

2022-2023
Flower Hill Institute



■ MPPTA Annual Impact Report

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Introduction

■ Meat and Poultry Processing Capacity and Technical Assistance Program (MPPTA)

Today, bottlenecks in the meat supply chain are creating barriers to food resilience for families, farmers, and ranchers nationwide. The meat processing industry is primarily controlled by four large conglomerates, which reduce farmers' earnings while creating barriers to healthy, affordable food for families by increasing prices at grocery stores. Over the past few decades, these conglomerates have consumed many smaller processing facilities and created a hyper-centralized meat supply chain that is more vulnerable to disruptions, from natural disasters to ransomware attacks. To create a more resilient food system, critical investments towards a distributed and competitive meat processing sector are necessary.

The Biden Administration dedicated \$1 billion in American Rescue Plan funds to expand and diversify independent meat and poultry processing capacity. One key initiative launched by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is the Meat and Poultry Processing Capacity Technical Assistance (MPPTA) Program, which will ensure that participants in USDA's Meat and Poultry Supply Chain initiatives have access to robust technical assistance (TA) to support their project development and success. These supply chain initiatives support the growth of domestic processing capacity and the ability of independent facilities to serve more customers in more markets. USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has established a nationwide network of technical support focusing on four key areas, or scopes:

- 1) Federal grant application management. Navigating federal grants processes and procedures, from pre-award application processes through post-award grant management compliance;
- 2) Business development and financial planning. Business and financial planning resources, market intelligence, and project/ concept feasibility analyses;
- 3) Meat and poultry processing technical and operational support. Advice and resources to support the operational needs - including workforce development of processing plant development and utilization; and
- 4) Supply chain development. Support for the development and maintenance of successful supply chain and marketing relationships between suppliers, processors, distributors, and customers.



■ Flower Hill Stewards Food System Resilience

Flower Hill Institute (FHI) serves as the Technical Assistance Coordinator for the Meat and Poultry Processing Technical Assistance (MPPTA) Program. Flower Hill works with USDA grant applicants and grant-funded project managers to help match experts best suited to support its client's project needs. They are joined by Oregon State University's Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network, Intertribal Agriculture Council, American Association of Meat Processors, the American Meat Science Association, and the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute to expand and provide quality assistance for meat and poultry project capacity needs nationwide. All MPPTA TA providers will use both in-house resources and their connections within the industry, academia, and state and federal governments to connect stakeholders to four distinct technical assistance scopes. Below is additional information about the five TA providers that offer deep technical expertise and demonstrated service to underserved communities, as part of the USDA's support for fairer, more competitive, and resilient meat and poultry supply chains.

American Association of Meat Processors (AAMP)

The American Association of Meat Processors (AAMP) is North America's largest meat trade organization. Membership includes more than 1,600 medium-sized and smaller meat, poultry, and food businesses. The AAMP leverages in-house experts and industry connections to help small processors with issues concerning everything from food safety and HACCP plans to labeling and grant applications. Grant awardees who work with the Flower Hill Institute are eligible for a free 3-year membership with AAMP.





American Meat Science Association (AMSA)

The American Meat Science Association (AMSA) brings those in the meat science field together through ways that encourage community and professional development with over 1,000 meat scientists representing major university research, education institutions, and meat processing companies in the United States and internationally.



Agricultural Utilization Research Institute

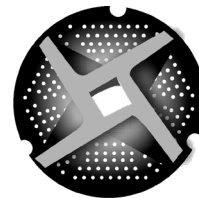
Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI)

The Agricultural Utilization Research Institute's mission is to foster long-term economic benefit through value-added agricultural products. It accomplishes this by using science and technology to help develop new uses for agricultural products. It partners with producers, businesses and entrepreneurs to generate economic impact in Minnesota communities by helping businesses take advantage of innovative opportunities in four focus areas: biobased products, renewable energy, coproducts and food. AURI provides a broad range of services, including applied research and development, scientific assistance and a targeted network of resources to develop value-added uses for crops and coproducts.



Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC)

The Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) was founded in 1987 to pursue and promote the conservation, development and use of our agricultural resources for the betterment of Native American and Alaskan Tribes. The IAC has, over the last three decades, become recognized as the most respected voice within the Indian community and government circles on agricultural policies and programs in Indian country.



