

Question 1	FRCR Plan Development: What elements should be strengthened in the FRCR Plan development process?
CTRC&D	The FRCR Plan should be designed as a comprehensive farm resiliency assessment, rather than focusing solely on individual conservation practices. The plan should identify the farm's specific climate vulnerabilities, including drought, excessive precipitation, flooding, erosion, extreme heat, severe storms, winter weather, and electrical outages, and then identify the combination of practices and infrastructure needed to reduce those vulnerabilities. We would recommend that the planning process not rely solely on soil scientists. Soil scientists provide valuable expertise, but a comprehensive resiliency plan may require multiple disciplines depending on the farm's operations and vulnerabilities. CT DOAG should consider a multidisciplinary approach that can be incorporated as appropriate and includes industries such as: - soil scientist and conservation; - agricultural engineering; - water and irrigation design and management; - drainage and flood-management; forestry and agroforestry; - livestock and grazing; - renewable energy and energy efficiency; - electrical and backup-power; - greenhouse and climate control; - farm infrastructure; and other qualified technical experts appropriate to the farm. Energy resilience deserves consideration as many farms depend on electricity for wells, irrigation, refrigeration, livestock water and ventilation, greenhouses, pumps, and other essential systems. Any extended electrical outage during an extreme weather event can substantially increase agricultural losses. The objective should be to develop a coordinated farm specific resiliency plan, where soil, water, energy, infrastructure, and production practices are considered together.

NCTFA	Additional clarity is needed regarding both the required contents of an FRCR Plan and its intended purpose. A strong plan should be more than an eligibility document for future funding. It should be a practical decision-making tool developed collaboratively with the farmer and grounded in the farmer's operation, goals, vulnerabilities, resources, and business realities. The planning process should begin with a shared understanding of the producer's priorities and vision for the farm, rather than simply identifying technically desirable practices. Plans should distinguish among immediate priorities, longer-term opportunities, and recommendations that may require substantial additional capital, permitting, technical assistance, or changes to the farm business. Where possible, they should also provide approximate implementation costs and identify potential funding or technical-assistance resources. A technically sound plan may nevertheless have limited value if the farmer does not understand, support, or have a realistic pathway to implement its recommendations. Producers should therefore have meaningful opportunities to review, discuss, and revise a plan before it is finalized.
Murray Gates	Question is unclear...what is the FRCR Plan Development Process? By "process", are you referring to the four bulleted lines under "details"?
Julie Harrison	I felt like there could have been more communication and discussion back and forth with the consulting firm in the early stages. It was one meeting early on and then nothing for a long time and then the suggested practices. I would have appreciated another meeting after the proposed practices. Fortunately, we were aligned.
Steve Munno	The program details note that soil scientists will be contracted to develop FRCR plans. Some FRCR plans might involve forest management, silvopasture, riparian zone management that could benefit from additional or alternative specific professional skill sets. The plans might be strengthened if additional professional skills are

	included in the plan development process if needed.
Ben Crockett	My experience has shown me that these kind of plans need to be flexible and grounded in the farmer's goals and vision of the farm. To strengthen the process, I would encourage CT DoAg to make the planning process, and resulting plan documents, as dynamic as possible. This is key to ensure a diversity of operation types, operator styles, and business goals can be incorporated into a holistic vision of farm climate adaptation that the farmer can commit to and buy-in to, while creating a dynamic document that the farmer could repurpose and update over various iterations of risk mitigating activities. Assume that it will take most farmers many cycles and versions of adaptation to achieve the type of 'momentum' they need to be resilient to climate change shocks.

