

FINANCIAL SUPPORT - U.S.A.

Looking for funding to support your farming education? In the vast and diverse landscape of the United States of America, from the federal to even the county level, options may exist for growers that are seeking financial assistance.

When it comes to growing your education as a farmer, and participating in a program like The Market Gardener's Masterclass, to find ways to support your registration fees, we recommend using the following practices as a guide – ultimately, connecting with the following resources will expand your network of support, which is never a bad thing!

1) Build your case

In order to find the appropriate program or area of assistance, it's best to know what you really need to accomplish your goals! As most grant programs will request a business case for how your project intends to bolster your profitability/production goals, etc., take the time to think about this and write everything out – by really envisioning the step by step process, you'll likely uncover new needs and opportunities as well.

2) Learn more about available funding programs:

Government Funding:

As a substantial amount of funding for U.S. farmers is granted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), take some time to peruse the existing federal agencies to learn more about which areas have available financial support:

- [Benefits.Gov](#)
- [USDA - Farm Service Agency](#) - see their National Program list (with deadlines) [here](#).
- [US Farmers.Gov](#) - On this page, you can find your local service centre by scrolling down and indicating your state and county. This will help you get connected to a representative to discuss your business development.
- [USDA Council for Native American Farming and Ranching](#)
- [USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture](#) - NIFA administers federal funding to address farming issues impacting people's daily lives and the future of the country. You can review funding options [here](#).
- [USDA National Resources Conservation Services \(NRCS\)](#) - Farmers can receive financial assistance from NRCS to make improvements to their land. Also, did you know there is a federal program – the Environmental Quality Incentives Program– to support those that are transitioning to certified organic practices? [See here](#) to find your nearest office and inquire about the opportunity.
- [USDA New Farmers](#) - if you are just getting started in agriculture, this is a central resource to learn of key programs and opportunities. This includes [opportunities for veterans](#) as well.
- [USDA - Rural Development](#) - offers grants, loans, technical assistance and research to help rural farms and cooperatives succeed. Learn more about their business development grants [here](#).
- [USDA-SARE - Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Grants](#) - The USDA has partnered with regional chapters of the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) to provide funding for on-farm

research demonstrations, marketing innovations, value added activities and other projects. To find out more, [see here](#) and click on the specific region in the upper right hand corner to learn what may be available to you.

- [U.S. Small Business Administration](#)

If you want some further guidance, [here's a helpful resource](#) provided by the USDA's National Agricultural Library.

Not currently farming but hoping to start a farm business? [See here](#) for a helpful guide for writing your plan. Check out your local department of labour to identify resources that may support your business development.

Private Funding Opportunities:

There is funding issued from private institutions, organizations and companies as well, so make sure to look into the different opportunities that are available.

- [Farmer Veteran Fellowship Fund](#) provides veterans with awards ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000 to make purchases they have identified will make a crucial difference in the launch of their farm business.
- [Hoosier Beginning Farmer Scholarship](#) - a yearly grant that administers \$5K to farmers entering year 3-10 of their operation.
- [Lakewinds Organic Field Fund](#) is an annual fund that provides funding support to farmers working on the development and sustainability of organic production.
- [Young Farmer Grant](#) issued annually by the National Young Farmers Coalition and Chipotle.

Social Justice in Agriculture

To ensure that more grants are supporting equitable access to agricultural careers and represent people of all racialized and gender identities, funding programs may also specify preference for applicants representing Black,

Indigenous or non-Black People of Color, or those that identify as Women or Queer farmers.

Some of these programs include:

- [Acres of Ancestry Initiative/Black Agrarian Fund](#)
- [Black Farmer Fund \(NY-specific\)](#)
- [Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance](#)
- [USDA programs for Minority and Women Farmers](#) (government)

We will continue to build this list as we identify more opportunities. If you have one to recommend, please let us know by writing to lucia@themarketgardener.com

3) Connect with your local agricultural extension specialist

Feeling overwhelmed by the number of different programs options, and don't know where to start? Connect with your local extension agent to help you with the next steps.

But what's an extension agent, you ask? More than 100 colleges and universities offer extension services across the country. Extension agents can provide you with education and research-based information about agriculture, along with guidance on available government programs and requirements indicated by your state's department of agriculture. They will be familiar with what's available in your region, along with the more specific details that will help you decide which pathway is best for you.

Not sure where to find one? [See here to find the nearest office](#) in your region.

Once you connect, here are some questions to ask:

- What programs are available for small-scale growers managing mixed

vegetable production for direct markets?

- Do you know of any services or support for farmer training expenses? If so, what are the conditions? Specify if you are a beginning farmer.
- What are the eligibility requirements for these programs?

4) Connect with your local/organic farming organization

Ah yes, farming nongovernmental organizations, community-based non-profits, and more! Many of these highly active groups are leading projects that advocate for progressive change in the dominant U.S. agricultural system. They often function as critical community hubs for both networking and learning and many typically offer events, either in-person or online, to share knowledge, raise awareness and build new connections. Find the options nearest you!