Writing a Winning Grant Proposal

April 24, 2014

What USDA/Other Federal Funding Opportunities Exist
Farmers Market (and Local Food) Promotion Program (FMLFPP)

- **Due:** Refunded in 2014 Farm Bill $30m/year over 5 years - Future Solicitations Planned
- **Max award:** $100,000
- **Big idea:** To help communities support local food systems through direct marketing. Direct marketing includes farmers markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture, agri-tourism and other direct producer-to-consumer marketing opportunities. Project awards increase access to local foods by low-income consumers, expand opportunities for farmers and growers to market their products directly to the consumer, and raise customer awareness of local farm products through promotion and outreach.
- **Who can apply:** Agricultural cooperatives, economic development corporations, local governments, non-profit organizations, producer associations and producer networks, public benefit corporations, regional farmers market authorities, and Tribal governments.
- **Possibilities:** FMPP grants are available to:
  - Bring local farm products into federal nutrition programs with electronic benefits transfer (EBT) technology at direct-market outlets.
  - Raise customer awareness of local foods through promotion and outreach.
  - Educate farmers and growers in marketing, business planning, and similar topics.
  - Increase market awareness through advertising and branding efforts.
  - Purchase infrastructure, such as refrigerated trucks, or equipment for a commercial kitchen for value-added products
- **Real example:** Penn’s Corner Farm Alliance of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania used a $45,000 FMPP grant to make infrastructure upgrades to their cooperative market, including new refrigerated storage and trucks. The market, which serves restaurants and a CSA program, has helped their business grow 12-fold in five years, and the Alliance now has over 700 CSA shareholders and 30 farmers and serves three dozen restaurants.
- **Get more information:** [http://www.ams.usda.gov/AM Sv1.0/FMPP](http://www.ams.usda.gov/AM Sv1.0/FMPP)
Farm to School Grants Program (FNS)

- **Due**: 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, **April 30, 2014**
- **Max award**: Planning, Implementation and Support Service grants are available from $20,000 - $100,000. Matching funds of 25% of the total project is required.
- **Big idea**: To help schools source more foods locally and to provide complementary educational activities to students that emphasize food, farming, and nutrition.
- **Who can apply**: Eligible schools, State and Local agencies, Indian Tribal Organizations, agricultural producers or groups of agricultural producers, and non-profit entities.
- **Possibilities**: Applicants are planning programs to bring local or regionally produced foods into school cafeterias; hands-on learning activities such as school gardening, farm visits, and culinary classes; and the integration of food-related education into the regular, standards-based classroom curriculum.
- **Real example**: Portland Maine Public Schools is using a Farm to School grant to update central kitchen equipment, certifications, and training in order to become a large-volume processor of local foods. The project also includes a number of experiential learning activities such as school gardens, after-school agriculture clubs, school curriculum, taste testing, and chef-to-school. The school district will also hold an annual "Local Food Show" open to the public exhibiting the farms, recipes, and student projects related to farm to school.
Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP)

- **Due:** TBD – Possibly in spring of 2014
- **Max award:** No max - grants generally range from $25,000 - $135,000 - matching required
- **Big idea:** Funds are used to explore barriers, challenges, and opportunities in marketing, transporting, and distributing food and forest products.
- **Who can apply:** State Departments of Agriculture, State agricultural experiment stations, and other appropriate State agencies including a State university, a State college, or a State government entity such as a State department. The terms State university and State college include land-grant universities and colleges.
- **Possibilities:** Given the broad flexibility of this program, there are many possibilities for projects, including:
  - Determining market demand for local products;
  - Building online marketing tools such as MarketMaker;
  - Developing protocols for harvesting excess crops for local food banks;
  - Developing business plans for food hubs.
- **Real Example:** The Maryland Department of Agriculture, in partnership with the University of Maryland School of Nursing, Future Harvest/Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture, and others, received $100,620 to increase the use of locally-produced sustainable proteins such as beef, pork, poultry, dairy, eggs, and seafood in Maryland health care facilities. This grant built upon two previous FSMIP grants facilitating increase consumption of locally-produced foods in Maryland hospitals.
- **Get more information:** [http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/FSMIP](http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/FSMIP)
Risk Management Education and Outreach

- **Due:** TBD - Possible funding in summer 2014
- **Type:** Cooperative agreements
- **Awards:** Range from $10,000 to $300,000
- **Big idea:** USDA's Risk Management Agency partners with educational institutions and community based organizations to provide farmers and ranchers (especially minority, limited resource and traditionally underserved farmers and ranchers) with information on new ways to manage risk. This program funds risk management strategies related to production (including crop insurance), marketing, legal, human, and financial issues.
- **Who can apply:** Non-profit organizations, Tribal organizations, State agencies, and colleges or universities.
- **Possibilities:** Managing risk through sound practices is critical to any small business' success, especially for farmers and ranchers. Possible projects could address risk management related to:
  - Production practices, including on-farm food safety;
  - Insurance, including health insurance;
  - Business planning and accounting;
  - Marketing and branding;
  - Legal and succession planning.
- **Real example:** In North Carolina, the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project received $135,000 to provide limited resource and underserved farmers with the support, knowledge and tools necessary to access and operate successfully in the burgeoning markets for locally grown food.
Rural Business Development Grants

The 2014 Farm Bill merges the Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) and Rural Business Opportunity Grants programs

