2026 Farm Business Accelerator Overview

The Foodshed Project Farm Business Accelerator is a 3-year program offering beginning farmers an alternative entry point to establishing a successful farm business. We provide a bridge to business viability for those with existing farm skills through low-cost access to everything needed to manage a successful farm business: land, water, infrastructure, technical support, marketing assistance, mentorship, and business education through CSU Extension's Building Farmers program & more.

The Accelerator Program is designed for vegetable and crop producers** with farming experience and an interest in establishing their own farming business. Eligible participants must be able to show evidence of farming experiences and be able to describe a compelling vision for a farm business of their own.

***Though the program is designed for vegetable and crop producers, we are open to all types of producers – if you are interested and are not a vegetable/crop producer, please email us! We would be happy to work with you.*

<u>What we provide</u>

- Affordable access to land and water
- Shared infrastructure – storage space, basic harvest/processing facilities, walk-in coolers
- Shared equipment – BCS walk-behind tractor, hand tools (broadforks, bed rakes, shovels, etc.), basic power tools (drills, light saws), seeders, and more
- Basic drip irrigation infrastructure (pump, mainline, pressure regulators) – Participants are responsible for all irrigation equipment beyond the pressure regulator (header lines, valves, drip tape, associated maintenance)
- Basic land preparation in fall and spring
- Registration in CSU Extension Building Farmers Principles of Business Planning & Management Course (Year 1)
    - The Principles of Business Planning and Management program is a series of evening classes designed to help new farmers and ranchers explore farming as a business and provide intermediate and experienced farmers and ranchers with tools and ideas to refine and enhance their business management, production, and marketing skills. The course culminates in the presentation of a business plan that is then refined with support from experienced producers. For more details: buildingfarmers.com/classroom-programs
- Access to technical assistance through CSU Extension and farmer mentors
- Connections to established and emerging marketing opportunities – including access to our mobile market and other partner programs.
- Interpretation/translation services upon request
- Years 2 & 3:

    - Access to Advanced Classes in partnership with CSU Extension on an a la carte basis – these short courses may include subjects such as employee management, marketing, legal considerations, bookkeeping, grant writing, and fundraising
    - Proposal writing and fundraising training after year 2 and through year 3 in order to help ensure participants have familiarity with and connections to potential funders and investors post-program
    - Market Channel Assessments for all Accelerator participants in their third year. This tool enables producers to identify and understand differences in sales to labor ratios among different marketing channels and prioritize those that maximize profitability.
    - Participants will not be required to retake the Building Farmers Principles of Business Planning and Management course in years 2 & 3.
- Support for land and water access for all program graduates through a partnership with Poudre Valley Community Farms

What you provide

- Seeds/transplants, special equipment, harvest supplies
- All irrigation equipment beyond the pressure regulator (header lines, valves, drip tape, associated maintenance)
- Keep accurate farm records (crop planning, production, sales & expenses, etc.) and share with program staff for evaluation purposes
- Participation in site-wide meetings, strong communication, and a spirit of collaboration
- Proof of minimum $1,000,000 general farm liability insurance, covering both your farm and products (must be provided before starting onsite)

Application process

Applications are due **December 31st, 2025**. Interested applicants can apply online or by filling out a paper application and emailing to ed@foodshedproject.org. If for some reason you are not able to meet the deadline but are interested in applying, please email us.

Applications will be reviewed by program staff and an expert review panel to examine farming experience, training needs, business vision, and overall fit with the program. Participants selected by the review panel will be interviewed by program staff and decision notifications to all applicants will be sent by mid to late January.

Applications are required annually. Returning participants will submit a returning application to gauge needs, goals, plan adjustments for the next season, and to submit reports from the prior season. Returning participants will be able to move to a larger plot size during the reapplication process.

2026 Schedule

December 31st, 2025 – Application deadline

(if you are not able to meet the deadline but are interested in applying, please contact us)

Mid/late January 2026 – Decision notifications sent out

Early February, 2026 – Participant orientation meeting

January - March, 2026 (Specific dates TBD) – CSU Extension Building Farmers Course begins (In-person in Fort Collins)

Mid-March/Early April 2026 – Site orientation including irrigation and safety trainings (date TBD)

Early April 2026 (Specific dates TBD) – 1-2 on-site works days with participants & program staff

Mid-April/Early May 2026 – Participants begin in the field

Mid to Late October, 2026 – Field season ends

Requirements

- Minimum two seasons of direct production experience
- A well-thought-out business idea
- Familiarity with key aspects of running an agricultural operation in your area of interest
- Familiarity with and interest in learning business skills necessary to manage a business plan, maintain financial records, market products, etc.
- Knowledge of and commitment to sustainable, ecologically sound production practices
- Commitment to attend all on-farm trainings, workdays, and Building Farmer course dates
- Willingness to work collaboratively and communicate effectively with program staff, participants, and other resident farmers
- Obtain farm liability insurance and provide proof of insurance to Foodshed Project
- Commitment to organic growing practices (certification not required)
- Payment of all program fees on time
- Sign and adhere to the site guidelines
- Regular plot maintenance (weed control, general care, irrigation, manage field edges, scout for pests)
- Adherence to food safety protocol set by GAP and FSMA

Accelerator Fees (includes everything listed in “what we provide” section)

Total Program Fees			
Plot Size (by acre)	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**
0.25	$500	$750	$1,000
0.5	$1,000	$1,500	$2,000
1	$1,250	$2,000	$2,750
1.5	*Not available*	$2,500	$3,500