



National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

# Guide to USDA Funding for Local and Regional Food Systems



*First Edition, April 2010*

# The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition's Guide to USDA Funding for Local and Regional Food Systems

First Edition - April 2010

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# Introduction

Around the country, farmers, entrepreneurs, parents, students, community organizers, and activists are coming up with novel ways to develop food systems that are economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable. From farm business incubation programs, to community kitchens, to “Buy Local,” campaigns, the initiatives led by these visionaries demonstrate that it is possible to re-envision the way food is grown, processed, distributed, and consumed in America.

Sometimes it takes crisis to elicit the best in us. Childhood obesity and diabetes, the economic hemorrhaging of rural communities with the loss of mid-sized family farms, the increase in urban and rural food deserts, rising energy prices, and environmental tragedy have all generated public awareness of the problems with our globalized, industrial food system. Increasingly, academics and practitioners are coming to recognize the potential in local and regional food systems to provide healthy, fresh, affordable food, preserve natural resources, and support vibrant rural communities.

Successful local and regional food initiatives offer models that can be replicated and lead to large-scale systems change. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) has many grant programs that can be used and increasingly are being used to support this kind of work. Applying for government funds can be daunting; this resource tries to de-mystify some of the grant programs most likely to be useful and directs you to resources that can provide help in designing a project and writing a grant.

The guide begins with a general overview of the USDA’s structure, followed by descriptions and details of fifteen grants and programs that are relevant to local and regional food systems development. Each program description also includes a case study of a real-world regional food system project that received program funding.

These federal programs belong to you—we hope this guide helps you to take advantage of them and in doing so successfully add to the vibrant movement underway to the rebuild local and regional food systems.

# Understanding USDA's Structure

## USDA's Seven Mission Areas

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has seven "mission areas": Farm and Foreign Agriculture Services; Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services; Food Safety; Marketing and Regulatory Services; Natural Resources and Environment; Research Education and Economics; and Rural Development. Some Department-wide initiatives like Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food, the Sustainable Development Council, the Small Farm and Beginning Farmer and Rancher Council, and the new Office of Advocacy and Outreach attempt to bridge the gap between the mission areas (see more below). In general, though, USDA grants originate from and are administered by different agencies and offices housed within each of the seven mission areas. The programs administered by agencies and offices each have their own unique rules, definitions, and funding requirements. Each agency's website is also structured differently, and some websites are updated more frequently than others, but each site can serve as a starting point to learn about how the grants work, what the scoring criteria is, and what kind of projects have been funded in the past.

*USDA Main Website: <http://usda.gov>*

While all seven mission areas have programs that touch on aspects of local and regional food system development, as of the beginning of 2010, four of the seven mission areas have programs aimed specifically at strengthening local and regional food systems. The programs in these mission areas plus the Department-wide Office of Advocacy and Outreach, are explored further in this guide:

- FARM AND FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL SERVICES
- MARKETING AND REGULATORY SERVICES
- RESEARCH EDUCATION AND ECONOMICS
- RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Another mission area, Food and Consumer Services (FCS), will roll-out two small new grant programs in 2010 that have already received funding from Congress, one to support school gardens in low-income communities and another for various activities to reduce hunger in at-risk communities. Since neither of these is yet operable they are not included in this version of the guide. Watch the Know Your Farmer website and the FCS site for more information on their availability.

In addition, the Administration has a pending proposal before Congress for a Rural Regional Innovation Initiative that includes a focus on local and regional food system development as one of its major thrusts, as well as a proposal for a Healthy Food Financing Initiative aimed at getting food markets into food desert areas. These two proposals have not yet been approved or funded by Congress, but could become part of future activity in this arena in the near future.

## **USDA's Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative**

In September 2009, the USDA launched the Know your Farmer, Know Your Food initiative aimed at strengthening the relationship between American consumers and American farmers. The effort is generating public understanding and an agency commitment to regional food systems by highlighting existing USDA programs that support regional food system development and also by identifying and creating additional support that is needed by farmers, businesses, and consumers. The Know Your Farmer website is envisioned as the go-to place for the latest information about USDA programs relevant to local and regional food systems. Read the information on this website as you start thinking about what might work in your community and check back from time-to-time for updates.

*Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Website: <http://www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer>*

## **USDA's Office of Advocacy and Outreach (OAO)**

USDA's Office of Advocacy and Outreach opened in December of 2009 to help increase access to USDA programs in order to promote the viability and profitability of small, beginning, and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. In addition to analyzing USDA programs' accessibility and creating cross-cutting goals to measure the Agency's success in advancing the needs of small, beginning, and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, the Office will house a number of programs transferred from other agencies, including the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Competitive Grants Program (2501 Program), formerly part of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)



## Quick Guide to Local and Regional Food Systems Grants

| Mission Area and Agency                                                                | Program Name                                             | Page No. | Who can apply?                                                                                                 | Grant Amounts                                                                                                                  | Matching Requirements                         |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| FARM AND FOREIGN AGRICULTURE SERVICE<br><i>Risk Management Agency</i>                  | Community Outreach and Assistance Partnership Program    | 8        | Nonprofits, associations, etc.                                                                                 | Amount varies year to year, and grants range from \$5,000 to \$300,000.                                                        | No matching required.                         |
| MARKETING AND REGULATORY PROGRAMS<br><i>Agricultural Marketing Service</i>             | Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)               | 9        | State Dept of Ag, in partnership with organizations                                                            | Awards made to states range from a minimum of \$100,000 to over \$16 million                                                   | No matching required.                         |
|                                                                                        | Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)                  | 10       | Nonprofits, growers associations, local governments, etc.                                                      | \$2,500 to \$100,000 total for up to 2 years.                                                                                  | No matching required.                         |
|                                                                                        | Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP)      | 11       | State Dept of Ag, in partnership with organizations                                                            | Amount varies, but average grants to organizations are \$50,000.                                                               | Yes, see details in FSMIP section.            |
| RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND ECONOMICS<br><i>National Institute of Food and Agriculture</i> | Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) | 13       | Collaborative state, tribal, local, or regionally-based networks or partnerships of public and private groups. | Up to \$250,000 per year for up to three years.                                                                                | Yes, see details in BFRDP section.            |
|                                                                                        | Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program (CFP)  | 15       | Nonprofits, associations, etc.                                                                                 | \$10,000 to \$300,000 for one to three years.                                                                                  | Yes, see details in CFP section.              |
|                                                                                        | Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)    | 16       | Universities, nonprofits, individual researchers or producers, etc.                                            | Varies depending on the type of grant and the region (could be \$1,000 for a producer grant or \$350,000 for a research grant) | No individual organization matching required. |

|                                                                |                                                                                                       |    |                                                                         |                                                                                                   |                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| RURAL DEVELOPMENT<br><i>Rural Business-Cooperative Service</i> | Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG)                                                                    | 18 | Individual producers, coops, organizations representing producers, etc. | Planning grants up to \$100,000 and operating grants up to \$300,000.                             | Yes, see details in VAPG section. |
|                                                                | Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEG)                                                               | 20 | Nonprofits, associations, etc.                                          | No set maximum or minimum, but smaller grants are prioritized.                                    | No matching required.             |
|                                                                | Rural Business Opportunity Grants (RBOG)                                                              | 21 | Nonprofits, associations, etc.                                          | Up to \$250,000 for project periods up to 2-years.                                                | No matching required.             |
|                                                                | Rural Cooperative Development Grant (RCDG)                                                            | 23 | Nonprofits, universities                                                | 1-year grants up to \$200,000.                                                                    | Yes, see details in RCDG section. |
|                                                                | Small Socially Disadvantaged Producer Grant (SSDPG)                                                   | 24 | Cooperatives or associations of coops.                                  | Maximum grant of \$175,000.                                                                       | No matching required.             |
|                                                                | Community Facilities Grant (CF)                                                                       | 25 | Local governments, non-profits, and tribes.                             | Grant amounts vary, but average grants are around \$30,000.                                       | No matching required.             |
|                                                                | Business and Industry Loan Program (B&I)                                                              | 26 | Individual, nonprofits, business, etc.                                  | Guaranteed loans go up to \$10 million with some special exceptions for loans up to \$25 million. | No matching required.             |
| <i>Office of Advocacy and Outreach</i>                         | Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (OASDFR, <i>Section 2501</i> ) | 27 | Community-based organizations, universities, Indian Tribes.             | Up to \$400,000 per year, up to 3 years.                                                          | No matching required.             |

# Things to Know About USDA Grants

## How do I find out when funding is available and applications are due?

Federal grant programs come out of multiple agencies and the amount and timing of funds relies on the sometimes unpredictable policy process. Some grant programs have a rolling application process. When programs have application deadlines, they can vary from year to year.

A quick word about grant making terminology – the good old-fashioned term “request for proposals” or RFP has morphed in recent years into several related terms, all of which essentially mean a request for proposals, though with slightly different connotations. For many of the programs in this Guide, the term for grant notices will be “Request for Application” (RFA), “Notice of Funds Availability” (NOFA), or “Notice of Solicitation of Applications” (NOSA). Whatever the term used, they all mean USDA is accepting applications for funding under a given program. When speaking generally about these notices, we will use the term Request for Applications or RFAs generically to mean any of the above terms.

There are a number of resources that can help you find out when funding is available and an application is due. Some USDA program websites post new Requests for Applications (RFAs) as they become available. The Federal Register publishes some RFAs, which can be searched by program name or number. When agencies use Grants.gov to process their grants, new RFAs with deadlines will be listed on the Grants.gov website. Search by the program name and check the year on the notice to make sure it’s current.

*Federal Register: <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/>*

In addition, as the Know your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative continues to develop, the KYF website has started to post some updates and information on RFAs as they are released.

*Know your Farmer, Know your Food:*  
*<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/knowyourfarmer?navid=KNOWYOURFARMER>*

Finally, the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition maintains a list of programs and grants including grants related to food systems development. This can serve as a one-stop shop for the most up-to-date information about upcoming deadlines.

*National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition Quick Guide to Farm Bill Programs and Grants:*  
*<http://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/grassrootsguide/farm-bill-programs-and-grants/>*

## Using Grants.gov

Many USDA grant programs (as well as grants in other government agencies) now use the Grants.gov service to post, accept, and process grant applications. Grants.gov can be very frustrating to use, but more and more programs are moving their applications to the platform, so it's best to get registered and become comfortable with the system. We hope the site will become easier to use over time.

It takes several weeks to register for Grants.gov, so check it out well before you plan to submit a grant. See Appendix One at the end of this guide for more information on registering for the system. Since many

organizations submit proposals at the last minute, the system has been known to get overwhelmed and crash. Better be safe than sorry and submit your proposal well before the last minute.

*Grants.gov online: <http://www.grants.gov>*

# Grant and Loan Programs

## 1. FARM and FOREIGN AGRICULTURE SERVICE: Risk Management Agency

### *1.1 Community Outreach and Assistance Partnership Program*

The Risk Management Agency (RMA) Community Outreach and Assistance Partnership Program (COAPP) provides funds to organizations which offer risk management training to limited resource, socially disadvantaged, traditionally underserved (including women), and beginning farmers and ranchers.

Risk management includes a broad array of strategies to build stronger agricultural businesses including innovative marketing approaches, improved financial management, and production planning to better serve customers. In 2010, the Risk Management Agency (RMA) expanded the scope of risk management projects it will fund to include Farm to School, Food Safety, and addressing Food Deserts (areas underserved by food retailers) with agricultural products from small farmers and ranchers. An interesting component of these grants is that RMA staff work closely with grantees and help to implement the program activities.

The COAPP has access to a broader pool of mandatory funding made available through the Farm Bill. Specific amounts are determined by the Administration on a year-by-year basis. In 2009, RMA awarded \$3.4 million in partnership grants for Community Outreach and Assistance Partnership Grants. There are \$2.5 million dollars available in 2010.

#### COAPP Application Information

Applicants can apply for funding through Grants.gov.

Funding amounts and educational topics change annually and new focus areas are announced in the Federal Register and on the RMA website (<http://www.rma.usda.gov/aboutrma/agreements/>).

#### COAPP Matching Funds Requirements

No matching funds are necessary.

#### COAPP Contact Information

Jacquea Howard-Brock, Outreach Specialist, 202-690-1518, jacquea.howard-brock@rma.usda.gov  
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#### COAPP Case Study: GrowNYC

Information from GrowNYC's website: <http://www.cenyc.org/greenmarket/nfdp>

GrowNYC, formerly CENYC, received a grant of \$105,338 in 2009 to support their New Farmer Development Project (NFDP). With support from the Community Outreach and Assistance Partnership Program and other donors, and in partnership with the Cornell Cooperative Extension, the project identifies, educates, and supports immigrants with agricultural experience by helping them become local farmers and establish small farms in the region. The program complements GrowNYC's flagship project, its Greenmarket farmers markets throughout New York, strengthens regional food security, and expands public access to high-quality, locally-grown farm products.

Since the project began, more than 130 project members have graduated from the NFDLP's comprehensive agricultural training course, La Nueva Siembra. Sixteen individuals and their families have started their own farming businesses with the support of the NFDLP. These farmers come from countries such as Columbia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Mexico. These new farmers sell produce at more than 40 farmers markets throughout the year. Many of these markets are located in immigrant neighborhoods where NFDLP farmers sell vegetables, flowers, traditional ethnic produce, eggs from pastured chickens, and honey to members of their community.

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## **2. MARKETING and REGULATORY PROGRAMS: Agricultural Marketing Service**

### ***2.1 Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBGP)***

The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) provides grants to help states and US territories improve the competitiveness of their specialty crops (fruits, vegetables, tree nuts and nursery crops), improve nutrition, and develop better produce distribution systems.

SCBGP funds go through State Departments of Agriculture. These departments may retain a portion of their total allocation for their own programming needs, but can also partner with nonprofit groups, community-based organizations, producers groups, or colleges and universities. In most states, moreover, a majority of the state funding allocation is made available as competitive grant funding.

Applications by states should describe how they will use the funds to produce measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or the public as a whole rather than a single organization, institution, or individual. Grants to states can supplement existing programs or start new projects in areas including “buy local” campaigns, nutrition, product development, or research.

The SCBG program is expected to receive \$55 million in mandatory farm bill funding in fiscal years 2010 through 2012. Allocations to states are based on the value of specialty crops in the state relative to the value of specialty crops nationally, with a guaranteed minimum award to states of \$100,000. Current funding per state ranges from nearly \$177,000 for Alaska to over \$16 million for California.

#### SCBGP Application Information

Contact your State Department of Agriculture to discuss project ideas. To find your state contact and learn more about the program and what it has funded, go to: [www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp](http://www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp)

#### SCBGP Matching Funds Requirements

No matching funds are necessary.

#### SCBGP Contact Information

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, Specialty Crop Block Grant

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Karla Martin, [karla.martin@usda.gov](mailto:karla.martin@usda.gov) 202-205-3941

### SCBGP Case Study: Georgia Organics

Georgia Organics (GO) in Atlanta, GA received a \$20,000 Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) in 2007 for several projects to strengthen the state's food system. GO focused many of the 32 workshops at their annual conference on information for producers about local and regional marketing opportunities, launched a "Buy Local" campaign and published a GA food guide, and commissioned a study of GA's food system.

GO's Chef Advisory Team enlisted the support of 65 restaurants to participate in the Buy Local campaign. Pledging to buy local produce whenever possible, the restaurants received marketing support, which they reported increased their sales. GO's local food guide included the location of farmers' markets, pick-your-own farms, community supported agriculture farms (CSAs) and restaurants sourcing locally. GO printed 50,000 copies of the 84-page guide and made it available in 192 locations and online.

In June 2008, GO commissioned a study to consolidate existing statistics and census data to give a snapshot of agriculture and consumer buying habits in Georgia. The goal was to identify the potential to build local and regional food systems that would benefit consumers, farmers and local economies. The data quantified the potential buying power of local consumers and the opportunities that exist for agriculture if "we simply connect the dots locally."

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## ***2.2 Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)***

Farmers' Market Promotion Program (FMPP) grants are designed to increase marketing opportunities for farmers to sell directly to consumers through farmers' markets, community supported agriculture (CSA) farms, farm and roadside stands, agri-tourism activities, and other direct marketing initiatives. FMPP grants can go to farmer networks, coops, and associations, nonprofits, agricultural cooperatives or producer associations, local governments, economic development corporations, regional farmers' market authorities, public benefit corporations, and Tribal Governments.

By law, at least 10 percent of total FMPP funds are to support the use of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) in direct marketing. In 2009, 35 of the 86 FMPP projects awarded, totaling \$1,757,279, went to recipients facilitating the use of EBT at markets. EBT is the debit card system that Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) participants use to receive and use their monthly food benefit. Many markets nationwide still do not have the technology to allow them to serve SNAP customers, reducing these customers' access to the best and most nutritious food available.

For the 2010 request for proposals, AMS is emphasizing three priorities:

- recruitment and retention of new farmers to sell at farmers market and other direct to consumer outlets;
- professional development of market managers, boards, vendors, and organizations; and
- improving food access in rural and underserved communities.

Such emphases may change from year to year.

The FMPP will have \$5 million in mandatory farm bill funding to disburse in FY 2010 but its budget will double to \$10 million in FY 2011 and 2012, an increased provided for by the 2008 Farm Bill.

### FMPP Application Information

The minimum award per grant is \$2,500 and the maximum is \$100,000. Proposed projects can last up to two years. Note that beginning in 2011, FMPP will not award any organization grant funds for two consecutive years. For example, 2011 recipients will not be eligible for FMPP grants in 2012.

To read the full application requirements and look at programs funded in the past, go to the FMPP website:

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/FMPP>

AMS also recently released two tools to help organizations with the grant-writing process for FMPP: a pre-application guide: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5082928&acct=fmpp>, and a presentation on grant-writing: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5082923>.

### FMPP Matching Funds Requirements

There are no matching funds requirements.

### FMPP Contact Information

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, Farmers Market Promotion Project

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### FMPP Case Study: Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project

The Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Program (ASAP) received a \$69,289 Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) grant in 2009 to strengthen and expand farmers markets in western North Carolina as a means to increase farm income and consumer access to the best, locally grown food.

ASAP will offer a farmer training program focused on best market practices for food safety, market regulation, structure, management, and promotional practices. ASAP will conduct workshops in various locations spanning a region with 49 farmers markets, and will select two markets for a comprehensive strategic planning process. Workshop participants will provide feedback on the presentations and training materials and at the end of two years ASAP expects to have a solid, replicable organizational model useful for farmers markets across western North Carolina and elsewhere.

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## ***2.3 Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP)***

The Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) provides funds to State Departments of Agriculture or other similar state agencies to develop innovative approaches for marketing agricultural products. The grants can be used to conduct projects in collaboration with nonprofit organizations, community, or producer groups that solve practical marketing problems facing small and medium-scale producers.

A wide variety of proposals addressing challenges or opportunities in the marketing chain are funded. Some possible topic areas include:

- determining the best method for processing, packaging, and distributing agricultural commodities;



- exploring new markets and researching consumer needs;
- determining the costs of marketing agricultural through different channels;
- developing more efficient marketing methods; and
- improving the standards of quality, grade, and packaging to encourage consistency in commercial practices.

Specific topic areas can vary from year to year.

RBEG is a discretionary program subject to annual congressional appropriations. In FY 2009, the USDA awarded \$1.3 million dollars in FSMIP funds and will award another \$1.3 million in FY 2010.

#### FSMIP Application Information

Applications must come through State Departments of Agriculture and similar state agencies. However, producer groups, economic development, and nonprofit organizations often work with their State Departments of Agriculture to develop and implement FSMIP proposals and the USDA encourages collaborative applications.

Organizations interested in developing a proposal should contact their their State Department of Agriculture. You can find the contact information for your their State Department of Agriculture at [www.nasda.org](http://www.nasda.org).

FSMIP grants are typically awarded to one year projects, but longer projects of up to two years in duration are also considered. To read the full application requirements, go to the FSMIP website [www.ams.usda.gov/FSMIP](http://www.ams.usda.gov/FSMIP)

#### FSMIP Matching Funds Requirements

State Departments of Agriculture requests for FSMIP funds must be matched, dollar for dollar, from any non-federal source. The match funds may consist of cash or in-kind contributions, state appropriations, or resources contributed by the FSMIP project partners, such as nonprofits or farming organizations.

#### FSMIP Contact Information

Janise Zygmunt, [Janise.zygmunt@usda.gov](mailto:Janise.zygmunt@usda.gov), 202-720-8043

#### FSMIP Case Study: The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture

*From the Kerr Center Website: [www.kerrcenter.com/pressrelease/06-17-09.html](http://www.kerrcenter.com/pressrelease/06-17-09.html)*

In 2007, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry, in cooperation with Oklahoma State University, Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, and the Oklahoma State Department of Education received \$56,365 to help develop food distribution models for small, medium, and large producers, and to create safe handling guidelines to foster the use of locally grown and produced food products in school systems throughout the state. The farm to school programs have grown since then, supporting Oklahoma agriculture and rural communities.

One of the activities funded by the grant was a workshop co-hosted by the Kerr Center and OSU extension staff on integrated pest management (IPM), including alternatives to pesticides and accurate pest identification as well as safe and effective handling and storage of pesticides for small-scale production.

