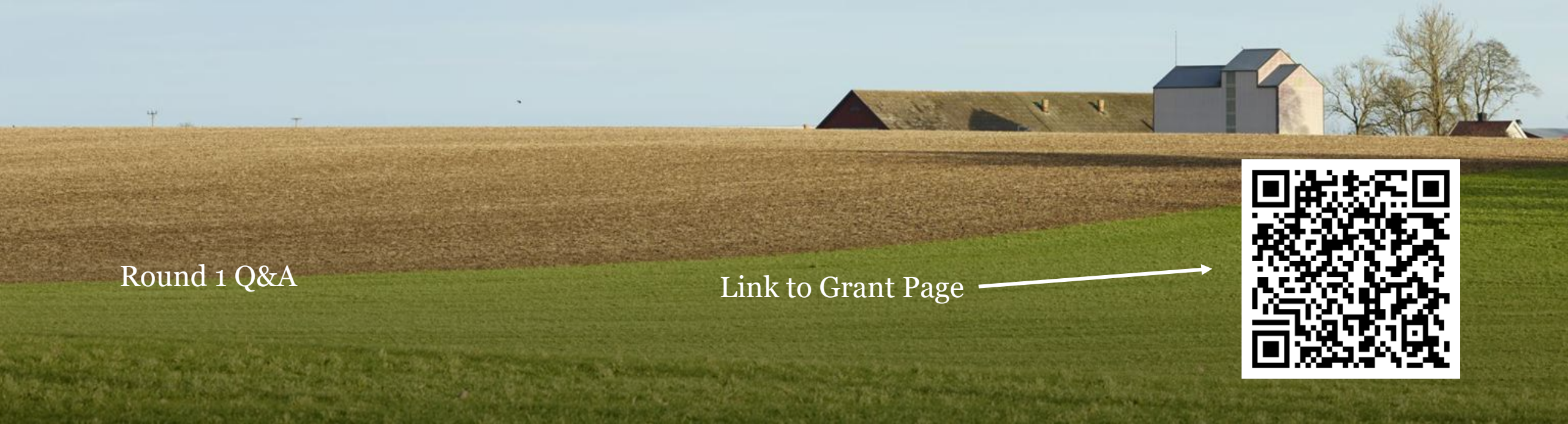
Ag and Farmland Protection Reserve Fund

MONTGOMERY COUNTY NY
Soil & Water Conservation District



Round 1 Q&A

Link to Grant Page

Purpose

- Clarify RFA requirements and eligibility
- Explain the application and scoring process
- Reduce common application errors
- Ensure consistent understanding for all applicants
- This session does NOT change or override the RFA

Program Overview

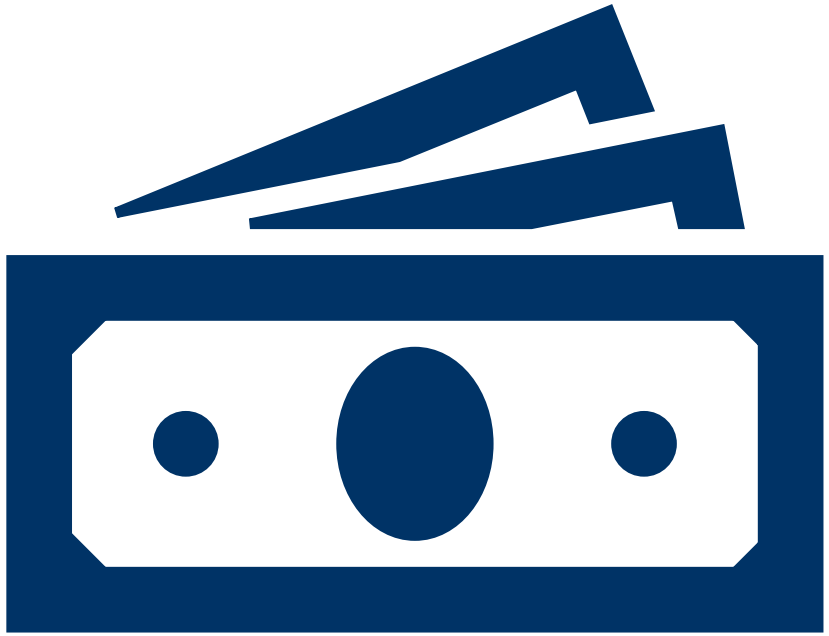
- Competitive farmland protection grant program
- Administered by Montgomery County SWCD
- Funded through County Legislature Resolution 260 (2025) and 104 (2026)
- Supports agricultural viability and farmland preservation
- Focus: preventing farmland conversion and fragmentation

Funding Structure

- SWCD may fund full or partial requests

Cost Share Requirement

- Minimum 10% applicant match required
- Match may be:
  - Cash contribution
  - Verifiable in-kind services
- Must be documented and eligible
- Match is required for reimbursement



Eligible Applicants

- Applicants must:
  - Operate a farm in Montgomery County
  - File IRS Schedule F
  - Meet Ag & Markets Law farm definition
  - 2/3 income from farm OR ½ - 2/3 AND showing growth
  - AGI under $900,000
  - Be actively farming at the time of application

Ineligible Costs

- Not eligible:
  - Land acquisition
  - Pre-contract expenses (unless authorized)
  - General farm operating expenses
  - Costs not tied directly to project scope
  - Any non-compliant expenditures under law

Eligible Project Types

Marketing:

- Branding
- Websites
- Outreach
- Direct-to-consumer sales

Value-Added Agriculture:

- Processing
- Packaging
- Storage
- Equipment

Implementation:

- Infrastructure
- Equipment
- Conservation practices
- Efficiency and farm viability improvements

Project Work Plan Requirement

Must include:

- Clear scope of work
- Tasks and deliverables
- Timeline (within July 1–Dec 31, 2026)
- Responsible parties
- Demonstrated readiness

Weak work plans = lower feasibility scores

Evaluation Criteria (100 Points Total)

Farmland & Local Agricultural Impact – 50 pts

Farmland protection impact
Farm viability & profitability
Market access / revenue growth
Local agricultural economy impact

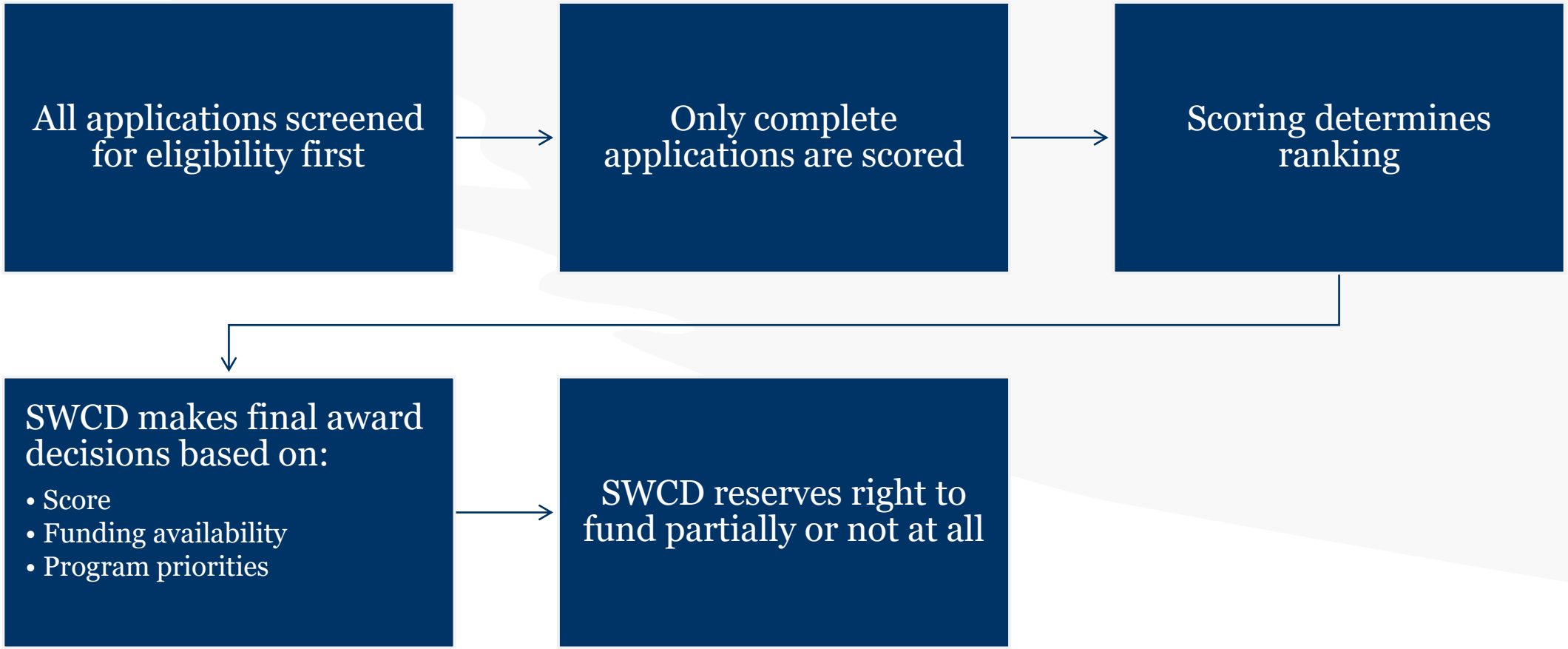
Feasibility, Capacity & Cost Effectiveness – 35 pts

