

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

GRANT PROGRAM FOR COUNTIES TO DEVELOP OR UPDATE AGRICULTURAL AND FARMLAND PROTECTION PLANS

The following questions are frequently asked:

1. Q: Who is eligible for grant funding?

A: Any county is eligible to submit an application for funding provided that the county has established an agricultural and farmland protection board and either 1) has not already prepared an agricultural and farmland protection plan or 2) has an approved farmland protection plan that was approved by the commissioner no less than one hundred twenty months (10 years) prior to submitting an application for funding under the RFA.

2. Q: What is the deadline for submitting the grant application to the Department of Agriculture?

A: No deadline exists. Grants will be funded on a first come first served basis until funding available for FY2008-2009 has been awarded. If available funding for projects is exhausted in the current fiscal year, complete applications will be held in order of receipt by the Department for award in the next fiscal year, subject to the availability of funds.

3. Q: What kind of response should be submitted to the Department?

A: Applicants need to respond by completing Application Form A (Narrative and Scope of Work) including developing

a work plan for the required work tasks and filling out the Budget Form B-1 (Proposed Project Budget) and B-2 (Budget Summary).

4. Q. Will a county resolution be required for submitting the application?

A: Yes. The authorizing resolution to submit the grant application must be signed by the chief elected official, or the Legislative Chair of the governing body.

5. Q. If the county intends to hire a consultant to develop or update the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan must the consultant be hired at the time of application submission?

A. No. The County does not have to hire the consultant prior to a grant award. The County may want to identify who they are considering to do the plan if they obtain an award and detail their experience in developing agricultural protection plans. It is important to note that costs incurred prior to the approval of a contract by the Department shall not be eligible for reimbursement or be eligible as an in-kind contribution.

6. Q. Please provide examples of activities that are eligible for grant funding. (see Scope of Work in the RFA)

A. Activities, programs or strategies intended to promote continued agricultural use in the community are eligible for funding. Examples include but are not limited to the following:

Counties may develop or revise the agricultural sections of any County Master plan to insure that County planning documents contain clear language and explicit policies that are supportive of the local agricultural industry.

Please see American Farmland Trust's "Guide to Local Planning for Agriculture in New York" for a detailed review of options and planning techniques to protect agriculture. Counties may evaluate existing municipal land use regulations and provide guidance, and advice to local municipalities regarding techniques to protect agriculture. They may conduct a build out analysis for selected regions of the county to demonstrate the impact of planned infrastructure improvements (such as new roadways, proposed sewer and water lines) on local agriculture.

Counties are encouraged to survey farmers and citizens to identify agricultural and farmland protection issues and needs. Public participation programs are important and are eligible for funding and this effort should include activities that involve area farmers, the public, members of the county agricultural protection board and local and county officials.

Counties may develop GIS maps or other mapping techniques to identify and overlay: prime agricultural soils, active farms by type, Agricultural Districts, and zoning within farm areas. Farms that are proposed to be protected should be identified.

7. Q. Are there reports or guides that may help county planners in developing ideas that may be helpful in formulating an approach to this planning grant?

A. Yes. Prior to grant submission, applicants may want to obtain a copy of the "Guide to Local Planning for Agriculture in New York" published by the American Farmland Trust. Information contained in the Guide may assist county planners in formulating a work plan tailored specifically to

agricultural and farmland protection needs of their community.

8. Q. Can you explain the basic match requirement for this grant program?

A. The match requirement for this program is 50% funding from the State and 50% funding from the applicant. The maximum amount of funds any one county may receive is \$50,000. For example, to receive the full \$50,000 state award the proposed planning project would have a total cost of \$100,000. In this example, the minimum local cash match contribution must be 20% of the \$50,000 or \$10,000 in cash. The remaining 80% of the local contribution is \$40,000 of in-kind services. Two eligible counties may submit a joint application and receive \$100,000 in maximum state funding.

9. Q. How should the cash match be documented?

A. An applicant should identify the cash match by resolution or in a letter from an authorized county official obligating the cash match. Please attached cash match documentation to the application.

10. Q. Does the county have to request the entire \$50,000 in state assistance funds?

A. No.

11. Q. What type of activities can be covered by the in-kind match?

A. The in-kind match contribution may cover such costs as secretarial services by county personnel, printing costs associated with the project, costs of supplies, costs of

preparing and sending communications, setting up public meetings, county planning staff, GIS map development, county office of real property, county attorney, Cornell Cooperative Extension staff and the Soil and Water District staff, etc. Application form B-1 (Proposed Project Budget) regarding the applicant match column, which separates the applicant match into a cash column and an in-kind column.

- 11.Q. How would a county go about identifying or locating farmland or agricultural areas proposed for protection as identified within AML Circular 1500 Article 25 AAA under section 324, "...plans shall include but not limited to: a) the location of any lands or areas proposed to be protected. " This required task may be addressed in the scope of work in various ways and the following is one possible approach.

Activity #1) Review New York Agricultural District maps and reports for farmland areas within the county; identify important farmland outside the Agricultural District. Develop a county wide overlay map identifying prime agricultural soils and soils of state wide importance. Overlay maps of sewer lines and water lines.

Activity #2) Develop summary report and master map of farmland and prime soils within the county; identify blocks of farmland to be protected.

Activity #3) Review master map of farmland proposed to be protected with farmers and the public, adjust as needed.

End Product: Develop a summary report and map(s) of farmland and agricultural areas proposed to be protected.

12. Q. If two eligible counties intend to make a joint application, how should they go about submitting application information to the Department?

A. Two eligible counties may jointly apply to the State for funding for a total maximum state funding award of \$100,000. A joint application should be formally approved by each County through an inter-county agreement. The agreement must address such key issues as work task responsibilities, financial contribution of local match responsibilities including cash match, lead agent and a principal contact person for each municipality, public hearing arrangements, plan approval process, dispute resolution, and process of termination of agreement, etc. A resolution authorizing the submission of the application must be signed by the chief elected official of each county's legislative body.

13. Q. What is the duration of the project?

A. Proposed projects should be completed within 18 months from the date of the Commissioner's award letter.

14. Q. Our County has selected the chair of the county planning board to head up the advisory committee to oversee the development of the agricultural and farmland protection plan. This is a volunteer position, but can the time this person spends on plan development be counted as part of the in-kind match?

A. Volunteer services will not be accepted as part of the match.

15. Q. Are indirect and overhead charges acceptable as part of the municipal match?

A. Both indirect and overhead charges will not be accepted as part of the county match.