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### **3. RESEARCH, EDUCATION, and ECONOMICS: National Institute for Food and Agriculture**

In addition to the two programs listed below, the National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) recently released a Request for Applications within the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) called “Improved Sustainable Food Systems to Reduce Hunger and Food Insecurity Domestically and Globally.” The program seeks to improve food security in vulnerable US communities and create viable local economies through a competitive grants program for integrated projects which combine research, education and extension on local and regional food systems including topics such as farm-to-institution, values-based supply chains, finance, and policy.

The program is only open to colleges and universities, and will fund up to five projects in 2010, at up to \$1 million per year for five years. Though non-profits and community based organizations (CBOs) and individuals *are not eligible* to apply for this integrated research grant<sup>1</sup>, the Request for Application specifically requires applicants to work directly with food systems development practitioners in order to learn from and leverage existing models. There may be opportunities to engage with a project in your region. Check back on the AFRI website in late 2010 or early 2011 to learn more about grant recipients.

*AFRI website: <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/afri/afri.html>*

#### ***3.1 Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP)***

The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) is a competitive grant program administered by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) that funds education, extension, outreach, and technical assistance initiatives directed at helping beginning farmers and ranchers of all types.

The BFRDP is targeted especially to collaborative local, state, and regionally based networks and partnerships to support financial and entrepreneurial training, mentoring, and apprenticeship programs, as well as “land link” programs that connect retiring with new farmers, innovative farm transfer and transition practices, and education, outreach, and curriculum development activities to assist beginning farmers and ranchers. Topics may also include production practices, conservation planning, risk management education, diversification and marketing strategies, environmental compliance, credit management, and so on.

Applicants for the BFRDP must be collaborative state, tribal, local, or regionally-based networks or partnerships of public and private groups. Networks or partnerships may include: community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations; cooperative extension; relevant USDA and state agencies; and community colleges. These networks or partnerships in turn use the BFRDP funding to provide the training and assistance to beginning farmers and ranchers.

The BFRDP sets aside 25 percent of the yearly funds for projects serving limited resource and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, including minority, immigrant, and women farmers and ranchers, as well as farm-workers desiring to become farmers in their own right.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that there are other NIFA grants for which CBOs and individuals *can* apply. Eligibility is based on the project type. Integrated projects like the “Improved Sustainable Food Systems” grant can only go out to colleges and universities.

BFRDP grants have a term of 3 years and cannot exceed \$250,000 a year. Projects funded can serve farmers who are not beginning farmers, provided that the primary purpose of the project is fostering beginning farmer opportunities.

The 2008 Farm Bill provided BFRDP with first-time mandatory funding of \$75 million, with an additional \$30 million a year authorized for appropriations. There was approximately \$18 million available for grants in 2010.

#### BFRDP Application Information

Organizations can apply for BFRDP grants online at Grants.gov.

To access the most recent copy of the RFA, visit the BFRDP website at <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/rfas/bfrdp.html>

The program gives priority to partnerships and collaborations that are led by, or include, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) with expertise in beginning agricultural producer training and outreach. Applications with a minimum of 25% of the budget allocated to partner organizations will be given priority consideration for funding.

In 2010, BFRDP began to make Development Grants available to assist organizations that have not previously been successful in obtaining competitive grants from NIFA, to sustain collaborations and innovative activities to support beginning farmer and rancher programs, and to help organizations with future program success in obtaining other grants for beginning farmer and rancher education. *Applicants may not apply directly for these grants*, but standard applications that rank below the funding line will be considered.

#### BFRDP Matching Requirements

Eligible recipients can receive consecutive grants and must provide a cash or in-kind contribution match that is equal to 25 percent of the grant funds provided. For an example of how to provide information about your match in your application, take a look at the sample materials posted here: [http://sustainableagriculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/BFR\\_samplelanguage\\_matchedfunds.pdf](http://sustainableagriculture.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/BFR_samplelanguage_matchedfunds.pdf) (Note that the sample application is for a different program – the Specialty Crop Research Initiative – but the type of language that should be used in the grant applications are similar).

#### BFRDP Contact Information

S. Sureshwaran, Program Leader, [ssureshwaran@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:ssureshwaran@nifa.usda.gov), (202) 720-7536.

#### BFRDP Case Study: California FarmLink

In 2009, California FarmLink was awarded \$525,000 over 3 years for a project called “Facilitating Access to Land and Capital: A California Collaboration to Advance Beginning Farmer and Rancher Entrepreneurship.” The project built on ten years of experience facilitating farm transitions, providing technical assistance, hosting workshops, financing farm operations, and empowering farmers to build assets through CA FarmLink’s Individual Development Account (IDA) program

Specifically, the program provided one-on-one technical assistance to beginning farmers and ranchers in the region, as well as training and access to financing programs. These young farmers play an essential role in developing local and regional food systems as the next generation of producers and entrepreneurs selling food into their communities. Rebecca King of Watsonville, California, received technical assistance and business planning from CA FarmLink’s program, and also participated in the IDA program, which allowed her to save around \$9,000 to invest in infrastructure for her sheep dairy. Eventually, with the benefit of financial training and

a growing operation, Rebecca was also able to obtain a \$90,000 loan from CA FarmLink for equipment that helped her grow her business, Garden Variety Cheese, which produces farmstead cheeses for sale at local farmers' markets and to local restaurants.

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### ***3.2 Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program***

Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program (CFP) funds non-profit organizations for projects to meet the food needs of low-income people by increasing their communities' capacity to provide enough food for its residents. CFP also funds projects that:

- promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues;
- meet specific state, local, or neighborhood food and agriculture needs for infrastructure improvement and development; or
- create marketing activities that benefit both agricultural producers and low-income consumers.

Additional program objectives include: developing linkages between two or more sectors of the food system; supporting the development of entrepreneurial projects; developing innovative linkages between the for-profit and nonprofit food sectors; and encouraging long-term planning activities and multi-system, inter-agency collaboration.

Private non-profit organizations are eligible to receive funding directly as well as in collaborations with local government or with private, for-profit companies.

The 2008 Farm Bill made the CFP a permanent program, with mandatory funding of at least \$5 million a year. There is \$5 million available for CFP grants in FY 2010.

#### CFP Application Information

Organizations can apply directly for grants at the Grants.gov website.

To be considered competitive for a CFP grant, organizations should have experience in community food work, job training, and business development in low income communities. They should also demonstrate a willingness to share information with researchers and other practitioners.

Projects can be funded from one to three years, in amounts from \$10,000 to \$300,000. To read the full application requirements, go to <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/cfp/cfp.html>

#### CFP Matching Requirements

A dollar for dollar match is required during the term of the grant, unless the grant is for training and technical assistance. The match funds may be cash or in-kind contributions in the form of facilities, equipment, or services, etc.

#### CFP Contact Information

Dr. Elizabeth Tuckermanty, [etuckermanty@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:etuckermanty@nifa.usda.gov).

#### CFP Case Study: Practical Farmers of Iowa

In 2003, Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI), in Ames, IA, partnered with the City of Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department, the Des Moines Community Gardening Coalition, and a host of other supporters to form a community food security project called Digging Deeper. To facilitate this project, PFI applied for funding through the Community Food Projects Grant Program and received an \$118,000 award.

The mission of this collaborative project was to expand food security activities and increase the capacity of six underserved neighborhoods to meet their own food needs. PFI and their partners' goal was to significantly increase the production and access to food inside the city limits. They built 120 raised bed gardens in the six targeted neighborhoods and designed nine edible landscapes at neighborhood-based institutions.

Once the gardens were in place and gardeners recruited, PFI held gardening classes on basic care and maintenance of the plants and trees at the community sites. Individuals knowledgeable in plant care also volunteered to be "Garden Mentors" to help with the training of gardeners and monitoring of the sites. Six years since its inception, the Digging Deeper project is still thriving and PFI credits the various levels of community involvement for its success.

*The Community Food Security Coalition has a number of additional case studies of successful Community on their website (<http://www.foodsecurity.org/funding.html#samples>)*

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### ***3.3 Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education***

The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program is the pre-eminent national research and extension competitive grants program to advance a more sustainable food and farming system. Its mission is "to advance sustainable innovations to the whole of American agriculture." Since it began in 1988, SARE has funded more than 4,000 sustainable agriculture research, education, and professional development projects across the country. Sharing project results is a cornerstone of the SARE program with field days, workshops, and conferences in every region and an Outreach office producing an ever-growing library of books, bulletins, online resources, as well as a vast archive of profiles of SARE grantees.

While many SARE projects specifically address research on production methods, the program also has provided grants specifically on alternative marketing strategies, value-added production, and other projects that relate directly to local and regional food production.

SARE is a discretionary program subject to annual congressional appropriations. There is nearly \$19.2 million available in 2010.

#### **SARE Application Information**

SARE is administered by four regional offices guided by administrative councils of local experts. Every region offers Research and Education, Professional Development, and Farmer/Rancher Research grants. Some regions also offer Graduate Student, Sustainable Community Innovation, and Planning grants. Here is a general outline of each of the grant types:

- **Research and Education Grants:** Ranging from \$30,000 to \$150,000 or more, these grants fund projects that usually involve scientists, producers, and others in an interdisciplinary approach.

- **Professional Development Grants:** To spread the knowledge about sustainable concepts and practices, these projects educate Cooperative Extension Service staff and other ag professionals.
- **Producer Grants:** Producers apply for grants that typically run between \$1,000 and \$15,000 to conduct on-farm research, marketing, and demonstration projects and share the results with other farmers and ranchers.
- **On Farm Research/Partnership:** Supports on-farm research by Extension, NRCS, and/or nonprofit organizations. Available in the Northeast, Southern and Western regions.
- **Sustainable Community Innovation:** Forges connections between sustainable agriculture and rural community development. Available in the Northeast and Southern regions.

You can apply for SARE grants through your regional office. Each office has a slightly different set of granting schedules, grant types, and requirements. To find out more about the grants available in your area, visit one of the regional websites listed under “Contact Information” below.

#### SARE Matching Requirements

No match required

#### SARE Contact Information

**North Central SARE:** <http://www.sare.org/ncrsare/>

Bill Wilcke

Regional Coordinator, North Central Region SARE

612-625-8205

[wilck001@umn.edu](mailto:wilck001@umn.edu)

**Southern SARE:** <http://www.southernsare.uga.edu/>

Jeff Jordan

Program Director, Southern Region SARE

770-412-4787

[jjordan@uga.edu](mailto:jjordan@uga.edu)

**Northeast SARE:** <http://nesare.org/>

Vern Grubinger

Regional Coordinator, Northeast Region SARE

802-257-7967 x13

[vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu](mailto:vernon.grubinger@uvm.edu)

**Western SARE:** <http://wsare.usu.edu/>

Phil Rasmussen

Director, Western Region SARE

435.797.3394

[philip.rasmussen@usu.edu](mailto:philip.rasmussen@usu.edu)

#### SARE Case Study: Picket Fence Creamery

*For more examples of projects, search for “food systems” in the SARE project report database:*

<http://www.sare.org/MySare/ProjectReport.aspx>

Picket Fence Creamery is a family operation in Woodward, Iowa managed by Jeff and Jill Burkhart and their children. The farm consists of 80 acres of rotationally grazed grass where they milk 80 dairy cows and then bottle

the milk in a Grade A creamery. In 2003, the Burkhardt's received a \$6000 SARE grant to help in the construction of a bottling plant on their farm and to share the results of their project with other producers.

