



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY SOIL AND WATER
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

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FARMLAND PROTECTION RESERVE FUND

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA) 2026 FUNDING ROUND

IMPORTANT DATES

MILESTONE	DATE
RFA RELEASE	April 2026
PUBLIC MEETING	April 27, 2026
DEADLINE FOR QUESTIONS	May 15, 2026
FINAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS POSTED	May 20, 2026
APPLICATION DEADLINE	June 1, 2026 (4:00 PM EST)
AWARD ANNOUNCEMENTS	July 1, 2026
EARLIEST PROJECT START DATE	July 1, 2026
PROJECT COMPLETION DEADLINE	December 31, 2026

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY

The Farmland Protection Reserve Fund (the “Fund”) was reestablished by the Montgomery County Legislature pursuant to Resolution No. 260 of 2025 and subsequently amended by Resolution No. 104 of 2026. The Fund was created to support the continued viability of agriculture and to address increasing pressures on farmland within Montgomery County, including conversion to non-agricultural uses.

The Montgomery County Legislature has authorized the use of this Fund to provide financial assistance to farmers through a competitive grant program administered by the Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). Funding for the program is appropriated annually and may be adjusted based on the extent of farmland loss and program demand.

In accordance with these authorizations, SWCD is responsible for administering the program, including soliciting applications, evaluating proposals, and awarding funds consistent with the purposes of the Fund.

This Request for Applications (RFA) establishes the requirements, eligibility criteria, and evaluation process for the 2026 funding round.

1.2 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Montgomery County is experiencing increasing pressure on agricultural lands, including but not limited to farmland conversion, land fragmentation, and large-scale energy development. These pressures reduce the availability of productive agricultural land and may adversely affect the long-term viability of farm operations.

The Fund is intended to support projects that:

- Improve the productivity and efficiency of agricultural operations
- Enhance farm profitability and economic sustainability
- Support value-added production and market development
- Promote conservation of soil and water resources

The grant requires a 90/10 cost share, with 90% provided through grant funds and 10% contributed by the applicant. Priority shall be given to projects that address impacts associated with farmland loss, fragmentation, or development pressure.

1.3 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

All questions regarding this RFA must be submitted in writing to:

mcswcd.aed@gmail.com

OR by mail to:

*Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation District
Attn: Farmland Protection Reserve Fund
4001 State Highway 5S
Fultonville, NY 12072*

Questions must be received no later than **May 15, 2026**

Responses will be issued by **May 20, 2026**

SWCD reserves the right to issue clarifications or modifications to this RFA.

1.4 AVAILABLE FUNDING

Funding is available on a competitive basis and is subject to the availability of funds.

GRANT CATEGORY	ESTIMATED ALLOCATION
MARKETING	\$30,000
VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE	\$110,000
IMPLEMENTATION	\$110,000

A maximum award of \$30,000 may be provided to a single project, farm, or applicant across any combination of the above categories. SWCD reserves the right to modify allocations based on program demand and priorities.

1.5 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

To be eligible, applicants must:

1. Own a farm operation located within Montgomery County
2. File Schedule F (IRS Form 1040)
3. Derive at least two-thirds of total income from farming, or derive between one-half and two-thirds of income from farming, and demonstrate a documented growth trend
4. Meet the definition of a farm operation pursuant to New York State Agriculture and Markets Law
5. Have an average Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) of less than \$900,000, as defined by USDA or IRS standards.
6. Demonstrate active agricultural use at the time of application

SWCD reserves the right to request documentation to verify eligibility.

1.6 APPLICATION SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Applications must be received no later than **June 1, 2026, at 4:00 PM EST**. Applications must be submitted in an organized format and be either typed or clearly legible; unreadable submissions will be disqualified.

Applications received after the deadline or determined to be incomplete may be deemed ineligible and not considered for review.

2 PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

2.1 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

All projects must:

- Be consistent with the purposes of the Fund
- Be completed within the approved project term
- Comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations and in a safe and environmentally responsible manner
- Maintain documentation sufficient to substantiate all project costs and match contributions
- Be subject to inspection by SWCD

2.2 GRANT CATEGORIES

2.2.1 Marketing Grants

Maximum award: \$3,000

Supports activities that expand market access, increase product visibility, and improve farm profitability. Eligible activities may include branding, packaging, advertising, website development, and participation in new or expanded markets.

