



Intertribal Agriculture Council

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The United States Department of Agriculture has numerous programs administered by several agencies that can or could potentially support maricultural development and production. With its seventeen distinct agencies, understanding which programs are most relevant is critical to effectively accessing these resources. This summary is not intended to be completely comprehensive, as other programs may also apply, especially with creative application as part of larger efforts. Other federal and state agencies, private foundations, and additional entities also have relevant support resources.

- ***Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)***: In preliminary discussions with Alaska's NRCS staff, the biggest issues in accessing technical and financial assistance will be 1) ownership questions relating to coastal waters where mariculture occurs and 2) connecting conservation practices and support to land-based resource concerns. If these issues are resolved, NRCS' EQIP program could be used for cost-share technical and financial assistance for resource management plans and potentially infrastructure development.
- ***Rural Development***
 - Value Added Producer Grant (VAPG): VAPG provides up to \$75,000 for planning projects to conduct feasibility studies and development business plans or up to \$250,000 for working capital that can be used for a variety of uses but not construction or most equipment. All VAPG application require a 1:1 match that can include in-kind contributions.
 - Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG): The RBDG may be the flexible source of Rural Development funding as it can fund education, outreach, feasibility studies, equipment, and even construction.
 - Rural Energy for American Program (REAP): REAP may contribute up to 25% of the project costs for energy audits or facility upgrades improving energy efficiency.
 - Community Facilities Program: Rural Development has loans and a small amount of funding that can offset costs for a range of community facility infrastructure projects.
- ***Farm Service Agency (FSA)***
 - Farm Loans: Microloans up to \$50,000 are an excellent potential resource for existing or aspiring maricultural producers because the reduced paperwork and reasonable interest rates. Operating and farm ownership loans may also be available, and the youth loan up to \$5000 is an excellent resource for assisting youth in starting small operations while provide educational opportunity.
 - Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP): This basic crop insurance program provides partial protection for products not easily insured through more comprehensive programs. While reimbursements amount to roughly only half the loss, the annual premium is relatively nominal and may be waived under certain circumstances, especially for socially disadvantaged producers. Signup for coverage typically occurs in the fall, and coverage must be in place prior to damage claims.

- ***Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)***
 - Specialty Crop Block Grant: Individual states request applications, which are reviewed and submitted to USDA for national review and project selection. Since the program is limited to plants, shellfish or other animal-based products would not be eligible for the program's marketing, research, or production assistance, but seaweed and other marine plants are covered. The program is generally limited to cultivated plants, although states have degrees of authority in developing exemptions for wild plants.
 - Farmers Market Promotion Program and Local Food Promotion Program. Both FMPP and LFPP can provide a variety of assistance up to \$100,000 in supporting local food production, including staffing, equipment, program development, education, and marketing. LFPP has a 25% match requirement.
- ***National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)***
 - Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program: This program may provide up to \$600,000 for educational programs supporting new and existing local and regional training, education, outreach, and technical assistance efforts for beginning farmers and ranchers. There is a 25% match requirement, and applications are due January 21, 2016.
 - Agricultural and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) has several program areas targeting innovative research that could support maricultural development. Project awards range up to \$500,000.
- ***Additional Programs and Support***
 - Roughly 75-80% of USDA total budget goes to nutrition programs. Finding ways to introduce local foods into feeding programs like the school lunch or elderly meal programs can be an effective strategy to keep foods and money within local communities, although the price points will typically be lower and understanding federal purchasing and food certification guidelines is essential. Similarly, finding local retail markets can allow SNAP customers to purchase local foods using their EBT benefits.
 - Youth education for non-historical agricultural production is oftentimes lacking in rural areas, but 4-H, FFA (Future Farmers of American), and Farm Credit have resources that can assist in youth educational development programs.
 - Decreasing federal budgets have reduced the amount of available funding for community food programs, but several programs like Community Food Project (CFP), Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Program (2501), and the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) grants continue to provide significant funding opportunities for community-based projects.
 - The Small Business Administration (SBA), the US Commerce Department, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also have programs that may support mariculture or closely related efforts as well.
 - Alaskan Natives may also request assistance through the Intertribal Agriculture Council and USDA's Office of Tribal Relations.

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