



Brighter
Future Fund

by American Farmland Trust

**American Farmland Trust and Virginia Soil Health Coalition
Regenerate Virginia 2026 Healthy Soils Grants Program
Guidelines**

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Healthy Soils Grant Program (the Program) is to make the pursuit of soil health more accessible for producers and land managers across the commonwealth of Virginia. The Program encourages partners and producers to pilot innovative and impactful ideas— at the field level, the classroom level, or the market level. The Program is designed to support the ongoing efforts of producers and partners while fostering innovation and enhanced education and outreach.

Taking a “complete, not compete” partnership-based approach, the Program seeks to fund ideas via grants up to \$30,000 for an individual farmer or up to \$50,000 for a group of farmers, that innovatively fill gaps and address barriers to adoption of soil health-building systems while incentivizing the adoption of practices and transformation of systems that go above and beyond current standards. The Program aims to support farmers and ideas that are ineligible for other programs.

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

The following are eligible applicants:

- Individual farmers operating in Virginia, including nonprofit or for-profit farms who have not previously been awarded a Regenerate Virginia Healthy Soils grant.
- Groups of farmers, including producer associations
- Eligible costs include farm labor (excluding payroll & salaries); equipment purchase or rental; farm inputs and operating costs, including insurance; payments to technical service providers, consultants, or advisors; infrastructure; purchase of livestock, seeds, or plants; etc.

Projects must:

- Be entirely located in Virginia
- Address one or more of the principles of soil health, ideally through an innovative or holistic systems approach (see examples below for inspiration)
- Include an educational/outreach component (e.g. field day, case study, social media output, etc.)
- Include a description of the way soil health will be assessed

- Have a project completion date of no more than 2 years from the time of receipt of funds.
 - Applicants will select a one- or two-year grant period at the time of application. The grant period starts at the time of agreement; however, the period of performance refers to the time from initial award fund receipt to the due date of the final report, 365 days or 730 days respectively. Awardees may choose to start work after the agreement is signed, but are not required to until the first installment is received.
- Be willing to share findings and results, including possibly collaborating with AFT or Virginia Soil Health Coalition partners to collect and analyze relevant data.

Applications will be evaluated based on the following:

- The viability of their concept
 - The degree to which the project addresses the principles of soil health
 - The communications and outreach plan
 - Evidence of farmer commitment (examples could include a history of experimenting with soil health practices; previous participation in soil health educational trainings, field days, or opportunities; matching funds in the form of cash or labor outlays committed to the project by the farmer(s); description of how the project will be sustained long-term; or discussion of the way this healthy soils project meets the overall goals of the farm business)
- ❖ Note: Farm size is not a consideration for project selection. There are no minimum or maximum acreage requirements

A COMMITMENT TO FARMERS

AFT is committed to supporting opportunities for all in agriculture. This grant program will prioritize support to farmers who have experienced barriers to capital and other resources. We encourage Virginia farmers from all backgrounds to apply, including those from the following groups:

- Beginning farmers
- Limited-resource farmers
- Farmers of color
- Women farmers
- Veterans
- LGBTQ+ farmers
- Farmers with disabilities

Priority funding will be allocated to proposals that:

- Include a system of practices that work in combination to achieve synergistic outcomes
- Go beyond practices that are eligible for traditional cost-share opportunities, either because they are more experimental or innovative or because they take a holistic approach that combines several practices

- Engage local conservation practitioners including Soil and Water Conservation District staff, extension agents, NRCS practitioners, nonprofit partners, etc. either in implementation or outreach and education

ALLOWABLE use of funds includes but is not limited to:

- A silvopasture system for pastured livestock
- Cover crop and nutrient reduction trials
- Hedgerows or riparian buffers that incorporate income-generating crops
- Innovative crop rotation to improve soil health, including adding a new crop into an established rotation
- Mulching or cut and carry systems
- Building soil health on an urban farm through the addition of compost
- Integrating perennial crops into annual cropping systems
- Integrating livestock into an annual cropping system
- Building soil health as a climate resilience strategy
- Agroforestry

HOW TO APPLY

To apply, farmers should submit a completed Regenerate Virginia Healthy Soils Grant Application to AFT by the due date of December 19, 2025. Applications must be submitted electronically through the link on our webpage available December 1.

