



BLOG

USDA 2501 Grant Recipient Connects Rural Community Leaders in Service

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[Rural Development Leadership Network](#) (RDLN) President Starry Krueger is working to keep people on their traditional lands, and to keep the land grounded in agriculture.

RDLN has received several United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) [2501 grants](#), including its most recent in 2020. These 2501 grants support the efforts of organizations like the RDLN to provide training and technical assistance to underserved and veteran farmers, ranchers, and foresters who seek to own and operate successful farms, ranches, and forest lands.

Founded in 1983, RDLN supports community-based development in poor rural areas through hands-on projects, education and skills building, networking, and leadership development. The organization supports a two-year leadership program that combines field project work with online classroom study.

Two program graduates, Anita LaRan and Dorothy Grady-Scarborough, with RDLN, are currently leading the work on-the-ground as co-project directors for RDLN's most recent 2501 grant. Both women are working with underserved communities that seek to realize the potential economic return on their land.

LaRan is executive director of Collaborative Visions/Visiones Collaborativas in New Mexico. She assists rural communities threatened by encroachment from rising property values by providing technical support, training and facilitation. Most recently the group has helped

communities affected by the Hermits Peak and Calf Canyon fires, among the worst fires in New Mexico's history, with firewood collection for home heating.

Grady-Scarborough is the executive director of Mississippians Engaged in Greener Agriculture, which provides training and marketing opportunities in agriculture. She is working with African American and other socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to improve the health of local people by increasing the availability of and understanding around locally grown food. A vital part of this work includes demonstration gardens, where farmers and future farmers can gain hands-on experience and learn about soil and crop health.

Both LaRan and Scarborough are also engaging young people to bridge the generational divide and keep land and families involved in farming. They connect farmers and USDA staff, introducing new resources and markets. They have also had the opportunity to visit each other's communities and share valuable insights.



"This kind of inter-regional collaborative approach is important to our organization," said Krueger. "These women have a lifetime commitment to this work. They are maximizing community assets for low-income people of color."

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