Example Projects:

- Create or update a farm website to showcase products and provide online ordering
- Develop branded signage, labels, or packaging to attract customers at farmers markets
- Launch a social media or email campaign to highlight seasonal products or special promotions
- Attend a new market or festival to reach new customers

2.2.2 Value-Added Agriculture Grants

Maximum award: \$20,000

Supports projects that increase the value of agricultural products and diversify farm revenue. Eligible activities may include processing, packaging, storage, and equipment that increases production or processing capacity, as well as the development of new or enhanced agricultural products.

Example Projects:

- Purchase equipment to expand production of value-added products, such as planters, harvesters, or processing equipment
- Package or rebrand products to make them market-ready for retail or direct sales
- Develop a new product line using farm-grown ingredients, such as frozen fruits or specialty preserves
- Conduct small-scale processing workshops to expand skills and production capacity

2.2.3 Implementation Grants

Maximum award: \$30,000

Supports on-farm improvements that enhance operational efficiency, environmental sustainability, and long-term farm viability. Eligible activities may include equipment purchases, infrastructure improvements, and conservation practices.

Example Projects:

- Install irrigation, drainage, or climate control systems to improve crop production
- Build or upgrade storage, packing, or greenhouse facilities
- Purchase equipment that increases efficiency and reduces labor costs
- Implement conservation practices, such as soil health improvements or energy-efficient systems

2.3 PROJECT WORK PLAN

Applicants must submit a detailed work plan that clearly describes the proposed project. The work plan must:

- Define the scope of work
- Identify key tasks, deliverables, and project milestones
- Include a realistic timeline for completing each task
- Demonstrate project readiness, including necessary equipment, resources, or partnerships

Applicants must clearly describe project implementation from start to finish. Include specific actions, responsible parties, and target dates where possible.

2.4 ELIGIBLE COSTS

Eligible costs must be directly related to the proposed project and may include, but are not limited to:

- Equipment and infrastructure necessary for project implementation
- Marketing and promotional materials, including signage, branding, and outreach tools
- Processing and storage improvements
- Conservation practices that support sustainable operations
- Technical assistance or professional services required to complete the project

Applicants should clearly indicate which costs will be covered by the grant and provide justification for each item.

2.5 INELIGIBLE COSTS

The following costs are not eligible for funding under this program:

- General operating expenses not directly associated with the project
- Land acquisition
- Expenses incurred prior to contract execution, unless expressly authorized
- Any costs prohibited by law

Applicants should ensure that their proposed budget does not include these items, as they cannot be reimbursed.

2.6 MATCH REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must provide a minimum ten percent (10%) match of the total project cost. Match contributions may include cash or verifiable in-kind services. Documentation of match contributions is required for reimbursement.

Applicants should clearly identify the source and type of match in their application. Include estimated dollar values for in-kind contributions.

2.7 PROJECT DURATION

- Projects may begin no earlier than July 1, 2026
- All projects must be completed no later than December 31, 2026, unless otherwise approved by the SWCD.

Applicants should provide a timeline that ensures all project activities are completed within this period.

3 APPLICATION SUBMISSION PROCESS

3.1 SUBMISSION METHOD

Applications must be submitted using one of the following methods:

- Electronically via email to mcsxcd.aed@gmail.com, or
- By mail or in-person delivery to the SWCD office

Applicants are responsible for ensuring submissions are received, including verifying delivery confirmation. Late submissions may not be considered.

3.2 APPLICATION COMPONENTS

A complete application must include the following components:

- Completed application form
- Project narrative
- Project budget
- Project work plan
- Applicant's Schedule F and Form 1040 from the previous tax year
- Form W9
- Certificate of Insurance (COI) listing Montgomery County as an additionally insured.
- Supporting documentation, as applicable

Incomplete applications may be deemed ineligible. Applicants should ensure that all required materials are included and clearly labeled.

