



# Central Texas Farm Incubator Collaborative

## Program Guide for Applicants

The purpose of this guide is to give prospective farm incubator applicants an overview of the program and [application](#) process.

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## Program Overview

Farmshare Austin, in collaboration with Green Gate Farms and Hope Full Farm, is launching the Central Texas Farm Incubator Collaborative to provide beginning farmers in the start-up phase of their business with access to land, infrastructure, mentorship, business training and marketing outlets to bridge barriers to starting and sustaining a farm.

**Incubator Farmers will be able to lease quarter or half acre plots for up to 3 years along with access to the tools and infrastructure necessary for successful specialty crop production**, including irrigation, propagation greenhouse space, cultivation tools, produce wash station and cold storage space. Each Incubator Farmer will have an on site mentor to offer support and guidance as they build their new businesses, as well as a series of in person and asynchronous classes to support their growth. Rent will be charged on a graduated basis, increasing each year as the new business grows.

By embracing a collaborative model, we are able to draw on our collective farmland and the collective knowledge, thereby reducing the barrier of land access for beginning farmers while leveraging the fertile resources of our community. As a Collaborative, we aim to embody the values of interdependence, adaptability, humility and knowledge sharing. By farming in community, we can all be more resilient.

## Who is this program for?

Vegetable and flower growers with no less than one year of growing experience who have a plan for starting a farm business. Partnerships and groups of farmers are welcome to apply as well.

The following experience is preferred:

1. 2+ years of farming experience and/or completion of a farmer training program
2. Experience in certified organic production
3. Experience growing in the challenging Central Texas climate
4. Farm management or small business management experience

While applicants do not need to have all the above qualifications, this program is not an entry level program and growers are expected to have some farm production experience and a plan for their new business. If you are looking for an entry level program, you may want to consider [Farmer Starter](#).

## Curriculum and Mentorship

One of the resident farmers at each host site will serve as a mentor for incubator farmers. They will be available for guidance and support through weekly check-ins. Mentors and incubator farmers will also have the support of the Collaborative and our wider farming community to help solve problems and innovate solutions.

Each incubator farmer will work with their mentor to set goals and evaluate progress towards those goals each season. There will also be a series of both in person workshops and online classes to support the business development of each new farmer.

Workshop topics per year:

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Organic Compliance	Developing & Interpreting your Financial Statements and Measures (online course)	Land Access Course (7 part live online class)
Bookkeeping & Financial Management	1 on 1 Financial Management Technical Assistance	1 on 1 Financial Management Technical Assistance
Food Safety	Climate Smart Farming Workshop	Climate Smart Farming Workshop
TxFED Direct Marketing online classes		
Climate Smart Farming Workshop		

## Expectations and Requirements

In order to successfully grow in a community, everyone is expected to treat others and be treated with care and respect. All shared tools, infrastructure and equipment must be maintained and returned clean and in working order.

All incubator farmers will be required to follow organic practices, keep records for organic compliance and submit records to their land host/mentor.

This is the first year of this project and we ask all participants to help us co-create this program by offering constructive feedback through quarterly evaluations and less formal check-ins to help us improve and grow.

## Cost of Program

Monthly rent will be based on a graduated lease structure that increases each year of the program. The first two years will subsidize the market rate for turnkey, high-quality, irrigated land appropriate for growing annual specialty crops. In the 3rd year, farmers will be expected to pay market rate.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Half Acre plot	\$50 per month	\$100 per month	\$150 per month
Quarter Acre plot	\$25 per month	\$50 per month	\$75 per month

The lease rate includes access to irrigation, some tools and infrastructure, but does not include operational costs like seeds, soil amendments, drip tape or marketing supplies.

At the end of the three years, Incubator Hosts and Farmers may negotiate an extended lease period beyond the scope of the incubator program.

## Plots available for 2025

We aim to bring on 5 new Incubator farmers each year into the Incubator Collaborative.

In 2025 the following plots are available:

Green Gate River Farm Plot 1	8310 Canoga Ave. Austin, Texas 78724	Quarter Acre
Green Gate River Farm Plot 2	8310 Canoga Ave. Austin, Texas 78724	Quarter Acre
Farmshare Block 12	3608 River Road, Cedar Creek 78612	Quarter Acre
Farmshare Block 14	3608 River Road, Cedar Creek 78612	Half Acre
Farmshare Block 15	3608 River Road, Cedar Creek 78612	Half Acre

In 2026 and 2027 5 additional plots will be available at our collaborating farms. As the program develops we hope to bring on additional Incubator Host farms to be able to serve more farmers for longer periods of time.

If an incubator farmer decides they want to access additional land, they may apply for an additional plot the following year.

## Application Process and Timeline

1. [Applications will be accepted through this online form October 1, 2024 - November 1, 2024](#)
2. Top applicants will be selected to interview with their potential host farm during the month of November.
3. Acceptance will announced and leases signed in December 2024 with the goal of Incubator plots being available starting January of 2025

## Application Questions

Here are the questions on the application so that you may craft your answers before submitting them in the [Google Form Application](#):

### 1. Personal Information

- a. Name, pronouns, contact info
- b. Do you have any known physical or health limitations? If yes, please describe.
- c. Do you have reliable transportation to commute to and from the farm?
- d. How did you hear about the program?

### 2. Experience

- a. Tell us about your experience in farming, farm management and/or small business entrepreneurship.
- b. Do you have experience with Certified Organic growing and/or sustainable/regenerative practices? If so, please describe.

3. **Business Plan:** The questions in this section compose what is generally included in a farm business plan. If you have a business plan that answers all of these questions, you may upload or link to it instead of answering the questions. You may also upload or link to any other documents that might be helpful to evaluate your business plan, such as a crop plan, budget or marketing materials

#### a. Business Overview

- i. Please describe the farm you wish to establish including what crop(s) you plan to grow and/or products you plan to make. This may include your farm's mission statement.

#### b. Marketing Plan

- i. Where will you sell your products? How will you reach your customers?

#### c. Operations

- i. Describe how you plan to manage your assigned plot from season to season in terms of field prep, inputs, crop rotation and succession, cover-cropping, pest and disease management, and irrigation. What farm equipment, tools and infrastructure will you need to be successful?
  - d. **Financial Plan**
    - i. What are your short and long term financial goals for your farm?
    - ii. How much personal capital do you anticipate investing in your business over this three year program and how do you plan to allocate it?
  - e. **Time Management**
    - i. How many hours per week are you willing to commit to your farming endeavor?
    - ii. How are you planning for rest and self care to avoid burnout?
  - f. **Vision**
    - i. Where do you see your farm in 3 - 5 years? What are your future goals and how do you see this program as helping you to achieve those goals?
  - g. Is there anything else you would like us to know to help evaluate your application?
- 4. **Site Choice**
  - a. Rank your choice for sites.
  - b. Are there any comments or questions you would like to share about site selection?
- 5. **References**
  - a. Please list two professional references. Include name, phone number, e-mail address, and relationship.

Please submit your application through [this online form](#).

For questions or more information, e-mail  
[education@farmshareaustin.org](mailto:education@farmshareaustin.org)

This is a brand new program, and your feedback is welcome and essential to help us grow! If you have ideas as to how we can make this application process better, please reach out.