

For Immediate Release

April 1, 2022

## OpenTEAM Launches New Fellows Program to Equip Land Stewards and Food System Leaders With The Tools and Skills Needed to Drive Landscape Level Agricultural Transformation

Walmart Foundation Awards Wolfe's Neck Farm Foundation \$730,000 Grant to Strengthen Collaboration across Agricultural and Technology Communities

**Freeport, Maine** — *April 1, 2022* — Open Technology Ecosystem for Agricultural Management ([OpenTEAM](#)) today announced they will expand support and ground its work with farmers, ranchers, and food system leaders through a new Fellows Program. With significant support from a \$730,000 grant by the [Walmart Foundation](#), inaugural OpenTEAM Fellows and their associated pilot Hubs will provide training, community support, and technical facilitation that will equip farmers and ranchers (land stewards) with the best possible agricultural knowledge and tools to lead to landscape level regenerative outcomes.

“Helping farmers transition to more regenerative farming systems will require a combination of support networks, technical assistance, and leveraging data and technology to improve access to decision making tools and new markets,” said Julie Gehrki, VP and COO of the Walmart Foundation. “This grant will enable OpenTEAM to test and scale a program that integrates all three of those activities using an open source platform that connects farmers and their data with a wide variety of opportunities.”

OpenTEAM, facilitated by [Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture & the Environment](#), stewards a farmer-driven collaborative community of over 200 skilled professionals, including farmers, ranchers, scientists, researchers, technologists, farm service providers, and food companies who are committed to improving soil health and advancing agriculture's ability to become a solution to climate change. As a nonprofit, Wolfe's Neck Center is stewarding networks such as OpenTEAM to equip land stewards and food systems leaders with universal access to agricultural knowledge and better soil health. Through OpenTEAM, the community is co-creating a connected ecosystem of digital tools that support adaptive soil health management for farms of all scales, geographies and production systems. By launching the Fellows program, this work is expanded.

Over the course of two years, Fellows and pilot Hubs will lay the groundwork to connect land stewards to this open source ecosystem of digital tools and to other agricultural support networks. This creates a streamlined process where land stewards can input and share their data on management practices, soil health measures, and other key operations to connect to benefits, opportunities, and economic incentives.

The first four pilot Hubs will be selected from representative groups of diverse farms and ranches from across the United States, connecting hundreds of land stewards to the technology ecosystem. They will help nominate and host the Fellows who will be or will become trusted advisors, similar to conservation districts, crop advisors, grazing consultants, extension staff, or other farm organizations.

“We are really excited to build this foundational support and equip the next generation of food system leaders with the skills necessary to move this agriculture and technology transition forward,” says Dorn Cox, Research Director at Wolfe’s Neck Center for Agriculture & the Environment and Project Lead for OpenTEAM, “Through the launch of the OpenTEAM Fellows program, we will strengthen collaborations between agricultural and technology communities, cultivate trust, support data sovereignty, and open new markets and opportunities for all farmers, ranchers and land stewards.”

On behalf of land stewards, Fellows will help track and store data on farm management, practices, soil health measures, and other data points in a digital agricultural data wallet, or “Ag Data Wallet.” This digital wallet functions similarly to a safe deposit box, bank account, and ID card to provide control and data sovereignty to land stewards. Through this technology, land stewards can enter their data once, store it securely, and use it many times by giving permissioned wallet access to crop advisors, certifiers, markets, governmental agencies, and other producers. This will enable access to an array of benefits and unlock new market opportunities.

Fellows will be embedded into the local farming and ranching community they serve, working as trained community and technical facilitators to support pilot Hubs as they accomplish their goals around using the digital wallet, testing OpenTEAM’s shared technology toolkit and maximizing data-driven value for the land steward.

Fellows will also act as trusted intermediaries between tool developers and land stewards to strengthen connections and share feedback to improve tools and outcomes across the ecosystem.

This summer, OpenTEAM and the selected pilot Hubs will onboard inaugural Fellows to represent a diverse group of land stewards and begin piloting the Ag Data Wallet. As the OpenTEAM community continues to develop an expanding free and open source technology ecosystem, Fellows and land stewards are working together to provide the participatory feedback necessary to translate technologies into practices on the ground, creating new pathways for collaboration that are essential to landscape level agricultural transformation.

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## **About OpenTEAM**

Founded in 2019, Open Technology Ecosystem for Agricultural Management ([OpenTEAM](#)), is a farmer-driven, collaborative community committed to improving soil health and advancing agriculture's ability to become a solution to climate change through the codevelopment of an interoperable suite of tools. By acting as a convener, technology steward, and facilitator, OpenTEAM is increasing integrability, interoperability, and knowledge shared across the agricultural technology landscape for a more sustainable technology ecosystem.

OpenTEAM is facilitated by Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture & the Environment. Through regenerative farming, innovative soil health research, and visitor interactions, this place-based institution uses its preserved coastal landscape in Freeport, Maine as an educational resource for the center's visitors and nearby farmers. Wolfe's Neck Center draws upon this rich history of innovation and experimentation to continue its legacy today through collaborative research initiatives like OpenTEAM and the Maine Soil Health Network, demonstrating how agriculture and the food system connect to global environmental systems. Wolfe's Neck Center leads our OpenTEAM hubs to bridge the knowledge and tools needed to improve soil health and mitigate climate change with farmers and ranchers around the world. For more information about OpenTEAM, visit [www.openteam.community](http://www.openteam.community).

## **About Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture & the Environment (WNC)**

Wolfe's Neck Center is a pioneer in regenerative agriculture, a nonprofit research and education center, and a working organic farm. Situated on over 600 acres of conserved coastal landscape in Freeport, Maine, WNC's mission is to transform our relationship with farming and food for a healthier planet. For more information of Wolfe's Neck Center for Agriculture & the Environment, visit [www.wolfesneck.org](http://www.wolfesneck.org) or follow on Facebook and Instagram at [@wolfesneckcenter](#).

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## **About Philanthropy at Walmart**

Walmart.org represents the philanthropic efforts of Walmart and the Walmart Foundation. By focusing where the business has unique strengths, Walmart.org works to tackle key social and environmental issues and collaborate with others to spark long-lasting systemic change. Walmart has stores in 26 countries, employs more than 2.2 million associates and does business with thousands of suppliers who, in turn, employ millions of people. Walmart.org is helping people live better by supporting programs to accelerate upward job mobility for frontline workers, advance equity, address hunger, build inclusive economic opportunity for people in

Open**TEAM**



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