

EVALUATING USDA AMS GRANT PROGRAMS SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

Focus on Socially Disadvantaged Communities



“ This critical partnership will enable AMS to better support historically underserved farmers, ranchers, fishers and agricultural businesses by assessing their challenges and creating a support network. As a part of USDA's commitment to equity in all that we do, this agreement will build strong relationships and broaden our ability to serve diverse communities, ensuring inclusive access to vital programs.

— Jenny Moffit, USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has partnered with Florida A&M University and University of Maryland Eastern Shore on a project to work with socially disadvantaged individuals and communities, centering their voices and learning from their experiences. This project will:

1. evaluate barriers to AMS grant opportunities¹ for socially disadvantaged communities
2. invest in building trust and confidence between these communities and the USDA
3. take action to rectify inequalities in program access through targeted outreach, training, and technical assistance.

The project team will conduct nationwide listening sessions and evaluate the AMS grant application and review process from the view of these groups in cooperation with a vast network of universities, community organizations, and food system practitioners. Project participants will share their experiences and discuss their needs along with any barriers they have faced. The knowledge gained from these discussions will be used to develop training materials, technical assistance programs, and other resources.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! JOIN A LISTENING SESSION.

Topics to be discussed during the listening sessions include, but are not limited to:

- Perceptions of the relationships between the USDA and socially disadvantaged communities and what can be done to strengthen them. This includes getting a better understanding of the historical experiences that individuals have had with USDA AMS grants.
- Barriers to entry, challenges, opportunities, or other concerns relating to socially disadvantaged individuals, including successfully applying for Federal grants and how USDA can mitigate identified challenges. What additional tools could help grant applicants to submit successful applications for competitive funding.
- Input from participants, who have applied previously, on their experiences working with USDA, grants management specialists, and getting access to information/resources.
- Grant recipients' experiences working with AMS including positive interactions, challenges faced while executing the grant agreement and identifying future opportunities to provide culturally appropriate technical assistance.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you need any additional information or have any questions, please reach out to any of the following project leads.



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¹ AMS Grants that are the primary focus of this project include Famers Market and Local Food Promotion Program, Regional Food System Partnership Grant and the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, though all experiences with AMS Grants are valuable and the project team welcomes discussion of experiences with all AMS programs.