



PRESS RELEASE

USDA Announces American Rescue Plan Technical Assistance Investment to Benefit Underserved Farmers, Ranchers and Forest Landowners

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WASHINGTON, March 9, 2022 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced today that it is accepting grant applications for the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Technical Assistance Investment Program to provide historically underserved farmers, ranchers and forest landowners technical support in accessing USDA programs and services.

“This past year, the Biden–Harris Administration has taken bold and historic actions to level the playing field to ensure ALL Americans benefit from the many opportunities open to them,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “As part of USDA’s American Rescue Plan investments, we want to ensure that those who have been traditionally underserved by USDA have the same understanding and technical support needed to access USDA programs and services. This is one of many steps USDA is taking as we continue to break down barriers and be more inclusive of all USDA customers.”

USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) will provide, at a minimum, a \$25 million investment of American Rescue Plan funds, with awards normally ranging from \$500,000 to \$3.5 million for a five–year cooperative agreement. There is no anticipated overall maximum funding level. Applications are encouraged from partnerships and collaborations that are led by domestic nonprofit organizations and accredited public and nonprofit institutions of higher education with specialized expertise and a proven track record in working with underserved agricultural producers and/or the specific content for technical assistance. The deadline to submit applications is June 1, 2022.

Underserved communities of agricultural producers have not received the level of technical support that would benefit the launch, growth, resilience and success of their agricultural enterprises. Without meaningful technical assistance, producers are more likely to operate smaller, lower-revenue farms, have weaker credit histories and may lack clear title to their agricultural land, which increases difficulty in securing loans to own or operate their businesses and to ensure the success and resiliency of their operations.

In addition, USDA has comparatively fewer programs directed to supporting specialty crop production, which is a popular crop production choice for many producers and existing programs may not always be well-matched to the needs of small, diversified farms and ranches.

Common barriers experienced by small or underserved farms and ranches include challenges with accessing federal agricultural programs, including receiving information about available programs, difficulty navigating complex application processes, lack of standardization and transparency, limited knowledge of qualification requirements for all programs and complicated reporting requirements.



To address these inequities, technical assistance projects can provide technical support in many key areas, such as:

- Targeted agriculture financial training.
- Agriculture mediation access.
- Outreach about USDA programs and services.
- Agriculture cooperative development training and support.
- Capacity building training and land access technical support.
- Targeted support related to agriculture production.
- Agriculture credit and capital access.

As part of this program investment, technical assistance must be within a comprehensive program designed to reach defined audiences of underserved agricultural producers. Applicants are encouraged to consider and include youth-related and/or beginning farmer and rancher activities within the scope of their project, where applicable.

NIFA will hold an informational webinar to explain and answer questions about the application process. The webinar is open to interested potential applicants and will be held March 24 at 4 p.m. EDT. [Register for the webinar.](#)

USDA intends to release a Request for Information (RFI) in the coming weeks to further inform this important work.

The Request for Applications can be reviewed on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or the [NIFA](https://www.nifa.usda.gov) website.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy, and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.



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