3.3 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

SWCD may provide technical assistance to prospective applicants prior to submission.

Applicants are encouraged to contact SWCD with questions or for guidance to strengthen their application prior to the submission deadline.

4 EVALUATION CRITERIA AND METHOD OF AWARD

4.1 RECEIPT OF APPLICATIONS

All applications will be reviewed for completeness and eligibility prior to scoring.

Only applications deemed complete and eligible will advance to full evaluation.

4.2 EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each application will be scored based on the following criteria and sub-criteria:

CATEGORY	POINTS
FARMLAND & LOCAL AGRICULTURAL IMPACT	50
PROJECT FEASIBILITY, APPLICANT CAPACITY & COST EFFECTIVENESS	35
AGRICULTURAL & ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS	15
TOTAL	100

4.2.1 Farmland & Local Agricultural Impact (50 Points)

Applications will be scored based on the extent to which the project demonstrates:

- **Farmland Protection (0–15 points):**
Degree to which the project reduces the risk of farmland conversion, supports continued agricultural use, or addresses land fragmentation.
- **Farm Viability & Profitability (0–15 points):**
Expected impact on farm income, financial sustainability, and long-term viability.
- **Market Access & Revenue Growth (0–10 points):**
Ability to expand market opportunities, increase sales, or reach new customers.
- **Local Agricultural Economy Impact (0–10 points):**
Contribution to local supply chains, agribusiness development, or broader agricultural economic activity.

Higher scores will be awarded to projects with clear, specific, and measurable impacts.

4.2.2 Project Feasibility, Applicant Capacity & Cost Effectiveness (35 Points)

Applications will be scored based on the following:

A. Project Feasibility (0–15 points)

- Clarity and completeness of the work plan
- Realistic timeline and achievable milestones
- Demonstrated readiness and identification of risks with mitigation strategies

B. Applicant Capacity (0–10 points)

- Relevant experience and past performance
- Technical knowledge or access to qualified partners

- Ability to complete the project within the proposed timeframe

C. Cost Effectiveness (0–10 points)

- Reasonableness and justification of costs
- Efficient use of funds relative to expected outcomes
- Demonstrated return on investment (financial, operational, or environmental)

Higher scores will be awarded to projects that are well-defined, feasible, and demonstrate strong value for investment.

4.2.3 Agricultural & Environmental Benefits (15 Points)

Applications will be scored based on the extent to which the project demonstrates:

- Natural Resource Benefits (0–5 points):
Improvements to soil health, water quality, or other natural resources
- Conservation Practices (0–5 points):
Implementation or enhancement of conservation measures
- Efficiency & Resilience (0–5 points):
Increased resource efficiency and/or improved resilience to weather and climate variability

Higher scores will be awarded to projects with meaningful and lasting environmental benefits.

4.3 METHOD OF AWARD

Awards will be made based on:

- Final application scores,
- Availability of funds, and
- Alignment with program priorities

In making final award decisions, SWCD may consider geographic distribution and diversity of agricultural sectors in making final award decisions. SWCD reserves the right to fund all, part, or none of an application in its sole discretion.

4.4 APPLICANT NOTIFICATION AND DEBRIEFING

Applicants will be notified of award decisions following the evaluation process.

Unsuccessful applicants may request a debriefing within ten (10) business days of notification.

Debriefings will provide general feedback to strengthen future applications.

5 CONTRACTS AND PAYMENT

5.1 GRANT AGREEMENTS

Awardees must enter into a formal grant agreement (Appendix 2) with the SWCD prior to the start of any project activities. All awardees must follow the district procurement policy (Appendix 1) and all applicable grant terms.

No work may begin, and no costs may be incurred, until the agreement has been fully executed, unless otherwise authorized.

5.2 PAYMENT

All payments will be made on a reimbursement basis. Awardees must submit required documentation for review and approval prior to payment, including:

- Proof of payment (e.g., canceled check, bank statement, or receipt)
- Contractor name
- Description of work performed

Reimbursement requests must include invoices, receipts, and proof of payment. Incomplete submissions may delay payment.

