

A woman with brown hair tied back, wearing a red t-shirt and khaki pants, is pouring feed from a large white bag into a red bucket. She is standing in a grassy field with many brown chickens. In the background, there is a green field and a line of trees. A red bucket is on the ground in the foreground, and another red bucket is on the ground in the foreground.

Get Your Farm Funded

A Guide for Farmers to
Find and Apply for Grants

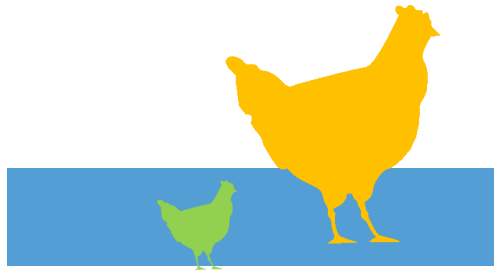
Misty Brook Farm

Get Your Farm Funded:
A Guide for Farmers to Find and Apply for Grants
Published February 2017
1st Edition

Table of Contents

Introduction	page 3
Types of Funding	page 4
Finding funding	page 6
Choosing where to apply.....	page 8
Tips for a successful grant application	page 9
Conclusion	page 19





Introduction

You may be reading this guide because you need funding for a project and want to know what kinds of funding are available. Or perhaps you are in the middle of working on a grant application and need guidance on how to submit the best possible proposal. Whatever may be the case, Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) hopes you find this guide helpful as you navigate the funding process.

This guide grew out of FACT's experience administering a farmer grant program over the past five years. During that time, we reviewed more than 400 applications and are able to offer advice from our perspective about what funders look for in an application.

Founded in 1982, FACT is nonprofit organization headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. Our mission is to promote the safe and humane production of meat, milk, and eggs. FACT's Fund-a-Farmer Project offers grants, webinars, and conference scholarships to livestock and poultry farmers to support their efforts to improve farm animal welfare on their operations. Since 2012, FACT has awarded 91 grants and over 100 conference scholarships to farmers across the country who are committed to raising their animals humanely.

Grants are competitive, making it essential that you craft your application to stand out and engage the reader. This guide will help lead you through the funding process from start to finish. Keep reading to learn what types of funding exist for farmers and how to find funding opportunities, as well as tips for crafting a successful proposal.

Types of funding

There are many types of funding available for farmers, ranging from grants to loans to cost share opportunities. The guidance offered in this guide primarily relates to grants made by private funders. However, the list below explores the diverse array of funding options. You may find that one type of funding suits your needs better than the others.

Private grants Numerous private entities – namely those that are not tax supported, including foundations, businesses, or non-profit organizations such as FACT – award grants to farmers for a specific purpose. Grantees are expected to report on how the grant money was spent and whether their goals were met at the end of the grant period. Funders may set priorities for funding, limiting the type of projects that are eligible for funding. Grants are by definition not intended to be repaid. There is usually an application period during which farmers submit an application and other required documents. The size of the grant is set by the funder and can range from a few hundred dollars to tens of thousands of dollars.



Public grants Any tax-supported grant is classified as a “public” grant, and usually requires extensive reporting as well as publication of grant recipients and amounts. At the federal level, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers a variety of grant opportunities for farmers. For example, there are grants available for

community food projects, value-added product development, and for beginning farmers and ranchers. The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition’s ***Guide to Federal Farm and Food Programs*** is a great place to start researching funding opportunities offered by the federal government (available at sustainableagriculture.net/publications/). Many state and local government agencies (e.g. municipal, county, and township) also offer grant programs.

Research grants Both private and public entities fund research projects. Research grants are often more technical than non-research grants and have different requirements. Projects are designed to answer a specific question. Some research grants fund a project that is conducted in partnership between a private farm (or farms) and an academic institution such a university or college. As such, research grants tend to be larger in size and require coordination among multiple parties.



Cost share Public agencies provide cost sharing opportunities to incentivize specific results or practices. For example, there are cost share programs available to help farmers defray the costs associated with organic certification. There are also conservation-related cost share programs in many states, administered by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). If accepted into a cost share program, farmers are paid upfront or reimbursed for a portion of the related expenses. In the case of organic certification, for example, farmers may apply to the USDA to receive up to 75 percent of their certification costs, not to exceed \$750.

