



Maine Healthy Soils Program Soil Health Implementation Grant Questions and Answers Summary

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| Written Questions Deadline | March 3, 2026 no later than 12:00 noon, local time Submit all questions via online submission |
| Application Deadline | March 17, 2026 , no later than 12:00 noon, local time. To apply, visit our program webpage. |

The Question and Answer Summary below includes all questions asked and answered during the Information Session held on February 18, 2026 and all written questions submitted through the on-line form as of 3:30 p.m. on February 25, 2026.

- Where can I access materials and information for applying to this grant?
 - Instructions on how to apply are provided in the Request for Applications (RFA) document on the Maine Healthy Soils Program [website](#).
- Do I submit the application workbook as part of my application package?
 - NO. The application workbook is a tool to help you prepare your application package. You are REQUIRED to submit your application through the online form. The link for the online form is available on the first page of the Request for Applications (RFA) document available on the program website.
- Besides the online form, what are the other components of my application package?
 - All applicants are REQUIRED to submit at least a budget template and a farm map as supplemental documentation. Depending on what you are applying for, you may also need to submit vendor quotes, soil health tests, and soil health management plans.
- How do I know what supplemental documentation I need to submit?
 - Use the RFA and the application workbook to determine which documentation you need to submit.
- How do I submit supplemental documentation?
 - You must email supplemental documentation to matthew.boucher@maine.gov using the subject line ARDSHIG26 Supplemental Files – [YOUR FARM’S NAME].
- If I am offered grant funding, am I guaranteed to receive the amount I requested?
 - NO. You may be offered less funding depending on how many applications are selected for funding.
- How many applicants are you expecting this funding cycle?

- Last year we received 71 applications, this year we expect 75 – 100 applications.
- Is soil health testing the same as soil nutrient testing?
 - NO. While soil health testing includes some of the standard nutrient tests, it also includes evaluation of biological and physical properties. Please review Section 2B of the RFA to best understand what tests are required for your data to qualify as a soil health test.
- Is soil health testing required to be eligible to apply for this grant?
 - NO. If you have not completed soil health testing, you must include funds for soil health testing in your budget.
- Can soil be imported as part of a drainage project for grading.
 - YES. Soil imported to the farm site for the purpose of drainage or other earthwork is allowed. Importing soil to use for agricultural production is an unallowable expense.
- Do Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMP) count as soil health management plans?
 - NO. Submission of a CNMP or other extraneous documents may result in a reduced score for application completeness, per the RFA.
- My farm does 5 acres of mixed vegetables for CSA. For the farm map, do you want me to break up the annotations by field, or is it ok to provide a single annotation for the whole farmed area.
 - In this situation, break up the farmed area into management units. If you have 1 acre of high tunnels and 4 acres of open field, create two annotations, one for each. If different areas of open field are managed differently, add more annotations.
- I rotate my fields between pasture and hay, how should I label my map?
 - You may state on the map that all fields are rotated between pasture and hay, but mark what each field is currently being used for or will be used for in 2026.
- For equipment, I am going to search for used items, how should I include that in my budget?
 - You are highly encouraged to price out a new piece of equipment, given the chance that the used equipment will no longer be available when contracts are finalized. If you earn a grant award and find a cheaper option, you may work with the RFA coordinator to navigate that change. You may include in your application that you plan to search for a used piece of equipment. If a new piece of equipment exceeds the \$65k maximum, state that you intend to self-fund the rest of the purchase if you cannot find a used option. Make sure your budget does not exceed \$65k.
- If I am renting equipment multiple times throughout a season, but each rental is below \$2000, do I need to provide a vendor quote?
 - For rentals in a single season that will exceed \$2,000, you must provide a vendor quote, even if a single rental event is less than \$2,000.
- Do I need to include signed lease agreements in my application?
 - NO.
- I want to renovate a pasture, but to do so I would have to move my animals to my hay ground, forcing me to purchase hay. Would the purchase of hay be an eligible expense?
 - YES because this is a cost associated with resting and rehabbing a field.
- If we share fields with another farm, do we need to include how the other farm uses the fields as a secondary or tertiary use?