5.3 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Awardees will be required to submit the following:

- Periodic progress reports, as specified in the grant agreement
- Documentation of all project expenditures
- A final report summarizing project activities, outcomes, and impacts

Failure to submit required reports may result in delayed reimbursement or termination of the agreement.

5.4 INSURANCE

Awardees are required to provide proof of insurance, including, but not limited to, general liability and workers' compensation coverage, as applicable, listing Montgomery County as additionally insured.

Specific insurance requirements will be outlined in the grant agreement.

5.5 COMPLIANCE

Awardees must comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and permitting requirements.

Awardees are responsible for obtaining any necessary permits or approvals prior to project implementation.

6 ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

6.1 RESERVATION OF RIGHTS

The Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) reserves the right to:

- Modify and amend the RFA and/or application requirements or revise scheduled dates prior to the submission deadline to correct errors, address omissions, or provide additional information. Amendments will be issued in writing, with appropriate notice to applicants
- Require applicants to revise or resubmit materials in response to RFA amendments
- Withdraw or cancel this RFA at any time, at the sole discretion of SWCD
- Reject any or all applications
- Make awards in whole or in part, or to fund all, a portion, or none of any application
- Request clarifications, additional information, or revisions during the review process
- Disqualify any application that does not comply with RFA requirements
- Waive minor irregularities or non-material requirements when in the best interest of SWCD and not affecting the fairness of the process
- Correct or require correction of arithmetic or apparent errors for clarity and accuracy
- Negotiate with awardees regarding scope, budget, or other project elements
- Determine final award amounts and establish payment terms and conditions
- Conduct follow-up evaluations or request additional information to assess project outcomes and impacts

All applications submitted in response to this RFA shall become the property of SWCD and may be used for administrative and programmatic purposes, in accordance with applicable laws.

6.2 CONFIDENTIALITY AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

All application materials submitted may be subject to disclosure in accordance with the New York State Freedom of Information Law (FOIL).

Applicants should not submit confidential or proprietary information unless necessary.

6.3 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Applicants and reviewers must disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest.

Failure to disclose a conflict of interest may result in the disqualification of an application or other corrective actions.

6.4 RECORDKEEPING AND AUDIT

Awardees must maintain all project and financial records for a minimum of six (6) years following project completion and make such records available upon request.

Records must be sufficient to document all project expenditures and activities.

7 APPENDICES

7.1 APPENDIX 1: DISTRICT PROCUREMENT POLICY

All purchases made using grant funds should follow the Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) Procurement Policy. The following are general guidelines for applicants:

- Purchases of \$20,000 or more require competitive bidding under General Municipal Law 103, except when using existing county, state, or federal contracts.
- Purchases of \$5,000–\$10,000 require three written quotes, documented and filed; price lists and catalog references may substitute for quotes.
- Purchases of \$5,000 or less do not require formal documentation, but employees should exercise good judgment to obtain maximum quality at the lowest price without favoritism.
- Surplus or second-hand items may be purchased from government sources without competitive bidding.

*Note: This summary provides general guidance only. The **full Procurement Policy may be requested from the SWCD office**. Applicants are responsible for complying with the official policy when using grant funds.*

7.2 APPENDIX 2: EXAMPLE STANDARD AWARDEE CONTRACT

This is a sample contract; terms may be updated in the final agreement.

Montgomery County Agricultural Implementation Program SWCD – Awardee Contract

7.2.1 PROJECT INFORMATION

Awardee: _____

Project Designer: _____

Address: _____

Drawings Dated: _____

Phone: _____

Project Location: _____

Project Description: _____

7.2.2 CONTRACT PRICE AND PERFORMANCE TIME

This contract is made this ____ day of ____, 2026, by and between [Awardee] (hereinafter “Awardee”) and the Montgomery County Soil & Water Conservation District (hereinafter “SWCD”), for the installation of BMP(s) described above and in the attached plans and specifications.

The Awardee shall perform all work in accordance with the referenced plans and specifications and the general and special provisions set forth herein, for a contract sum not to exceed \$[Contract Amount], as detailed in the attached SW-2. The cost-share amount will not exceed 90% of the total cost, up to \$[Grant Amount], plus a contingency of 10% of the contracted amount (\$[Contingency Amount]). The maximum payment of \$[Max Payment] will be available upon completion of the Whole Farm Plan referenced in Grant Contract Number [Contract Number].