Loans Unlike grants, loans must be paid back to the funder – usually with additional fees and/or accrued interest. Traditional financial institutions such as banks offer individual and business loans. There are also agricultural loans available from public sources, specifically the USDA's Microloan Program, and private funding organizations such as the Carrot Project. It is essential to find a loan with a low interest rate and to thoroughly understand the terms of loan, such as how long the repayment period is, or if there are additional fees and penalties for late payment or default. Late payments or defaulting on the loan can damage your credit rating, making it more difficult to be approved for loans in the future.

Finding Funding

There are many funding sources out there for farmers, including lists of grants, loans, and cost share opportunities. Several excellent places to start your search include:

- ◆ Farm Aid's Farmer Resource Network Online Directory available online at farmaid.org/our-work/. Select "Resources for Farmers" and then "Funding Opportunities for Farmers" from the menu options.
- ◆ Database of federal grant opportunities located at grants.gov
- ◆ Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Service's (MOSES) Funds for Farmers available at mosesorganic.org/farming/farm-finances/
- ◆ National Center for Appropriate Technology's (NCAT) list of funding opportunities available at attra.ncat.org/calendar/funding.php

Get Connected

Subscribe to farming newsletters that announce funding opportunities throughout the year to stay updated on what new (or reoccurring) deadlines are approaching. The **Weekly Harvest** digest distributed by NCAT is one of the best ([subscribe at ncat.org/subscribe/](http://ncat.org/subscribe/)).

You may also learn about grants by networking with other farmers online or in-person. If you enjoy interacting over social media, join Facebook groups and chat rooms with other farmers and farming organizations. Your local university or extension office may be able to put you in touch with funders in your area. FACT also maintains a list of farmer funding resources available at fundafarmer.org/farmer-resources/

Try Different Search Terms

Search for funding using terms specific to your region, animals, needed funding type, and farm type to narrow down your options. Try both broad and narrow searches.

A few search tricks:

Use AND to combine keywords and narrow your search: For example, in www.grants.gov, you could search by the term “agriculture” for a wide swath of results. Searching by “livestock” results in a more narrow set of grant opportunities. You can combine search terms to narrow down your search even more, such as “livestock AND Arkansas.”

Use an asterisk (*) to include similar words in your search: Again, in www.grants.gov or another database, you could enter the search term “farm*” and find results for anything with the root word “farm” such as farmer, farmers, farming etc. By truncating the word, you will expand your search.

Pay attention to the words, terms, and phrases that funders use related to your proposed project, and try a variety of related words or phrases to describe your topic. For example, you may be searching for “broiler chicken” grants when many funders are referring to “meat poultry” or vice versa.



Choosing where to apply

It's not possible to apply for every grant, nor is it a wise use of your time. As you begin searching for grants and other funding opportunities, here are some points to consider that will help you identify the best options:

What do you need? Put some initial thought into the needs and scope of your project. How much money would you need to successfully implement your goals? Will you be applying on behalf of yourself or will you have partners working on this project? How soon do you need the funds? Some grant making processes can take months.

What are you eligible for? Make a list of all the options you may be eligible for based on a preliminary review of the requirements.

Prioritize your options. If you have identified several possibilities for funding, narrow down your application list to those with the best cost/benefit ratio. For instance, if an application will take a lot of time, is for a small amount of money, and you aren't a very good fit for the funding, put it to the bottom of the list. On the other hand, if an application seems straightforward, is for a substantial amount of money, and you are a perfect fit for what they usually fund, bump it up to the top of the list.

Back Creek Farm



Tips for a successful grant application

After you have identified and prioritized your list of possible funding sources, you are ready to apply. FACT has 14 tips to help make your application stand out. Please note, the guidance offered here primarily relates to grants made by private funders such as FACT. However, many of these tips can be applied to other types of applications as well.



