



Field to Market®

PROJECT REGISTRATION

Frequently Asked Questions

GENERAL QUESTIONS

What is the Continuous Improvement Accelerator?

The Continuous Improvement Accelerator is Field to Market's program that harnesses the power of collaboration across the entire food and agriculture value chain to implement locally-led conservation solutions and deliver sustainable outcomes for agriculture through member-led continuous improvement projects.

How does the Continuous Improvement Accelerator drive sustainable agriculture forward?

Each project in the Continuous Improvement Accelerator seeks to support farmers in advancing their journey of continuous improvement and addressing pressing local natural resource concerns, while also contributing to global sustainable development priorities. These projects utilize the power of voluntary, and often market-driven, solutions to incentivize improved environmental outcomes and enhanced farmer livelihoods.

Why does a project need to register in the Continuous Improvement Accelerator?

By registering continuous improvement projects and publicly reporting progress against a project's stated continuous improvement goal(s) and objectives, the Accelerator creates a standardized and validated approach to recognize and reward the contributions of Field to Market members in advancing sustainable agriculture.

Why does a project need to publicly share continuous improvement goal(s), objectives and progress?

Because strengthening trust in food and agriculture is more important than ever, Field to Market prioritizes transparency in our approach, creating a clearinghouse for credible action in advancing sustainable agriculture through a public-facing project directory. This directory enables interested stakeholders to understand a project's continuous improvement goal(s) and progress in accelerating continuous improvement.

PROJECT INTENT & SCOPE QUESTIONS

Why do you not ask for a Project Name?

Project Names will be autogenerated to create a consistent naming approach throughout the Accelerator based on information supplied, such as project pathway, geographic boundaries, crop type.

What is the difference between a Prospective and Active Project?

Field to Market recognizes that a successful project takes time to design and develop. For that reason, we allow projects to register as Prospective Projects for up to twelve-months while they complete stakeholder engagement and project scoping. To register as a prospective project, you must identify:

- Project Pathway
- Project Boundaries
- Primary Crop(s) Addressed
- Rotational Crops Engaged
- Locally Relevant Natural Resource Concern(s)
- Target Sustainability Metric(s)
- Project Sponsor's Contact Information

An Active Project has submitted their full Project Registration and Continuous Improvement Plan for review and approval to be listed in the Continuous Improvement Accelerator project directory.

What are the Project Pathways supported by the Continuous Improvement Accelerator? (Question 1)

- **INCUBATION:** Creates enabling conditions by engaging with farmers on the connection between practices and at least one sustainability indicator
- **INSIGHT:** Offers sustainability insights for farmers and transparency for value chain partners through measurement
- **INNOVATION:** Provides tangible support for farmer in accelerating adoption of practices that deliver improved sustainability outcomes consistent with the published goals of the Project

What are the requirements and claims eligibility of each Project Pathway?

PROJECT REGISTRATION & REPORTING REQUIREMENTS	INCUBATION	INSIGHT	INNOVATION
Project Registration (Reviewed & Published to Project Directory)	✓	✓	✓
Continuous Improvement Plan (Reviewed & Published to Project Directory)	✓	✓	✓
Annual Reporting on Progress/Activities Completed for Plan(s) (Reviewed & Published to Project Directory)	✓	✓	✓
Annual Aggregate Reporting of Metric Outcomes (Filed with Field to Market and made available upon request to support Impact Claim)	No	No	✓
CLAIMS ELIGIBILITY	INCUBATION	INSIGHT	INNOVATION
Project Participation Claims (Project Intent & number of growers and acres enrolled)	✓	✓	✓
Measurement Claims (Aggregate metric outcomes)	No	✓	✓
Credible Project Attribute Claims (Measuring adoption of continuous improvement strategies by participating farmers)	No	No	✓
Impact Claims (Improvement in metric outcomes over time)	No	No	✓

Where can I find additional information about each Project Pathway?

Please reference a [Project Framework Summary](#) previously released to membership for additional information about each Project Type, including illustrative examples, requirements and claims information.

How do I determine my Project Boundaries? (Question 2)

Project Boundaries can be determined in multiple ways based on the project pathway and the project's intended continuous improvement goal(s) and objectives. Each project is encouraged to consider what makes their community and location unique (e.g. crop produced, common natural resource concerns shared; supply shed from which you are sourcing; or a trusted adviser engaging farmers on opportunities to improve sustainability outcomes).

At a minimum, Field to Market requires all projects to scope their project at a state level. Where possible, projects are encouraged to consider how to address the variations in soil types and climatic conditions by considering sub-state parameters such as districts, counties, watersheds or supply sheds.

Please note that project boundaries are intended to support solutions to address common natural resource concerns. Due to wide variations in soil and climate, Field to Market does not support the use of metrics for making regional comparisons. Rather, we encourage all Field to Market members to support continuous improvement strategies that address the most critical needs within the region where the project is located.

