

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
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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.

The Farm Business Development Center

at Prairie Crossing Farm

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
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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.

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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.

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.

MARKET CHANNEL	% VALUE THROUGH CHANNEL	MARKET NAMES (IF KNOWN) or CSA SIZE

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: