

Next Gen Leaders and Improving Land Access Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the American Rescue Plan Act?

A: The American Rescue Plan is critical to helping the American people beat Covid-19, by delivering direct relief to the American people and rescuing the American economy. A full overview of what's in the law is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/american-rescue-plan/>

The provisions of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) related to USDA have provided the Department with tools to deliver nutrition assistance to millions of Americans, support farmers and strengthen the food supply chain, strengthen infrastructure, housing and healthcare amidst the pandemic, and advance equity among underserved agricultural producers. More information is available at: www.usda.gov/arp.

Q: What is the Inflation Reduction Act?

A: The Inflation Reduction Act is landmark legislation that will lower the cost of prescription drugs, health insurance, and everyday energy costs for families and reduce the deficit. This is an investment at a critical time that will strengthen our resilience to the climate crisis and protect and enhance our ability to produce food and fiber on our farms, ranches, and forests, and strengthen our energy independence. A full overview of what's in the law will soon be available at www.whitehouse.gov

Q: What are these programs and how were they created?

A: The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Section 1006, as amended by Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act, provides direction and significant funding for USDA to take action to ensure underserved agricultural producers have the tools, programs, and support they need to succeed in agriculture. These laws provide funding and direction for USDA to make investments in providing technical assistance and increasing access to land, capital, and markets. Additionally, through Section 1006 of ARP as amended by IRA, Congress directed USDA to establish an independent Equity Commission, and provided funding for eligible Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) to support career pathways and internship programs in agriculture for the next generation of food and agriculture leaders. Also included is \$2.2 billion in financial assistance for farmers who have experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs.

Q: Why is this important?

A:

- 1) In 2019, on average, small family farms derived more than half of their total household income from off-farm sources¹. To meet the growing need for food and fiber—and to ensure the next generation of agricultural producers takes root, USDA must ensure every producer has a fair shot to earn a stable income from farming. This effort is part of USDA's historic commitment to center equity in decision-making and policymaking and, fundamentally, to ensure that USDA programs are aligned with the

¹ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2021/september/off-farm-income-a-major-component-of-total-income-for-most-farm-households-in-2019/#:~:text=In%202019%2C%2096%20percent%20of,farm%20income%20than%20larger%20farms.>

needs and priorities of all agricultural producers— especially those who have been shut out or poorly served by USDA programs.

- 2) This effort will help with USDA’s efforts to develop a diverse, modern, and inclusive pipeline of agricultural leaders with career opportunities in agriculture broadly and at USDA. The goal is to help build a future agricultural workforce that reflects the talent, diversity and richness of the entire U.S. population.
- 3) This effort is aimed at lowering barriers to access and ensuring USDA programming is inclusive of all employees and all customers, including underserved farmers, ranchers, as well as forest landowners and operators. In other words, this effort is aimed at ensuring fairness and equal access across all of USDA’s activities.

The American Rescue Plan-authorized and funded Section 1006 programs, as amended by the Inflation Reduction Act that have been announced to date help underserved agricultural producers, as well as forest landowners and operators, by:

- Providing outreach, mediation, financial training, capacity building training, cooperative development training and support, and other technical assistance on issues concerning food, agriculture, agricultural credit, and agricultural extension services to underserved producers.
- Providing grants and loans to improve land access and address issues related to heirs’ property, fractionated land and related land title issues.
- Creating and funding the work of the USDA Equity Commission.
- Supporting the efforts of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) to create, support, and develop career development opportunities, such as scholarships, internships, and pathways to federal employment.

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access

Q: What is the new FSA program?

A: USDA is providing up to \$300 million for the “Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access” program, administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

This opportunity will fund cooperative agreements or grants to organizations, to develop and run programs that are designed to support a diverse set of farmers, ranchers, forest landowners and operators, to help them move from surviving to thriving, as they address core barriers to attain land, capital, and market access, for use in agriculture. The targeted beneficiary groups include underserved agricultural producers, as well as forest landowners and operators.

USDA is especially seeking submissions that focus on developing new program or curriculum content that expands successful existing models, to address the three major barriers: inadequate access to land, capital, and markets.

Q: Why is it needed?

A: Land access is critical to the success of agriculture, within all communities. Land access is particularly important within communities that have been underserved, either through access to limited resources,

geographic location, choice of crop or livestock production systems, or because the producers are disadvantaged in their access to programs and services.

