

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
Farms for the Future Phase 1  
Business Plan Development Program



**AGRICULTURE RESOURCE  
DEVELOPMENT**

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,  
CONSERVATION & FORESTRY

**Request for Applications and Application Workbook**

Released January 14, 2025. Applications open January 24, 2025.

**DUE MARCH 7, 2025**

RFA#ARDFFF.P1.2025

RFA Coordinator	All communication regarding the RFA <u>must</u> be made through the RFA Coordinator identified below. <b>Name:</b> Mariam Taleb <b>Title:</b> Farm Viability & Farmland Protection Specialist <b>Program email:</b> mefff@maine.gov
Submitted Questions Deadlines <i>See section 2.3</i>	All questions must be <u>submitted via this link</u> by one of two deadlines: <b>Deadline 1: January 31, 2025</b> no later than 11:59 p.m., local time <b>Deadline 2: February 21, 2025</b> no later than 11:59 p.m., local time
Application Submission Deadline <i>See section 2.5</i>	DACF <b>MUST</b> receive applications by: <b>Submission Deadline: March 7, 2025</b> no later than 11:59 p.m., local time. To apply, first complete this <u>Application Form</u> , and then reply to the confirmation email with the requested supplemental documents: two years' Schedule F and soil map
Program Website	<b>Website:</b> <u>DACF Farms for the Future website</u> For timely information about this RFA and related programs, enroll in the Maine DACF "Agricultural Grants and Loans" email listserv on the DACF Farms for the Future website.

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## 1. OVERVIEW

### 1.1. Background and Purpose

Agriculture is critically important to Maine's communities, economy, food security, and the quality of life of Mainers. The continued vitality of the agricultural landscape in Maine depends on the vitality of the farm businesses within it. Planning for and enacting changes, adaptations, and growth is critical for farm businesses to achieve sustainable profitability. One essential step for beginning, established, and transitioning farmers to develop sustainable businesses is to write well-researched and forward-thinking business plans. Another step is investing to grow, change, and adapt businesses to reflect changing markets and conditions.

The 119th Legislature initiated the Maine Farms for the Future Program (FFF) in the State of Maine (7 M.R.S.A., Chapter 10-B) to assist farms in developing business plans that would identify and plan for changes to farm operations to improve sustainable profitability and to offer investment assistance for the equipment and infrastructure to enact those changes. FFF is a two-phase program. This is a request for applications to Phase 1, or the Maine Farms for the Future Business Plan Development Program. Once a selected farm has completed a Phase 1 Business Plan, they are eligible to apply for Phase 2, or Maine Farms for the Future Investment Support Program to Implement a Business Plan. Phase 2 awards will be made through a separate RFA. The Phase 2 RFA and all relevant application information can be found on the [DACF Farms for the Future website](#).

A farm business plan describes the history, current operations, and future plans for the business, including a mission/vision, legal organization, management, products, market research, marketing, financial statements and analyses, and potential impacts of planned changes in the business in the short-to-long term. A farm business plan can serve as an internal organization tool, a way to develop a clear sense of purpose, a place to store information that may be vital to future loan and grant applications, a tool to identify and address challenges and opportunities, or a tool to assist in marketing, operations, production, and financial decisions.

The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (Department) is seeking applications for the Maine Farms for the Future Program Phase 1. Successful Applicants will be awarded a \$6,000 grant to develop a detailed business plan to increase farm vitality or [the long-term, maintainable farm profitability and net worth](#). A Farms for the Future Business Plan template can be found on the [DACF Farms for the Future website](#).

### 1.2. Eligibility to Submit Application

Applicants are eligible to apply to the Farms for the Future Business Plan Development Program if:

- They own and operate a for-profit **farm business** in Maine.
- The farm business has been producing **agricultural products** commercially in Maine for at least 2 years (24 months) OR the applicant has evidence of at least 2 years' experience operating a **commercial farm** in Maine.
- Those agricultural products include fresh or to-be-processed food, fiber, or horticultural products grown on the farm.
  - Those products do not include marijuana but may include hemp.
  - The farm business is not primarily producing forest products (timber, pulp, etc.).

- The applicant owns the farmland the business uses, or the applicant is a partner/shareholder in the legal entity that owns the land.
- The farm business holds all relevant State of Maine licenses or certifications.

The eligibility guidelines can be found in the [rules governing the Maine Farms for the Future Program](#). If you have any specific questions about your eligibility, contact the [RFA Coordinator](#).

