**STATE OF MAINE**

**Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry**



**RFA# 202212201**

**Maine Farms for the Future – Phase 2**

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| **Grant Coordinator** | *All communication regarding the RFP must be made through the RFP Coordinator identified below*.  **Name:** Alex Redfield **Title:** Farm Viability and Farmland Protection Specialist  **Contact Information:** [alexander.redfield@maine.gov](mailto:alexander.redfield@maine.gov) |
| **Submitted Questions Due** | *All questions must be received by the RFP Coordinator identified above by:*  **Date:** January 20, 2023, no later than 11:59 p.m., local time |
| **Application**  **Submission** | *Proposals must be received by the Division of Procurement Services by:*  **Submission Deadline:** February 6, 2023 no later than 11:59 p.m., local time.  *Proposals must be submitted electronically to the following address:*  **Electronic (e-mail) Submission Address:** [Proposals@maine.gov](mailto:Proposals@maine.gov) |

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**RFA TERMS/ACRONYMS and DEFINITIONS**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Term/Acronym** | **Definition** |
| **7-Year Farmland Protection Agreement (FPA):** | A written agreement between a farm selected to receive an investment support cash grant and the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, wherein the farm agrees to keep an area of farmland of no less than 5 acres in active agricultural use and to protect that land from non-agricultural development for a period of seven (7) years. |
| **Agricultural Products** | Means fresh, or to be processed, food, fiber, or horticultural products grown on the farm, with the intent that the product be sold or otherwise generate income. Agricultural products produced on the farm may include the growing and harvesting of some specialty forest products, such as firewood processing, but may not include the products of a business engaged primarily in the growing, harvesting or processing of trees for the purpose of producing pulp or other materials used in paper manufacturing or wood manufacturing. An agricultural product may also include aquacultural products, so long as they are raised on the farm. |
| **Applicant** | Farm Owner/Operator that is applying for Phase 1 Business Planning Assistance and is a private, for-profit company that is owned by individuals, partners or corporations, that grows or produces agricultural products for commercial sale (excluding marijuana farms, except as permitted under 7MRS Ch.406A, Section 2231) |
| **Business Plan** | A document that identifies changes in farm management practices and investments in equipment and property that would increase the profitability and net worth of the farm (vitality). A typical plan identifies ways to increase on-farm income through such methods as improved management practices, direct marketing, and value-added initiatives; and describes current operations and future plans for the business, including but not limited to sections on mission/vision, legal organization, management team, product descriptions, market research, market promotion, customer profiles, financial statements, financial analysis of planned changes in the business and long-term goals for the business. |
| **DACF** | Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry |
| **Department** | Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry |
| **FAME** | Finance Authority of Maine |
| **Farm Business** | Agricultural products grown or produced on the farm are being sold commercially and the farm has documentation of gross and net farm income, expenses, net worth and farm debt. |
| **FFF** | Maine Farms for the Future Program |
| **Grant Review Team** | A panel appointed by the DACF Commissioner to review applications and make grant funding recommendations to the Commissioner. |
| **Idea(s) for Change** | Ideas the Applicant proposed to research to improve Farm Vitality |
| **Land in Agricultural Use** | Land that is currently being used to grow agricultural, horticultural, and silvicultural products. |
| **RFA** | Request for Applications |
| **Selected Farm** | A farm that previously applied and was selected for Phase 1 between January 1, 2000 and March 31, 2022. |
| **State** | State of Maine |
| **Phase 1 Business Plan Development** | A grant awarded to conduct research on proposed Idea(s) for Change, that if found to be feasible are developed into a project or projects that are described in a written business plan. |
| **Phase 2 Investment Support – AMLF Loan Recommendation**  **Services Package:** | The Review Panel may recommend, and the Department may provide a selected applicant with a recommendation to apply for a reduced-interest (2%) loan from the Agricultural Marketing Loan Fund. If the total cost to implement the Business Plan is less than $100,000 then the reduced-interest loan may be up to 90% of that cost. If the total cost to implement the Business Plan is more than $100,000 then the reduced-interest loan may be up to 75% of that cost. In either case, the total amount of the reduced-interest loan may not exceed $250,000. The reduced- interest loan may be used as match for the cash grant. |
| **Phase 2 Investment Support – Cash Grant:** | The cash grant is for an amount not to exceed the lesser of $25,000 or 25% of the total investments identified by the Business Plan. Prior to the disbursement of cash grant funds, the Department may require the grantee to provide documented evidence of a proportionate amount of match equaling 75% of the total investments identified by the Business Plan. The match must be directly related to the implementation of the Business Plan and must have a real market value. Match may include, but is not limited to, in-kind labor and farm resources such as timber, sand, gravel or other natural resource materials used to implement the Business Plan; personal cash resources; loans, including a reduced-interest (2%) loan from the Agricultural Marketing Loan Fund; other grants; and other resources relevant to the Business Plan. |

