

First-Time Grant Writing for Beginning Farmers

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Sweet Season Farm
Calmar, Iowa



Me/our farm



- Me
 - Working on farms in 2020
 - Before that, worked in nonprofit communications
- Sweet Season Farm
 - Started in the 2022 season
 - Calmar, Iowa (NEIA)
 - ~4 ac. diversified vegetable production, 2 high tunnels
 - Outlets: Decorah Farmers Market, co-ops, restaurants

Choosing a project

- Think about what projects you want to do first, then think about what grants can help you get there
 - (Not the other way around)
- Identifying our needs
 - Moved production to a new farm in 2023
 - Competing priorities: Wash-pack vs. tractors vs. everything else
- Decided to start with wash-pack
 - Lots of grants for food safety
 - Few grants for equipment
- Other priorities would be covered with farm funds/personal funds/loans or moved to other years

Grants we've received



PFI Produce Safety Cost-Share 2023

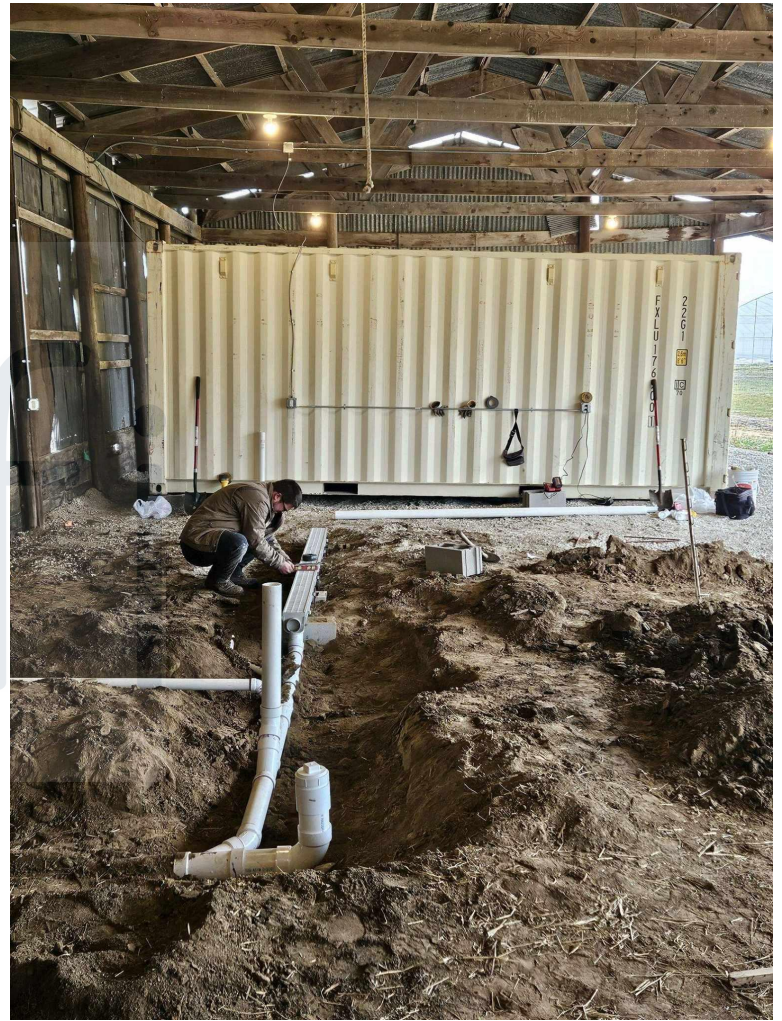
PFI Savings Incentive Program 2024

American Farmland Trust Brighter Future Fund 2024

Iowa Valley RC&D Clean Start program 2024

Iowa Farm Bureau Grow Your Future Award (contest) 2024

Choose Iowa 2024







Searching for grants



- Email groups (listservs)
 - PFI, ISU, MVEG
 - Local farmer email groups
- Emails from grantors
- Word of mouth

*As you search, put deadlines in your calendar.

Grant-writing process

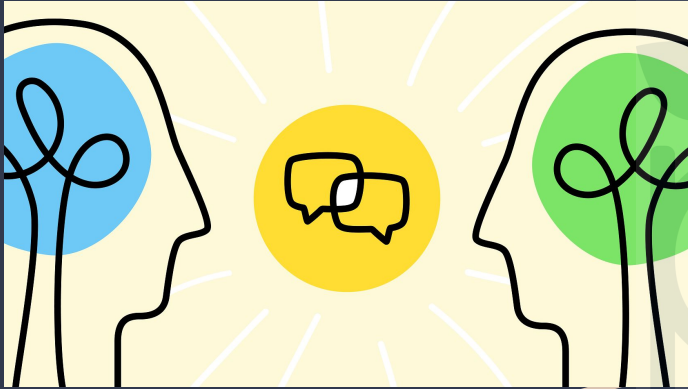


Getting started

- Reach out to grantors to chat about whether your farm/project is a good fit.
- Ask other farmer friends if they'll share their successful application with you.



