

# Clean Ohio AEPP Advisory Board Scoring Guide

## **What is the Clean Ohio Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (AEPP)?**

Designed to restore, protect, and connect Ohio's important natural and urban places, the Clean Ohio Fund works to make Ohio a better place to work and live. The State of Ohio took a giant leap forward in 2000 with the passage of the \$400 million Clean Ohio Fund. With these funds, five state agencies have come together to preserve green space and farmland, improve outdoor recreation, and clean up brownfields to encourage redevelopment and revitalize communities.

Ohioans continue to see value in this program. Voters in all 88 counties overwhelmingly approved the expansion of this program in 2008, extending the Fund with another \$400 million. The Ohio Department of Agriculture Office of Farmland Preservation implements distribution for \$25 million of the Fund through the Agricultural Easement Purchase Program (AEPP). The AEPP's purpose is to permanently protect farmland.

Of the \$25 million approved by Ohio voters in 2008, \$6.25 million will be distributed in the 2011 round of funding. Grants are issued for up to 75% of the points-based appraised value of a farm's development rights. All agricultural easement transactions are voluntary, permanent, and legally binding. The easements limit the land use for predominantly agricultural purposes, are recorded on the property deed, and transfer with the land to successive owners.

Landowners must apply to the Clean Ohio AEPP through a local sponsor which can be local governments (county, townships or municipalities), Soil and Water Conservation Districts or a charitable organization. These entities agree to monitor, assist in enforcement and co-hold the agricultural easement with the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

The completed application provides a perspective of the applicant's farmland. To differentiate between applications, a two-tiered ranking system was created.

The 100-point, quantitative Tier I portion uses a formula that takes into account a farm's soil quality, proximity to other protected areas, proximity to intermediate development pressure, use of best management practices, local support and planning for agriculture, and other factors.

The 50-point, Tier II portion of the application consists of a thorough review and scoring by the Ohio Agriculture Director's 12-member Farmland Preservation Advisory Board of five narrative/essay questions posed to the applicant.

The numerical values from both the 100-point Tier I and 50-point Tier II portions are then combined, giving preference to those farms best suited to promote the program's goals of protecting the best soils for farming and creating permanently, economically viable blocks of farmland that complement a local comprehensive plan.

The advisory board is charged with also considering regional balance when considering applications. Regional Balance is based upon, but not limited to:

- The number of applications received from a region in proportion to the total number of applications submitted
- The total amount of funds a region has previously received in proportion to the total amount of funds distributed.

For more information please review the:

- Clean Ohio AEPP brochure
- Clean Ohio AEPP application
- Guidelines and Policies

### **Role of Farmland Preservation Advisory Board**

In order to evaluate the five essay questions within the Tier II portion of the ranking system, the Farmland Preservation Advisory Board was established. The Advisory Board's charge is to: 1.) analyze and score the AEPP narrative portion of the applications, and 2.) present recommendations for funding to Ohio Agriculture Director per Ohio Revised Code 901.23.

While the Director will make the final allocation decisions, the role of the Advisory Board is a vital component to the decision-making process.

There are five Tier II essay questions which summarize both the landowners' and local governments' investment in the economic, social and agricultural framework. The Advisory Board reviews these essays and designates a score based upon the information provided. The narratives will vary greatly throughout the state; however, there are certain characteristics differentiating applicants. The Clean Ohio AEPP scoring methodology is intended to assist in providing a framework for decision-making regarding the selection of applications for funding.

Tier II is a qualitative measuring of the following five areas:

- Agricultural infrastructure, support services, and facilities specific to the farm's agricultural activities.
- Estate, farm succession and business management plan and other long-term investments made on the farm.
- Potential for the farm to be a good demonstration or showcase project for the promotion of farmland preservation in Ohio.
- Public commitments to farmland preservation taken by the local government.
- Examples of sustainable agriculture on the farm.

Each of these topics is worth up to 10 points each and applicants have the ability to use a maximum of 1300 characters to discuss each subject. The application describes this section to the applicants as follows:

“These questions are designed to give you the opportunity to showcase the unique characteristics of your land or operation. It is a chance for you to explain what makes your application special (in ways that might not be evident in the straightforward answers to Tier I questions). Evaluations are based on the thoroughness of your responses, NOT on writing style.”

### **2011 Scoring**

For the 2011 funding round, the Advisory Board will be scoring Tier II narratives of applications submitted. In order to do so, the Advisory Board will be divided so that six members score Quadrants 1 and 2 while the other six Advisory Board members score narratives from Quadrants 3 and 4.

Tentatively, the following members will score Quadrants 1 and 2; the representatives from The Ohio State University, Planning Interests, Soil and Water Conservation Interests, Southwest Ohio Farmers, Northwest Ohio Farmers, and County Commissioners Interests. Scoring Quadrants 3 and 4 will be representatives from Township Trustees, Northeast Ohio Farmers, Southeast Ohio Farmers, Environmental Interests, National Non-Profit Organization, and Development Interests.

### **Advisory Board Member’s Role**

The role of an Advisory Board member is to provide a neutral and consistent ranking to the essay portion of the AEPP application. Advisory Board members will not score any applications from the county in which they live, sponsored by an organization of which they are a member, or a property of which they may have an ownership interest.

On each application that will be scored, the landowner’s name and personal information has been asked to be eliminated and only the county and acreage will be revealed. The Advisory Board members are asked to read and score the applications provided to them, using the attached score sheets and this scoring guide.

## Clean Ohio AEPP Scoring Methodology

As a reminder, the scoring methodology attached is offered to assist Advisory Board members in developing a framework for evaluating the five Tier II questions of each AEPP application and to allow for a consistency across all members' scoring. Each question below appears on the application.

**16A:** Provide some specific information about the property in this application. In particular, list or describe: (1) the kinds of agricultural activities conducted on the property; (2) the essential agricultural support services and facilities used in the operation; and, (3) the distance of those essential support services and facilities from the property. (*Maximum Points = 10.0*)

<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>STRONG RESPONSE (10-8 POINTS)</b> Strong response in all areas	<b>AVERAGE RESPONSE (7-4 POINTS)</b> At least one of the factors is avg or above	<b>WEAK RESPONSE (3-0 POINTS)</b> All of the factors are weak or unresponsive
<b>AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES</b> (max of 4 points)	Give detail on agricultural activities, that includes information on livestock and crops; Information on the operation in terms of economic impact	Mentions some activities on the farm, but gives little or no detail regarding the operation	Vague on the types of agricultural activities conducted on the farm
<b>AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT SERVICES AND FACILITIES</b> (max of 3 points)	Gives detail on agricultural support services that the farm utilizes, identifies each type of entity; the number of services for the county which is an important factor that indicates the stability, success and ultimately longevity of the agricultural infrastructure for that farm.	Mentions some agricultural support services and facilities but gives little detail on the variety within the region	Unresponsive to question and provides little detail.
<b>PROXIMITY</b> (max of 3 points)	List of a variety of support services and facilities, complete with distances; Close proximity to the farm indicating less than 10 miles.	Lists services and facilities, lists proximities which are beyond 10 miles.	Lists a few support services and facilities, but not a variety within the county; does not list proximity measurements.

**16B:** Discuss the management and future of the property in this application. In particular, describe: (1) what sort of estate plan is in effect for the property; (2) what sort of business plan is there for the operation of the farm; and, (3) what, if any, long-term investments have been made on the property. (*Maximum Points = 10.0*)

<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>STRONG RESPONSE (10-8 POINTS)</b> Strong response in all areas	<b>AVERAGE RESPONSE (7-4 POINTS)</b> At least one of the factors is avg or above	<b>WEAK RESPONSE (3-0 POINTS)</b> All of the factors are weak or unresponsive
<b>ESTATE PLAN</b> (max of 4 points)	Give detail on an existing will or trust, that includes information on beneficiaries, line of succession for farm, or trustee duties, showing strong evidence farming will continue after death of owners; Information on the operation of will or trust is helpful to determine whether adequate steps have been taken to ensure farm's future and intent that farm be tended in the future.	Mentions will or trust or intent to create will or trust, but gives little or no detail regarding beneficiaries, succession of farm, or trustee duties.	Does not mention will or trust, existing or intent to create; No documented plan for future succession of farm or what is to happen with farm. Answers that indicate intent for farm to go to son or daughter, for example, without documentation or detail; Unresponsive to question.
<b>BUSINESS PLAN</b> (max of 3 points)	Gives detail on operation, management structure, and if the farm is incorporated, what type of entity; Entity structure and management/structure/duties are all important factors that indicate the stability, success and ultimately longevity of the farm.	Mentions how it is incorporated but gives little detail on management structure, type of entity, etc.	No-plan or mentions plan in passing with no detail; Unresponsive to question.
<b>LONG-TERM INVESTMENTS</b> (max of 3 points)	List of capital improvements, new equipment purchases, land or infrastructure purchase or improvements, complete with cost amounts; Other improvements to the farm or land that indicate a firm, long-term monetary commitment to the farm.	Lists some improvements or purchases, but does not necessarily list costs or indicate when such purchases were made; Plans for future investments are not an indication of what has actually been invested in the farm.	No improvement mentioned or lists a few improvements, but no cost amount or time when purchased; Statements about what owner would like to do with farm infrastructure or intends to do with farm; Unresponsive to question.

**16C:** (1) What makes the property in this application a good showcase for the promotion of farmland preservation in Ohio? (2) List ideas for making this property a better showcase. (3) Describe any awards received in these areas, if any. (*Maximum Points = 10.0*)

<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>STRONG RESPONSE (10-8 POINTS)</b> Strong response in all areas	<b>AVERAGE RESPONSE (7-4 POINTS)</b> At least one of the factors is avg or above	<b>WEAK RESPONSE (3-0 POINTS)</b> All of the factors are weak or unresponsive
<b>DEMONSTRATION OR SHOWCASE PROJECT</b> (max of 5 points)	Gives details on present activities regarding the demonstration or showcase of agricultural operation to a variety of audiences, shows strong evidence of community involvement regarding the promotion of agriculture	Applicant provides a few or vague examples of how the farm is a good demonstration or showcase project	Applicant does not provide any examples of how the farm has been a demonstration project in the past or present of farmland preservation
<b>IDEAS TO IMPROVE DEMONSTRATION</b> (max of 3 points)	Gives details on potential activities and ideas regarding the demonstration or showcase of agricultural operation to a variety of audiences, shows strong evidence of community involvement regarding the promotion of agriculture	Applicant provides a few or vague examples of how the farm could be a good demonstration or showcase project in the future	Applicant does not provide any examples of how the farm could become a demonstration or showcase project of farmland preservation
<b>AWARDS</b> (max of 2 points)	Provides detailed information on nominated or received awards reflecting a good showcase for the promotion of farmland preservation in Ohio	Provides some or vague information on nominated or received awards reflecting a good showcase for the promotion of farmland preservation in Ohio	Does not provide any information on nominated or received awards reflecting a good showcase for the promotion of farmland preservation in Ohio

**16D:** What has your local government(s) done to (1) establish an agricultural preservation board; (2) fund an office of farmland preservation; (3) provide steady revenue to purchase agricultural easements; (4) create or support a land trust; or, (5) demonstrate other public commitment to farmland preservation. (*Maximum Points = 10.0*)

<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>STRONG RESPONSE (10-8 POINTS)</b> Strong response in all areas	<b>AVERAGE RESPONSE (7-4 POINTS)</b> At least one of the factors is avg or above	<b>WEAK RESPONSE (3-0 POINTS)</b> All of the factors are weak or unresponsive
CREATE A AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION BOARD or OFFICE FOR FARMLAND PRESERVATION (max of 4 points)	Gives detail on existing local governmental actions, creation of a agricultural preservation board and office/personnel dedicated to farmland preservation; adequate steps have been taken to ensure the agricultural infrastructure and landowners are intended to be part of the county's land use and economic future.	Mentions some governmental actions regarding farmland preservation, such as the creation of a farmland preservation task force report, or personnel dedicated to farmland preservation but gives little or no detail regarding other governmental actions.	No documented farmland preservation board or government personnel dedicated to farmland preservation efforts; answers indicate no intention by the elected officials to protect the agricultural infrastructure; Unresponsive to question.
ESTABLISHMENT OF A REVENUE STREAM (max of 3 points)	Gives detail on the establishment of a revenue stream; Entity structure and management/structure/policies are all important factors that indicate the stability, long-range goals of the program.	Mentions attempts at establishment of a revenue stream.	No revenue stream or attempts to establish a revenue stream have been made in the county or region.
CREATION/SUPPORT OF A LAND TRUST (max of 3 points)	Details creation or support of local land trust within county or region; identifies number of easements held or commitment as a local sponsor towards application.	Intent to create or support a land trust, but gives little or no detail regarding timeline for establishment.	No established land trust in the area; no private commitment towards farmland improvements; Unresponsive to question.

**16E:** Explain the ways in which the property in this application demonstrates sustainable agriculture. List all programs (governmental or your own) you have entered into to address the following :(1) soil erosion, (2) water quality, (3) wetland protection/restoration, and, (4) wildlife habitat enhancement. *(Maximum Points = 10.0)*

<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>STRONG RESPONSE (10-8 POINTS)</b> Strong response in all areas	<b>AVERAGE RESPONSE (7-4 POINTS)</b> At least one of the factors is avg or above	<b>WEAK RESPONSE (3-0 POINTS)</b> All of the factors are weak or unresponsive
<b>ADDRESS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SOIL EROSION</li> <li>• WATER QUALITY</li> <li>• WETLAND PROTECTION/RESORATION</li> <li>• WILDLIFE HABITAT ENFORCEMENT</li> </ul> (max of 10 points)	Applicant provides evidence of addressing all four mentioned resource concerns positively if the issues apply. (Example: wetlands may not apply)	Applicant provides evidence of addressing at least two of the four mentioned resource concerns if applicable.	Applicant provides at least one of the four mentioned resource concerns if applicable.

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