

Apprenticeship and Mentor Pilot Program for Black, Indigenous, and Peoples of Color (BIPOC)

*for Connecticut specialty crop farms and agricultural non-profits to host and mentor a
BIPOC apprentice(s) for the 2023 growing season.*

Program and Application Guidelines

Application Deadline: May 1, 2023 at 4:00pm



Ned Lamont, Governor
Bryan P. Hurlburt, Commissioner



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Important Information:

The deadline for final submissions is Monday, May 1, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. All applications should go through the online [Cognito form](#). You may start your application, save it, and finish it through a link you will receive to the email address provided.

Final Applications must be received by:
Monday, May 1, 2023

Applications will not be accepted after 4:00 p.m. on May 1, 2023

If you have questions or need assistance with completing the application, please contact Cyrena Thibodeau at CT DoAg , Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov or 860-895-3094

Program Description:

In March 2021, the CT Department of Agriculture (DoAg) established a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion working group to put forward recommendations to the agency for how it can more accessible, inclusive, and build up diverse producers in the state predominantly focused on those who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC).

One recommendation is to provide resources to support BIPOC farm apprenticeships. CT DoAg is soliciting applications from individual farms and/or non-profits to identify, host and mentor a BIPOC apprentice(s) for the 2023 season. The focus of the apprenticeship must be on **specialty crops**. Specialty crops are defined as “fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture.”

DoAg has up to \$50,000 in funds to award in 2023. Funding for this initiative is from USDA’s Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. Prospective mentors can apply for up to \$5,000.

Requirements:

The organization/farm must be able to competently provide training and hands on experience to the apprentice in the skills/competencies listed below for specialty crop producers as well as help the apprentice to develop workplace best practices as applicable (listed below for examples).

The organization/farm is ultimately responsible for recruiting and matching with an apprentice(s). DOAG will send out an interest form for apprentices and publicize the position descriptions developed by the mentors, but it is ultimately the responsibility of the mentor to identify a BIPOC apprentice.

The organization/farm must report to the department on the apprentice(s) selected and check in monthly with the program coordinator while hosting the apprentice.

Upon finding an apprentice(s), the organization/farm must submit a mentoring partnership agreement including an agreed upon set of skills that the apprentice(s) wants to develop and the mentor can help build during the apprenticeship, an example of a mentor/apprentice agreement can be found at the end of this document.

At the end of the apprenticeship, the apprentice shall create a write-up or a video talking about the merit of the experience, what skills were gained, looking forward to their next steps in agriculture, etc. Both the apprentice and farm/organization will be required to complete a post-evaluation survey and skill assessment.

Awarding Priorities:

- 1) It is **required** for the apprentice to identify as BIPOC
- 2) Mentors who identify as BIPOC

Eligible Applicants:

The following entities are eligible to apply:

1. Specialty crop farms
2. Non-profit farms that grow specialty crops

Expenses & Payment:

Farms can apply for up to \$5,000.

All funds must go towards stipends for the on-farm apprentice(s). Farms/organizations are highly encouraged to supplement apprentices pay with other funds if available and appropriate depending on hours/wk. These funds are not intended to pay minimum labor costs, but to allow BIPOC individuals to participate in an agriculture apprenticeship who may otherwise be unable to due to finances.

Funds can be utilized upon receipt of the signed letter of award (anticipated May 10, 2023) and funds must be spent by September 29, 2023. Apprentices may be employed prior to or extend beyond this time frame, but DoAg funding cannot be utilized.

Payments will be distributed 75% advance, 15% reimbursed upon submission and approval of final reporting requirements.

Post Award Requirements

Selected mentors will have additional training on requirements once letters of award are executed.

In addition, each awardee will:

- Receive technical assistance as needed throughout the project timeline.
- Attend at least one convening with other grantees during the duration of the project for networking and resource sharing.

The apprentice shall create a write-up or a video talking about the merit of the experience, what skills were gained, looking forward to their next steps in agriculture, etc. Both the apprentice and farm/organization will be required to complete a post-evaluation survey and skill assessment.

Submission Process:

All applications should go through the online [Cognito form](#). You may start your application, save it, and finish it through a link you will receive to the email address listed. For any technical questions, please contact Cyrena Thibodeau at CT DoAg.

Evaluation Criteria and Process:

Only complete applications which are submitted on time, will be evaluated. In review, the team will be looking for mentors who can provide the best overall experience for BIPOC apprentices. Below are two areas that should be considered when developing your application.

