

**REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS**  
**GoFarm Seeks Land to Lease in Jefferson County, CO for  
a Farmer Training Center**

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**Point of Contact:**

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**Purpose of Solicitation:** GoFarm, a nonprofit local food system and farmer training organization, seeks to lease 3-10 acres of land to establish a farmer training center that includes food production, an educational hub and a retail farm stand.

**Eligible applicants:** GoFarm welcomes proposals from landowners and land managers of private and public land located in Jefferson County, CO. Applicants may include: municipalities; county departments; land trusts and other nongovernmental organizations; and individuals, homeowner associations and other private entities.

**Application Submission Deadline:** Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until a plot of land has been secured.

**Request for Applications (RFA) Content**

- I. Overview
- II. Requirements
  - A. Natural features
  - B. Built features
  - C. Phased Development
  - D. Utilities
  - E. Legal requirements
- III. Roles and responsibilities
  - A. Training Center Advisory Board.
  - B. Rent and fees.
  - C. Reserved rights.
  - D. Decision-making, review and approvals.
  - E. GoFarm role and responsibilities.
  - F. Landowner as landlord/partner role and responsibilities.
- IV. Landowner profile and benefits
- V. Application
  - A. Procedure

- B. Form
- VI. Appendices
  - A. Background
  - B. GoFarm's values and practices
  - C. Payment and Ownership Scenarios for Site Improvements

### **I. Overview**

The mission of GoFarm, a Golden, Colorado-based non-profit organization, is to increase the supply of and access to affordable, fresh, healthy, local food in Colorado. Training the next generation of farmers is paramount to that mission. To that end, we provide training, support and market access to local, beginning farmers. The GoFarm Incubator Program offers beginning farmers a two-year apprenticeship as well as internships and other training opportunities. See Appendix A for more information on GoFarm's mission and programs.

The Training Center is a component of the GoFarm Incubator Program. The Training Center will be a physical site where farming and related educational activities take place. The Training Center will house our programming activities in one location and offer additional resources to our farmers and community. The Training Center will be a working farm where beginning farmers within the incubator program will learn and practice regenerative farming practices, start their own businesses, develop market channels, test their business plans, and prepare to scale their businesses at other locations. It will also generate revenue that will feed back into the program to ensure financial sustainability.

Over the past two years, GoFarm has developed an effective Incubator Program for beginning farmers. After a thorough needs assessment of the Incubator Program and our farmers, we identified a secure, centralized farm and educational site as a top priority.

A farmer training center will greatly increase the efficacy of the Farmer Assistance Program. A central location will enable better support for the apprentices. It will enhance learning opportunities by providing a site to demonstrate growing techniques and field maintenance. It will also create opportunities for collaboration and community among the apprentices, interns and externs. The farmer training center will allow GoFarm to maximize available resources and create an even more robust education program that will also serve community members.

The Training Center has four main components:

- Incubator Plots. Each apprentice farmer in the program (seven total per year) will receive a ¼ acre plot in their first year, with the option to expand in the second year.
- A one-acre GoFarm production and teaching plot. This area will combine commercial production with demonstration and education for the apprentices and other learners.
- Classes and workshops. The site will have facilities to conduct business planning and other course and workshop offerings to trainees. We will also offer farming and local food educational events to the community.

- Farm Stand. A retail farm stand on the Training Center site where we will sell products from the apprentice and teaching plots.

## **II. Requirements**

GoFarm seeks a parcel of land to house a Farmer Training Center. We are excited to move into the next phase of this program and to partner with a landowner that shares our vision. We recognize that leasing land for the proposed Training Center is a significant commitment. While we have some basic requirements, we are open to co-design and negotiation on several aspects of this project. The success of the Training Center will hinge on meeting the landowner's goals and on a positive, transparent and cooperative relationship between GoFarm's Training Center users and the landowner.

This section lists the features and requirements GoFarm has identified to meet the goals of the Training Center.

### **A. Natural features**

- a. A parcel of 3 to 10 acres containing at least 2.5 acres of tillable land that are mostly clear of trees, brush, and buildings and with limited slope.
- b. Located within one hour of a strong economic market center and below 6,500 feet of elevation
- c. Soils- no fill or contamination (we will do a soil test prior to moving forward with a letter of intent).
- d. Access to sufficient water for irrigation. Water may come from surface water and wells with adequate water rights and water testing or from a municipal water source.
- e. Access to municipal or other potable water for post-harvest handling of produce
- f. Low flood risk
- g. Access to the parcel via a public roadway
- h. Few or no limitations within the parcel (e.g., impassible or sensitive areas)
- i. No existing or potential conflict with abutting properties or uses (e.g., chemical drift or other nuisance vectors; not receptive neighbors)
- j. Areas of conservation concern (e.g., habitat, waterbodies, riparian buffers, HEL, etc. to be named) able to be managed and not compromising site usability

### **B. Built features**

The built structures for the Training Center may be one or a combination of the following options:

- a. Existing on the parcel to be used as is
- b. Existing structures renovated or modified
- c. New permanent construction per the lease agreement between GoFarm and the landowner
- d. New temporary (i.e. removable) construction per the lease agreement

[See Appendix C on how site improvements may be negotiated.]

### **C. Utilities**

- a. Access to electric power and/or sufficient alternative energy source(s)
- b. Internet
- c. Cell service
- d. Potable water
- e. Water for irrigation

#### **D. Phased Development**

New and modified structures will be considered in three phases over at least a ten year period. Phases I and II contain structures necessary to the operations of the training center. Structures in Phase III would greatly enhance all of GoFarm's programs and offer additional assets to the community. Phase III structures are subject to negotiation. We will consider properties that may not be able to support Phase III improvements. Phases and structures are:

Phase I- These structures are necessary for basic farm operations. They can be permanent or temporary (removable). Phase I structures not already existing on the site will be constructed by GoFarm according to the lease agreement and following all local zoning codes. Modifications to existing structures will similarly be performed by GoFarm.

- a. 1 Storage shed or barn of at least 200 square feet or as allowed by local code
- b. 1 Post-harvest washing/processing facility with access to potable water
- c. 1 Coolbot Shed of at least 120 square feet (requires electricity)
- d. 1 Growing Spaces Geodesic Dome Greenhouse, 18' in diameter. Currently in GoFarm's possession.
- e. 1 Hoop House, 50' x 15' or as allowed by local code restrictions
- f. 1 Bathroom (may be a composting toilet, porta potty, or plumbed bathroom)
- g. Fencing if needed to exclude grazing and/or wild animals

Phase II- These structures will allow GoFarm to increase our impact through food access, season extension, and expanding our farm supply Co-op. These structures may be temporary in nature or permanent installments as negotiated by GoFarm and the landowner. They may exist on the site, or be newly constructed.

- a. Retail farm stand of approximately 400 square feet with electric power; must be ADA compliant
- b. Space for at least to 10 cars to park near the farm stand and additional parking within a few minutes walk (could be street parking)
- c. 1 Additional Greenhouse of at least 400 square feet with access to electricity.
- d. 1-2 additional storage sheds/ barns for a total storage square footage of 600-800 square feet between all storage sheds/barns.
- e. 1 Additional bathroom (may be a composting toilet, porta potty, or plumbed bathroom)

Phase III- These structures will allow us to build upon our systems approach by including more local businesses using local products in the commercial kitchen. The classroom space will allow us to offer educational opportunities for our community and to build an even more comprehensive program for farmers. Housing would allow GoFarm to further support beginning farmers.

- a. Commercial Kitchen
- b. Office Space
- c. Classroom space for farmer and community classes to accommodate up to 25 people. Must be ADA compliant.
- d. ADA-compliant bathroom
- e. Additional parking spaces
- f. Optional: on-site housing for 2-6 farmer apprentices. Housing may be tiny houses, in an existing house, or another imagined possibility as allowed by the local municipality.

#### **E. Legal requirements**

- a. A single contiguous parcel or part of a larger property.
- b. Willing and able to enter a lease of at least 10 years
- c. Inclusive of lease terms, incentives, and lease rates that will promote sound stewardship and land management practices, long-term agricultural productivity, and community stability.
- d. Inclusive of any restrictions as per public or private land at the municipal, county or state level.
- e. Commitment that the lease stays with the land through any transfer of title
- f. No zoning and other regulations that would or could interfere with proposed uses
- g. No current or history of underground storage tanks, chemical spills, dumps or other sources of potential contaminants, unless previously mitigated
- h. No liens, easements, rights of way or other encumbrances (identify in application) that would or could prevent or compromise any proposed activities
- i. The tenant will not make major improvements to the land or buildings covered by the lease, other than normal repair and maintenance, without written consent of the landlord. Major improvements, without limiting the generality of the term, may include: drainage, erosion control, fencing, building construction, clearing and breaking land.
- j. Compensation for any approved improvements will be an amount as agreed to in writing as per the terms of the lease.
- k. Title to all improvements, whether made with or without consent, will be vested in the landlord and no improvements may be removed, sold or encumbered without the landlord's consent.

### **III. Roles and responsibilities**

A clear and agreeable allocation of roles and responsibilities is essential for a good, sustainable relationship between GoFarm and the landowner providing the site for our Training Center. We value fairness, transparency and accountability. We will be responsive to the landowner's concerns and flexible around needed changes along the way.

#### **A. Training Center Advisory Board**

A Training Center Advisory Board will be composed of the landowner (may be a representative), GoFarm staff, at least one GoFarm board member and incubator participant, and community partners and members. The purpose of the Advisory Board is for GoFarm to benefit from the

collective knowledge of the stakeholders being impacted by the Center to support sound decision making. This Board will offer non-binding strategic advice regarding the management of the leased property. It will serve as the initial sounding board for problems on the site. Clear processes for conflict resolution will be delineated. Additionally, the Advisory Board will deliver information about the Center to key stakeholders. It will review quarterly progress reports and an annual report submitted by GoFarm. The role and responsibilities of the Advisory Board will be developed once the land is secured.

**B. Rent and fees**

Rent and fees (if any) will be negotiated considering the type and needs of the landowner. As a nonprofit organization, GoFarm's preference is to keep its land rent costs to a minimum and to invest limited resources in the site and programming.

**C. Reserved rights**

The landowner may reserve rights to access the property for specific uses that do not conflict with GoFarm's permitted activities. These might include storing personal items in a structure, drawing water from the leasehold, and recreational uses such as walking and hunting.

**D. Decision-making, review and approvals**

Processes to request and deliver approvals, submit and review infrastructure plans, modify lease terms, and document all decisions will be designed by the landowner and GoFarm.

**E. GoFarm role and responsibilities**

- a. All programming
- b. All facilities management, maintenance, including expenses unless otherwise agreed
- c. All improvements (new construction, capital modifications); authority to design, choose contractors, etc. and associated costs according to lease terms.
- d. All utilities charges
- e. Site security
- f. Maintain all required insurances
- g. Request permissions

**F. Landowner as landlord/partner role and responsibilities**

- a. Comply with all laws pertaining to landowner's status as a landlord to GoFarm
- b. Pay taxes (property, income) and other applicable assessments
- c. Participate in annual planning and monitoring sessions and as needed
- d. Maintain open communications; respond to correspondences; review requests
- e. Maintain all required insurances
- f. Construct/manage/maintain infrastructure per lease agreement

**IV. Landowner Profile and Benefits**

The successful applicant landowner will have enthusiasm for and commitment to GoFarm's vision and Training Center activities. The landowner will understand the implications of letting their land be used and developed for these purposes over a relatively long period of time. They commit to their responsibilities as landlord that will be spelled out in a lease agreement. They accept the level of activity on the property, including size of workshop groups, numbers of vehicles, and use of buildings and water. They prioritize good and timely communications and collaborative problem solving.

GoFarm interacts with many landowners and land managers interested in leasing their land to a local farmer. The following benefits may motivate a GoFarm Training Center applicant:

- a. Improvements to the land such as soil health and biodiversity
- b. Community development and engagement
- c. Economic development through job creation and new businesses
- d. Increased food access and security through local food production
- e. Community awareness of local agriculture
- f. Meeting conservation goals
- g. Increased green space
- h. Contribution to fostering the next generation of farmers and the future of farming
- i. Active land management (e.g., invasive species and/or pest control)
- j. Site security
- k. Income
- l. Infrastructure maintenance
- m. Infrastructure development

## **V. Application**

### **A. Procedure**

Please submit your responses through this [google form](#). Any questions or concerns can be directed to [Katie@gofarmcoop.org](mailto:Katie@gofarmcoop.org).

Applications will be reviewed by a team of GoFarm Staff, board members, and local agriculture experts. Someone may contact you for clarification or additional information. Incomplete applications may not be able to be accepted. Your application may be selected for the next level of review consisting of a site visit and in-person interview with official representatives of the proposed property.

A finalist will be selected and notified by December 15th. At that point, GoFarm and the finalist will commence negotiations to determine whether an agreement can be forged. GoFarm will submit a site plan to the landowner, and the landowner will provide a letter of intent with any specifications regarding lease terms. If GoFarm and the applicant are in accord, a draft lease agreement and accompanying documents will be drafted for review and approval by both parties, guided by legal counsel.

### **B. Application Form**

- a. General information
  - i. Contact information
    1. Name
    2. Organization if relevant
    3. Position/relationship to property
    4. Phone
    5. Email
    6. Mailing address

- ii. Legal owner
  - iii. Site location (address)
  - iv. Acres available (indicate if this is part of a larger tract)
- 
- b. Site description
  - c. Current and prior use(s)
  - d. Natural features: Please describe, addressing the list of requirements in Section II(1).
  - e. Built features: Please describe, addressing the list of requirements in Section II(3). Include a description of the current condition and uses of any built features. Indicate willingness to have new infrastructure installed.
  - f. Legal requirements: Please address the list of legal requirements in Section II(2). Include any other considerations or attributes of the parcel that could be relevant to this project.
  - g. Describe your reasons for leasing to GoFarm [You may refer to Section IV, but you are not limited to that list.]
  - h. If selected, what are your vision and goals for this property?
  - i. Please identify any management or use requirements or restrictions you would have in order for GoFarm to lease this property.
  - j. Please describe your willingness to negotiate a competitive rental rate or your suggestions for another formula or approach.
  - k. Please describe any additional considerations and/or ideas

## **VI. APPENDICES**

- A. Background
- B. GoFarm's values and practices
- C. Payment and Ownership Scenarios for Site Improvements

**\*\*Letters of Reference are available upon request\*\***

## **Appendix A. Background**

### **Goals of the GoFarm Training Center:**

- (1) increase the local food supply by training beginning farmers in sustainable farming methods;
- (2) increase new independent farming enterprises through business planning and development; &
- (3) increase community awareness of local agriculture

Two-year apprenticeships are designed for beginning farmers who, upon graduation, are expected to continue their independent farm enterprises. Apprentices are provided year-round training, mentoring, technical assistance, access to a farm plot, water, equipment, and more to begin their enterprises. In 2019, 27 participants enrolled in the program, as either farmer mentors, farm interns, or farmer apprentices. The apprentices spend two years studying the business aspects of starting their own farm, as well as technical farm training. The incubator helps break down barriers of entry into the farming industry, and includes an emphasis on recruiting veterans and socially disadvantaged individuals interested in farming.

GoFarm also works to increase access to food through our Local Food Share (LFS) and Community Food Access (CFA) Programs. The Local Food Share is an aggregated CSA program that supplies from more than 30 small-scale local farmers. The LFS had more than 550 members in 2019 and continues to grow each year. LFS members can use EBT/SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks to pay for their share of produce. GoFarm also offers discounts to households enrolled in WIC (Women, Infants and Children), Medicaid, Free and Reduced Lunch, or that qualify based on household income. The LFS program creates a significant wholesale channel for small farmers who often can't access traditional wholesale markets. The CFA Program takes excess food from the Local Food Share and purchases additional local produce to supply low cost markets in partnership with WIC, Headstart, and other community partners.

### **Desire and Need**

For the past 50 years, the Denver Metro area has been steadily losing farms and farmland; only nine of the original 307 farms that once existed in Denver 100 years ago are still in operation today. Over the past seven years, Colorado's population has increased by 577,829 residents, and there has been a significant increase in the number of young entrepreneurs interested in a farming career. This is evident by the surge of beginning farmers applying for the CO Agriculture Development Authority's Beginning Farmer Loan Program and by the increasing enrollment of students in CSU Extension's Building Farmers Course. In response to the rising interest of the Denver Metro area's younger population in becoming farmers, GoFarm initiated the Incubator Program with a goal to increase the number of beginning farmers and enhance their success and sustainability.

## **Appendix B. Values of the GoFarm Incubator**

### Organic Practices and No GMOs

What we put into the soil is what comes out of it - which is why we practice, regenerative, and sustainable growing practices with no harmful toxins, chemicals or GMOs. This way, our soil stays strong, the food stays healthy, and farm workers stay safe! Not all of the farms we work with are certified organic, as this is not financially feasible for many small-scale farmers, though ALL of our farmers use sustainable practices and go above and beyond organic certification standards.

Our farmers:

- perform soil fertility management practices that promote healthy, nutrient rich soil
- abide by an integrated pest management plan to control pests, weeds, and diseases using only physical, mechanical, and biological controls, instead of chemical or toxic inputs
- only use biological, botanical, or synthetic substances that are approved for use on the USDA National Organic List
- use absolutely no genetic engineering, gene editing, GMO seeds, ionizing radiation, or synthetic inputs that are not on the approved USDA organic list
- use absolutely no glyphosate

### Soil Health and Environmental Stewardship

Our farmers have the utmost care for the health of our soils and agricultural land. Having healthy, nutrient rich soils increases the nutrient value of our food, increases resilience to drought, flood, and other extreme weather, prevents erosion, contains less pollutants, and ensures the vitality of our land to grow food well into the future.

Our farmers:

- conduct conservation tillage practices ranging from no-till to shallow tilling just 2 times per year
- protect soil from erosion when it's not in production through mulching, cover crops, laying tarps, etc.
- promote soil biodiversity and sustain soil organic matter through cover crops, compost, crop rotation, crop diversity, etc.
- compost farm waste
- incorporate water conservation and efficient irrigation practices
- conserve resources by amending soil based on soil testing

### Equitable Work Environment

In addition to environmental, community, and health benefits that our farmers value, we also work to ensure all farm worker conditions are fair, equitable, and safe. We value the work that our farmers and farm workers do for us each day, and whatever we can to show this support and appreciation.

Our Farmers:

- Ensure all farm employees are compensated in a fair manner and paid at or above minimum wage
- Uphold that all farm employees have a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect at all times

### Food Safety

Food grown and distributed all within our local environment is already much safer than food grown and distributed on a global scale. This is because the food is grown in healthier soils, sees less handling and transportation mechanisms, and thus is at much lower risk of contamination. Even still, our farmers must attend a FSMA training class and have a documented food safety plan for their farm. GoFarm staff visit every farm we work with regularly, and ensure that farmers are keeping up with food safety protocols.

### Sustainability

Sustainability is a major focus of the GoFarm Incubator program. To us, sustainability means using responsible farming techniques as well as building farm businesses that sustain the farmer physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and financially. No farm business is truly sustainable if the farmers are unable to pay themselves a fair wage. GoFarm hopes to support farmers in achieving all of these pillars of sustainability through the Incubator program while also increasing consumption of, access to, and knowledge of local produce and other farm products.

### Community Development and Engagement

GoFarm is intentional about the inclusion of existing and new relationships with community organizations/members. At their core, all of our community-based projects, events, and initiatives strive to be mutually beneficial to all stakeholders in the partnership and responsive to a community need.

## Appendix C: Payment and Ownership Scenarios for Site Improvements

Who pays for improvement?	Status of improvement during lease term	Disposition of improvement upon termination
Landowner pays for <b>permanent</b> improvement	Landowner owns; lease modified, (e.g., maintenance, rent)	Landowner owns
Tenant pays for <b>permanent</b> improvement	Tenant owns and maintains; lease modified (~ ground lease)	Reverts to landowner with or without compensation (sell back)
Landowner pays for <b>removable</b> improvement	Landowner owns; lease modified (e.g., maintenance, rent)	Landowner owns; may keep, remove, sell
Tenant pays for <b>removable</b> improvement	Tenant owns and maintains	Tenant option or obligation to remove; may sell back to landowner