Writing strategies



- Think about your goals, the grantor's goals, and where they intersect
 - Think of it as collaboration. You're helping the grantor achieve their goals too!
- Choose a few main points to emphasize about what you would do with the grant funds.
 - Don't try to cover too much ground.
- Don't get too technical.
- Use numbers/data/projections where you can.

CRITERIA	MAXIMUM SCORE
<p>Addresses goals of the Choose Iowa Value-Added Grant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increases sales of Iowa agricultural products. - Increases market access, diversifies markets and/or increases processing capacity. 	20 points
<p>Impact on Iowa agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Plan to increase sales of Iowa agricultural products is achievable. - Amount of Iowa agricultural products to be increased is realistic. - Increase is appropriate for the size of the grant request. - Project has the potential to impact many farmers. - Project has both short-term and long-term impact, including jobs and investments in Iowa. 	20 points

Describe your project in detail.

Describe how this project will increase the sales of Iowa agricultural products.

Describe your business, its history, and how it interacts with Iowa farmers and agriculture.

Describe the budget for the project and how you plan to finance the private match requirement.

Describe in detail a timeline for which you plan to complete the project

Describe the outcomes that will be measured to evaluate the success of the project

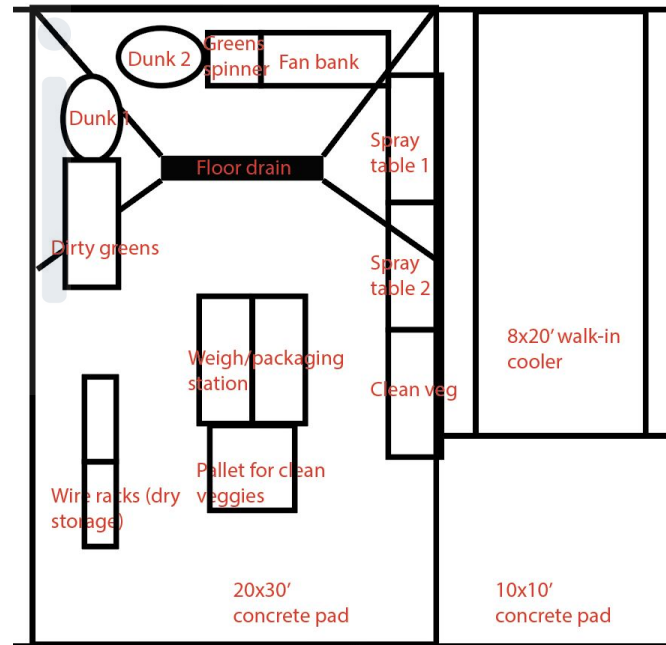
Small details that count



- Fill everything out correctly
 - Answer all of the questions
 - Answer all parts of the questions
 - Follow the max/min word counts
- Formal, but dynamic!
 - Add personality where you can.
 - Give the reader a feel for the farm, what you're trying to achieve, and your value to the community and the grantor's goals
- **Write in a separate document & copy/paste**

Other items to include

- Quotes (from contractors, for materials)
- Diagrams/floor plans/etc.
- Letters of recommendation
- Financials/projections



Proofing



- Have people look it over
 - Michael Fields Agricultural Institute
 - Friends
- Make sure everything matches
 - Project timelines/goals/numbers

*Start early so you have time to send to other people to review!

Is your project a good fit
for the grant?



Timing



- Is it the best time for you, right now?
 - Do you have time/capacity this season?
 - If you're applying for multiple grants for the same project, how will they work together?

American Farmland Trust Brighter
Future Fund 2024

Iowa Valley RC&D Clean Start program
2024

Iowa Farm Bureau Grow Your Future
Award (contest) 2024

Choose Iowa 2024

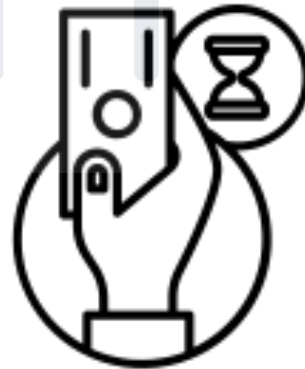
Grant types

- Matching (ex. Choose Iowa, SIP)
- Reimbursement (ex. Choose Iowa, SIP)
- Not matching or reimbursement (ex. BFF)
- At the end of an educational program (SIP, Clean Start)



Receiving the funds

- Some grants, you'll receive the money at the beginning
- Reimbursement grants
 - End of the project/month
 - Will you have enough money in your account to finish the project and wait for reimbursement?



Reporting/ communication

- Reporting during/after project
 - Put dates in your calendar after signing agreement
- Take lots of photos!
- Let them know if your project is delayed.



Final thoughts



Final thoughts



- Grants are great tools, but keep perspective on your goals
- Don't plan your whole season around grant funds before you know if they're actually coming.
 - Have a backup plan.
- Remember that managing the grant will take time during the busy season.
- You can do it! Funding is out there.