

FAQ - Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program

What is the purpose of the program?

The Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access (Increasing Land Access) Program will result in increased land access for underserved farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners. Increasing land access to underserved producers will also provide opportunities to focus on capital and market access. The program is funded by Section 1006 of the American Rescue Plan Act, as amended by Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act.

The program – administered by USDA’s Farm Service Agency -- will fund cooperative agreements or grants for projects that focus on strengthening land access with at least one of the following related areas of concern:

- Capital access concerns that affect the ability to access land.
- Market access concerns that affect the ability to access land.
- A combination of one or more land, capital, and market access concerns.

Who is eligible to apply?

Funding is available to various government entities from local to Tribal, not-for-profit educational institutions, and non-profit organizations. The non-profit organizations can include Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), foundations, and Tribal financial institutions with a 501c3 status. Due to the unique nature of land access among Tribal communities, Tribal projects may be in all scopes.

Individuals, non-domestic entities, and private, for-profit organizations are not eligible to apply to this funding opportunity.

Entities are allowed to submit one application for funding. Entities that submit duplicative or multiple applications will be disqualified.

Can a group be part of more than one application? More than one awardee group?

One group cannot serve as the lead for multiple applications. A group may be part of multiple projects but can only be the lead on one. Proposals should be unique and should not be duplicative in purpose or be the same proposal with rotating leads to the project. If an entity submits a proposal and has support or subgrants with other organizations, the subgrant organizations can be in different proposals.

What type of financial assistance is being offered?

The Farm Service Agency will provide project funding through cooperative agreements or grants.

A cooperative agreement will be awarded for proposed projects that include substantial involvement of the Government. A grant agreement will be awarded if the proposed project does not include substantial involvement of the Government.

How much federal financial assistance is available?

The minimum amount per agreement will be \$250,000, and the maximum amount per agreement will be \$40 million. The quality and scope of the application will determine the funding level. Applicants may submit only one application under the tier which they deem most applicable.

How long are the agreements, and what is the required scope?

The agreements will be for up to five years and may be local, state, regional, or national in scope. Projects in tiers one and two must be for five years. Projects in tiers three and four may be for up to five years (generally 3-5 years).

Is a financial match required?

There is no cost sharing or matching requirement and there is no competitive advantage to applicants that provide a match.

How do entities apply?

Eligible applicants can apply through grants.gov. Applicants should register in SAM.gov as soon as possible.

The SAM.gov entity legal business name and address validation tickets are taking longer than expected to process due to high demand. Therefore, if an applicant is not able to upload their application in grants.gov because the applicant does not have full SAM registration and a unique entity identifier, and if the applicant is still awaiting a response to a pending SAM.gov help desk ticket, then USDA may grant waivers on a case-by-case basis. In these circumstances, submissions received via email **by the 11:59 p.m. ET October 28 deadline** will be considered for a case-by-case waiver if **all** the following is provided in a single email sent to Land.Access@usda.gov:

- All elements described above, and
- A valid copy of the SAM.gov help desk ticket.

Please be aware that applicants must complete their SAM registration prior to award. An application submitted or resubmitted after the deadline is late (an application is considered on time at 11:59 p.m. ET, but it is late at 12:00 am ET). Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered.

When is the application deadline?

Eligible entities must submit their applications by 11:59 p.m. eastern time on October 28, 2022.

Is there any special application ranking criteria?

USDA is interested in prioritizing land access and addressing land loss among underserved producers. Priority points will be awarded to projects that focus on unlocking land access, providing specialized project design and focus to address the challenges with land access, or innovative ways to connect available land to producers who have challenges in accessing land. Priority points will also be awarded to projects that focus on mitigating and preventing land loss as well as projects which will restore lands into the hands of those who have been underserved.

When will USDA make selections?

USDA anticipates making selections by late Fall 2022 and awarding funds by January 2023.

The funding opportunity mentions support for producers “on the edge moving them from surviving to thriving”, what does USDA mean by that statement?

Land access is critical to the success of agriculture. Land access is particularly important within for underserved producers, either through access to limited resources, geographic location, choice of crop or livestock production systems, or in their access to USDA programs and services.

Underserved producers have not received the amount of specialized technical support that would benefit the launch, growth, resilience, and success of their agricultural enterprises. Underserved 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 farm loans.

Through the Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program, we seek to address the limited support for underserved producers, which will then improve their respective operations-- moving them from surviving to thriving.

What are examples of successful applicants?

The following are examples of successful projects. These should not be considered all-inclusive of possible projects.

- Multi-year funding agreements to develop capacity and expertise of cooperators across the entire ag-value chain that will enable cooperators/grantees to access other funding or investment sources.
- Guarantee or leveraging pools for innovative finance and investment by philanthropic or other institutional investors.
- Equity contributions for the creation of producer cooperatives to benefit from economies of scale.
- Capitalization of innovative loan funds (CDFIs, Donor advised funds, etc.) and administrative capacity for coordinating with secondary market purchasers (Farmer Mac and others) on those instruments.
- Transitional subsidy towards full-time farming (health insurance, student loan repayment, wage adjustment for farm related work, IDA for working capital, etc.).
- Down payments to provide bridge funding to agricultural financing.
- Incentive payments to retiring producers to support transition of agricultural lands to historically underserved agricultural producers and allow for affordability of agricultural land.
- “Training farms” that provide support for targeted producers as they stabilize their operation and prepare to purchase land or generate new capital or market access opportunities (i.e., “on ramps” to access).

Please explain the requirement to coordinate with USDA and all other recipients of the American Rescue Plan Section 1006 technical resources in a manner as determined by USDA. How does this coordination requirement work?

Cooperators in this program will be required to collaborate with other recipients of Section 1006 technical assistance resources, including cooperators selected for the NIFA administered program “From Learning to Leading: Cultivating the Next Generation of Diverse Food and Agriculture Professionals” grants. This may include sharing cooperator expertise, elevating best practices and lessons learned, and participating in venues that facilitate interaction and collaboration.

Can proposed projects/programs use these funds to purchase land or equipment?

If a submitted application proposes to include the purchase of land or equipment, the Awardee must comply with various applicable federal requirements related to the purchase of land or equipment, including requirements for valuation and documentation. USDA will work with selected applicants to ensure compliance with all applicable requirements.

What is USDA defining as an underserved producer for this funding opportunity?

A, underserved producer is an underserved farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners, including veterans, limited resource producers, beginning farmers and ranchers, and farmers, ranchers and forest landowners living in high poverty areas.

How is wrap around technical assistance and support services (such as business development, tax training, legal services for resolution of land title issues, etc.) different from the Regional Food Business Centers?

This program is designed to support organizations with individual producers as the ultimate beneficiaries. The purpose of the Regional Food Business Centers is to support the establishment of systems which directly improve the supply chain.

Is the Increasing Land Access program a covered Justice40 program? If so, will Awardees have any additional Justice40 reporting requirements?

The Increasing Land Access program is a covered Justice40 program. To ensure that applicants and grantees of this program are not burdened with additional administrative work or new reporting requirements, USDA will complete any administrative requirements associated with this program being included in Justice40 at Headquarters