



Maine Healthy Soils Program Soil Health Implementation Grant Questions and Answers Summary

Written Questions Deadline	March 3, 2026 no later than 12:00 noon, local time Submit all questions via online submission
Application Deadline	March 17, 2026 , no later than 12:00 noon, local time. To apply, visit our program webpage.

The Question and Answer Summary below includes all questions asked and answered during the Information Session held on February 18, 2026 and all written questions submitted through the on-line form as of 12:00 noon on March 3, 2026.

- Where can I access materials and information for applying to this grant?
 - Instructions on how to apply are provided in the Request for Applications (RFA) document on the Maine Healthy Soils Program [website](#).
- Do I submit the application workbook as part of my application package?
 - NO. The application workbook is a tool to help you prepare your application package. You are REQUIRED to submit your application through the online form. The link for the online form is available on the first page of the Request for Applications (RFA) document available on the program website.
- Besides the online form, what are the other components of my application package?
 - All applicants are REQUIRED to submit at least a budget template and a farm map as supplemental documentation. Depending on what you are applying for, you may also need to submit vendor quotes, soil health tests, and soil health management plans.
- How do I know what supplemental documentation I need to submit?
 - Use the RFA and the application workbook to determine which documentation you need to submit.
- How do I submit supplemental documentation?
 - You must email supplemental documentation to matthew.boucher@maine.gov using the subject line ARDSHIG26 Supplemental Files – [YOUR FARM'S NAME].
- If I am offered grant funding, am I guaranteed to receive the amount I requested?
 - NO. You may be offered less funding depending on how many applications are selected for funding.
- How many applicants are you expecting this funding cycle?

- Last year we received 71 applications, this year we expect 75 – 100 applications.
- Is soil health testing the same as soil nutrient testing?
 - NO. While soil health testing includes some of the standard nutrient tests, it also includes evaluation of biological and physical properties. Please review Section 2B of the RFA to best understand what tests are required for your data to qualify as a soil health test.
- Is soil health testing required to be eligible to apply for this grant?
 - NO. If you have not completed soil health testing, you must include funds for soil health testing in your budget.
- Can soil be imported as part of a drainage project for grading.
 - YES. Soil imported to the farm site for the purpose of drainage or other earthwork is allowed. Importing soil to use for agricultural production is an unallowable expense.
- Do Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMP) count as soil health management plans?
 - NO. Submission of a CNMP or other extraneous documents may result in a reduced score for application completeness, per the RFA.
- My farm does 5 acres of mixed vegetables for CSA. For the farm map, do you want me to break up the annotations by field, or is it ok to provide a single annotation for the whole farmed area.
 - In this situation, break up the farmed area into management units. If you have 1 acre of high tunnels and 4 acres of open field, create two annotations, one for each. If different areas of open field are managed differently, add more annotations.
- I rotate my fields between pasture and hay, how should I label my map?
 - You may state on the map that all fields are rotated between pasture and hay, but mark what each field is currently being used for or will be used for in 2026.
- For equipment, I am going to search for used items, how should I include that in my budget?
 - You are highly encouraged to price out a new piece of equipment, given the chance that the used equipment will no longer be available when contracts are finalized. If you earn a grant award and find a cheaper option, you may work with the RFA coordinator to navigate that change. You may include in your application that you plan to search for a used piece of equipment. If a new piece of equipment exceeds the \$65k maximum, state that you intend to self-fund the rest of the purchase if you cannot find a used option. Make sure your budget does not exceed \$65k.
- If I am renting equipment multiple times throughout a season, but each rental is below \$2000, do I need to provide a vendor quote?
 - For rentals in a single season that will exceed \$2,000, you must provide a vendor quote, even if a single rental event is less than \$2,000.
- Do I need to include signed lease agreements in my application?
 - NO.
- I want to renovate a pasture, but to do so I would have to move my animals to my hay ground, forcing me to purchase hay. Would the purchase of hay be an eligible expense?
 - YES because this is a cost associated with resting and rehabbing a field.
- If we share fields with another farm, do we need to include how the other farm uses the fields as a secondary or tertiary use?

- NO, focus your application on your operation and your use of the land.
- Part of our plan for these funds is to increase the size of our pasture from 2 to 10 acres. Which number do we enter into the application for primary use of the farmland?
 - 2 acres, explain in your application that your goal is to expand it to 10.
- If my management units have different primary soil health constraints, how do I explain that in my application.
 - When selecting soil health constraints, your primary constraint should be the one that affects the most amount of your farmland. If a subset of your farmland faces a unique problem, that should be your secondary soil health constraint.
- If partial awards are offered, who determines how the funding is distributed.
 - If we offer you a partial award, we will work together during the contract preparation phase to ensure the funds are distributed across categories according to your needs.
- Do you have more details on working with an ag service provider to get a soil health management plan?
 - Soil health management plans are still relatively new, it is a service that the Maine Healthy Soils Program will eventually offer, but right now, your primary avenue for getting a management plan is through USDA – NRCS or a certified TSP. While it is required to submit if you have one, you are not scored negatively for not having one.
- How much should I budget for soil health testing if I have not completed MHSP soil health testing?
 - Roughly \$150 per sample.
- How many samples should I budget for for soil health testing?
 - Consider how many management units you have. For example, if you have 300 acres on 5 different soil types, I would consider 5 samples. If you have high tunnels and field vegetables, I would consider 2 samples.
- For silvopasture, are there certain practices that need to be implemented?
 - No, you can approach it in the way that works best for you and your operational needs.
- How should we navigate tariffs if importing a piece of equipment?
 - Include the cost of tariffs in your funding request. If the tariff fluctuates, we will have to address that in the contract.
- If I don't get an award, how can I get feedback to improve for next time?
 - Reviewer feedback is available upon request, you may email the RFA coordinator. I also offer 1 on 1 meetings that you can schedule on the MHSP website, and those can be used to discuss grant writing for future opportunities.
- Is there anywhere I can go to see previous projects?
 - The MHSP website has a list of awardees from 2025, but not project summaries at this time.
- I raise goats for dairy production. For my primary use, do I enter Pasture-Dairy or Pasture-Small Ruminants?
 - Pasture – Small Ruminants
- Can we cost-share a piece of equipment?

- If you are requesting funds for equipment that exceed the \$65k maximum, you should describe in you application how you intend to make up the difference.
- What type of contractor should I get a quote from for a drainage project?
 - Many contractors that do general earthwork would be able to provide drainage installation. I encourage you to call around in your area, and if ask for recommendations if your contacts do not do drainage projects.
- If I have poultry and sheep sharing the same acreage for my secondary and tertiary land use should I enter that number twice or put half in each?
 - Put half in each. For example, on a 2 acre pasture - If your secondary use is pasture-small ruminants and your tertiary use is pasture-poultry, and you follow the small ruminant with the poultry, then put 1A for your secondary and 1A for your tertiary.
- How would I categorize a cut-and-carry mulch system in the soil health practices listed on the application?
 - Green mulch
- I lease land to other farmers and I received a SHIG award last year, can the farmers leasing my land apply for SHIG this year?
 - YES, so long as they are a separate farm operation.
- I do not have Microsoft office and therefore cannot open the workbook or the budget template, what do I do?
 - You are able to open these files using Google Docs and Google Sheets. Be sure to save the Google sheet as a .xlsx file before submission. Google Sheets will not be accepted.
- We use a Farm Management System that has maps that we use throughout the season. These maps have a color coded legend for crops as well as a second list of the acres per field. Is this sufficient?
 - You may use these maps, make sure that your fields are outlined, and include the required annotation. If you grow mixed vegetables and the map breaks it down into finer categories than we request, please include the overarching category (mixed vegetables CSA, mixed vegetables wholesale, etc.) somewhere on the map.
- I don't yet see the questions/recording from the Information Session held on 2/18. Am I missing it?
 - While we will make every effort to update the Q&A and post it weekly, time constraints may not allow us to do so. A final Q&A summary will be posted by 3/10/2026.
- If poor drainage is our primary concern, should I select Soil Water Dynamics as my soil health constraint?
 - Soil water dynamics would be an appropriate constraint to select for poor drainage, though other constraints such as compaction can cause poor drainage, do your best to identify the cause behind the poor drainage and select what is most appropriate.
- The formula for the total summary in the budget template (G77) appears to not include the Materials subtotal in G38. Is this a mistake or are the materials not part of the total cost?
 - Materials SHOULD be included in the total cost, an updated spreadsheet has been uploaded to the [program website](#).