Prior to engaging an apprentice, all mentors should consider what **skills or competencies** an apprentice should possess and what skills and competencies the apprentice should leave the relationship with. Below are some skills and competencies to consider as they pertain to specialty crop production:

- Basic Soil Science
- Crop planning
- Propagation
- Soil fertility

- Field preparation
- Crop production
- Irrigation
- Weed control
- Pest and disease control
- Harvesting
- Post-harvest handling
- Product distribution
- Marketing
- Safe tool/equipment usage
- Basic business planning

In addition, when soliciting an apprentice, give thought to what **general workplace skills** you can offer to the relationship or what skills you'd like an apprentice to bring to the relationship. Below is a list for consideration:

- Adaptable to changing schedules
- Reliable; good follow through
- Punctual; good time management
- Open and clear communication; good listener
- Inquisitive, engaged, eager to learn, self-motivated
- Observant / attention to detail
- Proactive, sees what needs attention, anticipates needs
- Friendly, polite, engaged with mentors and other crew
- Healthy physical labor/body mechanics
- Good self-care; shows up in the morning rested and ready to go
- Able to express needs
- Able to ask for, receive, and act upon feedback
- Good stress management

Cognito Form Questions for Mentor Application

The below questions will be asked on the Cognito form. Do not type your answers here, but use the information below as a reference to start thinking/preparing your answers.

- 1) How much funding are you requesting? (Max \$5,000)
- 2) How many apprentices do you have the capacity to mentor in 2023?
- 3) Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic heritage?
- 4) Please describe what specialty crops you grow, the size of your farm, how you sell your products if applicable (CSA, farmers market, etc.), and any other programs of note that you offer (educational, agritourism, etc.)
- 5) How many years have you been farming?
- 6) Why are you interested in having a BIPOC apprentice on your farm?
- 7) Tell us about your experience mentoring producers. Do you currently have any farm employees/apprentices?
- 8) What skills and area(s) of expertise would you be able to share with an apprentice?
- 9) If you identify as white, please further expand on your experience working with individuals who identify as BIPOC and how you would ensure you create a welcoming, safe space. If able, please provide contact information for a BIPOC individual (with their consent) whom you have worked with and who can provide a reference.
- 10) Please tell us how you would conduct outreach and identify an apprentice from the target audience.
- 11) How many hours/wk would you want an apprentice and for how many weeks? What would you pay hourly (minimum allowed is \$15/hr but higher is encouraged)? Would you offer any other benefits and/or professional development opportunities?
- 12) Please briefly describe the types of jobs or tasks the apprentice would be expected to do.
- 13) What months are you interested in having an apprentice in 2023? Please note that apprenticeships can be in place beyond August 2023, however, DoAg funds can only be used between May-August 2023.
- 14) Do you have any housing available on your farm?
- 15) Are you willing to create learning objectives with the apprentice and invest time in their professional development?
- 16) Any other comments or things you would like to share?

SAMPLE MENTORING PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE MENTOR AND LEARNER

(Adapted from the Quivira Coalition)

Should you be awarded, below is a sample agreement for your use in the program.

Goals:

- We will assess the incoming skills and interests of the learner and develop a plan through use of a skill sheet, to help the apprentice build their agricultural and business skills.
- We will actively build a mentor/learner relationship that supports this learning and provides labor to the host site that applies this learning through development of a learning plan.
- We will develop a professional network of people and organizations that will help the learner move forward professionally at the end of the apprenticeship.
- We have discussed the process by which we will collaborate on the development of a learning plan. To ensure that our relationship is a mutually rewarding and satisfying experience for both of us, we agree to the following:

1. Development and Establish a Learning Plan

- We will establish a skill sheet and set up specific learning trajectories built into the regular work environment.
- We will identify specific skills that require additional one-on-one instruction or mentoring and opportunities for corresponding mentorship.
- We will regularly communicate about the learning process, identify areas in need of more focus, and jointly create strategies to foster this learning.
- We will consider the long-term professional goals of the learner when assessing focus areas.
- The mentor will assist the learner in creating a holistic goal for their experience and as a prompt for identifying useful professional contacts and post-apprenticeship opportunities.

2. Identifying Additional Learning Opportunities

We have identified, and will commit to, the following specific opportunities and venues for learning beyond the on-site curriculum:

- The learner will attend a statewide agricultural annual conference.
- The learner will attend at least one workshop relevant to the Learning Plan with cost covered by the Mentor if applicable.
- The learner will accompany the mentor to relevant meeting(s).
- The mentor will introduce the learner to key resource people in the community so the learner can set up learning days with them.

3. Confidentiality of Information Exchange

Confidentiality for us means that what we discuss remains between us. The mentor and learner will agree ahead of time whether specific information is to be shared with anyone else.

4. Relationship Ground Rules

Our ground rules will be:

- We will meet every week to discuss the work week, priorities, deadlines, etc.
- We will be on time for meetings and will refrain from answering the phone, email, etc. during these meetings unless an emergency arises.
- We will bring up conflicts or problems when they arise, rather than waiting and letting the problems worsen.
- We will listen respectfully and compassionately to one another.
- We will offer our ideas in an open, judgment-free space to benefit each other and the business and learning environment.
- The labor provided is to benefit each other, the business, and the learning environment.

5. Feedback and Evaluation

- In addition to meeting weekly to discuss the work week, we will have check-ins and skill sheet meetings as needed, but no less frequently than a check-in every 2 weeks.
- We will come to these meetings prepared, on time, and with open minds ready to both give and receive honest, helpful feedback from one another.

Apprentice Signature and Date

Mentor Signature and Date