### 1.3. Awards

No more than **16** Phase 1 Business Plan Development grants will be available in this grant cycle.

### 1.4. Title and Chapter

All general instructions for submitting the applicable application are provided in this document in accordance with:

- [Statute establishing the Maine Farms for the Future Program \(7MRS Ch.10-B §316\)](#)
- [Rules for Governing the Maine Farms for the Future Program \(01-001, Ch. 36\)](#)
- [Rules for Departmental \(DACF\) Grant Awards and Appeals \(01-001, Ch. 8\)](#)

### 1.5. Appeal of Contract Awards

In accordance with the [Rules for Departmental \(DACF\) Grant Awards and Appeals \(01-001, Ch. 8\)](#) an aggrieved person (hereinafter the “petitioner”) may request an appeal hearing on a grant award decision by submitting a request for appeal to the **Commissioner**, in writing, no later than fifteen (15) calendar days from the date of the award decision. The written request for appeal must describe the specific nature of the grievance. The Commissioner shall grant an appeal hearing unless it is determined that: A. The petitioner is not an aggrieved person; or B. The written request for appeal was submitted more than fifteen (15) calendar days after notification of award.

## 2. APPLICATION PROCESS

### 2.1. Timeline and Key Dates

Date	Item
<b>January 14</b>	Solicitation Posted
<b>January 24</b>	Submissions Open
<b>January 31</b>	First written question due date
<b>February 7</b>	Expected date answers are posted
<b>February 21</b>	Final written question due date
<b>February 28</b>	Expected date answers are posted
<b>March 7</b>	Application Due Date
<b>April 4</b>	Anticipated completion of peer review; internal review begins
<b>April 18</b>	Anticipated notification date of project and award decisions
<b>Upon signed contract</b>	Period of performance begins. Funds are accessible, and expenses from on or after this date are eligible for reimbursement
<b>Two years post award</b>	Period of performance ends. Expenses on or after this date are not eligible for reimbursement.

### 2.2. Solicitation

This RFA was posted on [DACF Farms for the Future website](#) on the release date noted on the cover page and contains the instructions and components needed to submit a complete application. It is the responsibility of all interested parties to go to this website to obtain the Question and Answer Summaries and any amendments to this RFA.

### 2.3. Submission of Questions and Amendments

It is the responsibility of all applicants and other interested parties to examine the entire RFA and seek clarification in writing if they do not understand any information or instructions.

Applicants and other interested parties should submit any questions in writing to [this online form](#).

Responses to all questions will be compiled in writing and posted on the [DACF Farms for the Future website](#). All interested parties are responsible for going to this website to obtain a copy of the Question & Answer Summary. Only those answers issued in writing on this website will be considered binding.

Questions should be submitted by one of the two deadlines specified on the RFA cover page. Answers will be posted approximately five (5) business days after each deadline. No questions will be accepted after the second deadline. The Department assumes no liability for assuring accurate, complete, and on-time email transmission and receipt.

### 2.4. Amendments to the Request for Applications

All amendments (if any) released regarding this RFA will be posted on the [DACF Farms for the Future website](#). It is the responsibility of all interested parties to go to this website to obtain amendments. For timely information about this RFA and related FFF programs, an email listserv sign-up can be found at [DACF Farms for the Future website](#).

Only those amendments posted on this website are considered binding.

DACF reserves the right to revise, suspend, or terminate this RFA at its sole discretion. In such an event, DACF will inform all applicants as soon as reasonably possible. DACF also reserves the right to extend the deadline for submission of proposals or to seek additional proposals under this RFA.

## 2.5. Application Submission Instructions

**Applications Due** The Application Form and all required supplemental files must be received by March 7, 2025 at 11:59 p.m. local time. Application Forms must be submitted via [this link](#), and all required supplemental files must be received by email at mefff@maine.gov.

Any emails containing original application submissions or additional or revised application files received after the 11:59 p.m. deadline will be rejected. The Department assumes no liability for assuring accurate, complete, on-time email transmission and receipt.

**Required application materials** Applicants must complete and submit the following documents.

- Application Form.** [Click here to fill out the online Application Form.](#)
- Supplemental files.** Reply to your confirmation email with the following files attached:
  - **Copies of Schedule F for the two (2) most recent tax years**, if available. Otherwise, a profit and loss statement for those years is acceptable.
  - **A soil map or an aerial map of the farm showing boundary lines and soil types and their classification by the USDA NRCS\* as Prime, Statewide Important or Locally Significant Farmland.** These maps can be found at the [\\*United States Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) Natural Resources and Conservation Service's \(NRCS\) web soil survey site.](#)

**Submission Instructions** Applications that do not comply with the instructions specified in this RFA or failure to submit all required documents may result in the proposal being disqualified or receiving a reduced score at the sole discretion of the Department.

