

Connecticut Department of Agriculture

Agricultural Enhancement Grant Program

(Formerly Farm Viability Grant)

*For Connecticut municipalities, groups of municipalities,
regional councils of governments, and/or agricultural non-profit organizations*

2024 Grant Application Guidelines and Forms

***Application Deadline:
February 16th, 2024, at 4:00 pm***



**Ned Lamont, Governor
Bryan P. Hurlburt, Commissioner**

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Important Dates:

Applications must be received by February 16, 2024, at 4:00 p.m. Please review the “Submission Process” section of this document for additional detail on submission requirements.

**Applications must be received by:
Friday, February 16, 2024, at 4:00 p.m.**

Applications will not be accepted after 4:00 p.m. on February 16, 2024.

**Questions can be directed to Alison Grabarz:
Alison.Grabarz@ct.gov or (860) 993-5275**

Informational Webinar:

Friday, January 26th at 10:00 am via Webex

A virtual workshop will be hosted on Friday, January 26, 2024, at 10:00 am for interested applicants to learn more about the grant program, application requirements, and submission process. The webinar will take place on Webex. Registration for the workshop is required to receive the meeting link.

[Click here to register for the webinar.](#)

Office Hours:

- Wednesday, January 17th from 10:00-11:00am [via Webex.](#)
- Wednesday, February 7th from 10:00-11:00am [via Webex.](#)

Interested applicants can drop in and out to ask questions about the grant program and questions specific to their applications.

Grant Description

The Agricultural Enhancement Grant Program (*previously known as the Farm Viability Grant until December 2023*) provides matching funds to Connecticut municipalities, groups of municipalities, regional councils of governments, and/or agricultural non-profit organizations for projects that directly impact and/or foster agricultural viability.

All projects funded by the Agricultural Enhancement Grant must advance farming and agriculture as defined by [Connecticut General Statutes Section 1-1\(q\)](#).

Funding for the Agricultural Enhancement Grant is provided through the State of Connecticut [Public Act 05-228](#), *An Act Concerning Farmland Preservation, Land Protection, Affordable Housing, and Historic Preservation*.

The Agricultural Enhancement Grant Program and any awards are subject to limitations of state funding. The amount awarded to any applicant through the Agricultural Enhancement Grant is dependent upon the Micro Grant or Question of Focus applied for.

Grant areas and options are outlined below. Select the Question of Focus or Micro Grant that best captures your project. You may submit only one application.

Agricultural Enhancement Micro Grants

The Agricultural Enhancement Grant program is now accepting applications for Micro Grants. Each Micro Grant category has a maximum award of \$5,000. All Micro Grant categories require a 25% match through cash or in-kind contributions.

Please Note: The two Micro Grant Categories below do not correspond with a Question of Focus. Each Question of Focus also offers a Micro Grant opportunity.

- 1. Municipal Farm Map Projects. Maximum award \$5,000.** Municipalities may apply for funds to create a multilingual electronic and printed map/brochure highlighting all farms in their town and host a map unveiling event to encourage community support of local farmers.
Eligible expenses: Hiring subcontractors to develop the map, materials, provide translation, and limited supplies for the unveiling event, printing the developed materials, and event promotion.
- 2. Certified Farmers' Market Promotion and Outreach. Maximum award \$5,000.** Certified CT Grown farmers markets may apply for funds to develop new marketing materials to promote their market and availability of redemption for the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program if applicable) through print, digital, social, or other media outlets while using the CT Grown logo.
Eligible expenses: Hiring a graphic designer to create media, printing of developed materials, distribution of materials, and costs of promoting the market through print, digital, social, or other media outlets.

2024 Questions of Focus

Six Questions of Focus are outlined below. Each Question of Focus addresses a specific problem, interest, or need of the agricultural industry. Eligible applicants must describe how their project answers and responds to one of these Questions of Focus.

The maximum award for applications addressing a Question of Focus is \$49,999. The required match percentage for projects addressing a Question of Focus is 40%. Each Question of Focus also offers a Micro Grant Opportunity for up to \$5,000, and the required match is 25%.

- 1. Enhancing Youth Agricultural Education:** Bolstering the availability of youth agricultural education, gaining experiences on working farms, and utilizing ag specific equipment with opportunities for hands-on skill development will encourage pursuit of lifelong careers in CT agriculture.

Question of Focus for Youth Agricultural Education:

Please propose a project to deliver quality agricultural education, encourage hands-on skill development, or expand the program's available offerings through infrastructure improvements to schools, 4-H camps, or fair association facilities or purchase of specialized agricultural equipment.

NEW FOR 2024:

Micro Grant Opportunity:

Vocational Agricultural Centers, municipalities, or nonprofits may apply for up to \$5,000 towards hiring agricultural experts to provide guest lectures, supplemental training, or workshops in their area of expertise.

[A list of Agricultural Science and Technology Education \(ASTE\) Centers may be found in Appendix B.](#)

- 2. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in Agriculture:** DoAg acknowledges the importance of supporting a diverse, equitable, and inclusive agricultural community and working towards achieving an industry that addresses structural and systemic inequities faced by many producers who identify as BIPOC, veterans, members of the LGBTQ+ community or people with a disability.

Question of Focus for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in CT Agriculture

Please propose a project which directly responds to, or supports the agency with responding to one of the recommendations identified in the [DEI Working Group Report](#), or another identified area of need by your population of focus. Projects must directly benefit, and be informed by, farmers in one or more of the following classifications: BIPOC, veterans, members of the LGBTQ+ community or people with a disability.

Micro Grant Opportunity:

Up to \$5,000 to make materials, workshops and/or other agricultural resources more accessible. These activities may include hiring a translation service for translation of agriculture-specific or culturally relevant materials, offering an in-person translator or interpreter during a workshop or training, or developing [plain language guides](#) for technical programs.

3. Urban Ag: Urban agriculture is a growing, meaningful sector of Connecticut agriculture that can contribute to increasing food security, food sovereignty, agriculture education of all ages and reducing carbon emissions.

Question of Focus for Urban Agriculture

Please propose a project that focuses on establishing or expanding support and resources for urban agriculture.

Micro Grant Opportunity:

Up to \$5,000 for municipalities (that are not eligible for DEEP’s Urban Green and Community Gardens Grant program) or nonprofits to establish or make improvements to a previously established urban farm or garden.

For those who are eligible, community garden projects are also encouraged to apply to the [CT DEEP Urban Green and Community Gardens Grant Program](#).

4. Food Supply Chain: The COVID 19 pandemic has continued to increase awareness of the importance of a sustainable and resilient local food supply in CT. With the increased demand for CT Grown food and farm products, the lack of resources and significant challenges related to distribution and processing options for CT farmers became apparent.

Question of Focus for Food Supply Chain

Please propose a project that would strengthen the local food supply by increasing production of CT Grown farm products, proposing/developing plans for meat processing facilities, or expanding marketing efforts to increase the purchase and sale of CT Grown farm products.

NEW FOR 2024:

Micro Grant Opportunity:

Up to \$5,000 to offset expenses for new and beginning, BIPOC, or veteran farmers to participate in a Certified CT Grown farmers’ market. Expenses such as town permit fees, signage, display necessities (such as tables), food safety related materials (such as portable handwashing station or coolers) would be eligible.

For those looking for an award over \$100,000 that are in the middle of the supply chain (and not processing meat or dairy products,) please look into the upcoming Regional Food System Infrastructure Grant Program which will be released on www.CTGrown.gov/Grants

5. Farmland Accessibility: Farmland accessibility and farmland conversion are a continuing challenge that the CT agricultural industry faces; specifically for new farmers. There are currently over 500 farmers seeking farmland on CTFarmlink.org, a website and resource hub that aims to connect farmland owners with farmland seekers and aid in the successful transition of farmland.

Question of Focus for Farmland Accessibility

Please propose a project which addresses farmland accessibility or pilots an effort to inventory, survey, and/or prepare vacant farmland for agricultural production. This may be done through infrastructure enhancements as well as promotion of available parcels on the [CT Farmlink](#) website. Projects should also improve accessibility for new farmers, current producers looking to expand, or support succession strategies for farmers exiting agriculture.

NEW FOR 2024:

Micro Grant Opportunity:

Up to \$5,000 for municipalities to offer reduced-rate leases of public farmland to new and beginning, BIPOC, or veteran farmers.

Projects relating to securing land for open space are encouraged to apply to the CT DEEP [Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program](#).

NEW FOR 2024:

6. Applicant Identified Question of Focus: For applicants looking to pursue a project which does not qualify for a Question of Focus above, projects can be submitted under the Applicant Identified Question of Focus.

Applicant Identified Question of Focus

Please propose a creative, innovative project to support the viability of local farms and/or the agricultural industry.

DoAg reserves the right to alter the Question of Focus selected by the applicant. This approach enables the agency to better serve the industry by supporting and funding viable solutions, outcomes, or responsive programming for the betterment of CT agriculture.

Eligible Applicants

The following entities are eligible to apply for all Agricultural Enhancement Grants:

1. Municipalities with a current Plan of Conservation and Development. Please visit the [CT Office of Policy and Management website](#) to determine if your municipality qualifies.
2. Regional councils of governments organized under the provisions of sections [4-124i to 4-124p](#), inclusive.
3. Groups of municipalities that have established a regional inter-local agreement pursuant to sections [7-339a to 7-339l](#), inclusive.
4. Agricultural non-profit organizations.

Non-profit specific requirements:

- Non-profits must be registered with the Connecticut Secretary of State.
- Non-profits must have submitted Form 990 and been in existence for the previous three years.

Prior awardees may reapply for an Agricultural Enhancement Grant. However, open awards, past awards, and corresponding project completion and outcomes will be taken into consideration.

Match Requirement, Expenses, & Payment

The amount awarded to any applicant addressing a Question of Focus shall not exceed \$49,999.00. The amount awarded to any applicant for a Micro Grant shall not exceed \$5,000.00.

All grants (micro grants included) have a **match requirement**. Matching funds from the applicant must be *a minimum* of 25% of the total cost of the project budget for Micro Grants and *a minimum of 40%* for Question of Focus grants; this must be clearly outlined in the application. The match can consist of in-kind and/or cash contributions directly associated with the project. If a grant is providing the match, the applicant must disclose the grantor, the grant name, and amount awarded.

Employee salaries and fringe benefits to execute the project are allowable expenses but in total **cannot exceed 25% of the grant funds requested**.

The following **expenses** are examples of expenses that can be reimbursed with grant funds:

- Multi-media marketing expenses
- Employee salaries and fringe benefits paid to execute the project (cannot exceed 25% of grant funds requested)
- General purpose equipment and equipment rental if it directly supports the project
- Consultant or contractor expenses directly related to the project
- Stipends, honorariums
- Rental fees

The following **expenses** cannot be used as a match and will not be funded by the grant:

- Any expense incurred prior to contract execution
- Land acquisition/mortgages
- Cost of borrowing (points and other fees)
- Expenses related to establishing a new organization/business
- Any portion of expense for which the applicant pays a contractor in merchandise or service in lieu of cash
- Tuition/tuition reimbursement or career-related/scholarship funds
- Routine business expenses (utilities, office supplies, etc.)
- Disposable supplies (office, farm, otherwise) unrelated to the project
- Legal expenses related to litigation
- Indirect or contingency costs of any percentage

The following **expenses** are an acceptable match if they directly and meaningfully support the proposed project:

- State/local/federal permits
- Attorneys' fees (not related to litigation)

- Consumable or disposable supplies
- Employee salaries and fringe benefits paid to execute the project

The eligibility of general-purpose equipment will be reviewed based on the Question of Focus and project usage.

These are reimbursement grants. Incomplete projects cannot be fully reimbursed.

After the issuance of a purchase order, one cash advance of up to 50% of the total grant award may be requested by the grantee. The balance of the award will be reimbursed upon project completion and submission of required reporting documents.

Project Duration & Post Award Requirements

Projects must be **complete within 18-24 months** of the contract start date. Contract and project extensions are not allowed. Please anticipate a project start date of May 1, 2024.

Applicants of awarded projects will be responsible for the following:

1. Signing an agreement with the State of Connecticut
2. Providing a Certificate of Insurance listing the state as an additional insured on the grantee's liability insurance policy
3. Completing the project within the contractual timeframe
4. Submitting a final project report in the required format per the executed contract
5. Submitting a final financial report itemizing actual expenses. Copies of invoices and proof of payment must be submitted with the payment request at the conclusion of the project
6. Agreeing to a site inspection once the project is complete and prior to final payment being released
7. Other requirements as outlined in the State of Connecticut contract

If awarded, failure to sign and return a complete grant contract by the deadlines provided at the time of contract issuance will result in the rescinding of the award and the reallocation of funds back to the program. The awardee may reapply through future funding opportunities but there is no guarantee of future awarding.

Awarded grantees will have additional training on contract requirements and obligations, provided by the DoAg, prior to contract issuance.

Submission Process

The grant application for both Micro Grants and Questions of Focus is available on the [Agricultural Enhancement Grant website](#).

Only complete applications submitted through the [Cognito link on the website](#) will be accepted.

Application Requirements

A complete application includes:

1. Budget Form added as an attachment.
2. Grant Narrative responses added as an attachment.
3. Conceptual drawings, estimates/quotes, other budget justification items, and letters of support added as attachments.

[Copies of the Budget Form and Grant Narrative Template can be found here.](#)

Evaluation Criteria and Process

The Farm Viability Grant is a competitive grant. Only complete applications, as outlined above which are submitted on time through the Cognito link, will be evaluated. The evaluation will be weighted heavily on the project plan described in the Grant Narrative.

Additional information, such as quotes, conceptual drawings, and other documentation justifying and supporting the budget and project, is strongly encouraged to present a competitive application.

Anticipated Timeline for Application Review, Award Notification, and Project Start*:

Applications Deadline	Friday, February 16, 2024, at 4:00 p.m.
Evaluation of Applications	Through March 7, 2024
Notification of awards	March 8, 2024
Contract Start Date	May 1, 2024, or May 15, 2024
Project Period	May 1, 2024, to October 1, 2025, or May 15, 2024, to October 15, 2025*

*Large-scale projects may request up to 24 months to complete their project.

The grant application and additional information can be found on DOAG's **[Agricultural Enhancement webpage](#)**

**Applications must be received by:
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Questions can be directed to Alison Grabarz: **Alison.Grabarz@ct.gov**

Budget Form:

The information provided below is for informational purposes only. [The Budget Form is available for download here.](#) Applicants must upload this budget form as an attachment to their application.

