

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE FARMS, RANCHES AND COMMUNITIES

A GUIDE TO FEDERAL PROGRAMS
for Sustainable Agriculture, Forestry,
Entrepreneurship, Conservation, Food
Systems, and Community Development



Sept. 2020

Building Sustainable Farms, Ranches, and Communities

A Guide to Federal Programs for Sustainable Agriculture, Forestry, Entrepreneurship, Conservation, Food Systems, and Community Development

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NSAC's policy staff

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Programs by Category

This list shows one way to categorize program offerings. Although each program is listed only once, some programs may fall under multiple categories. For example, the Sustainable Agriculture, Research and Education (SARE) program is listed under Research and Outreach, but it has funded projects on conservation, value-added and marketing, renewable energy, and economic development. Readers should explore programs listed within several categories to be sure of having found all programs pertinent to their interests.

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Introduction

This guide is written for anyone seeking help from federal programs to foster sustainable and innovative initiatives associated with agriculture and forestry in this country and territories. Sustainability can be understood to embrace the triple concepts of economic, environmental and social viability. A reader can find information about program resources pertaining to economic development; farm loans; insurance and risk management; local food systems, value added and marketing innovations; natural resources conservation and management; nutrition and consumer food access; renewable energy and energy conservation; and research and outreach. The guide can help farmers, researchers, entrepreneurs, community developers, private landowners, conservationists, and other individuals, as well as private and public businesses and organizations. It describes program resources ranging from grants and loans to technical assistance and information resources.

USDA and other agency employees can learn more about federal programs and resources available to their clients in supporting sustainable innovations in agriculture and forestry. This edition is the guide's seventh printing and fifth complete update, incorporating programs from the 2018 Farm Bill.

How can the guide help you?

We introduce you to programs that can advance your work, including some you might not otherwise have thought to pursue. It is not the definitive guide to any program, but an introduction. After a general overview of each program, the guide describes assistance it offers, its purposes, and restrictions on that assistance. When possible, we give specific examples of how the program has been used in the past as well as the program contact

information; some programs have recently reduced contact information.

This guide includes longstanding programs as well as some newly authorized in the 2018 Farm Bill. Although program descriptions are accurate as of this printing, aspects of some programs will change. Please conduct Internet searches to obtain updates and applications for programs.

How is the guide organized?

Programs are listed in only one category, but where they're pertinent to another category, the program's page number is listed at the bottom of the respective category section. Programs are also listed alphabetically in the **Index**.

In addition, the side margins of each page contain an **abbreviated text** and a variety of **symbols**.

The **abbreviated text** indicates the agency that administers or manages the program:

AMS – USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
ARS – USDA Agricultural Research Service
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency
FNS – USDA Food and Nutrition Service
FS – USDA Forest Service
FSA – USDA Farm Service Agency
NCAT – National Center for Appropriate Technology
NIFA – USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture
NRCS – USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
OPPE – USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement
RD – USDA Rural Development
RMA – USDA Risk Management Agency

The **symbols** provide easy reference to the intended target audience and the program category. Some programs have both target audiences and belong to multiple categories.



Farmers / Processors / Landowners



Universities / Institutions / Private or Public Organizations

What categories of programs are included?



Economic Development for Farms, Businesses and Communities

Many rural communities with historically agriculturally dependent economies have suffered as agriculture has concentrated toward fewer, larger farmers, serving and served by fewer local businesses. Programs in this category offer direct and indirect support through loans, grants, and technical assistance, including for cooperative development.



Farm Loans

Farms and farm businesses often need access to capital, both for land and operating costs. This guide describes several USDA direct and guaranteed loan programs, which increasingly are available to enterprises of all sizes, with terms and availability designed to serve beginning, underserved, and veteran borrowers.



Insurance and Risk Management

Farmers seek to manage risks associated with farm production and market fluctuations. In addition to strategies like diversifying farm enterprises or seeking organic or other higher value markets, many farmers use crop

insurance. Historically, crop insurance policies have been unavailable or poorly designed for organic and diversified farms. This guide features several programs offering steps to correct such inequities, as well as other risk management education programs.



Local Food Systems, Value-added, and Marketing Innovations

Earnings in extractive industries like agricultural production and timber harvesting can be low and volatile. Therefore, many entrepreneurs seek to build economic and environmental sustainability by adding value to those natural resources through processing, packaging, marketing, distributing the products themselves, or by producing their goods with methods that gain market premiums. This category includes programs offering financial, technical, marketing, and other assistance for such enterprises, as well as programs that support local marketing or market development, including organic or food safety-related certifications.



Natural Resources Conservation and Management

Farmers, foresters, and other landowners adopting resource management practices that protect soil, air, water and wildlife on their land in an economically viable way use many strategies. These include sustainable forestry practices; intensive rotational grazing of livestock; soil conservation; organic or biodynamic farming systems; cover crops and crop rotations; farmland protection, wetland and other habitat restoration; riparian buffers, and many other practices. This category includes funding, technical assistance and other resources to support such land management changes.



Nutrition and Consumer Food Access

The nation's struggle to address the health, fiscal and social implications of obesity has brought renewed awareness of the importance of affordable, culturally appropriate, safe and nutritious food, including fresh fruits and vegetables. Many families living in rural and urban areas also lack access to healthy food. To address food insecurity issues, federal programs were created to link local producers and consumers. Programs in this category may also seek to address underlying causes in poverty in a community.



Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation

Fluctuating fuel prices, concerns on climate change, and desire for national energy self-sufficiency have resulted in several programs supporting renewable energy and energy conservation. Some programs support energy production on farms and ranches, including biofuels, wind turbines, geothermal, manure digesters, and solar panels. Some build community infrastructure supporting renewable energy or conservation. Others support individual landowners' or producers' interest in creating energy or reducing energy costs on their lands.



Research and Outreach

To remain dynamic and become more resilient to climate, market, and societal changes, farmers, ranchers and landowners require reliable, research-based information, technical assistance, or other informational help. Several programs offer outreach, research, or community assistance, and the last three Farm Bills have focused specific assistance on underserved, beginning or veteran farmers and ranchers.

What are successful strategies to finding resources to support work?

Starting with a well-designed project, identifying and targeting appropriate resources, and following some sensible and logical grant-writing steps will increase your chances of successfully obtaining resources. The following sections of this Introduction lay out some basic advice to help you.

What are the hallmarks of a well-conceived project?

A successful federally funded project — whether a research proposal, conservation plan, marketing or other proposal — is no different from any other good project. It has tightly defined purposes; a clear strategy to accomplish them on a realistic timeline; the necessary people, money, and other resources; a basis for evaluating the process when done; and an effective means of communicating results.

Many projects are improved by a thoughtful effort to build supporting coalitions. Most funders will look favorably on, and many require, local matches of funding. Remember that funding matches usually can also come in the form of existing staff salaries and other "in-kind" contributions, as well as actual dollars.

In designing a good project, be sure that you have included the right people in the planning process itself. Every participant should not only care about the idea, but also be prepared to contribute to its execution. Some questions to consider in developing your proposal include the following:

- What problem do you seek to address?
- What is your principal strategy to resolve that problem? Why is this strategy better than other approaches you might consider?

- Have other people, locally or otherwise, addressed this problem? If so, what can you learn from their work, and how does your effort relate to theirs?
- Who else might be concerned about your issues? Should they be involved in your project?
- What is a realistic timeline for action?
- What resources do you need to implement your project? What resources can you use for a non-federal match?
- If others would profit from knowing about your initiative, how do you plan to get the word out?
- How will you measure and evaluate your project's outcomes?

How can you identify potential federal programs?

Once you have a good idea of what your project should look like and what resources it requires, it is time to explore funding options and figure out what federal programs, if any, can help achieve your goals. Besides this guide, there are many ways to locate resources potentially useful to you. Ask colleagues doing similar work about who has funded them, and use reference sections in larger public libraries, most university main libraries, and the development office of any large university; these reference sites often have many useful directories, some dealing with private sources and others with federal ones.

Additional resources that are available on the Internet include:

- Grants.gov, <http://www.grants.gov>, a site for grants in most federal agencies. Because this site is so important for many submissions, we list its customer support info: 800-518-4726 Toll-Free, open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week except [federal holidays](#). Email: support@grants.gov
- Formerly known as the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance, now called <https://beta.sam.gov/> On the main website, scroll down to Federal Assistance and “Search Assistance Listings.”
- The Federal Register, <https://www.federalregister.gov/>
- The Foundation Center, <https://fconline.foundationcenter.org/> (subscription required)
- This Guide, <http://attra.ncat.org/guide/>.
- The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition produces an excellent Grassroots Guide to the 2018 Farm Bill <https://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/grassrootsguide/>
- USDA’s Farmers’ Guide to Farm Bill Programs <https://www.rma.usda.gov/-/media/RMAweb/Publications/2018-Farm-Bill/2018-FarmBill-Brochure.ashx?la=en>
- USDA: Resources and tools to understand grants and cooperative agreements <https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/grants-overview>

Many other private and public resources at the state and local levels are not covered in this guide. Contact your State Department of Agriculture, State Forester, State Rural Development Office, and local Extension and conservation and FSA offices to explore those possibilities. Also, asking yourself who might have a stake in the outcomes of your work might suggest additional potential funding sources.

How can you decide which programs are most appropriate for your needs?

Identifying programs in this guide and from other sources whose purposes and available resources suit your objectives is an art form. Instead of wasting your time chasing programs that have incompatible goals, a little methodical research will help you assess how well your project fits within various programs. Many programs offer a webinar to explain their purposes, offerings, restrictions, and administrative procedures; many are recorded and available online. You may want to talk with program staff, people previously funded, or organizations that have worked with a program to decide whether there is a fit and if so, how to argue for it. It comes down to asking good questions and thinking strategically. For example:

- What are a program's stated mission and objectives? What projects has it funded or collaborated with in the past? Is its form of assistance appropriate to your needs? (Think creatively about your project's needs. Problems for which you seek help from federal resources are likely complex, and often more than one type of assistance may be useful.)
- What are the program's funding pool, percentage of applicants who typically get funded, average funding amounts, and duration of program grants?
- What are eligibility requirements, financial match requirements, and restrictions on a program's use? Is funding available up front or (more typically) on a reimbursement basis?
- Are deadlines for applying and the timeframe for funding appropriate to your project timeline? Does the program fund multiyear projects? Do past grantees say that its reporting requirements are reasonable and the program well administered?

What are some tips for submitting successful applications?

Once you have designed a good project, prepare it for submission to any program to which you're applying so that it stands the greatest chance of being approved. Read the Request for Proposals (RFP - sometimes called Notice of Funding Availability or other titles) several times, even if it's in small print or poorly worded! Carefully follow directions explained in the RFP, including any format requirements. Get on the list to receive notices from program staff about any training webinars they may conduct to explain the RFP and answer questions from applicants.

Identify the central points you want to make, including how your proposal addresses a program's key goals. Be precise and accurate; do not be tempted to exaggerate the need or over promise results. Use clear, concise language to make your application or proposal is readable. It is smart to have your application reviewed by someone whose editing skills you trust. Is it clear? Readable? Grammatically correct?

Pay close attention to formatting, deadline, nonfederal monetary match and other stated

requirements. Be sure that your budget is accurate, clear, and is accompanied by a budget narrative to clarify any points you think could be misunderstood by reviewers. And, of course, do not be daunted by having to readjust your proposal for each program to which you submit it.

Make sure you understand the review process. Is it based on a review by only a few people, or will the review be more comprehensive? If the contact person makes funding decisions, get to know their preferences. Call program staff if you have questions about the application process. Of course, always be pleasant in discussing your project.

Give yourself more time than you think you'll need – you'll need it! Many applications processes are complex, and even simple ones require time to work out matching contributions, get letters of support, share your proposal with partners and readjust your text accordingly. Organize your time by making a chart of all portions and requirements of the grant to check them off as you or partners complete them.

Many federal grants are submitted electronically. Although a visit to www.grants.gov will explain the process, some extra steps are required that take time, sometimes a few weeks. Be sure you submit the proposal in plenty of time (at least a day or two in advance) if submitting it electronically, as lines sometimes back up for electronic submission.

Finally, but very importantly – do not be discouraged! Many successfully funded grants and applications for federal resources are the result of earlier failed attempts. Understanding why your earlier efforts were rejected is likely to help in future ones. Be sure to ask.

Getting a copy of this guide

To obtain a free copy of this guide, call ATTRA - National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service, 1 (800) 346-9140, or e-mail pubs@ncat.org. It is also available for download at ATTRA's publications website: <https://attra.ncat.org/topics/other-resources/>

Workshops on using the guide

The Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (MFAI) offers workshops to help use this guide. The workshops cover how to envision and design sound projects; identify programs offering resources; and maximize your chances of submitting successful proposals. www.michaelfields.org.

For more information on workshops, contact Margaret Krome, MFAI Policy Program Director, at 608-628-2503; mkrome@michaelfields.org

MFAI also offers free grants advising for individuals and groups in the Midwest, particularly targeting underserved farmers. <https://michaelfields.org/grant-advising-resources/>

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Business and Industry (B&I) Guaranteed Loan Program

Promoting innovative and science-based conservation solutions that benefit farmers and the environment

RD

Program Basics

The B&I program helps guarantee loans to support and establish enterprises that process, distribute, aggregate, store, and market foods produced either in-state or transported less than 400 miles from the origin of the product. The guarantee helps banks, community development financial institutions, credit unions, and other lenders provide loans to businesses that might not otherwise meet their underwriting standards.

B&I loans may be used for a variety of purposes including, but not limited to:

- Business conversion, enlargement, repair, modernization or development.
- The purchase and development of land, easements, rights-of-way, buildings or facilities.
- The purchase of equipment, leasehold improvements, machinery, supplies or inventory.
- Debt refinancing when refinancing improves cash flow and creates jobs.
- Business and industrial acquisitions when the loan will maintain business operations and create or save jobs.

For all B&I loan guarantees, a borrower must be engaged in or proposing to engage in a business that will provide employment and improve the economic or environmental climate.

A component to B&I loans, *Local and Regional Food Enterprise* set asides, are also available to fund the construction of food processing, aggregation, and distribution facilities, as well as food hubs. Priority within the *Local and Regional Food Enterprise* set asides is given to projects that benefit communities that have limited access to affordable and healthy foods and that have a high rate of hunger, food

insecurity, or poverty. The recipient of the loan guarantee is required to inform consumers in some way of the locally- or regionally-produced food products.

Application Process

B&I loans are available year-round. Entities eligible for this program include:

- Cooperative organizations
- Corporations, partnerships, or other legal entities organized and operated on a profit or nonprofit basis
- Native American Tribes on a federal or state reservation, or other federally recognized tribal organization
- A public body
- An individual

B&I loans are generally available in rural areas, which include all areas other than towns of more than 50,000 people and those contiguous or adjacent to urbanized areas. Despite the rural restriction, food aggregation and distribution enterprises that are located in non-rural areas are also eligible to receive loan guarantees. These enterprises were deemed eligible so long as they meet certain criteria, including selling a portion of the product in underserved communities.

Applications are available from your RD state office. Potential borrowers will work directly with their commercial lenders to develop a loan package that can be submitted to the RD state office. All parties (RD, loan recipient and the lender) will then meet to determine project acceptability.



Financial Information

As a discretionary program, the funding is determined each year through the annual appropriations process. In general, the B&I program has received between \$800 million and \$1 billion in loans. With the five percent set aside for *Local and Regional Food Enterprise* loans, this means no less than \$40 million per year.

The maximum B&I loan guarantee is 80 percent for loans of \$5 million or less, 70 percent for loans between \$5 and \$10 million, and 60 percent for loans exceeding \$10 million (up to \$25 million maximum). Generally, loans to a single borrower are capped at \$10 million, though several exceptions apply.

Depending on the purpose of the loan, there are different maximum term limits: For real estate, it is 30 years. For machinery and equipment, it is for its useful life or 15 years, whichever is less. For working capital, it is not to exceed 7 years.

There is a collateral requirement which items must have documented value sufficient to protect the interest of both the lender and RD. The discounted collateral value must be at least equal to the loan amount. Lenders will discount collateral consistent with sound loan-to-value policy. Hazard insurance is required on collateral (equal to the loan amount or depreciated replacement value, whichever is less).

Interest rates are negotiated between the lender and borrower, subject to RD review. Rates may be fixed or variable. Variable interest rates may not be adjusted more often than quarterly.

For More Information

To locate your RD state office, search here: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices>

B&I Website: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/business-industry-loan-guarantees>

Factsheet for Local and Regional Food Enterprise Projects: https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/Local_Food_Fact_Sheet_20150401.pdf

Intermediary Relending Program (IRP)

Provides low-interest loans to organizations that relend to rural business and community development projects

RD

Program Basics

IRP loans are provided to local organizations (intermediaries) for the establishment of revolving loan funds. Loans from intermediaries are then used to help ultimate recipients to finance business and economic development activity to create or retain jobs in disadvantaged and rural communities. Intermediary lenders are encouraged to complement state and regional strategies, and work with other public and private organizations that can provide complementary resources.

For ultimate recipients applying to intermediary lenders, funds may be used:

- To acquire, construct, convert, enlarge or repair a business or business facility
- To purchase or develop land
- To purchase equipment, machinery or make leasehold improvements
- To cover feasibility studies
- For start-up costs and working capital
- For pollution control and abatement
- For educational institutions

Application Process

Nonprofits, cooperatives, federally-recognized tribes and public agencies are eligible to apply to IRP if they have:

- Legal authority to operate a Revolving Loan Fund
- A record of successfully assisting rural businesses and communities
- The ability to provide adequate assurance of repayment of the loan

Please contact a RD state office to apply as a Revolving Loan Fund lender.

Individuals, public or private organizations or other legal entities are eligible to apply for a loan from the intermediary lender. There are additional requirements for ultimate recipient eligibility, one of which includes that the project is located in an eligible rural area.

Financial Information

Intermediaries may request up to \$2 million for the first financing and up to \$1 million at a time thereafter. The total aggregate debt from all funding may not exceed \$15 million.

Each loan has a fixed, one percent interest rate with a maximum 30-year term. Interest-only payments are allowed for first three years.

Intermediaries set rates, terms, and payment structure on loans to ultimate recipients in an amount sufficient to cover the cost of operating and sustaining the revolving loan fund. Note that no more than 25 percent of an IRP loan may be used for loans to ultimate recipients that exceed \$150,000. This limit does not apply to revolved funds.

For ultimate recipients, the maximum loan amount is \$250,000 or 75 percent of the total cost of the project, whichever is less. Note that as of the publication date, the award limit for ultimate recipients may change.

For More Information

To locate your RD state office, search here: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices>

IRP Website: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/intermediary-relending-program>



Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) Program

Assisting the development of small and emerging rural businesses



Program Basics

RBDG falls under two categories:



Enterprise Grants must be used on projects to benefit business projects by providing technical assistance such as project planning, business counseling, market research, feasibility studies, reports, product/service improvements. Funds may also provide:

- Acquisition or development of land, easements, and rights of way
- Construction, conversion, or repairs of buildings, equipment, and utilities
- Capitalization of revolving loan funds, including funds that will make loans for start-ups and working capital
- Distance adult learning for job training
- Rural transportation improvement

Opportunity Grants identify and analyze business opportunities. It may also be used to:

- Conduct regional and local economic development planning and coordination, and leadership development.
- Establish business support centers to create new businesses
- Identify, train, and provide technical assistance to existing or prospective rural entrepreneurs and managers.
- Establish centers that provide training in the use of interactive communications technologies to develop international trade opportunities and markets.

Application Process

Eligible entities include towns; communities; Indian Tribes; state agencies and authorities; nonprofit organizations; and non-profit rural cooperatives. RBDG project funds must benefit business development in rural areas or towns outside urbanized areas or on the periphery of any city with a population of 50,000 or more.

Typically, applications are accepted once a year, through RD state offices. Applicants are advised to view program information and contact your RD state office to learn about local application timelines and requirements.

Financial Information

Generally, *Enterprise Grants* range from \$10,000 to \$500,000, though smaller requests are given priority. There is no cost-sharing requirement. The maximum Opportunity Grants award is up to \$50,000.

For More Information

To locate your RD state office, search here: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices>

RBDG Website:

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-business-development-grants>

Rural Cooperative Development Grant (RCDG) Program

Assisting the development of rural cooperative businesses

RD

Program Basics

The RCDG program improves the economic condition of rural areas by assisting individuals and businesses in the startup, expansion, or operational improvement of rural cooperatives and other mutually-owned businesses through Cooperative Development Centers. The Center can be located in any area, but the individuals and business assisted must be located in an eligible rural area. The type of work that the Centers can do are:

- Conducting feasibility studies
- Developing business plans
- Providing leadership and operational improvement training
- Facilitating strategic planning

Funding for technical assistance intended for socially disadvantaged groups may also be available through the *Socially-Disadvantaged Groups Grant (SDGG) Program*. *SDGG* applicants may also request technical assistance or other guidance while applying.

Application Process

Eligible entities for RCDG are non-profit corporations or institutions of higher education. Eligible entities for *SDGG* are Cooperatives and Cooperative Development Centers.

Each fiscal year, a Notice is published in the Federal Register and through Grants.gov. Please read the Federal Register Notice for important information needed before applying for the grant.

Applications can be accepted online or paper applications may be mailed or submitted to a RD state office. Late applications are not eligible for funding.

Applications will first be screened for eligibility. If eligible, the application will be scored by a panel. Then applications will be funded in rank order until the funding limitation has been reached. Applications that cannot be fully funded may be offered partial funding at the Agency's discretion.

Financial Information

For FY 2019, \$5.8 million was allocated for RCBG and \$3 million for *SDGG*. Note that available funding varies each year and depends on the annual appropriations process.

The maximum award for RCBG is \$200,000 and \$175,000 for *SDGG*. Projects must be completed within a year. Funds may be used to pay up to 75 percent of the cost of establishing and operating centers for rural cooperative development. There is a match requirement of 25 percent.

For 1994 Institutions (Tribal Land Grant Institutions), funds can cover 95 percent of the cost of establishing and operating centers for rural cooperative development. There also is a five percent match requirement.

There is no match requirement for *SDGG*.

For More Information

For questions, contact:
CPGrants@usda.gov

To locate your RD state office, search here:
<https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices>

RCDG Website:
<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-cooperative-development-grant-program>



Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP)

Promoting rural economic growth through microloans and business assistance



Program Basics

RMAP provides funding for local and regional organizations that qualify as Microenterprise Development Organizations (MDOs), which in turn provide microloans and business development technical assistance to rural microentrepreneurs. Three categories for RMAP funding are available:

Loan Capital for the development of microenterprises in rural areas.

Technical Assistance Grants to MDOs to provide marketing, management, and other technical assistance to microentrepreneurs who have already received or applied for an RMAP loan.

Technical Assistance-only Grants to MDOs that provide business-based technical assistance and training to eligible microentrepreneurs and microenterprises, but do not seek loan funding.

Application Process

Eligible entities to apply as an MDO include nonprofits; federally recognized tribes; and public institutions of higher education. MDOs are not required to be in a rural area, but the microentrepreneurs they lend to must be rural.

Applications for grants and loan capital through RMAP are accepted on an ongoing basis. Contact your RD state office for additional information on applying.

Financial Information

In 2019, \$3 million RMAP was allocated to RMAP however, future RMAP funding is up to the annual appropriations process.

For *Loan Capital*, MDOs provide fixed interest rate microloans of less than \$50,000. Loans cannot have a term longer than 20 years or an annual interest rate lower than 1 percent. Each MDO must establish a loan loss reserve fund and keep at least 5 percent of the outstanding loan balance in reserve.

For *Technical Assistance Grants*, the annual grant award can be between 20 and 25 percent of the organization's outstanding microloan balance.

Federal share of the microentrepreneur's project costs shall not exceed 75 percent. The MDO must provide or secure the remaining 25 percent from non-federal sources. For any RMAP grant, MDOs must match at least 15 percent of the total amount in the form of matching funds, indirect costs, or in-kind goods or services.

For More Information

To locate your RD state office, search here: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices>

RMAP Website: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-microentrepreneur-assistance-program>

Direct and Guaranteed Farm Loans (DFL & GFL)

Providing loans to family farmers and ranchers to purchase land and assets or finance annual operating expenses

FSA

Program Basics

Access to credit is a make-or-break issue for farmers and ranchers, particularly for aspiring producers that need additional support to launch their careers in agriculture. DFL and GFL allows all types of farmers and ranchers to get access to capital for two purposes:

Ownership Loans to purchase farmland, construct or repair buildings, or promote soil and water conservation.

Operating Loans to purchase livestock, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, insurance, minor improvements of buildings, costs associated with land and water development, and to refinance debts under certain conditions.

Beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers are given priority in DFL & GFL through *Loan Set Asides* and *Down Payment Loan Program (DPLP)*.

Application Process

DFL are made and administered by local FSA offices. FSA loan officers will meet with the applicant to assess all aspects of the proposed or existing operation to determine if the applicant meets the eligibility requirements.

GFL are administered by local FSA offices, but applicants must apply through local commercial lenders. GFL are provided with a federal guarantee against significant loss of principal or interest on a loan.

DFL and GFL eligibility requirements are:

- Applicants must be unable to obtain credit elsewhere (or only able to obtain credit without a federal guarantee) and have an acceptable credit history.

- Borrowers must also be the operator or tenant operator of a farm that is not larger than a “family farm” after the loan is closed. A family farm is defined as one in which all of the management and a substantial amount of the total labor is provided by the farm family.
- Applicants must comply with highly erodible land and wetland conservation cross-compliance farm bill requirements.



Additional considerations for DFL:

- Applicants must demonstrate sufficient education, training, and experience in managing or operating a farm.
- For DFL *Ownership Loans*, the applicant must have participated in the farm or ranch operation for at least 3 out of the past 10 years. Note that there is some discretion for FSA to consider less than three years depending on the type of management experience the farmer has.
- An applicant who applies for *Direct Loan Assistance* must fit the definition of a beginning farmer, has never received a DFL, or has not had a DFL outstanding for more than the term limits allowed (10 years for *ownership loans* and 7 years for *operating loans*).

All applicants who are approved to receive DFL are required to attend a borrower training, which consists of a workshop on financial management.

Additional considerations for GFL:

- You may be directed to a list of approved lenders on the GFL website.
- The lender analyzes the farmer's business plan and financial condition.
- Once the information is received, the lender submits a GFL application to the local FSA office and the request will be approved or disapproved within 30 days after receipt of a complete application.

Financial Information

The amount available each year for DFL and GFL depends on funding levels contained in the annual agricultural appropriations bill. As of 2018, maximum loan limits are \$400,000 for DFL *Operating Loans*; \$600,000 for DFL *Ownership Loans*; and \$1.75 million for GFL *Operating and Ownership Loans*. Only GFL are adjusted for inflation each year.

The loan recipient must be able to repay and to provide enough collateral to secure the loan on at least a dollar-for-dollar basis and use the loan for authorized purposes.

Repayment terms and interest rates vary according to the type of loan made, but *Operating Loans* are normally repaid with seven years and *Ownership Loans* cannot exceed forty years. Interest rates are calculated monthly and are the lowest rates in effect at the time of loan approval or loan closing. You can find the current interest rates on the FSA website.

For More Information

To locate your local FSA office, search here: <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

See page 15 for more details for *DPLP* and page 19 for *Loan Set Asides*

GFL Website:

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/guaranteed-farm-loans/index>

DFL - Operating Loans Website:

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/farm-operating-loans/index>

DFL - Ownership Loans Website:

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/farm-ownership-loans/index>

Down Payment Loan Program (DPLP)

A joint financing option to help beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers and ranchers purchase farmland

FSA



Program Basics

DPLP is a special joint-financing program within *Direct Farm Loans (DFL) Ownership Loans*. DPLP creates a partnership between a private lender and FSA in order to help beginning, socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers purchase farm or ranchland.

First time farmer or *aggie bond* programs provided by individual states (via the National Council of State Agricultural Finance Programs – NCOSAFP) can also provide assistance.

Application Process

Application forms are available online, but those eligible must apply in person at an FSA county office or USDA Service Center. To be eligible, the applicant must be a beginning, socially disadvantaged or veteran farmer or rancher. Note that there are additional eligibility requirements within *DFL Ownership Loans* and for special cases for applicants who are entities (rather than individuals)

Financial Information

The applicant must make a cash down payment equal to five percent of the desired land's purchase price. Applicants must also be able to secure a commercial loan for at least 50 percent of the purchase price. Combined, the five percent down payment and the private loan for 50 percent of the land value brings the maximum loan amount that can be financed by FSA to 45 percent of the desired land's purchase price.

The total financed by FSA should not exceed the land's appraised value and not exceed \$667,000. With this cap, the maximum loan amount that can be financed by FSA is \$300,000. FSA can also provide up to a 95 percent guarantee on the private loan.

FSA interest rates on the down payment loan is a fixed rate that is four percent below the direct farm ownership rate, but not lower than one and a half percent. Current interest rates can be found on the FSA website.

The repayment period for the FSA portion of the loan is scheduled in equal, annual installments for a term not to exceed 20 years.

For More Information

To locate your local FSA office, search here: <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

See page 13 for more details on *DFL*

To learn more about financing with NCOSAFP, visit: <http://www.stateagfinance.org>



Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL)

Financing farmers and ranchers to build or upgrade storage, cold storage, and packing facilities



Program Basics

FSFL provide low-interest loans to build permanent or portable storage units, upgrade existing storage, or purchase mobile storage facilities.



Eligible uses for FSFL include:

- Grain drying equipment, storage cribs, bins, and silos, and electrical equipment
- Equipment to maintain, improve, or monitor stored grain quality
- Seed cotton handling, storage, and transport equipment
- Hay and biomass storage structures
- Cold storage buildings and equipment
- Packing sheds and handling equipment
- Portable storage structures, equipment, and handling trucks



Products eligible for FSFL include:

- Whole grain corn, grain sorghum, rice, soybeans, oats, peanuts, wheat, barley, malted grains, or minor oilseeds
- Other-than-whole grain corn, grain sorghum, wheat, oats or barley
- Triticale, spelt, buckwheat, and rye
- Hay and renewable biomass
- Pulse crops (lentils, chickpeas, dry peas)
- Seed cotton
- Fruits (includes nuts) and vegetables
- Honey, maple sap, and maple syrup
- Meat, poultry and dairy products
- Aquaculture
- Floriculture and hops

Application Process

An eligible borrower is any person who is a landowner, landlord, leaseholder, tenant or sharecropper. Eligible borrowers must be able to show repayment ability and meet other requirements including but not limited to:

- Produce an eligible commodity
- Demonstrate a storage need
- Have a satisfactory credit rating and the ability to repay the loan
- Provide proof of all peril insurance and, if applicable, flood insurance
- Provide proof of multi-peril crop insurance (MPCI) or *Non-Insured Crop Assistance Program (NAP)* coverage; however, fruit and vegetable growers may request a waiver from FSA from the requirement to hold MCPI or *NAP* coverage

Applications can be found on the FSFL website and should be filed in the local FSA office that maintains the business records.

Note that *Direct Operating Loans*, including *Microloans*, can be used in conjunction with FSFLs. Using both loan programs in combination may be able to fully satisfy a grower's financial support need for storage, washing, packing, and transport.

Financial Information

The maximum loan amount is \$500,000. A cash down payment of 15 percent and a \$100 non-refundable application are required. Loan terms are for seven, 10, or 12 years depending on the amount of the loan. Producers must demonstrate storage needs based on three years of production history.

For loans that exceed \$100,000, the borrower must provide a first lien on the real estate where the facility is situated, other real estate sufficient to secure the loan, or a letter of credit sufficient to protect the government's interest. Loans of up to \$100,000 may be secured by a promissory note only.

The interest rate is fixed and set at the rate of interest charged on comparable U.S. Treasury securities (a lower rate than would be available commercially). Loans are repaid in equal amortized installments.

One partial disbursement of up to half the anticipated total cost is available when that portion of the structure has been completed. The final disbursement will be made when the entire structure has been completed and inspected by a USDA representative. The local FSA county committee must approve all loans.

Structures and equipment generally must have an expected useful life of at least 15 years, which includes both new and used equipment. Facilities that are not for the sole use of the borrower(s) are not eligible.

For More Information

To locate your local FSA office, search here <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

See page 13 for more details on *DFL Operating Loans*, page 21 for *Microloans* and page 24 for *NAP*

FSFL Website:

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/price-support/facility-loans/farm-storage/>

Land Contract Guarantee Program (LC)

Providing federal loan guarantees for farmers and ranchers who self-finance the sale of their land to a beginning or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher



Program Basics



The LC Program connects experienced farmers and ranchers looking to sell their land with beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers looking for property. This program also reduces the financial risk for retiring farmers who self-finance the sale of their land to a beginning or socially disadvantaged farmer by providing a federal guarantee much like that available to commercial banks and other lenders. The LC program is structured to provide the seller of the farm or ranch one of two choices:

Prompt Payment Guarantee covers up to the amount of three annual installments plus real estate taxes and insurance.

Standard Guarantee covers an amount equal to 90 percent of the outstanding principle of the loan provided the seller has a servicing agent.

Application Process

At a minimum, the buyer of the land must:

- Be a beginning or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher
- Have an acceptable credit history demonstrated by debt repayment
- Own or operate the farm or ranch when the contract is complete
- Be unable to obtain sufficient credit elsewhere without a guarantee to finance actual needs at reasonable rates or terms.

Financial Information

For either option, the term of the program is in effect for 10 years. The purchase price or appraised value of the farm or ranch that is the subject of the contract sale cannot be greater than \$500,000. The buyer of the farm or ranch must contribute at least five percent as a down payment for the land.

Under *Prompt Payment Guarantee*, if the buyer does not pay an annual installment due on the contract or pays only part of an installment, FSA provides the scheduled payment or the unpaid portion to the seller through an escrow agent after the seller unsuccessfully attempts collection.

Under *Standard Guarantee*, the seller is protecting themselves against the possibility that the value of the land may have sharply declined between the time the contract was entered and any default by the buyer.

For More Information

To locate your local FSA office, search here: <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

For more information, visit the fact sheet: https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/land_contracts.pdf

Loan Set Asides

Targeting loan funding to beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers

FSA

Program Basics

Loan Set Asides from *Direct and Guaranteed Farm Loans (DFL and GFL)* are for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. This helps beginning farmers and ranchers into the pipeline and addresses the loss of land ownership among socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. Congress has also given beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers a preference in acquiring land out of government inventory.

Application Process

When applying for *DFL* or *GFL* either through FSA or a commercial lender, it is the responsibility of the borrower to inform the loan officer that they are beginning or socially disadvantaged. To be eligible, applicants must fit the criteria of either:

- Beginning Farmer or Rancher
- Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher; or
- Veteran Farmer or Rancher

In addition to the above, there are other criteria required to qualify for the *DFL and GFL*. Refer to the specific loan program for additional eligibility requirements.

Financial Information

Direct Farm Ownership Loans:

On average, a total of \$1.5 billion is allocated to the program annually. 75 percent is reserved for beginning farmers and ranchers. If all of the reserved funds are not used by September 1, remaining funds may be offered to other qualified borrowers. Of the 75 percent reserved funds, two-thirds (50 percent of the subtotal) is reserved exclusively for the

Down Payment Loan Program (DPLP) and joint financing agreement loans. If the reserved funds are not used by April 1, remaining funds may be available for other purposes within the program. Target participation rates for socially disadvantaged producers are in effect for the entire fiscal year. Rates are typically determined by the percent of total socially disadvantaged people living in a particular county. There are, however, two exceptions:

- For counties within the boundaries of a Native American reservation, the target participation rates are based on populations within the entire reservation (rather than county)
- The target participation rate for women is set based on the percent of women farmers in the state relative to the total number of farmers in that state

Direct Farm Operating Loans:

On average, a total of \$1.5 billion is allocated to the program annually. 50 percent is reserved for beginning farmers and ranchers. If all of the reserved funds are not used by September 1, remaining funds in the final month of the fiscal year can be made to other qualified borrowers. Target participation rates are determined by the percent of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers in a state relative to the total number of farmers and ranchers in that state. Any reserved funds that are not used within a state are made available for socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers in other states or are re-pooled within the same state for other purposes.



Guaranteed Farm Ownership and Operating Loans: On average, \$2.75 billion (ownership) and \$2 billion (operating) are allocated to the programs annually. For both ownership and operating, 40 percent is reserved for beginning farmers and ranchers. If all of the reserved funds are not used by April 1, remaining funds then become available for any type of *Guaranteed Farm Ownership and Operating Loans*. In each fiscal year, if there are unused funds from *Guaranteed Farm Operating Loans* as of August 1, FSA will make those funds available for beginning farmers and ranchers seeking a down payment real estate loan if appropriated funds for down payment loans are already extinguished. On September 1 of each year, if there are still unused funds from *Guaranteed Farm Operating Loans*, FSA will make those funds available for any type of beginning farmer and rancher ownership loan.

Inventory Property Sales:

If the government acquires farmland through foreclosures, this “inventory” property is advertised for sale within 15 days of government acquisition. Eligible beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers are given first priority to purchase these properties at their appraised market value during the first 135 days the land is on the market. If more than one eligible beginning or socially disadvantaged producer offers to purchase the same property during that period of time, a buyer is chosen at random. USDA may divide or combine inventory properties to maximize new farming opportunities. USDA can also lease the land to a beginning or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher until such time as funding is available for them to receive a *Direct Farm Ownership Loan* with which to purchase the property. If the 135-day period expires without a buyer, the land is open for public sale to any buyer.

For More Information

To locate your local FSA office, search here <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

See page 13 for more details on *DFL* & *GFL* and page 15 for *DPLP*

Microloan Program

Streamlined small loan options for operating costs, land, or equipment purchases

FSA

Program Basics

Young, beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers and ranchers who may manage smaller-scale and diverse operations often struggle to find appropriate credit options that reflect their financial goals and business aspirations. Microloans are specifically designed to serve these types of farmers and ranchers. This program may also be appropriate for farmers and ranchers serving local and regional food markets, including urban and small-scale, diversified operations.

Applicants may seek up to \$50,000 and can apply for both an *operating* and an *ownership* microloan.



FSA will no longer require an itemized cash flow budget for microloan applicants. This was previously required but was eliminated because it made it difficult for diversified fruit and vegetable growers and community-supported agriculture farmers to participate.



Application Process

The Microloan program uses a streamlined application process that requires less paperwork than other federal lending programs. Application forms are available online, but those eligible must apply in person at an FSA county office or USDA Service Center.

For More Information

To locate your local FSA office, search here: <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

See page 13 for more details on *DFL*.

Microloan Website: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/farm-loan-programs/microloans/index>

Some eligibility criteria for *Direct Farm Loans (DFL)* apply to microloans. However, unlike other direct loan programs operated by FSA, microloans made to beginning or veteran farmers or ranchers do not count toward the total number of years that a farmer or rancher can receive assistance through *DFL*. For other farmers and ranchers, microloans do count toward the seven-year term limit during which a farmer or rancher can receive FSA direct loan assistance.

Financial Information

Microloan funds may be used to cover both annual operating expenses (e.g., seeds, animals, small equipment) and to purchase farmland. Microloan repayment schedules and loan terms are similar to those of *DFL*.

Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)

Helping producers manage financial risk through diversification, marketing, or natural resource conservation practices



Program Basics

Although NRCS administers AMA, the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and Risk Management Agency (RMA) also support the program. NRCS oversees the conservation provisions, AMS is responsible for the *Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP)*, and RMA is responsible for mitigation of financial risk through an insurance cost-share program.



NRCS works with producers who own or control the land within an identified AMA State and comply with adjusted gross income limitation provisions. Producers work with NRCS personnel to develop an AMA plan of operations which may include:

- Construction or improvement of water management structures or irrigation structures
- Planting trees for windbreaks or to improve water quality
- Mitigating risk through diversified production systems or conservation practices

AMA eligible lands include cropland, rangeland, grassland, pastureland, non-industrial forestland, and other private land that produces crops or livestock where risk may be mitigated through operation diversification or change in resource conservation practices.

Application Process

AMA is available in 16 states where participation in the Federal Crop Insurance Program is historically low:

Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

Applications may be obtained and filed at any time with your local USDA Service Center. Applications may also be accepted by cooperating conservation partners approved or designated by NRCS.

Financial Information

The total AMA payments (from NRCS, AMS, and RMA), shall not exceed \$50,000 per participant for any fiscal year.

AMA provides financial assistance up to 75 percent of the cost of installing conservation practices. For historically underserved producers, AMA offers a higher cost-share.

Contracts are for a minimum of one year after completion of the last practice, but not more than 10 years. Participants are expected to maintain cost-shared practices for the life of the practice.

For More Information

To locate your state NRCS office, search here <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

See page 35 for more information on *OCCSP*

AMA Website:
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/ama/>

Extension Risk Management Education (ERME) Program

NIFA

Providing grants for agricultural risk management training

Program Basics

ERME provides funding for projects that help farmers identify resources and implement techniques to reduce risk and increase the financial stability of their operations. The program has five priority topics including production, price or marketing, human resources, legal and financial risk. Note that depending on the region, other priorities may be developed to address the region's needs.

NIFA emphasizes that projects assist:

- Beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers
- Legal immigrant farmers or ranchers
- Retiring farmers and ranchers transitioning operations to beginning farmers and ranchers
- Farmers or ranchers converting production and marketing systems to pursue new markets

Project Examples

In **California, Washington, Arizona** and **Idaho**, AgSafe will work with regional partners to target limited resource producers, specialty crop producers and small farms or ranchers for participation in the H2-A Decision Tool. The tool allows participants to make an information labor decision for scaling up production.

In **Texas**, Prairie View A&M University will provide training to veterans, urban and non-traditional farmers. Topics will include business planning, marketing and various risk management factors that will focus specialty and ethnic crops sold in local communities.

Application Process

Although ERME is managed by NIFA, it operates through four regional centers and one digital center. NIFA makes initial grants available to the four regional centers which then solicit grant applications from the regions they represent. Each of the four regional centers releases a Request for Applications (RFA) – typically during the fall – and will keep the application period open through mid-November.

Organizations eligible to apply for the grants from the regional centers include:

- Land grant and other colleges and universities
- Cooperative Extension
- Public and private entities with a demonstrated capacity to develop and deliver educational programs for agricultural producers. This includes farm groups, lenders, risk management service providers, and community-based organizations

Financial Information

Every year, ERME is allocated \$10 million in funding with no less than \$5 million set aside to support projects specifically focused on educating underserved producers within the federal crop insurance program. Subawards may range up to \$100,000.

For More Information

Program Contact: Brent Elrod
(816) 926-2535
richard.elrod@usda.gov

ERME Website:
<https://nifa.usda.gov/program/extension-risk-management-education-program>



Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)

Expanding safety net options to help farmers and ranchers cover losses from natural disasters



Program Basics

Eligible farmers and ranchers can enroll in NAP and receive payments on their lost crop caused by natural disasters. Despite its similarities to crop insurance, NAP is separate and distinct from the RMA crop insurance program.



NAP also covers the organic, direct market, fresh, and processing crop values when adequate pricing data is available as well as contract prices guaranteed for those with a production contract.

Eligible crops include crops grown for food, feed, fiber, seed, biofuels, and bio-based products. Crops that are already eligible for crop-specific RMA insurance are not eligible for NAP coverage.

Application Process

Eligible farmers and ranchers must not have an average Adjusted Gross Income greater than \$900,000. Farmers utilizing *Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP)* can also enroll in NAP.

Applications for NAP coverage can be found at a local FSA office and service fees must be paid at the time of submission. Closing dates vary and may be during the year prior to planting.

To receive NAP benefits, producers must fill out Form CCC-576 within 60 days of the end of the coverage period for the particular NAP-covered crop. Following a natural disaster, producers must report it to their FSA office within 15 calendar days. There are specific crops losses that must be reported within 72 hours.

Financial Information

NAP covers 100 percent of the crop's value and a farmer or rancher can buy coverage for up to 65 percent of that value. The annual payout limit for buy-up coverage is \$300,000.

Recipients also required to pay a service fee calculated as the lesser of either \$325 (per crop, per county) or \$825 (per producer per county). The maximum service fee required is capped at \$1,950 per farmer. A fee waiver and 50 percent premium discount applies to beginning, limited resource, and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers when they file form CCC-860.

For More Information

To locate your local FSA office, search here <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

See page 27 for more details on *WFRP*

NAP Website: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/disaster-assistance-program/noninsured-crop-disaster-assistance/index>

Organic Crop Insurance

Expanding safety net options to help organic farmers and ranchers manage risk

RMA

Program Basics

Historically, farmers and ranchers have not received sufficient financial support of a crop insurance safety net tailored towards organic agriculture. In recent years, there has been more proposals to level the playing field for organic producers by reforming the federal crop insurance system. As of 2019, organic and transitional to organic crop and revenue insurance covered over 1.5 million U.S. acres.

With changes in the 2018 Farm Bill, there are several components that continue to benefit organic production:

Premium Organic Price Elections (POPE) reflect the organic market price premiums. In general, organic coverage is offered wherever RMA offers conventional coverage for that crop and most crops have a POPE. Applicants should check with their local crop insurance agent to determine which policies are available in specific states and counties.

Under the Contract Price Addendum (CPA), organic producers and producers transitioning to organic under an organic plan can receive insurance on their crop at the price agreed within a written contract from a buyer if provided by the acreage reporting date. The CPA is typically capped at twice the conventional price, or one and a half times the organic price election. RMA routinely evaluates the capping level and adjusts the level based on available data, so some crops have higher caps. Farmers with contracts above the cap should be aware that they might be underinsured if using this option.

The *Whole Farm Revenue Program (WFRP)* policy is advantageous for highly diversified operations.

Rather than insuring crop-by-crop, *WFRP* offers both organic and non-organic farmers and ranchers premium discounts for increased diversity for up to seven crops. It also offers premium subsidies of up to 80 percent, depending on the level of coverage and the number of crops grown.

RMA eliminated the imposition of a five percent surcharge on organic crop insurance premiums beginning in the 2014 crop insurance year. Instead, actual Transitional Yields (“t-yields”) are used for organic crops to determine premium rates. T-yields are used to calculate payments where the producer does not have at least four years of crop yield history for a particular crop (also known as actual production history or APH). Where actual production history is unavailable, RMA uses county averages of crop yield to determine t-yields.

When there is not enough organic data to develop a t-yield directly, RMA reduces the county average crop yield by 35 percent when applying it to organic producers, which means that organic producers could be at a disadvantage until RMA obtains sufficient data on organic prices and organic yields. As more organic producers obtain crop insurance, making more data available on organic crop yields, RMA is more enabled to establish county or regional averages of organic crop yields.

Application Process

The Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC) is administered by RMA who establish the terms and rates for insurance policies as well as approve insurance providers for insurance policies. The policies are then purchased and delivered through private crop insurance companies and their agents.



Crop insurance is available for all organic acreage, transitional acreage, and buffer zone acreage certified through the USDA National Organic Program – either through individual crop policies where they are available, or through *WFRP*.

Financial Information

Those enrolled in the program are eligible for payments where damage is significant enough to lower a crop yield below the deductible for the entire insured unit. In addition, the damage is due to an insurable cause of loss which include drought, excess moisture, freeze, hail, prevented planting, insect damage, disease, and weeds.

To get insurance for an organic crop or a crop transitioning to organic under an organic plan at a price that reflects the organic premium, there must either be an RMA-established Organic Price Election for that crop or an approved written agreement contracting the production of that crop at a specific price. In the latter instance, the producer can elect the contract price rather than the RMA price election or use the contract price in lieu of the conventional price if there is no RMA-established POPE for that crop.

Insurance Plans, Coverage levels, Types, Price Elections, T-Yields, Dates, and Rates can be found in actuarial documents.

For More Information

Program Contact: Richard Flournoy
richard.flournoy@usda.gov
(816) 926-7381

Find an approved insurance agent here:
<https://www.rma.usda.gov/Information-Tools/Agent-Locator-Page>

See page 27 for more details on *WFRP*

National Organic Program Website:
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/about-ams/programs-offices/national-organic-program>

List of eligible crops for POPE:
<https://www.rma.usda.gov/Topics/Organic-Crops/Organic-Premium-Price-Elections-Available-by-Commodity>

List of eligible crops for CPA:
<https://www.rma.usda.gov/Topics/Organic-Crops/Contract-Price-Addendum-Eligibility-by-Commodity>

Actuarial Information Browser:
<https://webapp.rma.usda.gov/apps/actuarialinformationbrowser/>

Factsheet for Organic Farming Practices
<https://www.rma.usda.gov/en/Fact-Sheets/National-Fact-Sheets/Organic-Farming-Practices>

Whole Farm Revenue Protection (WFRP)

Helping sustainable and organic producers manage risks on diversified farms

RMA

Program Basics

All farmers and ranchers deserve access to an adequate farm safety net to protect against the inherent risks of farming. WFRP is a crop-neutral revenue insurance policy that is designed to protect entire operations including all crops and livestock. RMA develops crop insurance policies, sets premium rates, and subsidizes the costs for producers and the approved insurance providers. Then federal policies are administered through private crop insurance agents who sell the policies to individual farmers and ranchers.

Some benefits include:

- Replant coverage
- Larger premium discounts for increased diversification from three to seven crops
- Inclusion of some incidental processing expenses necessary to make the commodity ready for market
- Able to combine WFRP with single crop policies and with the *Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)*

Application Process

In order to participate in WFRP, a farmer or rancher must have five consecutive years of Schedule F or other farm tax forms. For beginning farmers or ranchers, only three years of farm tax forms is required. In addition, those interested must have:

- No more than \$8.5 million in insured revenue
- No more than 50 percent of total revenue from commodities purchased for resale

- ‘Buy-up’ coverage levels on any Federal crop insurance plans you choose in addition to the WFRP insurance plan
- Met the diversification requirements of the policy by having two or more commodities if a commodity you are raising has revenue protection or actual revenue history insurance available; and
- Met the diversification requirements of the policy by having two or more commodities if there are potatoes on the farm.

Farmers and ranchers interested in signing up for WFRP can speak to a local crop insurance agent (in any county or state) about purchasing a new policy. There are different closing dates based on which part of the country the farm is in so be sure to check with your local crop insurance agent about your closing date. Farmers or ranchers may also contact a regional or county RMA office with any questions.

WFRP will only cover up to \$2 million expected revenue from livestock or nursery commodities. A farmer or rancher may have more than \$2 million expected revenue from those commodities and still qualify for WFRP, but their insurance guarantee will be capped at \$2 million.

For farmers or ranchers engaged in hemp production, coverage exists under specific conditions:

- Must be in compliance with the applicable state, tribal, or federal plan
- Must be under a marketing contract
- It is not eligible for replant payments



- “Hot” hemp (when THC concentrations spike above 0.3 percent due to crop stress or cross-pollination) will not be considered an insurable loss at this time

For all revenue losses, a notice of loss must be submitted within 72 hours after discovery that revenue for the policy year could be below the insured revenue. Inspections may be required for losses. Farm taxes must be filed for the policy year before any claim can be made. Claims must be made no later than 60 days after the date tax forms have been submitted to the Internal Revenue Service. Claim payments for a revenue loss under WFRP are paid within 30 days after the determination of a payment due as long as you are in compliance with the policy.

Financial Information

In 2018, over 2,000 policies were sold representing \$2.3 billion in liabilities. Some coverages include:

- Crop-neutral revenue coverage for all crops and animals (up to \$2 million in sales for animal production) on a farm
- Premium subsidy of up to 80 percent when at least two crops are grown
- An additional 10 percent premium discount for farmers and ranchers operating for less than ten years
- Coverage levels in five percent increments up to 85 percent of revenue
- Coverage for expanding operations, currently capped at 35 percent per year

For More Information

Program Contact: Richard Flournoy
richard.flournoy@usda.gov
 (816) 926-7381

See page 24 for more details on *NAP*

WFRP Website:

<https://www.rma.usda.gov/en/Policy-and-Procedure/Insurance-Plans/Whole-Farm-Revenue-Protection>

Find an approved insurance agent here:

<https://www.rma.usda.gov/Information-Tools/Agent-Locator-Page>

Free webinar for WFRP:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6ZF1ylClsw>

Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program (CFPCGP)

NIFA

Helping communities increase self-sufficiency and food security

Program Basics

CFPCGP provides one-time funds to eligible organizations who develop comprehensive, community-based solutions that promote self-sufficiency and increase food security in low-income communities. Examples of CFPCGP projects may include community assessments, GIS analysis, gardens with market stands, value chain projects, food hubs, farmers markets, farm-to-institution projects, and both marketing and consumer cooperatives.

In general, CFPCGP supports projects that:

- Meet the food needs of low-income individuals through food distribution, outreach to increase participation in federally assisted nutrition programs, or improve access to food as part of a comprehensive service
- Increase self-reliance of communities to meet their own food needs
- Promote responses to issues related to local food access, farm, and nutrition.
- Meet specific state, local, or neighborhood food and agricultural needs, including equipment, planning long-term solutions, or innovative marketing activities

Project Examples

In **Nebraska**, HoChunk Community Development Corporation will implement key components of a broad tribal food sovereignty plan. The plan includes increasing the amount of fresh, locally grown food incorporated into tribal diet; increasing Tribal sovereignty by meeting more tribal food needs from reservation sources; and increasing economic opportunities for ag-related entrepreneurs.

In **New Hampshire**, the Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success will help refugee farmers secure food sovereignty through land access, food preservation, civic engagement and business development.

Application Process

Public food program service providers, tribal organizations, and private nonprofit entities are eligible to apply. Applicants should demonstrate experience engaging low-income communities with food activities.

Once a year, Request for Applications (RFA) is announced and applicants are usually given one month to submit their applications via grants.gov. Free technical assistance may be requested by grantees and applicants. Then, proposals are given to a peer review panel for relevance, applicant experience, and overall impact of the project.

Financial Information

Every year, \$5 million is allocated to CFPCGP in mandatory funding. Typically, awards can range from \$35,000 to \$400,000. CFPCGP requires a dollar-for-dollar (1:1) match in resources which can include in-kind support.

For More Information

Program Contact: Jaheon Koo
(816) 926-1179

Jaheon.koo@usda.gov

CFPCGP Website:

<https://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/community-food-projects-cfp-competitive-grants-program>



Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program (FMPP & LFPP)

Developing and expanding direct and intermediated local food marketing



Program Basics

Farmer-to-consumer connection points (such as farmers markets and food hubs) create economic opportunities for small and mid-sized family farms, increase consumer choice and access to fresh and healthy food, and improve economic outcomes for rural and food producing communities. Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) and Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) can help develop and build-out those connections.

FMPP supports the development, coordination, and expansion of domestic direct-to-consumer outlets. Awards can be used for market startup, operation, training and education, outreach, market analysis and planning, customer and producer surveys, vendor and customer recruitment, and new venue establishment.

LFPP supports the development, coordination, or expansion of local and regional food business enterprises. Awards can be used for business planning, training, technical assistance, outreach, marketing, etc.

For this grant, these definitions apply:

“Local and regional food” - the final market and the origin of the product must be within the same state, territory, or tribal land or the transportation from producer to consumer is kept to a minimum.

“Local and regional food enterprises” - organizations or business entities that function as intermediaries between producers (farmers or growers) and buyers by carrying out one or more supply chain activities (e.g., aggregating, storing, processing, value-added production, distributing).

“Direct marketing” - includes direct-to-retail, direct-to-restaurants and direct-to-institution marketing and sales.

Project Examples

In **New Jersey**, funds from FMPP allow the Township of Mount Holly to bring together local farmers, food vendors and community stakeholders to coordinate a weekly farmers markets that ensures growth and sustainability of the market in an area of low income/low food access.

In **Colorado**, funds from LFPP allow Go Farm, Inc. to distribute local produce within communities by strategically locating refrigerated shipping containers in close proximity to existing and/or new farms and underserved communities. The customized containers serve as local food hubs that are convenient for deliveries by local farmers and as food share pickups by shareholders.

Application Process

Eligible entities for FMPP and LFPP include:

- Agricultural businesses and cooperatives
- Producer networks and associations
- Community supported agriculture (CSA) networks (a CSA comprised of a group of farms, and not just a single farm)
- CSA associations (a group that represents, assists, or serves a CSA or CSA network)
- Local governments
- Nonprofit corporations
- Public benefit corporations
- Economic development corporations

- Food councils
- Regional farmers market authorities
- Tribal governments

FMPP and LFPP issue two separate, but concurrent, Request for Applications (RFAs) each year. AMS publishes the RFAs on grants.gov, the program websites, and solicits applications from eligible organizations. There is no set timeframe for when the RFA is released, though AMS tries publishing during the first quarter of each calendar year.

For both FMPP and LFPP projects, USDA gives priority to projects that primarily serve low income/low food access communities (as defined by USDA in its ERS Food Access Research Atlas map).

Financial Information

The 2018 Farm Bill authorized FMPP, LFPP as well as *Regional Food System Partnerships Program (RFSP)* and *Value-Added Producers Grants (VAPG)* under the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP). Although LAMP programs receive permanent mandatory funding, about \$22 million is made available to FMPP and LFPP each year. This amount depends on future appropriations acts.

In 2020, approximately \$27 million is available to fund FMPP and LFPP projects. For FMPP, the minimum grant award of \$50,000 and the maximum award is \$500,000. For LFPP, the minimum grant award of \$25,000 and the maximum award is \$500,000.

A cash or in-kind match, in an amount equal to 25 percent of the total federal portion of the grant, is required for both FMPP and LFPP.

For More Information

FMPP Email:
USDAFMPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov

LFPP Email:
USDALFPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov

See page 36 for more details on *RFSP* and page 38 for *VAPG*

FMPP Website:
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/fmpp>

LFPP Website:
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/lfpp>

Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP)

Improving marketing opportunities through research and innovation



Program Basics

FSMIP encourages innovative research aimed at improving the efficiency of the marketing system including direct, wholesale, and retail.



Funds may be used to address barriers, challenges, and opportunities in marketing, transportation, and distribution of U.S. food and agricultural products domestically and internationally.

Although projects may align with multiple, applicants may only apply under one type:

1. *Agricultural Product Development*
2. *Agricultural Product Distribution*
3. *Cooperative Development*
4. *Economic Research to Clarify Marketing Barriers and Opportunities*

Project Examples

The **University of Tennessee** will determine value-added opportunities for marketing cattle using available genetic information. Outreach and educational materials will be developed to assist producers with valuing cattle traits throughout the supply chain.

The **Montana Department of Agriculture** has organized a hemp trade team to research established Canadian hemp markets and learn hemp harvest and postharvest management techniques with the intent of developing a guide for farmers entering the hemp market.

Application Process

Entities that are eligible to apply include:

- State departments of agriculture
- State agricultural experiment stations
- Other appropriate State agencies (i.e., State universities, State colleges, or State governmental entities)

It is strongly encouraged that the applicant also partners with industry groups and community organizations. The applicant would then subcontract or subaward with partners.

Financial Information

In 2019, approximately \$1 million was available in total funding for FSMIP with the maximum award of \$250,000. Projects last up to three years although it is acceptable to complete the project earlier.

A one-to-one dollar match in the form of cash or in-kind resources is required. Indirect costs may count toward the match. All matching contributions must be committed or in place when the proposal is submitted.

For More Information

Program Contact: Martin “RO” Rosier
(202) 260-8449

Martin.Rosier@usda.gov

FSMIP Website:

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/fsmip>

Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP) Audit Verification Program

Assisting produce growers, packers, and distributors meet food safety certification requirements from buyers

AMS



Program Basics

GAP and GHP programs are voluntary, user-fee funded, independent audit programs offered to the produce industry to verify that fresh fruits and vegetables are produced, packed, handled, and stored according to food safety practices that minimize the risks of microbial food safety hazards. There are several types of audits:

GAP: Observes best practices of on-farm production and harvesting.

GHP: Observes best practices of packing, storing, and distributing.

Harmonized GAP and GHP (H-GAP): Aligns the GAP/GHP audits with the Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule.

Group GAP: Creates an internal audit program for small and medium sized farms. Farms can share resources and costs of the audits.

H-GAP Plus+: Aligns H-GAP with standards recognized by the Global Food Safety Initiative.

GAP and GHP programs do not guarantee that the product is free from microbial contamination or compliant with FDA food safety regulations. They do, however, help producers obtain third party certifications that may be required for some markets.

Application Process

Growers, packers, and distributors are eligible to be GAP and GHP certified. Participants must contact their local USDA inspection office to submit a request. Participants must schedule an audit at least two weeks in advance of their anticipated audit date. When scheduling the audit, the participant must provide:

- A copy of one's food safety manual
- A point of contact for its food safety officer, who must be present at the time of the inspection
- A Participation Agreement outlining the expectations of the operation and USDA in performing the audit

Financial Information

Currently, the audit fee is a \$115 per hour (plus round-trip travel) for an auditor's time. Therefore, the overall cost of the audit can vary significantly based on the travel time.

For More Information

To locate your local inspection office, search <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/auditing/groupgap/state-contacts>

OR reach out to:
scaudits@usda.gov
(202) 720-5021

GAP & GHP Website:
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/auditing/gap-ghp>

Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI)

Improving access to healthy food in underserved communities



Program Basics

HFFI is a public-private partnership administered by Reinvestment Fund, a nonprofit Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) on behalf of RD. HFFI helps to link more families with healthy food by providing grants and technical assistance to food retail and food system enterprises that seek to improve access to healthy food in underserved areas.



One-time grants are available to assist projects with a variety of aspects of retail or enterprise development, renovation, or expansion.



Technical assistance is offered, including:

- Support with capacity building
- Identifying food access needs and potential interventions
- Project planning
- Market studies
- Feasibility studies
- Business planning
- Financial modeling
- Appraisals
- Community or customer engagement

Application Process

For-profit businesses, cooperative businesses, nonprofit organizations, and state, local, and tribal governments and governmental agencies are eligible to apply. Eligible applicants must propose a project that:

- Plans to expand or preserve the availability of staple and perishable foods in underserved areas with low and moderate-income populations.
- Accepts benefits (if the project involves retail sales) under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

In addition, applicants must propose a project in an underserved area. There is an interactive map with identified areas on the HFFI website.

HFFI is administered by Reinvestment Fund and typically once a year, a Request for Applications (RFA) is released for each grant.

Financial Information

The 2018 Farm Bill reauthorized HFFI at \$125 million though HFFI funding depends on the annual appropriations process. Total funding available for grants and technical assistance in fiscal year 2019 was \$2 million and for FY 2020, \$5 million.

For More Information

Program Contact: Molly Hartman
molly.hartman@reinvestment.com
 (215) 574-5898

To locate a CDFI near you, search here:
<https://www.healthyfoodaccess.org/launch-a-business-financing>

HFFI Website:
<https://www.investinginfood.com>

Organic Certification Cost Share Program (OCCSP)

Easing the transition to organic certification for producers and handlers

FSA

Program Basics

The process of becoming organically certified can be expensive, but it is an essential step for farmers who want to tap into the growing demand for certified organic food in the U.S. OCCSP can help alleviate some of the costs of certification for small and mid-sized organic farm businesses. This cost share program provides reimbursements for allowable costs including application fees, inspection fees, certification costs, state organic program fees, user fees or sale assessments, and postage.

OCCSP receives funding from two sources – the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program (NOCCSP), and the *Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA)* Organic Certification Cost Share Program. The funding source is determined by the region of the applicant's operation.

Application Process

To receive reimbursements, applicants must be certified organic (either as a newly certified or re-certified organic operation) under the National Organic Program.

Organic producers and handlers in all 50 States, District of Columbia, and U.S. territories are eligible to participate in NOCCSP.

For *AMA*, organic producers (but not handlers) in 16 states (CT, DE, HI, ME, MD, MA, NH, NJ, NV, NY, PA, RI, UT, VT, WV, WY) are eligible to participate.

Organic producers and handlers can apply directly through their FSA county office. Some states may also offer OCCSP through their State Department of Agriculture so applicants can apply either through the state or through FSA. Applicants are encouraged to apply as early as possible since states process on a first-come, first-serve basis.



Financial Information

The 2018 Farm Bill provides \$24 million for NOCCSP and \$5 million for AMA until 2023. While these mandatory funds have been reserved, it is possible for each program to receive less funds due to annual appropriations.

Reimbursements may cover up to 75 percent of annual certification costs. Maximum payments of \$750 are given per year per applicant.

For More Information

To locate your local FSA office, search here <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

To find a certified cost share agent, search: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/resources/organic-certifying-agents>

See page 22 for more details on *AMA*

OCCSP Website: <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/occp/index>

Regional Food System Partnerships Program (RFSP)

Building and strengthening local and regional food systems through collaboration and innovation



Program Basics

RFSP supports partnerships that connect public and private resources to plan and develop local or regional food systems. Effort is focused on building and strengthening local or regional food economy viability and resilience by alleviating unnecessary administrative and technical barriers for participating partners.



Application Process

Applications must be submitted by eligible partnerships, which include at least one eligible entity and at least one eligible partner.



Eligible entities include:

- Producers
- Producer networks or associations
- Farmer or rancher cooperatives
- Majority-controlled producer-based business ventures
- Food councils
- Local or tribal governments
- Nonprofit corporations
- Economic development corporations
- Public benefit corporations
- Community-supported agriculture networks or associations
- Regional farmers' market authorities

Eligible partners include:

- State agencies or regional authorities
- Philanthropic organizations
- Private corporations
- Institutions of higher education
- Commercial, Federal, or Farm Credit System lending institutions

Financial Information

The 2018 Farm Bill authorized RSFP as well as *Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)*, *Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP)*, and *Value-Added Producers Grants (VAPG)* under the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP). Although LAMP programs receive permanent mandatory funding, about \$5 million is made available to RSFP each year. This amount may vary depending on future appropriations acts.

In 2020, approximately \$10 million is available to fund RFSP projects, which consists of funding from 2019 and 2020.

A 25% cash match is required. All matching contributions must be committed or in place when the proposal is submitted.

For More Information

Program Contact - Patrick Kelley
(202) 205-3941
Patrick.Kelley@usda.gov

See page 30 for more details on *FMPP* & *LFPP* and page 38 for *VAPG*

RFSP Website:

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/rfsp>

Specialty Crop Block Grants Program (SCBGP)

Helping fruit, vegetables, and other farmers with research, training, infrastructure, and marketing support

AMS



Program Basics

SCBGP funds can supplement state-run specialty crop programs and/or States can make grants available for projects that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. SCBGP funds, however, cannot be used to solely benefit a single organization, institution, or individual.

In addition, the *Specialty Crop Multi-State Subprogram (SCMP)* enhances the competitiveness of specialty crops by funding collaborative multi-State projects. SCMP applications must have at least two partners from different States to develop solutions to practical problems and address the needs of specialty crop growers in the areas of food safety, plant pests and disease, research, crop-specific projects addressing common issues, and marketing and promotion. Projects should also measure benefits for specialty crop growers, encourage partnerships among specialty crop organizations, and reduce duplication of effort among participating organizations.

Project Examples

In **Delaware**, SCBGP supports 10 different projects, including implementing hydroponics technologies, researching resistance measures for pests and developing garden programs.

SCMP supports the **California Department of Food and Agriculture** partnering with USDA's Agricultural Research Service, Washington State University, and the University of California-Davis to identify the cause of Esca (Black Measles) in California table grapes, and its impact on the State of Washington's wine and juice grape production systems.

Application Process

Only State Departments of Agriculture are eligible to apply. Organizations interested in applying to state sub-grants should contact their state Department of Agriculture.

Financial Information

Per year, \$85 million is allocated to SCBGP and \$5 million is allocated to *SCMP*. The amount allocated to each state is based on a formula that considers specialty crop acreage and production value within the state. Both programs do not require a cost share or match and must be completed with three years.

For More Information

SCBGP Program Contact - Carly Borgmeier
(202) 260-8702

Carlym.borgmeier@ams.usda.gov

SCBGP State Contacts:

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgrp/state-contacts>

SCMP Program Contact - Martin "RO" Rosier
(202) 260-8449

Martin.rosier@usda.gov

SCBGP Website:

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgrp>

SCMP Website:

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scmp>



Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG)

Helping farmers and ranchers create and expand value-added products and enterprises



Program Basics

VAPG provides funds to farmers or ranchers to create or develop value-added, producer-owned businesses. These enterprises help increase farm income and marketing opportunities, create new jobs, contribute to economic development, and enhance food choices for consumers.



VAPG can be used to fund business and marketing plans, feasibility studies, improve food safety practices, or acquire working capital to operate a value-added business venture. Depending on the use, those interested can apply for either *Planning Grants* or *Working Capital Grants*.



The term “value-added” includes any agricultural commodity or product whose value has been increased by any of the following:

- Undergoing a change in physical state (e.g., turning fruit into jam)
- Being produced in a manner that enhances the value of the agricultural commodity (e.g. organic carrots, eggs produced from free-range chickens)
- Being physically segregated for its special character or identity (e.g. GMO-free corn separated from genetically modified corn)
- Transforming natural resources into energy on the farmstead (e.g. anaerobic digester)
- Being aggregated and marketed as a locally produced food (e.g., as part of a Buy Local campaign, state-produced branding or labeling effort)

Project Examples

In **Georgia**, Collective Harvest used VAPG funds for labor (daily CSA operations manager) and marketing (embroidered materials and advertisements in local newspapers).

In **Kansas**, Hildebrand Farms Dairy received VAPG funds to help with the cost of goods sold (glass containers, ingredients, labor) during a time they were seeing an annual loss.

Application Process

Eligible applicants include:

- Independent, individual farmers, ranchers, and harvesters (including fisherman and loggers)
- Groups of agricultural producers
- Majority-controlled producer-based business ventures
- Farmer or rancher cooperatives

Producers must supply the majority (more than fifty percent) of the commodity needed for the project and clearly demonstrate that the project will expand the customer base and increase revenues. Businesses with majority farmer ownership are eligible to apply but grants to these entities cannot make up more than 10 percent of total awarded funds in any given year.

Each year, RD publishes a Notice of Solicitation of Applications (NOSA) in the Federal Register which opens the solicitation for applications from eligible producers and groups of producers to apply for VAPG. There is no set timeframe for when the NOSA is released. Usually, applicants have 60 to 90 days to apply and submit their applications to USDA. Proposals must be

submitted electronically via grants.gov, in person, or via mail to the state RD office. Typically, the deadline for submitting online is different than the deadline to submit directly to a state RD office.

Initially, all applications are screened by the state RD office. Then they are sent to independent grant reviewers to be evaluated and scored. After, USDA staff in Washington D.C. conduct a final review to assign any additional administrative priority points.

In ranking applications, USDA awards priority points to projects increasing opportunities for farmers and ranchers who are beginning, socially disadvantaged, veteran and or operating small- and medium-sized family farms and ranches. If two or more applications have the same ranking point total, the one that addresses one of the program priorities will be ranked higher than one that does not.

Financial Information

The 2018 Farm Bill authorized VAPG as well as *Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)*, *Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP)*, and *Regional Food System Partnerships Program (RFSP)* under the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP). Although LAMP programs receive permanent mandatory funding, about \$17.5 million is made available to VAPG each year. This amount may vary depending on future appropriations acts.

For *Planning Grants*, the maximum award is \$75,000 and for *Working Capital Grants*, the maximum is \$250,000. Funding to support costs related to changing and/or upgrading food safety practices and related equipment (\$6,500 maximum grant) is capped at 25 percent of the total funds made available in any given year.

All grant funds awarded must be matched with non-federal funds on a 1:1 basis. Matching funds may be in the form of cash or eligible in-kind contributions. Up to 25 percent of the total project cost (or 50 percent of the match) may come from the farmers' or ranchers' own time ("sweat equity") put into the project. The other portion of the match must be in cash. Matching funds, both cash and in-kind, must be secured in full at the time an application is submitted.

By law, there are three 10 percent funding set-aside categories:

- Mid-tier value chain projects
- Projects that benefit beginning or socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers
- Projects in persistent poverty counties.

For More Information

To locate your state RD office, search here: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices>

See page 30 for more details on *FMPP* & *LFPP* and page 36 for *RFSP*

VAPG Website: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/value-added-producer-grants>

Agricultural Marketing Resource Center Website: <https://www.agmrc.org>

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

Conserving wetlands, grassland, farm and ranch land through long-term conservation easements



Program Basics

ACEP is an easement program that combines three previously separate easement programs: Wetlands Reserve Program, Grassland Reserve Program, and Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program. As of 2018, ACEP primarily functions in two ways:



Wetland Reserve Easement (WRE) restores, protects, and enhances wetland values and functions farmed or converted wetland habitat. Landowners have two easement options: permanent and long-term (typically 30 years). WRE also includes *Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership* component (formerly the *Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program*) in which NRCS partners with states, non-governmental organizations, or Native American Tribes.



Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) permanently protects land from development to ensure farm viability for future generations as well as conserves grazing land (rangeland, pasture and shrub land). States that do not allow permanent easements, easements will be as long-term as allowed by law.

Application Process

Farmers, ranchers, and partners interested in ACEP should contact their local NRCS office for more information. Farmers and landowners may also contact their local land trust or state agriculture or conservation department or agency. The land trust or other eligible entity will then work with the farmer or landowner and NRCS to apply for funding for the easement.

WRE funding for purchase of the easement (apart from the *Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership* option) goes directly to the landowner. To be eligible, the proposed easement must meet one or more of the following designations:

- Farmed or converted wetlands, together with adjacent land that is functionally dependent on that land
- Flooded cropland or grassland that was used for agricultural production prior to flooding from the natural overflow of either a closed basin lake or a pothole
- Farmed wetlands and adjoining lands that are enrolled in the *Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)* that would return to production after leaving CRP
- Riparian areas linking protected wetlands
- Other eligible land, including certain previously restored wetlands, hydric soil areas, and wetland adjacent lands, if NRCS determines such wetlands would add to the functional value of the easement

Funding for ALE goes to non-profits (such as land trusts), state and local agencies, and Indian tribes to purchase easements.

To be eligible, the proposed easement must:

- Be subject to a pending offer for purchase of an agricultural land easement from an eligible entity or through a buy-protect-sell transaction
- Have prime, unique, or productive soil, and meet one of the following criteria:
 - Contain historical or archaeological resources
 - Protect grazing uses by restoring and conserving land

- Further a state or local policy consistent with the purposes of the program

Also, the easement meets one of the following:

- Cropland, rangeland, or grassland
- Land that contains forbs or shrub land for which grazing is the predominant use
- Located in an area that has been historically dominated by grassland, forbs, or shrubs and could provide habitat for animal or plant populations of significant ecological value
- Pastureland or nonindustrial private forestland that contributes to the economic viability of an offered parcel or serves as a buffer to protect such land from development

For both *WRE* and *ALE*, NRCS prioritizes applications that include acres that will expire within a year from *CRP*.

Financial Information

For the *WRE* Permanent option, NRCS will pay the lowest of:

- The fair market value of the land using the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practices
- Area wide market analysis or survey
- An offer made by the landowner

For the *WRE* long-term option, NRCS provides up to 75 percent of the compensation that would be paid for a permanent easement. For easements valued at \$500,000 or less, payments may be provided in lump sum or in no more than 10 annual installments. For easements valued at more than \$500,000, payments must be made in at least 5, but no more than 10, annual installments.

Projects of “special significance” (different than “grasslands of special significance”), may be waived for any portion of an entity’s cash contribution requirement if the applicant donates an amount equal to the waiver.

For *ALE*, NRCS can provide up to 50 percent of the fair market value. Eligible entities can include cash or landowner contributions, as well as other certain non-USDA federal funding to satisfy the matching funds requirement. For “grasslands of special environmental significance,” NRCS may contribute up to 75 percent of the fair market value of the easement.

For More Information

To locate your local NRCS office, search here: <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

See page 48 for more details on *CRP*

ACEP Website:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/programs/easements/acep/?cid=stelprdb1242695>

Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF)

A federal-state partnership that provides communities low-cost financing for a wide range of water infrastructure and water quality projects



Program Basics

The CWSRF was created by 1987 amendments to the Clean Water Act (CWA) as an EPA-state financial assistance partnership program. CWSRF functions like environmental infrastructure banks by providing low interest loans to eligible entities for water quality projects. As money is paid back into the state's revolving loan fund, the state makes new loans to other recipients for priority activities. Past funded projects have been mostly non-agricultural, however, funding for conservation and agricultural best management practices is possible.



CWSRF recipients may use loans to construct municipal wastewater facilities; control nonpoint sources of pollution; build decentralized wastewater treatment systems; create green infrastructure projects; protect estuaries; and other water quality projects.

In addition, each state administering CWSRF funds may provide various types of assistance, including loans, refinancing, purchasing, or guaranteeing local debt and purchasing bond insurance. States may target financial resources to specific community and environmental needs. In 2009, Congress authorized CWSRFs to offer additional subsidization, such as grants, principal forgiveness, and negative interest rate loans.

Project Examples

In 2016, **Delaware's** CWSRF provided loans to farmers to address nonpoint pollution. Below market interest rates and flexible repayment terms helped farmers implement nutrient management techniques, composting systems, and other agricultural best management practices.

Over 20 years, Rock County has used **Minnesota's** CWSRF to provide 377 loans worth nearly \$8 million to farmers to support nutrient reduction farming practices.

Application Process

EPA provides grants to all 50 states, plus Puerto Rico, to capitalize state CWSRF loan programs. EPA also provides direct grant funding for the District of Columbia, U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas. Contact the CWSRF program in your state or region for information on how to apply.

Financial Information

In 2018, federal investments of over \$1.2 billion combined with state investments to provide \$6.8 billion in loans to communities for high priority water infrastructure and other water quality projects. States may set specific loan terms, interest rates (from zero percent to market rate), and repayment periods of up to 30 years. They may also customize loan terms to meet needs of small and disadvantaged communities or to provide incentives for certain types of projects.

For More Information

CWSRF Regional Contacts:

<https://www.epa.gov/cwsrf/epa-regional-office-cwsrf-contacts>

CWSRF State Contacts:

<https://www.epa.gov/cwsrf/forms/contact-us-about-clean-water-state-revolving-fund-cwsrf#state>

CWSRF Website:

<https://www.epa.gov/cwsrf>

Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (CFP)

Establishing forests that provide community benefits through fee simple acquisition of private forest land

FS



Program Basics

CFP helps communities acquire and conserve forests that provide public access, recreational activities, protect water supplies and wildlife habitat, serve as demonstration sites for landowners, and provide economic benefits from timber and non-timber products.

Lands acquired through the program are actively managed in accordance with a Community Forest Plan to provide community benefits. Applicants are encouraged to work with the State Forester or equivalent Tribal government official for technical assistance when developing or updating the Community Forest Plan.

Eligible land must be private forest that is at least five acres (75% forested) and suitable for natural vegetation. The lands must also be threatened by conversion to non-forest uses, must not be held in trust by the U.S. on behalf of any Indian Tribe, must not be Tribal allotment lands, must be offered for sale by a willing seller, and if acquired by an eligible entity, must provide defined community benefits under CFP and allow public access.

Project Examples

In **Michigan**, the Superior Watershed Partnership was awarded CFP funding in 2018 to acquire 18 acres of old-growth forest and coastal wetlands to provide educational and recreational opportunities.

In **Vermont**, the Town of Waitsfield was awarded CFP funding in 2017 to acquire an additional 110-acres to the 640-acre Scrag Mountain Town Forest which created a new trailhead for recreational use.

Application Process

The Forest Service (FS) publishes an annual Request for Applications (RFA) in the Federal Register which is typically released in the Fall.

Those eligible to apply include local governmental entities, federally recognized Indian Tribes (including Alaska Native Corporations), or nonprofit organizations that are qualified to acquire and manage land. For non-profits and local governments, applications are submitted to the State Forester, who then sends it to FS. For Indian Tribes, the application is sent directly to FS.

After the application has been submitted, the reviewing process undergo several eligibility screenings, from local to national levels of FS. A national selection panel is recruited annually to consider finalist applications.

Financial Information

The total amount of funding for CFP depends annual appropriations from Congress. For example, in fiscal year (FY) 2018, Congress appropriated \$4 million with the maximum amount for a single project as \$600,000 over an initial two-year period. The total funding available for CFP is specified in the RFA. Note that there is a 50 percent match requirement of the total project cost.

For More Information

Contact your CFP Regional Contact:
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/contact-us/community-forest-regional-coordinators>

CFP Website:
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest/program>

FS Community Wood Energy and Wood Innovation Grant Program (Wood Innovations)

Assisting with costs of installing wood energy systems and building innovative wood product facilities



Program Basics

New in the 2018 Farm Bill, Wood Innovations financially supports costs associated with installing wood energy systems and building innovative wood product facilities in rural communities. The types of facilities range from small office buildings to large sawmills and other industrial operations. These facilities are typically manufacturing or processing plants that make diverse products like building components and other products made from low-value or low-quality wood.

The program also aims to disposing hazardous fuels and other wood residues from the National Forest System and other forest lands while also supporting wood product and energy markets.

Proposals should align with FS regional priorities and [State Forest Action Plans](#). Projects may include, but not limited to:

- Fulfilling requirements (such as engineering designs, cost analyses, permitting) in the later stages of commercial construction projects that use wood as a primary building material
- Developing manufacturing capacity, additional wood products infrastructure, and markets for wood products
- Showcasing quantifiable environmental and economic benefits of using wood as a sustainable building material in an actual commercial building
- Establishing new statewide wood utilization teams and statewide wood energy teams

- Overcoming market barriers and stimulating expansion of wood energy in the commercial sector.

Basic research, construction, and equipment purchases except for stationary wood energy equipment will NOT be considered; however, applied research and demonstration projects will be considered.

Project Examples

In **Arkansas**, the Village of Kluti-Kaah received funding that enabled heat production in four tribal community buildings with one central system.

In **Maine**, Limington Lumber receiving funding that generated electricity in addition to heat for their sawmill operations.

Application Process

Eligible applicants are:

- For-profit entities
- Non Federal governments
- School districts
- Not-for-profit organizations
- Institutions of higher education; and
- Special purpose districts (e.g., public utilities districts).

Applications must be received electronically at the individual e-mail address for the respective Regional Coordinator.

First, applications will be screened to ensure compliance with the administrative requirements as set forth in the Request for Proposals (RFP). A panel of Federal experts or their designees will perform a thorough technical review of eligible proposals.



FS Regional Foresters will also rank proposals according to regional priorities. Regional Foresters and the review panel will submit their recommendations to FS national leadership for a final decision.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to work with their designated Regional Coordinator early in the application process to determine whether project ideas will be competitive. Regional Coordinators may have additional tools and resources to help with your application development process.

Financial Information

All awards are based on availability of funding. For reference, fiscal year 2020 provided up to \$8 million in total funds with the maximum award of \$250,000 to be completed in a period of 2-3 years. Note that FS may consider awarding more funds to a project that shows significant impact. FS may also allow longer timelines for projects of greater complexity.

Applicants must contribute at least 50% of the federal funds requested (for every \$2 of Federal funding requested, applicants must provide at least \$1 in match). The applicant's match must come from non-Federal sources. The match may include cash or in-kind contributions.

If your proposal is selected for an award, 10 percent of the Federal funds may be held by the administrator until final reporting is completed and approved.

For More Information

Wood Innovations Website:
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/naspf/programs/wood-education-and-resource-center/wood-innovations-home>

FS Region 1 (MT, ND, Northern ID, & Northwestern SD): Julie Kies
julie.kies@usda.gov
(406) 329-3680

FS Region 2 (CO, KS, NE, SD, & WY): Laura Wolf
laura.wolf@usda.gov
(303) 275-5115

FS Region 3 (AZ & NM): Buck Sanchez
buck.sanchez@usda.gov
(505) 842-3498

FS Region 4 (Southern ID, NV, UT, & Western WY): Julie Kies
julie.kies@usda.gov
(406) 329-3680

FS Region 5 (CA, HI, Guam, and Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands): Larry Swan
larry.swan@usda.gov
(707) 562-8917

FS Region 6 (OR & WA): Jim Archuleta
SM.FS.spfr6-wig@usda.gov
(503) 808-2346

FS Region 8 (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, Virgin Islands, & Puerto Rico): Kevin Naranjo
kevin.naranjo@usda.gov
(404) 347-4034

FS Region 9 (CT, DE, DC, IL, IN, IA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MO, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, VT, WV, WI): Lew McCreery
lew.mccreery@usda.gov
(304) 285-1538

Forest Service Region 10 (AK)
ATTN: Daniel Parrent*
SM.FS.spf10-wig@usda.gov
(907) 743-9467

*After December 24, 2019, please contact the Region 6 contact, Jim Archuleta

Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)

Promoting innovative and science-based conservation solutions that benefit farmers and the environment



Program Basics

CIG is a subprogram of the *Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)* specifically designed to fund projects that support the development and testing of new conservation technologies and approaches. The goal CIG is of making the technologies and approaches available for use as quickly as possible by farmers and ranchers. These on-the-ground projects help transfer technology to farmers and ranchers in order to address critical natural resource concerns and may include field demonstrations and on-farm pilot projects. Each year, CIG funds are available through *National and State pools*.



Project Examples

In **Alaska**, the remote location of Afognak Island has high costs for forest and subsistence management. CIG supports the development of a comprehensive island-wide subsistence silvo-pastoral adaptive management strategy would be the first in Alaska, with the goal of serving as a model for other communities.

In **Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Jersey**, CIGs support the increase in adoption of organic, no-till systems. This allows for growers to experiment with different reduced- and no-till methods and share their experiences with other growers. Data will then be collected, focusing on the benefits and challenges. The information is also shared widely in workshops, field days, conferences, and media material.

Application Process

To be eligible, applicants must be:

- State, local, and tribal government entity
- Non-governmental organization
- An individual
- Community college with land seeking to carry out demonstration projects

To be a successful application, the proposed conservation approach or technology must involve *EQIP-eligible* farmers or ranchers.

National CIG funding notices are announced each year and are awarded through a nationwide competitive grants process. The scope of projects can be watershed-based, regional, multi-state, or nationwide. The CIG announcement will identify the particular resources to be addressed through that year's funding pool and may change each year to prioritize new or emerging high priority natural resource issues.

Applications are evaluated by a technical peer review panel against criteria identified in the funding notice. The peer panel recommendations are reviewed by an NRCS Grants Review Board that makes funding recommendations to the NRCS Chief. The NRCS Chief makes the final award selections.

State CIG awards typically support projects that are state-based, multi-county or small watershed in scope. Those funds are announced through participating states, though NRCS may also make the information available on the national CIG website.

For both *national and state pools*, applications must be submitted through grants.gov and e-mailed to the Program Contact.

Financial Information

Each year, the NRCS Chief sets aside a portion of EQIP funding (usually \$10-\$15 million) for a national CIG competition. The maximum award is set annually by the NRCS Chief (historically, either \$1 million or \$2 million).

Funds can be used to fund single or multi-year projects (not to exceed three years). Grantee matching funds must at least equal funds provided by the CIG award through non-federal in-kind contributions or cash. The grantee is also responsible for providing the technical assistance required to successfully complete the project. NRCS will provide technical oversight for each project receiving an award.

Each year, up to 10 percent of *national CIG* funds may be set aside for projects targeting beginning and limited resource farmers and ranchers, or Native American tribes (including community-based organizations comprised of or representing these farmers

For More Information

Program Contact: nrcscig@wdc.usda.gov

To locate your state NRCS office, search here <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

See page 53 for more details on *EQIP*

CIG Website:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/cig/>

Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

Taking environmentally sensitive land out of production and establishing long-term ground cover



Program Basics

The primary purpose of CRP is to conserve and improve soil, protect water quality, and provide wildlife habitat by establishing long-term cover on highly erodible land or land in need of conservation buffers that has previously been in row crop production. There are several types of CRP contracts:

General CRP - Agricultural land is bid into the general signup for CRP on a competitive basis and ranked using an Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). Currently, FSA uses the following EBI factors for General CRP, which can change over time: wildlife habitat benefits, water quality benefits, on-farm soil-retention benefits, benefits that will likely endure beyond the contract period, air quality benefits, and cost.

Continuous CRP (CCRP) – There is also a continuous signup option which pays farmers to install partial field conservation practices. Farmers and landowners may enroll such land at any time rather than waiting for specific sign-up periods. The land is enrolled automatically if it meets the eligibility criteria.

Within *CCRP*, the *Clear Lakes, Estuaries, and Rivers (CLEAR) Initiative* was created to include targeted practices to protect water quality by reducing sediment loadings, nutrient loadings, and harmful algal blooms. At least 40 percent of all *CCRP* acres are devoted to the *CLEAR Initiative*.

CRP Enhancement Program (CREP) - USDA may also enter into a *CREP* agreement with a state, under which the state and USDA together pay farmers to address targeted conservation issues identified by local, state, or tribal governments or non-governmental organizations.

Grasslands Enrollment - USDA reserves roughly 2 million CRP acres per year for grassland enrollments. Ranchers maintain and enhance conservation cover on grazing lands. Within the reservation for grassland enrollments, expiring CRP acres are prioritized; the land will remain in CRP but economic use of the land for grazing and haying is greatly expanded.

The 2018 Farm Bill has additional transition options for expiring CRP land. First, farmers are allowed to enroll in the *Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)* in the final year of their CRP contract, so long as no double payments are made. Second, producers are given two years of extra rental payments if they rent or sell their land to a beginning, socially disadvantaged, or veteran farmer who will practice conservation on the land through the *CRP Transition Incentives Program (CRP-TIP)*.

Application Process

Farmers, ranchers, and land owners can apply to CRP either through the continuous sign up at any time, or during a general sign up. General sign-ups are announced by USDA (at least once a year).

Applicants must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months preceding the first year of the contract period, unless:

- The new owner acquired the land due to the previous owner's death
- Ownership changed due to a foreclosure
- FSA is satisfied that the new owner did not acquire the land for the purpose of placing it in CRP

The land must be at least one of the following:

- Highly erodible cropland that is planted or considered planted in 4 of the previous 6 crop years, and that can be planted in a normal manner
- Marginal pasture that is suitable for use as a riparian buffer or for similar habitat or water quality purposes
- Ecologically significant grasslands that contain forbs or shrubs for grazing.
- A farmable wetland and related buffers

No more than 25 percent of a county's cropland can be enrolled in CRP and federal wetland easements at any given time. USDA can waive this limit in order to enroll cropland in *CCRP* or *CREP*, if the county agrees.

Financial Information

All types of CRP contracts are for either 10 or 15 years. At the end of a contract, landowners have the option of re-enrolling for another term.

Rental Payments: Rental rates are based on the productivity of the soils within each county and the average dryland cash rent. The maximum rental rate for each offer is calculated in advance of enrollment. Producers may offer land at that rate or offer a lower rental rate to increase the likelihood that their offer will be accepted.

Cost-share Assistance: FSA provides up to 50 percent cost-share of the actual or average cost of establishing the practice.

Incentive Payments: Payments can be made up to the actual cost of thinning and other practices to improve the condition of resources promoting forest management or enhancing wildlife habitat. There are additional incentives for continuous practices.

CREP participants receive the annual rental payment and up to 50 percent cost-share. Participants may also receive a sign-up incentive for implementing specific practices.

For More Information

To locate your local FSA office, search here <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

See page 50 for more details on *CRP-TIP* and page 51 for *CSP*

CRP Website:
<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-program/index>



Conservation Reserve Program Transition Incentives Program (CRP-TIP)

Encouraging landowners to transition farmland to beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers and ranchers

Program Basics

An existing *Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)* contract holder participating in CRP-TIP can allow a beginning, socially disadvantaged or veteran farmer or rancher to begin making conservation and land improvements (or begin the organic certification process) on the land covered by the *CRP* contract. On or near the date that the *CRP* contract is terminated, the landowner must sell, enter into a long-term lease, or lease with an option to purchase, some or all of the land covered by *CRP*. The new farmer or rancher must then develop and implement a conservation plan on the land that was previously covered by *CRP*.

FSA will continue making payments to the *CRP* contract holder for two additional years after the date that their *CRP* contract terminates.

Application Process

All *CRP* landowners with expiring contracts are eligible to apply as long as they are not a family member of the CRP-TIP recipient. Requests for participation in CRP-TIP can be taken continuously at FSA County Offices. *CRP* landowners should contact their local FSA office up to two years before the expiration of their *CRP* contract, but at least a month before the end of their contract, to apply. Interested beginning or socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers who are looking for land may also contact community-based organizations in their state who administer beginning farmer and/or land-link programs and may be able to help connect them with a landowner in their area.

On the date that the participating farmer or rancher takes possession of the land through ownership or lease, they will have the voluntary option to enroll in the *Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)* or the *Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)*. They will also have the option of enrolling portions of the land back into *CRP* through the continuous sign-up option, which is for conservation buffer practices.

Financial Information

Funding for CRP-TIP comes as a lump sum, so it is difficult to predict how much money or how many producers FSA will be able to enroll on an annual basis. As an example, in 2018 FSA spent \$3.8 million to enroll 382 producers.

For More Information

To locate your local FSA office, search here <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

See page 48 for more details on *CRP*, page 51 for *CSP*, and page 53 for *EQIP*

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Rewarding farmers and ranchers for adopting and managing advanced conservation systems

NRCS

Program Basics

CSP is a voluntary, comprehensive working lands conservation program designed to help farmers, ranchers, and non-industrial private forestland (NIPF) producers continue to protect and improve natural resources and the environment on their farms. Producers may receive technical and financial assistance to actively improve, manage and maintain existing conservation systems and to implement new conservation activities on land in agricultural production or forestry operations. CSP targets funding to:

- Assist farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners in improving priority *Natural Resources of Concern* such as soil erosion, water quality, and air quality
- Provide increased biodiversity and wildlife and pollinator habitat
- Reduce greenhouse and sequester carbon to mitigate climate change
- Conserve water and energy

Landowners with expiring *Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)* contracts may be eligible to enroll in CSP during the last year of their *CRP* contract.

Application Process

CSP is available in all 50 States, District of Columbia, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, Virgin Islands of the United States, American Samoa, and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. NRCS accepts applications on a continuous basis with announced batching cutoff dates to complete evaluations and select applications for funding. NRCS State websites contain important program information including cutoff dates, eligible conservation practices and activities, and payment rates.

Private agricultural land, including cropland, pasture, and rangeland, and non-industrial private forestland may be eligible. Applicants must enroll all acres that they operate, and the acres enrolled must be under the applicant's effective control. Applicants who lease or rent land may be required to provide NRCS with documentation of land control, such as evidenced in a lease or rental agreement or a simple non-binding statement from the landowner. Forest operations compete for funding separately from agricultural operations.

Natural Resources of Concern are determined by State Technical Committees and Local Working Groups.

First time applicants must demonstrate that they:

- Are currently meeting or exceeding the stewardship threshold (a standard that NRCS sets for improving a natural resource's long-term sustainability) for at least two resource concerns; and
- Will meet or exceed the stewardship threshold for at least one additional resource concern by the end of the stewardship contract

NRCS evaluates and ranks applications based on the applicant's level of conservation currently in place, and the additional environmental benefit achieved from implementing new conservation practices or activities. Here are the primary ranking factors NRCS uses to evaluate applications:

1. Conservation and environmental benefits that result from the conservation treatment on State-identified priority resource concerns at the time of application;



2. The degree to which proposed conservation activities increase natural resource conservation and environmental benefit; and
3. Other criteria necessary to ensure that national, State, and local priority resource concerns are effectively addressed.

CSP contracts are five-year terms, with an option to renew for another five years.

Financial Information

The 2018 Farm Bill changed CSP from an acreage-based program to a dollar-based program, authorizing between \$700 million and \$1 billion in funding per year for new CSP enrollments, plus additional funding for CSP contracts initially enrolled under the previous farm bill.

CSP payments are comprised of an existing activity payment and payments for the new conservation activities the applicant implements during the contract. NRCS establishes payment rates for each activity and State's post the payment rates on their website. The maximum a producer can earn in CSP payments is \$200,000 over the life of the 5-year contract. Most CSP contracts have a minimum annual payment of \$1500 per year; however, annual payments can vary greatly depending on the farm, ranch, or forest operation, and the conservation activities implemented. NRCS approves CSP payments once a year, after October 1, for conservation activities the producer implemented the previous fiscal year.

NRCS gives priority to beginning, socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers and ranchers to encourage their participation in CSP. NRCS establishes separate ranking and funding pools for both beginning farmers and ranchers (BFR) and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers (SDFR) by allocating a minimum of 5 percent each of a State's CSP budget to these pools. Veteran farmers and ranchers competing in the BFR or SDFR ranking pools receive additional ranking points. States also receive an additional allocation for organic and transitioning-to-organic producers.

For More Information

To locate your local NRCS office, search here <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

See page 48 for more details on *CRP*

CSP Website:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/csp/>

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Helping farmers and ranchers share the costs of addressing natural resource concerns

NRCS

Program Basics

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program that incentivizes agricultural and forestry producers to conserve and enhance soil, water, air, plants, animals (including wildlife), energy, and related natural resources on their land. EQIP promotes agricultural production, forest management, and environmental quality as compatible goals.

Through EQIP, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to address specific natural resource concerns on agricultural and private forestry lands. EQIP reimburses participants for conservation practices and activities based on improvements natural resources including soil health; air quality; water quality and quantity; nutrient management; pest management; invasive species management; wildlife habitat development (including pollinator habitat). Examples include:

- Vegetative and structural practices such as terraces, manure waste lagoons, irrigation equipment, grassed waterways, filter strips, and wildlife habitat enhancement; and
- Management practices such as conservation crop rotation, nutrient management, prescribed grazing management, drainage management, and integrated pest management.

Payments cover income foregone, as well as costs incurred that are associated with planning, design, materials, equipment, installation, labor, management, maintenance, and training. Practices are subject to NRCS technical standards adapted for local conditions.

EQIP funding is available through a general pool and through national or State initiatives, which highlight specific practices that target natural resources or geographic areas.

Examples of national initiatives:

National Organic Initiative provides financial assistance to producers who are: certified organic; exempt from organic certification; and transitioning to organic. Examples of organic practices and activities include developing conservation plans; establishing buffer zones; planning and installing pollinator habitat; improving irrigation efficiency; and enhancing cropping rotations and managing nutrients.

Conservation Initiatives provide additional EQIP opportunities for eligible producers through programmatic, landscape conservation, and working lands for wildlife initiatives in targeted areas or ecosystems.

The 2018 Farm Bill introduced *EQIP Incentive Contracts* to expand resource benefits for producers through incentive conservation activities such as cover crops, transition to resource conserving crop rotations, and precision agriculture technologies along with a similarly broad suite of incentive activities for ranchers and nonindustrial private forest operators. *EQIP Incentive Contracts* can be a steppingstone for producers between EQIP classic and *Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)* contracts.

Application Process

To be eligible for EQIP, an applicant must be the owner or operator of eligible land which includes cropland, rangeland, pasture, nonindustrial private forest land, and other farm or ranch lands. The 2018 Farm Bill expanded the eligibility for certain water



conservation projects to include *water management entities*, which are a State irrigation district, ground water management district, acequia, land grant—merced, or similar entity that has responsibilities related to water delivery or management to eligible lands.

EQIP applications can be received on a continuous basis; however, NRCS State offices announce batching dates to periodically complete evaluations for contract approval. Information regarding batching dates, practices, payment schedules, conservation initiatives, and other pertinent information are posted on NRCS State office websites.

NRCS completes assessments of the applicable practice schedule, and ranks applications based on criteria developed by NRCS with input through the locally led process. The criteria vary from State to State, but in general, applications are ranked based on:

- Cost-effectiveness of the proposed approach compared to the anticipated conservation benefits of the project.
- How effectively and comprehensively resource concerns are addressed.
- Fulfillment of EQIP program goals.
- The level of improvement of conservation practices or systems in place at the time of application, or completion of a conservation system.

Approved applicants are responsible for working with NRCS to develop and submit a conservation plan that will address the resource concerns identified and producer objectives.

Financial Information

The term of an EQIP contract cannot exceed 10 years and typically participants develop an EQIP plan of operation and contract with a term of two to three years.

NRCS is required to target fifty percent of total EQIP funding for livestock operations and at least 10 percent for practices and activities that develop, restore and improve wildlife habitat. States may set aside EQIP funds for State initiatives.

Payment limits over the life of the 2018 Farm Bill are: \$450,000 for General EQIP, \$140,000 for the *National Organic Initiative*, and \$200,000 for *EQIP Incentive Contracts*.

The 2018 Farm Bill authorizes NRCS to provide higher payment rates (up to 90%) for practices and activities that address *High Priority Practices* and *Source Water Protection*. Payments for *EQIP Incentive Contracts*, provide two components – annual payments (provided at the beginning of each fiscal year) and conservation practice / activity payments (provided for the implementation of a specific practice or activity).

Historically underserved producers, including limited resource, beginning, veteran, and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, may receive increased payment rates and advance payments to help defray upfront costs associated with implementation of conservation practices and activities. Five percent of EQIP funds are set-aside for beginning farmers and ranchers, and an additional 5 percent for socially disadvantaged farmers. Additionally, veteran farmers are given preference within both priority set-asides.

For More Information

To locate your local NRCS office, search here <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

See page 51 for more details on *CSP*

EQIP Website:
<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip/>

Forest Legacy Program (FLP)

Permanently conserves environmentally significant forest land threatened by conversion

FS

Program Basics

The FLP is a conservation program administered by FS in partnership with State agencies to encourage the protection of privately owned forest lands. Landowners participate in the FLP in two ways:

A *Fee Transaction* where the landowner sells their property outright to the state.

A *Conservation Easement* where the landowner chooses to forever restrict certain uses of the land. *Conservation Easements* will restrict development, limit uses that impact the conservation values, and require compliance with a management plan to protect soil, water, biological diversity, recreation, timber, and more. If choosing this option, landowners must prepare and implement a resource management plan and an endowment must be established for long term monitoring and stewardship. Landowners who purchase or inherit properties with FLP *Conservation Easements* also assume these long-term roles.

In addition, landowners participating in FLP may also benefit from reduced taxes.

Application Process

Both nonindustrial and industrial private landowners can participate in the FLP. Nonprofit entities are not eligible to hold land or interests in land that are purchased with FLP funds. However, qualified nonprofit entities can hold land and interests in land when fully donated to the FLP. Nonprofits can also work on behalf of State Lead Agencies to help facilitate project development, and monitoring. Nonprofit roles vary in each State.

Tribal governments cannot directly receive FLP funds, however, funds may be granted to the State Lead Agency in support of a project as proposed by a Tribal entity. Only non-trust tribal allotment lands can qualify for protection.

Traditionally, projects are selected for funding through a nationally competitive process, however, at the time of publishing this guidebook, the project selection process has change for fiscal year 2022. FLP will be competitive, merit-based, and coordinated by the Washington Office (WO). State Lead Agencies may submit project proposals to the Region and the Institute States (R/I) to which proposals will go through a series of regional and national review processes. Proposals will be ranked and a prioritized list of FLP projects will be in consideration in the President's Budget.

The application process can take several years and requires a high degree of commitment from landowners and partners. Please contact the FLP state coordinator to discuss general and State-specific FLP requirements.

For More Information

Program Contact: Scott Stewart
scott.stewart@usda.gov
(202) 205-1618

List of FLP State Coordinators:
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/contact-us/forest-legacy-state-coordinators>

FLP Website:
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/forest-legacy>



Forest Stewardship Program (FSP)

Providing landowners with resources to develop a management plan and actively manage their forests



Program Basics

FSP addresses our most pressing resource management concerns including forest insects and pests; invasive species; the economic viability of private forest ownership and management; renewable energy needs; threat of wildfire; soil conservation; wildlife habitat; water quality and supply; and climate change. These concerns cross multiple ownerships thus FSP works in partnership with state forestry agencies, cooperative extension, and conservation districts to connect private landowners with forest and woodland management information and tools.



Types of Services

A *Forest Stewardship Management Plan* serves as the foundation for engaging landowners in a plan that addresses individual landowner objectives while adhering to National and State guidelines. Participation in *Forest Stewardship Management Plan* is voluntary. Alternatively, FSP enables landowners to develop their own *Forest Management Plan* which helps identify the goals for the land and the management activities needed to meet them. For example, landowners may want to increase the land's economic value while protecting water and air quality, wildlife habitat, and natural beauty.

In addition, FSP offers educational programs and technical assistance to landowners:

- Awareness on financial incentives and property tax abatement programs
- Providing access to forest certification and new markets for forest products and ecosystem services
- Creating forestry jobs in rural areas
- Networking opportunities with experienced forestry consultants

Participation in FSP is open to any non-industrial private forest landowner who is committed to the active management and stewardship of forested properties for at least 10 years. There is no restriction on the maximum number of acres owned, although some states may have a minimum acreage requirement. To learn more about FSP, please contact your state forestry agency coordinator.

For More Information

Program Contact: Laurie Schoonhoven
laurie.schoonhoven@usda.gov
 (202) 205-0929

List of FSP State Coordinators:
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/contact-us/forest-stewardship-state-coordinators>

FSP Website:
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/forest-stewardship>

National Association of State Foresters Website:
<https://www.stateforesters.org/>

Land Conservation Assistance Network Website:
<https://www.landcan.org/>

Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention Network Website:
<https://www.usendowment.org/sustainable-forestry-and-african-american-land-retention-program-sflr/>

Women Owning Woodlands Website:
<http://www.womenowningwoodlands.net/>

Healthy Forest Reserve Program (HFRP)

NRCS

Restoring, enhancing, and protecting forestland resources on private lands through easements and cost-share agreements

Program Basics

Restoring and protecting forests contribute to the economy, increases carbon sequestration, and provides biodiversity of plants and animal populations. Thus, HFRP was established as a voluntary program to provide landowners with financial incentives including:

- *10-year restoration cost-share agreement*
- *30-year easement*
- *30-year contract on acreage owned by Indian Tribes, or permanent easements*

A habitat restoration plan is required for all land enrolled in the HFRP and it will be developed through an NRCS representative, in consultation with the program participant. Where applicable, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) will provide additional input.

Application Process

Currently, there are 12 states that offer HFRP funding: Arkansas, California, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina.

To apply for HFRP, contact your local NRCS office. NRCS will announce certain periods during which applications may be submitted. When available, those interested may submit an Application for Participation. By doing so, the landowner is providing consent to allow an NRCS representative to enter their land to determine land eligibility and to conduct other activities. The landowner may accompany an NRCS representative on any site visits.

After submission, applications are ranked amongst others. Those with a high priority ranking will be notified by a NRCS designee.

The landowner will have 15 calendar days to sign a letter of intent (LOI) to continue. When NRCS receives LOI, NRCS will present to the landowner an option agreement to purchase. This option agreement will describe the easement area, the easement terms and conditions, and other requirements for participation. After the option agreement to purchase is executed by NRCS and the landowner, NRCS will proceed with the remaining activities necessary for NRCS to purchase an easement, if applicable, and to implement the HFRP restoration plan.



Financial Information

For *10-year restoration cost-share agreements*, the landowner may receive 50 percent of the average cost of the approved practices.

For *30-year easements*, the landowner may receive 75 percent of the easement value of the enrolled land plus 75 percent of the average cost of the approved practices.

For *30-year contracts on acreage owned by Indian Tribes, or permanent easements*, landowners may receive 100 percent the easement value of the enrolled land plus 100 percent of the average cost of the approved practices.

No more than 10 annual payments may be made as agreed between NRCS and the landowner.

For More Information

To locate your local NRCS office, search here: <https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

HFRP Website: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/forests/>

Landscape Scale Restoration (LSR)

Funding innovative projects that address priorities and needs identified in State Forest Action Plans



Program Basics

LSR is a FS State and Private Forestry (S&PF) competitive grant program that promotes collaborative, science-based restoration of priority forest landscapes. Projects cross multiple jurisdictions, including tribal, state and local government, and private forest land, integrating other FS programs to address large-scale issues: watershed protection and restoration; wildfire risk reduction; and the spread of invasive species, insect infestation and disease. LSR proposals must be based on a State Forest Action Plan or an equivalent restoration strategy.

Note that the 2018 Farm Bill amended the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (CFAA) causing administrative changes within FS, however, these changes build upon the foundation of LSR. Fiscal year (FY) 2020 is considered the transition year with changes fully executed during the FY2021 grant cycle.

Application Process

Those eligible to apply for LSR funding include state and territorial forestry agencies, units of local government, Tribes, non-profit organizations, and universities. For-profit entities are not eligible to apply.

Eligible non-federal lands must also be:

- non-industrial, private forest land that is rural; has existing tree cover / suitable for growing trees; and is owned by any private individual, group, association, corporation, Indian tribe, or other private legal entity; and/or
- Non-federal, but rather, State forest land that is rural; is under state or local governmental ownership

During project development, applicants are encouraged to seek guidance from the appropriate state entity and FS Region to ensure the project aligns with the program purpose, eligibility and CFAA criteria.

For Tribes, applicants may submit through the appropriate Tribal official to the FS Region where the project is located. FS Regions will advance the proposal to the project review team for consideration in the competitive process. If a Tribal project is selected, the FS Region will work directly with the Tribe on the grant award.

Financial Information

Regionally recommended projects are given to the FS Washington Office Deputy Area Budget Coordinator. When FS receives its final appropriation from Congress, the Deputy Chief for S&PF will notify the corresponding FS Regional Office regarding their final allocation for LSR projects.

Federal funds require a 1:1 match from non-federal sources. Activities performed with match must meet the same requirements as the federal funds, e.g., match cannot be used for construction, research and other ineligible activities.

For More Information

Program Contact: Scott Stewart
scott.stewart@usda.gov
 (202) 205-1618

LSR Website:
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/landscape-scale-restoration>

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Targeting natural resource concerns through local conservation partnerships

NRCS

Program Basics

RCPP provides financial and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to install conservation activities to tackle priority natural resource concerns in a state or region. It also focuses on a given set or type of farmers or ranchers within a state or area interested in pursuing innovative conservation objectives – such as nutrient pollution reduction in impaired watersheds, cover crop adoption to improve soil health and reduce runoff or market development for carbon sequestration credit trading.

Farmers and ranchers do not apply directly for RCPP. Instead, entities who work with farmers and ranchers submit proposals to NRCS. Eligible entities who wish to provide technical assistance may include activities like resource assessment, conservation practice survey and design, conservation planning, and resource monitoring. If the application is accepted, farmers and ranchers are then able to apply through NRCS and enroll in a stand-alone contract with its own rules and regulations.

The 2018 Farm Bill has significantly revised RCPP. In the past, farmers and ranchers were required to enroll in one of the “covered” programs, but now participants will use the “covered” programs as a guide for what conservation activities can be done. NRCS is still in the process of writing rules (ranking criteria, partnership agreements, contracts). Updates have yet to be released at this time.

Project Examples

In **Oregon and Washington**, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon seek to improve irrigation efficiency through irrigation ditch piping, diversion and culvert replacements, instream leases, fish screens installations, water measuring devices, channel reconnections to the mainstem John Day River, riparian fencing and planting, and instream restoration work.

In **Virginia**, Virginia Cooperative Extension and project partners will identify and rank farms based on proximity to water sources and water quality, soil erosion and health, ag viability and animal health, and wildlife protection. Funding will help support the relocation and building of manure storage, water runoff receptacles, and housing structures to an area outside the flood zone and away from stream banks.

Application Process

Interested entities should check the RCPP website for the current Announcement of Program. Applicants should contact their State coordinator who is best suited to answer partner questions about proposals and RCPP in general. Interested farmers and ranchers should contact their local NRCS office to see if there is a RCPP project in their area.

Successful projects should ideally work closely with farmers in the region – the more farmers are involved in the planning stages of a project, the more likely that they’ll participate in the project once it is underway.



The following entities are eligible to act as project partners:

- Producer associations or groups
- State or unit of local government
- Native American tribes
- Acequias
- Farmer cooperatives
- Water, irrigation, or rural water districts or associations, or other organizations with water delivery authority to producers
- Municipal water or wastewater treatment entities
- Institutions of higher education
- Organizations or entities with a history of working with producers on agricultural land to address natural resource concerns
- Conservation Districts
- Land trusts or other organizations who have authority to hold conservation easements

Financial Information

The 2018 Farm Bill provides RCPP with \$300 million per year in total funding. Fifty percent of total funding is allocated for state and multi-state projects administered at the local level with the advice of the applicable state technical committees. The other fifty percent is allocated to projects in eight *Critical Conservation Areas (CCA)* which include:

- Chesapeake Bay Watershed
- Great Lakes Region
- Mississippi River Basin
- Colorado River Basin
- Longleaf Pine Range
- Columbia River Basin
- California Bay Delta
- Prairie Grasslands

Eligible partners may enter into an *Alternative Funding Arrangement* or a *Grant Agreement*. Partners would implement projects and provide financial assistance directly to farmers and ranchers. NRCS can now enter into up to 15 *Alternative Funding Arrangements* or *Grant Agreements* per year.

Partners are required to provide a significant contribution to the overall cost of the project, including in-kind services such as monitoring, conservation planning, and producer assistance.

For More Information

List of RCPP State Coordinators:

https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/PA_NRCS/Consumption/download?cid=nrcseprd1628417&text=pdf

To locate your local NRCS office, search here:

<https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

RCPP Website:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/pr/programs/farmland/rcpp/>

Map of CCA Boundaries:

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/programs/farmland/rcpp/?cid=stelpdb1254053>

Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management Program (Section 319)

A federal-state partnership that provides communities low-cost financing for a wide range of water infrastructure and water quality projects

EPA



Program Basics

The 1987 amendments to the Clean Water Act (CWA) established the Section 319. States, territories and tribes receive grants that support a wide variety of activities including technical assistance, financial assistance, education, training, technology transfer, demonstration projects and monitoring to assess the success of specific nonpoint source implementation projects. Most Section 319 funds focus on watershed-based grants, whether for planning or implementation of plans to address polluted runoff.

Project Examples

In **Louisiana**, Capital Resource Conservation & Development Council used Section 319 funds to cover 34% of the cost of grain drills, pasture renovation, and aerator equipment for farmers to lease in Little Silver Creek watershed, helping to remove it from the list of impaired waters.

Wisconsin's Uplands Watershed Group in very hilly Iowa County received Section 319 funding in 2017 to conduct a "9 Key Element" nutrient reduction plan for two of its sub-watersheds. Further Section 319 funding is pending to implement that plan.

Application Process

Section 319 funds are provided only to designated state and tribal agencies to implement their approved nonpoint source management programs.

Each year, States submit their proposed funding plans to EPA. If a state's funding plan is consistent with grant eligibility requirements and procedures, EPA then awards the funds to the state in accordance with a state-by-state allocation formula that EPA has developed in consultation with the states.

For state-specific application information, please contact your state NPS coordinator.

Financial Information

In recent years, funding for the program has averaged between \$163 to \$168 million, with 30-40% of the program's watershed funds spent addressing agricultural sources.

For More Information

State and EPA Regional Coordinators:
<https://www.epa.gov/nps/contacts-nonpoint-source-nps-pollution-programs>

Section 319 Website:
<https://www.epa.gov/nps/319-grant-program-states-and-territories>

Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) Program

An urban or community forest is the aggregate of all public and private vegetation and green space within a community that provide a myriad of environmental, health and economic benefits.



Program Basics

UCF supports the Nation's forest health, creates jobs, contributes to vibrant regional wood economies, enhances community resilience and preserves the unique sense of place in cities and towns of all sizes. The program provides technical, financial, research and educational services to non-profit organizations, community groups, educational institutions, local and tribal governments.

Research priorities, resource allocation, partnerships, communication needs, program direction, performance measures and accountability at all levels UCF align with the seven goals outlined in the collaboratively developed National Ten-Year Urban and Community Forestry Action Plan (2016-2026):

- Integrate urban and community forestry into all scales of planning
- Promote the role of urban and community forestry in human health and wellness
- Cultivate diversity, equity, and leadership within the urban forestry community
- Strengthen urban and community forest health and biodiversity for long-term resilience
- Improve urban and community forest management, maintenance, and stewardship
- Diversify, leverage, and increase funding for urban and community forestry
- Increase public awareness and environmental education to promote stewardship

This plan also serves as a framework for funding and priorities developed by the National Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council for UCF and the *Challenge Cost Share Grants (CCSG)*.

Application Process

Non-Federal and Tribal Organization operating within the United States or its territories may apply for the *CCSG*. Individuals and private land are not eligible. Proposals are required to address national, multi-state, or multi-tribal-land urban and community forestry issues.

Prior to developing your proposal, applicants are required to contact their Forest Service Regional /Area Urban Forestry Program Manager to assist with any program authorities, questions, and/or resources.

Financial Information

Awards are based on the availability of funding which may be subject to change. In fiscal year 2020, UCF provided \$900,000 awarded through *CCSG*.

Awarded funds are subject to a 50% match requirement with non-Federal sources. Applicants are encouraged to use a portion or all their indirect cost rate as match.

For More Information

UCF Regional Program Managers:
https://www.fs.fed.us/ucf/supporting_docs/contacts/SPF-UCF-Contacts_20170403.pdf

UCF Website:
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/urban-forests/ucf>



Farm to School Grant Program (Farm to School)

Helping schools source local food and connect children to farming and gardening

FNS

Program Basics

Farm to School is an important program to help initiate, expand, and institutionalize farm to school efforts. Competitive grants support planning, developing, and implementing farm to school programs. Farm to School aims to increase local food procurement for child nutrition programs and expand educational agriculture and gardening activities.

Project Examples

In **Colorado**, First Nations Development Institute is developing resources and administering farm to school trainings tailored specifically to the unique needs of Native farm to school programs.

In **Indiana**, Maconaquah School Corporation has students raising beef cattle for their own school lunches; grant funds allow them to scale up the program to supply the entire district with local beef and pork, providing students with hands-on training, and fully integrating a partnership with a local meat processor.

Application Process

Entities that are eligible to apply include:

- State and local agencies
- Indian tribal organizations
- Agricultural producers or groups of producers
- Non-profit entities
- Eligible schools and school districts: Pre-K–12 school food authorities that participate in the National School Lunch or Breakfast Program

Each year, a Request for Applications (RFA) is released and applicants are given at least 60 days to prepare their application.

Applications must be submitted electronically through grants.gov. An initial eligibility screening of applications is conducted, followed by a panel evaluation using prescribed scoring criteria. Applications deemed eligible and competitive are considered for a final agency decision regarding funding.

Financial Information

Since FY 2013, USDA has awarded over \$39.9 million through Farm to School, funding 560 projects across the 50 states, District of Columbia, Virgin Islands, Guam, and Puerto Rico, reaching almost 18.5 million students in 39,000 schools.

The additional \$5 million in Farm to School funding provided by Congress in both FY 2018 and FY 2019 essentially doubled the amount of grants FNS was able to award. In FY 2020, an additional \$9 million in Farm to School funding has been allocated.

For More Information

Farm to School Grant Contact:

farmtoschool@usda.gov

Farm to School Website:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cfs/farm-school-grant-program>



Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)

Helping WIC participants buy local fruits, vegetables, and herbs from local farmers



Program Basics

FMNP is associated with the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) where eligible participants receive coupons to buy fresh, unprocessed, and locally grown fruits, vegetables, and herbs from authorized farmers, farmers' markets, and roadside stands. FMNP also educates WIC participants on how to select, store, and prepare fresh produce.



The program operates through State agencies, who authorize farmers, farmers' markets, and roadside stands to accept FMNP coupons for eligible foods. State agencies can limit sales to eligible foods grown within state borders to encourage FMNP recipients to support the farmers in their own states.



Women, infants (over 4 months old) and children that have been certified to receive WIC program benefits or who are on a waiting list for WIC certification are eligible to participate in the FMNP. State agencies may serve some or all of these categories. The value of the Federal FMNP benefit received by each recipient may not be less than \$10 and no more than \$30 per year, though state agencies may supplement the benefit levels with state, local, or private funds. Eligible WIC participants are issued FMNP coupons in addition to their regular WIC benefits.



Application Process

Currently, there are 49 State agencies, U.S. Territories and federally recognized Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) that participate in the FMNP. To accept FMNP benefits, eligible farmers, farmers' markets, and roadside stands should contact their respective State agency responsible for administering the WIC program within their state (typically, the Department of Public Health).

Vendors who exclusively sell produce grown by someone else, such as wholesale distributors, cannot be authorized.

Financial Information

The funding level for FMNP is determined each year by the annual agricultural appropriations bill. In fiscal year 2020, Congress appropriated \$18.5 million for the FMNP. State agencies who receive an FMNP grant can use the funds to cover 100 percent of the food costs and 70 percent of the administrative costs.

For More Information

FNS State agency contacts:

[https://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts?f\[0\]=program%3A30](https://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts?f[0]=program%3A30)

FMNP website:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/fmnp/overview>

Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)

Helping low-income seniors buy local fruits, vegetables, herbs, and honey from local farmers

FNS

Program Basics

Less than one-third of all U.S. seniors eat the daily recommended amount of fruits and vegetables. SFMNP addresses this public health concern allowing State agencies distribute coupons to low-income seniors that can be exchanged for local fruits, vegetables, herbs, and honey from authorized farmers, farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agriculture (CSA) programs.

Eligible seniors receive SFMNP benefits between \$20 and \$50 per year, though State agencies may supplement those levels with state, local, or private funds. Low-income seniors are generally defined as individuals who are at least 60 years of age and who have household incomes of not more than 185% of the federal poverty income guidelines.

Application Process

FNS awards SFMNP grants to States, the District of Columbia, U.S. Territories, and federally-recognized Indian tribal governments. Currently, 54 State agencies administer SFMNP primarily through Departments of Health, Agriculture, or Aging.

To accept SFMNP benefits, farmers, farmers' markets, roadside stands, and CSA programs must become authorized. The process for becoming authorized varies, but requires attendance at an interactive training and a written agreement with the state. Vendors, who exclusively sell produce grown by someone else, such as wholesale distributors, cannot be authorized.

Interested farmers, farmers' markets, roadside stands, and CSAs should contact their respective State agency to find out how they can become authorized to participate in the SFMNP.

Financial Information

The 2018 Farm Bill maintained mandatory funding at \$20.6 million per year through fiscal year 2023. Ninety percent of federal funds support food costs and 10 percent of federal funds support administrative costs of the program.

For More Information

FNS State agency contacts:
[https://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts?f\[0\]=program%3A30](https://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts?f[0]=program%3A30)

SFMNP website:
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfmnp/senior-farmers-market-nutrition-program>



The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP)

Helping low-income families purchase fresh fruits and veggies directly from farmers



Program Basics

GusNIP, formerly the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives Program, provides funding to projects that help low-income consumers access and purchase fresh fruits and vegetables through “cash” incentives that increase their purchasing power at food markets. There are five distinct funding opportunities:



GusNIP Pilot Projects (FPP) are aimed at new applicants seeking funding for the early stages of an incentive program.

GusNIP Projects (FIP) are aimed at groups developing incentive programs at the local or state level.

GusNIP Large-Scale Projects (FLSP) are aimed at groups developing multi-county, state, and regional incentive programs with large target audiences.

Produce Prescription Programs (PPR) are aimed at groups developing county, multi-county, and state-wide programs, partnering with one or more healthcare entities. *PPR* projects demonstrate and evaluate the impact of the projects on a) the improvement of dietary health through increased consumption of fruits and vegetables; b) the reduction of individual and household food insecurity; and c) the reduction in healthcare use and associated costs.

NIP Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation and Information Center (NTAE) are aimed at developing and providing program training and technical assistance related to *FPP*, *FIP*, *FLSP*, and *PPR*.

Note that *PPR* cannot be combined with other GusNIP grants in the same proposal, but applicants may apply for a separate GusNIP grant in addition to the *PPR*. These types of programs are use different criteria in the application process.

Project Examples

In **North Carolina**, Rural Advancement Foundation International – USA will partner with four farmers markets to coordinate SNAP Ambassador programs, which rely on SNAP recipients to develop marketing and outreach activities. They will also support six local food outlets dedicated to increasing low-income consumers’ access to healthy food and they will partner with local grocery stores to provide EBT incentives.

In **Colorado**, LiveWell Colorado’s project focuses on increasing fruit and vegetable consumption for low-income communities and economic opportunities for farmers. Three new areas of expansion include 1) diversify the type of partner sites and extending the Double Up Food Bucks program season 2) integrate the promotion and implementation of Double Up into digital platforms 3) build regional capacity to support and sustain Double Up.

Application Process

Eligible entities for *FPP*, *FIP*, *FLSP* and *PPR* include:

- Agricultural cooperatives
- Producer networks or associations
- Farmers markets
- CSA programs
- Buying clubs
- SNAP-authorized retailers

- Emergency feeding organizations
- Community health organizations
- Public benefit corporations
- Economic development corporations
- State, local, or tribal agencies

For *FPP*, *FIP*, *FLSP*, projects must 1) have support of the state agency responsible for administering SNAP 2) operate through authorized SNAP retailers, and be in compliance with all relevant SNAP regulations and operating requirements 3) ensure that the same terms and conditions apply to purchases made by individuals receiving SNAP benefits as apply to purchases made by individuals who are not SNAP participants.

For *PPR*, entities must also partner with one or more “health care partner” which includes:

- Hospitals
- Federally-qualified health centers
- Hospitals or clinics operated by the Secretary of Veteran Affairs
- Health care provider groups

Eligible entities for *NTAE* cooperative agreements are limited to:

- Nongovernmental organizations
- State cooperative extension services
- Regional food systems centers
- Federal, State, or Tribal agencies
- Institutions of higher education

On a competitive basis, *NTAE* cooperative agreements may be made with one or more organizations with expertise in developing outcome-based reporting, at least one of which has expertise in *FPP*, *FIP*, or *FLSP* and at least one of which has expertise in *PPR*.

For all five GusNIP grant programs, applicants are encouraged to create partnerships with public or private, non-profit or for-profit entities.

Each year, NIFA publishes a Request for Applications (RFA) in the Federal Register to solicit applications from eligible organizations. Each RFA typically gives applicants around 60 days to prepare and submit their applications for funding. Applications must be submitted electronically through [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). NIFA regularly hosts webinars for potential applicants as part of the RFA process. Upon submission, NIFA will conduct an eligibility screening. Applications will then be given to a peer review panel for scoring.

Financial Information

The 2018 Farm Bill provides permanent, mandatory funding for GusNIP including \$250 million over the next 5 years. For *FPP*, the maximum award is \$100,000 and lasts up to one year. For *FIP*, the maximum award is \$500,000 and lasts up to four years. For *FLSP*, the minimum award is \$500,000 and lasts up to four years. Ten percent of the total GusNIP funding is allocated towards *PPR*.

For all five programs, applicants should request a budget and project period commensurate with the proposed project.

FPP, *FIP*, and *FLSP*, applicants must provide dollar-for-dollar match for all funds awarded. *FPP*, *FIP*, and *FLSP* grantees may meet the match requirement through cash and/or in-kind contributions. *PPR* and *NTAE* applicants do not need to provide matching contributions.

For More Information

Program Contact: Jaheon Koo
Jaheon.Koo@usda.gov
 (816) 926-1179

GusNIP Website:
<https://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/food-insecurity-nutrition-incentive-fini-grant-program>

Advance Biofuel Payment Program (ABPP)

Support and ensure an expanding production of advanced biofuels by paying advanced biofuel producers for finished advanced biofuel products.



Program Basics

ABPP increases American energy independence by increasing the private sector supply of renewable energy and decreasing the demand for fossil fuels. ABPP addresses the financial risk associated with the production of advanced biofuel products by providing payments to producers and sellers.



Eligible advanced biofuels must:

- Meet the definition of an advanced biofuel in 7 CFR Part 4288 and 102
- Be a liquid, gas, or solid
- Be a final product
- Be produced in the United States
- Be ones where the buyers and sellers act independently and have no relationship to each other.

Application Process

Any entity that produces and sells advanced biofuel is eligible to apply. This includes an individual, corporation, company, foundation, association, labor organization, firm, partnership, society, joint-stock company, governmental entities, schools and other types of educational facilities, group of organizations or a nonprofit entity that produces and sells an advanced biofuel.

An entity that blends or otherwise combines advanced biofuels into a blended biofuel is not considered an advanced biofuel producer under this program.

For interested applicants, contact your State Rural Development Energy Coordinator for questions and to obtain application materials.

Financial Information

For Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 and FY 2020, a total of \$7 million dollars was made available with no minimum or maximum payment limit for participants. The payment amount depends on the number of eligible producers; the amount of advanced biofuel produced; and the amount of funds available during the FY. There is no minimum or maximum payment.

Recipients will be paid on a quarterly basis for the actual quantity of eligible advanced biofuel produced during the quarter.

For More Information

State Renewable Energy Coordinators:
https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/RBS_StateEnergyCoordinators.pdf

ABPP Website:
<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/advanced-biofuel-payment-program>

Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP)

Promoting the cultivation of biomass for bioenergy production

FSA

Program Basics

BCAP provides incentives to help farmers and ranchers grow advanced bioenergy feedstocks – crops that are well suited to be turned into energy – for use in biorefineries in their area. BCAP is intended to promote bioenergy crops that show promise for producing highly energy-efficient, advanced bioenergy or biofuels, and to develop those new crops and cropping systems in a manner that preserves natural resources.

Producers and bioenergy production facilities participate in BCAP through selected “projects” necessary to ensure a direct tie-in between feedstocks and facilities.

BCAP provides:

- Annual incentive payments for the production of perennial crops, such as switchgrass or giant miscanthus, as well as some annual crops, such as camelina;
- Establishment payments to establish perennial biomass crops

In addition to biomass establishment and production payments, producers or other eligible individuals can also receive payments for *collection, harvest, storage and transportation (CHST)* of an eligible crop on land under a BCAP contract. A person does not necessarily need to be part of the BCAP project in order to utilize the *CHST* portion of the program.

Application Process

BCAP does not have any funding for 2018 and 2019. As discretionary funding, BCAP requires an annual congressional appropriation, but it may be funded in the future years.

If funded, a proposal for a BCAP project would then have to be submitted to the USDA by a project “sponsor,” defined as either a biomass conversion facility or a group of producers who are located within a specified project area.

Agricultural land and non-industrial private forestlands within a BCAP project area are eligible to apply through their local FSA office. The following lands are not eligible:

- Federal or state-owned land
- Land that is native sod as of May 22, 2008
- Land enrolled in the *Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)* or *Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)*, unless the contract will expire at the end of the current fiscal year.

In general, the term ‘eligible material’ means renewable biomass harvested directly from the land, including crop residue from any crop. The following crops are not eligible:

- Any crop that is whole grain and eligible to receive payments under Title I of the 2014 Farm Bill – including corn, wheat, barley, grain sorghum, oats, upland cotton, rice, peanuts, and oilseeds
- Animal waste or byproducts
- Food waste or yard waste
- Algae
- Bagasse (sugarcane or sorghum residue)
- Woody biomass that is removed outside contract acreage and that is not a byproduct of a preventative treatment to reduce hazardous fuel or to reduce or contain disease or insect infestation



- Woody biomass that would otherwise be used for existing market products
- Any plant that is invasive or noxious or has the potential to become invasive or noxious, as determined by USDA.

For *CHST*, woody biomass may be collected from federal land if the person has rights to collect such wood and if the material collected is a byproduct of preventative treatment that is removed to reduce hazardous fuels or to reduce disease or insect infestation.

Producers are required to implement a conservation or forest stewardship plan in conjunction with NRCS.

Financial Information

If funding is made available, 10 to 50 percent of total BCAP funding is allocated to *CHST* payments. Other funds are to make payments to producers and to provide technical assistance.

Recipients will enter into either a 5-year agreement (establish annual or perennial crops) or a 15-year agreement for woody biomass.

Under the contract, producers may receive 50 percent of the cost of establishing an eligible perennial crop covered by the contract but not to exceed \$500 per acre (\$750 in the case of socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers). In addition, annual incentive payments are given.

USDA may reduce annual payments if:

- An eligible crop is used for purposes other than the production of energy at the biomass conversion facility
- An eligible crop is delivered to the biomass conversion facility and paid for by the facility
- The producer receives a payment for *CHST*
- The producer violates a term of the contract

CHST payments are to be provided on a matching basis at a rate of \$1 for each \$1-per-ton provided by the biomass conversion facility, up to an amount not to exceed \$20 per ton, for a period of two years.

For More Information

To locate your local FSA office, search here:

<https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator>

See page 40 for more details on *ACEP* and page 48 for *CRP*

BCAP Website:

<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/energy-programs/BCAP/index>

Rural Energy for America Program (REAP)

Promoting on-farm and rural renewable energy production and energy efficiency

RD

Program Basics

As climate variability increases and energy costs continue to rise, producing on-farm, renewable energy has become an attractive option for many farmers, ranchers and small businesses. REAP was created to help businesses save money and utilize renewable energy. There are two types of financial assistance:

Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Improvements Guaranteed Loans and Grants provide financial support to install renewable energy systems or to improve energy efficiency of existing operations.

Energy Audits and Renewable Energy Development Assistance Grants provide financial support for energy audits and Renewable Energy Development Assistance (REDA) which evaluates energy usage and the potential for incorporating efficiency improvements or renewable energy production systems.

Wind turbines, solar panels, anaerobic digesters, renewable biomass, geothermal pumps, small-hydroelectric are examples of renewable energy systems.

Application Process

For *Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Improvements Guaranteed Loans and Grants*, small businesses in eligible rural areas and agricultural producers with at least 50% of gross income coming from agricultural operations are eligible to apply. Agricultural producers may be in rural or non-rural areas. Applicants will be screened for:

- The type of renewable energy system
- The estimated quantity of energy generated by the renewable energy system

- The expected environmental benefits of the renewable energy system
- The quantity of energy savings expected to be derived from the activity, as demonstrated by an audit
- The estimated period of time for the energy savings generated by the activity to equal the cost of the activity
- The expected energy efficiency of a renewable energy system

Applications for guaranteed loans are accepted year-round at your local RD office, however, grants or combined loans and grants are accepted at different times of the year.

For *Energy Audits and Renewable Energy Development Assistance Grants*, the following entities may apply:

- State, tribal or local governments
- Land-grant colleges or universities, or other higher education institutions
- Rural electric cooperatives
- Public power entity Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils

These applicants will be screened for:

- Their ability and expertise of the applicant to provide professional energy audits and renewable energy assessments
- The geographic scope of the proposal in relation to the identified need
- The number of agricultural producers and rural small businesses to be assisted
- The potential to produce energy savings and environmental benefit



- Their plan for outreach and assistance to agricultural producers and rural small businesses on the benefits of energy efficiency and renewable energy development
- Their ability of the applicant to leverage other sources of funding

Applicants must submit separate applications, limited to one energy audit and one REDA per fiscal year. Applications for this program are accepted year-round at your local RD office.

Those interested in enrolling in both REAP programs should contact their state's renewable energy coordinator for questions on available funding and application deadlines. You will also find accurate information through announcements on the Federal Registrar.

Financial Information

The 2018 Farm Bill provided REAP with a permanent funding baseline of \$50 million per year for the program. Despite the mandatory status, the funding level for a given year could change depending on annual appropriations.

For *Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Improvements Guaranteed Loans and Grants*, combined grant and loan guarantee funding covers up to 75% of total eligible costs.

For loan guarantees, up to 75% of total eligible project costs can be covered. Loans range from \$5,000 - \$25 million. The rates and terms are negotiated with the lender and subject to USDA approval. The maximum loan term varies upon use:

- Maximum 30 years for real estate
- Maximum 15 years for machinery and equipment
- Maximum 7 years for capital loans
- Maximum 30 years for combined real estate and equipment loans.

For grants, up to 25% of total eligible project costs can be covered. Renewable energy system grants range from \$2,500 to \$500,000. Energy efficiency grants range from \$1,500 to \$250,000.

Additional requirements include:

- Applicants must provide at least 75% of the project cost if applying for a grant only
- Applicants must provide at least 25% of the project cost if applying for loan, or loan and grant combination
- Projects greater than \$200,000 require a technical report
- Energy efficiency projects require an energy audit or assessment

For *Energy Audits and Renewable Energy Development Assistance Grants*, the maximum aggregate amount of an energy audit and REDA grant in a Federal fiscal year is \$100,000.

For More Information

State Renewable Energy Coordinators:
https://www.rd.usda.gov/files/RBS_StateEnergyCoordinators.pdf

To locate your RD state office, search here:
<https://www.rd.usda.gov/contact-us/state-offices>

Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Improvements Guaranteed Loans and Grants Website:

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-energy-america-program-renewable-energy-systems-energy-efficiency>

Energy Audits and Renewable Energy Development Assistance Grants Website:

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-energy-america-program-energy-audit-renewable-energy-development-assistance>

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)

Research to address key problems of regional, national and international importance in sustaining agriculture

NIFA

Program Basics

AFRI plays a major role in developing solutions for many on-the-field challenges and results help inform policy and protocols applicable to work in nutrition, food safety, and public health. AFRI does this by providing grants for research, extension, and education to address key challenges faced by farmers, rural communities and consumers. Every year, there are several Requests for Applications (RFAs) released. In fiscal year (FY) 2020, there were three RFAs:

- *Foundational and Applied Science*
- *Sustainable Agricultural Systems*
- *Education and Workforce Development*

Within RFAs, there are Program Area Priorities which serve as smaller grant programs under AFRI RFAs.

Project Examples

Utah State University is studying reclaimed wastewater use in the Cache Valley. The project will improve the understanding of the agricultural use of nontraditional waters, potential human health exposures, and risks at watershed scales.

The University of Rhode Island used AFRI funds to develop selective-bred oyster lines that perform well in the face of a fatal condition, Dermo disease. Dermo disease impacts the growth and survival of farm-raised oysters in the Atlantic and Gulf coasts.

Application Process

Eligibility is linked to the program of interest but in general, there two types of eligibility.

Integrated Grants restrict eligibility to colleges and universities only.

Non-integrated Grants allow state agriculture experiment stations; colleges and universities; federal agencies; research institutions; national laboratories; and nonprofit organizations.



RFAs are published on the AFRI website and applications are submitted through grants.gov. Each AFRI subprogram has a peer review panels who review and rank each proposal based on relevance and scientific merit.



Financial Information

The 2018 Farm Bill authorized AFRI to receive up to \$700 million for each fiscal year through 2023, though fiscal year 2020 only received \$425 million. The annual agricultural appropriations bills will determine if AFRI is to receive total funding increases in the future.

Of the total AFRI funds, 60 percent is allocated for *fundamental (or basic) research* and 40 percent toward *applied research*. Of the AFRI funds allocated to *fundamental research*, not less than 30 percent will be directed toward research by multidisciplinary teams. In addition, at least 30 percent of AFRI funding must be used for integrated projects that combine at least two (or all three) of research, education, or extension.

The maximum term of an AFRI grant varies by program, but generally it is up to five years. Indirect costs are limited to 30 percent of the total federal funds provided.

For More Information

AFRI Website:
<https://nifa.usda.gov/afri>

AFRI Coordination Team:
afri@usda.gov
(202) 734-0472

NCAT **Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA)**

*Providing technical assistance information to producers and information providers
on a wide range of sustainable agriculture topics*



Program Basics

The ATTRA program is a national sustainable agriculture information service that provides technical information to those engaged in or serving commercial agriculture. This includes farmers, ranchers, extension agents, farm organizations, and farm-based businesses. People can call in requests on a toll-free telephone line, use the frequently updated website, and learn about workshops featuring technical presentations by staff.

ATTRA agriculture program specialists will research the question, summarize the findings in writing, and compile supporting literature and research as appropriate to accompany the report, which a caller receives either via email.

Publications based on frequently requested topics are also available. ATTRA provides more than 500 topic-specific publications on its website. As of 2020, all ATTRA publications are free of charge.

ATTRA also provides a free weekly electronic newsletter on national events and advances in sustainable agriculture, to which anyone may subscribe via the ATTRA website.

Agency Information

Funding is provided for ATTRA through USDA's Rural Business-Cooperative Service as part of the annual agriculture appropriations bill. This funding supports the informational and educational work of more than 30 staff assigned to the ATTRA program, which is managed by the nonprofit National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT). NCAT is headquartered in Butte, Montana and has regional offices in Arkansas, California, Mississippi, New Hampshire, Virginia, and Texas.

For More Information

ATTRA Website:
<https://attra.ncat.org>

Subscribe to electronic newsletter:
<https://attra.ncat.org/attra-newsletter-sign-up-form/>

Contact information:
1 (800) 346-9140



ATTRA offers a wide variety of information on sustainable agriculture, from horticulture and agronomic crops to livestock and farming systems. ATTRA's services seek to help U.S. farmers increase profitability and provide more healthful food for consumers while becoming better stewards of the natural resources and environment.

Types of Services

ATTRA specializes in responding to questions about specific sustainable enterprises or practices. Common requests include:

- Improve farm income with a diversity of crops and livestock
- Produce alternative crops and livestock
- Reduce dependence on off-farm inputs
- Improve soil fertility and water quality
- Institute sustainable and organic farming practices
- Save or produce energy
- Assess new marketing methods
- Incorporate value-added products

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP)

Training new farmers to ensure their success in starting successful farm businesses

NIFA



Program Basics

BFRDP is the only federal program that is exclusively dedicated to training the next generation of farmers and ranchers. It provides farmers with technical production and business skills they need to start a successful farm operation through hands-on training projects. Projects can also serve non-beginning farmers, provided that the primary purpose of the project is fostering beginning farmer opportunities.

Examples of services include mentoring, financial and entrepreneurial training, and apprenticeship programs; programs that connect retiring farmers and landowners with new farmers; vocational training and agricultural rehabilitation programs for veterans; and education, outreach, and curriculum development activities.

Project Examples

In **Hawaii**, BFRDP supports training programs targeted to Native Hawaiian youth and adults. Some objectives include a native restoration project, providing land to farmers to cultivate native crops and developing new markets for agroforestry cultural crops.

In **Nebraska**, BFRDP supports financial and production trainings and connections to technical resources for Hispanic beginning farmers. Interpreters are available for all activities and the 4-month class is broadcast to additional sites to reduce travel barriers.

Application Process

BFRDP applicants must involve collaborative networks or partnerships of public and private groups. This may include:

- Community-based organizations
- Non-governmental organizations
- School-based organizations
- Cooperative extension
- Relevant USDA and state agencies
- Community colleges

Typically, a Request For Applications (RFA) is released in the fall and applicants are given 60 days to complete their application. Applications are then evaluated by a peer review panel.

Financial Information

Eligible recipients can receive consecutive grants. BFRDP grants have a term of 3 years and cannot exceed \$200,000 a year. There is a simplified application process for single year grants that are less than \$50,000. Recipients must provide a cash or in-kind contribution match equal to 25 percent of the grant funds provided, however, a waiver for the matching funds requirement can be requested.

BFRDP allocates 5 percent of annual funds for projects serving minority, immigrant, and women farmers, as well as farmworkers desiring to become farmers. An additional 5 percent is allocated for projects serving military veteran farmers.

For More Information

Program Contact: Desiree Rucker, PhD
desiree.rucker@usda.gov
(202) 445-5386

BFRDP Website:
<https://nifa.usda.gov/program/beginning-farmer-and-rancher-development-program-bfrdp>

Cooperative Extension System (CES)

Solving public needs with college or university resources



Program Basics

CES is a nationwide, non-credit educational network that addresses public needs by providing non-formal higher education and learning activities. With its wide reach — an office in or near most of the nation's approximately 3,000 counties — extension agents work with land-grant colleges and universities to bring vital, practical information to agricultural producers, small business owners, consumers, families, and young people. Educational offerings may include:

- Agriculture and food
- Family and consumer sciences
- Natural resources
- Leadership development
- Community and economic development
- 4-H youth development

Types of Services

College and university faculty members, who are disciplinary experts, translate science-based research results into language — written, verbal, and electronic — appropriate for targeted audiences. County-based educators work with local residents and interest groups to solve problems, evaluate the effectiveness of learning tools, and collect grassroots input to prioritize future research. By living and working in communities, county educators are able to rely on existing relationships to respond to local needs, build trust, and engage effectively with community members.

Electronic information can be found on the eXtension website where Extension professionals and citizens have 24/7 access to unbiased, research-based, peer-reviewed information from land-grant universities on a wide range of topics. Information is organized into articles, professional development resources, news, frequently asked questions, and blog posts.

Agency Information

CES is operated through the nation's Land-Grant University System in partnership with the federal, state and local governments. As the federal partner, NIFA plays a key role by distributing annual congressionally appropriated formula grants to supplement state and county funds. Each state has at least one designated Cooperative Extension service which engage in outreach and provide education to local communities.

In 2015, the member-based nonprofit, eXtension Foundation, was created and maintains the eXtension website.

For More Information

Land-Grant University Website Directory:
<https://nifa.usda.gov/land-grant-colleges-and-universities-partner-website-directory>

eXtension Website:
<https://impact.extension.org>

Crop Protection and Pest Management (CPPM) Program

Addressing high priority issues related to pests and their management using IPM approaches

NIFA

Program Basics

The CPPM program increases food security and responds effectively to other major societal challenges with Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approaches. The CPPM program provides support for these functions with three linked program areas:

Applied Research and Development Program Area (ARDP) support projects for the development of new IPM tactics, technologies, practices, and strategies through research (single-function) projects. *ARDP* also funds IPM adoption through research-led projects and IPM implementation through extension-led projects.

Extension Implementation Program Area (EIP) support projects based on combinations of primary and secondary priorities intended to increase IPM implementation to clientele.

Regional Coordination Program Area (RCP) support projects to enhance coordination and efficiency of IPM research and extension efforts; facilitate collaboration across states, disciplines, and purposes; and promote further development and adoption of IPM through regional pest management information networks, collaborative team building and broad-based stakeholder participation.

The National IPM Roadmap identifies strategic directions for research, implementation, and measurement. Fiscal year (FY) 2020 goals are:

1. Improve cost-benefit analyses when adopting IPM practices
2. Reduce potential human health risks from pests and related management strategies

3. Minimize adverse environmental effects from pests and related management strategies

The CPPM program (through *ARDP*, *EIP*, and *RCP*), addresses overall IPM needs in the five following focus areas as funding is available:

Plant Protection Tactics and Tools - need for discovery, development, and introduction of new pest management tactics in IPM systems.

Diversified IPM Systems - need for long-term sustainable solutions to pest management problems on a regional or national scale.

Enhancing Agricultural Biosecurity – to develop and maintain key information systems, networks, and decision support tools that provide the knowledge infrastructure needed for early detection and the application of science-based IPM systems for invasive, emerging and high-consequence pests that threaten U.S. agriculture.

IPM for Sustainable Communities - direct application of IPM knowledge and expertise to address pest management challenges in non-traditional settings (urban structures, landscapes and gardens, homes, and schools).

Development of the Next Generation of IPM Scientists – to develop pre-doctoral and postdoctoral education programs.

Application Process

Applications may only be submitted by colleges and universities. Applicants may subcontract to ineligible organizations provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.



The CPPM Program's Request for Applications (RFA) is typically released once per year and applications are submitted via [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). For FY 2019 and 2020, only *ARDP* projects will be accepted for funding. *EIP* continuation RFAs will be emailed directly to the FY 2017 continuation awardees and *RCP* continuation RFAs will be emailed directly to the FY 2018 continuation awardees. NIFA does anticipate available funding for *EIP* and *RCP* in future years.

For FY 2020, there are two application types:

- New applications, or
- Resubmitted applications which must include a response to major concerns raised in previous reviews

In addition, applicants must propose one of the following project types:

- *Applied research projects*
- *Research-led projects*
- *Extension-led projects*

NIFA evaluates each application in a two-part process, starting with screening of applications on administrative requirements. Then, a peer-review process will be used to technically evaluate applications. After the peer review process, NIFA staff will recommend that your project is either approved with available funds or declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review. NIFA sends copies of reviews and a summary (if applicable) of the review panel comments to the Project Director (PD).

Financial Information

The anticipated amount available for CPPM grants in FY 2020 is \$18.1 million (\$10 million for *EIP* projects through renewal awards; \$4.1 million for *RCP* through continuation awards; and \$4.0 million for new *ARDP* awards). For *ARDP* projects with PD from one state/U.S. territory, the maximum award is \$200,000.

For PDs from more than one state/U.S. territory, the maximum award is \$325,000. *ARDP* projects may be from two to four years and all funds will be provided in the first year of the project.

Starting in FY 2019, when a project is a benefit to a specific agricultural commodity, the recipient must match awarded funds with 1:1 cash and in kind contributions from non-Federal sources. Note that it is possible for NIFA to waive this matching requirement.

For *ARDP* and *RCP* program areas of CPPM, the recovery of indirect costs on CPPM awards may not exceed the lesser of the institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 30 percent of total Federal funds awarded. However, institutions are not required to recover indirect costs. For *EIP* in FY 2019, recovery of indirect costs is not allowed.

For More Information

CPPM Program Contacts:

Robert Nowierski or Michael Fitzner
robert.nowierski@usda.gov | (202) 552-9084
michael.fitzner@usda.gov | (202) 450-9579

CPPM Website:

<https://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/crop-protection-and-pest-management>

North Central IPM Center Grants:

<https://www.ncipmc.org/grants/>

Northeastern IPM Center Grants:

<https://www.northeastipm.org/index.cfm/grant-programs/grant-opportunities/>

Southern IPM Center Grants

<https://southernipm.org/grants/>

Western IPM Center Grants:

<http://westernipm.org/index.cfm/center-grants/>

Food Safety Outreach Program (FSOP)

Funding outreach, education, and training to help farmers, processors, and wholesalers adapt to new food safety requirements

NIFA

Program Basics

FSOP grants are intended to create innovative outreach and training programs that help farmers and small food processors prepare for and adapt to new food safety requirements. Funding is available for two types of on-the-ground training projects:

Community Outreach Projects (COP) support new and existing food safety education (including curricula) and outreach programs offered in local communities. Projects should enable existing programs to broaden their scope by reaching out to new or a larger number of participants.

Collaborative Education and Training Projects (CETP) are focused on multi-county, state, or multi-state programs, including collaborations across regions. Applicants must have a history of working with target audiences including underserved and smaller producers and businesses. Projects should ensure the training touches on the new Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) rules.

In addition, both types of training programs offer a *Collaborative Engagement Supplement (CES)* which can be used for outreach to socially disadvantaged communities.

Project Examples

In **New Mexico**, La Montañita Food Cooperative is helping farmers achieve FSMA compliance through *Harmonized Good Agricultural Practices (H-GAP)* certification. New food safety trainers will be added to deliver training programs and consultations, increase the number of *H-GAP* and FSMA certified farmers and additional services.

In **California**, Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association will provide a food safety initiative offering bilingual information, and training to underserved farmers as well as facilitate the implementation of *Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)* certification.

Application Process

Eligible entities to apply include:

- Community-based organizations
- Non-governmental organizations
- Cooperative Extension Services
- Federal, state, local, or tribal agencies
- Colleges and universities
- Foundations maintained by an institution of higher education

NIFA typically releases a Request for Applications (RFA) once a year, usually in the spring. Organizations prepare applications and must submit them electronically via grants.gov.

Financial Information

In 2020, about \$8 million was allocated to FSOP. For *COP*, the award ranges from \$80,000-\$150,000. For *CETP*, the award ranges from \$200,000-\$400,000. For *CES*, the maximum award is \$150,000. All projects may last up to three years.

For More Information

Program Lead: Jodi Williams
(202) 720-6145
Jodi.williams@usda.gov

FSOP Website:
<https://nifa.usda.gov/food-safety-outreach-program>



Forest Products Laboratory (FPL)

Conducting research and providing information forest products technologies and commercial applications



Program Basics

FPL was established as a centralized national wood research laboratory and clearinghouse for information on uses of wood. FPL is primarily or partly responsible for many of today's wood-based technologies, including wood preservatives, glulam beams, oriented strandboard, and fiber-based packaging.



FPL's five main research areas include advanced composites, advanced structures, forest biorefinery, nanotechnology, and woody biomass utilization.



FPL's research and demonstration programs are accomplished through coordinated partnerships with industry, universities, and government. Although no financial assistance is available, FPL's website sometimes provides information about FS calls for proposals for various wood- and biomass-related programs. In cases where a technology being developed requires partners to demonstrate or evaluate them, the FPL connects private-sector partners with sources of capital either through USDA agencies or participating state government programs.



Types of Services

The *FPL Library* is open to the public during hours of operation. FPL staff can provide most information upon request, develop information where needed, or suggest alternative sources of information or expertise. Information on subject areas include solid wood products, pulp and paper, mycology, wood anatomy, wood engineering, biotechnology, adhesives, wood preservation, fire research, economics, biodeterioration of wood, paints and coatings, and recycling. Subjects change according to federal emphasis areas.

The *Patent Program* helps convert Forest Service research into usable information and technologies that benefit both the American public and industry. Patents are an effective mode of technology transfer, as they make technologies more appealing to the marketplace due to the exclusivity they offer. Technology transfer leads to increased productivity, increased industrial innovation, enhanced U.S. industrial competitiveness, job creation, and improved and lower cost public services. Ultimately the purpose of technology transfer is to better coordinate research activities between the parties, so the results are efficiently transferred to the public.

The *Forest Products Marking Unit (FPMU)* helps ensure healthy, sustainable forests that are more resilient to disturbances by creating high-value, high-volume markets from woody biomass. The FPMU achieves success through a wide-range of cooperative working relationships, both internally and externally that strengthen technology development and applications across agency mission areas. The actions of the FPMU will result in new and expanded utilization and marketing opportunities of products and residues from a wide array of forest operations; forest health and land restoration activities; natural disaster recovery; and urban forest utilization.

For More Information

FPL Website:

<https://www.fpl.fs.fed.us/>

Email:

mailroom_forest_products_laboratory@fs.fed.us

Phone:

(608) 231-9200

Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI)

Funding research, education, and extension to solve challenges organic producer face

NIFA



Program Basics

OREI provides funds for research, education, and extension projects that enhance the ability of organic producers and processors to grow and market organic agricultural products. OREI has several types of grants:

Multi-Regional Grants address critical issues that cut across multiple regions.

Regional Grants address issues that may be limited to a single region.

Targeted Grants have a narrower scope or is specific to locality.

Curriculum Development Grants lend assistance in the development of new undergraduate or graduate curriculum in organic agriculture.

Conference Grants involve workshops or symposiums designed to bring together scientists and other stakeholders around advancing or understanding organic issues.

Planning Grants provide assistance in developing future proposals that require multi-regional and regional coordination.

Each fiscal year (FY), specific research areas are prioritized and are listed in the Request for Applications (RFA).

Project Examples

In **Indiana**, Purdue University is assessing industrial hemp as a potential crop for organic farmers. The primary goal of this project is to develop and communicate research-based information from field experiments. Hemp will be integrated into cropping systems that include cover crops and no till practices and will help determine effects of location and planting date on the performance of multiple hemp cultivars.

Mississippi State University is assessing the needs of the growing organic sweet potato industry. The project conducted a market assessment, developed surveys to address the needs and barriers for certified, transitional and conventional producers. The project also formed a stakeholder advisory group to guide future research and extension efforts.

Application Process

Entities eligible to apply for OREI include:

- Federal agencies
- National laboratories
- State agricultural experiment stations
- Colleges and universities
- Other research institutions
- Private organizations and corporations
- Individuals

Each year, typically in the winter, NIFA publishes an RFA. Applicants are typically given at least 60 days to prepare their application. Applicants submit their applications electronically via grants.gov. Both new applications and resubmitted applications are considered for funding. Applications are first reviewed for compliance with the administrative requirements and then a peer review panel will rank each proposal that complies based on the scientific merit and relevancy.

Fieldwork for proposed projects must be done on certified organic land or on land in transition to organic certification. Thus, all applicants are strongly encouraged to consult with organic producers for both design and implementation of the proposed project. A certified organic setting is not required for clinical trials for animal health research.

For *Multi-Regional Grants*, applicants must include a local or regional advisory panel throughout the project timeline.

Proposals should not have significant overlap in objectives and scope if applying to *Organic Transitions Research, Education, and Extension Program (ORG)* or other NIFA programs.

Financial Information

Permanent mandatory funding was secured for OREI in the 2018 Farm Bill. Funding levels in FY 2019 and FY 2020 will start at \$20 million per year, ramping up to \$50 million in permanent baseline funding by FY 2023.

There is no match required unless a project addresses a specific agricultural commodity, in which case, the applicant must provide a 100 percent match. However, the requirement may be waived if NIFA determines:

- The results of the project, while of particular benefit to a specific commodity, are likely to be applicable to agricultural commodities generally.
- The project involves a minor commodity, the projects deals with scientifically important research, and the grant recipient is unable to satisfy the matching fund requirement.

Maximum awards for OREI grant programs:

- *Multi-Regional Grants*: \$2 million
- *Regional Grants*: \$1 million
- *Targeted Grants*: \$500,000
- *Curriculum Development Grants*: \$250,000
- *Conference Grants*: \$50,000
- *Planning Grants*: \$50,000

For More Information

Program Contact: Mathieu Ngouajio
Mathieu.ngouajio@usda.gov
(202) 570-1915

See page 83 for more details on *ORG*

OREI Website:
<https://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/organic-agriculture-research-and-extension-initiative>

Organic Transitions Research, Education and Extension Program (ORG)

Supporting organic research to increase competitiveness of organic farmers and ranchers

NIFA



Program Basics

ORG funds *integrated projects* (including at least two components: research, education, extension) that allow producers to overcome barriers in transitioning to certified organic systems. ORG also seeks to improve understanding of the economic and environmental benefits of organic production. In recent years, the program has focused on:

- Documenting and understanding the effects of organic practices
- Improving technologies, methods, model development, and other metrics to optimize ecosystem systems
- Developing cultural practices and other allowable alternatives to substances recommended for removal from the National Organic Program's National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances
- Overcoming barriers to organic transition

Each year, ORG focuses on a discrete set of organic production research topics. Prioritized areas may include:

- Research around the impacts of crop rotation, livestock-crop system integration, soil health, and cover crops
- Optimizing ecosystem services and the ability of organic crops to adapt to and to mitigate climate variability
- Development of cultivars or breeds suited to organic production
- Region-specific production challenges, infrastructure constraints, marketplace solutions, and other policy or administrative barriers.

Projects are expected to deliver production information to producers, students, extension agents, and other service providers.

Project Examples

The **University of Arkansas** is exploring the use of invasive Asian carp as organic poultry feed. The overall goal is to evaluate the natural source of methionine, while assisting organic poultry producers to comply with the requirements of the National Organic Program.

Pennsylvania State University seeks to measure the emission of nitrous oxide gas from experimental fields that represent realistic organic grain and silage production systems in the northeastern part of the U.S.

Application Process

Only colleges and universities are eligible to apply. This includes land-grant institutions, Hispanic-serving agricultural institutions, and other private and public academic institutions. Other entities could collaborate with colleges and universities.

Every year, usually in early winter, a Request for Applications (RFA) is released. Applications must be submitted electronically through [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Applications are first reviewed for compliance with the RFA and then scored by a technical peer review panel who evaluate the scientific merit and relevancy.



Applications are expected to show evidence of stakeholder (including producers) involvement in problem identification, project planning, implementation, and evaluation. Thus, applicants are strongly encouraged to partner with non-governmental organizations engaged in organic agriculture research, education, and outreach, especially those who target underserved communities.

All research activities on organic practices must take place on certified organic land or land transitioning to organic production unless the non-certified land is being used for proof of concept.

Financial Information

In fiscal year 2019, ORG received funding totaling \$6 million (its highest funding to date). ORG is not directly funded through the Farm Bill, but rather, through annual appropriations so funding may change year to year.

The total project cost cannot exceed \$500,000 (or \$200,000 in any one year). Projects are funded for up to three years.

ORG requires a 100 percent match if the project provides “a particular benefit to a specific agricultural commodity.” The matching requirement may be waived if NIFA determines:

- The project results are likely to apply to agricultural commodities in general
- The projects involve a minor commodity, deals with scientifically important research, and the recipient is unable meet the matching requirement

For More Information

Program Contact: Mathieu Ngouajio
Mathieu.ngouajio@usda.gov
(202) 570-1915

ORG Website:
<https://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/organic-transitions-org>

Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers Program (2501 Program)

Providing grants to educational institutions, tribal and nonprofit organizations that offer education, outreach and technical assistance to socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers

OPPE



Program Basics

Socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers have been historically underserved in many USDA programs. The 2501 Program helps nonprofits and higher education institutions provide critical outreach, education and technical assistance to these historically underserved producers with the purpose of providing increased opportunities to successfully acquire, own, operate, and retain farms as well as equitably participate in all USDA programs.

Projects are required to address the following program priorities:

- Assist in owning and operating successful farms and ranches
- Improve participation in USDA programs
- Build relationships between current and prospective farmers and ranchers and USDA's local, state, regional and national offices
- Introduce agriculture-related information through innovative outreach and technical assistance techniques
- Introduce agricultural education to youth and beginning farmers and ranchers, in rural and persistent poverty communities

Project Examples

In **New Mexico**, the Indian Nations Conservation Alliance will provide USDA agency program information through newsletters, webinars and trainings. INCA will also hold a national meeting to bring the Tribal Conservation Districts, Tribal farmers and ranchers, USDA agencies and Bureau of Indian Affairs together.

In **Missouri**, the Springfield Community Projects will implement a project that will consist of education and training on (1) land; (2) infrastructure; (3) knowledge; (4) markets; and (5) capital, with the added component of (6) wrap around service support, technical assistance, and mentorship from project personnel.

Application Process

A Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) is published in the Federal Register for each fiscal year that funding is available, typically in the spring. Applicants are provided roughly 45-60 days to prepare and submit their applications, which must be submitted electronically through grants.gov.

Organizations that are eligible to apply for grant funding include:

- Community-based and non-profit organizations, including networks or coalitions of community-based organizations
- Land Grant Institutions (1890, 1994, 1862)
- Indian Tribal Community Colleges
- Alaska Native Cooperative Colleges
- Hispanic-serving Institutions
- Tribal Governments and Organizations
- Other Institutions of Higher Education with agricultural curriculums

Organizations must have demonstrated expertise in working with socially disadvantaged or veteran farmer and rancher communities. Priority will be given to nongovernmental, community-based organizations.

Applicants are also encouraged to coordinate with existing regional projects to complement pertinent and relevant cross-regional activities. USDA is required to ensure geographical diversity in grant funding.

Financial Information

The maximum amount that organizations can apply for is \$250,000 per year for a 3-year grant project. There is no match required for

applications, and only one project proposal may be submitted per organization.

For More Information

Program Contact: Kenya Nicholas
(202) 720-6350

Kenya.nicholas@osec.usda.gov

Website:

<https://www.outreach.usda.gov/grants/>

Small Business Innovation Research Program (SBIR)

Supporting small businesses exploring their technological potential for commercialization

NIFA

Program Basics

Providing solutions to the issues that face American agriculture and society requires passion and dedication, traits that are synonymous with the drive of small business owners. SBIR funds focused, valuable projects and creates partnerships between university researchers and small businesses to bring together science, research, production, and marketing in a way that allows forward-thinking ideas to become a reality.

There are several SBIR research areas:

- Animal Production and Protection
- Aquaculture
- Biofuels and Biobased Products
- Conservation of Natural Resources
- Food Science and Nutrition
- Forests and Related Resources
- Plant Production and Protection — Biology
- Plant Production and Protection — Engineering
- Rural and Community Development
- Small and Mid-Sized Farms

In addition, there are two SBIR phases:

Phase I to determine the scientific feasibility of ideas with commercial potential

Phase II to facilitate a research and development phase with the scale-up of innovation that provides a positive return on investment. *Phase II* also allows for planning and implementation of the commercialized technology, product or service. Successful *Phase II* grantees are encouraged to secure funding from personal, public, private, and state resources and investments to enable commercialization.

Project Examples

In **Massachusetts**, Nano Terra, Inc. received a *Phase I* award to develop a bee-friendly, dust-free seed coating formulation that removes a key pathway for harm to pollinators in the area. They plan to conduct planting and bee toxicity studies in *Phase II*.

In **Minnesota**, Advanced Medical Electronics Corporation received a *Phase II* award to develop a home telemedicine system for rural technology dependent children. The product will provide an active data interface between the FDA-approved infant-worn oximeter in the patient home and a monitoring physician.

Application Process

Phase I Requests for Applications (RFA) are generally released every year in June with due dates in October. *Phase I* is open to entities that qualify as a Small Business Concern which may include those that:

- Are organized for profit
- Have a place of business in the U.S.
- Operate primarily within the U.S.
- Are independently owned and operated
- Are not dominant in its field on a national basis

Phase II RFAs are generally released every year in December with due dates in February. *Phase II* is open only to previous *Phase I* awardees.

Applications must be submitted via grants.gov. All proposals will initially be screened for administrative requirements. Those accepted will then go through a peer review process. All applicants will receive verbatim copies of reviews. Applicants may request a debriefing from the National



Program Leader for the SBIR topic area to discuss the review and outcome.

Participation by university faculty or government scientists in SBIR projects is strongly encouraged. They can serve as consultants or can receive a subcontract and continue to work full time at their institution. University faculty or government scientists can also serve as a Principle Investigator if they reduce employment at their institution to 49 percent for the duration of the grant.

Financial Information

A total of \$25 million was made available for SBIR for fiscal year (FY) 2020 and 2021. The annual appropriations may affect future availability and percentage levels of funding.

Funds are allocated by proportion of the number of proposals received over the number of research areas. NIFA will award up to two *Phase I* awards per Small Business Concern.

For Phase I, the maximum award is \$100,000 and projects may not exceed eight months. For Phase II, the maximum award is \$600,000 and projects may not exceed 24 months. In addition, Phase I and Phase II applicants may request funds for Technical and Business Assistance (TABAs). For Phase I, the TABA request is up to \$6,500 and for Phase II, the TABA request is up to \$50,000.

For More Information

Program Lead – Kelly McDonald
kelly.mcdonald2@usda.gov
(202) 430-3002

SBIR Website:
<https://nifa.usda.gov/program/small-business-innovation-research-program-sbir>

Animal Production and Protection |
Aquaculture
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(816) 926-2833

Biofuels and Biobased Products
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(816) 926-1816

Conservation of Natural Resources
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(816) 926-1630

Food Science and Nutrition
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(816) 926-2620

Forests and Related Resources
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Patrick.Cassidy@usda.gov
(816) 926-1490

Plant Production and Protection — Biology
Dr. Robert Nowierski
Robert.Nowierski@usda.gov
(202) 552-9084

Plant Production and Protection —
Engineering
Dr. Steven Thomson
Steven.J.Thomson@usda.gov
(816) 926-8805

Rural and Community Development
Dr. Caroline Crocoll
CCrocoll@usda.gov
(202) 720-4795

Small and Mid-Size Farms
Dr. Denis Ebodaghe
Denis.Ebodaghe@usda.gov
(202) 445-5460

Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI)

Supporting research and extension on critical issues facing producers of fruits, vegetables, and other specialty crops

NIFA

Program Basics

SCRI is a federal research grant program that supports regional and multi-state projects that address specialty crop challenges. The following three project types are offered:

1. *Standard Research and Extension Projects (SREP)*
2. *Coordinated Agricultural Projects (CAP)*
3. *Research and Extension Planning Projects (REPP)*

SCRI has five focus areas:

- Research in plant breeding, genetics, genomics, and other methods to improve crop characteristics
- Identifying and addressing threats from pests and diseases
- Improving production efficiency, handling and processing, productivity, and profitability over the long-term
- New innovations and technology
- Methods to prevent, detect, monitor, and respond to potential food safety hazards in production and processing

Project Examples

The **University of Florida** aims to quantify mango germplasm for field performance and flavor quality as well as determine the genetic control of consumer-preferred flavor.

Michigan State University will coordinate with a variety of researchers, producers, and allied trade industry stakeholders in the herb industry to review the current status of Controlled Environment Agriculture herb research, production, and utilization. The information exchanged will develop an action plan for priority research and outreach objectives.

Application Process

Land-grant institutions, private institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations (including small businesses), federal agencies, state agricultural experiment stations are all eligible to apply.

A Request for Pre-Applications is issued, typically in September. Interested applicants must submit requested materials, including a stakeholder relevance statement.

Pre-applications are reviewed by specialty crop producers and other industry representatives for relevance to the industry need. Scores are assigned to each pre-application, but various panels discuss and reach a consensus on which projects are invited to submit full applications. A targeted call for full proposals is then published. After submission, scientific merit reviews are conducted, and a final ranking of proposals is determined.

Financial Information

SCRI has been allocated \$80 million in total funding per year and depending on the project type, they may last up to five years. There is a 100% match fund requirement (cash or in-kind).

For More Information

Program Contact: Thomas Bewick
tbewick@usda.gov (preferred)
(202) 913-3052

SCRI Website:
<https://nifa.usda.gov/program/specialty-crop-research-initiative-scri>



Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE)

Advancing innovations to improve farm profitability and stewardship by investing in farmer-driven research



Program Basics

SARE is the only USDA research grant program that focuses solely on sustainable agriculture. The program provides funds for farmer-driven research and education and also plays a crucial role in outreach by sharing results to other farmers across the country. Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

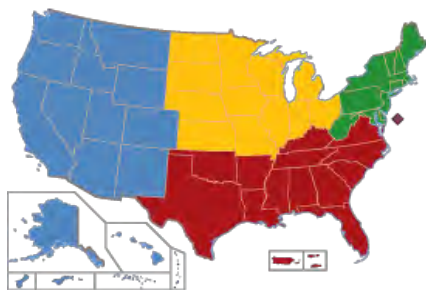
- Animal and crop production
- Soil and pest management
- Farm business management
- Natural resources and the environment
- Energy

Successful SARE projects simultaneously address the Ps of sustainability:

- Profit over the long term
- Protection of the land and water
- People (communities) who depend on agriculture

SARE is administered by NIFA and operates through four regional offices:

- North Central:* University of Minnesota
- Northeast:* University of Vermont
- Southern:* University of Georgia
- Western:* Montana State University



The four regional offices administer five primary grant programs:

Research and Education Grants fund projects that usually involve scientists, producers, and others in an interdisciplinary approach. Many projects involve on-farm research trials, economic analysis, and outreach. The program also funds education and demonstration projects.

Professional Development Grants spread knowledge about sustainable concepts and practices among Cooperative Extension Service staff and other agricultural professionals using a variety of approaches, from workshops to educational videos and on-farm training sessions. Proposals that involve both Extension staff and producers are preferred, as are partnerships with nonprofits and/or Natural Resources Conservation Service staff.

Farmer and Rancher Grants are aimed at producers who want to test a research idea. Projects typically involve on-farm research with crops or livestock, marketing and/or educational activities. Producers are expected to partner with an Extension professional or other agricultural advisor and share their results with others.

Partnership/On-Farm Grants are intended to foster cooperation between agriculture professionals and small groups of farmers and ranchers to boost on-farm research and education activities. Projects include curriculum for farmers and processors, on-farm trials, investigations into new approaches to processing or adding value to farm products.

Graduate Student Grants support projects led by graduate students enrolled in Masters and PhD programs and whose research addresses sustainable agriculture issues. These are competitive grants and proposals, and applicants are eligible for only one grant during their graduate program.

Project Examples

In **Micronesia**, Palau Community College used a *Research and Education Grant* to establish research and demonstration sites on existing farms that focus on traditional and appropriate technologies for small-scale banana production. A training on cultural and best management practices was conducted, and a manual on banana production was published to ensure that information from the project was disseminated to farmers in Palau.

The **University of the District of Columbia** received a *Professional Development Grant* to develop an educational outreach program that will train and sustain urban ethnic food producers in D.C. Funds will also be used to develop the “Train the Trainer” Program for Ag Extension Educators/Advisors that will share information with growers across the DMV area for best sustainable practices in growing ethnic crops.

Application Process

Eligibility for SARE grants to universities, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and individual agricultural producers. There are different eligibility requirements for each category of grants listed above. Refer to the Request for Applications (RFA) developed by each SARE for more information.

Each SARE region solicits proposals and awards grants at different times of the year. All grant programs have only one application period per year and each grant type has its own application, deadline, and focus. Once submitted, regional councils (made up of producers, researchers, educators, and government representatives) plus technical reviewers evaluate all SARE proposals. For additional grant information, contact your regional SARE office.

Financial Information

Fiscal year 2019 had a total of \$37 million appropriated to SARE. The range of awards depends on the region and the type of grant. Uses and restrictions on the funds also vary by region and year.

For More Information

SARE Website:
<https://www.sare.org>

SARE Resources and Learning:
<https://www.sare.org/resources>

North Central:
<https://www.northcentralsare.org>
ncrsare@umn.edu
(612) 626-3113

Northeast:
<https://www.northeastsare.org>
northeastsare@uvm.edu
(802) 651-8335

Southern:
<https://www.southernsare.org>
ssare@uga.edu

Western:
<https://www.westernsare.org>
wsare@montana.edu
(406) 994-4789

ARS Sustainable Agriculture Systems Research Program (SASR)

Advancing innovations in profitability and stewardship by investing in farmer-driven research



Program Basics

SASR (also known as National Program 216) is USDA's primary internal federal research program that focuses on issues relevant to sustainable and organic farmers. It is one of 15 national programs operated by the USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS). ARS has over 90 locations around the world and employs over 6,000 people working on approximately 690 research projects.

SASR seeks to use interdisciplinary research to optimize productivity, profitability, energy efficiency and natural resource stewardship for all farms – including organic, small, local, and conventional operations. SASR also develops information and tools – like best management practices and decision aides – that are then disseminated to farmers across the country through the *Cooperative Extension Service (CES)* and other delivery mechanisms.

Included within SASR is the *Organic Agriculture Production Research* program which is designed to help the organic industry “overcome the challenges they face related to productivity, profitability, environmental stewardship, and energy efficiency.”

The ARS National Program Leader coordinates [ARS Organic Agriculture Portfolio](#) which provides contacts for ARS researcher with regional and national organic organizations and contact with other Department agencies.

Research projects with objectives that directly benefit the organic industry are being conducted at:

Ames, IA; Beltsville, MD; Beaumont, TX; Booneville, AR; Brookings, SD; Dawson, GA; Geneva, NY; Ithaca, NY; Kearneysville, WV; Lane, OK; Morris, MN; Orono, ME; Parlier, CA; Prosser, WA; Salinas, CA; Shafter, CA; Stoneville, MS; Tifton, GA; Urbana, IL; Wenatchee, WA; and Wyndmoor, PA.

Application Process

ARS partners with other USDA agencies, other federal and state agencies, farmers, commodity groups, business and other organizations on many of their research projects. This program does not, however, award grants directly to farmers, research institutions, or non-profit organizations. To provide input on research topics or to get involved in research already being conducted, contact your local ARS station.

Financial Information

SASR is funded through the annual appropriations, rather than the Farm Bill, process. SASR is funded out of ARS's budget, which totaled \$1 billion in fiscal year 2019.

For More Information

National Program Leader: Sarah Beebout
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(301) 504-4613

To find your local ARS location, search:
<https://www.ars.usda.gov/people-locations/find-a-location/>

SASR Website:
<https://www.ars.usda.gov/natural-resources-and-sustainable-agricultural-systems/sustainable-agricultural-systems-research/>

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