1. Do your research. If you do not meet all the requirements, your application will most likely be deemed ineligible and not considered for funding. *Your time is valuable so don't apply unless you are eligible.*



Before investing too much time in an application, dig deeper. Determine if you are indeed eligible for a grant, if the funder has specific grant making priorities, and if there a geographic focus. For example, you'll find that the Frontera Farmer Foundation limits its grants to farms that sell their food to customers in the Chicago area.



If an email address or phone number is provided, don't be afraid to contact the funder to ask if your project is a good fit for funding. It won't hurt your application to ask, and it can help you make a personal connection. Inquiring also shows that you are serious about your application.

2. Create a timeline. When is the application deadline, and how much time do you have to craft your proposal? Think of the grant application as a project with many different pieces that you need to manage. A timeline will map out the tasks that need to be accomplished – and make them seem less overwhelming. Give yourself adequate time to gather your documents and information, and to develop your proposal. For example, if you decide to apply for a grant that is due in two weeks, here is a sample timeline:

- Day 1:** Make a checklist of all documents and pieces of the application you need to develop or compile.
- Day 2:** Seek out examples of previously funded projects (see Tip #3) and draft an outline (see Tip #4)
- Day 3:** Refine your outline and start drafting your proposal (see Tips #5, 6 and 7)
- Day 4:** Finish the first draft of project proposal
- Day 5:** Develop your budget (see Tip #8)
- Day 6:** Take the day off from your application! As possible, schedule in some time away from your proposal so when you come back to it, you do so with fresh eyes.
- Day 7:** Spend some time revising and clarifying your application (see Tip #9)
- Day 8 - 9:** Ask a friend, colleague, or family member to review your application (see Tip #10)
- Day 10:** Gather supporting materials requested by funder (see Tip #11)
- Day 11:** Incorporate changes that strengthen your application based on the feedback received. Finalize your documents.
- Day 12:** Submit your application with time to spare! (see Tip #12)

This sample timeline can be adapted depending upon the amount of time you have before the deadline, and how much time you are able to spend working on the application every day. Please note that some funders accept applications on a rolling basis, benefiting you to submit your application sooner rather than later.



3. Seek out examples of previously funded projects. As possible, identify projects that the funder has awarded grants to in the past. This will give you an idea of the types of proposals the funder has historically favored, and perhaps shed some light on how best to frame the rationale behind your proposed project.

Foundations will often list grantees in their annual reports, and sometimes highlight projects of particular interest. Always check a funder's website. For example, FACT provides information on all of the funded projects and farms at fundafarmer.org/funded-farms. The Organic Farming Research Foundation also lists all of its past grants in its Research Grant Database available at ofrf.org/research/database.

4. Create an outline. Once you've determined that you are eligible and have a project in mind, outline what you want to address in your proposal. This will help organize your thoughts and be intentional about how you present your proposed project. Some funders will specify how they want you to structure your proposal. If not, a sample outline could look like this:

Introduction

- Brief statement introducing your farm
- Summarize why you are applying for funding

Proposed project

- Convey the need or challenge that will be addressed by your project
- Explain your project goals
- Describe the steps that will be taken to implement the project
- Provide a timeline for completing the project
- Describe the experience, expertise, and/or training that you have to complete the project
- Explain how you will evaluate the success/effectiveness of your proposal
- Address any other requirements or questions set forth by the funder

Budget

- Please see Tip #9 in this section for guidance on crafting a budget

Conclusion

- Summarize the need, project goals, and intended outcomes. How will a grant make a difference to your operation?
- Make a connection between the funder's goals and your project, articulating how funding you will help the funder meet their goals as well.
- Thank the funder for considering your application

5. Clearly identify the project need. Thoroughly yet succinctly explain the reason you want or need to undertake your project, and be as concrete as possible about the steps you will take to complete it.



6. Make your outcomes measurable. Funders want to know how your proposed project will impact your farm and community. Make the case that your project is valuable by providing concrete figures such as the number of animals, acres, people, etc., that will directly benefit from your funded project. Avoid any inaccurate inflation of numbers, as that will make your reporting much more difficult. You can supplement your measurable outcomes with more descriptive statements such as testimonials or observations as space allows.