**NICHE MEAT PROCESSOR
ASSISTANCE NETWORK**

Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network (NMPAN)

The Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network (NMPAN) is an university Extension-based community of practice of people and organizations helping small meat processors thrive by growing their shared wealth of information and innovation. Housed at Oregon State University, NMPAN offers tools and technical assistance for small processors and the farmers, marketers, and meat buyers who depend on them.

MPPTA Vision

■ Healthy Foodways and Healthy Communities

The MPPTA focuses on implementing a central component of the Biden Administration's actions towards building a Fairer, More Competitive, and More Resilient Meat and Poultry Supply Chain. The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) strategy to improve meat and poultry processing infrastructure defines comprehensive technical assistance and capacity building to farmers and ranchers to access federal financing as a central component to redressing bottlenecks in the meat supply chain. By increasing access to capital for historically underserved agricultural producers, we can address the problems faced by mid-sized farms in accessing the dynamics of equitable access to economic opportunity, growth and expansion, and economic sovereignty.

■ MPPTA Offerings

In its first year, the MPPTA's national network of technical assistance providers established by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has assisted in the planning and development of more than 500 processing projects across the United States, in Puerto Rico, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

The MPPTA serves meat and poultry grant applicants and grant-funded projects. Through holistic technical assistance and capacity building, the MPPTA offers a wealth of expertise equipped to help guide people through the process of applying for grants, developing feasibility studies and business plans, constructing facilities, identifying potential markets, and more.

- Access to technical advisors located across the industry, academia, and state and federal governments.
- Focused outreach to a diversity of meat and poultry processing stakeholders, including small, rural, minority-owned, Native American, and Tribal-owned businesses, and other underserved groups seeking to build or expand local and regional meat and poultry supply chain capacity.
- General assistance with navigating USDA grant application and award processes, and guidance for successful post-award grant project management.
- One-on-one advising, including project and proposal reviews tailored to the needs of diverse stakeholders ranging from small and very small businesses to regional concepts and established mid-sized processing companies.
- Educational events, webinars, resources, and publications covering topics of interest for meat and poultry processing enterprises of all types.

To address access barriers to USDA programs for historically underserved producers, farmers, ranchers, and other landowners, the FHI institutionalizes these strategies to help establish the foundation upon which USDA will build a more just and equitable farm and food system.

■ Holistic Approach

Identifying interagency and multilateral opportunities to provide comprehensive access to technical assistance.

Section 1006 of the American Rescue Plan Act directed the USDA to create the Equity Commission and funded the effort along with an additional \$1 billion to support forward-looking activities that will advance equity and opportunity for historically underserved agricultural producers. The term “agricultural producer” is used to refer to agricultural farmers, ranchers, and private forest land owners and operators. Flower Hill Institute convenes the 1006 Cooperators, a cross-sector network of organizations dedicated to connecting their constituents to USDA resources. Each month, the cooperators join together to facilitate resource sharing, celebrate successes, and redress barriers to providing access to farmers and ranchers to thrive. This network, among others, provides more comprehensive support for historically underserved communities to receive equitable access to federal funding opportunities.

■ Building Resilience

Redressing legacy barriers to access funding by building community with historically underserved agricultural producers.

Agricultural financing can improve economies and help producers overcome obstacles to growth in their businesses to build resilience across regional foodways. Capital constraints have been proven to be the most critical factor driving business decisions for farms, ranchers, and processing facilities. While bottlenecks in accessing federal grants create barriers to resilient food systems, the MPPTA is dedicated to building the capacity of all agricultural producers to create pathways to more equitable resource allocation.



