

## **NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY**

### **LERAY MCALLISTER WORKING FARM AND RANCH FUND**

#### **2024 FUNDING CYCLE NOW OPEN**

**June 18, 2024**

#### **Overview:**

The purpose of the LeRay McAllister Working Farm and Ranch Fund is to conserve productive farm and ranch land through voluntary, incentive-based approaches on properties that will positively impact Utah's agricultural future, whether on its own or as part of a broader working landscape. This includes properties that preserve significant aspects of the State's agricultural heritage.

The program seeks to ensure the protection of vital farmland, promote sustainable agricultural practices, and safeguard the long-term viability of agricultural communities and markets in Utah. These conservation projects not only benefit individual landowners and the State's agricultural economy, but they also provide a wealth of benefits to the public by preserving scenic open space, and wildlife habitat, and maintaining critical ecosystem functions.

The Fund is administered by the Land Conservation Board, pursuant to Utah Code (UCA 4-46-301). The Board has the authority to adopt grantmaking rules and ranking criteria, and review completed applications for conservation easement funding, fee purchases of real property, and other related documents necessary to effectuate those transactions (UCA 4-46-302).

#### **Award Funding:**

**A total of \$1,000,000 was appropriated by the Legislature for 2024. Matching funds are required.** Please see the Grant Manual for details on matching fund requirements.

#### **Important Dates:**

- **June 18, 2024:** Funding Cycle Opens.
- **August 16, 2024, 4:59 PM:** Deadline to submit applications
- **Mid-October:** Grant Recipients are notified of the award and amount. The applicant will have two years from acceptance to implement the project.

#### **Applicant Eligibility:**

Eligible applicants must be a **qualified easement-holding entity**. A qualified easement-holding entity must have an organizational commitment to protect the conservation values of the easement and have the resources and expertise to enforce those restrictions in perpetuity.

This can include local entities (counties, cities, towns), UDAF, the Utah Department of Natural Resources and its divisions, Land Trusts, and charitable organizations that qualify as tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

If UDAF will be the holder of the proposed easement, the applicant must complete a pre-application consultation before applying. If another entity will hold the easement, they must convey the entity's eligibility and qualifications to hold and enforce the easement in perpetuity.

### **Review Process:**

Applications will be assessed based on criteria developed by UDAF and adopted by the Land Conservation Board, to objectively evaluate each proposal and rank them according to urgency, conservation impact, cost-effectiveness, and other factors. Once an application is received and deemed complete, UDAF staff will reach out to coordinate a site visit for members of the Land Conservation Board, where the applicants and landowners are encouraged to show off their projects. The Land Board will meet to discuss the individual applications and vote to make awards based on the recommendations of the Staff and Board. The Land Board may exercise its discretion in selecting projects for funding. Awards are voted on in open public meetings.

### **Ranking Criteria**

The Land Conservation Board has adopted Ranking Criteria which will enable them to make an objective determination of the project's merits, weighed against the other projects in the current cycle. Projects will be ranked based on the following:

- Local Support for the project
- Effect on housing affordability and diversity
- Adjacency and connectivity of the subject property with other conserved or working lands.
- Cost-effectiveness and project leverage
- Project Urgency
- Public benefit (doesn't necessarily mean public access)
- Impact on food production
- Impacts on water quality, wetlands, and riparian habitat
- Water rights and the willingness of the landowner to encumber the water to protect the agricultural viability and other conservation values of the property.
- Priority will be given to projects that protect prime soil, cropland, pastureland, grassland, and range land.

### **Eligible Costs**

- **Purchase of land or conservation easement**
- **Restoration of an already conserved property**
- **Purchase of land in fee (in limited circumstances – see Grant Manual)**

Note: Due diligence items cannot be included in the request in this funding cycle.

### **Eligible Costs for Restoration Projects:**

- project planning, mapping, and engineering
- wetlands delineation
- acquisition of water rights
- soils testing
- grading
- excavation
- channeling
- stabilization
- soil application
- revegetation, planting and seeding.

Applicants must prepare the project budget as accurately as possible. Due to limited funds, the Board discourages applicants from submitting requests for additional funds after a grant has been approved, although we retain the option to entertain an additional request if there is a compelling reason. We want to be clear to applicants that it is highly unlikely for an additional funding request to be granted for a previously approved project. This does not mean that applicants are discouraged from submitting subsequent applications for new projects or planned future phases of a previously funded project.

For more information, contact Jeremy Christensen, Land Conservation Program Manager, 385-441-4106, [jeremyc@utah.gov](mailto:jeremyc@utah.gov)

#### Application Link & Additional Info:

<https://ag.utah.gov/leray-mcallister-working-farm-and-ranch-fund/>

