U.S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service
Urban Agriculture and Innovation Production (UAIP) Competitive Grants Program
Webinar Transcript
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Leslie Glover: Welcome to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Competitive Grants Program Webinar. My name is Leslie Glover with the USDA's Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and the moderator for today's webinar. This is a newly established grant program under the 2018 Farm Bill and fiscal year 2021 is the second time USDA is soliciting applications for this funding opportunity. This year Approximately $4 million dollars is available to fund applications. Applications must be submitted online through Grants.gov. Check Grants.gov for the date the application is due which is July 30, 2021. Once the funding opportunity is posted you will be able to submit applications. Please do not wait until the due date to submit application package. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

Today's presentation will be divided into five sections. Jose Jimenez and I will be presenters. I am the Program Manager with the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production and Jose Jimenez Administrative Specialist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A combined 'Q&A' for FY 2020 is available for review.   New questions can be submitted to our inbox urbanagriculture@usda.gov and be added to frequently asked questions. USDA is happy to field any general, high-level inquiries that applicants may have regarding the application process. However, USDA staff is unable to offer specific guidance on how to craft, structure or write one's proposal.

So, what is OUAIP? OUIP is the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production. The mission of the Office of the is to encourage and promote urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural practices, including-
(A) community gardens and farms located in urban areas, suburbs, and urban clusters;
(B) rooftop farms, outdoor vertical production, and green walls;
(C) indoor farms, greenhouses, and high-tech vertical technology farms;
(D) hydroponic, aeroponic, and aquaponic farm facilities; and Agro Forestry, food forests and orchards.
(E) other innovations in agricultural production.
The authorizing statutes and regulations for this opportunity are under section 12302 of the

Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 also referred to as the 2018 Farm Bill. At this point will turn the presentation over to Jose to continue.

Jose Jimenez: Thank you Leslie. Today's webinar will discuss the competitive grant program. You will hear us refer to this grants program by the acronym UAIP.

The purpose of UAIP is to support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production activities by finding Planning Projects and implementation projects led by nonprofit organizations, local or tribal governments, and any schools that serve any of the grades kindergarten through 12 in areas of the United States. USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service is the awarding agency for this grant opportunity.

Projects, whether Planning Projects or implementation projects, should target a single or multiple urban areas, suburbs, or urban clusters in the United States where access to fresh food is limited or unavailable and should include one or more partner organizations to achieve project goals within the target areas. Will further explain these three components over the next few slides.

Let's first address target areas. UAIP project should target a single or multiple urban areas, suburbs, or urban clusters in the United States. The U.S. Census Bureau defines urban and rural areas based on population density. Rural areas comprise open country and settlements with fewer than 2500 residents.

Second, access to fresh food it should be limited or unavailable in the project target areas. Applicants should have experience serving these communities. The USDA's Economic Research Service is a national leader in measuring the people and places facing barriers to accessing healthy and affordable food. Applicants are not required to use tools developed by USDA's Economic Research Service, such as the USDA Food Access Research Atlas, or the Food Environment Atlas to measure access to fresh food in the target area. However, these data and mapping tools are available and free to use online.

There are many ways to measure food access for individuals and for neighborhoods. And many ways to define which areas are food deserts – neighborhoods that lack healthy food sources. Most measures and definitions consider at least some of the following indicators of access.

One, accessibility to sources of healthy food, as measured by distance to a store or the number of stores in an area. Two, individual level resources that may affect accessibility, such as family income or vehicle availability. And three, neighborhood level indicators of resources, such as the average income of the neighborhood and the availability of public transportation. Applicants can use any of these measures or others to measure access to fresh food in their project target area.

Eligible entities should collaborate with one or more partner organizations to achieve project goals within the target areas. Applicants are encouraged to seek, generate, and create partnerships with public or private, nonprofit, or for-profit entities. Only the applicant must meet the eligibility requirement for a UAIP grant. So, non-eligible entities may be partners on a project. The eligible entity that submits the application to the Natural Resources Conservation Service is responsible for receiving and managing the award, if its selected. Applicants that apply as partners or other similar grouping must clearly describe the relationship between applicants and the partner parties. Awards will only be made to a single entity. The letters of intent or support from partners are not required with the application but may be included. There is no competitive advantage for an applicant to provide a letter verifying support from partners. However, if you wish to include them, simply attach the letter to the application in Grants.gov.

