



July 28, 2024

Sandra Braun
Executive Assistant, Market Cooperatives
New Jersey Department of Agriculture
PO Box 330, Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Ms. Braun,

NOFA NJ would like to express our sincere appreciation for the NJ Department of Agriculture's support and guidance regarding the NJ Grant-In-Aid awarded to our organization for FY 23-24. The support and enthusiasm we received from your staff afforded us the ability to move ahead confidently in our plans and allowed the funding to have an incredible impact throughout the NOFA NJ and greater agricultural community.

On the following pages, you will find the Final Project Summary Report for the FY24 Grant In Aid. The report will include a narrative summary, relevant data and statistics, and some photographs and quotes from project beneficiaries. Additional reporting will be produced and shared externally with NOFA NJ stakeholders and communications recipients in an ongoing manner, and all promotions will include relevant references and credits to the funding source, project partner(s), and NJDA. Please make us aware if there are any project reporting information or metrics you request that are not found in this Summary Report.

A Final Project Expenditure Report Form has been provided, along with printed copies of receipts, invoices, and proofs of payment associated with project expenses, in the attached "project reporting packet". All documentation will be retained for no less than three (3) years and can be made available to NJDA digitally or in hard-copy form at your request.

Again, we thank you and your team for helping NOFA NJ bring these much-needed resources to the communities we serve. We look forward to continued collaboration with the NJ Department of Agriculture and look forward to reciprocating the good will and support we have received.

Sincerely,

Devin Cornia
Executive Director
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey

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NOFA NJ FY2024 Grant-In-Aid Final Project Summary Report

Overview:

In 2023, NOFA NJ was awarded a \$1M Grant-In-Aid from the NJ FY23-24 State Budget. NOFA NJ has leveraged this funding to bring additional funding and state resources to NJ food producers, to expand the technical support services offered throughout NJ, to highlight and promote NJ farm products, and to create market opportunities for local farmers and food producers.

Project Deliverable: NOFA NJ Mini Grants

Summary:

NOFA NJ provided \$250,000 in mini-grant funding to commercial farms and community organizations to support critical farm infrastructure and community-based projects. The funding opportunity was announced via NOFA NJ Weekly Newsletter on February 1, 2024.

68 applications were received and scored according to metrics devised by NOFA NJ and prioritized farms that relied on farm income as their primary income, demonstrated a commitment to organic practices, and could demonstrate sufficient land tenure to justify the investment of this funding into their property. In total, 27 applicants received a total of \$250,000 in funds to support their projects.

NOFA NJ has requested, received, and is aggregating reports from mini-grant recipients to demonstrate the efficacy and impact of this funding. Projects that were funded included:

- Smith Poultry Farm - Infrastructure to improve food safety and increase egg-washing efficiency
- Meadows & More - Creation of resource materials to support farms' marketing of wildcrafting products
- Cattail Hollow Farm - Construction of walk-in cooler and improvements to livestock fencing
- Stony Hill Gardens - Improvements to cold storage infrastructure
- Fluffy Farms - Purchase of grain mill and commercial oven to increase capacity for value-added product sales
- Pasture 13 - Purchase of shipping containers for livestock feed storage and tool/infrastructure storage
- Tuba Farm Foundation - Purchase of sub-compact tractor
- Lockatong Organic Herb Farm - Improvements made to high tunnel infrastructure
- Martenette Farms - Purchase of caterpillar tunnels
- Kittatinny Mountain Farm - Installation of deer fencing
- Moonshot Farm - Purchase of farm utility vehicle
- Rolling Hills Farm - Construction of wash/pack station infrastructure
- Duchess Farms - Construction of on-farm market stand and cut flower processing space
- Morganics Family Farm - Improvements to grain processing infrastructure
- Periwinkle Skies - Purchase of greenhouse/caterpillar tunnel
- Thin Place Farm - Construction of walk-in cooler
- Pine Barrens Post - Improvements to greenhouse, post-harvest and processing infrastructure
- Muth Family Farms - Purchase of ice machine for retail farm market
- Provenance Farm - Purchase of commercial chicken tractors and repairs to cold storage infrastructure
- Spring Wind Farm - Purchase of plastic layer and farm vehicle
- Wildflower Farm - Purchase of miscellaneous farm tools, seed processing infrastructure, and equipment rental
- Stone Circle Farm - Improvements to wash/pack station and food safety infrastructure
- Ramblin Sol Farm - Improvements to wash/pack station and food safety infrastructure
- Noble Mushrooms - Purchase of sterilizer and pasteurizer for mushroom production
- Pura Farms - Purchase of refrigerated farm delivery vehicle



