



## Ohio Administrative Code Rule 901-2-05 Application ranking system.

Effective: September 26, 2024

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(A) Prior to accepting applications for matching grants, the director shall notify and make available, through various farm organizations, charitable organizations, and political subdivisions the following:

- (1) The procedure for applying for matching grants;
- (2) The application for matching grants; and
- (3) The application ranking system which is outlined in paragraphs (B) and (C) of this rule and section 901.22 of the Revised Code.

(B) The application ranking system shall be comprised of several criterion as indicated in paragraph (C) of this rule. The ranking system will assign a score for each criterion based on the weighted score range as indicated. The total score for all criteria is one hundred points. Prior to each application funding round the director, with the advice of the farmland preservation advisory board, or if a certified local sponsor is participating, the certified local sponsor shall determine the specific value within this range for each ranking criterion as indicated in paragraph (C) of this rule. Applications approved by the director will then be submitted for phase two evaluation.

(C) The application ranking system criteria shall be comprised as follows:

(1) Soil types and agricultural productivity. Range: fifteen to thirty points. Emphasis for matching grants is placed on soils which are classified as prime or officially designated unique or locally important.

(2) Protected areas. Range: fifteen to thirty points. Emphasis for matching grants is placed on land that is adjacent to or in close proximity, in a formula approved during the certification process by the director or otherwise mathematically defined by the director, to agricultural land or other land that is



conducive to agriculture, whether such land is in the process of being protected or is already permanently protected such that a buffer from development exists between land proposed for agricultural easement and areas that have been developed or likely will be developed for purposes other than agriculture. These protected areas include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (a) Land that has already been permanently protected from development through agricultural or conservation easements;
- (b) Flood pools and other normally undevelopable waterbodies;
- (c) Parks, open spaces, forests, nature preserves, and other natural areas that are not protected from development through conservation easements, but have permanent deed restrictions or other restrictions which the director determines could protect agricultural land;
- (d) Publicly owned agricultural research lands that the director determines could protect agricultural land; and
- (e) Airports, military bases, or other developed areas that the director determines could be appropriately buffered by agricultural land.

(3) Use of best management practices including approved conservation plans. Range: five to ten points. Emphasis for matching grants may be given to, but is not limited to, the landowner who certification from the natural resource conservation service, soil and water conservation district, or other generally accepted qualified organization, as determined by the director, stating that the operation of the application property includes best management practices utilizing appropriate conservation standards, has a forestry management plan approved by the Ohio department of natural resources or qualified organization, as determined by the director, if applicable, and has a history of substantial compliance with federal and state agricultural laws.

(4) Development pressure. Range: fifteen to thirty points. Emphasis for matching grants is placed on farmland faced with potential development pressure that is likely to affect the ability of the farm operator to conduct agricultural activities or cause conversion of the agricultural land to nonagricultural uses. Development factors may include, but are not limited to, the following:



- (a) Roadway distance from any border of the property to sanitary sewer and water;
  - (b) Roadway distance to the nearest freeway interchanges;
  - (c) Application property public roadway frontage; and
  - (d) Development pressure as measured by activity such as an increase in lot splits, well or septic permits, traffic counts, or other indicators determined by the director to accurately measure such pressure.
- (5) A local comprehensive land use plan which identifies areas for agricultural protection. Range: fifteen to thirty points. Emphasis for matching grants may be placed on, but is not limited to, application properties which are located within a designated agricultural area of a political subdivision's long-range plan and where the political subdivision has adopted specific action to protect the area, such as zoning where agriculture is the predominant land use, a commitment not to extend utilities, or initiate any non-agricultural development activity.
- (6) Other criteria as approved by the director. Range fifteen to thirty points. These criteria include, but are not limited to, the following:
- (a) Application property location relative to a metropolitan statistical area;
  - (b) Application property enrollment in the agricultural security area program;
  - (c) Historic or archaeological designation;
  - (d) Century farm designation by the director; and
  - (e) Application property with local match higher than the required twenty-five per cent minimum, through cash or donation.
- (D) For each funding round, the director may adopt guidelines, including but not limited to, the



following:

- (1) A limit on the number of application properties, acres, or dollar amount funded per county;
- (2) A limit on the number of application properties per grantor;
- (3) A limit on the dollar amount funded per certified local sponsor;
- (4) A maximum dollar amount per acre of matching grant funds; or
- (5) A maximum dollar amount of matching grant funds per landowner shall not exceed one million dollars, as required by section 901.22 of the Revised Code.