

NH Conservation Districts Climate Resilience Grant

I. Introduction

The NH County Conservation Districts have launched this farm viability program to improve the resilience of NH farms in the face of extreme weather events and a changing climate. Direct grants to farms to invest in on-farm infrastructure, equipment, and innovative practices will support farm profitability and the long-term viability for NH's agricultural sector.

The mission of the NH Conservation Districts Climate Resilience Grant is to support and empower local farmers to build climate resilience throughout the granite state. This will be done through reducing the impact of agriculture on climate change (mitigation) through greenhouse gas emissions reduction and carbon sequestration, and to increasing the resiliency of New Hampshire Farms in a changing climate (adaptation), while meeting farm's conservation goals and needs. Extreme weather events, frequent and prolonged droughts, and increased pest pressures are increasing challenges for NH farms. This grant through the NH County Conservation Districts seeks to support farmers in meeting those challenges.

This grant program was designed with a high level of farmer input to ensure the most pressing needs of farms will be met. The NH Conservation Districts have also worked in close partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and other conservation partners to ensure that this statewide program fills the gaps that are not being adequately met by federal funds. Funds are available for projects that mitigate the impact of agriculture on climate change and enhance the on-farm adaptations to projected climate conditions. Preference will be given to projects that can demonstrate strong potential in mitigation and adaptation.

Learn more about the risks of climate change in NH, here:

- <https://statesatrisk.org/new-hampshire/all>
- <https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-09/documents/climate-change-nh.pdf>
- <https://www.nhpr.org/nh-news/2021-08-12/un-climate-change-report-new-hampshire>
- <https://interactive-atlas.ipcc.ch/>

II. Eligible Projects

The NH County Conservation Districts request proposals from farms who seek funding to make investments in the following areas, but welcome proposals for projects that are not represented on the list below if they are aligned with the mission and goals of the program:

- Practices which promote minimizing soil erosion and maximizing carbon capture:
 - Cover Cropping
 - Transitioning to reduced/no-tillage
 - Mulching
 - Wind breaks/buffers
 - Equipment and materials to promote healthy soil practices (ex. Silage tarps,, roller/crimper, low or no-till implements).
 - Transitioning to rotational grazing and grass based systems (fencing)
 - Crop rotation
 - Fixing gullies on fields, stopping further soil loss
 - Soil nutrient management
 - Soil testing
 - Soil carbon monitoring and testing
 - Soil sensors

- Practices which promote sustainable water management:
 - Waste/Manure storage and management
 - Run-off capture and re-use
 - Riparian pollinator buffers and plantings
 - Efficient irrigation systems
 - Efficient Well systems
 - Water sensors

- Integrated Pest Management Practices (IPM)
 - Fruit and Vegetable Netting

- Weather stations and sensors
- Climate batteries

The following will be funded:

- Practice implementation costs
- Materials costs
- Architectural, land planning, and/or engineering services
- Other direct expenses
- Equipment (All equipment purchased through grant funds must be new and under product warranty or, in the case where this is not possible, the equipment must have a lifespan that justifies the investment)
- Technical assistance
- Consultant and legal services

The following will not be funded:

- Advertising
- Research and feasibility studies
- Efforts that will not lead to increased climate resiliency through adaptation and/or mitigation
- Experimental projects
- This grant round funding is not available for renewable energy and energy efficiency projects, but the NH Conservation Districts hope to offer funding for these projects in the future. If this type of project is of interest, please contact your local conservation district. Demonstrated interest is crucial in securing grant dollars to fund these projects!

Priority will be given to projects/practices that:

- Focus on climate change mitigation or adaptation
- Follow application guidelines
- Have a detailed plan for project implementation, education, long-term maintenance, and sustainability
- Are scientifically supported by NRCS, UNH Extension, and NHACD
- Have a strong track record of success
- Provide opportunities to partner with their local conservation district to offer community education, and share their project story or testimonial through conservation district publications and/or social media
- Provide opportunities to partner with their local conservation district, NHACD, and partner organizations to monitor their projects, and assess project implementation and results for future programming and research.

III. Eligible Applicants & Sites

A. Eligible Applicants

Farms in New Hampshire. Eligible farms must be selling direct to consumer, or through wholesale markets for at least two years. Eligible farms must have secure access (own, lease) to land on which the operator is farming. If leasing, the lease must be in writing, and have a term long enough for the farmer to complete the proposed improvement project and see a return on the investment. To receive funding a farm must operate in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

B. Eligible Sites

Projects will need the signed consent and approval of the appropriate governing body or landowner(s).

IV. Program Funding and Project Duration

A. Funding Availability

Due to 2022 being the pilot year of the grant program, funding is limited to \$50,000 among the 10 NH Conservation Districts (\$5,000 for each district).

The grant will provide a cost share program for farms – grant covers up to 75% of project costs not to exceed \$5,000/farm.

To better understand the needs of NH farmers in regards to climate change resiliency, and to secure further funding for this program, we welcome any and all interested applicants to apply with the understanding that this year’s grant awardees will be limited. Please note that the 2023 grant round will be able to offer funding to more applicants. Applicants who apply for the pilot in 2022 will have the benefit of receiving feedback on applications with an opportunity to make improvements and reapply for the 2023 funding round that we anticipate opening in November 2022.

Program administrators reserve the right to offer funding to selected projects at an amount less than requested in the application budget. Program administrators also reserve the right to deny funding to applicants that do not propose a strong project. Remaining funding, if any, will be made available in future grant rounds.

Program participants must provide receipts verifying expenditures have occurred within the contract period. Relevant costs incurred prior to contract execution can be funded on a case-by-case basis, and require a waiver, reasonable explanation, and approval from district staff for reimbursement. Contact your district’s staff for more information.

B. Project Timeframe

Project must be completed and final report submitted by December 31, 2023

C. Timeframe: Grant Award Funding Decisions and Allocations

Process	Approximate Time Frame
1. RFP is available.	June 1, 2022
2. Optional Informational Session & one-on-one Conservation District Assistance available	June 8, 2022 at 7:00PM
2. Proposals are due.	July 29, 2022

3. Proposal review process. Applicants may be contacted for additional information to clarify the project.	August 1-September 1, 2022
4. All Applicants are notified of funding decision.	By September 1, 2022
5. Project ends and report and photos are due.	December 31, 2023

- o No payment will be made for project costs incurred prior to notification of grant award.

V. Application Submittal Procedure

The proposal can be submitted digitally or by hard copy in the mail. Applications must be postmarked by the due date.

A. Proposals Mailed to:

BCCD

64 Court Street

Laconia, NH 03246

Or email to:

belknapconservation@gmail.com

Proposal Due Date: July 29, 2022

VI. Grant Funding and Information Required for Funded Applications

A. Successful Applicants – Grantees - will be required to submit the following additional information upon notification of award:

1. Alternate W-9 (form provided by Belknap CCD).
2. Signed contract (provided by Belknap CCD)
3. Contracts of subcontractors if applicable. Subcontractors must be reputable and insured.
4. Liability insurance waiver

VI. Project Monitoring

A. 50% of payment for the project will be made upfront, with the remaining 50% made upon the completion of the project and submission of the final report. 75% of project costs can be made available at the start of the project upon request with reasonable justification.

B. Grantees are required to submit a final project report in a digital format. A template will be provided. The final project report shall document the completion of project tasks and the results attained, include documentation of all expenses, contain before and after photos, as jpg files, of the project as applicable, and share a testimonial from the farm owner and/or manager on the benefits the financial assistance from the climate grant fund provided.