What is the difference between Primary and Rotational Crop(s)? (Questions 3 and 4)

Primary crop(s) are the commodities the project will focus on to accelerate continuous improvement through the project's selected pathway. Rotational crop(s) are additional commodities that are common for the project area that may be impacted by continuous improvement strategies and activities but are not intentionally targeted by the Project.

If you wish to target all commodities within a rotation, then you would select all commodities as primary crops. Please note that Field to Market crops include the following:

- Alfalfa
- Barley
- Corn, grain
- Corn, silage
- Cotton
- Peanuts
- Potatoes
- Rice
- Sorghum
- Soybeans
- Sugar Beets
- Wheat

What are natural resource concerns? (Question 5)

Field to Market asks that each project consider what natural resource concerns in the areas of soil, water, air, plants and animals should be targeted by the continuous improvement goal(s), objectives and strategies.

How do I identify the key natural resource concerns within my Project Boundaries? (Questions 5 and 6)

Key natural resource concerns can be identified through a variety of sources. We encourage you to review the following resources and contact expert organizations to ensure your project's continuous improvement goal(s) and objectives are relevant to the location where the project is sited.

- [NRCS Critical Conservation Areas Resource Concern Priorities](#)
- [EPA Impaired Waterways](#)
- [NRCS & USFWS Working Lands for Wildlife Target Areas](#)

What are the examples of expert organizations that can help me? (Question 6)

A wealth of expertise exists at the local level to guide your project's continuous improvement strategy. As you shape your project's continuous improvement goal(s) and objectives, consider engaging:

- Soil & Water Conservation Districts
- NRCS Field Office
- Local and National NGOs
- Universities and Extension
- State Department of Agriculture
- State Department of Environmental Quality

What metrics align with the natural resource concerns? (Question 5)

Example of natural resource concerns and the associated metrics are:

- Climate change: Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Energy Use, & Soil Carbon
- Ecosystem conservation: Land Use & Biodiversity
- Soil health/quality: Soil Carbon & Soil Conservation
- Water scarcity: Irrigation Water Use
- Water quality: Water Quality & Soil Conservation

Why does it matter if I have a related program? (Question 7)

We understand that the consistent naming structure for the Continuous Improvement Accelerator may not match the name that you would wish to communicate about the project if it part of a larger corporate or organizational initiative. By flagging the affiliation here, we can identify solutions to meet both needs.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT GOAL(S) & OBJECTIVES QUESTIONS

How much detail does my Project Summary need to include? (Question 1)

A brief (3-5 sentence) overview of the project including your continuous improvement goal(s) to appear on the Field to Market Project Directory.

How does Field to Market define a continuous improvement goal? (Question 1)

A goal is defined as the intended outcome for which the project seeks to accelerate continuous improvement over its lifespan. For instance, the goal may focus on supporting farmers in improving soil conservation through the selected Project Pathway.

What is the difference between my Continuous Improvement Goal(s) and Objectives? (Questions 1 and 3)

- Goals are the overarching intended outcome(s).
- Objectives are time-bound and measurable steps that define the near-term scope to achieve the project's continuous improvement goal(s). For instance, an objective for an Incubation Project with a goal to support farmers in improving soil conservation may focus on supporting 100% of participating farmers in developing a soil conservation management plan by Year X.

Can you share examples of what continuous improvement goals and objectives would look like for each project pathway? (Questions 1 and 3)

- [Sample Incubation Project Registration & Continuous Improvement Plan](#)
- [Sample Insight Project Registration & Continuous Improvement Plan](#)
- [Sample Innovation Project Registration & Continuous Improvement Plan](#)

Why does my project need to establish a baseline? (Question 4)

Each project is required to report progress annually against their stated goal(s) and objectives. To aid in this reporting process, each project is required to set a baseline for each objective against which progress and success will be evaluated. Please note that for multi-year projects, you can utilize the first year to establish a baseline and would write "In Process of Drafting" within your Continuous Improvement Plan.

For example, a project may have the objective of reducing soil erosion for 100% of enrolled growers by Year Five. The project would establish a baseline by conducting a pre-project assessment or Fieldprint Platform data entry to determine which participating growers have already adopted reduced tillage practices (e.g., Baseline: 25% of enrolled growers are using no-till equipment to establish crops).

What do you mean by Multi-Stakeholder Participation? (Question 2)

A Continuous Improvement Project leverages collaboration among stakeholders within the food and agricultural value chain to accelerate adoption of conservation practices and improvements in environmental outcomes. By incorporating local trusted farmer advisors, research has shown significant improvements in both farmer recruitment and retention.

