



United States Department of Agriculture

A graphic consisting of two triangles, one orange and one blue, pointing towards each other to form a larger shape.

BRIDGES^{TO} OPPORTUNITY

FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Connecting Customers to the Services They Need

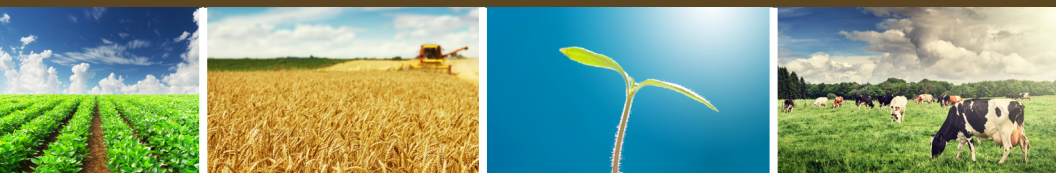


<http://offices.usda.gov>

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farm Service Agency (FSA) is now the bridge between agricultural producers and non-USDA partner organizations, providing farmers and ranchers access to more information that will benefit and grow their operation. USDA has access to more than **2,100 county offices** across the United States. These offices provide a unique access to farmers and ranchers and have allowed USDA the opportunity to develop relationships with local and regional partners. By connecting the two through Bridges to Opportunity (Bridges), USDA is able to provide additional resources and meet its mission of providing top-notch customer service to all farmers, ranchers and agricultural partners through the delivery of effective, efficient agricultural programs for all Americans.

Bridges began as a pilot in **five states** in October 2014 and is now in its second phase, expanding to **20 states** and **202 county offices** that service **318 counties** nationwide. The states where Bridges is available are: California, Colorado, *Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, *West Virginia and Wisconsin. Check your local FSA county office to see if it is available in your area.

*statewide



Q What is Bridges to Opportunity?

A Bridges is a service provided by FSA that bridges the gap between agricultural producers and non-USDA partner organizations. Through Bridges, we are able to provide farmers and ranchers access to information from USDA and non-USDA organizations on topics such as organic production, beginning farmer resources, integrated pest management, disaster assistance, conservation practices, agricultural education- al courses, loans, grants and other financial assistance that will benefit and grow their operation and ultimately help them meet their goals.

Bridges expands our reach and allows us to offer more than just USDA programs and loan. We now have access to programs and services from agricultural organizations outside of USDA that have partnered with us, and we are able to put that information into the hands of our farmers and ranchers when they visit an FSA county office.

Q How Does it Work?

A USDA has partnered with thousands of local, state, regional and national agricultural organizations that offer programs, nongovernmental grants, technical assistance, financial advice and other information vital to today's producers. Information from these partners is entered into the Bridges software application. For example, a farmer or rancher may come into the county office seeking information on organic production. An FSA employee can enter "organics" in the Bridges software application and a list of all local, state, regional and national organizations offering resources and services on organic production will come up. The FSA employee can email or print the information for the producer and send an email to one or more of the partner organizations informing them that the producer has an interest in learning more about their service or program. The database will contain information on all subject matters that affect producers, such as drought relief, beginning farmer information and disaster assistance.

Q How Does it Benefit Me?

A This value-added service removes the burden and time of searching multiple agencies for information. Instead of searching online for hours to find services offered by local, state, regional and national organizations, all you need to do is visit your FSA county office. One visit not only provides you with information on USDA programs and loans, but can also give you access to local, regional and national agricultural organizations that can assist you with disaster assistance, soil and fertilizer issues, conservation effort, financial assistance and any other topic needed to make your operation successful.

Q Do I Have to Come in to a County Office to Access Bridges to Opportunity?

A No. FSA employees in any county office that offers the Bridges service can assist you over the telephone or in the county office. Simply contact a county office to speak with an FSA employee.

Q Will USDA and FSA Continue to Offer Farm Programs and Farm Loans?

A Yes. Bridges provides additional resources beyond what FSA currently offers. All farm programs and farm loans offered through FSA are still available and FSA employees are able to help producers with the application process.

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Ohio
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