

Farm Aid-WSU Job Posting:
Full-time Farmer Hotline Operator



Skagit
County

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Date: Fall 2020

Job Classification / Employment Category: Exempt / Full-time employee of Farm Aid, in partnership with Washington State University (WSU) Extension-Skagit County

Position Location: Burlington, Washington. Office space provided at WSU, with possible remote work during pandemic.

Position Length: This is a three-year grant-funded position through the USDA's Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) for the Western Region. Continuation beyond the grant period is dependent on funding.

Overview and Organizational Summary

Farm Aid is a national, not for profit organization that works year-round to promote a vibrant, just and resilient family farm-centered system of agriculture in America. With music as our inspiration and farmers as our heroes, we envision a transformed America in which family farmers and citizens are active partners in a thriving food system that ensures farmers a fair living, justly nourishes people and communities, protects and sustains natural resources, and secures a prosperous future for all.

Artists and Board members Willie Nelson, Neil Young and John Mellencamp organized the first Farm Aid concert in 1985 to raise awareness about the loss of family farms and to raise funds to keep farm families on the land. Dave Matthews joined the Farm Aid Board of Directors in 2001. Our annual music festival celebrates farmers, eaters and music coming together for change. Since 1985, Farm Aid has raised over \$60 million to support programs that help farmers thrive, expand the reach of the Good Food Movement, take action to change the dominant system of industrial agriculture, and promote food from family farms.

Through direct service, grant making, community building, communications, and offering opportunities to engage meaningfully, Farm Aid works to:

- **Amplify** the voice of family farmers to bring attention to the challenges they face and the benefits they bring
- **Connect** farmers to resources and opportunity, connect farmers to eaters, and in general connect people so that they may cultivate community and power
- **Celebrate** family farmers, good food and the culture of agriculture, in which we all can participate
- **Empower** farmers and eaters to participate in a democratic, just and sustainable farm and food system
- **Invest** talent, time and money in efforts that effect positive change in the farm and food system

Farm Aid is seeking two full-time Farmer Hotline Operators to support its mission and goals to help farmers thrive by advancing the capacity and coordination of farm advocates and farm service providers nationwide.

Farm Aid recognizes that people gain skills through a variety of professional, personal, educational, and volunteer experiences. We encourage candidates to review the key responsibilities and qualifications below. If you believe you have not only the transferable skills necessary to fulfill the responsibilities of this role, but also a unique and valuable perspective to offer, we encourage you to apply.

Job Summary and Purpose

As a member of the Hotline Team, the Farmer Hotline Operator supports Farm Aid's Farmer Services program by operating the Farm Aid hotline on an ongoing basis, providing a listening ear to farmers and connecting them to the resources they need. The Hotline Operator serves as a critical bridge to farmers and rural communities throughout the country and assists in advancing Farm Aid's assessment of the needs of farmers nationwide and the availability of services to meet those needs. The Hotline Operator collaborates with the Hotline Team in the expansion of the farmer resource network and the development of reports that translate hotline activities into actionable knowledge for internal and external use in support of Farm Aid's mission.

Key areas of responsibility are to:

- Serve as a member of the Hotline Team by helping to operate Farm Aid's 1-800 farmer hotline and farmhelp@farmaid.org email service, with particular attention to increasing access for farmers in the Western Region of the US.
- Ensure effective recordkeeping and timely tracking of hotline contacts.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities:

Hotline Operation (Estimated to comprise 60% of effort)

1. Operate Farm Aid hotline and email service two-three days per week, providing farmers with relevant information and referrals, advice and emotional support, ensuring response to inquiries within 48 hours of initial outreach. Provide additional hotline coverage as backup for hotline team as needed.
2. Recommend and assist with coordination in issuing emergency grants to farmers in crisis, ensuring adherence to grant program guidelines and operations/accounting protocol.
3. Ensure effective recordkeeping and timely tracking of all hotline contacts, coordinating with other hotline staff to capture data on demographics, services needed and referrals.

Farmer Services Program Support (Estimated to comprise 20% of effort)

1. Monitor literature and listservs for emerging resources for farmers, with a focus on Native American farmers and ranchers, beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers, crisis and disaster assistance, financial counseling, legal support and mental health offerings, particularly, but not exclusively for those located in the Western US, including Hawaii, American Samoa,

Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and Micronesia. Populate farmer resource database with new referrals accordingly.

2. Translate emerging resources for farmers into relevant content, including Farmer Resource Guides, and collaborate with hotline, communications, and marketing staff to ensure timely content is made available through FA communication channels.
3. Working with the Farmer Services Network Manager, support Farm Aid's disaster response efforts, particularly for natural disasters occurring in the Western region.
4. Assist with outreach for workshops and our regional meetings

General (Estimated to comprise 20% of effort)

1. Participate in team meetings, reviews, and other related activities in support of organizational goals.
2. Advance FRSAN goals and objectives through representation and participation at farm conferences, meetings, trainings and with media as needed.
3. Other duties as assigned.