Applicants are not to provide additional supplemental files beyond those specified in the RFA. Additional materials not requested will not be evaluated. Fill out the Application Form found at

1. Submit your Application Form via [this link](#).
2. After your application Form is submitted, you will receive a confirmation email, requesting supplemental files listed above. Reply to the email by **11:59 PM on March 7, 2025** with the supplemental files attached.
  - a. E-mails containing links to file-sharing sites or online file repositories will not be accepted as submissions.
  - b. Encrypted e-mails received which require opening attachments and logging into a proprietary system will not be accepted as submissions.
  - c. Supplemental documents must be typed and saved as PDF (.pdf) or Word (.doc or .docx) file(s).
  - d. File size limits are 25 MB per email. Applicants may submit files separately across multiple emails, as necessary, due to file size concerns. All emails and files must be received in accordance with all the instructions above.

## 2.6. Evaluation and Selection Process

- 1) A review panel will evaluate and score project applications based on the program requirements and selection criteria in the rubric below. Applications will **NOT** be scored question by question but instead based on how the application as a whole addresses the rubric criteria. Applications will be scored for completeness. Applications will **NOT** be scored for writing quality, including grammar, spelling, and punctuation, provided that the writing quality does not obscure the meaning of the content of the application.
  - a) Members of the review panel will first score applications individually. The review panel will then meet to arrive at a consensus score.
  - b) Applications that are ineligible, late, incomplete, or incorrectly formatted may be disqualified from panel review.
- 2) Based on the review panel's scoring and evaluation, the Grant Coordinator will make recommendations to the Commissioner.
  - a) The final decision-making authority for awarding grants rests with the Commissioner based on the program requirements and selection criteria found in the rubric below.
- 3) Decisions and Notification
  - a) The Review Panel shall evaluate applications within five weeks following the deadline for submission of applications.
  - b) All applicants shall be notified in writing within one week following the Review Panel's decision.

### 3. RUBRIC

#### 3.1. Point Ranges for Scoring Criteria

*Management Capacity = 20 points*

Description	Point Range
<p>The applicant has demonstrated the capacity to manage their business <u>while</u> implementing their Idea for Change. The applicant is ready to engage in the program.</p> <p>The applicant has robust relevant experience in farming and management.</p> <p><b>AND</b> The application demonstrates experience successfully diagnosing and addressing challenges.</p> <p><b>AND</b> The application demonstrates readiness to develop their Business Plan and Idea for Change and to take full advantage of the opportunity.</p>	18-20
<p>The applicant is likely to have the capacity to manage their business <u>while</u> implementing their Idea for Change. The applicant is likely ready to engage in this program.</p> <p>The applicant has sufficient experience in farming and management.</p> <p><b>AND/OR</b> The applicant has some experience diagnosing and addressing challenges.</p> <p><b>AND/OR</b> The application indicates readiness to develop their Business Plan and Idea for Change, and can take advantage of the opportunity.</p>	12-18
<p>The applicant might have the capacity to manage their business <u>while</u> implementing their Idea for Change. The applicant might be ready to engage in this program.</p> <p>The applicant has minimal experience in farming and management.</p> <p><b>AND/OR</b> The applicant has minimal experience with or has struggled to diagnose and address challenges.</p> <p><b>AND/OR</b> The applicant might have the capacity to develop a Business Plan and Idea for Change, or to take advantage of the program.</p>	5-12
<p>The applicant is unlikely to have the capacity to manage their business <u>while</u> implementing their Idea for Change. The applicant is unlikely to be ready to engage in this program.</p> <p>The applicant has minimal experience in farming and management.</p> <p><b>AND/OR</b> The application does not demonstrate experience in successfully diagnosing and addressing challenges.</p> <p><b>AND/OR</b> The applicant is unlikely to have the capacity to develop a Business Plan and Idea for Change, or to take advantage of the program.</p>	0-5



