

STATE AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

POLICY

**PRIORITIZATION OF PLANNING INCENTIVE GRANT
PROJECT AREAS AND APPLICATIONS**

I. **Purpose**

To establish a priority ranking of individual applications to direct the expenditure of farmland preservation bond funds dedicated for the purchase of development easements.

II. **Authority**

N.J.A.C. 2:76-17
N.J.S.A. 4:1C-5f
N.J.S.A. 13:8C-1
P.L. 1999, c.180

III. **Summary Policy for Ranking Planning Incentive Grant Project Areas and Applications**

Utilizing the criteria in N.J.A.C. 2:76-17.11 Planning Incentive Grant applications will be ranked in order of highest to lowest statewide by the State Agriculture Development Committee. This ranking will be based on a numeric score which evaluates the degree to which the project area and the application provide an opportunity to preserve a significant area of reasonably contiguous farmland that will promote the long term viability of agriculture as an industry in the municipality or county. The application will be ranked by the Committee from the highest to lowest to determine a funding priority subject to available funds.

The general philosophy will be to provide grants to eligible counties and municipalities to acquire development easements on as many farms as possible in a project area. Assembling a reasonably contiguous concentration of permanently protected farms should enhance the economic viability of agriculture as an industry. The program places an emphasis on the careful planning of project areas and coordination with municipal and regional land use and infrastructure planning. Ranking and funding criteria will be applied to the project area as a whole and not to individual parcels. Priority will be given to those applications that utilize option agreements, installment purchases, donations, and other methods that leverage funds made available by the Garden State Preservation Trust Act.

The Planning Incentive Grant Prioritization Policy is organized similar to the statutory requirements identified in the Agricultural Retention and Development Act N.J.S.A. 4:1C-11 et seq. and criteria described in N.J.A.C. 2:76-6.16. The Policy is consistent with statutory requirements in the Farmland Preservation Planning Incentive Grant Act P.L. 1999, c.180 and criteria established in N.J.A.C. 2:76-17.11. Listed below is a summary of the major criteria with their relative weights.

A. FACTORS WHICH DETERMINE THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE PROJECT AREA PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO PRESERVE A SIGNIFICANT AREA OF REASONABLY CONTIGUOUS FARMLAND THAT WILL PROMOTE THE LONG TERM VIABILITY OF AGRICULTURE AS AN INDUSTRY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OR COUNTY (N.J.A.C. 2:76-17.11(a))

1.0	LEVERAGING	Weight	40
2.0	LOCAL COMMITMENT	Weight	25
3.0	SOIL PRODUCTIVITY	Weight	25
4.0	SIZE	Weight	20
5.0	PROJECT AREA DENSITY	Weight	20
6.0	TILLABLE ACRES	Weight	15
7.0	IMMINENCE OF CHANGE	Weight	10

IV. Specific Methodology for Ranking Planning Incentive Grant Project Areas and Applications.

A. FACTORS WHICH DETERMINE THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE PROJECT AREA PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO PRESERVE A SIGNIFICANT AREA OF REASONABLY CONTIGUOUS FARMLAND THAT WILL PROMOTE THE LONG TERM VIABILITY OF AGRICULTURE AS AN INDUSTRY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OR COUNTY.

1.0 LEVERAGING Weight 40

The Committee shall evaluate the leveraging of Garden State Preservation Trust Funds by examining the length of installment purchases, donations and option agreements as represented in the application.

1.1 Length of Installment Purchases

7 to 10 years	30 points
4 to 6 years	25 points
2 to 3 years	20 points

1.2 Donations
 1 point for every 1% donated 40 points (maximum)

- 1.3 Option Agreements
 - 7 to 10 years 20 points
 - 4 to 6 years 15 points
 - 1 to 3 years 10 points

2.0 LOCAL COMMITMENT Weight **25**

Priority will be given where municipal, county, regional, and state land use regulations, policies and programs support the long term viability of the agricultural industry. Factors indicating support:

- 2.1 Demonstrated Support for Agriculture as a Business
 - Development of local agricultural markets 5 points
 - Development of public relations and program promotion materials 5 points
 - Development of economic incentives 5 points

- 2.2 Consistency with Land Use Plans, Programs and Regulations
 - Municipal governing body has adopted a Right to Farm Ordinance which is consistent with the SADC's model ordinance 5 points
 - Preservation efforts are consistent with the State Development and Redevelopment Plan 5 points
 - Applicant has developed a Geographic Information System to assist in mapping and analyzing farmland 2 points

- 2.3 Absence of Conflicting Infrastructure Plans and Investments
 - Absence of existing conflicting infrastructure in project area 5 points
 - Absence of proposed or planned conflicting infrastructure in project area 5 points

