**Fiscal Year 2025 Ask / High Points**

* In fiscal year 2025, agricultural education is asking for $10 million dollars across all six grant programs. This increase of $2.95 million dollars will primarily support the growth of two programs. In FY25, approximately one third of these funds will be needed to support the growth of the Teacher Three Circle grant, and the remaining dollars will support the Incentive Funding Grant which provides supplies, materials and equipment for high school and middle school students.
* The Three Circle Grant’s success has led to increased participation. This year alone, more than 70% of Illinois teachers participated in the program. Increases in participation and teachers’ salaries are driving the need for increased funding. This makes up the greatest demand for new funding requested.
* Incentive funding is also critical for programs. Agriculture classes prioritize hands-on learning experiences, from designing floral arrangements to welding projects. Our increase in students and schools combined with the increase in the costs of these goods is driving the demand for funding in this grant program.
	+ Over the past five fiscal years, Incentive Funds averaged $32.39 per student, with the lowest being $15.61 in 2022 and the highest being $50.17 in 2023.
	+ This increase would result in an estimated $82.09 per student in FY25 with incremental step downs each fiscal year to allow for the growth of Three Circles. If this level of funding is sustained, we project 2028 IFG to average $34.42 per student.
* Amid a nationwide teacher shortage, Illinois has increased the number of Agriculture Teachers by 35% (142 more teachers since 2017). This is largely attributed to the Three Circle Grant, providing additional compensation for teachers’ time outside the school day with agricultural education activities like FFA and student projects.

**Growth and Diversity of Agricultural Education**

* In ten years, Agricultural Education in Illinois has grown by 75 programs and 164 teachers. This is decreasing the amount of individual support a teacher receives as all teachers are supported by five FCAE field advisors (as has been done since 1989). When the FCAE started, each field advisor supported around 40 teachers.
* In ten years, the number of students has also grown. We now support 8,217 more students through the Incentive Funding grant, which is used for consumable materials and lab equipment. As students increase, more materials are needed, and equipment receives more wear and tear. Also note the increase in the costs of these goods.
* As the demand for teachers has increased, the number of alternatively licensed teachers has also increased (22%). These teachers need additional support as they transition from industry jobs to the classroom, which requires more time and resources.
* Recent efforts to support Jr. Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) chapters in Illinois have yielded significant results. With ten new chapters started, Illinois is now home to 29% of the nation’s Jr. MANRRS programs.
* A pilot project in partnership with the Illinois Agri-Food Alliance to establish an Urban Agricultural Career Coordinator has increased access to students, teachers and school leaders not currently providing agricultural education. We would like to increase support for this effort by making this a full-time staff position within the FCAE project.
* Black and Hispanic/Latino students are among the fastest growing subpopulations of FFA members in Illinois. Black students have increased 72% since 2019 while Hispanic/Latino students have increased 34%.
* ISBE recently executed a contract with Cutting Edge Curriculum to develop new classroom resources for Urban and Community Food production. This was identified as a priority by the Illinois Committee for Agricultural Education. The project is funded by royalties collected on previous curriculum projects.