*Physical Resource Base = 20 points*

Description	Point Range
<p>The applicant has robust resources to maintain and increase the productivity of the farm business and is well-situated to use and maintain those resources.</p> <p>The applicant has productive farmland suitable for its current agricultural use and any uses relevant to the Idea for Change. The applicant employs soil health practices.</p> <p><b>AND</b> The Buildings, equipment, and other large infrastructure are in good condition and can support the farm business's current needs and any needs relevant to the Idea for Change. The applicant has a plan to improve or maintain their condition.</p>	18-20
<p>The applicant has sufficient resources to maintain and increase the productivity of the farm business, and/or a plan to purchase or repair additional resources.</p> <p>The applicant has little to no high-quality farmland suitable for its current agricultural use, and any uses relevant to the Idea for Change. The applicant employs soil health practices.</p> <p><b>AND</b> Buildings, equipment, and other large infrastructure are in fair to good condition and can support most or all the current and planned needs of the farm business. The applicant has a plan to purchase or repair additional infrastructure.</p>	13-18
<p>The applicant has sufficient resources to maintain and increase the productivity of the farm business and is well-situated to use and maintain them.</p> <p>The applicant has productive farmland suitable for its intended agricultural use and employs agricultural practices that indicate a commitment to the land's continued health.</p> <p><b>AND</b> Buildings, equipment, and other large infrastructure are in fair or good condition, and/or the applicant has a plan to improve or maintain their condition.</p>	8-13
<p>The applicant has adequate resources to maintain but not increase the productivity of the farm business.</p> <p>The applicant has farmland that is somewhat/mostly suited to its intended agricultural use, but their agricultural practices are insufficient to maintain or improve soil health.</p> <p><b>AND</b> Buildings, equipment, and other large infrastructure are in fair or poor condition, and the applicant has insufficient plans to improve their condition.</p>	5-13
<p>The applicant has inadequate resources to maintain and increase the productivity of the farm business.</p> <p>The applicant has farmland that is not productive or well-suited to its intended agricultural use and/or employs practices that may degrade soil health.</p> <p><b>AND/ OR</b> Buildings, equipment, and other large infrastructure are in poor condition, or the applicant is missing critical infrastructure and does not have a plan to acquire it.</p>	0-5

*Farm Financial Health & Ability to Transform = 25 points*

Description	Point Range
<p>The applicant demonstrates an understanding of the farm business's financial condition. Any new debt load associated with the Idea(s) for Change will likely be successfully managed.</p> <p>The applicant has an up-to-date and informative record-keeping system.</p> <p><b>AND</b> The applicant demonstrates an understanding of debt management.</p> <p><b>AND</b> Any debt incurred to implement the Idea(s) for Change is likely to be successfully managed based on the financial condition of the farm business. The applicant has a realistic plan to manage debt.</p>	20-25
<p>The applicant demonstrates knowledge of the farm business's financial condition. Any new debt load associated with the Idea(s) for Change will probably be successfully managed.</p> <p>The applicant has a mostly up-to-date record-keeping system.</p> <p><b>AND</b> The applicant demonstrates knowledge of debt management.</p> <p><b>AND</b> Any debt incurred to implement the Idea(s) for Change will probably be successfully managed based on the financial condition of the farm business. The applicant has a mostly realistic plan to manage debt.</p>	12-20
<p>The applicant demonstrates some knowledge of the farm business's financial condition. Any new debt load associated with the Idea(s) for Change will possibly be successfully managed.</p> <p>The applicant has an infrequently updated record-keeping system.</p> <p><b>AND/OR</b> The applicant demonstrates some knowledge of debt management.</p> <p><b>AND/OR</b> Any debt incurred to implement the Idea(s) for Change may not be successfully managed based on the financial condition of the farm business. The applicant has a somewhat unrealistic plan to manage debt.</p>	5-12
<p>The application has an incomplete description of the farm business's financial condition. It is unlikely that the new debt load and access to assets associated with the Idea(s) for Change will be successfully managed.</p> <p>The applicant demonstrates incomplete or contradictory knowledge of the financial condition of the farm business. Any new debt load associated with the Idea(s) for Change is unlikely to be successfully managed.</p> <p><b>AND/OR</b> The applicant demonstrates a poor understanding of debt management.</p> <p><b>AND/OR</b> The financial condition of the farm business is unlikely to successfully support any additional debt load. The applicant has an unrealistic plan to manage debt.</p>	0-5