BSC Group	One of the clearest lessons from the program in 2024 was the importance of establishing both program eligibility and site feasibility early in the planning process. One of the most challenging aspects of plan development was determining what was within the scope of the program, what constituted an appropriate climate resilience activity, and what portions of a property could realistically be considered for work – as well as communicating what was not. Having a clear definition of what constitutes resiliency (e.g., tearing down forested wetlands to plant an orchard of blueberries for pick-your-own sales is not necessarily a net positive for resilience) is important to ensure clarity of the program to the farmers. As such, we recommend incorporating a more standardized due diligence step near the beginning of FRCR Plan development, or even earlier, as an application step. At a minimum, this could include a property map, review of readily available information and disclaimers on wetlands and other environmental or land-use constraints, and an initial identification of areas where proposed work may, or may not, be feasible. Desktop resources are useful for screening, but the planning process should also clearly distinguish between screening-level information and field-based determinations, such as a wetland delineation, where those may ultimately be necessary. We faced challenges in helping the farmers to understand which areas of their farm were available for restoration activities - especially understanding where existing wetlands and rare species habitats exist on their sites. Clearer guidance on eligible and ineligible activities, as well as identification of areas on their farms available and allowable for eligible activities would strengthen the program significantly. Farmers and technical assistance providers would benefit from practical examples of projects that generally align with the program's
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	farmland restoration and climate resiliency goals, as well as examples of activities that may fall outside the program or require additional review. Providing that clarity up front would allow the FRCR planning process to spend more time refining feasible resilience strategies - and less time determining whether an initial concept fits within the program, as well as navigating potentially difficult conversations about why certain concepts are unlikely to be eligible.
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Kim & Yuri Grijalva	The biggest gap in plan development is cost and contractor uncertainty at the exact moment farmers are being asked to commit to a number. Our \$100,000 ask for 30 acres of silvopasture, pasture improvement, fencing, a solar agricultural pump, nose pumps where water lines weren't feasible, and equipment for invasive clearing and pasture maintenance was built on assumptions, not real quotes, because finding contractors with silvopasture experience, availability, and the ability to give an accurate bid was the hardest part of the process. Knowing what we know now, our actual scope would have cost roughly double the original estimate. Two concrete fixes: ● A farmer and contractor advisory contact list, organized by region and by type of work (forestry/silvopasture, fencing, water infrastructure, invasive removal), made up of people who have already done this work under an FRCR grant. Peer referral is more useful than a generic vendor list because it comes with "here's what it actually costs" and "here's who showed up." ● A published average cost-per-acre guide so applicants can budget realistically instead of guessing. For example: silvopasture (felling, hauling, invasive clearing, fencing) at roughly \$2,500 to \$4,000 per acre; a solar agricultural pump system at roughly \$20,000 to \$35,000, with well viability, well searching, and drilling called out as a separate cost line since it's so often left out of first estimates.
Kip Kolesinskas	• Farmers need to take an active role in the planning process, this is their plan. A self assessment tool to define the farm goals and priorities, link to climate impacts, and identify specific observed impacts (and where they are and severity on the farm) would be useful. Then work with a professional to conduct a risk assessment, and then develop a list of appropriate adaptation practices. Follow up is then needed to evaluate effectiveness and adapt as needed. One possible scenario would be a requirement to complete the UConn Climate Smart course that has been developed. Another would be completion of a self assessment tool. The USDA Climate Hub has one, a version has been modified by Julie Fine-AFT, I have modified a version for farmers to use as well. We can provide examples. • I believe there is a need for a simple, expedited version for basic restoration projects, such as invasive species management that could require fewer steps. • The Planning process should be compatible and incorporated into the NRCS Conservation Plan. In addition, NRCS practices that qualify can increase implementation by using the FRCR funds to then cover 100% of the practice cost.
Question 2	Plan Development Timelines: The FRCR Plan Development timeline is 6 months without extensions. Is this timeline reasonable?

CTRC&D	Six months may be reasonable for many plans, but the timeline could be challenging for more complex projects. CT DOAG should consider allowing limited extensions for documented circumstances outside the farmer's control that affect the planning process. The goal should be a practical and useful plan rather than just completing it within a certain time frame.
NCTFA	Six months may be a reasonable target, but we do not recommend making it an absolute deadline without extensions. Farmers may encounter weather, health, family, seasonal workload, or other circumstances that affect their ability to participate in the planning process. We are also concerned that technical-provider capacity could become a bottleneck as the program expands the number of FRCR Plans being developed. Completion may depend on the availability of the assigned technical professional, the need for site visits under appropriate seasonal conditions, additional specialized expertise, and agency review. Farmers should not lose access to the program because of delays in a planning process that are substantially outside their control. Extensions could remain limited to documented circumstances rather than being prohibited altogether.
Murray Gates	The time-line is almost exclusively dependent on the availability of the author of the plan. If every plan requires 40 hours to produce, will there be sufficient number of qualified authors contract to complete the plans within 6 months? Unless you are statutorily committed to completing the program within given time, I would recommend that you allocate 6 months to finding/soliciting appropriately skilled authors and then another 6 months to develop the plan.
Julie Harrison	Yes
Steve Munno	Anything can happen on a farm, allowing for a 6 month extension if needed might be best. And the soil scientists might not be able to get to all the farms to get all the plans done within 6 months of the award notice.

Ben Crockett	Maybe - if you are able to stick with the proposed timeline and grantees are informed by the end of the year, there might be enough time to develop plans and be ready to implement them in the '27 growing season. That said, 'life happens' and some very well meaning farmers that could benefit from this kind of planning support may get (reasonably) delayed in completing their plans by May/June.
Kim & Yuri Grijalva	Six months is reasonable in theory, but nothing about our actual timeline supported it. We were awarded the grant in December. The engineering plan wasn't delivered until the following November, roughly ten months, plus another two months to move to signatures. Signatures took another two to three months, and payment came through in April. DoAg told us we could start in January, but contractors require deposits, and we had no funds released yet to make that possible. If DoAg streamlined its internal review steps and held engineering firms to a defined turnaround, six months could work. Right now the timeline assumes the engineering phase is quick and collaborative, and for us it wasn't either. We expected the engineering company to be involved in the field, for example collecting soil samples themselves. That didn't happen.
Kip Kolesinskas	• No, there is a lack of qualified individuals and organizations to help farmers create plans. A training program could be created for consultants and organizations.
Question 3	Technical Assistance: How can DOAG improve the soil scientist-supported plan development process? How can DOAG support awarded organizations with identifying soil scientist to match with farmers for a FRCR Plan development?
CTRC&D	CT DOAG could consider establishing a multidisciplinary technical assistance network similar to that of the USDA NRCS TSP list, rather than limiting the planning process to just soil scientist support only. DOAG could maintain a roster of qualified professionals based on the specific needs of each farm. This would also help ensure that farmers do not have to independently identify and coordinate with technical professionals and have a lead technical advisor or planning coordinator that would help integrate these different areas into a single comprehensive FRCR Plan.

