



## 2021 Request for Applications Overview

### A Message on the COVID-19 Pandemic

*We here at NAAF – our staff and our Board of Trustees – stand with you and your communities during this ongoing global pandemic. Our top priority at NAAF remains investing in Native agriculture to bolster the critical task of feeding ourselves. Supporting Native farmers, ranchers, fishers and food champions in our communities, while rebuilding and reinvigorating our Native food systems, is at the core of NAAF’s mission. Our sovereignty depends on our being food sovereign. Every action matters.*

*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 NAAF Trust Agreement. Please make sure that your application accounts for the possibility that the country may be involved in social distancing or other public health order implementation and enforcement into the future. NAAF is 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.*

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### Introduction and Background

Welcome to the Native American Agriculture Fund’s (NAAF) grant application process for 2021. 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.

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/](https://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/](https://NativeAmericanAgricultureFund.org/trust-agreement/). We recommend you read the Trust Agreement prior to starting an application for funding.

Strategic planning activities, grantmaking outcomes and online survey responses inform programmatic areas for which NAAF seeks applications. For the 2021 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/naafsurvey>) and/or email us at [grants@NativeAmericanAgricultureFund.org](mailto:grants@NativeAmericanAgricultureFund.org) as often as possible and work with us to achieve the promise provided by the creation of NAAF.

### **Allowable Use of Funds**

The Trust Agreement ([NativeAmericanAgricultureFund.org/trust-agreement/](https://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 providing grant or loan funding directly to individual Native farmers and ranchers, therefore we will not accept applications directly from individuals. We are required to work through eligible entities as outlined in the Trust Agreement. 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, provided that those individuals not be explicitly named in the NAAF application. 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 (see page 4).

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. Young, beginning and new farmers and ranchers are a key constituency; any reference to farmer and rancher should also be interpreted to include people seeking to start agricultural production and related activities. 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.

We encourage you to combine focus areas into one project, 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 existing 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 public 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.

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 Native community served
- Other evaluation criteria identified later in this RFA (see page 22)

## 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.

Applicants eligible to receive funding from NAAF should discuss their organization track record (or key personnel 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 up the process of reaching audiences and achieving effectiveness in their work. NAAF encourages start-up nonprofit organizations that have applied for 501(c)(3) status from the IRS but not yet received a favorable determination to apply through a fiscal sponsor who can also provide important technical support for proposed project activities. If fiscal sponsors are used, the fiscal sponsor must be an eligible 501(c)(3) organization and should follow the guidance in NAAF's [Fiscal Sponsor Information](#).

The applicant shall provide proof that it clearly falls within one or more of the four types of eligible applicants listed above. 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 executed 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 for purposes of the specific limited waiver of sovereign immunity. Applicants must include a letter or resolution from the specific Tribal office or official that is seeking NAAF funding. Please request further guidance from NAAF if you have additional questions.

#### *Note to Educational Organizations*

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU) are clearly within the definition of educational organizations and are encouraged to apply for funding. The term “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.

#### *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 for grants across all categories with no exceptions. A sample limited waiver is available here: NAAF’s [Limited Waiver Information](#).

The final limited waiver of sovereign immunity will not be required when the application is submitted; instead, applicants will acknowledge and affirm that they and their Tribal leadership are aware of the requirement and are willing to provide a limited waiver in a timely manner after notification of the award. 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 2021 begin the process of obtaining waiver pre-approval as soon as possible to ensure final waivers are in place so funds can be expeditiously released to successful applicants. If a Tribal government is notified that they have been selected for an award but does not provide their limited waiver of sovereign immunity within a reasonable period of time, NAAF reserves the right to reallocate those funds to another Tribal government.

Instrumentalities of Tribes (of state or federally recognized 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. If an organization has eligible status as an educational institution or a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, for instance, but wishes to be considered as an instrumentality of a Tribal government, the organization must secure and submit an authorizing document from their Tribal government to that specific effect. A statement from an organization other than a Tribal government will not suffice for this purpose.

#### *Note on Eligibility of Previous Grantees*

Organizations funded in 2016 as Fast Track grantees and previous NAAF grantees are not prohibited from applying for funding through this 2021 RFA. Their application will not receive special consideration over first-time applicants to the NAAF grant process. Fast Track grantees and NAAF grantees may still be in the midst of their funded projects. If organizations from these cohorts choose to apply for funding in this 2021 RFA, 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.

#### **Addressing Access to Capital**

Because the central issues involved in the litigation that led to NAAF's creation involved access to capital issues, NAAF requires all applicants to incorporate strategies that will improve access to capital by Native farmers and ranchers in their proposed activities. Access to capital can be shown by any of the following types of activities: 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. Capital is always needed in agriculture enterprises and will always be relevant to those involved in food and agriculture. NAAF has increased the weighting we apply to this evaluation criteria as we review all applications. Applications that are absent any discussion of access to capital or management of agricultural risk will not be considered for funding. We encourage you to view our [video on access to capital](#) and Evaluation Criteria section on page 22 for more information.

## Cost Sharing or Matching Funds

NAAF does **not** require cost sharing, in-kind or matching funds be included within the project budget 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 augment 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 augment their work against other activities with which they are already 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.

## 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. 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. NAAF will request a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer during your application completion to indicate whether you are willing to work with NAAF to leverage additional resources.

## Limitation on Indirect Costs

Project budgets are divided into two broad categories: direct costs and indirect costs. Direct costs include, but are not limited to, salaries, travel, equipment, and supplies directly benefiting the **grant**-supported project or activity. Indirect costs are expenses incurred for common or joint activities that cannot be identified with a particular activity within line items. Examples of indirect costs include budget for operating offices or administrative tasks performed by staff within the organization that provide supportive services to those involved directly with the grant (such as, financial or accounting office staff). **All applicants will be limited to no more than 15% allowed indirect costs on personnel and direct costs.** Grantees may not assess indirect costs on intermediary funds used for loans, re-grants or scholarships. A detailed explanation on how to calculate indirect costs for your budget request is included in NAAF’s [2021 RFA Budget and Budget Narrative Guidelines](#). NAAF reserves the right to increase or decrease limitations on indirect costs in future RFAs.

## Unallowable Use of Funds

The following types of applicants or uses of funds are **NOT** eligible under this 2021 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
- Projects that identify an individual or individuals who will be served by the proposed grant activities. References to those in the service population should not include personally identifiable information.
- 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 and can include (but isn't limited to): estate planning, land purchase agreements, understanding of legal rights, contract negotiation, assistance with administrative appeals, and other typical legal or advisory 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 public issues education and public issues advocacy may be eligible activities)

**Note:** Only Tribal governments may apply for industrial hemp project funding. All applications including requests for industrial hemp support are required to strictly follow the guidance on page 15. Non-profit, educational or CDFI organizations are not allowed to submit proposals for funding in this subject matter area.

## **The Application Process and Deadlines**

There is **NO** Letter of Intent step for the 2021 RFA. 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. All applications must be submitted through the online process used by NAAF. 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.

A panel will review all applications for funding and will make the recommendations for final funding decisions to the NAAF Board of Trustees. The review 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 by the CEO to the NAAF Board of Trustees. The NAAF Board of Trustees makes all final funding decisions.

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.

### **Important Note on Initial Review 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 as an entity for funding. The Trust Agreement controlling NAAF very specifically identifies the four types of 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.

### **Key Dates**

**APRIL 1, 2021:** The 2021 RFA General and 2021 RFA Youth will open on April 1, 2021.

**MAY 25, 2021:** The 2021 RFA Youth will close at **11:59 p.m. CT** on May 25, 2021. The 2021 RFA Youth closes one week before the 2021 RFA General to allow NAAF to expedite grant awards in advance of the 2021-2022 school year. If the application is date stamped in the online application system at or before that day/time, the application will be reviewed for potential funding.

**JUNE 1, 2021:** The 2021 RFA General will close at **11:59 p.m. CT** on June 1, 2021. If the application is date stamped in the online application system at or before that day/time, the application will be reviewed for potential funding.

## **Webinars**

NAAF will host 2021 RFA Webinars on the following five (5) dates. Each webinar will start with a one-hour overview of the application process and then transition to a question-and-answer period. 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.

Register: [https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_SC7JXox4RyWNiYXR1MQLxw](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_SC7JXox4RyWNiYXR1MQLxw)

Thursday, April 15 at 2 – 4 pm CT

Thursday, April 22 at 2 – 4 pm CT (Youth Programming Only)

Thursday, April 29 at 2 – 4 pm CT

Thursday, May 13 at 2 – 4 pm CT

Thursday, May 27 at 2 – 4 pm CT

Please email [grants@NativeAmericanAgricultureFund.org](mailto:grants@NativeAmericanAgricultureFund.org) to receive details about the webinars that will be held on the dates indicated above. Please visit the NAAF website or contact us by email if you need information about the webinar schedule.

## **Electronic Submission of Applications**

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 be strictly enforced.

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.

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## **Key Topics for Which Funding is Allowed in the 2021 RFA Cycle**

Funding areas for the 2021 RFA were determined through strategic planning conducted by NAAF, are informed by the requirements of the Trust Agreement and are informed by input from the public. NAAF's Trust Agreement guides the four broad subject areas that are at the heart of our work (business assistance, technical support, agricultural education and advocacy). The Trust Agreement also provides specific requirements for what types of entities are eligible to apply for funding (nonprofit organizations, educational institutions,

CDFIs and Tribal governments). In the past, NAAF has provided multiple pathways for seeking funding but in the 2021 RFA, we are simplifying our approach while staying within the spirit and mandates of the Trust Agreement and the challenges and opportunities Native agriculture faces.

NAAF also took into consideration the ongoing and evolving situations across all Native communities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Native communities continue to face food access challenges and impacts to Native farmers and ranchers and their businesses. There are continuing real-time impacts across our health systems, governance systems, education systems, our economic development efforts and beyond. As such, we hope applicants will consider submitting projects that support any of the following: planning activities to regionalize/localize food systems supporting Native communities; economic analysis to determine impacts to and solutions for the food system as a result of COVID-19; resiliency and contingency planning for emergency/disaster situations; response plans for coordinated food production and distribution; intertribal agriculture infrastructure planning projects; and other projects aiming to boost Native food systems.

NAAF strongly believes in the importance of Tribal food sovereignty which increases and improves Tribal authority over its food system, from farm to fork. Tribal food sovereignty includes the development and adoption of policies to implement sovereign authority over food and agriculture. It includes traditional practices, large-scale production and everything in between in size and scope.

### **Targeted Projects**

A total of \$15,000,000 is being made available for 2021 funding. Please focus your attention to first determining the type of eligible entity that will pursue funding for your project. As described below, there are special focus areas that tie to each type of funding entity. Some entities are eligible to apply for several types of projects; other entities are only eligible to apply for more narrow types of projects. All funding entity types may apply for youth and funding, as described below, but are required to use a separate online process for their applications. If your project will focus on several types of programming efforts or activities, you will need to submit a separate budget form for each focus area. For example, if your organization is a nonprofit organization and you are applying for climate resilience support in addition to general food sovereignty support, you should submit one application with two separate budgets that clearly identify the costs associated with each type of effort that will be undertaken by your entity.

**For 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organizations**  
**General Focus: Business Assistance, Agricultural Education, Technical Support and/or Advocacy**  
**Special Focus: Beginning Farmer and Rancher; Climate Resilience and Conservation**

Available Pool: \$3,500,000  
Minimum Request Per Focus: \$150,000  
Maximum Request Per Focus: \$200,000

Funding applications are sought from eligible 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations. These organizations may seek funding for any type of project that includes 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. NAAF is only interested in funding projects that can directly show their project will benefit and build activities that will improve success of Native farmers and ranchers. All nonprofit organizations serving Native farmers and ranchers to ensure their agriculture communities have greater knowledge of the business assistance, educational, lending, financial, technical, legal, risk and related issues facing such farmers and ranchers, If a nonprofit organization does not have a staff person who has direct knowledge of business assistance and technical issues important to success of Native farmers and ranchers, they must include someone within their project team who has that knowledge.

Food sovereignty projects provided by 501(c)(3) organizations should assist a community, region or intertribal group to garner greater authority or control over their food system by connecting Native producers and consumers strategically within Indian Country's food systems. Food sovereignty projects should discuss how their work is tied to Tribal government policies that support Tribal food sovereignty and specifically assist and build towards the success of Native farmers and ranchers. All general food sovereignty projects must include specific efforts that support business assistance, technical support, agricultural education or advocacy. If the project does not include any of the four mission areas of NAAF, it will not likely not score highly enough to be funded.

