



Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy

PROTECTING LAND AND WATER FOR PEOPLE, FOR WILDLIFE, FOREVER.

BUILDING RESILIENCY ON NORTHWEST CONNECTICUT FARMLAND CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTATION GRANT GUIDANCE

Overview

Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy (NCLC) is pleased to announce the ***Building Resiliency on Northwest Connecticut Farmland*** grant program (known as the *Building Resiliency* program), made possible through a generous grant from the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF) program.

NCLC's *Building Resiliency* program funds two types of projects: (1) climate-smart agricultural assessments and (2) the implementation of climate-smart agricultural practices.

This guidance document describes the **Implementation Grant** and how to apply. NCLC's final implementation grant round is **October 1 to November 30, 2024**.

Please direct all questions to Shelley Rose, Agricultural Program Manager, at shelley@ctland.org, or call 860-927-1927.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants must operate working farmland or a farm business in NCLC's service area, which includes all of Litchfield County and Brookfield, Newtown, and Sherman in Fairfield County. All agricultural activities as defined by [Conn. Gen. Stat. § 1-1\(q\)](#) qualify, including but not limited to, the "cultivation of the soil, dairying, forestry, raising or harvesting any agricultural or horticultural commodity, including the raising, shearing, feeding, caring for, training and management of livestock, including horses, bees, the production of honey, poultry, fur-bearing animals and wildlife."

The proposed project must occur on property owned, licensed, or leased by the applicant (for all property, the **Landlord Consent Agreement** authorizing the assessment must be submitted with the application).

The following individuals and entities are eligible for funding:

- Agricultural producers and agricultural cooperatives
- Land trusts
- Municipalities
- Non-profit organizations

Priority will be given to historically underserved producers, as defined by the NRCS. Click [here](#) to determine if this classification applies to the applicant's farm.

Climate-Smart Projects

NCLC's *Building Resiliency* program will fund the implementation of climate-smart agricultural practices. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) defines **climate-smart agriculture** as “an integrated approach that enables farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners to respond to climate change by reducing or removing greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation) and adapting and building resilience (adaptation), while sustainably increasing agricultural productivity and incomes.”

NCLC will prioritize projects from the NRCS's [Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry \(CSAF\) Mitigation Activities List](#). Click the “Code” number to access guidance for specific activities. Examples include but are not limited to, tillage management, cover cropping, nutrient management, rotational grazing, riparian forest buffer, silvopasture, and renewable energy.

Measuring Impacts of Climate-Smart Activities

All applicants must demonstrate that their project produces quantifiable outcomes – the Environmental Impacts. To assess these impacts, the applicant will submit data collected before and after project implementation on chosen metrics. The applicant is responsible for identifying **at least two different types of metrics**. In the Project Proposal section of the application, applicants must demonstrate that the metric is environmentally related, economically feasible, and measurable within the timeframe of the grant. Applications that do not include a description of metrics will not be considered.

Examples of metrics include:

- **Soil testing** – Cornell's [Basic Soil Health Analysis Package](#) assigns a soil health score to soil samples based on biological, physical, and chemical properties
- **COMET-Planner** – A tool used by the NRCS to measure greenhouse gas emissions reductions and carbon sequestration associated with various practices
- **Adaptation and Resiliency Co-Benefits** – Including but not limited to:
 - Pesticide use
 - Fertilizer use
 - Biodiversity/species abundance
 - Water use
 - Water quality
 - Erosion
 - Fuel use
 - Yield
 - Cost savings
- **Energy Assessment** – Conducted by entities such as [Energize CT](#)
- **Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator** - A tool created by the EPA to convert energy data to the equivalent amount of carbon dioxide emissions and other metrics

*Note that Adaptation and Resiliency Co-Benefits is one category. NCLC encourages measuring as many co-benefits as possible.

Award Information

The maximum award for this grant is \$50,000. The minimum award is \$1,000. NCLC will prioritize funding opportunities within the range of **\$5,000-\$20,000**.