Let's discuss who is eligible to apply for a UAIP grant. Tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, local governments, and any school that serves any of the grades kindergarten through grade 12 are eligible to apply for UAIP grants and must be located within the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Caribbean area to include Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Pacific Islands area, including Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. There have been many questions about tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, and local governments and their definition. For that reason, we are going to state their definitions here, which are based on the Office of Management and Budget Uniform Grants Guidance. Tribal governments are defined as governing bodies or governmental agencies of any Indian tribe, band, nation, or other organized group or community or certified by the Secretary of the Interior as eligible for special programs and services provided through the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The next group is nonprofit organizations, nonprofit organizations are defined as any corporation, trust, association, cooperative or other organization not including institutions of higher education that is operating primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purposes in the public interest and is not organized primarily for profit and uses net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the operations of the organization. In addition, nonprofit having a 501(c)(3) status with the

IRS and nonprofits that do not have a 501(c)(3) status with the IRS are eligible for UAIP grants. Next local governments are defined as any unit of government within a state, including a county, borough, municipality, city, town, township, parish, local public authority, including any public housing agency under United States housing act of 1937, special district, school district, intrastate district, council of governments, whether or not incorporated as a nonprofit under State law, and any other agency or instrumentality of a multistate regional, or interstate or local government. The very last category for eligibility as any school that serves any of the grades kindergarten through grade 12.

Who is not eligible to apply? For this opportunity, individual such as farmer, gardener, for-profit organizations, and small businesses, also institutions of higher education, including any extension programs related to the institution are not eligible to apply for UAIP. Applicants not located within the 50 States, District of Columbia, the Caribbean Area, and the Pacific Islands are not eligible. An eligible applicant can serve as the lead on only one Planning Project or one implementation project grant application. You may be listed as a partner on more than one application. So, the proposed project should not duplicate activities from another Federal award and must have specifically different objectives. Can I receive a UAIP grant and one from a different USDA or Federal agency? Yes, you can, but the projects must have specifically different objectives. You may want to check with the other Federal programs to ensure you are not violating the terms and conditions of another award that you might have with a different USDA agency. We will move on to project types and funding amounts.

Planning Projects are new startup projects that may require a greater initial investment, may include activities such as assessments, surveys and investments, development of technology, design planning, and so forth. Funding for Implementation Projects should be used to accelerate existing and emerging efforts and lastly, there is no cost sharing on those requirements.

When trying to decide between applying for a Planning Project or an Implementation Project, it's important to consider the following. For Planning Projects the projects should support early-stage efforts of farmers, gardeners, citizens, government officials, schools, and other stakeholders in urban agriculture and innovative production and they may be designed to develop recommendations, facilitate assessments, or support the development of business plans, feasibility studies, strategies, and municipal planning that consider policies and zoning.

Implementation Projects accelerate existing and emerging models of urban, indoor, and other agricultural practices and improve access to local food. They need to be designed to offer needed resources, such as training, land, equipment, mentoring and other business development assistance. Increase food production, train students for careers in agriculture, or expand operations of community gardens or nonprofit farms. It is significant to note that USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service does not have examples of projects that have been funded under this grant. UAIP is a newly established grant program, and this is the second year USDA is soliciting applications for this funding opportunity.

So, what does this grant program fund? It funds activities that encourage and promote urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural practices, including community gardens and farms located in urban areas, suburbs, and urban clusters, rooftop farms, outdoor vertical production and green walls, indoor farms, greenhouses, and high-tech vertical technology farms, hydroponic, aquaponic facilities, and other innovations in agricultural production. Project activities that can be funded under this grant include production related expenses such as soil, plants, feed, shovels, gardening tools, fish, livestock, bees, and hoop houses or other items necessary to grow and store food. The purchase of a shipping container to grow food is allowable. However, the per unit cost of each supply item must be below $5000. Any item with a per-unit cost of $5000 or above and has a useful life of more than one year is considered equipment.

Construction is also another activity that can be funded with UAIP funds and may be used to construct, alter, or repair buildings, structures, or other property. Erecting a building or making substantial changes to the footprint of a building would be considered a construction project. In addition, funds can be used to expand or improve current operations of an existing greenhouse. Contractual costs, including labor, contractual costs are expenses associated with purchasing goods and/or procuring services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant in the form of a procurement relationship. Grant funds may be used for personnel whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities. Projects and budgets including the rental or lease and not the purchase of special equipment, vehicles, land, and building space during the length of the grants will be given higher consideration. Any lease or rental agreement must terminate at the end of the grant cycle, special purpose means equipment which is used for the research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities.

What are the activities that are not funded under this grant include; the purchase of general-purpose

equipment which is equipment not limited to research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities. Examples include office equipment and furnishings, modular offices, telephone networks, etc. Organized fundraising which includes any financial campaigns, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions, regardless of how the funds will be used. This list is not exhaustive, and a more detailed list of funding restrictions is provided in the Notice of Funding Opportunity on Grants.gov.

Let's discuss that an applicant will be given higher consideration if they meet the following four criteria. One, have experience in agriculture or innovative production for three years or more. And have experience serving communities in urban areas, suburbs, or urban clusters where access to fresh foods are limited or unavailable. Two, they demonstrate competency to implement a project, provide fiscal accountability, collect data, prepare reports and other necessary documentation. Three, they demonstrate a willingness to share information with researchers, evaluators, practitioners, and other interested parties including a plan for dissemination of results and four is the collaboration with one or more partner organizations working in the project target areas.