If the applicant is a start-up nonprofit organization that has applied for 501(c)(3) status but yet received a favorable determination, they may apply through a fiscal sponsor. The fiscal sponsor must be an eligible 501(c)(3) organization and is required to provide proof of service to Indian Country and/or the Native farming and ranching community and answer key questions concerning whether it is a Native-led organization. Specific rules apply to fiscal sponsors (see page 4).

**Special Focus: Beginning Farmer and Rancher**

NAAF believes Native beginning farmers and ranchers are critical to the continued growth of Native food systems and to that end seeks projects that focus on support of the next generation of agricultural producers. Beginning farmers and ranchers – individuals of any age entering the agriculture industry for the first time – often face unique challenges and opportunities compared to more experienced producers, and need specialized support to start, grow and sustain their

operations. NAAF seeks applications that provide a suite of services, including business assistance, agricultural education, technical support and/or advocacy, to Native beginning farmers and ranchers.

**Note:** Organizations seeking to work with Native youth (broadly defined as early childhood to 18 years old) should apply for funding through the 2021 Request for Applications – Youth, a separate online portal (see page 18).

**Special Focus: Climate Resilience and Conservation**

Farmers and ranchers constantly face climate impacts to their operations and activities. Likewise, conservation activities are very important to producers and regenerative agriculture projects are rising in importance. NAAF recognizes these important issues as being central to the short, mid- and long-term success of Native agriculture. NAAF seeks applications that focus on any of the following: development of a matching funds pool accessible to Native producers wishing to engage in conservation and regenerative agriculture activities for which cost-share funding is required; intertribal conservation or regenerative agriculture educational activities to impact Tribal producers across multiple communities; projects seeking to ensure Native producers engage in climate-smart agriculture techniques.

**For Educational Organizations**

**General Focus: Business Assistance, Agricultural Education, Technical Support and/or Advocacy**

**Special Focus: Beginning Farmer and Rancher; Climate Resilience and Conservation**

Available Pool: \$1,500,000

Minimum Request Per Focus: \$150,000

Maximum Request Per Focus: \$200,000

Funding applications are sought from eligible educational organizations recognized as such by the IRS, that currently provide food and agriculture-related classroom training, classroom education programs, agriculture programs and/or professional or certificate programs in ag law, veterinary, engineering, or related areas; scholarships; curriculum development; and applied research in topics important to the success of Native farmers and ranchers, including career technical training. Projects must focus on building success among Native farmers and ranchers. 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. 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. The applicant should also be prepared to answer key questions concerning whether the educational organization is Native led.

### **Special Focus: Beginning Farmer and Rancher**

NAAF believes Native beginning farmers and ranchers are critical to the continued growth of Native food systems and to that end seeks projects that focus on support of the next generation of agricultural producers. Beginning farmers and ranchers – individuals of any age entering the agriculture industry for the first time – often face unique challenges and opportunities compared to more experienced producers, and need specialized support to start, grow and sustain their operations. NAAF seeks applications that provide a suite of services, including business assistance, agricultural education, technical support and/or advocacy, to Native beginning farmers and ranchers.

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#### **For CDFIs**

**General Focus: Loan Capital, Re-granting Capital & Technical Assistance/Business Assistance**

**Special Focus: Beginning Farmer and Rancher; Climate Resilience and Conservation**

Available Pool: \$6,000,000

Minimum Request Per Focus: N/A

Maximum Request Per Focus: N/A; applicants may not request the full available pool.

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 or need in the agriculture lending area. Eligible entities need to 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 may request the full amount of available funding (\$6,000,000) in this pool. Please moderate your request so that as many CDFIs as possible may be funded. Please

understand that if applicants seek a majority of the available funding in this pool, they will be asked for a budget modification and to adjust their goals and deliverables prior to an award.

NAAF requests that each CDFI provide a short sentence of the total amount of perceived need for loan products in their service area, regardless of how much funding the applicant seeks. Additional consideration will be given to those applicants that 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 to direct project expenses but not to the amounts that will be offered as loan or re-granting activities.

**Special Focus: Beginning Farmer and Rancher**

NAAF believes Native beginning farmers and ranchers are critical to the continued growth of Native food systems and to that end seeks projects that focus on support of the next generation of agricultural producers. Beginning farmers and ranchers – individuals of any age entering the agriculture industry for the first time – often face unique challenges and opportunities compared to more experienced producers, and need specialized support to start, grow and sustain their operations. NAAF seeks applications that provide a suite of services, including business assistance, agricultural education, technical support and/or advocacy, to Native beginning farmers and ranchers.

**Note:** Organizations seeking to work with Native youth (broadly defined as early childhood to 18 years old) should apply for funding through the 2021 Request for Applications – Youth, a separate online portal (see page 18).

**Special Focus: Climate Resilience and Conservation**

Farmers and ranchers constantly face climate impacts to their operations and activities. Likewise, conservation activities are very important to producers and regenerative agriculture projects are rising in importance. NAAF recognizes these important issues as being central to the short, mid- and long-term success of Native agriculture. NAAF seeks applications that focus on any of the following: development of a matching funds pool accessible to Native producers wishing to engage in conservation and regenerative agriculture activities for which cost-share funding is required; intertribal conservation or regenerative agriculture educational activities to impact Tribal producers across multiple communities; projects seeking to ensure Native producers engage in climate-smart agriculture techniques.

**For Tribal Governments and Instrumentalities**

**General Focus: Business Assistance, Agricultural Education, Technical Support and/or Advocacy**

**Special Focus: Beginning Farmer and Rancher; Climate Resilience and Conservation**

Available Pool: \$3,000,000

Minimum Request Per Focus: \$150,000

Maximum Request Per Focus: \$200,000

NAAF has received many inquiries concerning the importance of agriculture infrastructure (brick and mortar, transportation, logistics, storage, and related activities) central to the success of Native farmers and ranchers. Infrastructure can include meat processing plants, vegetable and fruit packing houses, food hubs, grain terminal and storage facilities, distribution and logistics systems, and similar components in the food infrastructure and supply chain. Applications for value-added agriculture enterprise development and regionalized/localized intertribal food systems development are also sought. Activities can also include feasibility studies, market studies or the securing of architectural, engineering, legal or other technical advisors for future value-added agriculture enterprises; and drafting or implementing Tribal policies or sovereign authority over the food system. All projects must clearly indicate how the work will specifically support the success of Native farmers and ranchers.

Funding sought in this category can be used for preliminary construction activities, feasibility studies, marketing studies, ascertainment of labeling and marketing characteristics of foods, or other activities related to product development. Funding can also be used for shovel-ready projects, technology-based resources that support infrastructure development, website development or specialized marketing activities.

***NOTE: Tribal governments are required to provide a limited waiver of sovereign immunity and if the waiver is not provided within 2-3 months upon being notified that they are selected for funding, NAAF will withdraw our offer of funding and provide resources to other Tribal governments willing to expedite the limited waiver of sovereign immunity. There are no exceptions to this policy. More information concerning limited waivers and the application process is found on page 5.***

### **Note: Industrial Hemp**

NAAF will only provide funding to Tribal governments for projects related to industrial hemp. NAAF will also only provide funding for feasibility studies or market studies. Tribal governments are the only body that may seek hemp production regulatory approval from the federal government. A nonprofit or other eligible entity may not apply for industrial hemp project funding on behalf of a Tribe. NAAF will not entertain funding for production activities, CBD-related production or medicinal or recreational marijuana production as the regulatory environment at this point in time is still too premature and uncertain, and the emerging medical and labeling regulatory issues are complex. Any application including such activities will not be reviewed. Tribes may seek funding for projects that examine business or market potential for investment in developing industrial hemp production systems; project feasibility and market analysis for emerging industrial hemp production and value-added industrial hemp product manufacturing; analysis of transportation, testing, self-regulation and regulatory planning; or development of Tribal regulatory plans authorized under the 2018 Farm Bill.

### **Special Focus: Agriculture Infrastructure**

Tribal governments have the ability to provide significant and important support to the development of agriculture infrastructure within their communities either as stand-alone investments of the Tribal government or in concert with other like-minded Tribal governments. Tribal governments can also partner with those outside our communities to share the risk of building and maintaining infrastructure that can serve Native farmers and ranchers (fishers and forest persons) as well as a related need to ensure food sovereignty and food security. In 2020, NAAF released *Reimagining Native Food Economies* (<https://nativeamericanagriculturefund.org/reports/>), a report that drew attention to the importance of agriculture infrastructure. Tribal governments are encouraged to seek funding for support of plans for infrastructure development, specialized activities, technology development and any number of the brick-and-mortar and equipment activities that underscore movement forward in the development of agriculture infrastructure for Native food economies.

### **Special Focus: Beginning Farmer and Rancher**

NAAF believes Native beginning farmers and ranchers are critical to the continued growth of Native food systems and to that end seeks projects that focus on support of the next generation of agricultural producers. Beginning farmers and ranchers – individuals of any age entering the agriculture industry for the first time – often face unique challenges and opportunities compared to more experienced producers, and need specialized support to start, grow and sustain their operations. NAAF seeks applications that provide a suite of services, including business assistance, agricultural education, technical support and/or advocacy, to Native beginning farmers and ranchers.

**Note:** Organizations seeking to work with Native youth (broadly defined as early childhood to 18 years old) should apply for funding through the 2021 Request for Applications – Youth, a separate online portal (see page 18).

### **Special Focus: Climate Resilience and Conservation**

Farmers and ranchers constantly face climate impacts to their operations and activities. Likewise, conservation activities are very important to producers and regenerative agriculture projects are rising in importance. NAAF recognizes these important issues as being central to the short, mid- and long-term success of Native agriculture. NAAF seeks applications that focus on any of the following: development of a matching funds pool accessible to Native producers wishing to engage in conservation and regenerative agriculture activities for which cost-share funding is required; intertribal conservation or regenerative agriculture educational activities to impact Tribal producers across multiple communities; projects seeking to ensure Native producers engage in climate-smart agriculture techniques.

## **Youth Programming How to Apply**

Eligible Entities: All types of eligible entities may apply  
Available Pool: \$1,000,000  
Minimum Request: \$30,000  
Maximum Request: \$60,000

NAAF also believes Native youth (broadly defined as early childhood to 18 years old) are critical to the continued growth of Native food systems and to that end seeks projects that focus on support of the next generation. 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 or mobilizing Native youth to take on more roles in food systems and food production development activities. Because we seek to draw special focus on youth and beginning farmer and rancher programs, all types of eligible entities may apply for those programs, but we utilize a separate online application process for youth and beginning farmer and rancher program funding.

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
- COVID-19 response activities impacting food and agriculture production

**NOTE: BIE-supported or controlled schools.** NAAF is also interested in investing in programs that provide information and guidance to Native youth interested in choosing food and agriculture as their future career choice. NAAF is also specifically interested in reaching out to Native students who are in BIE federally controlled schools or Tribe-supported schools. Because BIE federally controlled schools are part of the federal government and not one of the four eligible entity types, they are welcome to partner with an eligible entity to pursue funding. If the BIE school is Tribal-controlled or a school receiving federal grants or contracts from the federal government, they may be eligible for funding as either a Tribal government instrumentality, a 501(c)(3) organization or an educational organization as described by federal law, depending on their organizational status.

**NOTE: All applicants for Youth Programming are required to use the separate application portal created only for Youth Programming. The deadline for submission is May 25, 2021 at 11:59 p.m.**

## **Outcome/Results Based Projects**

All projects should identify at least two (2) and no more than five (5) specific, measurable, realistic, and timely objectives, activities, and milestones of the funded activities and discuss the results or outcomes that are expected from the funded activities. 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 objectives with which funded projects should align. These objectives 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 or serving Native agriculture
- the overarching important goal of ensuring Native youth and beginning producers are prepared for careers in agriculture and that Native farming, ranching and food businesses are successfully transitioned to the next generation.

Please be specific and identify clearly what your project design and activities will seek to accomplish. 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 to that end NAAF will 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. Therefore, all successful applicants will be required to provide reasonable periodic progress reports through a simple 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.

## **Grantee Meeting**

While the preferred manner of meeting with all selected grantees is an in-person annual meeting, the COVID-19 situation may prevent such in-person meeting from occurring in 2021. 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, if requested, specific guidance within a reasonable time period on how best to improve an application.

### **Cover Letters**

All applications must include 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. Tribes and instrumentalities must include an authorization statement of their willingness to submit a limited waiver of sovereign immunity in a timely manner if awarded a grant.

### **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 within our online system to describe the 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.

### **Budget and Budget Narrative**

NAAF provides a budget template and budget guidance for the application. Please use the NAAF template for submitting your budget. The form, along with the full RFA, is located on our website ([www.nativeamericanagriculturefund.org/grants](http://www.nativeamericanagriculturefund.org/grants)). 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. All applicants are encouraged to attend or review archived webinar content to seek answers to their questions. If an eligible entity is seeking general funding (as described above) in addition to funding for a special focus area, they will need to submit two budget forms and discuss the budget needs separately so that during review it will be clear what funds are being used for each effort.

A budget narrative providing justification of the budget is required for each budget category for which funding is sought. Budget narratives are not limited in length but are usually no more than 1-2 pages in total length. Applicants must complete separate budget template forms for each type/category for which they are applying. If you need additional guidance on budget documents and budget justifications, please contact NAAF staff. Likewise, if the applicant eligible entity submits a general funding budget in addition to a special focus budget, their budget justifications should align with the two types of budgets.

NAAF reserves the right to negotiate budgets with all applicants selected for funding and will require 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 as needed to advise NAAF staff for the purpose of reviewing applications received, will conduct a review of 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 required in the application; or 3) failure to submit by the closing deadline.

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 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 completing the project narrative and designing the project to make sure the application is responsive to not only the topics for which NAAF is seeking applications in addition to the criteria NAAF uses to evaluate applications.

The panel reviewing the projects will be convened as soon as possible after the closing date. After the panel individually reviews every project application from eligible applicants 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 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 calendar year 2021 so that funds can be provided as soon

as possible. Project start dates will be determined once the review and selection process is concluded, but they will be in calendar year 2021.

## Evaluation Criteria

NAAF application reviewers are required to use identified evaluation criteria for review of all applications. Six criteria are weighted in 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 responses to the RFA. The criteria for review are as follows:

- **Impact on Access to Capital (25% weight).** NAAF is interested in projects that address the access to capital issues facing Native farmers and ranchers. All applicants need to identify how and to what extent the project focuses on core access to capital issues of Native farmers and ranchers. All applicants should also discuss the impact their project will have on improving access to capital for Native farmers and ranchers. Organizations that do not provide loans should focus on discussing how their project activities will improve the ability of individual Native farmers and ranchers to access capital and/or technical support needed for their enterprises.
- **Proposed Results/Outcomes (25% weight).** When reviewing applications, NAAF will examine the project approach and will look for identified results/outcomes of the work. When approaching this area, take care to provide or discuss:
  - 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; and,
  - the degree to which the anticipated results speak to NAAF priorities.

As to CDFI applicants, discuss the amount and number of potential loans, re-grants and/or technical assistance provided to Native farmers and ranchers. For educational organizations or education-focused projects, discuss the number of students and/or future Native farmers and ranchers to be served and the proposed benefits students will experience by engaging with the project. For Tribal governments, discuss the anticipated impacts on the community to be served.

- **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. Project narratives should also discuss how the audience will be recruited for the project. As to CDFI applicants, please discuss the demand for loans among an identified target audience. As to educational organizations or education-focused projects, discuss the demand or need for the content being delivered and project the number of anticipated participants. For

Tribal governments, discuss the farmers and ranchers who will be affected by and served through the funded project. Applicants are strongly encouraged to use USDA NASS data to describe the farmer and rancher community they seek to serve.

- **Team/Organizational Capacity and Collaborators (10% 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. NAAF is also 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.
- **Evaluation (10% weight).** The effectiveness of the plan for evaluating and tracking farmer and rancher success or participation outcomes or 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.
- **Innovation and Replicability (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. 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. NAAF acknowledges that some projects are not replicable, but nonetheless encourages all applicants to consider and discuss potential replicability and sustainability into the future.

### **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 and related information are received and reviewed in compliance with NAAF Conflict of Interest 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, 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 2021 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.

Information submitted by applicants that is related to the financial condition or audit results of the eligible applicant will be held in the strictest of confidence. NAAF tests the security of its online systems and its internal records retention systems on a frequent basis. NAAF will not release sensitive information related to the financial condition or audit results related to applicants.

### **Questions**

Applicants are encouraged to attend 2021 RFA webinars and may seek answers to any questions they have by contacting NAAF's Grant Team.

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