



2020 Request for Applications Overview

A Message to All Our Grantees and Potential Grantees

We here at NAAF – our staff and our Board of Trustees – stand with you and your communities during this evolving and uncertain time. What we know, and what we believe is important to share with you, is that now more than ever it is pivotal for all of us to push into the critical task of feeding ourselves. We believe that focusing on rebuilding and reinvigorating our Native food systems while simultaneously supporting our Native farmers, ranchers and food champions in our communities is at the core of NAAF’s mission.

Our goal is to keep momentum, hope, planning, and doing alive within our communities. As very wise farmers, ranchers and food champions are telling us now, we have things we must do today, planting seeds, feeding our four-legged family, tending the land, and strengthening our community food system. In doing so, we will help make sure our shared and collective future is food secure. Our sovereignty depends on our being food sovereign. Every action matters.

We are committed to staying the course and planning for the months and years ahead and we encourage you to do the same. Please let us know if you encounter difficulties in applying for 2020 funding because we are here to help and to be as flexible as possible during this time.

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Introduction and Background

Welcome to the application process to seek grant funding from the Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF). The information below describes projects and ideas for which NAAF is seeking applications and provides details concerning submission requirements as well as clarification of expectations applying to all applicants seeking funding.

The Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF) was created from *cy pres* funds attributable to the settlement of the *Keepseagle v. Vilsack* litigation. A history of the litigation leading to the creation of NAAF can be found on the NAAF website at NativeAmericanAgricultureFund.org/history/. The final Court approval of the amended settlement in the case occurred in 2018, and in late July 2018, the Trustees of NAAF executed the NAAF Trust Agreement. A copy of the Trust Agreement that launched NAAF into existence can also be found on the NAAF website at NativeAmericanAgricultureFund.org/trust-agreement/. We recommend you read the Trust Agreement prior to starting an application for funding.

Strategic planning activities, along with input provided continually to NAAF through its online survey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/R8YZTQ3>), informs programmatic areas for which NAAF seeks applications. For the 2020 funding cycle, applications are sought across a wide variety of projects across several topical areas.

NAAF is allowed to fund grant projects for a total of twenty (20) years until the year 2038, and in so doing hopes to make as much impact as possible across as many Native communities as possible. To do so, and to address the needs of Native farmers and ranchers while meeting the requirements of the NAAF Trust Agreement, ongoing input from eligible entities and Native farmers and ranchers is extremely valuable. We encourage all applicants to start a dialogue with NAAF via the NAAF survey instrument (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/R8YZTQ3>) and/or email us at grants@NativeAmericanAgricultureFund.org as often as possible and work with us to achieve the promise provided by the creation of NAAF.

Special Statement Concerning the Impacts of COVID-19

As this RFA was being drafted, the COVID-19 situation was developing and spreading throughout the United States. After conferring with many individuals, we determined that the most important work that NAAF could do right now is to ensure that NAAF funds for which we are caretakers be used during this critical time to further the important work of supporting Native farmers, ranchers, fishers and food champions and the important work of rebuilding Native food systems.

The work of providing food to Native communities and the work of supporting our farmers, ranchers, fishers and food champions in their work could never be more important than it is today, and it will continue to be important in the weeks, months and years ahead.

We encourage you to consider applying for funding. We will provide as much flexibility as possible for all applicants in this process, while meeting the requirements we must meet within the structure and context of the Trust Agreement. Please make sure that your application plans take into account that the country may be involved in social distancing or other related public health order implementation and enforcement for an undetermined time. NAAF will be flexible and we are looking for projects that can continue moving this important work forward during this critical time, while also taking into consideration and planning for public health and safety. Creative plans are in order.

Allowable Use of Funds

The Trust Agreement (NativeAmericanAgricultureFund.org/trust-agreement/) governing NAAF controls the eligible uses and eligible entities for NAAF grant funding. The Trust Agreement strictly prohibits NAAF as an organization from receiving applications for grant or loan funding directly from individual Native farmers and ranchers. In addition, no funds may be sought for litigation or direct lobbying purposes. However, NAAF is allowed to fund eligible entities that can then in turn fund grants and loans to Native farmers and ranchers. The

key areas for which funding is allowed under the Trust Agreement are broadly described as: business assistance, agricultural education, technical support and advocacy. Eligible entities are described more specifically below.

Funds may be used for projects that are up to 24 months (2 years) in duration. We prefer projects that are 12, 18 or 24 months in duration, but for unique projects we will consider time periods below 12 months. Funds may be used for project support, general organizational support, scholarships, re-grants, lending programs or capital expenditures. All applications must contain clear descriptions of the project activities and the populations targeted for such support and budget narratives must be clear.

The terms “farmer” and “rancher” should be interpreted in the broadest context possible and are meant to include farmers of all types of food and fiber products and ranchers of all types of livestock, as well as those engaged in fisheries, aquaculture or forest products. Farmers and ranchers can also be interpreted to mean those engaged in community-based agriculture such as community gardens, hunting and gathering for food production purposes and other means that individuals and communities in Indian Country engage in through the process of feeding their communities. Value-added agriculture is meant broadly to include all types of processes by which value is added to raw agricultural products or raw hunted or gathered products that would result in a product used to feed those within or outside Native communities and which can be used to engage in markets outside our communities.

Because the central issues involved in the litigation that led to NAAF’s creation involved issues at the core of access to credit, NAAF encourages all applicants to incorporate strategies to improve access to credit by Native farmers and ranchers in their specific targeted outcomes. Access to credit can be improved by working with individuals through business planning or market planning training, financial education, record keeping, credit repair activities, targeted credit application training or technical support, risk analysis and related activities to prepare Native farmers and ranchers as they seek capital to support their enterprises. Because access to capital will continue to be important in the months and years to come, please consider language and activities that drive into those issues.

We encourage you to combine focus areas such as combining business assistance with technical support or agricultural education with business assistance. Projects that focus only on research or only on curriculum development are not as high priority for funding as those projects that use existing research or curriculum to assist Native producers. NAAF is looking for projects that deliver developed content with practical application to the success of Native farmers and ranchers or that take research and assist individuals in applying the results of that research to improve their operations.

With regard to advocacy, NAAF will not fund lobbying efforts of any kind, but will fund educational or technical support projects that deliver information to those supporting Native farmers and ranchers or educational projects that ensure that those advocating on behalf of or developing policies that affect Native farmers and ranchers are provided with the best possible content relevant to Native agriculture.

For educational organizations, NAAF will not fund projects that seek to provide educational opportunities or degree programs for Native students who are not directly involved in agriculture (in the broadest context possible) and will not fund cultural or indigenous studies if the focus of those project activities are not somehow targeted towards food and agriculture.

Eligible Entities

As required by the Trust Agreement, eligible applicants include:

- Nonprofit organizations with IRS Section 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, or if such status has not yet been achieved, such organizations may apply for funding through a Fiscal Sponsor that has received such 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status;
- Educational organizations described in Section 170(b)(1)(A)(ii) of the Internal Revenue Code;
- Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), including Certified Native CDFIs and Emerging Native CDFIs, provided however that such CDFI is a tax-exempt organization described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code; and
- An instrumentality of a state or federally recognized Tribe, including a non-profit organization chartered under the Tribal law of a state or federally recognized Tribe, that furnishes assistance designed to further Native American farming or ranching activities, provided, however that 1) the use of any grant funds by such grant recipient shall be restricted exclusively to charitable and educational purposes; 2) the grant recipient shall annually provide NAAF with audited financial statements and reports as required by NAAF; 3) if the grant recipient is a governmental entity, it shall agree to a limited waiver of sovereign immunity with respect to NAAF's right to enforce the terms of the grant (i.e. the amount of funding awarded); and 4) if the grant recipient agrees to comply with all expenditure responsibility requirements designed by NAAF.

Note to Tribal Governments: All Tribal governments provided funding through NAAF are required by the Trust Agreement to provide NAAF a limited waiver of sovereign immunity for the amount of funding provided to the Tribe covering the period of the grant. This is a non-negotiable term of the NAAF Trust Agreement and will be required with no exceptions. A sample limited waiver is available upon request.

The limited waiver of sovereign immunity will not be required when the application is submitted; instead, applicants can wait until award notifications have been received to provide waivers. The waivers must be submitted prior to award funds distribution. NAAF will assist Tribal government staff in ensuring that appropriate documentation is secured. NAAF recommends Tribal governments submitting proposals in 2020 begin the process as soon as possible to ensure waivers are in place so funds can be expeditiously released to successful applicants.

Instrumentalities of Tribes can mean any number of things such as Tribal departments of agriculture, food authorities or even food processing or food marketing entities. Tribal governments have the latitude to determine which entities are instrumentalities of their governments; NAAF only needs proper documentation as to that status.

Applicants eligible to receive funding from NAAF should discuss their organization's track record (or key personnel's track record) of providing business assistance, agriculture education, technical support, or advocacy services to Native farmers and ranchers. If the applicant is a start-up organization, NAAF will expect the organization to involve others in the project as consultants or advisers who can speed the process of reaching audiences and achieving effectiveness in their work. NAAF encourages all start-up organizations to seek support from Fiscal Sponsors¹ who can also provide important technical support for proposed project activities.

The applicant is required to provide proof that it clearly falls within one or more of the four types of eligible applicants listed above. Applicants registering with the online software system for the first time will be prompted to provide such supporting documentation; applicants who have applied previously should review their previously submitted documentation within the online system to ensure that any changes in their status are properly reflected within the online system.

Due to the variation in organizations that exist within Indian Country, and because there is no central registry of the various types of entities that could be eligible under the Trust Agreement, NAAF requires each applicant to provide proof of its inclusion within the allowable types of eligible entities. Proof of eligible status can be provided through IRS documentation reflecting status as an eligible 501(c)(3) non-profit entity; proof that the organization meets the federal definition of an educational institution; proof of certification as a CDFI or Native CDFI that is also a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization; or a Tribal government resolution on government letterhead authorized by an official authorized to make such representations that the entity is an instrumentality or non-profit organization chartered under Tribal law of a state or federally recognized Tribe. When interpreting the scope of this RFA in light of the language in the NAAF Trust Agreement, we are not allowed to consider applications by entities that are community-based organizations without 501(c)(3) designation. Such groups should consider partnering with a Fiscal Sponsor in order to apply.

IRS letters recognizing the assignment of an EIN to the applicant organization are not sufficient proof of eligibility. Similarly, Tribal laws providing a blanket waiver of immunity for certain entities are not sufficient; applicants must include a letter or resolution for the specific office or official that is seeking NAAF funding. Please request further guidance from NAAF if you have additional questions.

Note on Eligibility of Fast Track Fund and NAAF 2019 RFA Recipients

Fast Track fund and NAAF 2019 RFA recipients are not specifically prohibited from applying for funding through this 2020 RFA. Their application will not receive special consideration over

¹ Information regarding Fiscal Sponsors can be found in the NAAF Trust Agreement Section 8(c).

first-time applicants to the NAAF grant process.

Fast Track funds were a unique and one-time, two-year funding opportunity and those entities that received funding through that process are still in the midst of their two-year funded project. NAAF 2019 grantees were awarded projects for up to two years and may also still be in the midst of their funded projects. If organizations from either of these cohorts choose to apply for funding in this 2020 NAAF funding cycle, they must clearly delineate how the funds they are seeking will be used for a project focused on 1) a new activity or 2) a new aspect of or continuation of completed activities related to their previously funded activities.

Cost Sharing or Matching Funds

NAAF does **not** require cost sharing, in-kind or matching funds be included within the budget of the project for which funding is sought. However, those entities seeking funding that can demonstrate or are willing to offer cost sharing, in-kind or matching funds to leverage their work will receive additional consideration during the review process. If cost sharing, in-kind or matching funds are provided, those funds can be from any available source. All applicants are strongly encouraged to find every opportunity possible to leverage their work against other activities with which they are involved or with other partners important to their work. As a reminder to all applicants, if selected for funding, the funds provided by NAAF are not considered federal in nature and therefore can be used as a federal match.

Limitation on Indirect Costs

All applicants will be limited to no more than 15% allowed indirect on project expenses. NAAF reserves the right to increase or decrease limitations on indirect costs in future RFAs.

Special Note on Educational Organizations

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU) are clearly within the definition of educational organizations and are encouraged to apply for funding. Educational organizations, as defined within the Trust Agreement, is broader than Tribal Colleges and Universities. Native-serving educational institutions, certified as such, are encouraged to apply as well. For purposes of this funding opportunity, educational organizations that are **not** recognized as Native-serving institutions must provide clear evidence as to their history of serving Native farmers and ranchers by discussing their experience in providing business assistance, agricultural education, technical support, or advocacy services to and for Native farmers and ranchers.

In projects involving TCUs and other types of educational organizations, NAAF encourages meaningful partnerships as indicated by delineated responsibilities and budgetary considerations. Overhead/administrative expense limitations apply to all educational organizations, including non-Native serving educational institutions, as discussed above. If an educational organization has a Federally Recognized Tribal Extension Program (FRTEP) faculty on staff, the organization is allowed to apply but is required to include FRTEP faculty as significant participants in delivery of the project.

Uses of Funds

In addition to the constraints discussed above, the following applicants/uses of funds are **NOT** eligible under this 2020 Request for Applications:

- Entities that do not provide business assistance, agriculture education, technical support, or advocacy services to Native farmers and ranchers
- Work based outside the United States or its territories
- Projects that do not provide assistance and/or resources designed to impact and further assist in the success of Native farmers and ranchers
- Projects that seek funding predominately to provide outreach on USDA programs and services (resources for those types of activities are already provided by USDA, therefore use of NAAF funds to provide redundant activity support is unallowable)
- Projects that assist individual Native farmers and ranchers, but the services are not agriculture-related
- Use of funds that are not restricted exclusively to charitable and educational purposes described in IRS Section 170(c)(2)(B)
- Use of funds for litigation; however, offering of legal services important to Native farmers and ranchers is allowable (this can include, but is not limited to: estate planning, land purchase agreements, understanding of legal rights, contract negotiation, assistance with administrative appeals, and other typical services important to those engaged in agriculture)
- Use of funds for lobbying, political activity or influencing legislation as defined by the IRS (other forms of advocacy may be eligible activities)

Factors that will be considered in assessing applications for funding include:

- The scope and nature of services previously provided to Native farmers and ranchers, and those services you plan to provide with award funds
- How your requested award amount fits within the overall budget for your organization
- How your work integrates community accountability and Native leadership
- Steps you will take to ensure the funds will be used for the purposes stated in the award proposal
- Whether your organization is based in a Native community that you are serving and whether you are in service to Native farmers and ranchers in that community

- Whether, if your organization is not Native led, you have a dedicated Native programming effort
- Whether your organization has a strong set of leaders and board members who are representative of the community and are accountable to the community that is served
- Other evaluation criteria identified later in this RFA (page 21).

The Application Process and Deadlines; Flexibility and Page/Word Limitations

There is **NO** Letter of Intent step for the 2020 RFA period. This step may be included or required within future RFA processes.

Only those applicant organizations that submit an application by the time and date deadline indicated below will be considered for funding. Applicants are encouraged to use the online process described below for submitting their applications. Applicants can alternatively use a hard copy, mailed procedure for submitting their applications if they are unable to utilize the online application system.

Strict adherence to the application deadlines described below will be followed and all applications received **AFTER** the deadline will **NOT** be considered for review or funding in this grant cycle. Any applicant with a question as to eligibility should contact NAAF offices as soon as possible.

NOTE: Because of the unique circumstances we are all in during the COVID-19 situation, NAAF has added a ***2-week flexibility period*** to ensure applicants can submit and be considered for funding. All applicants should submit their application by the stated deadline.

If the applicant has trouble with internet connections, challenges in obtaining signatures of key officials or representatives of the applicant organization, challenges in obtaining required documents, or challenges in obtaining information from project partners, they should submit as complete an application as possible and promptly send NAAF a notification by email (grants@NativeAmericanAgricultureFund.org) no later than June 1, 2020 at 11:59 p.m. CT, and request flexibility to submit additional information.

All applicants requesting flexibility by the stated deadline for submittal will be granted an additional two weeks past the stated deadline, or until June 15, 2020 at 11:59 p.m. CT, in which to finalize their application. In their request for flexibility, the applicant must clearly state the technical challenges or information the applicant seeks flexibility to provide. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed; all applications submitted by June 15, 2020 will be reviewed for completeness, and if deemed complete, will be reviewed for possible funding.

NOTE: Several applicants in 2019 were concerned about page and word limitations present in

the software system NAAF uses for application submittal. To address those questions and concerns, NAAF increased page and word limitations within our software system.

A panel will review all applications for funding and will make the recommendations for final funding decisions to the NAAF Board of Trustees. The panel will be comprised of not less than six and no more than ten individuals with experience and expertise in the fields of Native farming and/or ranching and philanthropy. The panel will be convened by the CEO of NAAF and funding recommendations will be submitted to the Board of Trustees by the CEO of NAAF. All funding decisions made by the Board of Trustees are final.

If a submitted application is not chosen for funding, the NAAF staff will work with the applicant to gain a deeper understanding of how their application was reviewed and what steps can be taken by the applicant to improve their chances for future success.

Key Dates

APRIL 1, 2020: The open date for the 2020 RFA funding cycle is April 1, 2020. The application period will remain open for sixty (60) days until June 1, 2020.

JUNE 1, 2020: The RFA will be closed at **11:59 p.m. CT** on June 1, 2020. If the application is date stamped by the online application system at or before that day/time, the application will be reviewed for potential funding. If the applicant chooses to submit their application by hard copy, using either the US Postal Service or another carrier (FedEx or UPS), then the application IS REQUIRED to be date stamped no later than 11:59 p.m. CT on June 1, 2020. Any application received in hard copy that carries a date/time stamped past this deadline will NOT be reviewed in this application cycle, unless the applicant has followed the request process for flexibility in submittal outlined above.

JUNE 1 – JUNE 15, 2020: The flexibility period will remain open throughout this time period, and all final application information must be submitted within the online system by no later than **11:59 p.m. CT** on June 15, 2020. Please follow the directions above (see page 8) to utilize the flexibility period.

Please consult our instructions and guidance below related to *Electronic and Hard Copy Submission* for additional information. NAAF will work with applicants to remain flexible as COVID-19 impacts develop, but all applicants able to meet these deadlines are strongly encouraged to do so.

Important Note on Eligibility

All applications received will be initially reviewed for eligibility (i.e. eligible entity status). If an applicant is not deemed eligible (see the list of eligible entities above) their application will not be reviewed for potential funding. It is the applicant's burden to prove, through proper documentation, their eligibility for funding. The Trust Agreement controlling NAAF very specifically identifies the eligible entities that may be considered for and receive grant funding through NAAF. Because NAAF believes it is too difficult to anticipate each and every potential type of organization interested in receiving consideration for NAAF funding, the NAAF Trust

Agreement must control our actions and as such, it is incumbent on the applicant to provide the documentation necessary to prove eligibility to receive funding.

Webinars

An Application Process Webinar will be held on the following five (5) dates. The fifth and final webinar will be to discuss only technical software or supporting documentation issues. All webinar recordings will be posted and archived on the NAAF website. The dates for each webinar are found below and registration is required to participate. The webinars will offer technical assistance to applicants and provide clarification concerning applicant eligibility or focus areas for applications during this grant cycle.

Please click NativeAmericanAgricultureFund.org/grants-webinars/ to register for one of the webinars. Please email grants@NativeAmericanAgricultureFund.org to receive details about the webinars that will be held on the dates indicated below. Please visit the NAAF website frequently or contact us by email if you need information about the webinar schedule.

Registration Links for GoToWebinar

- Thursday, April 9: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/3376069550408060172>
- Thursday, April 23: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2924279123043346700>
- Thursday, May 7: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8553571949070462476>
- Thursday, May 21: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1020409868363185932>
- Thursday, May 28: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5414144094863052044>

Electronic Submission and Hard Copy Submission

In order to ensure that those entities that have challenging access to broadband services are not excluded from this process, NAAF will accept hard-copy applications delivered through mail or delivery services. To request a physical copy of the application packet, please call 479-445-6226 or email grants@NativeAmericanAgricultureFund.org and provide a valid USPS mailing address. However, as noted above, the deadline for post-marking or date stamping such hard copy applications will be strictly enforced. When delivering hard-copy applications, all applicable documents required for a full submittal must be included in the package in order for the application to be considered.

If incomplete applications are received and the deadlines for submittal have passed, there will be no opportunity to further supplement the application. This requirement will also be strictly enforced. All hard-copy applications must be type-written using a font and type size appropriate for professional submittal processes. No hand-written applications will be reviewed; we will only accept typewritten applications. All hard copy applications submitted (as opposed to through the online system) are required to include one (1) original of the application within the transmittal package mailing.

If applicants wait until the last minute to prepare their application, they may risk missing the deadline. Please note the deadlines on your calendars, participate in the RFA webinars offered,

begin your planning and gathering of documents early, and reach out to NAAF with any questions or concerns you may have concerning requirements or the submission process.

Key Topics for Which Funding is Allowed in the 2020 RFA Cycle

NAAF has determined that there will be four targeted funding areas and additional special emphasis areas for which funding will be provided during the 2020 funding cycle. Funding areas were determined through strategic planning conducted by NAAF; are informed by the requirements of the Trust Agreement; and are also informed by the survey available on NAAF's website. NAAF also took into consideration the emerging and rapidly evolving situations across all Native communities in response to the COVID-19 situation. Native communities are facing surges in food access challenges and potential impacts to Native farmers and ranchers while also addressing real-time impacts across our health systems, governance systems, education systems, economic development efforts and beyond.

NAAF's Trust Agreement guides the areas that are at the heart of our work and inform NAAF's desire to provide resources that will enable deeper focus on Native food production, food access and revitalization of our key food systems which Native farmers, ranchers and food people have supported for generations. NAAF believes that in staying the course in relation to our core mission, we can best support Native communities in weathering and bolstering resilience within our communities. To that end, we anticipate many projects proposed during the 2020 RFA cycle will have activities that strike to the core of these important pillars that support our food needs as Native communities.

The four targeted areas for which funding applications will be accepted in 2020 are:

For CDFIs:

Funding applications are sought from CDFIs or Native CDFIs that meet the definition of eligible entities and currently provide agricultural lending to Native farmers and ranchers. These entities are not required to provide any specific percentage of their available pool for lending to Native farmers and ranchers but should have demonstrated activity in this lending area.

A **pool of \$4,000,000** is available to fund projects proposed by those eligible entities that can provide proof of a current agriculture lending portfolio or a demonstrated need through public input from their service area that such lending opportunities are needed by Native farmers and ranchers they serve.

