

FAQ — Farm & Ranch Transition Support Grant

What is the Role of the Navigator?

Navigators play a critical role in supporting farmers, ranchers, and landowners as they navigate the process of farm or ranch transfers. They act as guides and resources, helping applicants understand the intricacies of transfer processes, timelines, and requirements. In addition, Navigators assist in identifying specific needs related to transfer, conservation, or farm business continuity.

- Serve as a guide and support resource for farmers, ranchers, or landowners navigating a farm or ranch transfer.
- Help applicants understand transfer processes, timelines, and requirements.
- Assist in identifying needs related to transfer, conservation, or farm business continuity.
- Help arrange language translation support/services as needed; applicants should talk with their Navigator to coordinate specific translation services.

How does the Navigator help verify eligibility?

Navigators ensure applicants meet the eligibility requirements for the grant. This includes verifying that the applicant operates a for-profit farm or ranch, confirming that the land is permanently protected or actively undergoing protection via an agricultural conservation easement, and ensuring the applicant is engaged in a legitimate transfer process.

- Verify that the applicant operates a for-profit farm or ranch.
- Confirm that the land is permanently protected or in the active process of protection via an agricultural conservation easement (federal, state, or local easement programs are all eligible).
- Ensure the applicant is actively engaged in a legitimate transfer process.
- Confirm that the applicant has the capacity to receive and manage funds.

Why must applicants be actively working with a Land Transfer Navigator?

The Farm & Ranch Transition Support Grant is built around the idea that successful land transitions take time, trust, and a solid plan. Land Transfer Navigators help farmers and landowners clarify goals, build relationships, and map a realistic path to transfer and long-term land protection. Requiring applicants to be actively working with a Navigator helps ensure there is a clear, well-developed plan in place; that the project is ready to move forward; and that AFT can coordinate early in the process. This approach keeps the grant closely tied to the Land Transfer Navigators program and supports the long-term, relationship-based work that land transitions require.

Does the land have to be permanently protected to be eligible?

Yes. To be eligible, the land must either already be permanently protected or be actively in the process of becoming permanently protected. The key requirement is the land's permanent protection status (or a verified path to permanent protection)—not the specific program through which that protection occurs.

- Eligible: land already under permanent protection (for example, a recorded agricultural conservation easement or other permanent protection instrument).
- Eligible: land with documentation showing it is actively moving through a process intended to result in permanent protection.
- Program-neutral: federal, state, local, and private pathways may qualify as long as they result in permanent protection.

What level of support can or should Navigators provide applicants?

Navigators offer different levels of support to applicants. They help applicants understand the grant application requirements and assist in defining a realistic project scope tied to land access or transfer. Navigators also provide clarity on professional services, infrastructure, or equipment eligible for funding.

- Help applicants understand the grant application requirements.
- Support applicants in defining a realistic project scope tied to land access or transfer.
- Provide clarity on professional services, infrastructure, or equipment eligible for funding.
- If language translation support/services are needed, applicants should talk with their Navigator to arrange the appropriate translation services.

Can Navigators submit the online application on behalf of a farmer/rancher applicant?

In most cases, the farmer/rancher applicant should be the primary owner of the online application. If technical limitations arise, the platform's Collaborator feature allows the application owner to invite another person (including a Navigator) to view and edit the application.

- Collaborators can view and edit an application, but they cannot submit forms in the platform.
- Final submission must be completed by the application owner.

Can a Navigator complete an application on behalf of a farmer/rancher, and when is that appropriate?

Generally, the farmer/rancher applicant should complete and own their application. A Navigator may help draft responses, organize materials, and (if needed) enter information into the online form with the applicant's knowledge and explicit consent, but the applicant should review all entries for accuracy and must remain the decision-maker throughout the process.

- It may be appropriate when the applicant faces technology barriers (limited internet access, limited computer access, platform access issues) or accessibility needs that make self-entry difficult.
- It may be appropriate when time constraints are significant (for example, an approaching deadline) and the Navigator is transcribing information the applicant has provided verbally or in writing.

- It is not appropriate for a Navigator to complete an application without the applicant's involvement, review, and approval of the final content.
- When in doubt, use the platform's Collaborator feature so the applicant remains the application owner and can review and submit.

How do Navigators help applicants align with grant requirements?

Navigators advise applicants on what constitutes a strong project justification. They identify any weaknesses in the applicant's proposed budget or timeline and ensure that proposed expenses are directly connected to transfer progress or land protection.

- Advise applicants on what constitutes a strong project justification.
- Identify any weaknesses in an applicant's proposed budget or timeline.
- Ensure applicants tie proposed expenses directly to transfer progress or land protection.

How can Navigators support applicants in reporting and follow-up?

Navigators support applicants by helping them track milestones and document progress throughout the project. They also assist applicants in preparing for their one-year reporting obligations, ensuring that all necessary documentation is ready and complete.

- Support applicants in tracking milestones and documenting progress.
- Assist applicants in preparing for their one-year reporting obligations.
- Where technology may be a barrier, assisting applicants to print, sign, and return their grant paperwork.
- Get project approval (pre-approval) before the applicant submits: contact the AFT Land Transfer Navigator (LTN) program team or the Brighter Future Fund grant team with a brief project summary (scope, proposed expenses, and timing), wait for AFT confirmation to proceed, and keep a copy of that confirmation in the applicant's records.

Pre-Approval Step: Communicating with AFT

Before submitting a proposal, the Navigator must contact a member of the AFT Land Transfer Navigator (LTN) program team or the Brighter Future Fund grant team. The Navigator is required to provide a brief summary of the project the applicant intends to propose. Applicants should only proceed with submitting a grant application after receiving confirmation from AFT. Documentation of this communication should be retained by the Navigator.

- Before an applicant submits a proposal, the Navigator must contact a member of the AFT Land Transfer Navigator (LTN) program team or the Brighter Future Fund grant team.
- The Navigator must provide a brief summary of the project that the applicant intends to propose.

- AFT staff will review the summary and confirm whether the applicant should move forward with submitting a grant application.
- Navigators should not advise applicants to proceed until they have received this confirmation from AFT.
- Documentation of this communication should be retained by the Navigator.

Additional Frequently Asked Questions

Can Navigators or Navigator organizations receive grant funds on behalf of an applicant?

- No. Grant funds can only be disbursed directly to the farmer, rancher, or landowner who is the applicant. Navigator organizations are not eligible to receive or hold funds on an applicant's behalf.

What is a Land Transfer Navigator, and how do I know if I am working with one?

- A Land Transfer Navigator is a person or organization that provides hands-on guidance to farmers, ranchers, and landowners as they plan and carry out a farm or ranch transition (for example: clarifying the transfer steps and timeline, identifying needed professional services, and helping ensure the project aligns with grant requirements). To confirm you are working with a Land Transfer Navigator, [check that your Navigator is listed on the LTN website](#) and that they are actively supporting your transition. Applicants should only move forward with an application after their Navigator has confirmed they are ready to apply and has coordinated the required pre-approval communication with AFT on the applicant's behalf.

Are projects that are already completed eligible for funding?

- No. Projects that are fully completed before the award letter is issued are not eligible. Only expenses incurred after the official award date may be considered eligible, unless otherwise approved by Brighter Future Fund staff.

Due to the nature of land transfer and access, some expenses may be incurred prior to the award. Applicants and Navigators are expected to confirm what, if any, expenses incurred before the award are eligible for inclusion in the project budget.

Can applicants begin spending money before receiving grant funds?

- If an applicant receives an award, they may begin incurring eligible expenses after the award letter is issued. Grant funds may reimburse those expenses as long as they align with the approved project.

Can more than one farmer apply for funding for the same tract of land?

- Yes. Two farmers may apply for support for the same tract when the applications are part of the same transfer—for example, one application from the outgoing farmer (seller/transferor) and one from the incoming farmer (buyer/transferee). Each application should clearly describe the

applicant's role in the transfer and include a project scope and budget that are distinct and appropriate for that role.

Can someone who has already received a grant apply again?

- In general, no—awardees must wait 12 months before applying again. The exception is when two separate applicants are part of the same transfer on one tract of land (for example, an outgoing owner and an incoming owner). In that case, each person may apply for their own, separate grant as long as each application clearly explains the applicant's role and includes a distinct project scope and budget appropriate to that role.

When are applications reviewed and when should applicants expect to hear back?

- Applications are reviewed on a rolling, quarterly basis. Applicants are typically notified within 90 days of the close of the quarter in which they applied.

Tips for a Strong Application

Start with required pre-approval from AFT

- Confirm your Navigator has received the required pre-approval with AFT before you begin drafting or submitting your application, and keep a copy of the confirmation in your records.

Connect every proposed expense to land transfer or land protection

- Build a budget that clearly links every cost to land access, transfer progress, or farmland protection, and add a brief note explaining the purpose of each line item.

Plan for grant funds to be paid directly to the eligible applicant

- Plan for funds to be disbursed directly to the farmer, rancher, or landowner applicant, and describe how any partners (including Navigator organizations) will support the work without receiving or holding grant funds.

Align your budget with the award date and eligible cost window

- Include only eligible expenses that will be incurred after the award letter date, and note the expected purchase/contract dates to show alignment with the grant timeline.

Describe a clear project scope, milestones, and timeline

- Strengthen your application with a clear project description, specific milestones, and a realistic timeline that shows what will happen, by whom, and when.

Document your land protection status and easement details

- Clearly describe the land protection status (permanently protected or actively in process) and include the easement details or current step in the protection process to demonstrate eligibility. Federal, state, and local easement programs are all eligible because they lead to permanent protection of the land.

Plan early for reporting and documentation

- Show readiness to manage the grant by outlining how you will track milestones, keep receipts and documentation, and complete the required one-year report.