NCTFA	We encourage DOAG to consider whether soil scientists should be the exclusive category of eligible plan developer. Soil scientists bring valuable expertise related to soils, drainage, erosion, land capability, and many other resource concerns. However, the program also contemplates needs related to forestry, grazing, irrigation and water systems, farm infrastructure, and other areas that may require different expertise. DOAG could consider establishing a list or pool of qualified plan developers, together with minimum qualifications or competencies. Depending on the farm and identified resource concerns, potentially appropriate professionals might include soil scientists, foresters, NRCS-qualified conservation planners, conservation district staff, agronomists, grazing or livestock specialists, agricultural engineers, or other qualified technical professionals. If DOAG retains soil scientists as the primary planners, there should at minimum be a clear mechanism for bringing in additional expertise when a farm's primary resilience concerns fall outside that individual's experience. Capacity is also important. The revised program anticipates approximately 60 plans. Before establishing firm completion timelines, DOAG should assess how many qualified professionals are interested in this work, their realistic caseload capacity, and their relevant agricultural experience. Where capacity permits, matching should consider farm type and relevant expertise in addition to geography. A diversified vegetable farm, orchard, livestock operation, nursery, and forested farm may have very different planning needs even when located in the same region. DOAG could also support participating organizations by maintaining a vetted list of eligible planners that identifies qualifications, geographic service area, farm-system experience, and areas of technical expertise.
Murray Gates	a. As stated above, what is the process? b. As mentioned in #6 below, I don't understand why authors are limited to soil scientists. As example, If a farmer proposes an agriforestry practice, a soil

	scientist isn't likely to have the required knowledge to draft a plan.
Julie Harrison	I'm not sure how familiar our scientist is with agriculture, specifically horticulture. Having a scientist that is familiar with the type of farming would be helpful. Forage producers are different from forestry are different from flower farming.
Steve Munno	DOAG could provide an extensive list of potential soil scientists to work with. DOAG could share examples of existing approved FRCR plans.
Ben Crockett	I guess I would question the emphasis on a soil scientist - climate resiliency (and land restoration) to me extend far beyond just soil. I imagine the department needs to demonstrate a certain level of credibility for any technical service provider they contract with to deliver these plans, but I would extend the type of provider beyond soil expertise. For instance, I've seen on more than one occasion that the bottleneck for a farm to implement climate-smart ag. practices is more of a business issue (e.g. cash flow, calculating cost-of-goods-sold, etc.) then a question of soil health. Farmers may understand full well that soil health is critical to their success, and probably already have an affordable plan that could address it, but their accounting practices need to be updated to capitalize the implementation of soil health practices.

BSC Group	Soil scientists can play an important role in FRCR Plan development, but our experience suggests that the technical assistance framework should recognize where additional expertise is needed. Depending on the farm, site conditions, and proposed project, plan development may raise questions related to wetlands, drainage and water management, regulatory permitting requirements, design feasibility, or other sitespecific considerations that extend beyond soil science. We recommend that DoAG clearly define the expected role and scope of the soil scientist and establish a pathway for bringing in other technical specialists when appropriate. When matching technical assistance to farms, DoAG should weigh the farm’s proposed project type and site conditions alongside geography and availability, so that the assigned support is well suited to the issues most likely to arise during planning. Finally, DoAG should set clear expectations with farmers at the beginning of the process. Participants should understand that FRCR Plan development may involve specialists visiting their property, assessing site conditions, and reviewing existing and proposed activities as part of determining feasible resilience strategies. FCRC materials should also make clear that appropriate permits and approvals may be required before work can begin, so farmers are not caught off guard later in the process.
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Kim & Yuri Grijalva	We expected the engineering company to be a working partner through plan development. Instead it was ten to eleven months of waiting for a report, with no contact in between. During that gap we did our own research, reaching out to seed and forage companies to figure out what would actually establish well on our land. The most useful help we got wasn't from the program structure at all, it was informal: Joe Orefice at Yale, who runs his own working silvopasture operation, advised us directly, and our forester ended up reaching out to Joe too since silvopasture wasn't something he'd worked in before. That tells you where the real gap is. DoAg could formalize this by maintaining a short list of silvopasture practitioners and specialists (people like Joe) who awarded farms can be connected to during the plan development window, rather than leaving farms to find that expertise on their own. Realistically, a project our size runs about four years start to finish. We were awarded in 2024 and are only now starting phase two this fall.
Kip Kolesinskis	• There are few soil scientists knowledgeable enough about agriculture, climate change, and conservation practices and adaptation strategies. Broadening providers to include those that qualify as agronomists, soil conservationists, ecologists, and foresters could help meet the demands. Farmers who have completed the UConn Courses, or participated in the USDA Climate Fellow Program could be exempt, or possibly considered as qualified contractors. • Creating a basic conservation training, and climate adaptation planning course, could create a pool of consultants/organizations.
Question 4	Reporting: What reporting requirements should be considered to ensure accountability while maintaining accessibility for small and beginning farmers? Are additional metrics needed to assess long-term climate resiliency impacts?