*Quality of Idea(s) for Change = 25 points*

Description	Point Range
<p>The proposed Idea(s) for Change will make fundamental changes on the farm. These changes are very likely to improve the farm business's financial health and support farming becoming or remaining the applicant's primary income.</p> <p>The Idea(s) for Change are very likely to improve the business's viability, profitability, and capacity to repay debt through cash flow.</p> <p><b>AND</b> The applicant intends farming to be the primary source of income, and the farm business is very likely to support a sufficient salary to achieve that.</p>	20-25
<p>The proposed Idea(s) for Change will make fundamental changes on the farm. These changes will probably improve the farm business's financial health and support farming becoming or remaining the applicant's primary income.</p> <p>The Idea(s) for Change will probably improve the business's viability, profitability, and capacity to repay debt through cash flow.</p> <p><b>AND</b> The applicant intends farming to be the primary source of income, and the farm business will probably support a sufficient salary to achieve that.</p>	12-19
<p>The proposed Idea(s) for Change will make significant changes on the farm. These changes might improve the farm business's financial health and support farming becoming or remaining the applicant's primary income, but there are some doubts.</p> <p>The Idea(s) for Change might improve the business's viability, profitability, and capacity to repay debt through cash flow, but there are some doubts.</p> <p><b>AND</b> The applicant intends farming to be the primary source of income, and the farm business might support a sufficient salary to achieve that.</p>	5-11
<p>The proposed Idea(s) for Change will make insignificant changes on the farm. These changes will probably not improve the farm business's financial health and support farming becoming or remaining the applicant's primary income.</p> <p>The Idea(s) for Change will probably not improve the business's viability, profitability, and capacity to repay debt through cash flow.</p> <p><b>OR</b> The applicant may not intend for farming to be the primary source of income, and/or the farm business will probably not support a sufficient salary to achieve that.</p>	0-5

*Other Conditions = 10 points*

These points should be added cumulatively for this section

The degree of development pressure on the farm operation, the percentage of the operated farmland that is owned by the applicant, and the potential environmental and community economic development benefits derived from the proposed change.

Description	Point Range
The potential environmental, community, and economic development benefits derived from the proposed Idea(s) for Change. Greater points will be awarded to Idea(s) for Change which could offer broader impacts.	0-4
The degree of development pressure on the farm operation. Greater points will be awarded to farmland under greater development pressure. Development Pressure, in the form of conversion or fragmentation, may come from residential development, energy-generating infrastructure, utilities and rights of way, etc.	0-4
The percentage of the land the farm business operates on that is owned by the applicant. Greater points will be awarded to applicants who own a greater portion of the farmland that the farm business operates on.	0-2

**3.2. Other Considerations**

Regarding the proposed funds requested and the proposed work, the Grant Review Team will also consider:

- the degree to which the project represents a good return for the investment (money, time)
- whether the project work and cost estimates (tasks & budget) are reasonable for the expected outcomes
- the amount and quality of proposed matching funds or services.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: RFA Terms and Definitions

**Agricultural Products** Fresh, or to be processed, food, fiber, or horticultural products grown on the farm, with the intent that the product be sold or otherwise generate income. Agricultural products produced on the farm may include the growing and harvesting of some specialty forest products, such as firewood processing, but may not include the products of a business engaged primarily in the growing, harvesting or processing of trees for the purpose of producing pulp or other materials used in paper manufacturing or wood manufacturing. An agricultural product may also include aquacultural products, so long as they are raised on the farm.

**Applicant** An eligible Farm Owner/Operator (see [Eligibility](#)) that is applying for Phase 1 Business Planning Assistance.

**Business Plan** A document that identifies changes in farm management practices and investments in equipment and property that would increase the profitability and net worth of the farm (vitality). A typical plan identifies ways to increase on-farm income through such methods as improved management practices, direct marketing, and value-added initiatives; and describes current operations and future plans for the business, including but not limited to sections on mission/vision, legal organization, management team, product descriptions, market research, market promotion, customer profiles, financial statements, financial analysis of planned changes in the business and long-term goals for the business.

**Capital** Cash or goods used to generate income by investing in a business, and/or the net worth of a business as in the amount by which its assets exceed its liabilities and/or the money, property, and other valuables that collectively represent the wealth of the business.

**Commissioner** The Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

**DACF/Department** The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

**FAME** Finance Authority of Maine: a quasi-independent state agency that supports economic and workforce development in Maine. Successful applicants to the Phase 2 program are eligible to apply to the Agricultural Marketing Loan Fund established under [Title 10, section 1023-J](#) and administered FAME.

**Farm Business** Agricultural products grown or produced on the farm are being sold commercially and the farm has documentation of gross and net farm income, expenses, net worth and farm debt.