The SARE funds helped to pay for the business plan and feasibility study that made it possible for the Burkhardt's to apply for a loan to build their creamery and dairy store. Before the store opened, the Burkharts sold raw milk on the farm and through a local coop. They continue to sell locally, but are now able to sell a gallon of bottled milk for three-times as much as the raw milk, and also sell flavored milk for six-times as much per gallon. Not only does the farm provide a product that's in high demand in the local community, but the value-added production has increased their financial stability.

The SARE grant also allowed Picket Fence to do local outreach to other producers who were interested in value-added production as well as with educators, students, and general consumers who are interested in learning more about local and regional foods. The Creamery joined up with Practical Farmers of Iowa to host a field day in 2004 and continues to host tours and monthly events to teach the community about sustainable milk production, from cow to carton.

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## **4. RURAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY: Rural Business-Cooperative Service**

### **ONLY RURAL AREAS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FUNDING.**

Generally, a rural area is defined as any region with a population of no more than 50,000 people. The area cannot be immediately adjacent to a city or metropolitan area with a population of over 50,000. The Community Facilities Grant Program is an exception and is only available in rural areas and towns up to 20,000 in population. Another exception exists with respect to the Rural Business and Industry Loan program – loans may be made to cooperatives for value-added processing facilities in non-rural areas provided they service farmers in the local area and help improve farm income. As investments in integrated local and regional food systems grow, there will be some additional re-conceptualization of rural development rules along similar lines.

### ***4.1 Value-Added Producer Grants***

The Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG) program provides funds to increase farm income, create new jobs, contribute to community and rural economic development, and enhance food choices for consumers. VAPG is designed to increase farm income by supporting production practices, marketing, and processing that add value to a product, or through the development of mid-tier value chains. VAPG funds can go to individual producers, organizations representing agricultural producers, farming and ranching cooperatives among others.

For a product to be considered value-added it must have at least one of the following characteristics:

- A change in the physical state of the product has taken place, and it cannot be returned to its original state (e.g., dicing tomatoes, turning fruit into preserves or filleting fish).
- Using a production method that enhances the value of the product in the marketplace (e.g., organic carrots, eggs from free range chickens, or beef produced from grass-fed cattle).
- Physical segregation that enhances the value of the agricultural product by separating it from other varieties of that same product on the same farm during the harvesting, processing, and marketing (e.g., segregated non-rBGH milk).

- An agricultural commodity used to generate renewable energy on a farm or ranch (e.g., using grassy or woody plant materials for the creation of biomass energy).
- Marketing a food product as locally-grown by selling the product within 400 miles or within the state in which it was grown or raised (e.g., aggregating supply for local schools and institutional buyers).

RBEG is a discretionary program subject to annual congressional appropriations. There is \$20.4 million in VAPG funding available in FY 2010. Ten percent of this money is reserved for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers<sup>2</sup> and another ten percent for the development of mid-tier value chains<sup>3</sup>.

### VAPG Application Information

You can apply for a VAPG grant online through Grants.gov, or submit a paper application through your state's rural development office. All applicants are strongly encouraged to contact their state Rural Development office for assistance. To find your local Rural Development office, go to [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd\\_map.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html)

If you are seeking a grant of \$50,000 or less, you can submit an abbreviated application package. However, if awarded, you will need to submit all applications materials.

In the application package, the group or individual requesting grant funds must show applicant eligibility, product eligibility, and purpose eligibility.

- If applying for the Beginning Farmer or Rancher, or Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher funds, you must verify your status as a member of one of these groups.
- If applying for the mid-tier value chain funding, you must explain how your project will aid in the development of a local or regional food supply network<sup>4</sup>.

VAPG offers planning grants of up to \$100,000 and working capital grants of up to \$300,000. Applicants may propose projects of up to 3 years in duration.

- Planning grants can be used to obtain legal advice, develop a market or business plan, or conduct a feasibility study to determine if the value-added product would be successful.
- Working Capital or operating grants can be used to pay salaries, purchase office supplies and equipment or fund a marketing campaign.

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<sup>2</sup> Beginning farmers are those with less than ten years experience and socially disadvantaged farmers are a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice.

<sup>3</sup> Value chains are relationships between producers, aggregators, packers, transporters, and distributors which are based on mutual understanding, trust, and the belief that all can do best when working cooperatively. This system contrasts with marketing relationships based on competition where one link in the supply chain seeks to maximize its profit at the expense of others. Mid-tier value chains are specifically aimed at aiding small and especially mid-sized farms to improve income opportunities through participation in a coordinated value chain.

<sup>4</sup> In 2009, applications had to include the names of at least two partners within the value chain that link producers to businesses which market the value-added product in a way that benefits small to medium-sized farms; information on how the project will increase competitiveness of at least two small to medium-sized farms due to the marketing of the value-added product; at least one agreement on a marketing strategy with another member of the value chain; proof that the applicant owns and produces more than 50 percent of the raw agricultural commodity that will be used for the value-added product; and demonstration of how the project will increase the customer base and profits. Check back for possible changes to these rules in the VAPG rule and the 2010 RFA.



To see full application requirements and access application tools, visit the VAPG website: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm>. (Note: this is the correct URL, despite the fact that it is spelled VADG and not VAPG)

#### VAPG Matching Information

You must be able to match the amount of money for which you are applying in cash, loans, or in-kind contributions. Other federal grant money cannot be counted towards the match. You must be able to verify that you will have the funds at the time of the application by way of a statement from a lending institution or letter from a donor. The matching funds must be used during the course of the grant period.

#### VAPG Contact Information

Tracey Kennedy, [Tracey.Kennedy@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:Tracey.Kennedy@wdc.usda.gov), 202-690-1428

Andrew Jermolowicz, [andrew.jermolowicz@usda.gov](mailto:andrew.jermolowicz@usda.gov), 202-690-1416

Lyn Millhiser, [lyn.millhiser@vt.usda.gov](mailto:lyn.millhiser@vt.usda.gov), 802-828-6069

#### VAPG Case Study: California Alliance with Family Farmers

The California Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) used two Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) awards to establish the Growers Collaborative, an aggregating and distribution initiative that serves Sacramento and the Bay area, Southern California, the Central Valley and Central Coast. CAFF received a \$64,000 planning grant in 2005 and a \$155,000 operating grant in 2006. The Collaborative sells local fruits and vegetables from family farms to public and private grade schools, colleges, hospitals, and corporate cafeterias. By aggregating product from farms that are too small to work with conventional distributors, the Growers Collaborative removes a significant marketing barrier for independent family farms. The Collaborative delivers fresh produce to institutions through three regional offices in northern, southern and central California, and through an online ordering system.

Since all of the product that goes through the Growers' Collaborative is sustainably produced, source-verified and fully traceable, their business model fits neatly into VAPG's criteria for adding value through "identity preserved" marketing. The Growers' Collaborative also sources organic produce, which qualifies as value-added because the production method enhances the value of the product in the marketplace. The Growers Collaborative also works to promote social justice by placing a priority on working with a range of farmers from different cultural and regional contexts and by creating access to fresh fruits and vegetables in low-income communities and schools.

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## ***4.2 Rural Business Enterprise Grants***

The purpose of the Rural Business Enterprise Grants (RBEG) program is to foster the development of small and emerging business enterprises<sup>5</sup> in rural areas through grants to public entities, nonprofit organizations, and federally recognized Indian Tribal groups. Grant funds may be used for a variety of projects to build local and regional food systems including land development, road and building construction, the purchase of equipment, training and technical assistance, and the start and/or operation of a revolving loan fund. RBEG funds cannot be used for the growing, cultivation, and harvesting of an agricultural commodity.

RBEG is a discretionary program subject to annual congressional appropriations. There is nearly \$39 million available for RBEG projects in FY 2010.

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<sup>5</sup> A small and emerging business is one with 50 or fewer employees and less than \$1 million in projected revenues.

### RBEG Application Information

RBEG applications are listed at Grants.gov and are accepted online or at local Rural Development offices. Funding decisions are usually made at district or area offices and applicants are strongly encouraged to contact their state or local office for assistance. To find your local Rural Development office, go to:  
[http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd\\_map.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html)

The RBEG process begins with a pre-application. After determining the order of funding priorities at the beginning of the fiscal year, the Rural Business – Cooperative Services office will determine eligibility and request applicants to submit formal applications.

There is no set minimum and maximum for grant amounts, however smaller grant projects are prioritized. Applicants for grants to establish a revolving loan fund must include details on their experience operating a revolving loan program, proposed projects, and financial ability to operate a revolving fund and plans for leveraging.

To find more information on this program, please see the RBEG website:  
<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/busp/rbeg.htm>

### RBEG Matching Requirements

There are no matching requirements for RBEG funds.

### RBEG Contact Information

Cindy Mason, [cindy.mason@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:cindy.mason@wdc.usda.gov), 202-690-1433

### RBEG Case Study: Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA)

In 2008, the Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association (ALBA) of Salinas, CA and El Parajo Community Development Center of Watsonville, CA formed the Salinas and Pajaro Valleys Small Business Initiative to support economic opportunity and the small business sector in their region. They used a \$98,000 Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) to provide business training and support to farmers, farm workers, and entrepreneurs to develop value-added food enterprises to increase wealth in Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties.

The Small Business Initiative targeted 120 new and existing business ventures most of which are minority-owned, Spanish-speaking and limited-resource enterprises. With RBEG funds, the Small Business Initiative hired two bilingual staff that conduct workshops for business owners, develop business management systems, work one-on-one with owners to help them access capital through loan funds and Individual Development Accounts (IDA), and organize bilingual business expos in order to provide additional training and networking opportunities. Many of the entrepreneurs are farmers who are adding value to their crops through selling them locally as processed products (e.g., turning tomatoes, onions, jalapenos and garlic into salsa), or people interested in opening *taquerias* and *tiendas* (restaurants and small groceries).

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## ***4.3 Rural Business Opportunity Grant***

The Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG) is designed to promote economic growth and sustainability in rural communities. Public entities, nonprofit organizations, and federally recognized Indian Tribal groups that are located in rural areas and serve rural communities are eligible to receive RBOG funds.

The RBOG is primarily a technical assistance grant, and often funds projects that focus on business planning and better practice management. Specifically the RBOG has funded organizations pursuing economic development planning, the identification of new business opportunities, various trainings for rural entrepreneurs, and the development of rural business incubators.

In 2010, the RBOG Request for Applications gives preference to “Great Region” applications, or applications from multi-jurisdictional areas within a State, territory, or Federally-designated Tribal land or crossing such boundaries in order to emphasize whole-region approaches to rural development. The 2010 RFA also explicitly highlights programs which use one of 5 “USDA key strategies” for rural development, the first of which is “Local and regional food systems as a strategy for encouraging production agriculture and related industries in new wealth creation.”

Priority is given to rural communities that have suffered persistent poverty, job deterioration, and population decline. Once selected, grantees may be provided with targeted technical assistance by the USDA or other federal agencies.

RBOG is a discretionary program subject to annual congressional appropriations. The RBOG program received \$2.2 million in FY 2009 and nearly \$2.5 million in FY 2010.

#### RBOG Application Information

RBOG applications are listed at [Grants.gov](http://Grants.gov) and are accepted online or on paper at your local Rural Development offices. You are strongly encouraged to contact your local office for assistance with the grant. To find your local Rural Development office, go to [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd\\_map.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html)

Grants will be given for up to \$250,000 for project periods of up to two years.

#### RBOG Matching Requirements

No matching funds are required.

#### RBOG Contact Information

Andrew Jermolowicz, [andrew.jermolowicz@usda.gov](mailto:andrew.jermolowicz@usda.gov), 202-720-7558

#### RBOG Case Study: Sullivan County Agricultural Local Development Corporation

Agriculture remains the leading economic sector in Sullivan County, New York and the surrounding rural area, bringing in \$78 million dollars annually. Much of the agriculture business is in livestock production, with 200 livestock farms within a 75 mile radius.

Members of the Sullivan County Agricultural Local Development Corporation (AgLDC) noticed a decline in the number of ranchers taking their livestock to be slaughtered and processed. Most of these producers have had difficulty transporting their livestock to the only USDA inspected facility in the region, which is approximately 100 miles away. Due to the time, distance, and fuel expenses required to transport the animals, most producers have resorted to selling their livestock at auction. With New York City only 90 miles away, AgLDC knew that the market for local, specialty meats existed, and that the only missing link was a quality local processing facility.

AgLDC received a \$50,000 Rural Business Opportunity Grant (RBOG) to hire a consultant to provide technical assistance for development, business, and operational plans of a red meat processing facility. Once established, a centrally located, full service meat processing facility in Liberty, New York will be the connection to more profitable markets that will directly increase the success and sustainability of regional livestock producers.

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## ***4.4 Rural Cooperative Development Grant***

The goal of the Rural Cooperative Development Grant (RCDG) program is to improve local businesses in rural America through cooperative development. RCDG will provide grant funds to organizations providing technical assistance to new or existing rural cooperatives. Some eligible uses of funds include:

- providing training and education on financial management, accounting, and cooperative law to established cooperatives;
- conducting feasibility studies and organizational guidance to new cooperatives; and
- assessing the need and evaluating the potential support base for newly developing cooperatives.

Any nonprofit or higher education institute is eligible to apply. However, to be considered competitive for this program, organizations should have expertise in establishing rural cooperatives, and show a commitment to working in underserved rural areas.

RCDG is a discretionary program subject to annual congressional appropriations. In FY 2009, the RCDG program received \$5.9 million, and in FY 2010 it received \$11.4 million in federal funding.

### RCDG Application Information

RCDG applications are listed at Grants.gov and are accepted online or on paper at your local Rural Development offices. You are strongly encouraged to contact your local office for assistance with the grant. To find your local Rural Development office, go to [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd\\_map.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html)

You can submit your application up to 30 days before the deadline for a preliminary review. The preliminary review will assess the completeness and the eligibility of the application, but will not evaluate the quality of the proposed project. If information is missing from the application, you will be contacted before the deadline.

Projects are currently funded for just one year at a time (though legislative authority exists for three year grants), and in amounts up to \$200,000.

Organizations interested in receiving financial, legal or other services related to cooperative development from a RCDG-funded center, can locate a grant recipient here: [www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/rcdg/rcdg.htm](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/rcdg/rcdg.htm)

### RCDG Matching Requirements

The matching fund requirement is 25 percent of the total project cost (5 percent in the case of tribally-controlled institutions). Please note that priority is no longer given to matching contributions greater than the required 25 percent. Applicants must verify in their applications that all matching funds are available during the grant period. If an applicant is awarded a grant, additional verification documentation may be required. All of the matching funds must be spent on eligible expenses during the grant period, and must be from eligible sources. Unless provided by other authorizing legislation, other Federal grant funds cannot be used as matching funds. However, matching funds may include loan proceeds from Federal sources.

Matching funds must be spent in advance or as a pro-rata portion of grant funds being expended. All of the matching funds must be provided by either the applicant or a third party in the form of cash or in-kind

contributions. The grantee must be able to document and verify the number of hours worked (e.g. for staff time) and the value associated with the in-kind contribution. If the in-kind contributions are from board/ advisory council members for their travel, incidentals, etc., the grantee must have established written policies explaining how these costs are normally reimbursed, including rates. The USDA will *no longer accept Board or Advisory members' time* as an in-kind match.

#### RCDG Contact Information

Andrew Jermolowicz, [andrew.jermolowicz@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:andrew.jermolowicz@wdc.usda.gov), (202) 720-7558.

#### RCDG Case Study: Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development

The mission of the Kentucky Center for Agriculture and Rural Development (KCARD) is to foster business success and growth by delivering hands-on technical assistance and by providing education to agricultural and rural businesses seeking to enhance their economic opportunities. KCARD sought to improve economic conditions of Kentucky farmers and ranchers by promoting new cooperatives and continuing efforts to improve existing ones. In 2008, they applied for the Rural Cooperative Development Grant (RCDG), and received a \$200,000 award.

One of the many cooperatives they assisted was Central Kentucky Custom Meats (CKCM), which at the time, was processing red meat for local producers and selling from an on site retail store. After the CKCM received multiple requests for poultry processing, they decided investing in a USDA certified poultry processing facility would be profitable and beneficial to the area producers. Broiler chickens are the number two cash crop in Kentucky, but there are few places smaller scale farmers can take their birds to be processed and sold.

KCARD worked with CKCM to transform their ideas into a formal business plan and apply for funding. In February 2009, CKCM was able to secure a zero interest loan to construct a poultry processing facility and obtain USDA certification, so that meat can be sold to the public.

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### ***4.5 Small, Socially Disadvantaged Producer Grants***

The Small Socially Disadvantaged Producer Grant program (SSDPG) aims to provide technical assistance to socially disadvantaged, small-scale producers. Only cooperatives or an association of cooperatives are eligible to apply, and they must be proposing to provide technical assistance to socially disadvantaged producers that have averaged \$250,000 or less in annual gross sales in last 3 years. Until recently, the program was considered a subset within the Rural Cooperative Development Grants program.

The applicant must also be from a rural area, with a population less than 50,000 people; applicants from smaller towns are prioritized. The membership or board of the cooperative that is applying must be comprised of at least 75 percent socially disadvantaged producers<sup>6</sup>.

Examples of eligible technical assistance under the SSDPG program are market research, business planning, legal advice, product development or improvement, and feasibility studies.

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<sup>6</sup> The USDA defines a socially disadvantaged producer as farmers, ranchers, loggers, fishermen and other agricultural producers who have been subjected to racial, ethnic or, with respect to certain programs, gender prejudices.

The SSDPG is a discretionary program subject to annual congressional appropriations. Over \$1.4 million dollars in funding was awarded in FY 2009, and over \$3.4 million will be awarded in FY 2010.

#### SSDPG Application Information

SSDPG applications are listed at Grants.gov and are accepted online or on paper at your local Rural Development offices. You are strongly encouraged to contact your local office for assistance with the grant. To find your local Rural Development office, go to [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/reed\\_map.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/reed_map.html)

The maximum award amount is \$175,000. All projects proposed must be one year in length.

#### SSDPG Matching Requirements

No matching funds are required.

#### SSDPG Contact Information

Gayle Auman, [gayle.auman@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:gayle.auman@wdc.usda.gov), 334-279-3620

#### SSDPG Case Study: InterTribal Bison Cooperative

The InterTribal Bison Cooperative is a non-profit tribal organization made up of 57 member tribes in 19 states, with a collective herd of over 15,000 bison. ITBC's role is to act as a facilitator in coordinating education and training programs, developing marketing strategies, coordinating the transfer of surplus buffalo from national parks to tribal lands, and providing technical assistance to its membership in developing sound management plans that will help each tribal herd become a successful and self-sufficient operation.

In 2008, the ITBC received a Small Socially Disadvantaged Producer Grant for \$175,000 to help their member tribes develop farmers' market stores to provide economic sustainability and jobs in their local communities. These stores will give local residents better access to fresh, locally grown foods as well as provide badly needed jobs. Many Native American communities have unemployment rates that are several times higher than the state average. Some of the funds also went towards developing an e-commerce site to market bison and bison-related products from the coop.

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## ***4.6 Community Facilities Grant Program***

The Community Facilities Program (CF) provides grant funds to build or acquire "essential community facilities" in rural areas with no more than 20,000 residents. Note: this program is different from other RD programs which can be in communities as large as 50,000. Local governments, non-profit organizations and federally-recognized Native American Indian tribes are eligible to apply.

The project must not be a commercial endeavor and must serve the community as a whole. This means, for example, that a for-profit processing facility that allows various small producers to process and then sell their products would not qualify for a grant, but that a kitchen owned by the school district that processed local produce for a school breakfast and lunch program would be eligible. Grants can go to projects including, but not limited to: farmers markets, community kitchens and food processing centers, facilities and equipment used by not-for-profit distribution networks, cooking schools, and community food banks.



The CF program is a discretionary program subject to annual congressional appropriations. In FY 2010, CF received \$44 million in federal funding and an additional \$31 million in American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (stimulus) funds that must be awarded by August 2010.

#### CF Application Information

CF applications are listed at Grants.gov and are accepted online or on paper at your local Rural Development offices. All applications are filed and processed in either the State or local office of the State in which the project is located. To find your local Rural Development office, go to: [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd\\_map.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html)

#### CF Matching Requirements

No matching grants are required.

#### CF Contact Information

Chad Parker, [chad.parker@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:chad.parker@wdc.usda.gov), 202-720-1502

#### CF Case Study: Vermont Foodbank Regional Distribution Center

In 2009, the Vermont Foodbank received a \$50,000 Community Facilities grant to purchase and install freezer and cooler units for its newly constructed 21,000 square foot regional distribution center in Brattleboro, VT.

