



# Maine Farms for the Future Phase 1 Business Plan Development Program Questions and Answers Summary

<b>Questions Deadlines</b>	<p><b>February 21, 2025</b> no later than 11:59 p.m., local time</p> <p>Submit all questions at <a href="#">this link</a></p>
<b>Application Deadline</b>	<p><b>March 7, 2025</b>, no later than 11:59 p.m., local time.</p> <p><a href="#">To apply, download the program RFA here.</a></p>

- I cannot access the application form from any link. Is it uploaded yet?
  - There was an error with the application when it first opened. That error should be resolved now for all applicants.
- What is meant by the "Ability to Transform"? (Section 3.1, page 10)
  - "Ability to Transform" refers to the operational and financial capacity to successfully make any changes to their business associated with their "Idea for Change(s)". Successful applicants will have stable access to, or a reasonable plan to access the knowledge, capital, labor, and other resources required to make these changes.
- We're planning to apply to the Farms for the Future Program Phase 1. However, I have a question around Phase 2 and the grant provision related to farmland protection. Am I correct in understanding that given that our existing landbase is entirely protected by a Maine Farmland Trust easement that we wouldn't qualify for the grant? Related to that, we've been talking to a landowner from whom we lease a 9 acre hay field about purchasing the parcel. It is not protected by any easements. If we were able to work that out and purchase the property before applying for Phase 2 would we then be eligible for the grant in exchange for signing the protection agreement with DACF, or would we need to own the land prior to applying for Phase 1?
  - You are correct that you would not currently be eligible for Phase 2, but purchasing land between the phases would make you eligible. Eligibility requirements for Phase 2 are only relevant when applying for Phase 2.
- How strict are you with the minimum word counts? If we've answered the question succinctly but it's less than the minimum should we be concerned?
  - Word counts are not hard and fast requirements at all, though they are informative of the depth of answer we are looking for.

- Question 35 of the online application asks “What was your debt/income ratio this year?” and question 36 asks “What was your debt/income ratio last year?- Which year does “this year” and “last year” refer to? Is “This year” meant to be 2024 and “last year” 2023? (Application Form)
  - “This year” should refer to 2024, and “last year” should refer to 2023.
- Question 37 of the online application asks “What is next year’s gross projected income?” - What year does “next year” refer to? Is it 2025 or 2026? (Application Form)
  - “Next year” should refer to 2025.
- The rubric for the “Quality of Idea(s) for Change”, on page 11 of the RFA lists 12-25 points for Ideas for Change that make “fundamental” changes on the farm, and 5-11 points for Ideas for Change that make “significant” changes on the farm. Are those adjectives meant to describe the magnitude of improvements to the farm business’s financial health, or are they meant to describe some other type of change to the farm? Can you provide some examples of the difference between “fundamental” and “significant” changes? (Section 3.1, page 11)
  - Yes, the difference between ad “fundamental” and “significant” change does refer to the magnitude of improvement to the farm business’s financial health. Because this would be very specific to the farm business as it exists right now, examples would be difficult to provide.
- Online application questions 35 and 36 ask about debt/income ratio. Would you like that calculated using gross or net income? (Application Form)
  - Debt-to-income ratio should be calculated using gross income.
- I'm beginning a partnership this year .... I will be paid as a contractor by a non-profit for this season and am wondering if this makes [our farm] ineligible for this grant. [Question edited to maintain privacy]
  - In most instances, donations of agricultural products valued at \$2000 or more could stand in for sales of agricultural products for eligibility purposes.  
The financial compensation a farm business receives for agricultural products sold to a non-profit, would also count towards sales of agricultural products for eligibility purposes.