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**Maine Farms for the Future – Phase 2**

**APPLICATION DETAILS AND INSTRUCTIONS**

1. **Purpose and Background**

The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (Department) is seeking applications for Phase 2 of the Maine Farms for the Future Program.

Applicants that were selected for Phase 1 were awarded a $6,000 grant to develop a detailed business plan to increase farm vitality; *the long-term, maintainable, farm profitability and net worth*.[[1]](#footnote-2)

Once the Phase 1 business plan has been completed the selected farm may compete for Phase 2 investment support to implement the project or projects described in the business plan. This RFA is the competitive selection of Phase 2 grant recipients.

1. **Eligibility to Submit Bids**

The applicant must have been selectedfor and awarded the Phase 1 business planning grant between November 2018 and March 2022.

If the applicant intends to secure the cash grant of no more than $25,000, the following eligibility requirements apply:

* + 1. The applicant has ownership of at least 5 acres of land that is in agricultural use at the time of application; and
    2. The applicant agrees to enter into a 7-year Farmland Protection Agreement with the Department.
    3. If the entirety of the applicant’s owned farmland is already permanently protected by a permanent agricultural conservation easement, then the farm may NOT apply for the cash grant. However, the applicant may apply for the recommendation for the 2% interest rate as described below.

If the applicant is seeking recommendation to receive a 2% interest rate on a loan issued through the Agricultural Marketing Loan Fund (AMLF) program, the applicant will be subject to all AMLF project eligibility and loan application requirements described on the following website : [Agricultural Marketing Loan Fund](http://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/grants/agricultural_marketing.shtml).

1. **Awards**

The Department anticipates making multiple awards as a result of this RFA process. The number and size of the awards will be determined based upon the number of applications received and the funding available.

1. **Title and Chapter**

All general instructions for submitting the applicable application are provided in this document in accordance with [the Department’s Program statute](http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/7/title7ch10-Bsec0.html) and [Rules 01-001 Chapter 36](https://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/01/chaps01.htm#001).

1. **Appeal of Contract Awards**

Any person aggrieved by the award decision that results from this Request for Applications may appeal the decision to the Director of the Bureau of General Services in the manner prescribed in 5 MRSA § 1825-E and 18-554 Code of Maine Rules, Chapter 120 (found here: [Chapter 120](https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/policies-procedures/chapter-120)).  The appeal must be in writing and filed with the Director of the Bureau of General Services, 9 State House Station, Augusta, Maine, 04333-0009 within 15 calendar days of receipt of notification of contract award.

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**KEY PROCESS EVENTS**

1. **Submitting Questions**

Any questions must be submitted by e-mail to the Grant Coordinator identified on the [Grant RFPs and RFAs webpage](https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/vendors/grants) by January 20, 2023 at 11:59 p.m. local time. Submitted Questions must include the subject line: **“RFA# 202212201 Questions”**. The Department assumes no liability for assuring accurate/complete/on time e-mail transmission and receipt.

1. **Question & Answer Summary**

Responses to all questions will be compiled in writing and posted on the following website: [Grant RFPs and RFAs](https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/vendors/grants). It is the responsibility of all interested parties to go to this website to obtain a copy of the Question & Answer Summary. Only those answers issued in writing on this website will be considered binding.

1. **Amendments to the Request for Applications**

All amendments (if any) released in regard to this Request for Applications will be posted on the following website: [Grant RFPs and RFAs](https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/vendors/grants). It is the responsibility of all interested parties to go to this website to obtain amendments. Only those amendments posted on this website are considered binding.