7. Describe your project in the context of the funder's priorities. How does your project fit into the funder's larger mission or vision? Maintain the integrity of your proposal but make a persuasive case by intentionally using key terms, words, or phrases from the funders' website and grant materials. If you "mirror" a funder's language and terms, you make it more likely that they will see a direct correlation between your project and their desired goals and outcomes for their funding.

8. Provide a reasonable, honest, and detailed budget. Take into consideration the typical award size for the particular funder. Some funders specify a maximum amount and also stipulate what types of expenses are eligible. Ask for what you need as long as it fits within the funder’s specifications. For example, grants made by Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI) cannot be used to cover costs associated with labor for contractors and employees.

In your budget, be sure to provide justification for the numbers you provide. Shop around to make certain you are getting a “good deal” and even solicit several quotes for larger items. If you can budget for labor on a project, try to include an estimate from a worker with whom you plan to contract, or a breakdown of a current employee’s typical hourly wage to explain why you budgeted that dollar amount. Avoid any undocumented projections or “rough estimates,” as it could skew your budget and make your reporting to the funder more difficult.

Electric Fencing		Total: \$2,686.50
Labor:		
(15 hrs) One contractor for installation		@ \$12/hour = \$180
Materials:		
(1320 Ft) Twine		@ \$.05/foot = \$892
(400) 4’ fiber rods		@ \$1.50 ea. = \$650
(2,000) Clips to hold wire		@ \$.19 ea. = \$390
(20) Black safe handle for gates		@ \$3.55 ea. = \$71
(20) T-post activators for gates		@3.40 ea. = \$68
(20) Combo insulator for gates		@ \$.28 ea. = \$5.60
(2) Chargers		@ \$189.00 = \$398
(3) Grounding rods		@ \$5.50 ea. = \$16.50
(20) Ropelink for gates		@ \$.77 ea. = \$15.40

Sample budget for installing an electric fence

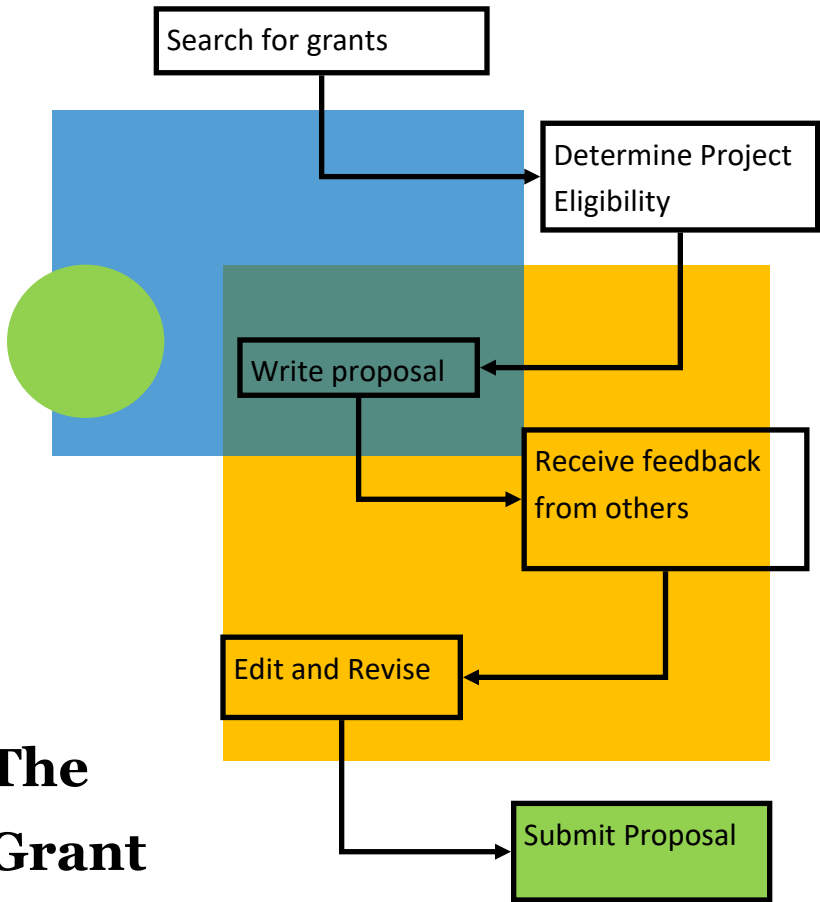
9. Edit and revise. Be as clear and precise as you can in space provided; less is often more. Make it understandable and persuasive. Read it aloud to a friend to see if it makes sense to them and sounds natural. If you struggle with writing a section, skip it and come back to it later. You can also explain your idea in casual language first, then revise to fit the application.

