



National  
Farmers  
Union

2023

# BEGINNING FARMER INSTITUTE

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# APPLICATION

National Farmers Union's Beginning Farmer Institute (BFI) is a free, year-long training program intended to improve the health of your farm or ranch business. The program is open to producers ages 18 and up and is inclusive of all operation types and scales of production.

Each cohort is selected through a competitive application process. If accepted, you will attend seminars, network with peers, pursue independent learning activities, and receive one-on-one technical assistance.

The program is structured around quarterly trainings led by experts in business management and the cooperative business model. During the ten weeks between trainings, participants complete up to four hours of assignments, including reviewing videos, completing self-assessments, and answering reflection questions.

Upon completion of the program, participants will be given a scholarship to attend NFU's Anniversary Convention in Phoenix, AZ. This event provides the opportunity to network with hundreds of Farmers Union members, hear from speakers about policy issues that impact farmers, and identify future leadership opportunities.

# PROGRAM OBJECTIVES



## **BUSINESS FORMATION**

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- Choose or maintain the appropriate business structure for your circumstances.
- Improve your process for tracking and managing assets put into your business



## **TAXATION**

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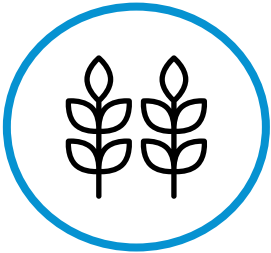
- Identify specific tax deductions available for your farm or ranch business.
- Develop a list of questions to bring to a CPA for assistance with your tax return.



## **ACCOUNTING**

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- Begin using your Balance Sheet as a management tool to make decisions about your business.
- Establish or improve your processes for calculating cost of production and cost of sales.



## **LAND**

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- Determine how much farm or ranch land you can afford to purchase or lease.
- Identify the steps required to create a succession plan for your operation.



## **LABOR**

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- Identify responsible labor practices for managing family, contractors, apprentices, and volunteers.
- Understand applicable laws governing wages, working hours, Worker's Compensation, and payroll taxes.



## **CREDIT**

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- Create or update your current month-by-month business cash flow budget.
- Identify sources of operating credit, credit for asset purchase or improvement, and credit for land acquisition.



## **BUSINESS PLANNING**

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- Develop or improve your farm or ranch business plan.
- Develop a list of questions for your insurance provider about getting coverage for your farm or ranch.

# APPLICATION PROCESS

"I still keep in touch with several members of my cohort and the cohorts before me today. My finances are dialed in. My growing practices are more successful. My opportunities for taking my role as farmer to larger audiences have begun to take off. I owe much of this growth to BFI."

—Alicia Razvi, Class of 2018



Thank you for your interest in NFU's Beginning Farmer Institute. Described below are the procedures for applying as well as the process we use to screen and select candidates for the program. Please read the directions carefully and be sure to return all required materials.

Each prospective participant must submit a complete application, including an essay on their farming or ranching experience and what they hope to achieve through this program. Those applying as a partnership must submit separate applications. In addition to the completed application and typed essay, each applicant must also include the following:

- A current resume, no longer than one page, that lists accomplishments.
- Two references in support of your candidacy for NFU's Beginning Farmer Institute. Please include their name, title, and contact information.

You may fill out the application at the end of this document and mail it with your supporting documents, or you can apply online at [nfu.org/bfi](http://nfu.org/bfi)

## APPLY ONLINE



OR

**SEND MATERIALS TO:**  
**NATIONAL FARMERS UNION**  
ATTN: BEGINNING FARMER PROGRAM  
**20 F ST NW, SUITE 300**  
**WASHINGTON, DC 20001**

**POSTMARK DEADLINE IS DECEMBER 1ST, 2022**

**Questions? Email Lisa Buckner at**  
**[lbuckner@nfudc.org](mailto:lbuckner@nfudc.org)**





A team of Farmers Union staff, leadership, and program alumni will review each application. All application content will be kept confidential. You will be notified of your admission status no later than March 1st, 2023. Acceptance is conditional upon your submission to and NFU review of a background check.

Participants must attend all programming in its entirety, including reporting punctually and completing homework assignments prior to each quarterly training. Three trainings will be hosted virtually on Zoom and one session will be hosted in-person. Each virtual training will last a total of four hours spread over two days. The in-person training will be hosted over the course of one weekend and will include farm tours, shared meals, and other social activities. Tentative dates are as follows:

- May 20-21, 2023 (virtual)
- July 29-30, 2023 (virtual)
- October 13-16, 2023 (in person, location TBD)
- January 6-7, 2024 (virtual)
- Optional: NFU Convention (Phoenix, AZ)

Participants who complete all the necessary requirements will be given a scholarship to the National Farmers Union Anniversary Convention. The scholarship will include travel, lodging, and most meals during the event.

We expect each BFI graduate to seek opportunities to mentor peers in their area, hold a local board position, or pursue other community leadership opportunities. NFU provides ongoing outreach and support to participants after the program concludes.

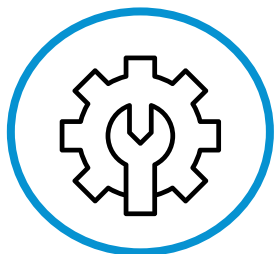


# PARTICIPANT BENEFITS



## **FARM COMMONS PRODUCER MEMBERSHIP**

This one-year membership puts ready-made legal knowledge at your fingertips through interactive and on-demand workshop series, resource libraries, and community forums



## **DIRECT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Between sessions, participants will have the opportunity to meet one-on-one with content-area experts including accountants, insurance agents, and food safety educators.



## **FARMERS UNION MEMBERSHIP**

Participants who are not currently Farmers Union members will receive a one-year membership, which offers benefits ranging from local networking and advocacy opportunities to discounts for farm apparel, equipment, and seeds.



## **FEARLESS FARM FINANCES**

We provide a free copy of this essential resource to all participants and facilitate an optional book club with other members of the BFI cohort.



## **TRAVEL STIPENDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS**

Stipends will be provided to assist with travel, lodging, and meal costs for those wishing to attend their state or regional Farmers Union convention. Additionally, all participants meeting program requirements will receive a scholarship to the National Farmers Union Anniversary Convention as described above.

# BEGINNING FARMER INSTITUTE APPLICATION

Are you applying as an individual or as a farm partnership? (e.g., with spouse, business partner, family member, etc.)

☐ Individual

☐ Partnership

*If applying as a partnership, please provide separate applications for each person and mail them in the same envelope. Keep in mind that space is limited, and all members of a partnership may or may not be admitted.*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Farm or ranch operation name, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a member of Farmers Union? (*desired, but not required*) ☐ Yes ☐ No

Current Farm Acreage: \_\_\_\_\_ Owned \_\_\_\_\_ Rented \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Employees: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of operation, check all that apply:

☐ Grain

☐ Dairy

☐ Cattle

☐ Poultry

☐ Vegetable

☐ Fruit

☐ Fiber

☐ Fish

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Sales channels, check all that apply:

☐ Farmers' market

☐ CSA

☐ Farm stand

☐ Wholesale

☐ Direct to institution, restaurant, or retail

☐ Co-op or food hub

☐ Contract

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you raise livestock? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, number of head: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you or have you ever been a member of a cooperative? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you participated in farm or ranch business management trainings in the past? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear about the Beginning Farmer Institute? \_\_\_\_\_

# BUSINESS BACKGROUND

The BFI program works best when we bring together participants from diverse backgrounds with shared learning objectives. Your responses will help us determine how to tailor this program to your current needs. Please answer honestly.

Type of operation, check all that apply:

- ☐ I own it by myself.      ☐ I own it with my spouse.      ☐ I own it with other family members.  
☐ My parents.      ☐ Someone else.      ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you formed a limited liability company or corporation for your business? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Is your farm organized as a non-profit entity? ☐ Yes ☐ No

How do you track your farm or ranch business cash, equipment, loans, income, and expenses? Check all that apply:

- ☐ In my check register      ☐ I keep receipts      ☐ Online software with limited functions      ☐ Excel  
☐ Software that can produce an Income Statement and Balance Sheet      ☐ I have a bookkeeper  
☐ None of the above      ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a Balance Sheet for your farm or ranch business? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you written a business plan for your farm or ranch?

- ☐ No, I do not know how to      ☐ No, I don't think this applies to me      ☐ No, I don't want to do this  
☐ Yes, but I didn't get very far or still need some help      ☐ Yes, and it is meaningful and useful  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you filed a tax return for your farm or ranch business? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, how did you file your tax return?

- ☐ Paid a tax preparer      ☐ Used software (e.g., TurboTax)      ☐ Filled out forms directly  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

# ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- With your application, please include a 2-3 page — typed and double-spaces — essay describing your current farm or ranch operation, how you envision your operation in 5 years, and how participating in BFI will help you achieve this.
- A current resume, no longer than one page, that lists accomplishments.
- Two references in support of your candidacy for NFU's Beginning Farmer Institute. Please include their name, title, and contact information.