

For: State and County Offices

Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program

Approved by: Administrator



1 Overview

A Background

USDA launched the Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access (Increasing Land Access) Program to help underserved producers by increasing land, capital, and market access. The program will fund grants or cooperative agreements for projects that help move underserved producers from surviving to thriving.

Land access is critical to the success of agriculture. Underserved producers have not received the amount of specialized technical support that would benefit the launch, growth, resilience, and success of their agricultural enterprises.

The Increasing Land Access Program is intended to address this problem by increasing access to farm ownership opportunities, increasing access and improving results for those with heirs' property or fractionated land, increasing access to markets and capital that affect the ability to access land, and increasing land ownership, land succession, and agricultural business planning.

In June 2023 USDA awarded approximately \$300 million for 50 selected projects for the innovative Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program through Section 1006 of the American Rescue Plan Act, as amended by Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act, which included provisions for USDA to ensure underserved producers have resources, tools, programs, and technical support they need to succeed. The tentative selected projects include national, regional, and local projects that cover 40 States and territories including Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Outreach Office has been working with applicants to negotiate the agreement details of their projects. More information about the program and a brief description of each of the 50 locally led projects is available at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/increasing-land-access/index>.

Disposal Date May 1, 2025	Distribution State Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices
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Notice AO-1887

1 Overview (Continued)

B Purpose

This notice provides State and County Offices with information about:

- roles of grants and cooperative agreement recipients
- how grants and cooperative agreements will be managed and tracked
- expectations around collaborating with grants and cooperative agreement recipients at the State level.

C Contact

If there are questions about this notice:

- State Offices will email land.access@usda.gov
- County Offices will contact the State Office.

2 Roles and Responsibilities

A Grant and Cooperative Agreement Guidance

FSA awarded grants and cooperative agreements pursuant to this opportunity. A grant is a legal instrument of financial assistance between a Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity and a non-Federal entity that, consistent with [31 U.S.C. 6302](#), [6304](#):

- is used to enter into a relationship the principal purpose of which is to transfer anything of value to carry out a public purpose authorized by a law of the United States (see [31 U.S.C. 6101\(3\)](#)); and not to acquire property or services for the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity's direct benefit or use
- is distinguished from a cooperative agreement in that it does not provide for substantial involvement of the Federal awarding agency in carrying out the activity contemplated by the Federal award
- does not include an agreement that provides only:
 - direct United States Government cash assistance to an individual
 - a subsidy
 - a loan
 - a loan guarantee
 - insurance.

2 Roles and Responsibilities (Continued)

A Grant and Cooperative Agreement Expectations (Continued)

A cooperative agreement is distinguished from a grant in that it provides for substantial involvement between the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity and the non-Federal entity in carrying out the activity contemplated by the Federal award. The agency will be substantially involved in the work performed under the agreements and will undertake activities such as the following:

- authority to suspend work if specifications or work statements are not met
- review and approval of one stage of work before another may begin
- review and approval of substantive provisions of proposed subawards or contracts beyond existing Federal policy
- agency and recipient collaboration or joint participation
- project monitoring to permit specified kinds of direction or redirection of the; work because of interrelationships with and impacts on other projects
- highly prescriptive agency requirements that limit recipient discretion
- review and approval of key personnel
- direct agency operational involvement or participation during the activity.

FSA's Outreach Office, in coordination with FPAC's Grants and Agreements Division (GAD), are managing the 50 grants and cooperative agreements mentioned above. FSA Outreach and GAD will work with States to ensure collaboration between States and recipients. The State Office and Service Centers are also an important part of the success of the programs. As recipients begin work, SED and State outreach coordinator (SOC) will receive a memo. Those should be shared with the field offices within the State.

See Exhibit 1 for a more extensive list of roles and responsibilities by GAD GMS, ILA GMS and recipient.

2 Roles and Responsibilities (Continued)

B Overview of State Roles

SED, the FSA Office of Outreach (OO), and FPAC's GAD will review the activities and reported items against the statement of work (SOW).

States will not be intricately involved in the management of the agreements. States **will be** asked to work in partnership with recipients and collaborate with the recipients to administer their goals/objectives. Management of the deliverables will be tracked by the FSA OO staff.