- Montclair Community Farms - Construction of farm shed for farm store, walk-in cooler and wash/pack station
- Two River Gourmet Mushrooms - Purchase of compost spreader, CO2 monitors, and air conditioning units

Additional Information:

21 of the 27 recipients classify as historically underserved producers according to the USDA definition of historically underserved. In addition, the grants were geographically dispersed throughout the state, funding projects in Atlantic, Gloucester, Somerset, Mercer, Middlesex, Hunterdon, Monmouth, Essex, Cape May, Morris, and Sussex Counties.

NOFA NJ has received tremendous feedback from mini-grant recipients. Many producers have stated that this opportunity has significantly shifted their farm business opportunities. Feedback and quotes from recipients are included below:

- Fluffy Farms - *"Our gratitude to NOFA cannot be overstated. A year ago, we were struggling to sell our eggs and produce and gain market access. Now, thanks to our oven and mill, we are overwhelmed with opportunities and have grown beyond our dreams."*
- Wildflower Farm - *"These funds have helped us tremendously to scale our vegetable and seed production up, make infrastructure more efficient and preserve the wellbeing of our workers by minimizing time in the heat by upgrading our irrigation and trellising methods. It has mostly enabled us to meet the needs of our new contract agreement to provide 30 boxes per week to a local food bank."*
- Pasture 13 - *"This opportunity offered by NOFA-NJ has totally changed my farming operation...I am very thankful and appreciative of the funding provided by NOFA-NJ and am excited to put it to good use raising pigs to feed my local community high-quality, humanely raised pork."*
- Rolling Hills Farm - *"Receiving this grant impacted our business in a huge way. As we have been moving from leased land to owned land we have had to rebuild our farm infrastructure all over again. This has included greenhouses, high tunnels, tractors, deer fences, driveways, water lines, and more. One of our biggest needs was a new wash station to efficiently wash all of our produce before market and wholesale orders. This grant allowed us to build our new wash station without going into debt and to be able to more seamlessly transition onto our owned land. With poured cement, drainage, and the need for a more structurally-sound overhang, we utilized multiple companies to get our wash station up and running. Thanks NOFA NJ!"*
- Tuba Farm Foundation - *"Since receiving a \$10,000 grant from NOFA NJ, we have been able to purchase our first compact tractor! Thank you all so very much! This tractor has been an absolute joy to use. It has allowed us to expand our production and improve our farm. It saves us hours of grueling work as we strive to continue our natural and sustainable farming...We have used the tractor to teach others the proper and various ways to utilize farming equipment. It has also created excitement to learn about agriculture and it has enhanced our community engagement."*
- Montclair Community Farms - *"The shed will not only help us extend the shelf life of our organic produce but also enable us to efficiently store value-added products, such as preserves, pickles, and dried goods. We appreciate the support of NOFA NJ, and all those who made these funds available to small urban Farms like ours!"*

Additional feedback, mini-grant project reports, photos, videos, and relevant outcomes will continue to be shared by NOFA NJ via email and social media communications and is available for NJDA to review upon request.

See Mini-Grant Project Photographs Digital Album:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGMQXKG3CM/UYY3ytQOdEieV6ML77rp8Q/view?utm_content=DAGMQXKG3CM&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=editor



Project Deliverable: Market Expansion via Copacking/Value-Added Processing Initiative

Summary:

Informed by producer feedback and marketplace opportunities, NOFA NJ is working to provide education and wrap-around technical support services to increase value-added production capacity within the NJ agricultural community. NOFA NJ purchased a commercial kitchen to serve as a value-added food product incubator and an R&D kitchen, where producers will be provided with educational opportunities and technical assistance regarding food safety, recipe development, processing fundamentals, scheduled process, packaging, labeling, distribution, and other relevant value-added processing topics.

NOFA NJ's commercial kitchen is located at 17 Bridge Street in Milford, NJ (Hunterdon County) and will serve as both a working/teaching kitchen and offices/mixed use space for NOFA NJ programs and activities. Several kitchens available for purchase were visited before making an offer on the 17 Bridge Street property. NOFA NJ chose to pursue this property due to its affordability, relative lack of issues during inspections, proximity to many NOFA NJ Member producers, and the building's long history of supporting local food (17 Bridge was previously home to Milford NJ's first farmers market, two farm-to-table restaurants, and a local cafe and floral shop).

The building was purchased for \$427,500 in total and \$7,782.01 was spent on administrative and legal fees, inspections, title, closing costs, and immediate investments for the facility (new locks, security cameras, tools, supplies, etc...).

Additional Information:

NOFA NJ engaged with subject matter expert and commercial kitchen consultant, Jared Batson, owner of Onion Bulb Productions LLC. Jared Batson provided consultant services to support NOFA NJ's initial kitchen search, informed negotiations for the property at 17 Bridge Street, and supported the orchestration of contractors and service providers to perform initial work on the commercial kitchen itself. Jared Batson was paid a total of \$3,950 for his services throughout the duration of this funding period.

Project Deliverable: Marketing & Community Events Support

Summary:

NOFA NJ supported the marketing of local and organic farms and farm products in myriad ways utilizing funding from this Grant-In-Aid.

First, NOFA NJ contracted with Hundred Year Films (Filmmaker Jared Flesher) to produce a feature-length documentary on New Jersey grain production, highlighting the farmers, millers, maltsters, bakers, and other professionals currently working to grow the local grain economy in the Garden State. This documentary is expected to be finished and released in 2025, and NOFA NJ will host viewings throughout the state to continue promoting the grain economy and the producers/artisans within it. The total cost of production for this documentary is \$45,000. NOFA NJ is confident in the investment, as Hundred Year Films is a Mid-Atlantic Emmy award-winning documentarian and has produced notable and well-received NJ documentaries "The Farmer and The Horse", "Sourlands", "Pine Mud", "Sugar House Yantra", and more, many of which highlight local farms.

NOFA NJ also sponsored the production of a FarmVoice Studios short film on Rancocas Creek Farm, a project of the Pinelands Preservation Alliance. Produced by New Jersey Agricultural Society, this short film highlights an experienced regenerative farmer, Jeff Tober, and the conservation practices and ecosystem services being implemented at Rancocas Creek Farm alongside their CSA and farm production.



Funding for Marketing & Community Events Support also allowed NOFA NJ to purchase and sample NJ farm products and to sponsor a variety of community events with partner organizations and farms, including:

- CROPS NJ Farm-to-Fork Celebration in Atlantic City, NJ
- Hunterdon County Board of Agriculture Annual Dinner in Ringoes, NJ
- NOFA NJ Winter Conference Makers' Market in New Brunswick, NJ
- Product Sampling at State Agricultural Convention/Vegetable Growers Association Meeting in Atlantic City, NJ
- Sponsorship of an Earth Oven Build for Whittemore CCC's *Food Makes Friends* dinner events in Tewksbury, NJ
- Sponsorship of a Robert Wood Johnson *Stop the Bleed* event with the Somerset County Board of Agriculture
- Sponsorship of Princeton Public School's *Chopped* youth local food cooking competition

Last, funding was utilized to increase NOFA NJ capacity to perform outreach, marketing and promotion of NJ farms at farmers markets and community events. Items purchased included a tv monitor to improve presentations, four vegetable/fruit costumes to promote NOFA NJ and NJ agriculture at festivals and special events, and logistical equipment including hand trucks. Fourteen (14) community farm markets and miscellaneous community events were attended to promote local and organic farming throughout NJ, including events in Hunterdon, Mercer, Monmouth, Camden, Bergen, Morris, Burlington, and Middlesex Counties.