The new units make it possible for the Foodbank to receive and store larger food donations and harvest excess and unmarketable produce from local farmers and gleaning programs and provide fresh, healthy food to food bank clients.

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## ***4.7 Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan Programs***

The Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan Program (B&I) aims to increase opportunities for new and existing businesses in rural areas to borrow money from private lenders. Through the B&I program, the USDA will issue a guarantee to the private lender, giving the borrower more favorable interest rates. The USDA will also cover part of the loss if the borrower becomes unable to make regular loan payments.

The 2008 Farm Bill designated 5 percent of the total B&I guarantee funds to support local and regional food enterprises. Loans can support enterprises that process, distribute, aggregate, store, or market foods produced either in-state or transported less than 400 miles from the origin of the product. To be eligible under the reserved funds, the borrower must be a cooperative, nonprofit organization, federally recognized Native American Indian Tribe, public entity, corporation, or an individual. They also must be in a rural area, except that in the case of a cooperative processing facility, in which case it can be located in a non-rural area provided it is serving local farmers and improving farm income. Priority is given to underserved communities with limited supply of affordable, healthy food and retail grocery stores, as well as a high rate of poverty. The maximum loan guarantee USDA will issue is 80 percent for loans of \$5 million or less, 70 percent for loans between \$5 million and \$10 million, and 60 percent for loans of more than \$10 million. Loan funds can be used for business expansion and development, purchase of land, buildings, equipment and supplies, or to provide working capital.

#### B&I Application Information

To apply for a loan, contact your State Rural Development office to find participating lenders in your area. To find your local Rural Development office, go to: [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd\\_map.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html)

### B&I Matching Requirements

Matching funds are not applicable to this opportunity.

### B&I Contact Information

Carolyn Parker, [Carolyn.parker@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:Carolyn.parker@wdc.usda.gov), 202-690-4103

Brenda Griffin, [brenda.griffin@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:brenda.griffin@wdc.usda.gov), 202- 720-6802

### B&I Case Study: Prairieland Foods, LLC

In 2010, a locally owned dairy processing facility in Hallam, Nebraska received a loan to purchase the property next door to expand production to meet growing demand for sustainable, source-verified dairy products. The project will also help to diversify the market exposure for milk produced at local dairies, including Prairieland's partner company, Prairieland Dairy, LLC. The loan guarantee was for \$650,000 and leveraged an additional \$732,182 in funding.

The facility will create three new jobs, and in the near future Prairieland Foods LLC intends to expand production from fluid milk to produce cheese, yogurt, ice cream, and other dairy foods for a local target market in a nearby county.

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## **5. Office of Advocacy and Outreach**

### ***5.1 Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (OASDFR)***

The Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Program (OASDRF), also known as the "Section 2501 program," is designed to enhance the coordination of outreach, technical assistance, and education efforts authorized under USDA programs through eligible entities and to reach socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers in a linguistically appropriate manner to improve their participation in the full range of USDA programs.

Proposed projects should identify one or more of the goals targeted at socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers:

- coordinate existing USDA outreach efforts and create new outreach, technical assistance, and education networks focused on increasing participation in USDA programs;
- enhance the effectiveness of outreach, technical assistance, and education efforts already authorized under USDA programs;
- improve the means by which assistance is provided through USDA programs; and
- increase participation in USDA programs by socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners.

The program will receive \$20 million in mandatory farm bill funding in fiscal year (FY) 2010-2012. The bulk of these funds will be available for competitive grants to eligible applicants including community-based organizations, minority-serving colleges and universities, and Indian Tribes.

### OASDFR Application Information



Organizations can apply for OASDFR grants via Grants.gov. Projects can last up to three years. Projects caps are limited to \$1.2 million with annual caps of \$400,000.

#### OASDFR Matching Requirements

No matching funds are required.

#### OASDFR Contact Information

Beatrice Herbert, [beatrice.herbert@osec.usda.gov](mailto:beatrice.herbert@osec.usda.gov), 202-205-4130

Lavinia Panizo, [lavinia.panizo@osec.usda.gov](mailto:lavinia.panizo@osec.usda.gov), 202-720-6350

#### OASDFR Case Study: New Entry Sustainable Agriculture Project

The New Entry Sustainable Agriculture Project at Tufts University in Massachusetts assists people with limited resources and an interest in small-scale commercial agriculture to begin farming in Massachusetts. The broader goals of New Entry are to support the vitality and sustainability of the region's agriculture, to build long term economic self-reliance and food security among participants and their communities, and to expand access to high-quality, culturally appropriate foods in underserved areas through production of locally-grown foods.

In 2008, the New Entry project received an OASDFR grant of \$299,617 to support their core programs, including training, education, and technical assistance to refugees, immigrants and other underserved producers to help them earn a living and also meet the growing demand for locally-produced, culturally appropriate foods in the region. New Entry participants from India, Iraq, Liberia, Vietnam, USA, Cambodia, Cameroon, Kenya, Laos, Liberia, Malaysia, Korea, Ghana, Zambia, Puerto Rico, and Zimbabwe attended hands-on workshops in production methods like irrigation, field prep, and soil testing and in business training. With help from the grant, New Entry Project has developed and publicized a number of technical resources and guides including a Guide to Organizing a Cooperative CSA. In addition to direct work with producers, the New Entry project also cultivates relationships with the public who are interested in purchasing CSA shares from the New Entry farmer cooperative.

*For more information, visit the New Entry Website: <http://nesfp.nutrition.tufts.edu/about/index.html>*

# Helpful Resources

This resource list is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather a starting point for your search. Some of the organizations listed provide direct technical assistance with program development, grant writing, or business development. Others offer workshops and other educational opportunities while still others provide online or print “self-help” resources.

Consider reaching out to other food and agriculture organizations in your region that may have advice for local organizations or people to talk to. And don’t be afraid to think outside of the box. As more and more people become aware of the many connections between vibrant local and regional food systems and economic development, public health, and the environment, you may find allies in unexpected places.

## GENERAL

**Agriculture of the Middle** – A web resource providing case studies, white papers, and other research on ways in which mid-sized farms and ranches can prosper through the development of “mid-scale food value chains.” This site is particularly helpful for those who want to understand how to apply for a Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG) in the 10 percent set-aside for mid-tier value chain projects, or for organizations who simply want ideas or inspiration for how to develop regional business models that make sense for mid-sized producers.

*Website: <http://agofthemiddle.org>*

**Agriculture Marketing Resource Center (AgMRC)** – This national online resource provides information for producers and entrepreneurs interested in value-added agriculture. Because this is an online resource, there are no opportunities for hands-on technical assistance; however, the AgMRC does produce a list of local food resources state-by-state.

*General website: <http://www.agmrc.org/>*

*Local food resources by state:*

*[http://www.agmrc.org/markets\\_\\_industries/food/state\\_localregional\\_food\\_programs/index.cfm](http://www.agmrc.org/markets__industries/food/state_localregional_food_programs/index.cfm)*

**ATTRA, National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service**, especially the Marketing Business and Risk-Management Section – ATTRA provides outstanding technical documents for a broad array of sustainable agriculture issues from crops to compost to bio-energy. The ATTRA section on marketing specifically includes relevant materials including information on Value-Added Processing, Business Management, and a funding guide that includes both federal and state and local opportunities.

*Website: <http://attra.ncat.org/marketing.html>*

**Building Sustainable Places** – A funding guide developed in partnership by the USDA, the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, and National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) with support from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. The guide is written for anyone seeking help from federal programs to foster innovative enterprises in agriculture and forestry in the United States.

*Website: <http://attra.ncat.org/guide/>*

**Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs)** – A Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) is a specialized financial institution that works in market niches that are underserved by traditional financial institutions. CDFIs provide a unique range of financial products and services in economically distressed target markets, such as mortgage financing for low-income and first-time homebuyers and not-for-profit developers, flexible underwriting and risk capital for needed community facilities, and technical assistance, commercial loans and investments to small start-up or expanding businesses in low-income areas. Many CDFIs have experience investing in food systems projects, including direct loans to producers to expand operations, loans for infrastructure like processing facilities, and for projects further downstream on the supply chain, such as financing for supermarket projects.

*List of CDFIs by state: <http://www.cdfifund.gov/docs/certification/cdfi/CDFIbyState.pdf>*

*CDFI US Treasury Website: [http://cdfifund.gov/what\\_we\\_do/programs\\_id.asp?programID=9](http://cdfifund.gov/what_we_do/programs_id.asp?programID=9)*

**Community Food Security Coalition** – An organization dedicated to building strong, sustainable, local and regional food systems that ensure access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for all people at all times. CFSC provides limited technical assistance to organizations that wish to apply for a Community Food Program Grant and for organizations that wish to start a Farm to School Program in their community.

*Community Food Program Guide: [http://www.foodsecurity.org/cfp\\_help.html#cfp\\_guide](http://www.foodsecurity.org/cfp_help.html#cfp_guide)*

*Community Food Program Grant Assistance: Begin by reviewing the guide above, then contact Zy Weinberg via email at [zyweinberg@earthlink.net](mailto:zyweinberg@earthlink.net)*

*Contact for CFSC Farm to School Program: Marion Kalb, Director, [marion@foodsecurity.org](mailto:marion@foodsecurity.org), 505-474-5782*

*General website: <http://www.foodsecurity.org/>*

**Cooperative Development Centers** – Cooperative Development Centers generally provide technical assistance to existing cooperatives and start-up assistance to new cooperative ventures. Some centers host annual conferences, workshops, and other educational opportunities. Coop development centers focus on many different types of businesses, but most have an agricultural or food area of focus.

*List of Coop Development Centers on the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center Site:*

*[http://www.agmrc.org/directories\\_\\_state\\_resources/related\\_directories/cooperative\\_development\\_programscenters.cfm](http://www.agmrc.org/directories__state_resources/related_directories/cooperative_development_programscenters.cfm)*

**Cooperative Extension Offices** – The Cooperative Extension System is a nationwide, non-credit educational network. Each U.S. state and territory has a state office at its land-grant university and a network of local or regional offices. These offices are staffed by one or more experts who provide useful, practical, and research-based information to agricultural producers, small business owners, youth, consumers, and others in rural areas and communities of all sizes. Some extension offices have more resources than others to assist specifically with local and regional food systems development projects, so get in touch with your local office and ask who you should talk with about your specific needs.

*Website: <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/Extension/index.html>*

**CS Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems at Michigan State University** – The CS Mott Group provides research, information and resources to foster community food systems development. Some of the information is specific to Michigan and the Midwest, but much of the research and many of the publications are transferable to other contexts. The Farm to School program also provides some technical assistance for organizations in Michigan working on farm to school initiatives.

General Contact : [mottgroup@anr.msu.edu](mailto:mottgroup@anr.msu.edu), 517-432-1612  
Farm to School Outreach Contact: Colleen Matts, [matts@msu.edu](mailto:matts@msu.edu), 517-432-0310  
Website: <http://mottgroup.msu.edu/Home/tabid/107/Default.aspx>

**eXtension.org Entrepreneurship Resource Guide** – The Cooperative Extension Service’s online resource includes a section focused on agricultural entrepreneurship with resources particularly relevant to food systems development work. The other sections (for example, the resource section on mobile meat slaughter) might also be helpful for particular types of projects.

Website: <http://www.extension.org/entrepreneurship>

**Farmers Market Coalition (FMC)** FMC helps to build networks, link peers, and connect farmers markets old and new with tools and resources for success. The Coalition itself does not provide direct technical assistance, but is a good starting point for informational resources (for example a Farmers Market Manager Training Manual or sample 501c3 applications) as well as a place to link up with local organizations and networks that could help more directly. FMC also hosts free educational webinars.

Resource Library: <http://www.farmersmarketcoalition.org/resources>  
State Associations: <http://farmersmarketcoalition.org/fmc-resources/state-associations/>  
Website: <http://farmersmarketcoalition.org/>

**Market Maker** – MarketMaker sites were built in order to more easily connect food producers with new markets and aid in the development of quality-driven food supply chains. Since it was launched in Illinois in 2004, MarketMaker has expanded to 13 sites, with three portals still in progress. It is currently one of the most extensive collections of searchable food industry related data in the country.

National MarketMaker Website: <http://national.marketmaker.uiuc.edu/>

**National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)** – NSAC is a coalition of grassroots farm, food, conservation, and rural organizations from across the US who advocate for federal farm policies that support the long-term economic, social, and environmental sustainability of agriculture. NSAC staff do not provide direct technical assistance on grant writing, but work on establishing and improving many of the programs highlighted in this guide. NSAC has also published a *Grassroots Guide to the 2008 Farm Bill* which highlights a number of programs that were added or amended in the 2008 Farm Bill. Staff in DC also maintain a quick-guide of Farm Bill Programs and Grants with updated links to Requests for Applications and due dates for grants.

Quick-guide to Farm Bill Programs and Grants:  
<http://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/grassrootsguide/farm-bill-programs-and-grants/>  
Sign up for Action Alerts and News: <http://sustainableagriculture.net/take-action/sign-up-for-action-alerts/>  
Website: <http://sustainableagriculture.net/>

**National Farm to School Network** – The network works at multiple levels to create a viable and sustainable structure to promote, institutionalize and catalyze farm to school programs as viable models for improving the economic viability of family-scale farmers and child nutrition. In addition to extensive informational resources and a strong networking system, the National Network coordinates eight regional lead agencies that provide free training and technical assistance, information services, networking, and support for farm to school activities.

*Regional lead agency contacts:* <http://www.farmtoschool.org/regional.php>

*Resources on starting a farm to school program:* <http://www.farmtoschool.org/howtostart.php>

*Funding Opportunities:* <http://www.farmtoschool.org/fundingopps.php>

*Main Website:* <http://www.farmtoschool.org>

**Private Consultants** – There are a number of private consultants who work with individuals or organizations for a fee to help develop business plans, comprehensive food systems plans, or provide other advice and technical assistance for local and regional food systems projects. The best way to access these people is through your local contacts, but you can also check out the National Good Food Network Database for ideas.

*National Good Food Network Database:* <http://www.ngfn.org/resources/ngfn-database>

**Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils** – RC&D Councils are volunteer-based, locally elected groups which plan and carry out projects in resource conservation and community development. The objects of RC&Ds are to create sustainable communities, support prudent land use and the sound management and conservation of natural resources. Recently, many more RC&D Councils have started to adopt initiatives specifically focusing on local and regional food systems development. To see what resources are available or initiate a project or partnership, visit the National Website to locate your local chapter.

*National RC&D Council Association:* <http://www.rcdnet.org/>

**Small Business Development Centers** – Your local SBDC can provide counseling, training and business development assistance for free or at a low cost. Not all SBDC's have specific expertise in agriculture or food business, but some do have programs targeted at food enterprise.

*Website to locate your local SBDC:* <http://www.sba.gov/localresources/index.html>

**State Departments of Agriculture** – Some grants mentioned in this guide require you to work directly with your State Department of Agriculture to develop the application. In other cases, the Department of Ag may be able to provide technical assistance or may be a source of additional grant funds.

*Website to locate your State Department of Agriculture:* <http://www.nasda.org/cms/7195/8617.aspx>

**State Rural Development Offices** – Some grants mentioned in this guide are administered directly through your local rural development office. In other cases, the local office may be able to provide technical assistance, information resources, or networking for projects related to local and regional food systems development in rural areas.

*Website to locate your local rural development office:* [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd\\_map.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/recd_map.html)

**Wallace Center at Winrock International** – The Wallace Center supports entrepreneurs and communities as they build a new, 21st century food system that is healthier for people, the environment, and the economy. The Center primarily focuses on building networks, sharing information and providing funding resources. The resource library has some interesting case studies on innovative models for food enterprise as well as tools including a farmers' market handbook.

*Resource library:* <http://www.wallacecenter.org/our-work/Resource-Library/wallace-publications/>

**WHY Resources on Local and Regional Food Systems and Community Food Assessment** – Provides general background information and resources on local and regional food systems, tools to develop a community food assessment and information on farmers’ market development. The organization does not provide technical assistance, but does have lists of organizations by state that are engaged in food systems work.

*Webpage on local and regional food systems:* <http://www.whyhunger.org/programs/fslc/topics/local-a-regional-food-systems.html>

*Webpage on community food assessment:* <http://www.whyhunger.org/programs/fslc/topics/community-food-assessment.html>

*Webpage on farmers markets:* <http://www.whyhunger.org/programs/fslc/topics/farmersa-market.html>

**Writing a Successful Grant Proposal, Purdue Extension** – A general guide to writing grant proposals, not limited to federal grants. Includes a set of worksheets to help demystify the process of seeking funds for a project

*Download PDF:* <http://www.ces.purdue.edu/extmedia/EC/EC-737.pdf>

## **REGIONAL RESOURCES**

### ***Midwest***

**Center for Rural Affairs** – The Center for Rural Affairs works to establish strong rural communities, social and economic justice, environmental stewardship, and genuine opportunity for all while engaging people in decisions that affect the quality of their lives and the future of their communities. They offer a Farm Bill Helpline to provide assistance to farmers, ranchers and rural communities seeking to access value added, conservation and beginning farmer programs. They are host a Renew Rural website that focuses on successful strategies for revitalizing rural communities.

*Website:* [www.cfra.org](http://www.cfra.org)

*Contact the Farm Bill Helpline by calling (402) 687-2100.*

*Find the Renew Rural website at* <http://www.cfra.org/renewrural>

**Illinois Initiative for the Development of Agricultural Entrepreneurs (IDEA)** – Provides high quality educational support and technical assistance to farmers and others in the agriculture sector. The Initiative houses online resources like business plan development and also provides links to key contacts in Illinois that can answer specific questions.

*Website:* <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/iidea/>

*Website with IDEA contacts listed by region:* <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/iidea/staff.htm>

**Illinois Value Added Sustainable Development Center** – The center conducts research and provides outreach to residents and communities in rural Illinois on agriculture and non - agriculture projects. Its purpose is to assist in creating value-adding ventures that benefit the economy, quality of life, and diversification of communities.

*Website:* <http://www.value-added.org/>

*Contact:* [iira@wiu.edu](mailto:iira@wiu.edu), 309-298-2237, 800-526-9943

**Kansas Rural Center (KRC)** – Among other on-the-ground projects promoting and building farmers markets and educating organizations about Farmers Market Nutrition Programs, the KRC also coordinates the Kansas

Food Policy Council which brings together public and private stakeholders from across the state to examine food systems. One goal of the Council is to strengthen regional food systems by promoting new policies that will encourage more local farmers, food processors and food retailers.

*Website: <http://www.kansasruralcenter.org/>*

**Land Stewardship Project (LSP)** – LSP’s program on Community Based Food and Economic Development includes three main programs: Food Alliance Midwest, Farm and City Food Connections, and Pride of the Prairie, a program to assist sustainable producers in cultivating profitable alternative markets and creating direct connections with consumers.

*Website: [http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs.html#food\\_econ\\_dev](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/programs.html#food_econ_dev)*

**Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Marketing and Food Systems Initiative** – Conducts research and testing on new marketing strategies and business structures that increase value for Iowa’s farmers and communities and supports education and partnerships to increase investment in support of local and regional food. The Initiative houses a number of projects, including periodic workshops on topics related to food systems development in Iowa.

*Website: <http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/marketing.htm>*

*Contact: Rich Pirog, [rspirog@iastate.edu](mailto:rspirog@iastate.edu), 515-294-1854*

**Michael Fields Agricultural Institute**, East Troy, WI – MFAI’s services include advocacy, convening, education, enterprise development, research, urban agriculture, and whole farm planning. The Center offers a full list of educational opportunities and resources including workshops on Innovative Farmers’ Market Models and Grant Writing.

*Calendar of workshops: <http://www.michaelfieldsagainst.org/work/education/workshops/index.shtml>*

**Michigan Food System Economic Partnership** – FSEP provides research, education and outreach with urban and rural partnerships, resulting in agricultural development opportunities, sustainable communities, and healthy local economies in Southeastern Michigan. The FSEP Business Development program works directly with ag and food entrepreneurs to develop viable businesses and the Farm to School Service Program offers a number of online resources to help individuals and organizations interested in starting a Farm to School project in their area.

*Website: <http://fsepmichigan.org/>*

*Contact for Business Development: Jane Bush, [bushj@fsepmichigan.org](mailto:bushj@fsepmichigan.org), 517- 231-2240*

*Farm to school: Michaëlle Rehmman, [rehmannm@fsepmichigan.org](mailto:rehmannm@fsepmichigan.org), 517-490-6912.*

**Michigan Land Use Institute** – The Institute’s Food and Farming group includes a number of programs promoting local and regional food systems. The Taste the Local Difference program links shoppers and retail buyers to area farms. Healthy Food for All helps families, schools, and other institutions serve fresh local food. Get Farming! connects farmers to farmland and business resources. The Entrepreneurial Agriculture program makes the case for local food as economic development, and helps coordinate northwest Michigan's Food and Farming Network.

*Website: <http://www.mlui.org/farms/index.asp>*



**Michigan State University MSU Product Center for Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR)** – Provides varied technical expertise, research, outreach, and educational services to entrepreneurs who want to commercialize high value, consumer-responsive products and businesses in the agriculture and natural food sectors.