Funds are managed by the national Outreach Office in coordination with GAD. States may be expected to provide additional assistance to the Outreach Office staff if grants and cooperative agreement recipients are delinquent in submitting required quarterly financial reports (SF-425).

Grants and cooperative agreement recipients are expected to submit quarterly progress reports that summarize their activities. The Outreach Office provides a copy of these reports to the States, who can provide additional technical assistance, as needed, to cooperative agreement recipients to support them in completing activities.

C State Requirements

States are encouraged to partner with all recipients on outreach activities. These sessions should cover a general overview of FSA programs.

SED's will:

- provide leadership and guidance to grants and cooperative agreement recipients in their States
- alert the Outreach Office of challenges, barriers, opportunities, and successes with recipients in a timely manner
- designate State and county-level points of contact (POC's) who will work directly with the grants and cooperative agreement recipients and serve as the FSA POC for their projects.

Note: The Outreach Office recommends SOC serve as the State-level POC. However, if SED chooses a POC who is not SOC, SED and the designee should keep SOC apprised of cooperative agreement work within the State, including but not limited to the cooperative agreement status.

2 Roles and Responsibilities (Continued)

C State Requirements (Continued)

SOC's, communications coordinators, and beginning farmer coordinators will:

- highlight projects and activities that the cooperators will be conducting during webinars and outreach events
- provide grants and cooperative agreement recipients with announcements, fact sheets, talking points, and communications materials about FSA programs
- collaborate with grants and cooperative agreement recipients on developing deliverables, hosting events, and achieving project deliverables, if requested
- load activities into OTIS
- promote events and resources created by grants and cooperative agreement recipients.

State Environmental Coordinators will for the State in which the action is proposed be responsible for completing the site-specific environmental review, in cooperation with the partner and producer, according to 1-EQ, paragraph 4 and 7 CFR Part 799. The environmental review must be completed before approval of the proposed action and any work beginning. See Notice AO-1863 for directions on environmental reviews for grants and cooperative agreements.

CED's and PT's will:

- work closely with grant and cooperative agreement recipients in their locations
- attend meetings with recipients and conduct outreach to underserved producers
- alert State Office of challenges, barriers, opportunities and successes with recipients and State Office POC
- collaborate with grant and cooperative agreement recipients on developing deliverables, hosting events, and achieving project deliverables, if requested
- load events into OTIS for any county level collaboration with recipients
- promote events and resources created by grants and cooperative agreement recipients.

Extensive List of Roles and Responsibilities

The following is an extensive list of roles and responsibilities by GAD GMS, OOPA, and recipient.

Pre-Award		
Grant Management Specialist (GAD)	Outreach Office Program Administrator (OOPA)/Grant Specialist	Recipient
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist and provide guidance to OOPA during the initial planning phase: type of information required to develop the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Announcement for competitive awards; type of information and documentation required for a non-competitive award. • Review and provide feedback on the draft NOFO developed by OOPA staff, and then to obtain a series of approvals for the NOFO. • Post NOFO Grant Solution/Grants.gov for competitive award. • Collect applications from Grants.gov for competitive award and upload to GAD SharePoint for agency review and selection. • Be available to assist OOPA in conducting preliminary review of applications. • Obtain signature of recipient and agency officials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define requirements and objectives for program. • Assist OMB with program budget apportionment. • Conduct market research to identify potential eligible applicants. • Define eligibility requirements and evaluation criteria. • Assist in preparation of the program Assistance Listing for SAM.gov unless one already exists. • Develop the NOFO for competitive awards, or the type of information and documentation needed for a non-competitive award program announcement. • Submit NOFO request to GAD through ServiceNow. • Submit cooperative agreement request to GAD through ServiceNow. • Assist grants official in providing technical responses to applicant’s program questions. • Provide members for selection panels for review of competitive applications. • Provide technical or programmatic expertise to the grant’s official for application negotiations. • Review applications for completeness and accuracy and make selections for the agency. • Follow GAD guidance and document selectees and reasons for their selection. • Develop the recipient performance report template to document the deliverables and milestones which includes: the number and type of producers reached, lessons learned and success in achieving the program objectives. • Review and comment on cooperative agreement and supporting documentation. • Collaborate with GAD and recipient for any required updates to application documents. • Review Notice of Award from GAD Return executed cooperative agreement to the GAD Grants Management Specialist, if needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locate NOFO at Grants.gov. • Submit required documentation prior to NOFO due date.