There is no set limit on the maximum amount of funding a single CDFI or Native CDFI may seek, but no CDFI can request the full amount of available funding (\$4,000,000) in this pool. Please moderate your request so that as many CDFIs can be funded as possible. Please understand that if applicants seek out a majority of the available funding in this pool, they will likely be asked to do a budget modification and adjust their goals and deliverables prior to award.

NAAF requests that each CDFI provide a short sentence of the total amount of need for loan products in their service area, regardless of how much funding the applicant seeks. Additional consideration will be given to those applicants who seek to serve the broadest number of potential Native farmers and ranchers within the scope of their request. Technical assistance activities provided by the CDFI are acceptable project activities. NAAF seeks to fund multiple projects in this category; overhead limitations apply.

For Educational Organizations:

Funding applications are sought from educational organizations that meet the definition of eligible entities and currently provide food and agriculture-related classroom training, classroom education programs, agriculture programs and/or professional degree (ag law, veterinary, engineering, etc.) programs; scholarships; or curriculum development and applied research in topics important to the success of Native farmers and ranchers, including career technical training. Projects can provide community technical assistance or other activities related to building success among Native farmers and ranchers, improving access to food and/or focusing on food sovereignty or traditional foods activities central to food systems improvement in Indian Country.

The training, educational activities or technical support should be made available to Native students of the educational organization and can be provided as a certificate program or a degree-seeking program. Funding may also be sought to support activities that improve food sovereignty, food access, subsistence activities as well as agricultural sciences related to food and agriculture.

Projects can also be designed to focus on any of the topical areas discussed above as well as the following areas, alone or in combination with other organizations that are eligible entities under this RFA. Additional topics can include, but are not limited to:

- planning activities to regionalize/localize food systems supporting Native communities;
- economic analysis to determine total impacts and food systems solutions as a result of COVID-19 impacts;
- pandemic/disaster for access response and contingency planning for Native food systems;
- resiliency planning for Native food systems;
- intertribal cooperative efforts within regions to bolster Native food systems;
- response plans for coordinated food production;
- planning for cooperative or coordinated food purchases within regions;

and similar projects.

If the project includes a FRTEP faculty member, such faculty member must be significantly involved in the project delivery. Funding will not be provided to proposed projects in this category if those being served in the classroom or the certificate program (online or in person) are not majority Native producers.

A **pool of \$2,000,000** is available for this area of funding. There is no upper or lower limit on the amount of funds requested but no one application may seek the entirety of the pool; overhead limitations apply.

For 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organizations:

Funding applications are sought from 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations meeting the definition of eligible entities within this RFA. These organizations may seek funding for any type of project (business assistance, agricultural education, technical support, or advocacy) that is allowable under the framework of this RFA. Nonprofit organizations must provide proof that they serve Native farmers and ranchers. Because there is a recognized need for all nonprofit organizations serving Native farmers and ranchers to have greater knowledge of the business assistance, educational, lending, financial, technical, legal, risk and related issues facing such farmers and ranchers. NAAF encourages applications to meet those needs. If the applicant is a start-up nonprofit organization, their Fiscal Sponsor must be an eligible entity itself and is required to provide proof of service to Indian Country and/or the Native farming and ranching community.

NAAF also seeks funding in the areas discussed above, but also in the following areas for projects that support:

- planning activities to regionalize/localize food systems supporting Native communities;
- economic analysis to determine total impacts and food systems solutions as a result of COVID-19 impacts;
- pandemic/disaster for access response and contingency planning for Native food systems;
- resiliency planning for Native food systems;
- intertribal cooperative efforts within regions to bolster Native food systems;
- response plans for coordinated food production;
- planning for cooperative or coordinated food purchases within regions; and similar projects.

A **pool of \$3,000,000** is available for projects in this category. There is no upper limit on the amount of funding sought for any particular project, but no applicant

should seek the entirety of the available pool; indirect limitations apply.

For Tribal Governments:

Applications are sought from Tribal governments or instrumentalities of Tribal governments for “value-added” agriculture enterprise development and for projects related to regionalized/localized food systems development that would ensure short-term stability in Native food systems as well as long-term needs for resiliency and sustainability across individual, regional and landscape areas. Funding for value-added projects can be sought for feasibility studies or the securing of architectural, engineering, legal or other technical advisors for future value-added agriculture enterprises.

In addition to value-added projects, applicants should also consider other food systems-related projects incorporating:

- planning activities to regionalize/localize food systems supporting Native communities;
- economic analysis to determine total impacts and food systems solutions as a result of COVID-19 impacts;
- pandemic/disaster for access response and contingency planning for Native food systems;
- resiliency planning for Native food systems;
- intertribal cooperative efforts within regions to bolster Native food systems;
- response plans for coordinated food production;
- planning for cooperative or coordinated food purchases within regions; and similar projects
- agriculture resource management planning
- exploration of means by which Native farmers and ranchers will have added access to critical infrastructure such as food hub or market/supply chain support led by Tribal companies or governments.

NAAF will not entertain funding for CBD-related production as the emerging medical and labeling regulatory issues facing CBD are complex, and the regulatory environment at this point in time is still too premature and uncertain. No applications will be entertained for projects including recreational or medical marijuana production systems. Tribes may seek funding for projects that examine business potential for investment in developing hemp production systems. NAAF will only entertain applications in areas such as: partial funding for project feasibility and market analysis for emerging industrial hemp production and value-added hemp product manufacturing; analysis of transportation, testing, self-regulation and regulatory planning; or development of Tribal plans authorized under the 2018 Farm Bill.

A **pool of \$2,000,000** is available for projects in this area. All Tribal government projects should seek to limit their requests in this category to no more than \$150,000. While NAAF will review higher request amounts, those applicants that stay within the overall pool limit identified will receive higher consideration for funding; indirect limitations apply.