TIMELINE & AWARD PROCESS

Applications will be accepted from December 1 through December 19, 2025, and grant recipients will be announced in early 2026. Applicants will be required to select a one year or a two year grant period at the time of application.

- Grant recipients will receive written notification via email. The award notification email will detail the approved timeline and process for payment based on the individual project.
- Funding is contingent on the awardee completing a Grant Award Agreement form and submitting it, along with other requested information, within 7 days of being notified of the award. Announcement of the award and other communication will be conducted via email and online. Failure to respond by the stated deadline could result in loss of award funds.
- Grant Disbursement Schedule:
 - The first 75% of the total awarded amount will be disbursed to the award recipient approximately 90 days after receipt of a signed award agreement via the online grant portal.
 - Applicants will select a one- or two-year grant period at the time of application. The grant period starts at the time of agreement; however, the period of performance refers to the time from initial award fund receipt to the due date of the final report, 365 days or 730 days respectively. Awardees may choose to start work after the agreement is signed, but are not required to until the first installment is received.

- Final reports are due to AFT 365 days following receipt of award funds **or** 730 days following receipt of award funds depending on the pre-selected grant period.
 - Awardees will receive a link via email to complete the final report in the Survey Monkey Apply portal 3 months prior to the close of their grant period.
 - Remaining 25% payments will be issued approximately 90 days after the close of the grant cycle on the condition that all deliverables are met and reporting is submitted.
 - Note: This schedule is fixed and cannot be modified.
- AFT will require the awardee to provide its SSN/EIN/TIN to fulfill AFT's obligation to report grant activities on its annual report to the IRS. The name on your application must match the name on the SSN/EIN/TIN number that you intend to provide.

AWARD FORM CHECKLIST

If chosen to receive an award, AFT will require:

- Current photo representing yourself and your farm
- A brief summary regarding the planned use of the funds and results you expect to achieve with the assistance of the funds.
- A statement agreeing to complete a brief final report and interview by AFT upon completion of the project. We will share selected projects via social media and promotional materials for farmers who opt-in. While sharing stories is a priority for AFT, we understand there may be reasons for discretion and will honor those instances. Participation in public-facing stories will not affect the applicant's receipt of funding.

REPORTING

- Reporting requirements will include semi-annual check-ins by phone or email with Program staff as well as a one-page final report.
- Communications and outreach efforts will also serve as project reporting.
- Additional reporting requirements may be requested for specific types of projects (e.g. on-farm research).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- The Regenerate Virginia Healthy Soils Grants have been established by AFT to provide support to awardees who need financial assistance to undertake proposed activities that further AFT's charitable purposes. These grants are motivated by charitable intent. AFT however does not make any representation as to the tax consequences of any award, if any.
- AFT shall have no obligation to disburse amounts in excess of the approved grant, for services not completed, or goods or services not approved by AFT. Any expenses that exceed the grant maximum amount are the responsibility of the awardee.
- Expenses incurred prior to receiving a fully executed grant award agreement will not be reimbursable by the grant.

- Any unspent grant funds may be dedicated towards further services for the applicant, pending written AFT approval.

QUESTIONS

- Visit our website for more details: Farmland.org/grants
- If you have questions or need additional assistance completing your application, please contact Amanda Cather, Mid-Atlantic Deputy Director, at (202) 387-1244 or acather@farmland.org.
- If you are interested in attending an online Q&A session about this grant, please sign-up by clicking on the link(s) below:

REGISTER TO ATTEND A LIVE Q&A SESSION:

[Wed. November 19th, 7-8pm](#)

[Mon. December 1st, 1-2pm](#)

[Mon. December 15th, 7-8pm](#)

A Note on Language

We encourage you to be thoughtful and diligent in completing your application, but we will not evaluate applications by grammar or writing style. Complete the questions to the best of your ability and take advantage of the narrative questions to describe your farm, your personal and professional goals, and the challenges you face in reaching them. Feel free to write in whatever style or language feels truest and most comfortable to you.

If desired, assistance in identifying the appropriate consultant for your individual needs, and drafting a budget, can be provided. Please note in your application if this would be beneficial to you.

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