1. **Application Submission**
   1. **Applications Due**: Applications must be received by February 6, 2023 at 11:59 p.m. local time. Applications received after the 11:59 p.m. deadline will be ineligible for award consideration for that annual application enrollment period.
   2. **Submission Instructions**: Applications are to be submitted to the State of Maine Division of Procurement Services, via email, to [Proposals@maine.gov](mailto:Proposals@maine.gov).
      1. Only applications received by e-mail will be considered. The Department assumes no liability for assuring accurate/complete e-mail transmission and receipts.
      2. E-mails containing links to file sharing sites or online file repositories will not be accepted as submissions. Only e-mail applications that have the actual requested files attached will be accepted.
      3. Encrypted e-mails received which require opening attachments and logging into a proprietary system will not be accepted as submissions. Please check with your organization’s Information Technology team to ensure that your security settings will not encrypt your proposal submission.
      4. File size limits are 25MB per e-mail. Applicants may submit files separately across multiple e-mails, as necessary, due to file size concerns. All e-mails and files must be received by the due date and time listed above.
      5. Applicants are to insert the following into the subject line of their email submission: **“RFA# 202212201 Application Submission – [Applicant’s Name]”**
   3. **Submission Contents**
      1. Applications are to be submitted as two, typed, PDF files, as described below:
         1. **File 1 [Applicant’s Farm Name] – Application**
            1. Application Cover Page
            2. Debarment, Performance and Non-Collusion Certification
            3. Application (pages 13-15 of this RFA).
         2. **File 2 [Applicant’s Farm Name] – Business Plan**
            1. Completed business plan as described under “Business Plan” on Page 16 of this RFA.

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**APPLICATION EVALUATION AND SELECTION**

1. Scoring Weights and Process
   1. Scoring Weights: The score will be based on a 100-point scale and will measure the degree to which each application meets the following criteria.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Scoring Criteria** | **Maximum Points Available** |
| Completeness of Business Plan | 5 points |
| Management Capacity - *“Will you be able to implement your Idea for Change)?”*  The application and business plan demonstrate applicant’s knowledge, experience, and capacity to successfully plan, implement and manage the proposed changes to the farm business. | 20 points |
| Financial Capacity and Debt Management - *“Will the Idea(s) for Change improve your Business’ financial health? Are you ready to take this on?”*  The changes proposed in the business plan will improve the cash flow, and management of debt load needed to pay any new debt associated with the proposed changes to the farm business. | 10 points |
| Collateral and Asset Base – *“Can existing resources support this new direction?”*  The application and business plan demonstrate that the farm will improve the productivity of the land (soil quality, fertility, water holding capacity), the physical condition of the buildings and equipment, and maintain any newly acquired assets to increase the overall sustainability of the farm business. | 20 points |
| Farm Vitality & Development of New Capital – *“Will it work?”*  The Business Plan demonstrates, through better strategies, marketing, production efficiencies and upgrading of facilities and equipment, an increase in profitability and overall net worth that will improve the overall sustainability of the Farm Business. | 30 points |
| Other Conditions  (A) The Business Plan identifies how the current or proposed farm operations will accomplish broader conservation objectives such as protecting water quality, improving wildlife habitat, or maintaining open space and local scenic and cultural amenities as long as such practices enhance or maintain the profitability of the farm. (5 points)  (B) The percentage of the farmland owned by the applicant that is to be protected under the Farmland Protection Agreement. (5 points)  (C) The degree to which the change in the business is new and different to the business. (5 points) | 15 points |
| Total Points | 100 points |

* 1. Scoring Process: The Grant Review Team will use a consensus approach to evaluate and score all sections listed above. Members of the review team will not score those sections individually but, instead, will arrive at a consensus as to assignment of points for each of those sections.
  2. Regarding the proposed funds requested and the proposed work, the Grant Review Team will consider the degree to which the project represents a good return for the investment (money, time) as well as whether the project work and cost estimates (tasks & budget) are reasonable for the expected outcomes, along with the amount and quality of proposed matching funds or services.

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**APPLICATION COVER PAGE**

***Handwritten applications will not be accepted.***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Farmland Owner’s Name: | | Click or tap here to enter text. | | | |
| Farm Business Name: | | Click or tap here to enter text. | | | |
| Tel: | Click or tap here to enter text. | | E-mail: | Click or tap here to enter text. | |
| Physical Address: | | Click or tap here to enter text. | | | |
| Town: | | Click or tap here to enter text. | | | |
| Zip: | | Click or tap here to enter text. | | | |
| County: | | Click or tap here to enter text. | | | |
| Year Awarded FFF Phase 1 Grant | | | | | Choose an item. |

* No personnel currently employed by the Department or any other State agency participated, either directly or indirectly, in any activities relating to the preparation of the Applicant’s application.
* No attempt has been made, or will be made, by the Applicant to induce any other person or firm to submit or not to submit an application.
* The above-named organization is the legal entity entering into the resulting agreement with the Department should they be awarded a contract.
* The undersigned is authorized to enter contractual obligations on behalf of the above-named organization.

*To the best of my knowledge, all information provided in the enclosed application, both programmatic and financial, is complete and accurate at the time of submission.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name (Print):** Click or tap here to enter text. | **Title:** Click or tap here to enter text. |
| **Authorized Signature:** | **Date:** Click or tap here to enter text. |

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**DEBARMENT, PERFORMANCE and NON-COLLUSION CERTIFICATION**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Applicant’s Organization Name: | Click or tap here to enter text. |

*By signing this document, I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that the aforementioned organization, its principals and any subcontractors named in this proposal:*

1. *Are not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, and declared ineligible or voluntarily excluded from bidding or working on contracts issued by any governmental agency.*
2. *Have not within three years of submitting the proposal for this contract been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against them for:*
   1. *Fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a federal, state, or local government transaction or contract.*
   2. *Violating Federal or State antitrust statutes or committing embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, or receiving stolen property.*
3. *Are not presently indicted for or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity (Federal, State or Local) with commission of any of the offenses enumerated in paragraph (b) of this certification.*
4. *Have not within a three (3) year period preceding this proposal had one or more federal, state, or local government transactions terminated for cause or default*.
5. *Have not entered into a prior understanding, agreement, or connection with any corporation, firm, or person submitting a response for the same materials, supplies, equipment, or services and this proposal is in all respects fair and without collusion or fraud. The above-mentioned entities understand and agree that collusive bidding is a violation of state and federal law and can result in fines, prison sentences, and civil damage awards.*

Failure to provide this certification may result in the disqualification of the Applicant’s application, at the discretion of the Department.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name (Print):** Click or tap here to enter text. | **Title:** Click or tap here to enter text. |
| **Authorized Signature:** | **Date:** Click or tap here to enter text. |

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**APPLICATION**

The Applicant is asked to be brief and concise in providing written information required in the application.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **OVERVIEW**  In 40 words or less, please provide a brief description of your Farm Business and planned Phase 2 Project(s). | |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | |
| Duration of Project | |
| Start Date: Start Date | End Date: End Date |
| **Brief Statement of Need**  Why do you need to undertake this (these) Phase 2 Project(s)? | |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | |
| **Investment Support Options**  Please review the following three options for financial assistance and indicate your preference by checking the box next to your preferred option. | |
| ***Option 1 – the Cash Grant***  A grant for up to 25% of Project Cost by no greater than $25,000. Requires a match of 75% or more of the project cost. A farm selected to receive the cash grant must enter into a 7-year Farmland Protection Agreement with the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry - Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources.  ***Option 2 – the 2% interest rate if approved for AMLF Loan***  The AMLF loan program requires owner’s equity for 5% of total project cost.  See <http://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/grants/agricultural_marketing.shtml> and <https://www.famemaine.com/business/programs/agriculture-loans/agricultural-marketing-loan-fund/>. A farm does not need to enter into the Farmland Protection Agreement in order to qualify for the 2% interest rate on AMLF loans.  ***Option 3 – the Cash Grant AND the 2% interest rate if approved for AMLF Loan***  All of the above applies. | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Budget for Project(s)** | |
| **Total Project Cost** | **$** |
| **Cash Grant**  25% of total project cost and capped at $25,000 | **$** |
| **Total Match**  At least 75% of total project cost | **$** |
| **Summary of Match** | |
| Personal Funds | **$** |
| Loan 1 – Lender Name: | **$** |
| Loan 2 – Lender Name: | **$** |
| Other Grant 1  (i.e. USDA NRCS cost-sharing, SARE, REAP, etc.) | **$** |
| Other Grant 2 | **$** |
| In-Kind Labor – total to date | **$** |
| **OFF FARM INCOME**  Describe any off-farm income from other employment or services that might be used to fund the implementation of the project(s) described in the business plan. | |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **IMPACT** | | | |
| **Acres of Farmland to be Protected**  If awarded, the Applicant must sign a 7-year Farmland Protection Agreement with the Department. Though this Agreement is not recorded in the Registry of Deeds, it is binding between the Applicant and the Department. | | | |
| **If awarded, I/we will protect** | | **# acres** | **by signing the 7-year non-development agreement.** |
| **Number of Jobs**  Upon completion of the project(s), I/we anticipate that there will be: | | | |
| # | Family members working full-time for the farm business | | |
| # | Family members working part-time for the farm business | | |
| # | Non-family employees working full-time for the farm business | | |
| # | Non-family employees working part-time for the farm business | | |
| **Environmental Benefits**  Briefly describe any positive impacts your plan and resulting project(s) will have on soil, water, and air quality and/or plant/animal habitat. | | | |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | | | |
| **Other Agricultural Sector Benefits**  Briefly describe how the plan contributes to local or regional agricultural infrastructure. | | | |
| Click or tap here to enter text. | | | |

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| **CURRENT AND FUTURE PROGRAM OBLIGATIONS** |
| ***If you are awarded OPTION 1 (cash grant) or OPTION 3 (grant and recommended for the 2% interest rate) you will be required to:***   * Sign the 7-year Farmland Protection Agreement for the acres for the years 2023 through 2030. * Provide annual data regarding farm business income, production, land, jobs, environmental and agricultural sector impacts for 2023, 2024 and 2025. Due: May 1, 2024, 2025, 2026. \*   ***If you are recommended for the 2% interest rate (OPTION 2) you will be required to****:*   * Provide annual data regarding farm business income, production, land, jobs, environmental and ag sector impacts for 2023, 2024 and 2025. Due: May 1, 2024, 2025, 2026.   *\*The Department will keep all such individual information confidential, aggregated to track Program efficacy and to share program reports to the Administration & Legislature.*  **By signing below, you acknowledge that you, the Applicant, understands and agrees to these requirements and verifies that the information presented in this application and farm business plan is true.**   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Authorized Signature:** | **Date:** Click or tap here to enter text. | | **Authorized Signature:** | **Date:** Click or tap here to enter text. | |

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**BUSINESS PLAN**

Applicants must include a complete business plan with their application materials, utilizing the “Business Plan Template for 2021 Phase 2 Applicants” found at this this [webpage](https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/business_and_market_development/farms_for_future/index.shtml).

The business plan must include all evidence of match accrued to date. The match must equal or exceed 75% of the total cost of the project(s) described in the business plan before the cash grant will be awarded. Such evidence of match includes:

1. Bank Statements to show personal cash resources;
2. Promissory Notes or Closing Statements for loans;
3. Award Letters and/or Contracts for other grants;
4. Proof of payment (receipts) for purchased Materials for work on the project(s) that was completed during the Phase 1 contract period. A sample Purchased Materials Log can be found [on](https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/business_and_market_development/farms_for_future/index.shtm) the Maine Farms for the Future Webpage: [Maine Farms for the Future](https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/business_and_market_development/farms_for_future/index.shtml).
5. Proof of payment to Hired Labor for any work done on the project(s) during the Phase 1 contract period (invoices or cancelled checks). A sample Hired Labor Log can be found on the Maine Farms for the Future Webpage: [Maine Farms for the Future](https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/business_and_market_development/farms_for_future/index.shtml);
6. Proof of value for In-kind Labor listing dates, tasks, and hours worked at $25/hr for work completed during the Phase 1 contract period. A sample In-Kind Labor Log can be found on the Maine Farms for the Future webpage: [Maine Farms for the Future](https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/business_and_market_development/farms_for_future/index.shtml).
7. Proof of value for In-kind Materials such as timber, lumber, sand, gravel or other natural resource materials that are harvested or mined on the farm valued at the fair market value for a comparable product sawn logs, milled lumber, yards of gravel, etc. A sample In-kind Materials Log can be found on the Maine Farms for the Future webpage: [Maine Farms for the Future](https://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/business_and_market_development/farms_for_future/index.shtml).

1. [Chapter 36: Rules for Governing the Maine Farms for the Future Program, Section 1. Definitions.](https://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/01/001/001c036.doc) Pg 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)