Project Timeline: Work shall be performed between [Start Date] and [End Date].

7.2.3 GENERAL PROVISIONS

The Awardee shall provide and pay for all materials, labor, subcontractors, equipment, tools, power, water, and other items needed to complete the work, unless otherwise noted.

All materials shall be new unless specified, and all work shall be performed in a workmanlike manner in accordance with the plans and specifications.

Any contract between the Awardee and a subcontractor shall not create a contract between the subcontractor and SWCD. Subcontractors are bound by the plans and specifications.

The Awardee shall allow observation of work by SWCD, its authorized agents, and public authorities with a bona fide interest. Inspections may occur Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, excluding holidays. Work requiring inspection that will be buried or covered must be scheduled with SWCD approval.

7.2.4 SWCD-AWARDEE CONTRACT

Changes or additional work required due to unforeseen conditions must be addressed in writing to SWCD.

The Awardee shall re-execute any work failing to meet contract requirements and remedy defects due to faulty materials or workmanship for one (1) year following completion. This does not supersede manufacturer warranties.

If the Awardee fails to perform or make reasonable progress, SWCD may issue a stop-work order and terminate the contract after thirty (30) days' written notice. The Awardee may be responsible for costs to correct defective work and will not be reimbursed for incomplete practices.

Termination does not release the Awardee from the obligation to install the practice. An independent contractor may be engaged per BMP Procurement Procedures to complete the work.

Upon completion, the Awardee shall submit a completed Procurement Record and/or receipts or invoices to SWCD for reimbursement. Payment will be made upon receipt and approval of documentation. Acceptance of payment constitutes a waiver of further claims.

The Awardee must comply with all applicable local, state, and federal health and safety regulations.

This contract does not create any contractual relationship between the Awardee and SWCD beyond the terms herein. Acceptance of this contract by the Awardee constitutes a general release of SWCD from liability related to performance.

7.2.5 SPECIAL PROVISIONS

No special provisions are attached or incorporated into this contract in Appendix A.

7.2.6 SIGNATURES

Awardee: _____ Date: __/__/2026

SWCD Representative: _____ Date: __/__/2026

Title: District Manager

7.3 QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

RFA CONTACT / SWCD OFFICE

MONTGOMERY COUNTY SWCD 4001 STATE HIGHWAY 5S, FULTONVILLE, NY 12072

EMAIL: MCSWCD.AED@GMAIL.COM

PHONE: (518) 853-7016

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PROJECT COMPLETION DEADLINE	December 31, 2026
FUNDING CATEGORIES & MAXIMUM AWARD	<p>Marketing: \$3,000</p> <p>Value-Added Agriculture: \$20,000</p> <p>Implementation: \$30,000 Max per applicant/project (any combination): \$30,000</p>
COST SHARE REQUIREMENT	Minimum 10% match from applicant (cash or verifiable in-kind)
ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS	Farm operations located in Montgomery County meeting IRS Schedule F & NY Ag & Markets Law criteria (see RFA Section 1.5)
SUBMISSION METHODS	<p>Email: MCSWCD.AED@GMAIL.COM</p> <p>Mail/In-Person: SWCD Office</p>
REQUIRED DOCUMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed Application Form • Project Narrative • Project Budget • Project Work Plan • Applicant’s Schedule F & Form 1040 (previous tax year) • W9 • Certificate of Insurance (Montgomery County as additionally insured) • Supporting documentation (if applicable)
EVALUATION CRITERIA (TOTAL 100 PTS)	<p>Farmland & Local Agricultural Impact: 50 pts</p> <p>Project Feasibility / Applicant Capacity / Cost Effectiveness: 35 pts</p> <p>Agricultural & Environmental Benefits: 15 pts</p>

KEY NOTES

- Projects must comply with all applicable laws and SWCD grant terms
- Full Procurement Policy may be requested from the SWCD office
- All payments are on a reimbursement basis
- Projects must be completed within the approved term