

THE NOFA-VT FARM SHARE PROGRAM: OVERVIEW & POLICIES

NOFA-VT's Farm Share Program reduces the cost of CSA shares for Vermonters in need of financial assistance, while ensuring farmers are fully paid. It is a great way for your farm to expand access for limited-income Vermonters in your community!



The share cost is covered as follows:

- ❖ Farm Share participants pay a portion (typically 50%). We typically offer a 50% discount for shares, up to \$350 off per season per household.* This means that the majority of Farm Share participants contribute 50% of the total share cost, which they pay directly to your farm. Applicants may request a 75% discount, up to \$525 off of a share, which may be granted depending upon program funding. Applicants may also request a 25% discount, if they are able to contribute more towards their share.
- ❖ Your farm sources funds for a portion. CSA farmers commit to at least one or two practices for sourcing community funds to support a portion of the share cost. Farmers are expected to inform NOFA-VT of their target number of Farm Share participants per year, and communicate how many funds they were able to bring in towards supporting those shares. Farms who feel that the fund sourcing component is prohibitive to participating in the program are welcome to reach out for more support. More about the fundraising component is [linked here, "Tips for Sourcing Community Funds."](#)
- ❖ NOFA-VT contributes 25% (or more). NOFA-VT raises funds every year through grants, from individual donations, and through a statewide annual fundraiser called Share the Harvest. This fundraiser takes place in the fall, engaging dozens of restaurants and food businesses around Vermont that donate a percentage of their sales during a promotional period to support the program.

*If the applicant's desired share size exceeds \$700 total, they will be responsible for paying the remaining cost. If they sign up for a share that spans both spring/summer period and fall/winter period, they may receive a subsidy on both seasons at once.

How to Participate

To participate in the NOFA-VT Farm Share Program, you must meet the following requirements:

1. Be a member of [NOFA-VT](#) and/or certified organic by [Vermont Organic Farmers \(VOF\)](#), and
2. Offer a full-season CSA and/or a pre-paid farmstand model.

Farm Responsibilities

1. **Promote the program:** Communicate the program to your existing community and current members who may benefit from the program, and share with them the program application. Promotional materials and templates will be sent to participating farms before the application opens.
2. **Fundraise:** CSA farmers source funds for a portion of the share cost. See "[Tips for Sourcing Community Funds](#)" for strategies. Note: If your farm has limited capacity to source funds, but still wishes to participate, we will work with you to figure out the best cost share breakdown.
3. **Communicate with NOFA-VT:** This program is a collaboration between community members, farmers, and NOFA-VT. We rely on you to communicate with us through email or phone about important information – including responding to whether you can accept applicants at the beginning of the season, notifying us if you cannot support any more shares, and confirming that participants have been receiving shares. If we are unable to get in touch with you in a timely manner, this may limit the number of Farm Share participants that can enjoy your food, or may delay your reimbursement.
4. **Collect share payments:** Farms arrange payment directly with the Farm Share participant for their discounted share cost.
 - a. Note about farm stand credits: NOFA-VT does not have any stipulations around when a participant redeems credits (i.e., within or beyond one season or calendar year). It is up to the farm to communicate clearly to the participant any restrictions or deadlines around spending farm credits. We hope that all Farm Share members are treated the same as any other CSA member. However, our application materials state that participants with an outstanding balance at a farm should not apply for additional Farm Share funds until their previous season's funds have been spent.

NOFA-VT's Responsibilities

1. **Contribute funds:** NOFA-VT can accept tax-deductible contributions from your community, as well as match the funds you are able to raise (to the extent we are able).
2. **Recruit:** NOFA-VT works with community partners to help with recruitment of eligible participants.
3. **Provide farm and food education opportunities:** Farm Share participants have the option to attend our Winter Conference for free and access scholarships to our summer workshop series.

Process & Timeline

SPRING/SUMMER SEASON	FALL/WINTER SEASON	EVENT
January	June	NOFA-VT contacts farms to confirm interest in participation, estimate of shares they can support, current designated donation balance (if applicable), and updates to CSA directory on NOFA-VT website.
February 1	August 1	Farm Share application opens.
Late February (and ongoing)	Late August (and ongoing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ NOFA-VT reviews applications and begins to notify farms about applicants that have requested a CSA. ➤ The farm will notify NOFA-VT whether they accept or deny these applicants, based on how much funding they can support. ➤ NOFA-VT will notify applicants of the decision. ➤ Accepted applicants contact the farm to 1) arrange payment of their cost responsibility and 2) confirm the specifics about the share distribution.
March	August	NOFA-VT continues to review applications on a rolling basis and will notify CSA farms as additional applicants are received, or until the CSA farm has indicated that they can no longer accept any more Farm Share applicants.
March 31st	September 30th	Application closes (or earlier, if funds run out) - NOFA-VT will not accept any new Farm Share participants for the season, unless funds remain.
Early June	Early November	NOFA-VT confirms with the farm that all Farm Share applicants have signed up for their CSA. Once confirmed, NOFA-VT will reimburse farms for NOFA-VT's 25% cost contribution, funds from the farm's designated donations account (if applicable), and a portion of the farm's cost if the farm was not able to contribute 25%.
July	December	Farms receive reimbursement, as laid out above.

Farm Share Participant Recruitment

We recommend that you encourage your existing members and other community partners to refer potential applicants. Your local social service agency may be able to distribute information about your CSA and the Farm Share program to their clients. In addition, we distribute information about the program through promotional meetings and our website. Funding is available on a first come, first serve basis, so encourage applicants to apply early.

Many Farm Share participants appreciate flexibility in paying for their shares. Consider whether you are able to set up payment plans with folks to spread out their share cost. If your farm is authorized to accept SNAP/EBT as a form of payment, make sure that participants know this is an option. If you are not currently authorized to accept SNAP, but are interested in doing so, contact johanna@nofavt.org.

Sourcing Community Funds

Participating farmers are expected to commit to at least one or two practices for sourcing community funds each season. After the Farm Share application period closes, they should communicate with NOFA-VT about how many funds they were able to raise to support shares. If your farm is not able to contribute towards the number of shares you wish to support through the season, NOFA-VT will aim to contribute the remainder of your farm's portion if funds are available. Additionally, if you are having difficulty getting share payments from program participants, NOFA-VT can help cover these losses at the end of the season.

Raising funds from your members and community helps to build a stronger community network within your CSA and allows more Vermonters to access farm-fresh food - regardless of their financial status.

Here are some strategies farms have found successful in sourcing community funds to support shares can be found [in this document](#).

Questions about the program? Contact Johanna Doren at (802) 434-7162 or johanna@nofavt.org.