- NO, focus your application on your operation and your use of the land.
- Part of our plan for these funds is to increase the size of our pasture from 2 to 10 acres. Which number do we enter into the application for primary use of the farmland?
 - 2 acres, explain in your application that your goal is to expand it to 10.
- If my management units have different primary soil health constraints, how do I explain that in my application.
 - When selecting soil health constraints, your primary constraint should be the one that affects the most amount of your farmland. If a subset of your farmland faces a unique problem, that should be your secondary soil health constraint.
- If partial awards are offered, who determines how the funding is distributed.
 - If we offer you a partial award, we will work together during the contract preparation phase to ensure the funds are distributed across categories according to your needs.
- Do you have more details on working with an ag service provider to get a soil health management plan?
 - Soil health management plans are still relatively new, it is a service that the Maine Healthy Soils Program will eventually offer, but right now, your primary avenue for getting a management plan is through USDA – NRCS or a certified TSP. While it is required to submit if you have one, you are not scored negatively for not having one.
- How much should I budget for soil health testing if I have not completed MHSP soil health testing?
 - Roughly \$150 per sample.
- How many samples should I budget for for soil health testing?
 - Consider how many management units you have. For example, if you have 300 acres on 5 different soil types, I would consider 5 samples. If you have high tunnels and field vegetables, I would consider 2 samples.
- For silvopasture, are there certain practices that need to be implemented?
 - No, you can approach it in the way that works best for you and your operational needs.
- How should we navigate tariffs if importing a piece of equipment?
 - Include the cost of tariffs in your funding request. If the tariff fluctuates, we will have to address that in the contract.
- If I don't get an award, how can I get feedback to improve for next time?
 - Reviewer feedback is available upon request, you may email the RFA coordinator. I also offer 1 on 1 meetings that you can schedule on the MHSP website, and those can be used to discuss grant writing for future opportunities.
- Is there anywhere I can go to see previous projects?
 - The MHSP website has a list of awardees from 2025, but not project summaries at this time.
- I raise goats for dairy production. For my primary use, do I enter Pasture-Dairy or Pasture-Small Ruminants?
 - Pasture – Small Ruminants
- Can we cost-share a piece of equipment?

- If you are requesting funds for equipment that exceed the \$65k maximum, you should describe in you application how you intend to make up the difference.
- What type of contractor should I get a quote from for a drainage project?
 - Many contractors that do general earthwork would be able to provide drainage installation. I encourage you to call around in your area, and if ask for recommendations if your contacts do not do drainage projects.
- If I have poultry and sheep sharing the same acreage for my secondary and tertiary land use should I enter that number twice or put half in each?
 - Put half in each. For example, on a 2 acre pasture - If your secondary use is pasture-small ruminants and your tertiary use is pasture-poultry, and you follow the small ruminant with the poultry, then put 1A for your secondary and 1A for your tertiary.
- How would I categorize a cut-and-carry mulch system in the soil health practices listed on the application?
 - Green mulch
- I lease land to other farmers and I received a SHIG award last year, can the farmers leasing my land apply for SHIG this year?
 - YES, so long as they are a separate farm operation.
- I do not have Microsoft office and therefore cannot open the workbook or the budget template, what do I do?
 - You are able to open these files using Google Docs and Google Sheets. Be sure to save the Google sheet as a .xlsx file before submission. Google Sheets will not be accepted.
- We use a Farm Management System that has maps that we use throughout the season. These maps have a color coded legend for crops as well as a second list of the acres per field. Is this sufficient?
 - You may use these maps, make sure that your fields are outlined, and include the required annotation. If you grow mixed vegetables and the map breaks it down into finer categories than we request, please include the overarching category (mixed vegetables CSA, mixed vegetables wholesale, etc.) somewhere on the map.
- I don't yet see the questions/recording from the Information Session held on 2/18. Am I missing it?
 - While we will make every effort to update the Q&A and post it weekly, time constraints may not allow us to do so. A final Q&A summary will be posted by 3/10/2026.
- If poor drainage is our primary concern, should I select Soil Water Dynamics as my soil health constraint?
 - Soil water dynamics would be an appropriate constraint to select for poor drainage, though other constraints such as compaction can cause poor drainage, do your best to identify the cause behind the poor drainage and select what is most appropriate.