Underserved agricultural producers have not received the amount of specialized technical support that would benefit their agricultural enterprises. These producers are more likely to operate smaller, lower-revenue farms, have weaker credit histories and many 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. (SOURCE: U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2019). Agricultural Lending: Information on Credit and Outreach to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Is Limited from:

<https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-19-539-highlights.pdf>)

Since wealth is accumulated over generations and land is often passed down through families, over decades, USDA programs have been of more benefit to some agricultural producers than others. Underserved agricultural producers have received neither the consistent investment nor specialized technical support that has been essential to the success of their agricultural operations.

FSA's 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 access
- Increasing land ownership, land succession, and agricultural business planning
- Increasing access to markets and capital that affect the ability to access land

Q: Who is eligible to apply for this FSA Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)?

A: Applicants eligible to apply for this program are:

- State, County, City, Local, Territorial and Township governments
- Public and State-controlled institutions of higher education
- Not for Profit institutions of higher education
- Nonprofits having a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS
- Foundations
- Community Development financial institutions
- Native American tribal governments (Federally or State recognized)
- Native American tribal government instrumentalities
- Native American tribal organizations (other than Federally or State recognized tribal governments)
- Native American tribal financial institutions

Q: Where can I find more information?

A: The program is administered by USDA's Farm Service Agency. For more information, please visit www.grants.gov.

National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Request for Applications (RFA): From Learning to Leading: Cultivating the Next Generation of Diverse Food and Agriculture Professionals

Q: What is the new NIFA program?

A: USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is providing up to \$250 million for the From Learning to Leading: Cultivating the Next Generation of Diverse Food and Agriculture Professionals (NEXTGEN) program to create career development opportunities for the next generation of agricultural scholars and leaders at Black colleges and universities, Tribal entities, and eligible Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). The NEXTGEN Program encourages implementing innovative and culturally responsive strategies and partnerships to inspire youth, adult learners, and other targeted audiences to pursue career paths in food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences.

This competitive funding opportunity includes an array of targeted technical assistance and outreach activities; meaningful, sustained engagement with diverse stakeholders to inform USDA policies and programs; and supporting and preparing diverse students for future careers in agriculture, with an emphasis on federal sector employment. Projects must be student-centered and directly benefit student learning and success. The NEXTGEN Program places emphasis on applicants coming up with innovative ways to close diversity gaps in federal sector employment and to address the disparity between supply and demand of professionals in agriculture-related fields.

Q: Why is it needed?

A: The NIFA NEXTGEN program is aimed at engaging, recruiting, retaining, training, and supporting young people to become the next generation of leaders in the food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences professions. The ultimate goal is to help develop a diverse and inclusive agricultural workforce that reflects the talent and richness of the U.S. population.

This program also benefits all Americans by helping ensure that there is a resilient, diverse, and capable workforce in food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences, to help ensure a productive and responsive U.S. food system, which helps support a healthy population and robust rural economy. Currently, USDA funds programs to advance education, but this new NIFA Section 1006 effort is dedicating resources to helping young people, adult learners, and others in targeted communities, find a job that is related to agriculture.

It is no secret that the agriculture sector overall is aging. This long-term trend is reflected in the findings of USDA's Census of Agriculture, which takes place once every five years. USDA's 2017 Census shows the average age of all farm producers was 57.5 years, [up 1.2 years](#) from the 2012 Census.

One of USDA's goals is to attract more young people overall to agriculture-related careers – both at USDA and elsewhere in agriculture-related fields – to help inject energy and vigor to the sector.

Q: Who is eligible to apply for the NIFA NEXTGEN Program?

A: ARPA Section 1006 defines eligible applicants as

- 1890 land-grant institutions, including Tuskegee University;

- 1994 Tribal land-grant institutions
- Hispanic-serving institutions, specifically the certified Hispanic-serving agricultural colleges and universities, or HSACUs
- Institutions serving Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians
- Institutions of higher education located in the U.S. territories.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to plan targeted outreach to and recruitment of underserved individuals to participate in proposed activities and programs within their project approach. Applicants also are expected to work with USDA and other partner entities, to work together to build sound support for the next generation of agricultural professionals.

Q: Where can I find more information?

A: The program is administered by USDA's National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA). For more information, please visit www.grants.gov.

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