*Website:* <http://www.aec.msu.edu/product/index.htm>

*Contact for product development advice:* [product@msu.edu](mailto:product@msu.edu), (517) 432-8750 Fax (517) 432-8756

**Missouri Food Circles Networking Project** – The networking project connects diverse stakeholders: farmers, consumers, policymakers and more in Missouri. Their guide provides names and contact information for organizations that have grant or technical assistance resources for other organizations working on food systems development.

*Download the guide:* <http://www.foodcircles.missouri.edu/Resources.pdf>

**Purdue University New Ventures Team** – Purdue Extension educators and campus specialists provide one-on-one assistance to citizens of Indiana interested in starting a food- or agriculture-related business.

*Website:* <http://www.agecon.purdue.edu/newventures/>

*Contact information by county:* <https://www.agecon.purdue.edu/newventures/team.html>

**University of Wisconsin Ag Innovation Center** – Provides online resources for business planning and works closely with the Emerging Ag Markets team to provide contact information and links to extension agents and other specialists who can provide one-on-one technical assistance for ag and food entrepreneurs. As part of the local and regional food systems initiative, the center also partners with local organizations who are working on food systems development projects.

*Website:* <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/agmarkets/aic/index.cfm>

*Website with local extension contacts who can work with local ag and food entrepreneurs:*

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/agmarkets/aic/aicbackground.cfm#programpartners>

*Contact for local and regional food systems initiative:* Anne Pfeiffer, [anne.pfeiffer@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:anne.pfeiffer@ces.uwex.edu), 608-890-1905

**Value Chain Partnerships, Regional Food Systems Working Group at Iowa State University** – An overarching working group that supports and works closely with six regional initiatives in Iowa promoting local and regional food systems. Each of the six regional initiatives provides some level of technical assistance to organizations and individuals in their area on developing food enterprises and other projects.

*Website with links to six regional groups:* <http://www.valuechains.org/regionalfood/groups.htm>

*Directory of contacts for regional coordinator:* <http://regionalfoodsystems.ning.com/page/directory-1>

*Contact:* Rich Pirog, Working group leader, [rspirog@iastate.edu](mailto:rspirog@iastate.edu), (515) 294-1854

*General website:* <http://www.valuechains.org/>

## ***Northeast & Mid-Atlantic***

**Food Systems Consortium** – Partnership of educational institutions, business, community and government organizations in the mid-Atlantic region who have programs around maintaining and improving the food system



in the mid-Atlantic region. The consortium is housed at Rutgers University and may provide opportunities to connect with other local organizations.

*Website:* <http://foodsystemconsortium.org/>

*Contact:* 732-932-9711 x242

**New York Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (NYSAWG)** – Among its other projects, NYSAWG has two projects to provide training and technical assistance services for organizations and communities on Local Food System Assessment and Planning.

*Website:* [http://www.nysawg.org/training\\_technical\\_assistance.php](http://www.nysawg.org/training_technical_assistance.php)

*Contact:* Judith Einach, Executive Director, [jeinach@yahoo.com](mailto:jeinach@yahoo.com) 716-316-5839

**Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development, Pennsylvania State University** – Offers region-specific research on rural development and coordinates web-based education and regional events (for example, a local food conference in 2009) on rural community development.

*Website:* <http://nercrd.psu.edu/>

*Contact:* Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman, Associate Director, [hmm1@cornell.edu](mailto:hmm1@cornell.edu), 607-255-0417

**Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (NESAWG)** – Includes a long list of resource publications on local and regional food systems development, a Northeast region Listserv, and local events and workshops on a variety of topics, including some relevant to food systems development.

*NESAWG Publications Website:* <http://www.nefood.org/page/publications-1>

**Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture** – PASA staff have helped develop new farmers' markets, connected restaurants and retailers to local food sources, and assisted farms and other businesses with marketing and business planning. PASA manages the local "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" campaign and also recently added Food Alliance certification as another tool available in array of regional marketing services.

*Website:* <http://www.pasafarming.org/our-work>

*Phone (headquarters in Millheim, PA):* 814-349-9856

**Rutgers Food Innovation Center** – Provides business mentoring for clients, assessing needs, proposing a scope of work, providing ongoing advice and assistance and specific deliverables within a designated period of time.

*Website:* <http://foodinnovationcenter.rutgers.edu/>

*Contact:* (856) 459-1900, [foodinnovation@aesop.rutgers.edu](mailto:foodinnovation@aesop.rutgers.edu)

## **South**

**Center for Environmental Farming Systems** at North Carolina State University – Among its multiple objectives, the Center for Environmental Farming Systems at NCSU works on incubation and support for community based food systems projects in urban and rural areas in North Carolina and beyond.

*General Website:* <http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu/index.htm>

*Website on Community Based Food Systems Program: <http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu/whatwedo/foodsystems.html>  
Community Based Food Systems Program Contact: Nancy Creamer, 919-515-9447, [Nancy\\_creamer@ncsu.edu](mailto:Nancy_creamer@ncsu.edu)*

**Delta Land and Community**, Delta Enterprise Network (DEN) – This organization facilitates groups of farmers, entrepreneurs and others creating new business ventures, cooperatives and policy change. DEN members assist each other in overcoming barriers to sustainable agricultural enterprises in our region and measure success by the development of sustainable, locally-owned, value-added (LOVA) enterprises especially including new farms.

Website: <http://deltanetwork.org/news/>

**Marketumbrella.org** – A community organization based in New Orleans, LA which began with a focus to develop local public markets in the Crescent City neighborhood, but has expanded to provide a number of useful free resources on public market development.

*Marketumbrella.org Market Toolbox: <http://www.marketumbrella.org/index.php?page=marketshare-map>*

**Southern Risk Management Education Center (SRMEC)**, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture – Coordinates risk management education programs throughout the southern region primarily through a regional competitive grants program. The Center does not provide grant-writing assistance for federal grants, but does run its own competitive grants program that may be able to indirectly provide support by providing information about projects that have been completed in the past.

*Website: <http://srmec.uark.edu/>*

*Phone: 501-671-2165*

**Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group** – SSAWG covers a broad array of program areas in sustainable agriculture, but includes specific focuses on enterprise development and community food development, including online educational resources on value-added production and links to enterprise training as well as opportunities for technical assistance for Southern Groups working on Community Food systems.

*Enterprise Development Resources: <http://www.ssawg.org/ed-resources.html>*

*Community Food Development Resources: [http://www.ssawg.org/communityfood\\_.html](http://www.ssawg.org/communityfood_.html)*

*Community Food Development Technical Assistance for Southern Groups working on Community Food Systems, contact: Keecha Harris, [keecharris@gmail.com](mailto:keecharris@gmail.com)*

## **West**

**Food Innovation Center (FIC)** at Oregon State University – The Ag Development and Marketing division of the Oregon Department of Ag at the FIC provides Local, National, and International Marketing Access and Development help. One service FIC provides is a food entrepreneur consultation meeting for \$195

*Website: <http://fic.oregonstate.edu/>*

*Contact: [fic@oregonstate.edu](mailto:fic@oregonstate.edu), 503-872-6680*

**Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center**, Ronan, Montana – Specializes in food product development, regulatory compliance training, business planning and development, market research, business networking, access to financing, cooperative development, and education on food industry equipment and technologies.

*Website: <http://www.mmfec.com/>*

*Contact: Jan Tusick 406-676-5901, [jt@ronan.net](mailto:jt@ronan.net); Karl Sutton, 406-676-5901, [ksutton@ronan.net](mailto:ksutton@ronan.net)*

**Northwest Agriculture Business Center**, Mount Vernon, WA – Provides business development services to farmers and agriculture-related business in Northwest Washington including business training, workshops on producing value-added products, marketing training, and the new Puget Sound Food Network, an online marketplace connecting food producers, distributors, institutions and other buyers in the Puget Sound region.

*Website: <http://www.agbizcenter.org/>*

*Contact: [info@agbizcenter.org](mailto:info@agbizcenter.org), 360-336-3727*

**Southwest Marketing Network** – Works to help Southwestern producers and communities develop new and improved markets and enterprises and to rebuild local food systems and includes a directory of experts who can provide specific assistance on food systems development projects. The network also has limited resources to provide personal assistance on Community Food Project grant proposals.

*General website: <http://www.swmarketingnetwork.org>*

*Directory of technical assistance experts: <http://www.swmarketingnetwork.org/doesearch1.php>*

*Contact for technical assistance on grant-writing: [swcomfoodassistance@swmarketingnetwork.org](mailto:swcomfoodassistance@swmarketingnetwork.org)*

# Appendix 1: Preparing to Apply to USDA Grant Programs using Grants.gov

*Adapted from handout by Margaret Krome, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute*

## Get Registered

Grants.gov has streamlined the process of finding and applying for federal grant opportunities. In order to take advantage of the system and apply for a grant, you must complete the Grants.gov registration process. You do not have to register with Grants.gov if you only want to *find* grant opportunities, but if you do plan to apply for a grant, plan ahead.

**The Grants.gov registration process takes 3-5 business days to complete or up to two weeks if all steps are not completed on a timely basis, so register early!**

First, you'll need to decide whether to register as an organization or as an individual. An individual submits grant applications on their own behalf, not representing an organization, institution or government. Individual applicants are only eligible for grants that are open to individuals and published on the Grants.gov website.

For more information, visit: [http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get\\_registered.jsp](http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp)

## Register Your Organization

Before you can apply for a grant through Grants.gov, your organization must obtain a **Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number** and **register with the Central Contractor Registry (CCR)**.

Grants.gov safeguards organizations from individuals who may attempt to submit grant application packages without permission by providing organizations with an E-Business Point of Contact (POC). The E-Business Point of Contact determines who in your organization is allowed to submit grant applications via Grants.gov.

Download a registration checklist: <http://www.grants.gov/assets/OrganizationRegCheck.pdf>

For more information, visit: [http://www.grants.gov/applicants/register\\_your\\_organization.jsp](http://www.grants.gov/applicants/register_your_organization.jsp)

## Register as an Individual

Individual registration is a one-time process and can take up to one day to complete. Individuals wishing to submit a grant application using Grants.gov are required to register with the Credential Provider and register with Grants.gov.

Register with the Credential Provider: [http://www.grants.gov/applicants/iregister\\_credential\\_provider.jsp](http://www.grants.gov/applicants/iregister_credential_provider.jsp)

Register with Grants.gov: [http://www.grants.gov/applicants/iregister\\_grants\\_gov.jsp](http://www.grants.gov/applicants/iregister_grants_gov.jsp)

For more information, visit: [http://www.grants.gov/applicants/individual\\_registration.jsp](http://www.grants.gov/applicants/individual_registration.jsp)

## Questions?

If you have any questions related to Grants.gov, contact: 1-800-518-4726. Hours are Monday- Friday, 7:00 AM to 9:00 PM EST, excluding federal holidays. You can also email: [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov)