

Sustainable Farms and Fields

Prioritization Metrics Detail

Scores may be provided in increments of 0.5. Note that not every possible scoring level is provided in this rubric – reviewers can use their best judgement when offering scores in between the levels outlined here.

Benefit to multiple landowners/managers

2	Applicants clearly explain how project will benefit 3+ landowners/managers
1	Project benefits 2 landowners/managers
0	Project benefits only one landowner/manager or is unclear in benefit to multiple landowners/managers.

Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI)

Clear explanation of involvement of historically underserved producers in project or targeted outreach to historically underserved producers which includes limited resource, beginning, socially disadvantaged, or veteran farmers or ranchers. See NRCS Historically Underserved category definitions based on NRCS definition (from May 2025) in program guidelines.

2	Project clearly benefits all or nearly all landowners/managers or a community that is identified as belonging to a historically underserved producers or communities meeting the NRCS definition.
1	Project involves benefit to multiple landowners/ managers and at least one (but not all) of the producers meet the definition of historically underserved.
0	Unclear whether project will provide benefit to producer or community that meet the definition of historically underserved.

Additional partners/collaboration

Demonstration project	Other project types	
4	2	Appropriate partners and collaborators are identified in the application, roles are identified and it is clear how partners and collaborators enhance the project
1-3	1	Projects that may have limited partnerships or not clearly articulated roles of project partners
0	0	No partners or collaborators identified

Creation of riparian buffers/fish habitat

Riparian forest buffer (Conservation Practice Standard 390) is an area predominantly trees and/or shrubs located adjacent to and up-gradient from watercourses or water bodies.

+1	Project creates riparian buffers or fish habitat
+0.5	Project does not create riparian buffers or fish habitat, but may benefit or improve either
0	Project has no impact on riparian buffers or fish habitat
-1	Project degrades riparian buffers or fish habitat

Creation of pollinator habitat

"Pollinator habitat" means an area of land that is or may be developed as habitat beneficial for the feeding, nesting, and reproduction of all pollinators, including honeybees.

1	Project creates pollinator habitat
0.5	Project does not create pollinator habitat, but may provide short term benefits for pollinators (e.g., cover crops)
0	Project does not create pollinator habitat

Project clearly fits within program priorities

From program website:

“Sustainable Farms and Fields (SFF) is a grant program that makes it easier and more affordable for farmers and ranchers to implement climate-smart practices and projects that increase carbon sequestration and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Through SFF, farmers and ranchers may receive free services — such as on-farm consultations, climate-smart farm plans, and other technical expertise — and financial assistance to help cover the cost of eligible projects, equipment, seeds for cover crops, and other expenses”

See the list of eligible practices for SFF FY27 funding in [SFF Eligible Practices and GHG Tools](#).

2	Project is a clear fit for SFF
1	Project may be a clear fit for SFF, but not enough details were provided to make a determination.
0	Project doesn't clearly fit within SFF

Applicant clearly demonstrates or describes ability to complete project

6	<p>Narrative clearly describes applicant’s ability to complete the project. A detailed project includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for executing the project is descriptive and carefully considered. • Narrative providing evidence of need for project. • Producers identified prior to application. • Budget reasonable given the project narrative. • Achievable timeline for project completion. • Staff/partners bring relevant expertise to project.
4	Two or three of the items listed above may be missing or not adequately described. The application demonstrates a good ability to complete the project.
2	Four or more of the items listed above may be missing or not adequately described in the application. Application demonstrates a fair ability to complete the project.
0	Not enough detail or supporting documentation was provided to assess the ability of the applicant to complete the project or the documentation submitted. Application demonstrates a poor ability to complete the project.

Potential of the proposed projects to increase carbon sequestration and reduce carbon dioxide equivalent emissions

Cost per metric ton of carbon dioxide equivalent (\$/MT CO₂e) = total cost of proposed project/ (annual MT CO₂e x lifespan of practice)

Score	\$/MT CO ₂ e
5	<\$100
4	\$100-\$300
3	\$300-600
2	\$600-\$1000
1	\$1000-1500
0	>\$1500

Application is complete (sufficient detail provided)

2	All pieces of the application have been submitted with sufficient detail including narrative, budget and budget narrative, estimate of CO2e impact, Letters of support from partners are provided (where applicable). For equipment purchase, bids are provided.
1	Application is missing a piece or detail was insufficient in part of the application.
0	Details were insufficient for multiple parts of the application or critical pieces of application are missing.