CTRC&D	Again, I think flexibility is key here, although I would recommend any accountability utilized align with our best understanding of the science for the practice/outcome being measured. Soil health is relatively easy (although slow moving over multiple years) with currently available tests through UConn, etc. Animal resilience to heat stress in a pasture system is much more difficult to quantify (although no less important) for non-dairy livestock producers, and require expensive capital infrastructure (easily accessible scale, or RFID based in-situ weighing tech) to measure. Small and beginning farmers in particular will not be able to cover the costs of certain accountability measurements, and CT DoAg should work with each awardee to develop a comprehensive MRV plan for their priority risks they address through RPP - this is another place where service providers could support the producer and CT DoAg with developing the MRV plan.
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NCTFA	For FRCR Plan Development grants, reporting should be relatively simple. At minimum, DOAG should receive or have access to the completed plan and basic information demonstrating that the required planning process occurred. It could also be useful to collect brief information from the farmer about whether the plan was understandable, reflected their priorities, and identified realistic next steps. Whether and how the farmer ultimately uses the plan is important, but much of that implementation will occur outside the period and scope of the planning grant. For implementation grants, reporting should document expenditures and identify how funded activities relate to recommendations in the FRCR Plan. However, farmers should retain flexibility to implement a high-priority recommendation rather than necessarily a "highest-priority" recommendation. Cost, timing, permitting, contractor availability, required complementary work, or other constraints may make another recommended project more feasible and impactful. We support evaluation of long-term climate-resiliency outcomes, but caution against placing extensive evaluation requirements on individual farmers. Meaningful long-term evaluation often extends beyond the grant period and may require specialized expertise. If DOAG wants to assess longer-term outcomes across the program, a dedicated evaluation effort or set-aside may produce more useful information than requiring each grantee to undertake substantial measurement and reporting. Where straightforward indicators are available, they could be incorporated—for example, acres affected, water-storage capacity added, improvements in irrigation reliability, erosion-control measures installed, or other clearly relevant outputs—but reporting should remain proportional to the size and purpose of the award.
Murray Gates	Metrics should be developed as part of the plan and should reflect the specific success criteria for the implemented solution.

Julie Harrison	I consider this a very generous award that should be reserved for someone with some experience, aside from size. I see many who are start up farmers that after a few years realize how difficult agriculture is. Having five years experience as an active farm might be a reasonable minimum for qualification, regardless of size.
Steve Munno	Reporting requirements should not be burdensome. Sharing the FRCR plan, receipts to document all grant expenses, and a site visit to verify implementation of practices for opportunity 2 is appropriate.
Ben Crockett	Again, I think flexibility is key here, although I would recommend any accountability utilized align with our best understanding of the science for the practice/outcome being measured. Soil health is relatively easy (although slow moving over multiple years) with currently available tests through UConn, etc. Animal resilience to heat stress in a pasture system is much more difficult to quantify (although no less important) for non-dairy livestock producers, and require expensive capital infrastructure (easily accessible scale, or RFID based in-situ weighing tech) to measure. Small and beginning farmers in particular will not be able to cover the costs of certain accountability measurements, and CT DoAg should work with each awardee to develop a comprehensive MRV plan for their priority risks they address through RPP - this is another place where service providers could support the producer and CT DoAg with developing the MRV plan.
Kim & Yuri Grijalva	We currently have an agroforestry PhD student from URI assessing wildlife impact on the property, and that model is worth building into the program formally. DoAg could maintain a list of farms willing to participate in university-led studies (UConn, UMass, URI) so field scientists can collect consistent data on the actual climate and ecological impact of practices like silvopasture, rather than relying only on farmer self-report. For farmers themselves, reporting should stay light and observational rather than becoming another compliance burden. We can track and speak to real changes: animal health, meat quality, and increased wildlife activity (birds, bats, deer, understory species) as invasives are cleared and natural forage returns. For beef cattle specifically, defined metrics like stocking rate, animal health indicators, and meat quality would give the

	program something concrete and repeatable across farms, without asking small operations to become their own data analysts.
Kip Kolesinskis	• Field review of practice implementation, documentation of reduced risk, increased resiliency/economics/yields. Improvements in water use, reduced pest pressure, increased plant health, soil health, reduced energy useage, etc.
Question 5	Access and Equity: How can the program more effectively support historically underserved, producers, including BIPOC, veteran, limited-resource, and new/beginning farmers?
CTRC&D	The RRP program should minimize administrative and financial barriers for all agricultural producers in the program inclusive of historically underserved, limited-resource, veteran, BIPOC, and beginning farmers. Technical assistance should include developing the project, preparing budgets, understanding eligibility, and identifying complementary state and federal funding. Consideration could be given to required matching fund requirements, reimbursement structures, or complicated reporting requirements that can create barriers for farmers with limited access to resources and capital.
NCTFA	The final guidance should clearly explain how historically underserved producers will be prioritized within a competitive program. If there will not be a separate funding pool, applicants should be able to understand how farmer classification affects scoring and how that preference interacts with other evaluation criteria. Alternatively, DOAG could consider reserving a portion of available funding for historically underserved producers while retaining a general pool open to all eligible farmers. Equity should also be addressed through program mechanics rather than

	scoring alone. Application complexity, reimbursement or cash-flow requirements, obtaining estimates, land tenure, technical vocabulary, and access to trusted technical assistance can all affect who is able to participate successfully.
Murray Gates	N/A
Julie Harrison	I don't know how grants are awarded, but one thing I often wished for with grants is that there would be an interview process so that you could ask questions, learn more about the farmer and their intent. I struggle with writing and feel like meeting me and having a conversation about my farm, my long term goals for my farm could be helpful to understand and help support me.
Steve Munno	Publish and share templates for FRCR plans and sample FRCR plans.

Ben Crockett	In my mind there are four key approaches: • Leverage existing relationships the Department has with organizations/partners already on the frontlines serving underserved producers • Communication channels (including through aforementioned partners) is key, especially given the tight timeline the Department is (rightfully so) aiming for with this program. Beyond the specific outreach channels (which should include FRCR partners) the Department should utilize 'informal' channels on social media and face-to-face time sharing the program at events/gatherings hosted by frontline organizations • Advertise and host a number of listening sessions, available at various times (morning, noonish, evenings) to ensure producers of all types, availability, etc. can learn and engage directly from the Department about the program and the expectations for grantees. • Identify regional/production-type leaders as 'champions' for the programs- the farmers that other farmers look to for insight and inspiration. Train them on a few talking points, and incorporate them into outreach communication channels and listening sessions
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BSC Group	Based on our experience with the 2024 round, the program appeared to reach a range of farms of different sizes and circumstances, which we encourage DoAG to continue to prioritize as the program evolves. Program clarity is also an important component of access and equity across the selection process; for example, some farms – whether due to size, age, operating principles, or other conditions – did not seem as well-suited to the program because of their relatively established, seemingly immovable processes and views on what constitutes a resilience-building activity. Clear, practical guidance on eligibility, the planning process, technical assistance, permitting, timelines, and farmer responsibilities can be particularly valuable for other producers with less administrative capacity or less previous experience navigating grant and regulatory processes. Continuing to provide hands-on technical assistance while making program requirements as understandable and predictable as possible can help preserve access for a broad range of producers.
Kim & Yuri Grijalva	My husband is a veteran of Latin descent, and he doesn't feel either of those things has affected his ability to succeed in this work. I have experienced prejudice as a woman pursuing opportunities in this space, so I'd like to see women farmers explicitly included in the program's equity language. That said, I don't think any one group should receive priority over another. Farming is hard regardless of race or gender, and the program will serve people better by removing the barriers that hit everyone (cost, access to contractors, timeline mismatch with the physical realities of outdoor work) than by ranking who deserves help most.
Kip Kolesinskas	• Being size neutral, requiring a minimum of one year of production, allowing use on leased land (with a 3 yr lease or landowner permission) • Utilize percentage pools for groups, if they are not used, redistribute to other categories. • Provide outreach and assistance funds to organizations. • Utilize alternative application tools such as interviews, videos, in person assistance. NCTFA developed some successful tools.

Question 6	Additional Considerations: What challenges or opportunities related to farmland restoration and climate preparedness are not sufficiently addressed in the program? Will these challenges be addressed with the new program structure?
CTRC&D	One area that should be given more attention within the RRP program is energy resilience. Energy should be considered a key component of agricultural climate resilience because extreme weather events have shown to create situations where farms have an increased demand for electricity and reduced availability of grid power. Eligible resiliency improvements should therefore be considered eligible where appropriate. The program should recognize that a farm cannot be fully climate resilient if critical systems cannot operate during a weather event. Additionally, there is limited support to CT farmers currently for the implementation of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects with the pause of the USDA REAP grant program at the federal level.
NCTFA	One important risk is that the planning requirement itself could become a bottleneck to accessing implementation funding. The proposed structure substantially expands opportunities to obtain FRCR Plans, which is positive. At the same time, the availability of qualified plan developers, their agricultural experience, and the time required to complete high-quality plans will directly affect how quickly farmers can move into implementation. The program should also preserve a clear connection between planning and implementation. Farmers should understand whether receiving a plan creates any preference or priority in a subsequent implementation round, how long a plan remains valid, and when a plan must be revised because conditions or the farm operation have changed.

Murray Gates	It is unclear why the plan authors are restricted to soil scientists when the set of proposed solutions to climate resilience and farmland restoration issues will include many solutions which fall outside of the domain of soil science. Limiting plan authorship to soil scientists may result in having too few qualified authors as well as plans which do not adequately address the issue experienced by the farmer/producer. To increase the impact of this grant program, there should be a requirement for awarded farmers to participate in some kind of outreach/education program thereby sharing experiences with other farmers.
Julie Harrison	I feel like access to water (well) and solar are two of the best things that can support farmers in a world of uncertain climate change. I'm grateful we were able to achieve this on our farm with your help. I see wind and extreme temperature fluctuations as two other major challenges that will need support.
Steve Munno	It is not clear that reducing emissions from farms is sufficiently addressed in the program. Initiatives or practices that reduce fossil fuel use, such as transitioning to electric equipment and/or more energy efficient equipment where possible, and installing green energy infrastructure where reasonable on farms should be considered and included.

Ben Crockett	I think any applicant, whether just going for a planning grant or the full planning + implementation option, should attend a kick-off meeting where they learn about anticipated climate impacts in the Northeast based on the most current models and current extreme weather patterns. This will help applicants and FRCR planners start from the same baseline of understanding to inform their approaches to achieve the goals of the program. This also helps build a bit of a cohort mindset, and build peer relationships that farmers can utilize to develop better/more comprehensive plans and projects. (not clear that this would be addressed in the new structure) • Examples/case studies of what the Department considers good/successful projects (in CT or elsewhere in the Northeast) would also help set expectations and generate ideas of how these funds could best be used.
BSC Group	One area that would benefit from greater emphasis in the revised program is the relationship between planning, regulatory requirements, and eventual implementation. The program should clearly communicate that participation in RRP, receipt of grant funding, or approval of an FRCR Plan does not itself authorize proposed work or supersede applicable local, state, or federal permits and approvals. For projects advancing to implementation, DoAG could clearly identify whether permitting, associated technical studies, education/coursework on resiliency techniques, and other necessary pre-construction activities are eligible grant expenses. Allowing those costs where appropriate can help projects move successfully from planning to implementation while also helping ensure compliance with applicable local, state, and federal requirements.

Kim & Yuri Grijalva	The gap is that the program speaks in environmental terms when farmers make decisions in financial terms. Most farmers want to do right by the land, but time, money, and well-worn practices win out unless the case is made in dollars. As Texas Longhorn ranchers, we're already seeing a shift in the breed away from what's typical in the southern states that produce most of the reporting on Longhorns. We believe our region, southeastern Connecticut, with its marine mineral content in the pastures, more consistent sunshine, temperate climate, glacial mineral deposits, and a more biodiverse forage base, is producing a distinct genotype for this breed. Learning from regenerative farming experts, we understand that converting our forest, which carries a heavy load of standing dead ash and chestnut and invasive underbrush, into silvopasture will raise yields and cut our dependency on outside pasture, hay, and feed. That means relying more on our own land, the land improves because of the animals, and the animals improve because of the land. DoAg should spell this out financially: how does doing the right environmental thing improve the farm's bottom line. Without that translation, the program reads as an environmental ask rather than a business case, and it will keep losing to whatever practice is cheaper and more familiar right now.
Kip Kolesinskas	• There is a need for restoration practices that are important for increasing land access and economics that are only marginally climate adaptation strategies. Removing surface stones, clearing invasives from field edges, improving farm roads, might be examples. • The economics of agriculture are difficult. There are adaptation strategies that are important that typically don't fit into the definition of conservation practices. Perhaps a cross over with other DOAG grant programs could help. For example, new crops and diversification, purchase of less vulnerable lands (outside of floodplain), new buildings and crop storage, customer comfort investments. • A priority should be given to lands protected with a conservation easement. These lands will be the best investment for agriculture and the future. AFT studies have shown that protected farms are more likely to invest in conservation and climate adaptation.
Question 7	Implementation Timelines: The RRP requires project completion within 24 months without extensions. Is this timeline reasonable for the types of restoration and climate-resilient improvements funded by the program?

CTRC&D	Twenty-four months is a reasonable timeline for most projects. However, because agriculture is such a variable industry and certain times of the year are not conducive to project installation the Department should consider allowing limited extensions when there are documented circumstances outside the farmer's control for an additional 6 months – 1 year.
NCTFA	Twenty-four months is a reasonable standard timeline for many projects, but extensions should be available when justified. Climate-resiliency projects may depend on contractors, permitting, equipment availability, engineering, planting or construction seasons, and suitable weather. Those constraints are particularly relevant to a program specifically intended to address extreme weather. The planning process may also affect the effective implementation timeline if completion of the FRCR Plan or related design work is delayed. We therefore recommend treating 24 months as the normal completion period while allowing extensions for circumstances outside the grantee's reasonable control.
Murray Gates	N/A
Julie Harrison	I think 24 months is reasonable, however having an extension option might be considered as some of these projects have a lot of moving parts that take time and are beyond the farmer's control. In our case, we needed Eversource approval, electrical upgrades, structural work, etc so lots to juggle on top of day to day farm operations.
Steve Munno	Allowing for a 12 month extension might be necessary, as some implementation projects might have to happen at specific times of year, and only if conditions allow. If a major storm of some set of environmental conditions prevent implementation on the planned timeline, a 12-month extension should be allowed.
Ben Crockett	That timeline should work for project implementation, but may not be appropriate when it comes to measuring outcomes depending on the resiliency strategy.

BSC Group	A 24-month implementation period appears appropriate for most projects, but we recommend allowing a process for reasonable extensions when an applicant can demonstrate why additional time is necessary. The FRCR Plan itself should identify an anticipated implementation schedule and consider whether that schedule is realistic before a project advances. Certain projects may reasonably require additional time because of permitting and regulatory review, seasonal constraints, procurement, technical design, educational components, or other project-specific circumstances. Identifying these considerations during FRCR Plan development would help DoAG and the farmer establish realistic expectations at the outset. Where circumstances outside of the farmer's control affect implementation, a clearly defined extension process would provide flexibility without sacrificing accountability.
Kim & Yuri Grijalva	No. Same answer as question 2: the sequencing of engineering review, signatures, and payment release already ate most of the 24 months before contractors could even be booked with a deposit.
Kip Kolesinskis	• This depends on the practices, economics, availability of contractors, engineers, materials, weather. This has historically been an issue for installation of conservation practices and farmland restoration. Allow extensions based on documented challenges.
Question 8	Program Eligibility: What improvements or clarifications should be made to the eligibility requirements for farmers? Are there additional considerations needed for leased land or nonprofit producers?

CTRC&D	Eligibility requirements should recognize that Connecticut agriculture includes both landowners and farmers who operate on leased land. Leased-land farmers can make significant long-term investments and therefore the program shouldn't favor land ownership over active agricultural production. DOAG could establish reasonable requirements concerning lease duration, landlord authorization, ownership of improvements, and protection of the dollars invested. Nonprofit agricultural producers should likewise be considered based on their agricultural use, climate vulnerability, and expected resiliency benefits rather than nonprofit status alone.
NCTFA	Eligibility requirements for leased land should not unnecessarily disadvantage producers who do not own the land they farm. Any required tenure or landowner commitment should be proportional to the useful life and permanence of the proposed investment. A longer-term agreement may be reasonable for a major permanent land improvement, while the same requirement may be unnecessary for a shorter-lived or portable practice or piece of eligible equipment. DOAG should also clarify how an "entire farm" FRCR Plan applies to producers operating on multiple owned and leased parcels, particularly when leases change over time. A farmer should not be made ineligible because one parcel in a larger operation cannot reasonably be included in a long-term capital project. For nonprofit producers, eligibility should focus on whether the organization is substantially engaged in agricultural production and whether the proposed project strengthens the resilience of that agricultural operation. The final guidance should clearly distinguish eligibility for organizations applying to develop plans from eligibility for nonprofits operating farms and seeking implementation support.
Murray Gates	N/A
Julie Harrison	None that I can think of

Steve Munno	Any farm or non-profit with a lease of 5 years or more should be eligible.
Ben Crockett	Clarifying forestry related practices will be a key consideration, given the propensity of forested land on many farms, covering everything from the requirements for forestry management plans, to DoAG allowable practices for forest based production. Related, ensuring that forestry expertise is available to applicants interested in forestry/agroforestry practices will probably be important.
Kim & Yuri Grijalva	Eligibility requirements are fair as they stand.
Kip Kolesinskas	Leased land should be eligible. Depending on the practice, a lease that ensures the practices are completed and successful, typically 3-5 years. A written lease, license, or letter of landowner commitment. Non-profit producers should be eligible, since they are part of developing a resilient local food system.
Question 9	Climate Resiliency Priorities: Are the program's priority project areas (soil health, water management, forest management, grazing management, and capital improvements) appropriately defined? What additional practices should be considered?
CTRC&D	This was covered in question #6 response.
NCTFA	We support the broad inclusion of soil health, water management, forest management, grazing management, and capital improvements. However, the current public notice does not provide definitions or sufficient detail regarding what activities fall within each category. We would welcome the opportunity to provide more specific feedback once those definitions are available.
Murray Gates	Add "Nutrient Management".
Julie Harrison	Absolutely agree with these focus areas

Steve Munno	Additional practices to be considered should include: reduction in fossil fuel use, investment in/transition to electric equipment, investment in green energy infrastructure (solar, wind, etc.). In terms of equipment, tractor purchases are not allowed, but perhaps an electric skid steer and attachments could be allowed. When farms lose power, farms need to keep their refrigeration, freezers and wells running, among other things. Solar battery banks, solar generators and battery storage systems should be part of a group of allowed equipment/infrastructure expenses, to help secure backup power, whether connected to an existing solar arrays or as part of a new system.
Ben Crockett	For the scope of this version of the program it seems like the priority areas are appropriate and well defined. Additional practices might include financial resiliency (crop insurance, budgeting for disaster/emergencies), and emergency response planning. Mental and physical health could also be considered as both are threatened by increasing climate impacts, like heat stress and depression/anxiety.
Kim & Yuri Grijalva	The priority areas are appropriately defined, but the end result needs to be the actual priority: better stocking rates, greater yields, and cost savings from higher pasture or cropland productivity. Without that framing, this becomes an academic exercise instead of a program farmers can build a business case around. These practices need to make sense as part of running a profitable farm, not just as environmental compliance.
Kip Kolesinskas	These are ok. Those used in the USDA Climate Hub are preferred: Sustain fundamental functions of soil and water; Reduce existing stressors of crops and livestock; Reduce risks from warmer and drier conditions; Reduce the risk and long term impacts of extreme weather; Manage farms and fields as part of a larger landscape; Alter management to accommodate expected future conditions; Alter agricultural systems or lands to new climate conditions; Alter infrastructure to match new expected conditions.

