



PRESETON KEEVES/USDA

## Land Transfer Navigators

SUPPORTING TRANSITION AND ACCESS ON AGRICULTURAL LANDS

Forty percent of the nation's agricultural land – 370 million acres – is owned or operated by seniors. As aging agricultural landowners prepare to retire, the future of the land they steward is at a critical turning point. How and to whom they transfer their land will have an enormous impact on the next generation of farmers and ranchers and the opportunities available to them. Regional food systems, local economies, and climate change solutions all depend on a new generation's ability to access and steward the land well.

**Land trusts and public Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) programs can play a key role in responding to these urgent challenges.**

Together, public and private land conservation groups have worked with farmers and ranchers to permanently protect more than 7 million acres across the country. They are in a unique position to foster relationships that can lead to the successful transfer of land between generations.

Land that has been permanently protected with an agricultural conservation easement, particularly when restricted to sell at agricultural value, is typically more affordable than unprotected land. This makes it especially appealing to beginning farmers and ranchers. At the same time, funds paid to landowners to protect the land are often used to make important investments for the farm business, including aiding in retirement for senior generations.

Many land trusts and public PACE programs are eager to do more to facilitate land transfers as part of their land protection efforts, but lack the capacity, resources, and training to fully engage in this work.

In response, AFT, with support from [USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service](#), has launched a multi-year, multi-faceted Land Transfer Navigator program to address challenges affecting:

- Senior landowners grappling with transferring their land and operations.
- A diverse, new generation of farmers and ranchers looking to access land.
  - The next generation within farm and ranch families involved in a transfer.
  - Organizations interested in providing land access and farm transfer support.



### What is a Land Transfer Navigator?

Navigators are organizations with skilled professionals who provide direct assistance to farmers, ranchers, and landowners. They support the process of transferring a farm or ranch to a new generation and tailor assistance to meet local needs and situations.

The purpose of the Land Transfer Navigators program is to dramatically increase the transfer of agricultural land to a new generation of farmers and ranchers. The program will catalyze practitioners from across the country to support equitable farm and ranch transfers that work for both entering and exiting generations. Through a four-year program, AFT is providing training along with technical and financial assistance to support easement-holding entities and the farmers, ranchers, and landowners they work with.



REBECCA DROBIS/AFT



PRESTON KERES/USDA



PRESTON KERES/USDA

## To reach the program goals, AFT is:

### Training and building the capacity of Navigator organizations.

Staff from Navigator organizations (including AFT) are trained in land access and farm/ranch transfer facilitation to provide tailored assistance to farmers, ranchers and landowners. Capacity grants are awarded to these entities to provide assistance to farmers, ranchers, and landowners, support their training, and build institutional capacity to invest in their land access and transfer work.

Navigators train to -

- Provide technical assistance to facilitate farm and ranch transfers.
- Reduce language, legal, cultural, and other barriers for historically underserved farmers and ranchers in accessing or transferring agricultural land or businesses.
- Connect farmers, ranchers and landowners with regional service providers.
- Increase the role agricultural conservation easement programs and partner organizations play in facilitating the transfer of farms to a new generation.

### Building regional networks to foster direct support for farmers, ranchers and landowners.

Navigator organizations serve as the core of regional networks. Regional forums bring together local professionals who support various aspects of farm and ranch transfers. Service providers such as attorneys, appraisers, lenders, mediators and others who specialize in agriculture gather to create robust networks, share resources and learn from each other. Regional networks host landowner workshops and provide direct technical assistance to support farm and ranch transfer planning. Through this direct service, they will identify landowners and land seekers who are ready to move forward and offer microgrants to implement their transfer plans.

### Launching a virtual resource center to support farm and ranch transfers.

AFT's Farmland Information Center (FIC) will host an online set of resources and tools that prepare agricultural landowners and incoming farmers and ranchers to engage in transfer planning. The resource center will build a national land-link finder to identify available land and support services – including those provided by Navigators. Additionally, AFT will have staff trained as Navigators available for in-depth technical assistance through the FIC answer service.

The Land Transfer Navigators program is created by American Farmland Trust with support from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The program's training, evaluation and network development is informed by a national advisory committee and expert consultants who represent farmers, ranchers, land trusts, and public PACE programs.

For more information visit:  
[www.farmland.org/land-transfer-navigators](http://www.farmland.org/land-transfer-navigators)