Additional Information:

See *Hundred Year Films Grain Documentary Contract*:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZpOVbNy5M0fcA6Kmmrhi61UUYbKHU1-l/view?usp=sharing>

Project Deliverable: NOFA NJ Technical Service Provider

Summary:

NOFA NJ hired a dedicated Technical Service Provider, Scott Morgan, to provide much-needed support for NJ organic, regenerative, and chemical-free farms. Scott Morgan has ample experience in a variety of farming operations, management styles, and organic certification processes. Upon his hire, NOFA NJ initiated the *Weekly Technical Assistance Open Hour*, a free, weekly virtual webinar that serves as an open forum for commercial producers to seek assistance on technical aspects of their farming operation. NOFA NJ has shared this weekly offering via the NOFA NJ Weekly Newsletter, via NOFA NJ social media, and at various County Board of Agriculture meetings.

Since the start of the *Weekly Technical Assistance Open Hour*, we have hosted 30+ webinars with 200+ attendees seeking technical assistance and guidance. Scott is frequently joined by fellow NOFA NJ staff and fellow resource providers in the community, including representatives from NJDA, NRCS, industry suppliers, and more. This activity has had the additional outcome of informing NOFA NJ on what kinds of challenges producers need assistance with, has allowed farmers to learn from fellow attendees' insights and challenges, and has led to collaborations on grant proposals and improved relationships with industry resources.

Aside from the *Weekly Technical Assistance Open Hour*, funding provided for the NOFA NJ TSP has allowed for on-farm visits and direct 1:1 support to producers. Scott Morgan has visited eight (8) farms to provide hands-on technical support, including support with transitioning to organic production, support with breaking up pest and disease cycles in a sweet potato crop, support with calibrating and using seed drill equipment, and more.

Additional Information:

N/A

Project Deliverable: NOFA NJ Website Improvements



Summary:

NOFANJ.ORG has long been a resource for the agricultural and local food community, offering resources such as the *Find Local & Organic Farms* mapping tool, the *NOFA NJ Classifieds* listing service, and links to NOFA NJ events, technical resources, funding opportunities, and program information. NOFA NJ contracted with Prestige World Media to rebuild NOFANJ.ORG, which was in need of redevelopment.

Prestige World Media provided consultation to simplify and clean up NOFA NJ's website design, branding, and integration with various applications and platforms in use by NOFA NJ. The rebuilt website was launched on February 1, 2024 and has made the dissemination of information much easier, along with the ability to sign up for NOFA NJ events, newsletters, and social media accounts. This improved website design will enable interested producers, consumers, and industry partners to easily access information shared by NOFA NJ and to better support local agriculture and food systems.

Additional Information:

Visit Updated Website:

<https://nofanj.org/>

Project Deliverable: NOFA NJ Grant-In-Aid to Outdoor Equity Alliance

Summary:

Outdoor Equity Alliance (OEA) is a community-based nonprofit focused on connecting underserved communities with opportunities to engage in outdoor recreation and education. Previously fiscally-sponsored by Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space, OEA has recently obtained their own 501(c)3 status. A core program of OEA has been the AgriHood Program, which engages high-school youth participants in a series of on-farm and classroom workshops around food systems, agriculture, conservation, and more.

NOFA NJ sponsored the 2024 OEA AgriHood Program, and for the first time, the program had a 100% participant completion/retention rate. Eighteen (18) interns and three student intern leaders were chosen from 55 applicants to participate in the program. Participants were engaged in a 9-week program that included partner organizations and farm producers, including Mercer County Community College, Chickadee Creek Farm, Wildflower Farm, Gravity Hill Farm/Rolling Harvest Food Rescue, Fairgrown Farm, Martenette Farm, Howell Living History Farm, Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum, Paterson Green Acre Community Garden, Lambertton Street Garden, and Pinelands Preservation Alliance.