Directions: In the cells below itemize the project expenses for each category. The sum function will total the itemized expenses in each of the gray category boxes. Rows can be added in each category if needed. Be sure to check the sum function of each category to ensure it includes the additional rows added.						
In addition to the itemized budget below, please also include a budget narrative that contains the following information:						
a. Where the match is coming from (cash, loan, other grant, etc.)						
b. Sufficient explanation and justification of the financial support requested						
BUDGET	ITEMIZED SUBTOTALS - GRANT FUNDS	GRANT FUNDS REQUESTED	ITEMIZED SUBTOTALS - MATCH FUNDS	CASH MATCH BY APPLICANT	IN-KIND MATCH BY APPLICANT	TOTAL COST
SALARIES & FRINGE. Employee salary & fringe paid to execute the project is eligible, however the salary and fringe request cannot exceed 25% of the total grant request. Salary is an eligible cash match as well.	Leave blank	\$0.00	Leave blank	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Salary & Fringe 1:	N/A		\$0.00			
EQUIPMENT. Equipment to be purchased per the project. Attaching quotes to justify the expense is highly recommended	Leave blank	\$0.00	Leave blank	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Item 1:	\$0.00		\$0.00			
*RENTAL OF EQUIPMENT. Rented equipment required to complete the project (rollers, heavy duty equipment)	Leave blank	\$0.00	Leave blank	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Item 1:	\$0.00		\$0.00			
Item 2:	\$0.00		\$0.00			
*MATERIALS & SUPPLIES. A list of materials and supplies required for the project.	Leave blank	\$0.00	Leave blank	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Item 1:	\$0.00		\$0.00			
Item 2:	\$0.00		\$0.00			
Item 3:	\$0.00		\$0.00			
Item 4:	\$0.00		\$0.00			
Item 5:	\$0.00		\$0.00			
CONTRACTUAL/CONSULTANT. Expenses associated with procuring services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant. If more than one, each contractor/consultant hired must be described separately. Attaching quotes to justify the expense is highly recommended	Leave blank	\$0.00	Leave blank	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Contractor 1:	\$0.00		\$0.00			
Contractor 2:	\$0.00		\$0.00			
OTHER COSTS. A list, with descriptions, of each item listed as "Other Costs"	Leave blank	\$0.00	Leave blank	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other 1:	\$0.00		\$0.00			
Other 2:	\$0.00		\$0.00			
Other 3:	\$0.00		\$0.00			
Other 4:	\$0.00		\$0.00			
Other 5:	\$0.00		\$0.00			
PROJECT TOTALS	Leave blank	#REF!	Leave blank	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
*If you're hiring a contractor do not break up the contractor's estimate into the various budget categories. The contractor's full cost/estimate should be listed as one item in the <i>Consultant/Contractual</i> category.						

Grant Narrative Template

The information provided below for the Grant Narrative Template is for informational purposes only. [The Grant Narrative questions are available for download here.](#) Applicants must upload the responses as an attachment to their application.

Answer the following questions regarding the project for which you are applying. Ensure that you have identified which Question of Focus or Micro Grant category your project addresses. Grant narratives should be no longer than five pages in length.

- 1. Introduction for Municipality/ Council of Gov't** – Introduce the municipality/COG to the reviewers. Include information such as:
 - a. Brief agricultural history of the municipality/COG and long-term plans for agriculture.
 - b. Are you enrolled in the Community Farms Preservation Program? What steps have you taken to participate?
 - c. Are there staff and/or committees dedicated to agriculture?

Introduction for Non-profits – Introduce the non-profit to the reviewers. Include information such as:

- a. An overview of the history and mission of the non-profit.
 - b. How does agriculture fit into your overall mission?
 - c. How does the project work towards your mission?
- 2. Project Explanation** – Explain your proposed project and the activities needed to complete the project. Try to include a sentence summarizing the main goal activities and objectives of the project.

Identify which Question of Focus or Micro Grant your project addresses.
What will the project accomplish and how will it be accomplished?

- 3. Project Outcome or Impact** – Identify at least one outcome you strive to achieve upon completing this project.

Example: At least 20 new and beginning farmers will receive education and training on urban agriculture techniques.

Municipalities: How does your project conform with the goals of the approved Plan of Conservation and Development?

- 4. Project Timeline** – Include all project milestones and related deadlines. Applicants must budget for the project planning, implementation, and final reporting to be conducted during an 18-month period. As a reminder no extensions will be given. No incomplete projects will be funded.

The following template will need to be used to provide the project timeline. Anticipate a project start date of May 1, 2024.

The following template should be used to provide the project timeline:

Task	Anticipated Timeline

5. **Target Audiences** – What expanded, additional, or underserved audience does your project allow you to support? This may include:
- a. Veterans
 - b. New and beginning farmers (farming for 1-3 years)
 - c. Anyone that speaks English as a second language
 - d. BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) producers
 - e. Anyone in a protected class (who are not reflected in the list above).

Please explain how you will be serving this expanded audience and any prior experience working with/reaching these groups.

6. **Project Summary and Conclusions** – Summarize the key points of this project in 3-4 sentences. Explain why the project should be supported and how the goals/outcomes respond to the Question of Focus or Micro Grant and create solutions to address an industry need.