

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

LeRay McAllister Working Farm and Ranch Fund

2025 Agricultural Conservation Easement Funding

Announcement Date: 6/1/2025

Application Deadline: Now Open Year-Round

Total Available Funding: \$1,000,000

Administered by: Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) Land Conservation Program: <https://ag.utah.gov/land-conservation-program/>

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SUMMARY:

The Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) is pleased to announce the availability of \$1,000,000 in grant funding through the LeRay McAllister Working Farm and Ranch Fund to support the permanent protection of agricultural lands through conservation easements.

This funding opportunity supports UDAF's mission to protect working farms and ranches that provide locally grown food, support Utah's rural economy, and preserve the state's agricultural heritage.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:

Eligible applicants include:

- Nonprofit land trusts,
- Local governments,
- Tribes, and
- Other eligible entities capable of holding and stewarding perpetual conservation easements.

Applicants must demonstrate the capacity to complete, monitor, and enforce agricultural conservation easements in accordance with state law and UDAF requirements.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS:

To be eligible, projects must:

- Protect active agricultural lands that are at risk of conversion or degradation;
- Involve willing landowners who are committed to the long-term stewardship of their land;

- Result in a perpetual conservation easement that meets UDAF and, if applicable, NRCS ACEP-ALE program standards;
- Demonstrate strong conservation value, such as soil quality, water availability, and proximity to other protected lands; and
- Leverage additional funding or in-kind contributions.

Projects that promote water conservation, preserve water rights, enhance wildlife habitat, or involve historically underserved agricultural producers are strongly encouraged.

FUNDING DETAILS:

Total Funding Available: \$1,000,000

Maximum Grant Request: \$500,000

Cost-Share Requirement: Preference will be given to projects with matching funds from NRCS, local governments, private donations, or other sources.

Funds may only be used for the direct purchase of conservation easements. Transaction cost assistance is available through the UDAF Agricultural Resource Development Loan Program (ARDL): <https://ag.utah.gov/farmers/agriculture-loan-programs/>

APPLICATION PROCESS:

Applications are accepted year-round on an ongoing basis, with review and award decisions made twice per year. Projects received by the biannual deadlines will be considered in that batch review period.

Batching Periods (NEW for 2025 & 2026)

- Fall Batch: Deadline August 31 (Beginning 2025)
- Spring Batch: Deadline March 31 (Beginning 2026)

Review & Award Timeline (NEW for 2025 & 2026)

- Staff Review & Site Visit Window → Sept-Oct (2025) / April–May (2026)
- Board Review & Final Decision → November (2025) / June (2026)
- Award Notification → December 1 (2025) / July 1 (2026)

Application materials and guidance can be found at:

https://ag.utah.gov/leray-mcallister-working-farm-and-ranch-fund_trashed/program-information/

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Agricultural productivity and viability of the property;
- Risk of conversion to non-agricultural use;
- Conservation values and natural resources protected;
- Readiness of the project and likelihood of timely completion;

- Degree of match funding and cost-effectiveness; and
- Applicant's qualifications

QUESTIONS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:

Applicants are encouraged to contact the Land Conservation Program with questions or to schedule a pre-application consultation.

Contact:

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