Youth participants completed final projects in collaboration with host farms and presented their outcomes at the AgriHood graduation ceremony on June 3, 2024. Eight externship opportunities were made available to participants, giving them an opportunity to deepen their knowledge and experience in the agricultural sector. Five youth interns are now engaged in externships with partners at Gravity Hill Farm/Rolling Harvest Food Rescue, Friends of Princeton Open Space, Chickadee Creek Farm, and Wildflower Farm. Of the eight high school seniors that participated, six are going into environmental studies, four of whom have chosen to pursue a concentration in agriculture at NJIT, Purdue University, Rutgers University, University of Pennsylvania, and TCNJ.

From OEA AgriHood Program Director, Renata Barnes:

"The two biggest influences on the success of this year's program are the grant we received from NOFA which allowed us to address some of the shortfalls that plague us every year from logistics to honorariums to supplies. The generosity of that grant allowed us to pay staff and any consultants we employed. Secondly, the addition of executive leadership, which instituted many of the changes in this year's iteration of the Agrihood. Those



changes really made the program flow and kept the focus on the interns, the farmers, the mission and the importance of agriculture and good earth stewardship.”

Additional Information:

See OEA Final Report 2024 AgriHood Internship Program:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1y2sIJtxgeX0aeE0J0G3vYXOjFQFiyv5c/view?usp=sharing>

Project Deliverable: NOFA NJ Grant Development Support

Summary:

NOFA NJ contracted with development & grant-writing consultant, Growing Brilliance (Maria Stewart), to support NJ farm producers with grant education, coaching, and direct 1:1 grant submission support. Beginning in January, 2024, Growing Brilliance hosted four webinars in collaboration with NOFA NJ. These webinars focused on USDA Value-Added Producer Grants, USDA/NJDA Specialty Crop Block Grants, and general grant writing information and best practices. A total of 109 producers registered for these webinars and received email summaries with recording links. These webinars, along with additional resources, are currently being organized and uploaded to serve as an ongoing resource for the community.

Following the webinars, Maria Stewart provided 1:1 grant coaching for interested producers. A total of twenty one (21) producers were supported with over seventy (70) hours of direct coaching and grant development assistance (11 of the producers supported via 1:1 technical support are classified as Historically Underserved producers according to the USDA definition). Maria has also participated in NOFA NJ *Weekly Technical Assistance Open Hour* events to share information regarding various grant opportunities specific to NJ producers.

With the support of this service, numerous producers have confirmed their submission to grant opportunities, and several have confirmed the success of their submission being funded. We will not know the exact number of successful awards until the relevant grant awards are all announced. The following are some quotes and feedback from this deliverable offering from our producer community:

- *“Amazing session with Growing Brilliance last night! Unbelievable that it is free - it was one of the most valuable Zoom sessions I have attended this year. Thank you.”*
- *“I did participate in the grant writing workshop and am now working with Maria on writing a value added producer grant. I would not be pursuing it without her help; she gave me confidence and is going to be a good coach for me. Thank you NOFA!”*
- *“I recently took the courses on Grants and Farm Planning. Both were excellent. By excellent, I mean the content was great and the courses also have influenced the way I approach/look at topics related to our farm.”*

Additional Information:

See Value-Added Producer Grant Webinar Recording Link:

<https://youtu.be/PsFzYcF5f7Q>

See Grant Workbook Resource:

<https://usercontent.flodesk.com/4ab2cb24-cf45-4f3b-bff1-5865ae3dad73/upload/bad52d03-b3eb-49e2-9bc8-78a25edb925a.pdf>

See Workshop #1 Slides:

<https://usercontent.flodesk.com/4ab2cb24-cf45-4f3b-bff1-5865ae3dad73/upload/dd2ba39f-9579-4089-8f1b-572045ca0d5e.pdf>