All the overview information I just provided can be obtained through the resources that have been made publicly available at Farmers.gov/urban and Grants.gov. We encourage you to visit Farmers.gov/urban to learn more about the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production, and its varied funding opportunities. You can reach out to us with any high-level inquiries, about the UAIP program, at the email address UrbanAgriculture@usda.gov. Thank you. Now back to you, Leslie.

Leslie Glover: Thank you Jose, Now, Part III and IV of today's webinar that covers the Application, Evaluation and Notification Process and Helpful Tips. Step 1 and 2 are completed by the applicant by 11:59 pm ET on date listed in NFO and on Grants.gov. Which is July 30, 2021. Step 3, 4 and 5 are completed by USDA. The agency anticipates announcing or notifying successful and unsuccessful applicants by August 31, 2021 and expects to have Federal awards in place by September 30, 2021. Pre-work involves several steps that the applicant is responsible for completing. Read the Notice of Funding Opportunity to make sure you are eligible to apply and understand the instructions. If you determine your organization is eligible and wants to apply, follow the instructions in the NFO. The Notice of Funding Opportunity is several pages. Where can you find the Notice of Funding Opportunity? You can find a link to it on farmers.gov/urban website.

Know what forms you need to submit. You may use this simple checklist as a guide.

UAIP requires that all application packages include several items: Proposal Narrative: The text of the proposal must be single spaced and typed in New Times Roman, no smaller than 12-point font and must not exceed 15 pages. The proposal shall not exceed 10 pages of written text, and up to 5 additional pages for figures and tables. We have established this maximum (15 pages) to ensure fair and equitable competition. Proposals that fail to comply with the required content and format will not be considered for funding. Material exceeding stated page limits and/or formatting structure will not be considered. Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals will not be considered. Application Form are the Standard Form 424 Application for Federal Assistance; Standard Form (SF) 424A for Budget Information - Non-Construction. Programs. Complete this form only if the proposal does not include construction. In a separate narrative titled "Budget Narrative", explain and justify all requested budget items/costs. Detail how the totals on the SF- 424A were determined and demonstrate a clear connection between costs and the proposed project activities. When applicable, application packages are required to include the form SF424C Budget Information for Construction Programs. Complete this form only if your proposal includes Construction Activities. The Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement is also required is requesting indirect costs. The NICRA must be in a PDF form and attached to the grants.gov application package.

Don't wait until the last minute! This chart is a general overview and includes the main steps a new organization or organizations that have never applied for a federal grant before must complete outside of Grants.gov prior to submitting an application through Grants.gov. Obtain an Employer Identification Number (EIN) also known as a federal tax identification number (TIN), which is used to identify a business entity. If your organization does not have an EIN, you should allow an additional 5 weeks to request and obtain an EIN from the IRS. The length of time to get an EIN depends on whether applying online, by fax or through mail.

Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) provides a D-U-N-S Number, a unique nine-digit identification number, for each physical location of your business. D-U-N-S Number assignment is FREE for all businesses required to register with the US Federal government for contracts or grants.

Registering with the System for Award Management (SAM) is a required step for your organization to be able to apply for federal grants. The registration process is FREE. You need to have a TIN or EIN and a DUNS number to register with SAM. Register with Grants.gov. The amount of time to register can vary. You should allow two full weeks to complete all registration steps, but additional time may be required. More detailed information about each of these steps is on the Grants.gov registration page. UAIP applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on July 30, 2021

through Grants.gov. Only applications submitted through this electronic system will be considered. Who should you contact for help if you need assistance or have difficulties while trying to complete any of these steps?

If you are needing that technical assistance, please remember that these systems are not owned or managed by USDA. You must contact the applications directly for assistance.

1. Use these phone numbers to contact the Internal Revenue Service if experiencing Employer Identification Number (EIN) also known as a federal tax identification number (TIN) with issues or questions.
2. Use this phone number or email address to contact Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) with DUNS Number issues or questions.
3. Go to the Help tab at the top of the SAM.gov website for assistance and user guides.
4. Use this phone number or email address to receive support with Grants.gov.

Keep a record of any correspondence with Grants.gov or other helpdesks, including any ID or case numbers provided.

Where you find and download the Notice of Funding Opportunity and related documents by going directly to Grants.gov and doing a keyword search for the program acronym "UAIP", the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number (also known as the Assistance Listing): "10.935" or by entering the Funding Opportunity Number which is USDA-NRCS-NHQ-UAIP-20-NOFO0001110 in the UPPER RIGHT CORNER OF THE WEBPAGE.

