

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 fundraises a portion. CSA farmers commit to at least one or two fundraising practices 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 much they were able to fundraise towards supporting those shares. Farms who feel that the fundraising component is prohibitive to participating in the program are welcome to reach out for more support. More about the fundraising component is on pages 4-6.
- ❖ 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 and fall/winter seasons, 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 fundraise for a portion of the share cost. See pages 4-6 for strategies. Note: If your farm is unable to fundraise, 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. Please be aware that 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.

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 until the application closes 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 fundraise their 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 farmshare@nofavt.org.

Fundraising

Participating farmers are expected to commit to at least one or two fundraising practices 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 fundraise the number of shares you wish to support through the season, NOFA-VT will aim to support 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 raising funds to support shares:

Have NOFA-VT be your Fiscal Sponsor

Many farmers have found that their current members and community groups are eager to support discounted shares at their farm. They can make tax-deductible donations to the program to help support shares for your farm, if NOFA-VT serves as your [fiscal sponsor](#)

[\(paperwork linked here\)](#). Once you have completed the paperwork, donations should be made directly to NOFA-VT and should have your farm's name written in the check memo. If the check or cash is donated to your farm (not NOFA-VT) we cannot offer a tax deduction. These donations are counted towards your farm's Farm Share cost portion, and are paid out to the farm at the end of the season.

Include in CSA Outreach Materials

You can introduce your CSA members to the Farm Share Program by including information in your CSA publicity materials. Here is some recommended wording:

"Our farm participates in the NOFA-VT Farm Share Program. This program subsidizes CSA shares for our neighbors who otherwise could not afford to join our CSA. Through the program, NOFA-VT will match each dollar that our CSA raises to offer a reduced rate to Vermonters needing financial assistance. Your contributions are tax-deductible if you make checks payable to NOFA-VT."

You can link to the [NOFA-VT donation page](#), or your own. Some farms also add:

"If you are in need of financial assistance, please ask us about the Farm Share Program. You may be eligible for a partially subsidized share."

Include in CSA Application

Many farms include an option to donate to the program on their CSA application. Here is some recommended language:

"Would you like to contribute to the NOFA-VT Farm Share Program to help low-income households in our community join the farm? For donations to be tax deductible, make checks payable to the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT) and write our farm name in the check memo. NOFA-VT will match the donation, and grant it back to our farm."

We have found it works best to include this at the bottom of the sign-up form.

Fundraising Events

Some farms go beyond this and host events or sales to support shares. Below are a few ideas that have been successful for farms:

- [Farm to Table Dinner](#)
- [Festivals and Events](#)

- Sell farm merchandise (t-shirts, hats, bags, etc.)

Other Examples

1. **Sandy Bottom Farm** fundraises 75% of the share cost on the farm's side, so that the share is free for Farm Share participants. They were able to ask for support from the Congregational Church, who donated \$1,000. In addition, their full-paying CSA members have a "bonus" dollar amount that is added to their share if they sign up before a certain date. On the online CSA application form, they have the option to donate this bonus to the Farm Share fund by checking a box, and most people choose to do so. Some people also donate additional funds.
2. **Bread & Butter Farm** utilized a solidarity share option in the past, in which CSA members could purchase a share for a neighbor. Now, they have a sliding scale for their share costs, which allows for those who are able to contribute more to balance out the supported-share costs.
3. **Intervale Community Farm** builds the cost of their Farm Share portion into their full-price CSA share cost. This allows them to have a more consistent amount of funds built into their budget for a set number of Farm Share members each season.

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