Key Milestones

■ Partnership Development

Over 15 MOUs established with national organizations supporting historically underserved agricultural producers

Partnerships are critical to providing targeted services and support collectively designed to improve understanding of and equitable participation in the full range of USDA programs and services among underserved agricultural producers. To overcome the silos and barriers within the meat processing sector, the FHI team has implemented an intentional approach to partnership development. Our partners listed below have been critical in ensuring this historic investment in food system resilience reaches all agricultural producers in the first year of the MPPTA:

American Grassfed Association

Center for Rural Affairs

FarmAid

Farmer's Outreach Network

Farmer Veteran Coalition – 1006 Cooperator

Hide and Leather Council of America

InterTribal Buffalo Council (ITBC)

National Bison Association

National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA (NCBA CLUSA) – 1006 Cooperator

National Farmers Union

National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Association – 1006 Cooperator

Native American Development Corporation

Rural Advancement Fund (RAFI-USA)

Rural Coalition – 1006 Cooperator

U.S. Cattlemen's Association

Women in Ranching

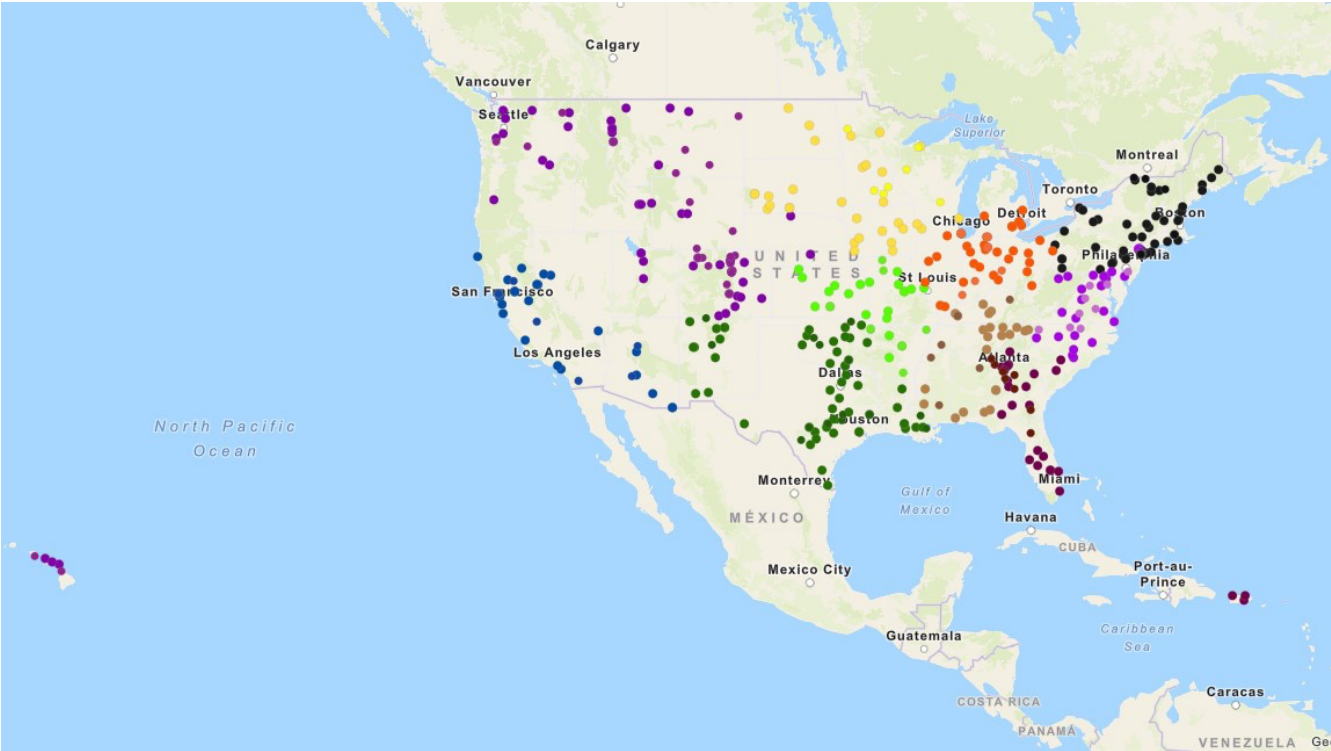
It is important to note that these MOU partnerships strengthen our ability to connect with underserved producers. Our partners continue to facilitate our work with producers we otherwise might not have that immediate trust. Because of these relationships, we have been able to connect with Texas AgriUnity, a proposed cooperative among five black Texas ranching families (via NCBA CLUSA and the Federation of Southern Cooperatives); Cooperative de Porcicultores de Puerto Rico (via RAFI-USA) and Latino Ranchers of Antonito (via Latino Farmers and Ranchers International).

■ Community Trust Building

Field visits and hands-on technical assistance build rapport between USDA and agricultural producers

Flower Hill Institute recognizes that there is no one-size-fits-all solution for agricultural producers. By taking a tailored approach through facility site visits, community engagement, and individualized assistance, the FHI TA team builds trust with agricultural producers towards a more equitable USDA that lives up to its name as the “People’s Department”. Field visits to processing facilities help foster open dialogues with producers about the challenges and opportunities to scaling effectively and meet the demand for meat and poultry in their local communities and regions.

Field Visit Map



■ Holistic Technical Assistance

Historic investments require intersectional technical capacity building to prevent bottlenecks in resource allocations.

Central to the FHI’s holistic support is individualized, one-on-one technical assistance offered to producers in accessing capital investments to help them achieve long-term resilience. FHI implemented a hybrid strategy by identifying opportunities to build community with agricultural producers both online and in-person, alongside the creation of an MPPTA Toolkit for Technical Assistance Providers (TAPs).

In our first year, we served participants with the following activities:



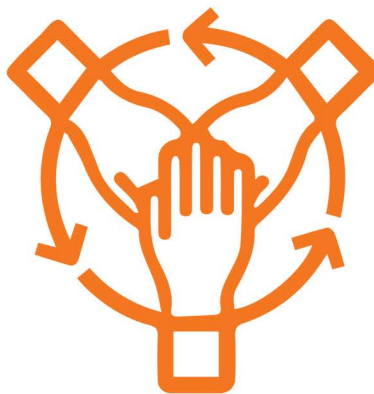
20,000

Interactions involving producer assistance, government inquiries, and implementing engagement initiatives with an array of government and organizational partners



5,000

Activities, meetings, conferences, symposiums, training, field-visits



1,000

Next generation engagements- individualized youth assistance and education institution outreach

Case Studies

■ Economic Development

Economic development for the next generation of interdisciplinary agricultural producers.

The USDA takes a bottom up middle out approach to building the capacity and resiliency in our meat supply chain by supporting the foundation of our food system- farmers and ranchers. The purchasing power of all types of public and private institutions should be harnessed to expand regional food procurement. And efforts should be made to align branding activities to create market synergy across a region. Agricultural investments help build regional infrastructure to change the impacts of health disparities and food insecurity in communities across the nation. From carcass utilization to culturally-responsive food processing, food resilience requires systems change from procurement through emerging markets development. Investing in the infrastructure for a regenerative meat and poultry supply chain is critical to sustaining healthy regional foodways.

Creating a Hybrid Market Strategy for Food Resilience in Iowa

Cherokee Locker Investment, Inc. is building a new multispecies processing facility to significantly increase their current capacity and allow local producers to have their meat federally inspected and sold at the same location. As an USDA Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP) awardee, the Cherokee Locker Investment is collaborating with the MPPTA to receive holistic support as they implement facility operations. Through a hybrid operation strategy, the facility will extend their market reach through the local retail market and online. The new multispecies facility will increase the current locker's capacity by 400 percent. The new locker opened in April 2023.

Poarch Creek Indians Build Meat Processing Capacity in Alabama

Current processing facilities across the Southeast have limited capacity for new business. In April 2023, the Poarch Creek Indians started constructing a new meat processing facility with support from the MPPTA. The Tribe has owned and operated Perdido River Farms (PRF) since 1992. PRF is one of the largest cattle farms in Alabama. This facility will expand their capacity to efficiently harvest and process cattle and hogs for both livestock-producing customers alongside a retail and wholesale business. The Poarch Creek Indians new facility will help meet that demand and create a larger capacity for meat processing in the future. The Tribe plans to complete the project by the end of 2023.

