



Ecotrust

Request For Applications (RFA): USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) Building Capacity, Access, and Resiliency for Oregon’s BIPOC and Other Producers – Microgrants 2024

Location: Portland, OR

Funding Amounts: The microgrants program has a total budget of \$150,000 for the duration of the cooperative agreement. Applicants can apply for a one-time grant of \$5,000. If awarded, **funds must be spent by January 31st, 2025.**

Application Opened on: July 16th, 2024

Applications Closed on: August 13th, 2024, 11:59:00 PM Pacific Time

About Black Food Sovereignty Coalition

Black Food Sovereignty Coalition exists to ignite Black and Brown communities to participate as owners and movement leaders within food systems, placemaking, and economic development. We serve as a collaboration hub for Black and Brown communities to confront the systemic barriers that make food, place and economic opportunities inaccessible to us. BFSC is focused on meeting these barriers with creative, innovative, and sustainable solutions.

About Ecotrust

At Ecotrust, we work in partnership from California to Alaska toward the vision of a more just, prosperous, and climate-smart future. Across more than 30 projects and with hundreds of partners, our approach focuses on impact at the intersections of equity, the economy, and the environment. Together, we uplift Indigenous leadership to respond to contemporary lands and water management challenges, connect schools with local producers, provide technical support for community-centered businesses, and more. We welcome you to join us in the pursuit of radical, practical change.

About the Portland Urban Agriculture Cooperators Program

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing \$1.5M to support urban farms across the Portland Metro region. Ecotrust has been selected by the USDA to lead these efforts. Ecotrust will expand the Farm Service Agency's (FSA) existing outreach efforts to urban agriculture producers through technical assistance, outreach, and education, and will allocate resources to urban agricultural producers to implement conservation and climate-friendly farming practices that reduce susceptibility to natural disasters and increase supply chain resiliency.

Microgrant Purpose

- Increase the capacity of urban BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) farmers and other producers for growing food, medicines, fibers, or commodities or for expanding their growing operations;
- Increase urban BIPOC farmers' and other producers capacity for implementing climate-friendly and/or conservation practices that improve soil quality and increase their resilience to a changing climate if funding is not currently available through existing USDA programs.

Timeline

Application Opened	July 16th, 2024
Virtual Info Session	July 30th, 2024 @ 3pm PST via Zoom (bit.ly/2024FSAinfo)
Applications Close	August 13th, 2024, 11:59:00 PM Pacific Time
Funds Disbursed to Applicant By	October 2024
Funds Must Be Spent By	January 31st, 2025
Grant Reporting Due	February 28th, 2025

Eligibility Criteria:

- ***Applicants must be stewarding land or ranching in the Portland Metro area (Oregon) OR applicants' commercial production sites must be located partially or wholly in one of the [selected urban areas](#) listed below.***
 - Portland and the neighboring cities of Beaverton, Gresham, Hillsboro, Milwaukie, Lake Oswego, Oregon City, Fairview, Wood Village, Troutdale, Tualatin, and Tigard.
- List of projected expenses (simple budget) for grant funds anticipated use
- Each farm business may only receive this microgrant once. Please ensure you apply at the time that is most beneficial to your farm business
- Applicant must derive a portion of their income from their farm business

Please note the USDA defines Urban Agriculture to include the cultivation, processing, and distribution of agricultural products (food or non-food) in urban and suburban areas. Urban farming can provide environmental, economic, and social benefits to the surrounding communities. ([USDA](#); website accessed on 2024-06-11)

The term “**Beginning Farmer or Rancher**” means a participant who has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years, and who will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm or ranch.

The term “**Socially Disadvantaged**” means an Individual or entity who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A socially disadvantaged group is a group whose members have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities.

Socially disadvantaged groups consist of the following:

- American Indians or Alaskan Natives
- Asians
- Blacks or African Americans
- Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders
- Hispanics.

For an entity, at least 50 percent ownership in the farm business must be held by socially disadvantaged individuals.

([NRCS](#); website accessed on 2024-06-11)

Eligible Expenses or Uses of Microgrant Funding:

- To leverage or implement conservation practices*
- Purchase on-farm infrastructure
- Leasing of processing facility and cold storage
- Provide cost share for supplies and equipment if funding isn't currently available and/or hasn't already been awarded through other existing USDA programs for the designated microgrant recipients.*
- To expand their growing operations if funding is not currently available through existing USDA programs.
- Irrigation improvements to reduce water use*
- Solar-powered water/well pumps*
- Other water efficiency projects (piping, mulching, system automation and remote monitoring, or other irrigation modernization)*
- Shade cloth to protect plants from heat*
- Shading structures for plants (greenhouses, high-tunnels, etc) and/or livestock*
- Opaque plastics and row covers*
- Shade structures for workers*
- Refrigeration and cold storage
- Reduced or no tillage (labor or equipment purchases)*
- Composting, mulching, or addition of other organic amendments (compost, compost systems, spreaders; biochar, chippers or biochar reactors; aggregating organic debris to distribute to farmers; mulchers or equipment to spread mulch)*
- Cover cropping and seeds*
- Rotational grazing (fencing, shade structures, water troughs)*
- Tree planting*
- Planting of drought/heat/climate resilient seeds/varieties*
- Transition to or implementation of dry farming practices*
- Adapting planting and harvest times, transitioning to new varieties, and transitioning to new crops, diversification of overall production to avoid late season heat impacts*
- Increase season extension infrastructure*
- Frost protection for earlier planting to avoid late season heat*
- Purchasing animal feed
- Livestock trailers
- Implements/equipment to improve soil health or support other resilience activities/strategies (no-till seed drill, flail mower, roller crimpers, manure spreader, and others)*
- Creating an on-farm disaster plan (heat/smoke policies, evacuation plan)*

- Purchasing water and/or paying water bills
- Personal protective equipment, on-farm safety gear, etc.
- Market support, equipment, application and vending fees, market labor, etc
- SNAP/FNS authorization, SNAP processing equipment, PNW CSA Coalition membership/fees, etc.
- Other...

Items marked with an asterisk (*) are considered climate-smart projects.

Ineligible Expenses or Uses of Microgrant Funding:

- Cannabis or hemp, regardless of tested THC level
- Staff time (salaried or hourly, full-time or part-time employees) that is unrelated to the specific grant-funded project being implemented
- Community or backyard gardens and other hobby-gardening projects that do not represent a commercial production venture

If you are unsure whether an activity is eligible for microgrant funding, contact fsamicrogrants@ecotrust.org.

Please note that if funds are being utilized for or supporting a project that has environmental disturbances, additional approval will be required from USDA FSA. Please review this [list of potential environmental disturbances](#).

Selected Urban Locations:

The intended area includes Portland and the neighboring cities of Beaverton, Gresham, Hillsboro, Milwaukie, Lake Oswego, Oregon City, Fairview, Wood Village, Troutdale, Tualatin, and Tigard. Applicants' commercial production sites must be located partially or wholly in one of the above locations.

Grant Award Requirements:

If awarded, the recipient (or beneficiary) must:

- Submit a short (no more than one-page) narrative report that demonstrates how funds were used, **inclusive of financial summary and receipts/ invoices must show proof of payment.** Language translation is available upon request.
- Spend the entirety of their grant before their report is due on February 28th, 2025 (Savings accounts for later use are not eligible for these funds).

Additional Information:

- The awardee's name will be included in a public announcement of grant recipients.
- Ecotrust and USDA will work with some grant recipients to share their stories through national communications channels. We will also ask that you sign a USDA photo release form so that USDA may highlight your story. Grant recipients have the option to opt out of this coverage. We encourage grant recipients to opt in as success stories to help demonstrate the need to increase funding levels to USDA programs that benefit urban farmers.
- Please note that this grant is taxable income. Please consult with your tax advisor on any potential impacts this might have on your tax liability.