Required Qualifications:

- Familiarity with issues facing farmers, ranchers, farmworkers and rural communities in crisis.
- A minimum of 3 years experience working directly with farmers and/or rural communities.
- Demonstrated ability to maintain effective relationships with people from a diverse range of backgrounds.
- Excellent interpersonal and communications skills, particularly active listening, with ability to demonstrate compassion for people dealing with challenging situations and to problem solve with them.
- Sound judgment in maintaining professional boundaries and confidential information.
- Interest and desire to serve farmers through direct, one-on-one engagement, and demonstrated excellence in providing supportive services.
- English fluency with speaking, reading and writing required.
- Demonstrated team player, with initiative and ability to work both independently and with others.
- Experience and demonstrated proficiency with data documentation and tracking; technical proficiency with Microsoft Office (Word and Excel); technical proficiency with CRM/database management systems (Salesforce experience a plus), and/or interest and aptitude to learn demonstrated by experience and transferable skills.
- A sense of humor, integrity, flexibility and an optimistic outlook

Preferred Qualifications:

- Knowledge of programs and services needed for farmers in crisis, including federal farm loan programs, federal disaster programs, legal needs and culturally appropriate mental health practices.
- Agricultural mediation training or other trainings critical to effective farm advocacy a plus.
- Experience developing, facilitating and/or implementing training workshops.
- Experience with mental health and crisis training (such as QPR, mental health first aid, etc.).
- Proficiency in Spanish or other languages desired.

Ongoing Learning includes:

- Mental health and crisis training, agricultural mediation training, and/or other trainings that are critical to effective farm advocacy, such as farm financial counseling and legal supports.
- QPR/Mental Health First Aid certification (initial and renewal certification fees will be covered as needed)
- Landscape of service providers and resources across the country, with a focus on beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers (specifically BIPOC farmers and ranchers), crisis and disaster assistance, financial resources, legal support and mental health offerings.
- Professional development to improve hotline operation skill set, increase awareness of and knowledge about farmer services resources, and facilitate use of appropriate technologies.

Work Environment:

This position is housed at Washington State University (WSU) Extension-Skagit County, with a functional workspace provided by the University, and a laptop and applicable tools/software provided by Farm Aid. During the Covid-19 pandemic, work from home arrangements can be considered. The job necessitates regular engagement with people under stress and/or dealing with dire circumstances and can be unpredictable depending on the volume of hotline calls, natural disasters, and other challenges facing farmers. The Farmer Hotline Operator is expected to be able to shift between intensive listening and referral work, data entry and management, and organizational engagement.

The Farmer Hotline Operator reports to the Hotline Manager and interacts regularly with fellow Farmer Hotline Operators and other Farm Aid staff to ensure ongoing and exemplary service delivery and coordination on Farm Aid's Farmer Services program. The Farmer Hotline Operator will also engage with WSU colleagues as part of its team. The Farmer Hotline Operator is encouraged to take structured breaks each day and will work closely with the Hotline Manager and the entire Hotline Team to support each other's well-being, with Farm Aid providing access to hotline worker mental health services, training and professional development. The Hotline Operator will also work closely with the Hotline Team to create regular schedules that enable the Hotline to be fully staffed on weekdays, with some evening hours expected. Weekend work is not expected.

In line with Farm Aid's collaborative culture, this position is expected to bring ideas to other members of Farm Aid staff for discussion and approval. The position interacts regularly with other staff members to integrate and coordinate program goals and objectives. Position demands ability to work well under pressure, handle multiple tasks at once and adapt to changing situations on a daily basis.

Pay & Benefits:

Starting salary range for this position is \$46,500 - \$51,000.

Benefits include 100% health insurance premium coverage, four weeks of paid vacation, paid sick time, option to participate in company IRA, FSA and Employee Assistance plans, longevity bonus

program rewarding each year of service, as well as an exciting work environment with smart, passionate people seeking to make change in our food and farm system.

How To Apply:

If you possess many of Farm Aid's required and desired characteristics and qualifications and are excited about this opportunity, we'd love to hear from you!

- Submit your complete application to hire@farmaid.org with "FA-WSU Hotline Operator" in the subject line. Please include in the email your personal pronouns for how you like to be addressed and attach the enclosures listed below. Note that incomplete applications may not be reviewed. Enclosures include:
 - a **cover letter** indicating where you learned of this opportunity and highlighting your experience and skills relevant to the position and listed qualifications
 - a **current resume**, and
 - a **writing sample or example of relevant work**.
- We will accept and consider applications as they are received and on a rolling basis, and seek to complete the hiring process as soon as possible.
- Farm Aid will confirm receipt of your application, and will reach out directly *only* if you are being considered a candidate for the position.
- No calls please.

Farm Aid is an equal opportunity employer and as such, we do not discriminate against any team member or candidate because of race, creed, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, marital status, pregnancy, or any other basis protected by law. We encourage all to apply because we believe a diversity of voices leads to better discussions, decisions, and outcomes for everyone.

For more information about Farm Aid, please visit www.farmaid.org