Poarch Band of Creek Indians Chairwoman and CEO, Stephanie A. Bryan, said:

"I am excited about the opportunities this project creates for our region's farmers and the agriculture industry. Like so many other local meat producers, we have had no other option other than to send the cattle we raised right here at Perdido River Farms out of state for processing. This new facility will provide us and other farmers the opportunity to process locally- raised beef and pork right here in Atmore. Not only will that make bringing a wonderful product to market easier and more cost-effective, it will also give Alabama producers an opportunity to be part of the "farm to table" movement that is so important to both consumers and local agriculture."

■ Trust Building with Producers

Flower Hill Institute hosted multiple place-based technical assistance engagements to establish stronger relationships between the USDA and agricultural producers. Over 100 field visits and conferences were coordinated to help the USDA build community with historically underserved producers to provide education about USDA services. The field visits produced community interest, which led to education on the various USDA programs that support the development of more resilient food systems. By establishing a presence at multiple events, the FHI MPPTA Technical Assistance team has and continues to integrate themselves into the fabric of the community, consistently developing a foundation of trust with the next generation of agricultural producers.

Strengthening Agriculture Cooperatives in Puerto Rico

In partnership with RAFI-USA, the FHI TA team conducted field visits to Puerto Rico to meet with Cooperative De Porcicultores de Puerto Rico, FIDECOOP, MegaFresh, USDA Rural Development State Office, and Naive Foods. The Cooperative of 73 pork producers has been receiving technical assistance from the MPPTA since October 2022 and the FHI team assisted FIDECOOP in applying to the MPILP. Due to the long-term trust and support built with FIDECOOP through the application process, the cooperative was awarded \$8 million in MPILP funding. This co-op has a very strong potential for success, particularly with the MPILP funding and MPPTA assistance.

Puerto Rico March 2023



■ Holistic Technical Assistance

Interagency partnerships to bolster access to funding and community resiliency.

Flower Hill Institute's Technical Assistance program implements a holistic, multilateral approach that prioritizes connecting producers to funding sources to build food system resilience. In building relationships with producers, FHI works directly with producers to understand their comprehensive vision for their facility and connects them to the resources needed to implement their business strategy leveraging USDA's resources. This wrap-around approach to technical assistance ensures producers are able to directly access interagency capital investments.

Securing Rural Community Foodways in California

Flower Hill Institute assisted a California cooperative in December 2021 that was facing shutdown due to noncompliance issues with Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS). In partnership with the American Grassfed Association (AGA) and Abbey Davidson from the American Association of Meat Processors (AAMP), the FHI technical assistance team helped the small multispecies cooperative facility develop a plan of preventative and corrective actions. The team held a successful meeting with the officials at the Alameda office in late December 2021 that resulted in a path forward for the cooperative. The free technical assistance from the USDA and partnership between the AAMP and FHI was critical to securing a more resilient future for the facility and rural communities.

Kathy Webster, CEO of the Cooperative, states:

“As a very small multi-species USDA processing facility with basically no resources, we were extremely relieved and appreciative to find the technical assistance and help from Flower Hill and AAMP. We really didn't have the skills or knowledge of how to respond to the USDA/FSIS's shutdown and requests. Dave Carter [FHI], Chris Roper [FHI], and Abbey Davidson [AAMP] led us through and basically held our hand to get through it. There is no way we could have navigated out of this unless we hired expensive legal teams.”

Key Opportunities for Long Term Impact

Through the MPPTA, the USDA is advancing long-term investments towards supporting a food system transformation that ensures equitable access to financing for all agricultural producers. The MPPTA protects these investments by ensuring clients across the nation have the technical capacity to explore the opportunities to right size themselves to the demand and update the way they are running their businesses to meet the need for healthy, affordable, and culturally-responsive food. In the upcoming years of the MPPTA, the FHI will continue to provide critical support to agricultural producers in implementing their vision to strengthen meat and poultry operations and processing facilities for future generations.

■ Workforce Development

Convening cross-sector partnerships to prepare the next generation of foodway stewards.

Flower Hill Institute's field visits to meat and poultry processing facilities across the nation have provided key insights into the realities and challenges that agricultural producers navigate today. One key barrier facing small and mid-sized processing facilities is retaining a skilled, interdisciplinary workforce to sustain and scale operations to help create thriving regional foodways. FHI provides support for workforce development through partnerships with education and youth coalitions to explore how to strengthen career pathways in the meat and poultry field from operations management to the facility floor. Our youth engagement includes the National Young Farmers Coalition, land grant institutions, higher education extension sites, and secondary trade schools to continue developing pathways for workforce development. Additionally, partner MPPTA technical assistance providers, such as the Intertribal Agriculture Council, facilitate youth engagement programming to prepare the next generation of resilient foodway stewards.

Building the Future Generation of Foodway Stewards in Indian Country

According to the Native American Agriculture Fund, over 70 percent of Tribal producers raise cattle. Investing in the meat processing workforce is critical for advancing Native American agriculture. The Intertribal Agriculture Council (IAC) provides support to the next generation through partnerships, advocacy efforts, and scholarship offerings. Its youth programming has grown an expansive network of Native agricultural professionals who are exposed to future resilient and multifaceted leadership development experiences, designed to increase their competitiveness as candidates when pursuing higher education, careers, and community leadership roles. The IAC offers a full suite of youth programs to build careers in regenerative agriculture and food production.

■ Trusted Partnerships

Cultivating interagency collaborations to prevent bottlenecks in USDA resource allocation.

Redressing legacies of underinvestment in all agricultural producers requires building long-term partnerships rooted in trust. Flower Hill Institute will continue to build trusted partnerships with land grant institutions, USDA offices, and NGOs that are serving local, historically underserved agricultural producers to understand the needs of all stakeholders. By developing a more holistic landscape analysis, the MPPTA convenes interagency collaborations to help agricultural producers create strategies to break down those barriers that have been put in place over the years to access capital and continuously assess equitable resource allocation for positive impact. Trusted partnerships help build the relational infrastructure to anticipate and respond to implementation needs.

Cross-sector Trust Building Through the 1006 TAP Network

The Technical Assistance Providers (TAPs) and 1006 Cooperators convene monthly to identify and bridge the gaps between national, tribal, regional, state, and local foodway resilience. The 1006 TAP Network removes communication silos by bringing together cross-sector stakeholders who work directly with agricultural producers alongside technical assistance providers and policy officials. Through hands-on technical education opportunities and knowledge-sharing for best practices, the network provides a brain trust for stakeholders to create informed strategies towards a more resilient meat and poultry processing sector.

■ Regional Food Resilience

Building a more holistic distributed food system by equitably investing in all agricultural producers.

A regional food system operates at various scales and geographies toward greater communal efficacy. Regional food production accounts for factors across volume, diversity, supply chains, markets, culture, land use, governance, and policy. Insufficient and inappropriate supply chain infrastructure is seen as the biggest barrier to building strong and resilient regional food systems. Among the needs are more terminal and public markets across regions; increased food processing capacity, including slaughterhouses and packing plants to bolster the viability of midsize farms through scaling up and increasing production; upgraded roads, bridges, and broadband services; improved collaborations among shippers, trucking firms, and wholesale buyers; better logistics to improve the efficiency of midscale distributors; and more attention to the role played by independent supermarkets in rural areas and small towns. The MPPTA helps agricultural producers access the capital needed to build the infrastructure for regional food resilience.

Establishing Regional Food Resilience through Agricultural Healing in North Carolina

Marvin Frink of Briarwood Cattle Farm, LLC in Red Springs, North Carolina, is a veteran of the U.S. Army who came to farming as a way to cope with PTSD, anxiety and depression. In 2018 he bought 42 acres of farmland about an hour away from the U.S. Army facility Fort Bragg. Today Briarwood Cattle Farm has a herd of 113 Black Angus cattle, in addition to chickens and hogs, all raised on pasture. In partnership with the Wounded Warrior Project, Briarwood Cattle Farm offers agricultural therapy for military families, school children, churches, and local communities. Through the help of the FHI MPPTA team, Briarwood Cattle Farm is scaling its operations by establishing Briarwood Custom Meats, a 27,500 square foot meat processing facility that will be able to process 100 head per day of beef and 100 head of hogs. This facility will provide Briarwood Cattle Farm and local small-scale beef and pork producers a crucial link in the local and regional food system.

Conclusion

Looking Ahead

Flower Hill Institute continues to work with dedicated ranchers, farmers, and businesses across the country as they begin to develop plans for enterprises that will create new markets for US-produced meat and poultry, bring new income back to rural communities, and increase the food security in rural America.

Multi-year initiative highlighting the key milestones for the year ahead:

- Increased focus on metrics and success stories
- Increased focused on Co-Branding Opportunities
- Partnership Development
- Regional Engagement
- Multilateral Technical Assistance Including New TAP Network Providers

FHI Team Data Request

USDA MPPTA YEAR 1 IMPACT

ANNUAL REQUESTS

484
Total TA Requests

130
Open Requests

353
Completed Requests



ABOUT THIS DASHBOARD

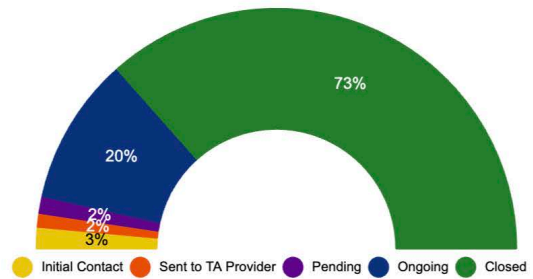
This dashboard includes only data collected through FHI's "USDA MPPTA Technical Assistance Request Form" from March 2022 through March 2023. Data from requests submitted directly to other Technical Assistance Providers (TAPs) in the network is not included.

PROGRESS

STATUS LEGEND

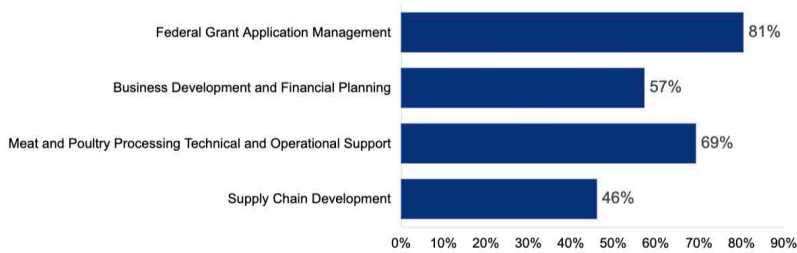
- Not Started**- A request for TA has been submitted by the client, but no action has been taken.
- Initial Contact**- FHI has emailed the client to request more information to determine the most appropriate TA provider and/or course of action for the request. This phase may be skipped if sufficient detail is provided in the request form.
- Sent to TA Provider**- FHI has assessed the TA request and forwarded it to the appropriate TA provider. No action reported by TA provider yet.
- Pending**- A preliminary meeting has been scheduled with the client but has not yet happened. This phase may be skipped if assistance is provided via email.
- Ongoing**- TAPs are actively working with the client.
- Closed**- TA services have concluded for the request. Requests are closed following verbal or written confirmation from the client and/or TAP that the request is closed or a lack of response from the client after 3 follow-up attempts.

TA REQUEST STATUS

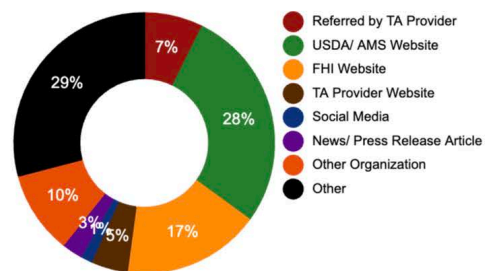


TYPES OF TA REQUESTS

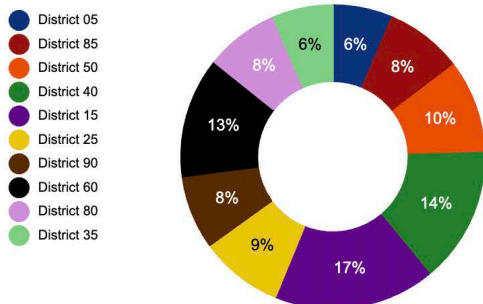
REQUESTED TA CATEGORIES



HOW CLIENTS HEARD ABOUT MPPTA



REQUESTS BY REGION



REQUESTS BY REGION