Question 10	Project Evaluation Criteria: Are the evaluation factors (outcome, climate-smart practices, farmer classification, soil type, and land use purpose) weighted appropriately? What refinements would better promote equitable and impactful project selection?
CTRC&D	These evaluation factors are appropriate but should also include how the project will improve the farm's ability to withstand and recover from extreme weather events. Specifically, what is the farm's vulnerability and expected benefits as a result of project implementation.
NCTFA	The current notice identifies outcome, climate-smart practices, farmer classification, soil type, and land-use purpose as evaluation factors but does not provide the proposed scoring rubric, definitions, or weights. We recommend publishing the proposed scoring framework before finalizing the program or providing another opportunity for stakeholder review. In evaluating projects, we encourage DOAG to balance expected climate-resiliency benefit with feasibility, farmer need, and equitable access. The strongest project should not necessarily or solely be the one capable of generating the largest absolute acreage. Evaluation should recognize meaningful improvements relative to the scale and vulnerability of the operation.
Murray Gates	a. I don't see any weighting published on the website so it is difficult to say whether it is appropriate. I might suggest adding the resultant increase in production. b. Greater impact can be achieved by including educational outreach activities as an evaluation criterion.
Julie Harrison	I am extremely grateful for the opportunities this grant has given our farm to expand and be supported for years to come. I also appreciate the reminder that we need to tie up some loose ends and be done before the end of the year! Thank you DoAg. Very proud to be a part of CT Grown!
Steve Munno	I do not see how the evaluation factors are weighted on the grant webpage. If it is available somewhere else, I would be happy to comment.
Ben Crockett	Not sure, would need to understand better the results of the 2024 RRP to provide more feedback on these areas and compare to current program weighting.

Kim & Yuri Grijalva	If this is asking about how the application sequences its evaluation factors: farmer classification shouldn't carry weight in this program. Ask any farmer or rancher who they are and what they do, and they'll answer with what they raise or grow, not with a demographic category. If the state is required to collect that information for equity reporting purposes, it should stay a simple checkbox with no bearing on scoring, not a prioritized factor as it currently reads. Outside of that, the weighting is appropriate. One refinement: separate expected outcome from actual outcome as distinct evaluation points, since those two things measure different stages of the same project and shouldn't be scored as one.
Kip Kolesinskis	• I'm not sure what evaluation criteria was previously used. See my comments on Reporting. The goal is to adapt to climate change, reduce risk, increase resiliency, and profitability in a changing climate. • There are outputs to measure such as acreage of cover crops, as well as outcomes, such as the reduced threat of loss due to flooding by changing production from one field to another. Probably want some of both. • You could report # of contracts/farms/acreage that address- Changing precipitation patterns; Increased temperatures; Extreme weather; Seasonal shifts.
Other comments:	

CTGGA	The Connecticut Greenhouse Growers Association would like to add its comments to the proposed RRP grant process, especially as recent severe summers storms have wreaked havoc on the state - particularly in Fairfield County. Convective thunderstorms, extreme heat and high winds appear to be the new climate normal; as such, controlled environment agriculture is as vulnerable to sever weather as traditional farming. We believe there should be more definitive language for climate resiliency preparedness infrastructure within FRCR grant eligibility and priority items [for grant implementation] that would assist the green industry in addressing on-farm climate resiliency. These items would enhance the list of suggested equipment and/or FRCR implementation plans: 1. Reinforce or improve greenhouse and hoop house structures against high winds, heavy rain, hail, snow, or extreme temperatures. 2. Improve drainage around greenhouses and hoop houses to prevent flooding and standing water. 3. Install stormwater management measures such as diversion channels, grassed waterways, and drains around greenhouses and hoop houses. 4. Establish windbreaks or vegetative buffers around greenhouse infrastructure when appropriate. Actionable measures for water security for greenhouses and hoop houses: 1. Rainwater collection and storage systems. 2. Drip or micro-irrigation (as noted in existing narrative). 3. Water recycling /reuse systems, if applicable. 4. Measures to reduce dependence of unreliable water sources in times of drought. Actionable measures for greenhouse climate resiliency to address extreme temperatures and storm-related power outages to reduce the chance of crop loss: 1. Energy-efficient greenhouse equipment and lighting. 2. Improved insulation or thermal curtains. 3. Efficient heating/cooling systems including evaporative walls. 4. Automated environmental controls. 5. Support renewable energy systems. 6. Backup power generators.
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