- I have a Solvita Nexus Soil Health Report completed by Matt Boucher in July of 2025. I believe this meets the standards described for a soil health test per the requirements of the grant, with two exceptions. There is no measurement of "soil protein", as described on page 8 of the RFA, and there is no explicit description of "soil texture", also described on page 8, unless that is synonymous with "soil type" or "soil classification". Can soil protein be inferred from the test results in my Solvita report, or should by grant proposal include funding for additional testing to find that value?
 - If you completed soil health testing through the Maine Healthy Soils Program, then your report contains all required tests. Soil protein is equivalent to Soil Amino-N and soil texture results are provided on the final page of the test report.
- I have a Solvita Nexus Soil Health Report completed by Matt Boucher in July 2025. This report includes a Goal Setting exercise titled "Soil Health Management Planning." Do the accompanying charts, if completed for each of my management areas, constitute a Soil Health Management Plan per the requirements of the grant? If not, can you offer guidance for budgeting a Soil Health Management Plan, akin to the estimate of \$150 per sample for soil health testing listed on page 3 of the Q&A summary?
 - NO. You do not need to budget for a soil health management plan unless your explicit goal is to design one as a part of this grant. Management plans need to be designed and signed off on in collaboration with an ag service provider to qualify according to the RFA. Currently, you are encouraged to reach out to your local USDA – NRCS office if you are interested in soil health management planning. You will not be scored negatively for the absence of a soil health management plan.
- We do our soil testing through one of our fertilizer companies, Nutrien. Does that still count for bonus points?
 - NO.
- We farm 70 acres total, with our products being split between retail through our farm stand and wholesale. Those numbers fluctuate based on the yield, quality, and timing of our harvests. How would you prefer we answer the questions regarding how our acres are used. Can we say 70 for Primary, Secondary, and Total and just explain that we always try to stock our stand first, and seconds quality or excess poundage go to wholesale? Or, would you prefer we split the acreage between Retail and Wholesale based on historical revenue?
 - Split the acreage between Retail and Wholesale based on historical revenue, to the best of your ability.
- Can labor toward writing our Soil Health plan be included in the budget?
 - If you are requesting funds to design a soil health management plan with an ag service provider, you should request a quote from a vendor and include that in your budget. You should NOT budget labor/wages for an individual on staff to design/complete the plan.
- The amount of land on our farm that we're actively farming, and will be farming in 2026, is less than one acre. The question on acreage devoted to primary farm use says to use a single number. Should we put 1, or use a decimal number smaller than 1 (i.e. 0.75)?
 - Use a decimal smaller than 1. If you are farming 0.75 acres, then enter 0.75.

- Our acreage for primary/secondary/etc. uses won't add up to one acre but we do have more than one acre of land on our farm. How can we prove that we meet the land access requirements in the application so we're not disqualified?
 - By applying to the grant, you are certifying that you have access to at least an acre of farmable land.
- Should the total acreage listed for primary/secondary/etc. uses reflect what we are currently farming, or should it include what we plan to open up to farming in 2026 and beyond?
 - Your total acreage should reflect the acreage that you farmed in 2025. Explain elsewhere in your application that your plan is to open additional acreage.
- I cannot open the Application Workbook or Budget Template in Google drive. When I try to upload them it says "file unreadable." Can you suggest how to open these in Google drive?
 - We have posted a how-to on the [program website](#) for opening the budget template in Google Sheets. You should follow the same procedure for opening the workbook in Google Docs. Remember, the workbook is not to be submitted as part of your application package, you must submit your answers through the online form.
- Our primary and secondary uses of each field (between hay production and pasture) may change over the 3-yr period of the grant. Are we supposed to list the number of acres planned for each use just for 2026?
 - List the acreage as it was for field season 2025.
- If we plan to convert a hayfield to pasture for one growing season in order to make up for a pasture that we are taking out of production for re-seeding, should we count the acreage of that hayfield as having a primary use of hay or pasture?
 - Categorize the acreage to be converted as it was used in 2025, and describe in your application how the land use will change.
- Since we manage our farm as a team, is it permissible to answer the question about experience with reference to more than one team member?
 - YES
- Our soil test is over three years old, done by Logan Labs, nor does it contain the all the necessary details. I believe we're in line for a visit and soil test from DACF, but uncertain of when. Also need to know cost so that can be added to budget. Thank you.
 - The RFA suggests budgeting \$150 per sample for soil health testing. Do NOT submit any soil health test data that is older than 3 years, as it may lead to a reduced score for application completeness, per the rubric provided in the RFA.
- Is the purchase of a forestry mulcher/subsoiler attachment for our tractor an allowable cost for the purpose of establishing additional field acreage for our crop rotation?
 - YES. Be explicit with how a tool like a forestry mulcher will help you improve your farm's soil health. Remember, the funds you request should be used to improve the soil of the land you farm, if it is ambiguous how your request will accomplish that, you may be at risk of losing points.
- If our project budget is higher than \$65,000, are we still eligible for this grant, assuming we provide proof of funds & pay the remainder out of pocket?
 - YES. Do not request more than \$65,000 in your project budget, but describe how you you plan to pay for elements that are not fully funded by the grant.

- In identifying how each field is used, should we say "Mixed vegetable retail (farm stand)/ Mixed vegetable wholesale" for all fields because we used harvests for both, or do we have to try to separate it out based on historical revenue. The amount of product going to each of those channels changes from harvest to harvest and would be difficult to parse out.
 - Split the acreage between Retail and Wholesale based on historical revenue, to the best of your ability.
- For labor as an allowable cost, can you be more specific about what kind of labor. For example, would labor of an employee to help record keep, correspond, and write and assemble a Soil Health Plan count?
 - You may request labor to support soil health work on the farm in any capacity. IF you aim to improve your farm's soil health management by hiring an individual to help with planning and implementation, that is allowable. However, a soil health management plan must be written in collaboration with an ag service provider, any funds you request to complete a soil health management plan should be considered a contract service for the purposes of the budget line-items.
- Re resting fields, will the grant pay a specific amount of dollars per acre to pause use of a field or portion of field and that is how we budget that line item?
 - NO, this grant program does not provide funds for lost income caused by field rest. Future. MHSP funding initiatives will address that gap.
- I am trying to browse cover crops on the cover crop selector tool available on the MHSP website, but am having trouble making it work, any suggestions?
 - To browse cover crops, navigate the selector tool site, select Maine on the map, and then select 'browse cover crops' at the bottom of the page. That should take you to a page with images of cover crops and a little 'details' button below each image. Click the 'details' button and a window should pop up, that will contain all sorts of information, including seeding rates, different uses, and types of soils that the cover crop performs well in.
- Are hand-scale tools allowable costs?
 - YES.
- What types of contract services might someone request funds for?
 - In the past, applicants have requested funds for drainage installation, soil testing, rental equipment, and direct consulting support.