

Five Places to Look For Farm Grants

If you're like many small-scale beginning farmers, you've stared at a certain piece of your property longing to build a greenhouse, pond or a commercial kitchen, but haven't had the funds to make it happen. One solution to this problem is to seek out grants that will give you the access to capital needed to further your farm operation.

State and federal governments, along with colleges and other institutions, set aside funding to help farmers afford the things they need. Some of these grants are geared towards specific types of projects while others allow you to invent the project yourself. Some pay the full amount while others share the cost with you. Either way, there's money out there waiting to help you get your project going—the big question is where to find it. The sites and organizations below are good places to start.

1. Local Extension Agent

One of the best places to start your grant search is with your local cooperative extension agency. Every county has one available, and their services are primarily free. The county extension agent is a person appointed to assist farmers in finding USDA loans and certain agricultural grant programs. If you are at all interested in getting grants, this should be the first person you check with.

For many state and federal grants—especially those from the USDA, Environmental Quality Initiatives Program (EQIP) and Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)—the extension agent can tell you what's available now, what will be available in the near future, and how best to prepare yourself so that when grants do come available, you're ready. Although some people hesitate inviting the government into their operation, wait to pass judgement on these programs until after you've spoken with your extension agent, as some grants are less invasive than others. Even if none of their grant opportunities appeal to your needs, the county extension agent is an excellent person to remain in contact with for other farm help.

2. Grants.gov

The federal government has set up an entire website dedicated to helping people find grants. To get grant leads, sign up for the Grants.gov newsletter, which will give you reports on agencies like the NRCS, USDA, private organizations, and other farm and agriculture-related institutions. The beauty of these newsletters is that they not only tell you what the grants are and give you a variety to choose from, but they also send you the press release with the specific goals for those grants, helping you determine if it's the right fit for your operation. To choose the type of email alerts you want to receive, click "Manage Subscriptions" at the top of the home page.

3. Farm Aid

Well-known for fundraising concerts put on by Willie Nelson and other famous musicians, FarmAid.org is a network of more than 700 family farms across the U.S. and offers great resources through their Farm Aid Resource Network. Visit their website to peruse information on grants, loans, legal advice and much more. Interested farmers can sign up for their emails, call their hotline (1-800-FARM-AID) or email them directly at farmhelp@farmaid.org.

4. Philanthropy News Digest

[Philanthropy News Digest](#) constantly updates their site with grant release information and sends out customizable alerts. As with Grants.gov, you can register with the site and select which areas appeal to you. They will update you periodically when suitable grants come available.

5. Google Alerts

Last, but definitely not least. Myrisa Christy of the Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development suggests that anyone wanting to find grants sign up to receive [Google Alerts](#). Google Alerts is a customizable program set up by Google to send you emails about whatever phrase or keyword you're interested in, such as "grants for farmers." You also get to choose the frequency with which you receive them—daily, weekly, et cetera—and can even further customize them to fit your specifications (so you're not receiving emails about people named "Grant Farmer"). Make your notifications as specific as possible so you'll receive updates about grants within your state or even within your region, as there will inevitably be grants available in your area that are not available elsewhere. "If you don't know how to sign up for Google Alerts, Google it," Christy joked. Indeed, Google will take you right to where you need to go.

Find more help funding your farm from HobbyFarms.com:

- [6 Beginning Farmer Tips for Securing Farm Funding](#)
- [5 Steps to Writing a Farm Grant](#)
- [6 Ways to Make Money Outside of a Farmers' Market](#)
- [10 Tips for Crowdfunding Your Next Farm Venture](#)
- [Keep Your Farm In the Black with 6 Record-Keeping Tips](#)

About the Author: *Jesse Frost is a Kentucky farmer, blogger and author. He and his wife run a small, off-the-grid farm in southern Kentucky called [Rough Draft Farmstead](#), where they raise vegetables and livestock naturally.*