Once you find the grant opportunity on Grants.gov, four blue tabs will appear. If you click on the tab labeled RELATED DOCUMENTS, this list of files will appear that can be printed or downloaded such as the full announcement, the frequently asked questions PDF, and other associated documents and instructions.

When you're ready to apply, click on the tab labeled PACKAGE and then select the APPLY tab. Reminder: Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on date listed in NFO and on Grants.gov. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding. Late submissions will not be reviewed or considered. The agency will rely on system generated date and time receipt documentation to determine whether applications meet the submission deadline. Grants.gov provides an automatic acknowledgement when applications are received. At this point am turning it back to Jose to finish this out.

Jose Jimenez: Thank you Leslie. Now moving onto USDA review process, each application will be evaluated in a two-part process. First applications will be screened to ensure it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. The slide shows examples of applications that would not meet the administrative requirement. Those are the application is submitted late through Grants.gov; proposal does not comply with the required content, format and formatting structure including the page length. The application is incomplete or noncompliant. The application does not fit the purpose of the UAIP project. Some additional examples are if the proposal includes activities funded by another award or applicants that do not meet eligibility criteria including eligible applicant types. Applicant is identified in the SAM.gov exclusions database as ineligible, prohibited, restricted, or excluded. Last, applicant has committed fraud including material, misleading or incorrect information in the application.

The second part of the process involves applications that have met the administrative review requirements will be evaluated with the technical evaluation by a review panel. Appropriate members of the Natural Resources Conservation Service and other USDA agencies will review all applications submitted and, if necessary, may seek the opinions of others who are qualified to give expert advice on that specific topic. Peer Reviews will be conducted by teams that will be considering when evaluating each proposal. Be sure to review the six criteria stated in that Notice of Funding Opportunity so you can understand what you should address in your project and budget narrative.

There is a summary of the six criteria on this slide. First, we have the Alignment and Intent witch the UAIP purpose and priorities presented here that's 20% weight. Achievability is number two. Quality of the plan to effectively support the development of urban agriculture and innovative production activities such as gardens and farms, rooftop farms, outdoor vertical production, green walls, and/or farms, greenhouses, high-tech, vertical technology farms, and hydroponic, aeroponic, and aquaponic farm facilities within the targeted area, that is also a weight of 20%. The third one here, 20%, the Projected Impact and Measurable Outcomes. The project needs to demonstrate the potential for positive impact in targeted urban and suburban areas with limited access to healthy, fresh food as listed in the USDA food access research Atlas. Number four, which is also 20%, it's the expertise and technical merit, internal and external organizational support for execution of the project, including experience and expertise of key personnel, and agriculture and innovative protection of. The fifth one, it's a 10% weight, collaboration and partners is the quality of the plan

for information sharing, in creating partnerships with public or private, nonprofit, or profit entities including links to academic institutions, and/or other appropriate professional community-based organizations, and local government entities to achieve project objectives and outcomes. The sixth and final one is also worth 10% which is the fiscal Plan and Resources. Projects with budgets need to include explication and justification for all requested budget items and costs included and not included such as the purchase of special-purpose equipment, vehicles, land, and building space during the length of the grant. After the technical review process that we are speaking about has been completed, both the Planning Projects and Implementation Projects they will be recommended for funding will be submitted to the approving official, who for this opportunity, is the Chief of the NRCS which will make the final award decision. Now its back to you Leslie.

Leslie Glover: Thank you Jose. Let's do a recap. Here is the outline of the Application, Evaluation and Notification Process and Tentative Timeline for the Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Competitive Grants Program. Step 1 and 2 must be completed by the applicant by 11:59 pm ET on final date listed in NFO which is July 30, 2021 and listed on Grants.gov. Step 3 and 4: Application Review between July and August 2021. Step 5: The agency anticipates announcing or notifying successful and unsuccessful applicants by August 31, 2021 and expects to have Federal awards in place by September 30, 2021.

Helpful Tips. Don't wait until the last minute! The Notice of Funding Opportunity is posted on Grants.gov under the Funding Opportunity Number or by searching the acronym 'UAIP' Proposals that fail to comply with the required content and format will not be considered for funding. Material exceeding stated page limits and/or formatting structure will not be considered. Incomplete and/or noncompliant proposals will not be considered. Consider requesting input from your partners in your proposal.

As a reminder, USDA staff is unable to offer specific guidance on how to craft, structure or write one's proposal. Any new questions will be added to the UAIP Frequently Asked Questions document and posted online at Grants.gov and Farmers.gov/urban website. This recording along with closed captioning of this presentation will also be posted on the website Farmers.gov/urban and on Grants.gov for any time viewing once complete. If you have questions, please submit them to email inbox UrbanAgriculture@usda.gov. New questions will be added to the frequently ask questions.

Thank you for attending this webinar on the Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production (UAIP) Competitive Grants Program and we hope to see your application. Thank you.