How to Apply

Please submit a proposal by completing an application form at the following [link](#) by the close of business on **August 13th, 2024, 11:59:00 PM Pacific Time:**

<https://form.jotform.com/scerquera/2024FSAApplication>

Please include in your proposal:

Application Process:

- Complete demographic information
- Complete contact information
- Answer three short answer questions:
 - How will this project help increase your capacity for growing food, medicines, fibers, commodities, etc.? Or, how will this project increase your capacity for implementing climate-friendly and conservation practices that improve soil quality and increase resilience to a changing climate?
 - Tell us about your project or activity – Provide as much detail and information as you can - including the technique, approach and the intended outcomes. Up to 5,000 characters including spaces. *There are no preferences for what applicants produce on their operations or for the current scale of the farm.*
 - Please attach a simplified budget (if purchasing items, please make a budget that shows the name, amount, and purpose). The total budget must add up to \$5,000.
 - Briefly share in a sentence or two a bit about your business's vision, mission, and/or values.

If you require translation services to complete this application, please contact fsamicrogrants@ecotrust.org to request translation services in a timely manner.

Please note the grant committee will contact you if further information is needed about your proposal.

Application Review Criteria:

- The selection committee comprises staff members from Black Food Sovereignty Coalition, Ecotrust and USDA Farm Service Agency.
- Projects will be prioritized based on potential impact and success.
- The highest scoring applicants will be selected and awarded microgrants, and all applicants will then be notified of selection statuses. Microgrant awardees will sign a contract with Ecotrust agreeing to the terms and conditions of the microgrant and will be **required to submit a finance report detailing the use of their funds. The entire microgrant award will be issued as a one-time \$5,000 payment.**

Microgrant Environmental Review Process

USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) will comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the implementing regulations in 40 CFR Parts 1500 – 1508, and FSA's NEPA implementing Regulations in 7 CFR Part 799 for cooperative agreements entered under the FSA Urban and Innovative Agriculture Community-Based Organization Fund. After review at the programmatic level, USDA determined that, in general, cooperative agreements entered under Section 1001 of the Build Back Better Act, Food Systems Transformation Effort do not have the potential for significant impacts to the human environment. FSA has determined that the following categories of activities are categorically excluded from further review under the National Environmental Policy Act, per 7 CFR § 799.31:

- Educational or informational (i.e., outreach) activities; and
- Procurement actions for goods and services conducted in accordance with Executive Orders.

However, a site-specific review will be needed for activities funded through the cooperative agreement, or subsequent microgrant programs, if any of the following conditions are true:

1. Disturb ground to a level that has not been previously disturbed, remove any trees, remove any tree roots, or use mechanical means to remove damaged fencing or debris that will impact below the level of previous disturbance.
2. Place a farm storage or other facility on a farm eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places and would have a visual impact to the historic character of the farm.
3. Modify, renovate, or remove a structure or building that is 50 years old or older.
4. Involve an activity including new land clearing, impacts to any water body, wetland, floodplain, riparian buffer, threatened or endangered species, their critical habitat, or cultural resources that would otherwise require consultation.
5. Result in any extraordinary circumstances in accordance with Handbook 1-EQ (Rev. 3) Par. 25.
6. Change the existing land use or remove the land from agricultural use.
7. Involve FSA actions or programs not specified in this P-850, not approved in that municipality, or for which an individual site-specific FSA-850 or environmental assessment is required.

For microgrants, the grantee must satisfy any site-specific NEPA requirements identified by FSA prior to drawing down funds or incurring expenses related to the microgrant. Once these conditions have been successfully completed, FSA will notify the grantee that the review is complete. At that time, the distribution and expenditure of microgrant funds will be authorized. Before the NEPA process is completed, Federal regulations specify acceptable actions in 40 CFR § 1506.1.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, and reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, and American Sign Language) should contact the responsible State or local Agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, which can be obtained online, at www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-programdiscrimination-complaint-form.pdf, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA.

The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation.

The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

or fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442;

email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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