- 2.4 Demonstrated Financial Support for Farmland Preservation
 - Development easement have already been acquired in the community 5 points
 - Dedicated tax established 5 points
 - History of continuing annual appropriation or repeated bonded indebtedness 5 points

3.0 SOIL PRODUCTIVITY

Weight 25

In order to evaluate soil productivity, septic suitability and adaptability, the Committee will utilize the New Jersey Important Farmlands Inventory prepared in 1990 by the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service as the reference to identify Prime and Statewide soils. Priority will be given to soils in the list of farms which exhibit superior quality, require minimal maintenance and have a greater potential for long term viability for a variety of agricultural purposes.

Percentage of prime soils x 25 = _____ points
Percentage of statewide soils x 15 = _____ points

4.0 SIZE

Weight 20

Priority will be given to larger project areas and to project areas that have a list of farms with larger land masses.

4.1 Total Acreage of the Project Area

1000 acres or more	10 points
500 to 999 acres	8 points
300 to 499 acres	6 points
200 to 299 acres	4 points
Less than 200 acres	2 points

4.2 Sum of the Acreage Contained in the List of Farms

1000 acres or more	10 points
500 to 999 acres	8 points
300 to 499 acres	6 points
200 to 299 acres	4 points
Less than 200 acres	2 points

5.0 PROJECT AREA DENSITY

Weight 20

The density score will be awarded by calculating the ratio of the sum of the acreage contained in the list of farms, lands from which development easement purchase applications have been approved by the municipality or board and submitted to the Committee pursuant to the Agriculture Retention and Development Act, as amended and the Garden State Preservation Act, lands from which fee simple applications have been approved by the Committee, other lands from which development easement applications have been approved by the Committee as authorized pursuant to the Garden State Preservation Trust Act, land from which development easements have already been purchased, other permanently deed restricted farmlands, lands enrolled in farmland preservation programs or municipally approved farmland preservation programs and other permanently preserved lands dedicated for open space purposes that are compatible with agriculture, as approved by the Committee, as compared to the total area of the project area.

90% to 100%	20 points
70% to 89%	15 points
50% to 69%	10 points
30% to 49%	5 points
Less than 30%	0 points

6.0 TILLABLE ACRES

Weight 15

Priority will be given to project areas that have a list of farms which have a high proportion of tillable land, which includes cropland harvested and cropland pastured. The following definitions shall be used for evaluating tillable acres:

“Cropland harvested” means land from which a crop was harvested in the current year. Cropland harvested shall include the land under structures utilized for agricultural or horticultural production.

“Cropland pastured” means land which can be and often is used to produce crops, but its maximum income may not be realized in a particular year. This includes land that is fallow or in cover crops as part of a rotational program.

“Permanent pasture” means land that is not cultivated because its maximum economic potential is realized from grazing or as part of erosion control programs. Animals may or may not be part of the farm operation.

Score will be awarded based on the ratio of total tillable acres contained in the list of farms as compared to the total acreage of the list of farms.

80% to 100%	15 points
60% to 79%	10 points
40% to 59%	5 points
Less than 40%	0 points

7.0 IMMINENCE OF CHANGE Weight 10

An application can receive up to (10) points where the Committee determines that the imminent conversion of the farm (application) from an agricultural use to a nonagricultural use would negatively impact the survivability of the project area in productive agriculture.

There are two aspects which shall be considered when evaluating the imminence of change:

- Factors which measure the degree of imminence of change of farmland to a nonagricultural use and
- Factors that evaluate the impact of the farmland conversion.

7.1 Factors Considered for Evaluating the Degree of Imminence of Farmland Conversion

County Comparisons (relative indices):

Average certified county easement value for previous round	1 point max.
County single family unit permits (3 years)	1 point max.
County Farmland Assessed cropland acre loss for 10 years	1 point max.
County Farmland Assessed cropland percent loss for 10 years	1 point max.

Township Comparisons (relative indices):

Township single family unit permits for 3 years	1 point max.
Township Farmland Assessed cropland acre loss for 10 years	1 point max.
Township Farmland Assessed cropland percent loss for 10 years	1 point max.

7.2 **Factors Considered for Evaluation the Impact of the Farmland Conversion**

State Comparisons (relative index):

Combined SADC Quality Scores for size,
boundaries, and buffers and density 0.5 point max.

County Comparisons (relative index):

Combined SADC Quality Scores for size,
boundaries and buffers and density 0.5 point max.

MAXIMUM FOR CATEGORY: (10 POINTS)

The above indices will be updated annually.

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