Federal Cooperative Development Assistance

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

USDA provides funding and program support for cooperatives through several of its agencies. The following agencies administer several programs that benefit cooperatives and their members:

Rural Development maintains the following programs and services that may assist cooperatives and their members:

Cooperative Services provides technical assistance and cooperative educational materials.

The Rural Cooperative Development Grant is a competitive award to cooperative development centers that help individuals and businesses start, expand, or improve rural cooperatives and other mutually owned businesses.

The Socially Disadvantaged Groups Grant competitive program provides funds so cooperative development centers and cooperatives can assist socially disadvantaged groups to create cooperatives.

Cooperatives can receive guaranteed loans through the Business and Industry Loan Guarantee Program. These loans can be used, for example, to convert a business to an employee-owned worker cooperative; enlarge, repair, or modernize a business; or purchase and develop land.

The Value-Added Producer Grant provides funds that cooperatives can use for planning or putting in place operations improvements that add value to an agricultural crop.

The Intermediary Relending Program provides 1 percent low-interest loans to local lenders including cooperatives ("intermediaries") that re-lend to businesses to improve economic conditions and create jobs in rural communities.

Rural Business Development Grants can provide small businesses with technical assistance and training, or business loans to fund a business incubator.

Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) provides guaranteed loans and grants to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements.

Multi-Family Housing Direct and Guaranteed Loans. While the direct loan has been unfunded in recent years, the guaranteed loan program is available to provide guaranteed financing for low- to moderate-income occupants.

Among other programs cooperatives can take advantage of include broadband grant and loan programs and water and waste loans, grants, and loan guarantees. Browse more here.

The Agricultural Marketing Service administers a number of programs to assist cooperatives and other agricultural producers with marketing foods to consumers across the country and...
Internationally. AMS also purchases food from agricultural producers for distribution through the USDA Food and Nutrition Service programs for schools, food banks and households as part of the nation’s food safety net.

- The Farmers Market Promotion Program increases the availability of locally and regionally produced agricultural products by providing outreach, training, and technical assistance to domestic farmers markets, community-supported agriculture programs, and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities. Related programs include the Regional Food System Partnerships program and the Local Food Promotion Program.

Additional AMS programs may support cooperatives and their members in the dairy, maple syrup, meat and poultry, seafood, and sheep husbandry industries.

The Food and Nutrition Service administers a variety of programs that purchase food for low-income individuals from agricultural producers and works with states and territories that authorize groceries, farmers markets, and Community Supported Agriculture programs to accept food vouchers from low-income individuals. Cooperatives and cooperative members may become vendors through the following FNS programs:

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
The Emergency Food Assistance Program
The Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
The Farmers Market Nutrition Program
The Seniors Farmers’ Market Nutrition Program
USDA Foods in Schools Program

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program

The Farm Service Agency offers a number of programs that may help cooperatives and their members including:

- Farm loan programs
- Conservation reserve programs that pay farmers to take their land out of production
- A Biomass Crop Assistance Program for forest owners that produce biomass feedstock
- A Feedstock Flexibility Program to encourage the domestic production of biofuels from surplus sugar
- Programs that benefit cotton and dairy farmers
- Disaster assistance programs
- Commodity loans providing interim financing at harvest time to meet cash flow needs
- Facility loan programs that help producers build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities
- Assistance to producers with commodities impacted by retaliatory tariffs
- An Organic Certification Cost Share Program that provides cost share assistance to agricultural producers who are obtaining or renewing their certification under the National Organic Program
- Commodity price support programs

USDA’s agencies also include the Foreign Agricultural Service, the Agricultural Research Service, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the Economic Research Service, the Food Safety and Inspection Service, the Forest Service, the National Agricultural Statistics Service, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Risk Management Agency.
And other **Federal** departments and agencies outside of USDA:

- Commerce Department, **Economic Development Administration**
- Commerce Department, **Minority Business Development Agency**
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Education Department
- Energy Department
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Federal Reserve
- Health and Human Services
- Housing and Urban Development
- Interior Department
- Justice Department
- Labor Department
- Postal Service
- Securities and Exchange Commission
- Small Business Administration
- Transportation Department
- Treasury Department
- Tribal Government Services
- U.S. Agency for International Development
- Cooperative Development Program
- U.S. Postal Service
- Veterans Affairs Department
- The White House

And others…(if your agency is missing from this list, please let us know at coopinfo@usda.gov)

Some of the IAWGCD non-federal **stakeholders** of the IAWGCD include:

- **National Association of Housing Cooperatives** (NAHC)
- **U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives**
- **Neighboring Food Co-ops Association**
- **CoBank**
- **Farm Credit Council**
- **National Cooperative Bank** (NCB)
- **Cooperative Fund of the Northeast**
- **National Telecommunications Cooperative Association** (NTCA)
- **Cooperative centers and cooperative development centers** (see resource Workbook located on this page)
- **Cooperation Works!**
- **North American Students of Cooperation** (N ASCO)
- **Cooperative Professionals Guild**
- **American Farm Bureau Federation**
- **National Farmers Union**

And others…(if your organization is missing from this list, please let us know at coopinfo@usda.gov)