Eligible Use of Funding

Applicants will submit a budget worksheet describing anticipated costs incurred throughout the course of the project.

Eligible expenses include the following:

- Materials and supplies related to project implementation
- Consultants and contractors
- State/local/federal permits
- Equipment purchases and rentals

Ineligible expenses include the following:

- Salaries and wages
- Any expense incurred prior to contract execution
- Land acquisition/mortgages
- Cost of borrowing (points and other fees)
- Expenses related to establishing a new organization/business
- Any portion of expense for which the applicant pays a contractor in merchandise or service in lieu of cash
- Tuition/tuition reimbursement or career-related/scholarship funds
- Disposable supplies (office, farm, otherwise) unrelated to the project
- Legal expenses related to litigation

Contractual Requirements

Selected awardees must sign a contract with NCLC governing the terms of their grant award. The contract will require that awardees comply with the following:

- Provide a certificate of insurance holding NCLC harmless
- Determine permits and other local requirements and supply a copy of documentation prior to project implementation
- Conduct data collection before and after project implementation on the chosen metrics
- Submit an initial and final report detailing project information, as detailed below
- Receive a site visit from a representative of NCLC and DOAG after project completion
- Publicly acknowledge funds
- Other applicable information, as outlined in the contract

Reporting will include the following information:

- Baseline data and data collected during the monitoring period on the chosen metrics, including detailed documentation
- Financial information with expenses itemized and broken down by project category, invoices from and payments to contractors/consultants, among other forms of proof of payment
- A timeline of activities for the upcoming period
- Deviations from the approved project and timeline
- Difficulties or challenges encountered
- Solutions developed to overcome difficulties

Grant Payment

After contract signing, awardees will receive up to a 50% advance of award funds. The remaining funds will be reimbursed to the applicant upon favorable review of the final report. The specifics of the grant payment will be tailored to each project and will be outlined in the contract.

Example Timeline

A typical timeline will look like the following, but will be tailored to each project in the contract:

Activity	Anticipated Completion
Applicant receives award notification.	2 months after the round closes
Awardee and NCLC execute contract.	Within 2 months of award notification
Awardee submits initial report.	Within 3 months of contract signing
NCLC disburses initial funds.	Within 1 month of Initial Report submission
Awardee completes project.	1-2 years after contract signing
Awardee submits final report.	Within 3 months of project completion
NCLC conducts site visit.	Within 6 months of project completion
NCLC disburses final funds.	Within 1 month of Final Report submission

How to Apply

1. Complete the following [online form](#). Applicants can also download a [PDF version](#) and send it to shelley@ctland.org.
2. Complete the [budget worksheet](#).
3. Make sure all required documentation is submitted with the application and worksheet, including:
 - Landlord consent agreement
 - Maps, sketches, pictures, and other visual materials
 - Contractor quotes
4. Make sure all supplemental documentation is submitted with the application, when applicable:
 - Conservation easement
 - Farm management plan
 - NRCS conservation plan
 - Any other materials necessary to demonstrate planned project

NCLC will not accept incomplete applications. Technology should not be a barrier to participation in this program. If the applicant needs any technological assistance or clarification on application questions, please reach out to Shelley Rose, Agricultural Program Manager, at shelley@ctland.org, or call 860-927-1927.

Evaluation Criteria (Strength of Application)

Applicants must show proof of eligibility, request an award within the minimum and maximum funding range, and submit all required documentation to be considered for a climate-smart agricultural implementation grant. Strong applications will also demonstrate the following:

- Projects that have a climate mitigation focus, improve the farm's adaptability and resilience, and/or promote ecological sustainability
- Projects that can be measured through multiple metrics
- The applicant's capacity to complete and measure the project within the timeframe of the grant
- Eligible and justified expenses

Learn More

View the online information session [recording](#) and [slides](#), and [FAQs](#).