Extensive List of Roles and Responsibilities (Continued)

Award		
Grant Management Specialist (GAD)	Outreach Office Program Administrator (OOPA)/Grant Specialist	Recipient
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review competitive and noncompetitive applications selected by agency. • Perform budget and cost analysis of the application budget narrative. • Assist agency with budget negotiations/revisions. • Prepare cooperative agreement Notice of Award including: the recipient performance deliverables and milestones, approved budget, performance and financial reporting requirements and reimbursement instructions. • Route cooperative agreement and supporting documents for review and signature by the recipient and agency signatory officials. • Notify recipient of award. • Before the transition to Grant Solutions occurs, the final is to send the fully executed agreement to the Financial Management Division (FMD) to record the obligation and set up accounting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the cooperative agreement and supporting documentation. • Review changes made/provided by the grants official that are required prior to routing the agreement for cooperators signature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the cooperative agreement/grant, terms, and conditions, and supporting documentation. • Sign the award document. • Be knowledgeable of cooperative agreement/grant including the program requirement, scope of work, terms and conditions, laws, regulations, and required reporting and reimbursement documents.

Extensive List of Roles and Responsibilities (Continued)

Post Award		
Grant Management Specialist (GAD)	Outreach Office Program Administrator (OOPA)/Grant Specialist	Recipient
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and maintain official cooperative agreement file with all pre-award, award, and post award documents included. • Review performance and financial status reports and ensure they are included in the official cooperative agreement file. • Review invoices and supporting GADBET document and make reimbursement payments for recipient progress as necessary. • Issue agreement modifications as necessary. • Assist with coordinating audits and reviewing audit information. • Complete processing requests for reimbursement (SF-270 and GADBET supporting doc) • Provide technical assistance to the recipient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide technical assistance to the recipient. • Conduct site visits. • Review performance (progress) reports for accuracy and completeness. • Review financial (SF-425) reports for accuracy and completeness. • Service Now ticket: notify grants officials of upcoming programmatic needs (i.e., no cost extensions, modifications, budgeting concerns, etc.) via Service Now • Service Now ticket: review, accept and certify requests for reimbursement (SF-270 and GADBET supporting doc) • Review No Cost Extensions and submit for approval. • Submit Data Act Reporting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with awarding agency. • Execute the Scope of Work and deliverables as outlined in the award. • Comply with the terms and conditions of the award document. • Do not exceed pre-approved funding amounts by budget narrative category without prior approval. • Sign and return all actions including cooperative agreements, modifications, etc. • Complete reporting requirements such as: financial reports and performance (progress) reports. • <u>Payments</u>: Prepare and submit requests for reimbursements (SF-270) and supporting GADBET budget document. • <u>Financial Reports</u>: Recipients must submit a Federal Financial Report (FFR), SF 425 in accordance with the schedule included in the award statement of work. Recipients must submit reports to either the ezFedGrants system or via e-mail to FPAC.BC.GAD@usda.gov. Failure to submit reports as required may result in delayed approval of payment requests, suspension or termination of award. • <u>Performance Reports</u>: The recipient is responsible for monitoring day-to-day performance and submit a written progress report at the frequency specified in the statement of work to either the ezFedGrants system or via e-mail to FPAC.BC.GAD.usda.gov. <p>Each report must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A comparison of actual accomplishments with the milestones and deliverables established for the reporting period and, where project output can be quantified, a computation of the costs per unit of output, the number and type of producers reached, lessons learned and success in achieving the program objectives. • Reasons why milestones and deliverables targets were not met, if appropriate. • Include additional pertinent information, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs. • The FPAC awarding agency will withhold payments if the recipient is delinquent in submitting required reports. • If the project involves subaward/contractual arrangements, the recipient is responsible for monitoring the performance of project activities under those arrangements to ensure that approved goals and schedules are met.