



National
Farmers
Union

2025

BEGINNING FARMER INSTITUTE APPLICATION

National Farmers Union's Beginning Farmer Institute (BFI) is a free, ten-week intensive 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 ten weekly online trainings led by experts in farm and ranch business management and the cooperative business model. Each week, participants complete assignments, including reviewing 30 to 60 minutes of videos, completing self-assessments, answering reflection questions, and participating in a two-hour Q&A.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES



BUSINESS FORMATION

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



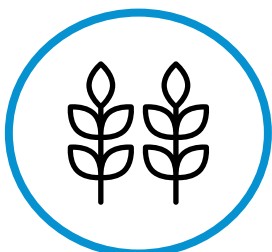
TAXATION

- 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

- 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

- 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

- 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

- 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

- 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



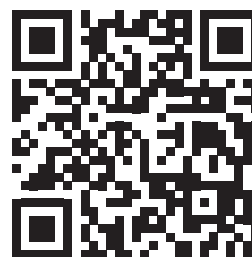
Thank you for your interest in NFU's Beginning Farmer Institute. Described below are the procedures for applying as well as the process we use to screen and select candidates for the program. Please read the directions carefully and be sure to return all required materials.

All application materials must be submitted in typed format. Applications may be printed and mailed or submitted online using the web-based version of the application available at: nfu.org/bfi

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. 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.
- A reference letter in support of your candidacy for NFU's Beginning Farmer Institute.

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 JULY 1ST, 2025

Questions? Email Lisa Buckner at
lbuckner@nfudc.org



A team of Farmers Union staff and 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 August 16th, 2024.

Participants must attend all programming in its entirety, including reporting punctually and completing homework assignments prior to each weekly session. These sessions will be hosted virtually and will last up to two hours. Participants who complete all the necessary requirements will be considered for an additional in-person session, which will include additional trainings, farm tours, and networking with Farmers Union leadership.

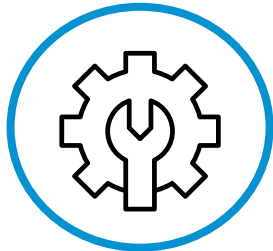
We expect each BFI graduate to seek opportunities to mentor peers in their area, hold a local board position, or pursue other community leadership opportunities. NFU provides ongoing outreach and support to participants after the program concludes.

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

Following the ten-week course, participants will have the opportunity to meet one-on-one with the instructor and ask questions about their individual situations.



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.

BEGINNING FARMER INSTITUTE APPLICATION

First Name:

Last Name:

Email:

Date of Birth:

Farm or ranch operation name, if applicable:

Mailing address:

City:

State:

ZIP code:

Is your operation a for-profit business? Yes: ☐ No: ☐

Have you been an owner or a key decision maker in your operation for at least two years? Yes: ☐ No: ☐

If you are an owner of your operation, have you filed your tax returns, reporting income or loss from the operation for at least two years?

☐ I am an owner and have filed for at least two years.

☐ I am an owner but have filed for less than two years.

☐ I am not an owner of the operation.

If your operation is a family operation, do you know how the operation's taxes are filed?

Yes: ☐ No: ☐ N/A: ☐

What is your current farm acreage, if applicable?

BEGINNING FARMER INSTITUTE APPLICATION

Do you currently own or rent your property?

Own:

☐

Rent:

☐

Both:

☐

How many people do you currently employ?

What is your type of operation? Check all that apply.

☐

Grain

☐

Poultry

☐

Fiber

☐

Dairy

☐

Vegetables

☐

Fish

☐

Cattle

☐

Fruit

☐

Bees

If you raise livestock, how many head?

What type of sales channels to you use? Check all that apply.

☐

Farmers'
Market

☐

Co-op /
Food Hub

☐

Farm Stand

☐

Direct to
institution,
restaurant,
or retail

☐

Wholesale

☐

CSA

☐

Contract

Have you ever been a member of a cooperative?

Yes:

☐

No:

☐

If yes, which co-op(s)?

Have you participated in a farm or ranch business management training in the past?

Yes:

☐

No:

☐

If yes, which training(s)?

How did you hear about the Beginning Farmer Institute?

Are you a member of Farmers Union? (desired, but not a requirement)

Yes:

☐

No:

☐

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

With your application, please include a 2-3 page — typed and double-spaced — 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.

Additionally, please include a resume and reference letter with your application.



nfu.org

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