Special Emphasis Projects

NAAF is seeking proposals in four special emphasis areas: traditional foods/food sovereignty, advocacy, youth programming and agricultural extension. These areas have been determined as important and of high interest among survey respondents and are also considered foundational concerns important to the underpinning of strong and sustainable food systems in Indian Country. The special emphasis projects are described as follows:

Traditional Foods and Food Sovereignty Programs

NAAF seeks proposals in this category due to the wide-ranging traditional foods and food sovereignty movements and local community activities that are occurring across all Indian Country. NAAF will provide funding for a group of projects focused on (but not limited to) the opportunities to:

- establish a new focus area for an existing food sovereignty/traditional foods program;
- explore “scaling up” existing food sovereignty or traditional foods programs to increase production involved within those programs or to expand the scope of those “scaling up” activities already in place;
- secondary or follow-up activities to implement an existing food sovereignty assessment process;
- activities in response to the evolving COVID-19 situation.

By seeking proposals in these areas, NAAF seeks to augment existing work being done by others; leverage food sovereignty or traditional foods investments already underway; and provide communities with additional resources to take next steps in their activities. NAAF will fund projects for \$50,000 - \$100,000 per project in this topic area. A **pool of \$1,000,000** is available in this area.

Advocacy

While NAAF is not allowed to support direct lobbying or political activity with funding support, NAAF also believes that support of the Native Farm Bill Coalition (NFBC) and the related efforts to support the continued work of the Coalition is essential to the long-term support of Native agriculture and food systems development in the United States. Funding could be specifically used to support the work of the Coalition focused on research, education, publications, and technical assistance related to allowing Native farmers and ranchers, and NAAF eligible entities, to gain deeper understanding of the policies and programs

funded by the recurring Farm Bill, topics for which ongoing Tribal consultation is occurring related to implementation, and any developing pre- and post- Farm Bill activities. Work could also be supported related to analyzing the development of policies and programs in response to COVID-19 impacts to agriculture and food access areas.

NAAF seeks applications that would propose activities for a multi-year time period beginning in 2020. A **pool of up to \$1,000,000** is available in this area. NAAF intends to fund at least one project in this area.

Youth Programming

NAAF believes the presence of Native youth in agriculture is important to the continued growth of Native food systems and to that end seeks projects that focus on the inter-generational shift happening across Indian Country. Youth engagement in agriculture can occur in many ways: K-12 classroom activities, community youth gardens, community youth ag policy councils, FFA or 4-H, youth food summits, mobilizing Native youth to take on more roles in food systems and food production development activities, and in many other ways.

NAAF believes that Native youth are the future of Native agriculture and they are needed in the work occurring within Native communities today. Projects can include:

- hands-on food production;
- support for 4-H, FFA or other youth groups in the community or school;
- youth-led community projects;
- youth ag councils;
- scholarships so that Native youth can participate in agriculture training or leadership programs outside their own community or connect with other Native youth in agriculture programs
- online youth agriculture and food related activities
- youth related COVID-19 response activities impacting food and agriculture production
- regional and national youth food and agriculture leadership projects.

NAAF is also interested in investing in programs that provide information and guidance to Native youth interested in choosing food and agriculture (farming and ranching or food systems/food sovereignty activities) as their future career choice.

NAAF seeks to fund small projects up to \$50,000. A **pool of \$1,000,000** is available in this area.

NOTE: All applicants for Youth Programming are required to use the separate application portal created only for Youth Programming. As opposed to our General RFA, NAAF will leave the Youth Programming

area open from April 1 through September 30, 2020 and will review and make determinations on funding throughout that period.

Agriculture Extension

Extension-related services for Native farmers, ranchers and food champions have always been skeletal and poorly supported by federal funding. The Extension faculty associated with land-grant institutions through the Federally Recognized Tribal Extension Professionals program (FRTEP) are stretched thin with flat funding from federal sources for years; extension-related activities of TCUs are also poorly funded. NAAF intends to focus, moving forward, on the work that needs to be done to create a “*21st Century Native Agriculture Extension*” system.

To that end, NAAF seeks funding applications from land grant institutions, TCUs, and other eligible entity organizations whose work is focused on education, research and extension of knowledge through community based supportive activities, and that wish to focus on building agriculture extension efforts and working directly with farmers, ranchers and food people within their communities that meet the needs of Native agriculture today and moving forward.

A **pool of \$1,000,000** is available for this priority issue. NAAF is not requiring any particular faculty or institution be in the lead on applications received. Any project that is proposed for funding that has a non-TCU land grant and TCU partnership involved will receive additional points and any TCU-only project that seeks to build the capacity of their agricultural faculty will also be given additional points. Projects that seek to build or plan for a new multi-faceted approach to extension-related support for Native agriculturalists are of high interest.

Outcomes/Results Based Projects

All projects should identify at least two (2) and no more than five (5) outcomes expected/anticipated or results expected/anticipated from the project work. NAAF intends to fund, over the life of NAAF’s grant-making processes, a body of work that can demonstrate specific progress towards several interlocking goals. These goals are:

- success of Native farmers and ranchers;
- improved access to credit for Native farmers and ranchers;
- improved food systems in Indian Country;
- improved delivery of services to Native farmers and ranchers;
- improved knowledge of Native farmers and ranchers on key issues relevant to their success;
- enhanced food sovereignty within Native communities;
- progress towards the building of value-added foods capable of accessing new or existing markets that will improve the agricultural economies and general economies of Native communities;
- an increase in the number of Native professionals involved in the agricultural sciences

- and serving Native agriculture; and
- the overarching important goal of ensuring Native youth are prepared for careers in agriculture and that Native farming, ranching and food businesses are successfully transitioned to the next generation.

When identifying the goals your project will seek to address, be specific and identify clearly what your project design will seek to accomplish. For example: identify measurable goals; identify the number of Native farmers and ranchers who will be involved in the project; identify the number and types of new or existing farms or ranches you will impact with the work; and quantify your goals. NAAF will work with each applicant to develop reasonable reporting and progress reviews for their projects.

Progress Reporting and Compliance

NAAF's Trust Agreement specifically requires financial responsibility on the part of all NAAF grantees and requires NAAF to conduct compliance reviews from time to time. In addition, the Trust Agreement requires that NAAF ensure the funds provided to successful applicants are used for the purposes intended and, if those funds are not, NAAF is required to recoup the funds. Therefore, all successful applicants will be required to provide reasonable periodic progress reports through an online system. All funds awarded will be provided to the applicants in reasonable increments depending on the type of project contemplated and may differ between successful applicants due to the difference in project type. Periodic compliance calls or visits (as appropriate) will also be conducted by NAAF employees from time to time.

Awardee Meeting

While the preferred manner of meeting with all successful applicants is an in-person meeting, the COVID-19 situation and its aftermath may prevent such in-person meeting from occurring. Please include at least \$750 in your project budget to cover the cost of at least one (1) project staff person to attend the annual grantee meeting, if an in-person meeting can occur. If situations exist that prevent an in-person meeting, the funds will be released for general project activities. NAAF will provide funding for most costs associated with the annual grantee meeting, but NAAF grantees are expected to cover the travel (airfare, mileage, etc.) associated with transporting project personnel to the grantee meeting. If an in-person meeting is not possible, all applicants will need to periodically engage with NAAF in teleconference, video conference or webinar activities with other successful applicants and NAAF staff.

Unsuccessful Applicants

NAAF anticipates that all rounds of funding during the life of NAAF will be highly competitive, as the engagement of Tribal governments, Native communities, organizations and Native farmers and ranchers in the success and growth of our food and agriculture sector is on the rise. If an applicant is not successful in this round of funding, NAAF will provide specific guidance on how best to improve an application. NAAF's goal is to provide sources of funding for the life of the 20-year period NAAF is allowed to exist. NAAF is interested in building the successful trajectory of all those engaged in Native agriculture and will find

multiple ways to assist unsuccessful applicants, and successful applicants as well, in building their own internal capacity to seek and obtain funding from any number of other funders.

Collaborators, Cooperators and Leveraging

While not specifically required, additional consideration will be given to any application for funding that has identified collaborators, or cooperators, or supporters of the work contemplated. Leveraging activities happening in Native agriculture, regardless of the project focus, are always important and all applicants are strongly encouraged to reach out to others who may have done similar work and to learn from others. Support letters are not required but may be included with the application if the applicant believes the support letters strengthen the narrative or project description in some way. Intertribal projects that have broad impact beyond just one Tribe, one community, or one region will receive additional consideration and any project with clear replicability will also receive additional consideration during the review process.

NAAF is seeking, from each applicant, a clear indication of whether the applicant is interested in working directly with NAAF to find additional leveraging opportunities from other funding sources. By this we mean, are applicants interested in NAAF sharing your application with other private philanthropic or public funding sources to find additional resources to support your work? The online software system will have a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ question to indicate your willingness for NAAF to work on your behalf to find additional resources for your project.

Letters of Commitment/Cover Letters

All project submittals are required to have a cover letter from the senior project official or authorized representative of the organization (signed and dated) that specifically discusses the project for which funding is sought. Clear commitment to the project must be expressed in the cover letter/letter of commitment.

Biographical Sketch/Resume of Key Personnel

Biographical sketches or short resumes (no more than three (3) paragraphs in length) are required for all key personnel (project leader(s), trainers, etc.) included in the project. This requirement is necessary in order to demonstrate experience, capacity or training necessary to provide the services outlined in the project narrative.

Maximum and Minimum Narrative Pages

All projects will have as much available space as possible (allowed within our online system) for you to describe your project in detail. NAAF believes that the increased page/character limits allowed in 2020 will be adequate to accommodate all applications. However, if your project needs additional space to describe your project, please advise NAAF as quickly as possible for alternative means to submit additional materials. Keep in mind, no additional points will be awarded to longer applications, brevity is appreciated. Narratives should describe how the audience will be recruited for the project and should also describe how the project itself

will become sustainable into the future.

Budget and Budget Justification

The budget form NAAF requires is provided to all applicants with the release of this RFA. Please use the NAAF form for submitting your budget. The form, along with the full RFA, is located on the NAAF grant website for easy access. Any questions pertaining to how budget categories should be reflected on the form can be posed at any time to NAAF staff; the webinars describing the application process will discuss budget forms and requirements, so all applicants are encouraged to attend or review archived webinar content to seek answers to their questions.

Budget justification information is required for each general budget category for which funding is sought. Budget justifications are not limited in length but are usually no more than 1-2 pages in total length. Applicants must complete separate budget documents for each targeted area or special emphasis area of funding for which you are applying. Please do not copy and paste the same budget from one project area to another. If you need additional guidance on budget documents and budget justifications, please contact NAAF staff.

NAAF reserves the right to negotiate all budgets with all applicants who are successful in being selected for funding and will require that all successful applicants execute a grant agreement with NAAF that will contain specific terms and conditions of the award.

Review of Applications

NAAF staff and leadership, along with experts selected to advise NAAF staff for the purpose of reviewing applications received as needed, will conduct a review panel and examine all applications that have not been disqualified for one of three reasons: 1) failure to prove eligible entity status; 2) failure to include all required forms and information in the application; or 3) failure to submit by the closing deadline(s).

All applications cleared for review will be reviewed using the same criteria; the criteria are included in this RFA, along with the relevant percentage scoring system that will be applied to the criteria when reviewing the application. Some criteria for review are more important than others. Please take note of the criteria when you are completing your project narrative and designing your project as well as determining the outcome/results you hope to achieve.

The panel reviewing the projects will be convened as soon as possible after the closing date. After the panel individually reviews every project application approved for review, the panel will also examine the array of projects for geographical and regional diversity, diversity in types and approaches of projects for which funding is sought, and applicability to the priorities established by this RFA. The panel review process is based on principles of confidentiality, fairness, consensus, equity, and adherence to the NAAF Trust Agreement and grounded in the principles shaping NAAF's work to support Native farmers and ranchers.

A final slate of projects recommended for funding will be presented to the NAAF Board of

Trustees who make all final determinations for funding. All efforts will be made to make final determinations for funding in 2020 so that funds can be provided as soon as possible. Project start dates will be determined once this review and selection process is concluded but all project start dates will be in 2020.

Criteria for Review

NAAF review panelists are required to use identified evaluation criteria for review and award recommendations. Seven criteria are weighted in their relative importance to the overall quality of the application and the potential for success of the project. Applications are evaluated based on the quality of their responses to the RFA. The criteria for review are as follows:

- **Proposed Results (30% weight).** The extent to which the project includes
 - clear statements of what the applicant anticipates farmers and ranchers will understand, analyze, develop, decide, or implement through participation in the project;
 - how realistic and attainable is the estimated number of farmers and ranchers to be reached;
 - the relative level of rigor associated with the farmer and rancher actions; and
 - the degree to which the results anticipated speak to NAAF priorities.
 - As to CDFI applicants, the applicant should discuss the amount and number of potential loans and/or technical assistance it will provide to Native farmers and ranchers.
 - For educational organizations or education-focused projects, the applicant will describe the number of students and/or future Native farmers and ranchers to be served and the proposed results from the project within this target audience, including the benefits students will experience by engaging with the project.
 - For Tribal governments, the applicant should discuss the proposed results their activity will have within their communities.

- **Farmer and Rancher Demand (20% weight).** The applicant should discuss the demand for the proposed activities that exists within the farmer and rancher community they seek to serve. They should also describe farmers and ranchers' willingness to participate in the activities proposed and the indicators (if any) that reflect interest in the proposed project activities. Identification of the intended audience is required, as is the identification of the location of the intended audience. Additionally, the application should discuss:
 - As to CDFI applicants, the demand for loans among an identified target audience.
 - As to educational organizations or education-focused projects, the demand or need for the content being delivered through the proposed project and could also project the number of anticipated participants.
 - For Tribal governments, the farmers and ranchers who will be affected by and served through the funded project.

- **Team/Organizational Capacity and Collaborators (15% weight).** NAAF is interested in understanding the skills, knowledge and experience of the project team and organization to effectively deliver on the project activities as proposed, and NAAF is interested in encouraging and supporting effective collaborations that will increase the likelihood of farmer and rancher success and participation in the project. Effectiveness is demonstrated by skills, knowledge and experience in the area and access to farmers and ranchers. The applicant should identify the relative qualifications and experience of primary project personnel and any identified partners or collaborators.
- **Impact on Access to Credit (10% weight).** NAAF is interested in projects that address the access to credit issues facing Native farmers and ranchers. All applicants need to identify how and to what extent the project focuses on core access to credit issues of Native farmers and ranchers. All applicants should also discuss the impact on improving access to credit for Native farmers and ranchers the project would have, if funded.
- **Evaluation (10% weight).** The effectiveness of the plan for evaluating and tracking farmer and rancher success or participation results is required. NAAF will examine whether the proposed results are reasonably measurable and whether there is a good plan for tracking the proposed results. The applicant should identify how the proposed results will be achieved and in what manner, as well as the plans for evaluating and tracking target audience success or participation.
- **Innovation (10% weight).** NAAF will evaluate the extent to which the project employs innovative approaches to develop or deliver assistance, technical support, education or advocacy and the materials or tools to do so. NAAF will also review how well the applicant proposes to build upon existing knowledge in the field and/or collaborate with others so that broader dissemination of knowledge can occur, and more efficient use of tools can be achieved. For all categories of eligible entities or projects, this category will identify and discuss innovative aspects of the project design and delivery methods.
- **Wide application and replicability (5% weight).** NAAF is interested in the extent to which the proposed project might have a wider application, allow for adaptation to specialized audiences, improve marketing and promotion techniques, encourage new methodologies or have intertribal application and replicability. For all types of eligible applicants or projects, this category should identify and discuss replicability potential. NAAF acknowledges that some projects are not replicable, but nonetheless encourages all applicants to consider and discuss potential replicability.

Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

NAAF staff and all NAAF Trustees have signed Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Statements and are pledged to ensure that all applications are received and reviewed in compliance with NAAF Conflict of Interest requirements and Confidentiality requirements.

NAAF takes seriously its responsibilities in these two key areas and will take all precautions necessary to ensure that there are no real or perceived conflicts of interest among staff, panel reviewers or Trustees when reviewing and making final determinations on projects selected for funding. NAAF also takes seriously its responsibilities for keeping all materials received by NAAF as confidential. NAAF is including one question in the application process in 2020 to identify those applicants who are interested in having NAAF seek additional resource funding on their behalf from other private philanthropic or public funding sources.

If a project is selected for funding, all project directors and project entities are required to allow public discussion and highlighting of project work by, through and in coordination with NAAF in order that the work supported by NAAF and the important work being done by project entities in support of Native farming and ranching can be publicly highlighted and others can learn from the project activities. All successful applications will be encouraged to use the NAAF logo in publicity related to their project activities or outcomes.

Questions

Any applicant with questions concerning this process or any requirements, should contact the NAAF offices at the following:

Native American Agriculture Fund, Attn: Grants
PO Box 1427
534 W Research Center Blvd., Suite 220
Fayetteville AR 72701
479-445-6226; grants@NativeAmericanAgricultureFund.org

In addition, all applicants should participate in the webinars as listed or visit the archived presentations in order to gain additional information.