10. Get an outside opinion. Ask a friend, colleague, or family member to read your application. Request feedback about grammar, content, and clarity. They might find small typos, or larger issues that you need to address. Share some information about grant requirements so that they know what to look for.

11. Follow instructions. Funders often specify exactly how to submit your application – via email, online, through the mail etc. Make it easy for the funder to review your application by providing all of the required documents in the requested formats, and answering all required questions. And be sure to only send the documents that are requested – extraneous files indicate that you have not read the guidelines. Double check everything to make sure your application is complete and adheres to all of the specifications.



The Grant Writing Process



12. Apply before the deadline. If at all possible, do not wait until the last minute to apply. Allow extra time in case you have questions, need to locate documents, confirm budgeted amounts, or encounter technical difficulties. Contact the funder in advance if you have questions about the application or guidelines, or if you experience issues when you are trying to submit your application.



13. Be a conscientious grantee. If you are awarded a grant or other funding, be sure to follow all of the requirements. Send in your reports on time and stay in routine communication with the funder. You never know – you may be considered for a renewal grant in the future.

14. Improve your next application by asking for feedback. Your first attempt may not be successful. Grants are often very competitive and there is more interest than there is funding available. Some funders will provide you with feedback about why your application wasn't selected upon

request. Use this constructive criticism to improve your next draft and apply again when the application reopens.

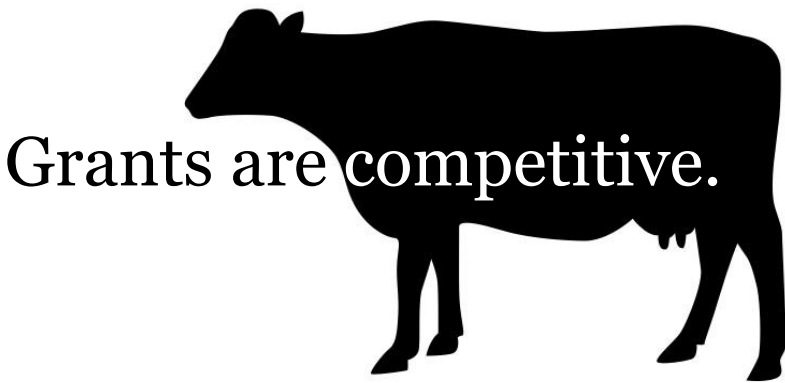
Once you have one grant application written, you can use content from it to apply for more grants with other organizations, making even a rejected application useful. The more applications you write, the less time each one takes.

A close-up photograph of a woman with blonde hair and bangs, smiling warmly. She is wearing a red and blue plaid shirt. She is holding a small, white goat close to her face. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a doorway or a window with white trim.

Conclusion

We hope this guide helps you identify some useful funding options and navigate the application process. Successfully attaining new funding for your farm can be an ongoing process. We wish you the very best in your funding endeavors, and hope that you will stay in touch with FACT and our Fund-a-Farmer Project.

Kat Johnson



Which makes it essential that you craft your application to stand out. This guide will help lead you through the funding process from start to finish, including what types of funding exist for farmers and how to find funding opportunities, as well as tips for crafting a successful proposal.

Founded in 1982, Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) is nonprofit organization headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. Our mission is to promote the safe and humane production of meat, milk, and eggs. FACT's Fund-a-Farmer Project offers grants, webinars, and conference scholarships to livestock and poultry farmers to support their efforts to improve farm animal welfare on their operations.

Web: www.fundafarmer.org

Email: info@foodanimalconcerns.org

Facebook: @FACTinc

Twitter: @Talk_with_FACT

Instagram: @foodanimalconcernstrust