- **Max award**: Undetermined - Authorization for up to $65 million in discretionary funding per year over five years
- **The ideas**: The RBEG program funded projects that facilitated the development of small and emerging rural businesses, distance learning networks, and employment-related adult education programs. The RBOG program promoted economic growth in rural communities by supporting training and technical assistance for business development and to assist with regional economic development planning.
- **Who can apply**: TBD – but RBEG and RBOG included local and state governments and authorities, economic development organizations, Indian tribes, cooperatives, and non-profit organizations. For the purposes of these programs a "rural community" is an area where the population does not exceed 50,000, or is next to a city or town with more than 50,000 people.
- **Real examples**:
  - RBEG: The Glynwood Center, located in the Hudson River Valley of New York, developed a mobile livestock unit to provide local ranchers access to slaughter and processing equipment and, ultimately, local markets. USDA awarded Glynwood a $99,800 Rural Business Enterprise Grant to weatherize the mobile unit, as well as to hire a coordinator to assist with logistics and marketing.
  - RBOG: Ecotrust, a non-profit organization located in Oregon, created FoodHub, an online marketplace that allows large-scale purchasers of food to connect with nearby growers. Through a $250,000 Rural Business Opportunity Grant, USDA is supporting the recruitment of more producers and buyers in rural communities throughout the Pacific Northwest, and to provide training and technical assistance to ensure FoodHub is able to help their businesses grow.
- **Former (and maybe future) Possibilities**:
  - For business development: Acquisition or development of land; Construction, conversion, or renovation of buildings; Purchase of machinery and equipment, including refrigerators and processing equipment; Capitalization of revolving loan funds; Provision of training and technical assistance (unless related to agricultural production); Project planning.
  - Regional economic planning focused on food system development;
  - Market development and feasibility studies;
  - Business training, including leadership development and technical assistance for entrepreneurs;
  - Establishing business incubators, including commercial kitchens.

Get more information: [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP_rbeg.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/BCP_rbeg.html) and [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/bcp_rbog.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/bcp_rbog.html), and to apply contact the Delaware/Maryland USDA Rural Development office:

USDA Rural Development  
Main Telephone Number: (302) 857-3580
Maryland State Office  
1221 College Park Drive, Suite 200  
Bill McGowan, State Director  
Dover, DE 19904  
(302) 857-3580
Rural Cooperative Development Grants (RCDG)

- **Max award:** $225,000
- **Big idea:** Rural Cooperative Development Grants support rural economic development through the creation or improvement of cooperative development centers. Cooperative development centers in turn provide assistance for starting up, improving, or expanding rural businesses, especially cooperatives.
- **Who can apply:** Non-profit organizations; for the purposes of this program, cooperative development centers must primarily serve "rural areas," where the population does not exceed 50,000, or is next to a city or town with more than 50,000 people.
- **Possibilities:** Rural Cooperative Development Grants support a broad range of activities, including:
  - New and beginning farmer training;
  - Marketing and feasibility studies;
  - Business development assistance;
  - Outreach.
- **Real example:** Farm to Table, a non-profit organization in New Mexico, received $142,382 through RCDG to partner with La-Montanita, a member-owned food hub, to develop and distribute a curriculum for best practices on food system cooperative development as well as to provide workshops throughout the state to assist cooperatives in different stages of development. Farm to Table also partnered with the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union to develop models for using the cooperative structure to address three crucial challenges facing local food system development: meat processing infrastructure, food safety, and food storage/transportation.
- **Get more information:** [http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/bcp_rcdg.html](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/bcp_rcdg.html), and to apply contact the Delaware/Maryland USDA Rural Development office:

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Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)

- **Due:** TBD – 2014 funded at $72.5m/year across all States and Territories
- **Type:** Block grants awarded directly to State departments of agriculture - Maximum award varies by state
- **Big idea:** States administer grant program to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops (fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, nursery crops, floriculture), including locally grown and consumed specialty crops.
- **Who can apply:** State departments of agriculture award funds to a range of specialty crop stakeholders
- **Possibilities:** This program supports a State’s specialty crop funding priorities including statewide and local food systems, all of which must solely support specialty crops, including:
  - School and community gardens;
  - Farm-to-school programs;
  - GAP certification and training for farmers;
  - Facilities that support the processing, aggregation, and distribution of locally grown specialty crops;
  - Improving access to specialty crops in underserved communities.
- **Real examples:** USDA provided $447,289 to the Maryland Department of Food and Agriculture to:
  1) Partner with the University of Maryland to increase the grade and marketability of processing sweet corn by modifying current insect control practices to manage stink bugs in the most cost-effective and environmentally-acceptable way and disseminate important information through a management guide and scientific papers
  2) Partner with Engaged Community Offshoots (ECO) City Farms to demonstrate how small urban and rural farms can intensively produce microgreens and shoots year-around for restaurants by developing and documenting a production system that can be replicated by other farmers
Economic Development Assistance Programs

Economic Development Administration — Department of Commerce

- **Due**: Deadlines by funding cycle - June 13, 2014 for funding cycle 4 of FY 2014
- **Max award**: No max - grants generally range from $25,000 - $135,000 - matching required
- **Big idea**: Funds are used to explore barriers, challenges, and opportunities in marketing, transporting, and distributing food and forest products.
- **Who can apply**: Designated Economic Development districts, Indian Tribes, State or local government, institutions of higher education, and non-profit organizations.
- **Possibilities**: Designed to leverage existing regional assets and support the implementation of economic development strategies that advance new ideas and creative approaches to advance economic prosperity in distressed communities:
  - Develop and expand food industry clusters
  - Provide technical assistance and business assistance to agricultural and food entrepreneurs;
- **Real Example**: EDA invested $1.4 million in Historic East Baltimore Community Action Coalition Inc. (HEBCA) project to transform unused buildings in the city’s abandoned Eastern Pumping Station into an a new Baltimore Food Hub that will offer an incubator providing commercial kitchens for rent by the hour, food storage facilities, and affordable office space for new businesses.
- **Get more information**: [http://www.eda.gov](http://www.eda.gov)

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Image from http://www.baltimorefoodhub.com