

# Connecticut Department of Agriculture

## **Land, Capital, Market Access Program (LCMA) Guidance**

*For Socially Disadvantaged Connecticut Producers, Agricultural Cooperatives of Socially Disadvantaged Producers, and Agriculturally Focused Non-Profit Entities Led by Socially Disadvantaged Individuals*

### ***Program Guidance and Process Document***

***Interest Forms Accepted  
Beginning November 21, 2024***



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



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**[www.CTGrown.gov](http://www.CTGrown.gov)**

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Scan here to visit the LCMA website!

### Important Links

- [Land, Capital, Market Access Program Website](#)
- [LCMA Program Interest Form](#)

## **Workshop**

There will be a virtual workshop held on **Tuesday December 10, 2024, from 11:30am-12:30pm** where the program and process will be reviewed as well as ample time for Q & A.

Please [register for the webinar here](#) or on the [LCMA Program Webpage](#). The meeting will be recorded and shared with registrants and posted on the program website.

You may reach out to the program manager at any time to ask questions as well.

**Questions about the LCMA program can be directed to Cyrena Thibodeau at**  
**[Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov](mailto:Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov), 860-895-3094**

## **LCMA Program Overview**

Historically, socially disadvantaged producers have not received the same amount of technical support and funding to launch, grow, improve resilience, and success of their agricultural enterprises when compared to traditionally-served counterparts. The Land, Capital, and Market Access Program (LCMA) Program, administered by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture and funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), is intended to work to address this problem by increasing access to farm ownership opportunities, market outlets, and capital funding for socially disadvantaged farmers in CT.

*[DoAg's LCMA Program](#) has three primary components to it:*

1. **Establish the Farm Business Navigator**, a new position within UConn Extension to coordinate the Land Ownership Readiness Course and support interested socially disadvantaged farmers to navigate available resources and connect to additional assistance as needed.
2. **Access to free technical assistance** (such as legal, tax, marketing, accounting, or financial advisors) through referrals by the Farm Business Navigator. At least 25% of the identified service providers shall identify as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color (BIPOC). Interested service providers should complete the [application for consultants](#).
3. Grant funding to aid in the purchase of agricultural land through the newly established **CT Farmland Access Fund**. Application details for this funding opportunity will be announced in early 2025.

## **Eligible Participants**

The following entities are eligible to participate per the agreement with USDA:

1. Socially Disadvantaged Connecticut Producers
2. Agricultural Cooperatives of Socially Disadvantaged Producers
3. Agriculturally focused nonprofit entities operated by Socially Disadvantaged individuals

The term “**Socially Disadvantaged**” is defined by the [USDA NRCS](#) as:

*Individual or entity who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A socially disadvantaged group is a group whose members have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.*

Socially disadvantaged groups include the following:

- American Indians or Alaskan Natives
- Asians
- Blacks or African Americans
- Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders
- Hispanics

For an entity with multiple owners, **at least 50 percent ownership** in the farm business must be held by socially disadvantaged individuals.

For an agriculturally focused non-profit, **at least 50 percent of the leadership team** (e.g. board of directors or executive team) must be socially disadvantaged individuals.

## **Program Process**

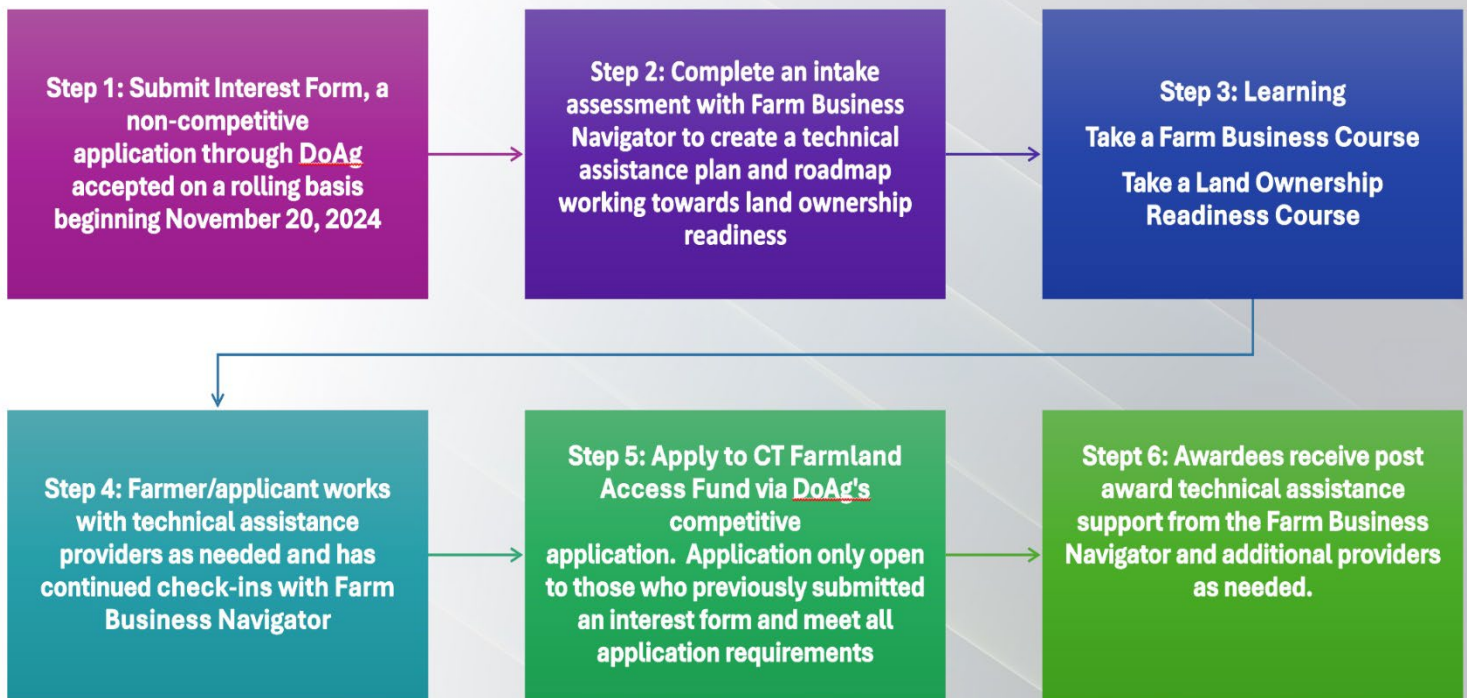
**This is the first of two program guidance documents that will be released.** The purpose of this document is to give an overview of the LCMA program and provide the Interest Form for applicants to complete and enroll in the program.

Submitting the [LCMA Program Interest Form](#) only identifies the eligible entity as having an interest in receiving free technical assistance and/or in applying for the CT Farmland Access Fund in the future. Submission of the form **does not guarantee funding** to support the purchase of land. This step is non-competitive and is nonbinding.

**The second guidance document**, to be released in early 2025, will contain the application for the **CT Farmland Access Fund** which is the grant program that will provide funds for the purchase of farmland. Applications for the CT Farmland Access Fund are expected to be due in June 2025.

The following flow chart gives an overview of the program process. Please see additional details below about each step.

## Program Process for an Applicant



### **Step 1: Submit LCMA Interest Form - [LCMA Program Interest Form](#)**

Eligible producers, agricultural cooperatives, or agriculturally focused non-profits who are interested in participating in the program should first submit the [LCMA Program Interest Form](#) via the provided link. If you need assistance completing the form, please contact the program manager.

The interest form has several purposes:

1. Provide some initial information on the farm business/organization and its goals.
2. Indicate interest in receiving free technical assistance from the UConn Farm Business Navigator and potential referrals to free consulting (i.e. legal, tax, business planning, etc.).
3. Indicate future interest in applying to the CT Farmland Access Fund to purchase farmland.

## **Step 2: Completing an intake assessment with UConn Extension's Farm Business Navigator**

After submission of the interest form, eligible entities will be contacted within (2) two weeks by Robert Chang, the Farm Business Navigator at University of Connecticut Extension, to schedule an intake assessment.

The intake assessment has several purposes:

1. Further discuss and determine the eligible entity's current goals regarding obtaining agricultural land and growing a farm business.
2. Assess the applicant as a producer and farm business for financial health, on and off farm skills, readiness to purchase farm property, etc. This may include a site visit to current place of farming.
3. Create an initial roadmap and plan for learning and receiving specialized technical assistance to increase readiness to purchase agricultural property and/or to increase farm viability.

Regular check-ins with the Farm Business Navigator shall be established on a case-by-case basis.

## **Step 3: Learning**

Program participants interested in applying to the CT Farmland Access Fund are required to show proof of completion of courses in two (2) required areas:

- (1) Farm Business Planning and
- (2) Land Ownership Readiness.

Courses must have been taken in the last three (3) years.

Listed below are options for courses that would fulfill each requirement, this is not an exhaustive list, other courses may be accepted. Upon completion of each course, participants will submit via email to [Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov](mailto:Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov) or the Farm Business Navigator [Robert.Chang@uconn.edu](mailto:Robert.Chang@uconn.edu) to share learning outcomes and upload a certificate (or other proof) of completion. Additional classroom or field-based learning may be recommended.

Additional courses and resources to support the requirements below will be posted on the [LCMA program webpage](#) as available.

### **1) Farm Business Planning Courses**

Individuals must take (or prove in the last (3) three years they've taken) a **Farm Business Planning course**. The course must consist of at least (9) nine hours of active classroom time (in person or virtual).

Businesses planning courses sponsored by the following organizations count towards this requirement. If you have taken or wish to take a course not on this list, please contact [Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov](mailto:Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov) or [Robert.Chang@uconn.edu](mailto:Robert.Chang@uconn.edu) with the course information and syllabus.

### Approved Courses

- UConn Extension, Solid Ground Farmer Training, [Business of Farming](#): Designed for producers with 0-3 years of farming experience. Course information and registration will be posted soon on the [Solid Ground website](#).
- New Entry Sustainable Farming Project, [Farm Business Planning Course](#): Tuesdays, January 14- March 4<sup>th</sup>, online
- National Farmers Union, [Beginning Farmer Institute](#): Applications will open Spring 2025
- [The Farmer's Office](#): All courses under the FSA Financial Borrow Training Section (10 modules), asynchronous
- Cornell Extension, Cornell Small Farms, [BF 203: Holistic Financial Planning](#), Tuesdays, January 14<sup>th</sup>-February 18<sup>th</sup>, online
- Extensión de Cornell, Pequeñas granjas de Cornell, [BF 101: Cómo Iniciar su Negocio Agrícola](#), El próximo se ofrecerá en el otoño de 2025.

The cost to participate in one of the approved courses vary, please check on the individual webpages for more information. If costs for taking a course poses a financial hardship, please contact the program manager at [Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov](mailto:Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov) or [Robert.Chang@uconn.edu](mailto:Robert.Chang@uconn.edu).

### 2) Land Ownership Readiness Course

Individuals must take (or prove in the last (3) three years they've taken) a **Land Ownership Readiness course**. The course must consist of at least (9) nine hours of active classroom time (in person or virtual).

University of Connecticut Extension is developing a new Land Ownership Readiness Course which will be offered for the first time in January 2025 and offered again in late fall 2025, and biannually thereafter. This will be a 7-module course, a combination of in person and virtual sessions for a total of 12 hours of instruction. Costs for the class will be no more than \$50.

**Course information and registration will be posted on [University of Connecticut Extension's Solid Ground page](#).**

We are unaware of other Land Ownership Readiness courses. If you have taken or wish to take a course not on this list, please contact [Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov](mailto:Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov) or [Robert.Chang@uconn.edu](mailto:Robert.Chang@uconn.edu) with the course information and syllabus.

### **Step 4: Technical Assistance**

Technical Assistance with subject matter experts will be available to all eligible producers in areas such as farmland matching, business planning, legal assistance, tax advising, marketing assistance, zoning and municipal regulations, soil science, building inspectors, etc. to aid in the preparation and readiness to purchase farmland and increasing business viability.

The Farm Business Navigator will support participating farmers to identify services they may need and match individuals with consultants. Translation services are available for these sessions.

After approval by the Farm Business Navigator, the LCMA program will pay **up to \$1,500** in consulting fees for eligible participants.

A list of recommended consultants is being assembled and will be available to all eligible participants who complete the intake form.

#### **Step 5: Full Application Submission**

The guidance and competitive application for the **CT Farmland Access Fund** is anticipated to be released in late winter/early spring 2025.

The guidance and application will be posted on [LCMA program webpage](#) once available.

#### **Step 6: Post-Award Monitoring and Assistance**

Once an award has been made, awardees will continue to receive post-award support for approximately three (3) years to help identify, conduct due diligence assessments, and finalize purchase for an appropriate property. Additionally, awarded applicants shall receive technical assistance focused on infrastructure needs (immediate and future), developing market outlets, and planning for the initial years on the new property.

#### **Interest Form Submission Process:**

The [LCMA Interest Form](#) shall be submitted through the online platform, Cognito. Progress can be saved and completed for submission later.

Links to the application are on the [DoAg Land, Capital, Market Access website page](#) or directly by visiting [LCMA Interest Form](#).

#### **LCMA Program Funding Source and Partners:**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) launched the Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program to help underserved producers, including socially disadvantaged producers, by increasing their access to land, capital, and markets.

Section 1006 of the American Rescue Plan Act, as amended by Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act, included these provisions for USDA to ensure underserved producers have resources, tools, programs, and technical support they need to succeed. For more information, please visit the [USDA Farm Service Agency's webpage](#).



CT Department of Agriculture, along with project partners at UConn Extension, Connecticut Farmland Trust, and American Farmland Trust received \$2.5 million for the implementation of the LCMA Program over the next four (4) years.

*Advisory Committee:*

In addition to the project partners, an Advisory Committee has been established to aid in the successful and equitable development of this program. The advisory committee is comprised of nine (9) individuals, eight (8) of whom identify as BIPOC. Advisory Committee members are not eligible for financial assistance through the CT Farmland Access Fund.