**Farm Vitality** An increase in long-term, maintainable farm profitability and net worth.

**FFF** Maine Farms for the Future Program

**FY2025** Fiscal year 2025, beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024- June 30, 2025

**Idea(s) for Change** Ideas the Applicant proposed to research to improve Farm Vitality

**Land in Agricultural Use** Land that is currently being used to grow agricultural, horticultural, and silvicultural products.

**Maine Farms for the Future Business Plan Development Program/ Phase 1** A grant program that offers awards to develop written business plans, including a description of (a) proposed well-researched Idea(s) for Change.

**Maine Farms for the Future Investment Support Program to Implement a Business Plan/ Phase 2** A grant program that offers cash awards and access to low-interest loans awards implement (an) Idea(s) for Change. To be eligible for the program, applicants must have been awarded a Phase 1 grant and completed their business plan. To be eligible for the cash award, applicants must own at least 5 acres of land and sign a 7-year agreement to protect it. More information about the program can be found at the [DACF Farms for the Future website](#).

**Review Panel** A panel appointed by the DACF Commissioner to review applications and make grant funding recommendations to the Commissioner.

**RFA** Request for Applications

**Selected Farm** A farm that previously applied and was selected for Phase 1 between PRIOR FOUR ROUNDS.

**Service Provider** Including but not limited to, individuals, private organizations, public organizations and agencies of the State, marketing consultants, accounting firms, business support organizations, farm support organizations, and other organizations that the Department determines may provide valuable services such as, but not limited to, analyzing markets or developing financial data and instruction or classroom training in economics and business planning for the owner or operator of a farm.

**Services Package** A number of specific tasks to be accomplished by a team of Service Providers and the owner or operator of the selected farm to develop a Business Plan. Services may include, but are not limited to, analyzing markets, developing financial data, creating production or processing efficiencies and registration for instruction or classroom training in economics and business planning for the owner or operator of the farm. All tasks must result in planning potential changes of the farm's production, management or marketing practices and investments in equipment and/or property that would increase the future profitability and net worth (vitality) of the farm.

**State** State of Maine

## APPENDIX B: General Provisions

- 1) From the time this RFA is issued until award notifications are made, all contact with the State regarding this RFA must be made through the RFA Coordinator identified on the cover page of this RFA. No other person/State employee is empowered to make binding statements regarding this RFA. Violation of this provision may lead to disqualification from the application process at the State's discretion.
- 2) The Issuance of the RFA does not commit the Department to issue an award or to pay expenses incurred by an Applicant in preparing a response to the RFA. This includes attendance at personal interviews or other meetings, where applicable.
- 3) All applications must adhere to the instructions and format requirements outlined in the RFA and all written supplements and amendments (such as the Summary of Questions and Answers) issued by the Department.
- 4) Applicants will take careful note that in evaluating an application submitted in response to this RFA, the Department will consider materials provided in the application, information obtained through interviews/presentations (if any), and internal Departmental information of previous contract history with the Applicant (if any). The Department also reserves the right to consider other reliable references and publicly available information in evaluating the Applicant's experience and capabilities.
- 5) The application must be submitted by a person authorized by the Applicant.
- 6) The RFA and the awarded Applicant's application, including all appendices, attachments, or updated documents requested by the Department will be the basis for the final contract, as determined by the Department.
- 7) Following the announcement of an award decision, all submissions in response to this RFA will be public records, available for public inspection pursuant to the State of Maine Freedom of Access Act (FOAA) ([1 M.R.S. § 401](#) et seq.).
- 8) The Department, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to recognize and waive minor informalities and irregularities found in applications received in response to the RFA.
- 9) All applicable laws, whether or not herein contained, shall be included in this reference. It shall be the Applicant's responsibility to determine the applicability and requirements of any such laws and to abide by them.

## APPENDIX C: Sample Scoresheet for Review Panelists

### Threshold Criteria

Criteria	Yes/No
Applicant is eligible.	
Application was complete and on time.	
Application was formatted correctly.	

### Scoring Rubric and Weights

Criteria	Max Points	Score
Management Capacity: “Can you manage your business <u>and</u> implement your Idea for Change?”	/20	
Physical Resource Base: “Do you own, have access to, or have plans to access sufficient physical resources to support the success of your farm business?”	/20	
Farm Financial Health & Ability to Transform: “Is the farm in suitable financial health to take on a new direction?”	/25	
Idea(s) for Change: “What is the idea you’d like to explore if awarded FFF support?”	/25	
Other Conditions: Development pressure; environmental, economic, and community benefits; farmland owned by applicant	/10	

Questions, Strengths and Weaknesses: