

**RESOLUTION 2023-26**  
**NEW JERSEY HIGHLANDS WATER PROTECTION AND PLANNING COUNCIL**  
**APPROVAL OF FY2024 REGIONAL MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION FUND**  
**FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE GRANTS**

**WHEREAS**, the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act (Highlands Act), N.J.S.A. 13:20-1 et seq., has created a public body corporate and politic with corporate succession known as the Highlands Water Protection and Planning Council (Highlands Council); and

**WHEREAS**, the Highlands Council is tasked with implementing the Highlands Act; and

**WHEREAS**, section 6.g of the Highlands Act authorizes the Highlands Council to enter into any and all agreements or contracts to effectuate the purposes of the Highlands Act; and

**WHEREAS**, the preservation of farmland and the promotion of sustainable agriculture in the Highlands Region are two essential objectives of the Highlands Act; and

**WHEREAS**, agriculture, if it is to remain viable in the New Jersey Highlands, requires a sustainable land base. The Highlands Region contains over 859,000 acres, of which over 118,000 acres were categorized as agricultural land in 2002. Agricultural land, in both the Preservation and Planning Areas of the Highlands, is an important resource, providing essential value to the residents of New Jersey with locally available agricultural products, economic benefits of agricultural production, and rural character associated with agricultural land; and

**WHEREAS**, to preserve and sustain agricultural resources and enhance the viability of the agricultural industry, programs are needed that focus more on the practices farmers can use to achieve sustainable profitability, sustainable stewardship practices for natural and agricultural resources, and sustainable coexistence with non-farmers in a densely populated state; and

**WHEREAS**, the New Jersey Legislature declared that the maintenance of agricultural production and a positive agricultural business climate should be encouraged to the maximum extent possible wherever appropriate in the Highlands (Highlands Act, Section 2); and

**WHEREAS**, to sustain and enhance agricultural resources and the viability of the agricultural industry, it is necessary to provide incentives and funding opportunities, to not only preserve agriculture, but to encourage land stewardship through Best Management Practices (BMPs) that enhance the resources of the Highlands Region, and

**WHEREAS**, the 2022 Highlands Economic Sustainability Plan identifies agriculture as a key industry and economic driver for the Region; and

**WHEREAS**, with these goals in mind and utilizing funding from the RMP Implementation Fund, the Highlands Council is offering grants to nonprofit organizations and public institutions of higher education for projects that advance innovative/alternative sustainable agriculture; and

**WHEREAS**, the grant program seeks to encourage the implementation of projects that will assist agricultural operations in the Highlands region including value-added facilities, technical assistance, new farmer programs, sustainable land management practices and other sustainable agricultural activity; and

**WHEREAS**, the maximum award amount is \$100,000 per year, for a maximum of three years, subject to funding availability, and projects will be reviewed annually to ascertain status, effectiveness, overall implementation, and management of the grant award; and

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**WHEREAS**, each grant shall be annually reviewed by the Budget and Finance Committee at which time the Committee may authorize an additional year of grant funding not to exceed the annual award amount provided herein; and

**WHEREAS**, the grant application was released to the public on June 20, 2023, and six (6) applicants submitted grant applications on or before the deadline of August 11, 2023; and

**WHEREAS**, after reviewing the applications, staff conducted in-depth interviews with all of the applicants to determine the extent of their expertise in all facets of sustainable agriculture and their overall suitability to provide the services contemplated in the grant application; and

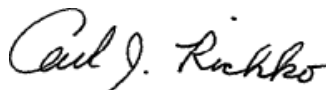
**WHEREAS**, Highlands Council staff recommends that the Highlands Council authorize entering into grant agreements with the following applicants:

Awardee	Amount
City Green, Inc.	\$90,000
North Jersey Resource Conservation and Development	\$90,000
Foodshed Alliance	\$92,840
Northeast Organic Farming Association of N.J.	\$93,245
Ramapough Culture and Land Foundation of the Turtle Clan of the Ramapough Lunaape (Lenape) Nation	\$83,930

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Highlands Council that the Executive Director, or their designee, is hereby authorized to enter into Sustainable Agriculture Grant Agreements with: City Green, Inc.; North Jersey Resource Conservation and Development; Foodshed Alliance; Northeast Organic Farming Association of N.J.; and the Ramapough Culture and Land Foundation of the Turtle Clan of the Ramapough Lunaape (Lenape) Nation, for the amounts provided above for a period of one year, subject to annual renewal by the Budget and Finance Committee.

**CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by the Highlands Council at its regular meeting held on the 19th day of October, 2023.



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 Carl J. Richko, Chairman

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<b>Vote on the Approval of The Resolution</b>	<b>Motion</b>	<b>Second</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Abstain</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Councilmember Alstede		√	√			
Councilmember Dougherty						√
Councilmember Dressler			√			
Councilmember Francis			√			
Councilmember Holtaway	√		√			
Councilmember James			√			
Councilmember Sebetich			√			
Councilmember Van Abs			√			
Councilmember Visioli			√			
Councilmember Vohden			√			
Chairman Richko			√			