Work plan quality
Applicant experience
Cost justification

Environmental & Agricultural Benefits – 15 pts

Soil / water benefits
Conservation practices
Efficiency / resilience

Award Decision Process



Procurement Rules

$20,000+: competitive bidding required

$5,000–$10,000: 3 written quotes required

Under $5,000: best value required (documented judgment)

Reimbursement Process

Payments are reimbursement-only

No advance payments

Must submit:

- Invoice
- Proof of payment
- Vendor info
- Work documentation

Incomplete documentation delays payment

Project Timeline

April 14, 2026
- Applications Released

April 27, 2026
- Formal Q&A Session

May 15, 2026
- Deadline for Questions

May 20, 2026
- Final Questions and Answers Posted

June 1, 2026 (4:00 PM)
- Applications due

July 1, 2026
- Awards announced
- Earliest start

December 31, 2026
- Completion deadline
- No extensions unless formally approved

Common Application Mistakes

Missing Schedule F or tax documents

Weak or incomplete work plans

Overstated or undocumented match

Including ineligible costs

Not demonstrating farm eligibility clearly

Q&A Guidance

All questions must be submitted in writing for official record

Answers provided here are interpretive, not program changes

Final authority: written RFA document

Clarifications will be posted May 20, 2026

Closing

- SWCD encourages strong, complete applications
- Technical assistance available prior to June 1 deadline
- Program is competitive and scoring-driven
- Goal: strengthen long-term agricultural viability in Montgomery County

Frequently asked questions

Will my project qualify / is this eligible?	We can't determine eligibility in advance. Applications are reviewed based on the full submission against the criteria in Section 1.5 and the project requirements. I'd encourage you to make sure your application clearly demonstrates how it meets those.
What kinds of projects are you really looking to fund?	Projects that score well clearly demonstrate strong agricultural impact, are feasible within the timeline, and show clear benefits to farm viability or resource conservation. I'd recommend aligning closely with the evaluation criteria in Section 4.2.
Can I include [specific cost]?	Costs must be directly related to the project and fall under eligible costs in Section 2.4. General operating expenses or costs not tied specifically to the project would not be eligible under Section 2.5.
How does the match work / can I use in-kind?	Yes, match can be cash or verifiable in-kind. The key is that it must be directly related to the project and properly documented with a reasonable value.
When can I start / can I start now?	No. Costs incurred before contract execution are not eligible unless expressly authorized. The earliest project start date is July 1.

Q&A