



Farm Incubator Program

The proposed program will provide access to the resources and tools needed to create farmers in our region who will be successful stewards of our natural resources. This program will reinvigorate our communities and foster a local culture centered around food, health, education, and the environment.

The Current Realities of Agriculture

- The average age of farmers and ranchers in the US is 58
- 70% of farmland will transfer ownership over the next 20 years
- New and beginning farmers face a mountain of barriers in accessing capital, land, infrastructure, and markets
- Regenerative agriculture practices and localized food systems can combat climate change and create a more resilient community

The Farm Incubator Solution

- Provide a path to farm ownership for new and aspiring farmers
- Provide access to land, farm resources, infrastructure, and educational opportunities.
- Provide opportunities to young farmers to develop business plans and explore emerging market trends

Key Components

- Farmland
- Infrastructure
- Participation Structure and Development
- Program Staff and Partner Support
- Funding Opportunities and Viability

Farmland

The Grand Traverse Conservation District will identify a suitable land base to be used as incubator parcels for the program participants. The chosen farmland will influence many aspects of the program and budget moving forward. Some of the ranking criteria for a suitable site include prior land use, land fertility, existing infrastructure, accessibility of the site, access to resources, and the proximity to GTCD.

Potential Sites: Meyer Property (Currently managed by GT County), Historic Barns Park, Misty Acres, Maple Bay, Partners/Private owned agriculture properties

Infrastructure & Equipment

Assess existing infrastructure on properties and identify needs

- Irrigation Capabilities / Wells
- Electricity
- Equipment Storage (barns, out-buildings)
- Fuel
- Agrichemical Facilities
- Equipment (tractors and implements)
- Hoop-houses / Greenhouses
- Wash-stations / Packing Shed
- Produce Storage
- Bathrooms
- Fencing
- Accessibility / Roads

Participation Structure & Development

- Identify the Structure of the Program
- Set parameters for participation
- Eligibility requirements of potential participants
- Formulate program needs
- Expectations and guidelines for participants
- Orientation structure
- Education / Curriculum for Participants
 - Workshops, classes, conferences (Farming and Business), Farmer Mentorships, Best Management / Conservation Practices, Emerging Trends and Market Research

Agriculture Education and Demonstration

- Define and manage an area of the farm to be used as a demonstration space to research and model various agricultural techniques and processes of regenerative agriculture
- Create on-site educational programming for public participation and access
- Create on-site educational opportunities and programming for area youth

Funding Opportunities

- Grants
- Fee for Service / Participation Fees
- Donors, Sponsorships, Fundraisers
- Year-end Appeals and campaigns
- Community services, classes, and workshops

Program Staff and Partner Support

- Incubator Farm Leadership Committee
- Full-Time Program Manager
- Engage community partners



**Grand Traverse
Conservation District**