What is the difference between Project Sponsors and Partners? (Question 2)

- Project Sponsors are Field to Market Full Members contributing to the project through financial investment or in-kind support. An Associate Member or Non-Member can license the ability to serve as a project sponsor if desired.
- Project Partners are Field to Market Associate Members and/or Non-Members that contribute to the project and have licensed the ability to affiliate with the project.

How can I associate my project with other sustainability initiatives or equivalencies? (Question 5)

Field to Market seeks to advance sustainable agriculture through a coordinated and comprehensive approach, harmonizing our efforts and seeking alignment with other sustainability initiatives. In the public-facing project directory, we provide each project with the option of associating with related sustainability initiatives to which the project may contribute. At present, these initiatives include:

- SAI Platform
- The Sustainability Consortium
- Cotton Trust Protocol
- Midwest Row Crop Collaborative
- Soil Health Partnership

If you have other initiatives that you would like to see listed here, please contact Lexi Clark at lclark@fieldtomarket.org.

Why are you asking for the level of verification of the project? (Question 6)

All continuous improvement projects are required to report their progress annually. We would like projects to consider what level of verification they plan to utilize when reporting this information for transparency. The options available to projects include:

- Self-Reported (First-Party)
- Reported by a Project Partner (Second-Party)
- Reporting validated by an independent verifier (Third-Party)

For more information about the Verification process and requirements, please review Field to Market's Assurance Principles which outline criteria for verifying claims.

GROWER ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONS

Why does the Continuous Improvement Plan include a section on grower recruitment, engagement and retention? (Question 1)

Successful continuous improvement projects carefully consider the methods they will utilize to reach, recruit, engage and retain growers. We ask each project to outline the qualitative and quantitative engagement goals for the project to successfully achieve its stated continuous improvement goal(s) and objectives. At a minimum, each project is required to provide a feedback mechanism that enables farmers to identify and pursue opportunities for continuous improvement in sustainability outcomes.

What are recommended methods for engaging farmers in a project? (Question 1)

Successful projects have used a variety of methods to reach, recruit, engage and retain growers. Examples include, but are not limited to, community outreach mailers, targeted outreach (calls or email) and/or in-person meetings and events. From field days to individual meetings, projects only succeed if you are able to connect with farmers, understand their needs, and provide resources to address those needs.

How do I determine my Engagement Goals & Timeline? (Question 2)

We encourage projects to set engagement goals for the number of growers and collective acreage the project seeks to influence by first identifying the project's geographic boundaries, local natural resource concerns and key stakeholders. These engagement goals help communicate the scope of your ambition with progress reported annually.

How can I provide Grower Support in my project? (Question 3)

All projects are required to help participating growers advance their continuous improvement journey through providing a feedback mechanism and/or tangible support.

Examples of tangible support that participating growers receive as a result of their involvement in the project, include but are not limited to:

- **Incubation:** conservation plan; nutrient management plan; soil mapping; soil moisture sensors; variable rate technology
- **Insight:** actionable feedback on their Fieldprint Analysis; peer-to-peer comparison at annual grower meetings; individualized reports comparing grower performance to anonymized peer results
- **Innovation:** cost-share on practice adoption; additional technical assistance to advance practice adoption

Why does my Insight or Innovation Project need to consider its enrollment methodology? (Question 4)

Field to Market requires that each Insight or Innovation Project collect data for a minimum of 10% of each farmer's total acreage for the relevant crop ensure that the selected fields in that percentage are representative of their overall operations. Each project is able to set its enrollment methodology within the accepted range of 10%-100% of each farmer's enrolled acreage for a given crop.

How do I determine if the fields are representative? (Question 4)

Representative field selection can be determined based on similar soil types, crop rotation and management systems across the farming operation. For example, a farmer with a predominant operation characterized by no-till corn/soybean rotation on loam soils would select fields with those attributes.

INVESTING IN CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT QUESTIONS

(Required for Innovation Projects)

Why are Innovation Projects required to invest in farmers' continuous improvement?

While all project pathways are encouraged to support farmers' continuous improvement journey, given the length of engagement required for Innovation Projects, these projects are required to document the specific strategies and/or value-added incentives the project will employ to support farmers in accelerating adoption of conservation practices to achieve the project's stated continuous improvement goal(s) and objectives.

How do I identify the conservation practices to promote within my project? (Question 1)

Projects should collaborate with national and local expert organizations that can provide guidance what suite of conservation practices are known to deliver improvements in environmental outcomes or address natural resource concerns. For a full list of conservation practice standards you can visit the [NRCS website](#). Other organizations that can provide guidance are conservation districts, NRCS staff, University Extension, CCAs, NGOs, etc.

Where can I find more information on Value-Added Incentives for my project? (Question 2)

For examples, please reference the [Value-Added Incentives White Paper](#).