**Beginning Farmer Application Packet**

**Overview**

There is one application cycle per year: Application deadline November 30th. The application process is expected to last at least three months from initial contact to final decision and consists of the following steps:

**Application Procedure & Staff Review**

We recommend contacting program staff to get an introduction to the Farm Business Development Center prior to submitting an application. All applicants will receive an application packet, which will include this application form, the FBDC Operations Manual, and sample lease.

Please submit your completed application for review via e-mail to info@prairiecrossingfarms.com with Beginning Farmer Application in the subject line or by mail addressed to:

Farm Business Development Center  
32400 Harris Road  
Grayslake, IL 60030

If the application seems feasible and it is a good match for available opportunities at the Farm Business Development Center, staff will ask applicant to submit a full business plan and any relevant additional materials.

Staff will screen the applications and business plan for completeness and basic ability to comply with contract along with the following criteria:

- Sound Business Plan that demonstrates good market opportunity
- Minimal one to three years farm experience and has never owned a farm
- Personal capacity to take risk and resources to cover living expenses
- Strong awareness of organic production criteria
- Equipment and resource use compatibility with existing farms
- Market focus and competition with existing farms
- Traffic and land use issues
- Openness to feedback and recommendations
- Good community member and neighbor

If your application is approved, program staff will prepare a contract and lease for review. The contract and lease will be signed by the new farmer and the Farm Business Development Center. Typical lease terms will run from February to January of the following year.
Upon acceptance to the program, the Farm Business Development Center provides the following for an appropriate fee:

- Land to farm
  - Unless otherwise agreed upon, first year farms will begin with 0.5 acre
- Access to water supply
- Greenhouse (and adjacent cold frame) for growing transplants
- Access to tractor and tillage equipment
- Peer mentoring from FBDC staff and fellow FBDC participants
- Crop washing facility
- Cooler storage for produce
  - Cold Cooler at 40° F
  - Warm Cooler at 50° F
- Office work space
- Small storage access
- Suggestions for markets
- Facilitate connections within sustainable agriculture and local food communities
- Facilitate connections with land owners for future land use
- Limited technical assistance

If accepted to the program, the following is expected:

**General Behavior**
An unquestioned commitment to professional behavior towards all other members of the Prairie Crossing Farm community is expected. All participants in the FBDC are to treat each other with respect and integrity. A spirit of cooperation is necessary among the Prairie Crossing Farm community as everyone will be sharing common resources.

**Land Use**
Cultivate the farmland in accordance to organic methods, take proper care of trees, vines, and shrubs on rented land. Maintain neat and orderly fields.

**Facilities and Equipment**
Maintain cleanliness and order in all common areas of farmstead and work cooperatively with other Prairie Crossing Farm participants in coordinating use of common facilities and equipment. Participation in maintenance projects of common areas is also expected.

**Organic Certification**
All farmers are required to seek individual certification.
Insurance
All farmers will maintain liability insurance (minimum $1 million).

Marketing
Participants are responsible for the marketing of their own businesses.

Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)
All participants are expected to maintain the highest quality food safety program possible.

Leaving the Program
Participants leaving the program must clean and seed fields with a cover crop. Any personal supplies, equipment, or other infrastructure must be removed.

Application
The following questions are designed to help you delve into the details of your proposed business enterprise, articulate the level of planning accomplished to date, and help us evaluate your potential fit at the Farm Business Development Center. Not all questions will be equally appropriate for all applicants.

*Please add lines or space as required to complete this form.
I. APPLICANT INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name(s) of applicant(s):</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary contact:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enterprise name:</td>
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<td>Email:</td>
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<td>Home address:</td>
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<td>City:</td>
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<td>Phone:</td>
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<td>Web address (if applicable):</td>
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II. PROPOSED ENTERPRISE INFORMATION

1. Please describe the idea/concept behind your proposed farming enterprise.

2. If you’re accepted as an Incubator Farmer, how do you see your farm in three to five years?
III. EXPECTED REQUIREMENTS

1. What land requirements are needed to execute your project? Please provide an area range in square feet or acres. Unless otherwise agreed upon, “first year farms” start at 0.5 acre.

For all of the following please indicate which resources you will expect to lease from the FBDC and which you intend to provide yourself.

2. What infrastructure requirements are needed to execute your project (i.e. transplant greenhouse space, storage space, wash station time [include estimated day of the week], cooler space [warm - 50°F and cold 40°F])?

3. What equipment requirements are needed to execute your project (i.e. tractors, tillage equipment, bed shapers, plastic layer, planters)?
4. What water requirements are needed to execute your project (i.e. frequency of supply, approximate volume during dry spells)? Irrigation is to be a combination of drip tape and overhead sprinklers.

5. List expected annual inputs required to execute your project (i.e. seed, compost, soil amendments, plastic mulch, pots, etc.).

6. How much time do you anticipate you will spend at the FBDC during the growing season?

7. How many hours per week will you need to commit to other responsibilities away from your farm business (e.g. employment, family)? How will you manage the time requirements of your farming business with your other responsibilities?
8. Outline your labor strategy by indicating who and how many people will perform the requisite tasks related to your enterprise.

IV. CROP PLAN

1. As a means of outlining your crop plans, please fill in the following table in as much detail as possible. Expand the table as necessary or submit on a separate page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CROP</th>
<th>DAYS TO MATURITY</th>
<th>PLANNED GREENHOUSE SEEDING DATE</th>
<th>PLANNED FIELD TRANSPLANT/SOWING DATE</th>
<th># OF BEDS or in Sq ft</th>
<th>APPROXIMATE HARVEST DATE</th>
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2. What is your cover crop plan?
V. MARKETING & SALES STRATEGY

1. What are your anticipated market channels? Please estimate the % of value from the following markets: CSA, Farmer’s Market, Restaurants, Produce Vendor, Other. If you have identified potential markets, please identify them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MARKET CHANNEL</th>
<th>% VALUE THROUGH CHANNEL</th>
<th>MARKET NAMES (IF KNOWN) or CSA SIZE</th>
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2. Have you test marketed your produce? If yes, please provide details in terms of the feedback you received and the lessons you have learned.

3. Outline your marketing plan:

4. Why did you choose this plan?

5. How do you plan on advertising your produce (i.e. flyers, website, word-of-mouth)?
6. What marketing strategies have you used previously? Where they successful? How do you plan building upon your former marketing strategies?

VI. SKILLS BUILDING

List workshops, courses, seminars etc. that you have attended in the past two years that have helped your farming business. Please identify certifications completed and planned as well as any relevant associations joined.

1. Have you worked on other farms? Which farms? What years? What skills did you acquire?

2. Do you have experience in Organic Certification?

3. Have you attended “Farm Beginnings” course or similar business planning course?

4. Do you know any of the other current or past members of the FBDC? Who? Have you ever discussed any potential business relationships with these growers?
VII. **FINANCIAL DETAILS**

1. Please outline your financing strategy:

2. Estimated Annual Revenues:
   a) Estimated annual gross product yields (lbs per product):

   b) Estimated annual gross income from produce sales ($ per product):

3. Estimated Annual Expenses:
   a. List the anticipated project expenses and amounts (i.e. inputs, capital costs, marketing, certifications):

4. Estimated Annual Net Income: