

Native American Agriculture Fund Request for Applications 2019

Instructions

Welcome to the application process to seek grant funding from the Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF). We appreciate your interest. The Native American Agriculture Fund (NAAF) was launched in 2018 after the final appeals were denied and the Court approved the settlement of the *Keepseagle v. Vilsack* litigation. More information concerning the case and its history can be found on the NAAF website (<https://nativeamericanagriculturefund.org/>). A copy of the Trust Agreement that created the NAAF and launched its existence can also be found on the NAAF website. We recommend you read the Trust Agreement at <https://nativeamericanagriculturefund.org/trust-agreement/> prior to starting an application. We appreciate your interest in applying for funding from NAAF. The information below is intended to describe those projects for which NAAF is seeking applications for funding in late 2019, with a start date for all projects in early 2020.

Background

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 also be found on the NAAF website <https://nativeamericanagriculturefund.org/>. 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 Trust Agreement. Funds were transferred to NAAF in early December 2018. The NAAF Trustees and CEO have engaged in multiple strategic planning sessions to inform this first of many grant cycles. Strategic planning activities, along with input provided continually to NAAF through its online survey posted on the NAAF website <https://nativeamericanagriculturefund.org/>, will continue to inform those programmatic areas for which NAAF seeks applications for funding. NAAF seeks to fund, in its 2019 cycle, a wide variety of projects across several topical areas and is interested in receiving applications that provide services within those topical areas. While these topical areas for potential funding cover a broad range of areas, in future years NAAF may take a more targeted approach or provide for larger funding amounts as deemed appropriate. NAAF is allowed to fund grant projects for twenty (20) years 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 valuable. We encourage all applicants to dialogue with NAAF via the NAAF survey instrument <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/R8YZTQ3> and/or email at 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 <https://nativeamericanagriculturefund.org/trust-agreement/> governing NAAF controls the eligible uses and eligible entities for NAAF grant processes. The Trust

Agreement strictly prohibits applications for funding from individual Native farmers and ranchers. In addition, no funds may be sought for litigation purposes. The NAAF Trust Agreement is not allowed to fund projects that are loans for Native farmers and ranchers, however, NAAF is allowed to entertain applications for funding for those eligible entities that can meet the requirements of the RFA and who are appropriate entities for providing loans to Native farmers and ranchers. All applicants receiving funds are prohibited from direct lobbying. Applicants receiving funds will be required to use the funds to provide services in several key areas described below to Native farmers and ranchers, including those seeking to become farmers and ranchers and to support and promote their continued engagement in agriculture. The key areas that are allowed funding 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. Funds may be used for project support, scholarships, re-grants or capital expenditures. A single application may include a mix of funds requested for project support; however, all narratives must be clear and the budget submitted for potential funding must distinctly track budgetary uses assigned to programmatic activities. Funding for programs that strictly meet the emphasis areas for the 2019 RFA will be given the highest priority for funding in this application process period. Funding for capital expenses will be given lower priority because of the relatively low amount of the overall award pool, the high number of topic areas chosen for funding for the 2019 cycle and because of the possibility of funding of capital expenses from other potential public or private sources.

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. Farmers and ranchers is also interpreted to mean those engaged in aquaculture. In certain cases, farmers and ranchers can be interpreted to mean those who engage 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 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 end with a product that can be used to feed those within or outside Native communities and which can be used to also engage in the broader agriculture and food sector through markets outside our communities. Farmers and ranchers can also include the process of raising and harvesting forest products. When interpreting the scope of this Request for Applications in light of the language in the NAAF Trust Agreement, we are not allowed to consider applications by entities that are community based organizations that do not squarely meet the definitions of eligible entities provided within this request for application.

Because the central issues involved in the litigation that led to the creation of NAAF involve issues at the core of access to credit, additional consideration will be given to those entities that have as one of their specific targeted outcomes the improvement of access to credit by Native farmers and ranchers. Applications that combine focus areas (such as combining business assistance with technical support or agricultural education with business assistance) will receive additional consideration over projects that are singular in focus.

Projects that focus only on research will not be considered for funding during this program cycle. In addition, projects that focus only on curriculum development will also not be considered for funding during this program cycle. Rather, NAAF is looking for projects that deliver developed content with practical application to the success of Native farmers and ranchers. With regard to advocacy, NAAF will not fund lobbying efforts of any kind, but will fund educational projects that deliver information to Native farmers and ranchers or educational projects that ensure that those advocating on behalf of Native farmers and ranchers or those developing policies that affect Native farmers and ranchers are provided with the best possible content relevant to Native agriculture.

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

Eligible Entities

Applicants eligible to receive funding from NAAF must have a proven track record of providing business assistance, agriculture education, technical support, or advocacy services to Native farmers and ranchers. Proof of that proven track record is required. If the applicant is a start-up organization, NAAF will expect the organization to partner with others who can speed the process of reaching audiences and achieving effectiveness in their work. NAAF will provide targeted capacity development to eligible entity organizations, such as organizations that have not yet achieved 501c3 status, starting in 2020.

The narrative describing the proposed project must be clear concerning the proven track record of providing services to Native farmers and ranchers in business assistance, agriculture education, technical support or advocacy. The applicant is required to also provide proof that it clearly falls within the four types of eligible applicants listed below. Because of the variation in type of 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, the NAAF requires each applicant to provide proof of its inclusion within the allowable types of eligible entities. To that end, we encourage all applicants to study the eligible entity requirements and be prepared to submit applications addressing eligibility in a clear fashion. Proof of eligible status can be provided through IRS documentation reflecting status as an eligible non-profit entity; a Tribal government resolution on government letterhead and 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; proof of certification as a CDFI or Native CDFI that is also a tax-exempt organization; or proof that the organization meets the federal definition of an educational institution.

As required by the Trust Agreement, eligible applicants include:

- Nonprofit organizations with IRS Section 501c3 tax-exempt status, or if such status has not yet been achieved, such organizations may apply for funding through a Fiscal Agent that has received such 501c3 tax-exempt status;

- Educational institutions 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;
- 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 the 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 requirement designed by NAAF. The limited waiver of sovereign immunity will not be required in the application, instead applicants can wait until award notifications have been received. The waivers must be submitted prior to award distribution.

Verification of Eligibility is Required

Evidence that the applicant applying is providing services to Native farmers and ranchers is required; this information must be provided and discussed within the applicant's narrative. Verification/evidence will be requested during this application process and if selected for funding, all verification/evidence must be finalized and properly submitted before funds will be dispersed. Additionally, as noted above, verification of applicant legal status is also required. Both types of evidence are required to be submitted with the application, by the closing date of the application period. Contact NAAF offices with any questions concerning verification of eligible entity status.

Note on Eligibility of Fast Track Fund Recipients

Fast Track fund recipients are not specifically prohibited from applying for funding through this Request for Applications, but their application will not receive special consideration over 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. If they choose to apply for funding in this 2019 NAAF funding cycle they must clearly delineate how the funds they are seeking will be used for a project focused entirely on a new activity or a continuation of their previously funded activity that is different from or a new aspect of their funding activity and they must demonstrate organizational capacity for managing a new project, if funded. New applicants will receive higher priority than Fast Track funded entities during this first 2019 funding cycle only.

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. Additional consideration given to offered cost share, in-kind or matching funds should in no way signal to applicants that cost sharing, in-kind or matching funds are required. 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.

Limitation on Overhead/Administrative Expenses

All applicants will be limited to no more than 15% allowed overhead on administration/project expenses. Lower percentage of indirect expenses are more likely to be granted. But in no circumstance shall the allowable overhead exceed 15% of total budget funding sought. NAAF reserves the right to increase or decrease limitations on overhead/administrative expenses in future RFAs.

Special Note on Educational Institutions

Tribal Colleges and Universities are clearly within the definition of educational institutions. However, the educational institution definition contained within the Trust Agreement is broader than Tribal Colleges and Universities. However, for purposes of this funding opportunity, educational institutions that are not Native-serving institutions must provide clear evidence as to their history of serving Native farmers and ranchers, specifically. They are required to show experience in Native communities directly providing business assistance, technical support, advocacy or agriculture education services with Native farmers and ranchers. If they do not have dedicated Native-serving programs for Native farmers and ranchers, they are required to partner with Tribal Colleges and Universities that have presence in the communities they seek to serve through their proposed project. If partnering, they are required to designate the Tribal College or University as the lead project administrative office for the project or provide clear documentation signed by all parties involved that the Tribal College or University has chosen another arrangement. Overhead/administrative expense limitations apply to all educational institutions, including non-Native serving educational institutions, as discussed above. If a non-Native serving educational institution has a Federally Recognized Tribal Extension Program (FRTEP) faculty, the institution is allowed to apply only if that specific faculty is the lead program director for the proposed project and the majority of funds sought are to be used to support such faculty's non-salary project expenses. Those projects involving FRTEP faculty and/or Tribal College and University faculty will be provided additional consideration during vetting of applications. If an educational institution has received a designation as an official Native-serving institution, it may be considered for funding as a stand-alone entity, but must reflect clear involvement of Native farmers and ranchers in its work proposed and must have cooperating entities or supporting entities that are Native-controlled organizations or entities.

Uses of Funds

The following applicants/uses of funds are NOT eligible under this 2019 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 designed to further the success of Native farmers and ranchers or provide resources designed to further such success
- 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 do not provide assistance that impacts and assists individual Native farmers and ranchers
- 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 emergency direct financial funding to Native farmers and ranchers, such as addressing natural disasters (those funds are already provided by USDA and are not allowable under this 2019 application); however funds that are used to provide generalized non-individual, non-financial support to Native farmers and ranchers facing or recovering from a disaster may be eligible
- 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 and other typical services important to those engaged in agriculture)
- Use of funds for lobbying or political activity as defined by the IRS, which is influencing legislation (other forms of advocacy are eligible activities)
- Entities that are educational institutions but that do not have an established record of working with, by and through Native farmers and ranchers are not eligible for funding, unless they partner with a Native-controlled educational institution and such Native-controlled educational institution is the lead applicant on the project
- Entities that have received Fast Track funding (NAAFTF) pursuant to a previous call for applications in 2016 which was subsequently funded in 2018 are ineligible for additional funding from NAAF for the same project funded under Fast Track funding until the expiration of their Fast Track funding period in October 2021. They are eligible to apply for funding for an entirely new project (see above) or a continuation of their previously funded fast track project if it covers new aspects of the project.

Factors that will be considered in assessing applications for funding:

- The scope and nature of the services previously provided to Native farmers and ranchers
- The scope and nature of the services you plan to provide to Native farmers and ranchers 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; or 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 being served
- Other evaluation criteria identified later in this Request for Applications.

The Application Process

There is NO Letter of Intent step for the 2019 Request for Applications period. This step may be included or required within future Request for Application processes. There is only one step in the application process under the 2019 Request for Applications.

Only those applicant organizations that submit a proposal for consideration of a grant award from NAAF by the time and date indicated below will be considered. 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. 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, and if a project is submitted for funding but is clearly ineligible, the NAAF staff will make reasonable efforts to advise the applicant so that opportunities to cure the situation can be pursued before the application deadline has passed.

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 all 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 scored for funding, comments provided by the panel review team and what steps can be taken by the applicant to improve their chances for future success. Beginning in 2020, NAAF will offer ongoing webinars and in-person opportunities for improvement of applications and development of organizations that could become eligible for NAAF funding in the future.

Key Dates

AUGUST 1, 2019: The open date for the Request for Applications for the 2019 NAAF funding cycle is August 1, 2019. The application period will remain open for sixty (60) days until September 30, 2019.

SEPTEMBER 30, 2019: The Request for Applications will be closed at **11:59 p.m. Central time zone** on September 30, 2019. 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. Central time zone on September 30, 2019. Any application received in hard copy that carries a date/time stamped past this deadline will NOT be reviewed in this application cycle.

Important Note on Eligibility

All applications received will be initially reviewed for eligibility. 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 of proof to show, 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 the NAAF believes it is too difficult to anticipate each and every potential type of organization interested in receiving consideration for NAAF funding, we are taking the position that 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. If an applicant submits their proposal and they are clearly an ineligible entity, the NAAF staff will notify the applicant and encourage the applicant to cure the situation, if at all possible, given the time remaining before the RFA application period closes.

Webinars

An Application Process Webinar will be held on the following three (3) dates. A fourth date will be added, should there be demand for an additional opportunity for assistance. All webinars 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 <https://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 three dates indicated above. Please visit the NAAF website frequently or contact us by email if you need information about the webinar schedules.

Registration Links for GoToWebinar

- August 13: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7926956968599810828>
- August 20: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7635393972704348940>
- September 3: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6861891940610329100>

Electronic Submission and Hard Copy Submission

NAAF encourages all applicants to utilize the electronic submission process provided by NAAF and discussed further in the instructions pertaining to this Request for Applications. However, 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. 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 deadline for submittal has passed, there will be no opportunity to supplement or cure 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 and one (1) copy of the application within the transmittal package.

Electronic submission through the online portal system NAAF is using is the preferred means of submitting an application for funding. All components of the application must be submitted at or before the deadline for submittal as noted above. No additional supplemental information will be allowed for electronic submissions. The NAAF website contains a link to the electronic submittal platform. NAAF will provide no less consideration of the application if it is submitted via hard-copy process.

If either electronic or hard-copy submittal are incomplete, they will not be considered during the review for funding process. Applicants will receive notification of incompleteness and they will be encouraged to submit their proposal during the next funding cycle, if the project is applicable to the priorities which will be identified within that future funding cycle.

NOTE: If applicants wait until the last minute to prepare their application, they risk missing the deadline for submittal or risk running out of time to modify or improve their application. Please note the deadlines on your calendars, participate in the RFA webinars offered, begin your planning and gathering of documents early, and reach out with any questions you may have concerning requirements or the process for submittal.

Key Topics for Which Funding is Allowed in the 2019 RFA Cycle

NAAF has determined that there will be four primary priority areas and an additional four special emphasis areas for which funding will be provided during the 2019 funding cycle. Funding areas were determined through a series of strategic planning efforts conducted by

NAAF; and are informed by the requirements of the Trust Agreement. These four areas were also considered in light of ongoing survey input being provided to NAAF through its publicly available survey instrument found on the NAAF website. The four key priority areas and the four special emphasis areas for which funding applications will be accepted are:

1. For CDFIs:

- a. Funding applications are sought from CDFIs or Native CDFIs that meet the definition of eligible entities that 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 \$2,000,000 will be made 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 amount of total available funding for any one project of the total \$2,000,000 a single CDFI or Native CDFI may seek, but 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. NAAF seeks to fund multiple projects in this category; overhead limitations apply.

2. For Educational Institutions:

- a. Funding applications are sought from educational institutions meeting the definition of eligible entities that currently provide and have in place advanced agricultural business classroom training, or who are ready to provide advanced agricultural business classroom training. The training shall be made available to Native students of the educational institution, can be provided as a certificate program or a degree-seeking program, and should cover such topics as agricultural economics, agricultural financing, agricultural marketing, hedging/futures/trading, agriculture entity selection, risk management, food safety, agriculture law and policy, supply chain/logistics in agriculture or related advanced agricultural business areas. This funding may only be used to support the provision of such targeted training to Native farmers and ranchers. If the project includes a FRTEP faculty member, such faculty member must be in the lead on the application and the project funds are to be used, not for salary expenses, but for program expenses (travel, assistance in the classroom in the training setting, program participant expenses, and the like). 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 farmers and ranchers. A total of \$2,000,000 in funding is allowed for this target area of funding. There is no upper or lower limit on the amount of funds requested; overhead limitations apply.

3. For Nonprofit organizations:

- a. Funding applications are sought from nonprofit organizations meeting the definition of eligible entities within this Request for Applications. These institutions may seek funding for any type of project (business assistance, technical support, agricultural education or advocacy) that is allowable under the

framework of this Request for Applications. The nonprofit organizations must provide proof that they currently serve Native farmers and ranchers. They are required to reflect the percentage of their larger portfolio of activities that are focused solely on the needs of Native farmers and ranchers. The nonprofit organizations may seek funding for enhancement of their own knowledge in the food and agriculture sector to encourage their employees and staff to have deeper understanding of the agriculture sector and needs of Native farmers and ranchers but the internal capacity development funds sought cannot be the majority of their proposed activities or budget for which funding is sought. There is a recognized need for all nonprofit organizations serving Native farmers and ranchers who are seeking success and sustainability in the agriculture sector to have greater knowledge of the business assistance, educational, lending, finance, technical, legal, risk and related issues facing such farmers and ranchers. There is an available pool of \$2,000,000 for projects in this category and no upper limit on the amount of funding sought for any particular project; indirect limitations apply. Higher consideration will be paid to those entities that have a singular focus on Native farmers and ranchers as their primary stakeholder group and those organizations that have experience in agriculture and/or experience in the needs of Native farmers and ranchers, as demonstrated by an established history of serving this audience. If the applicant is a start-up nonprofit organization, their fiscal agent is required to provide proof of service to Indian Country and/or the Native farming and ranching community.

4. For Tribal Governments:

- a. Funding applications are sought from Tribal governments or instrumentalities of Tribal governments, as specifically described within the context of eligible entities as described within this Request for Applications. Funding applications are being sought for the narrow area of “value-added” agriculture enterprise development. Funding can be sought for feasibility studies, the securing of architectural, engineering, legal or other technical advisors for future value-added agriculture enterprises provided that those Tribal governments seeking funds are “shovel ready.” These Tribes must be prepared to move to the next step towards investing in and creating value-added infrastructure that Native farmers and ranchers need in order to secure or maintain access to current or future markets, expand products available for the market, obtain the specialized technical support necessary in order to access or maintain presence in markets. Value-added agriculture has unlimited possibility for growth for Native farmers and ranchers and Tribal economic development activities. Because of this unlimited possibility for growth, NAAF is interested in targeting their investments this funding cycle on ensuring that proper feasibility studies are done to support the ultimate success of project ideas; that proper analysis of technical, legal and other significant components of proposed value-added projects are supported; and that the use of available funds be targeted on the ultimate success and stabilization of Native farmers and ranchers who would use such Native-controlled infrastructure for product development and market access. There is an available \$2,000,000 for projects in this area. All projects should seek to limit their applications to no more than \$75,000 in total budget funding sought; NAAF will entertain higher

amounts in the request but those entities that stay within the limit identified will receive higher consideration for funding; indirect limitations apply.

Special Emphasis Projects

NAAF is also seeking proposals in four key special emphasis areas. 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:

1. Traditional Foods and Food Sovereignty Programs

a. 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. Because these activities cut across many of the topic areas of importance to NAAF's mission, and because there are other public, private, Native-focused or general funding opportunities already available to support these types of efforts, NAAF will provide funding for a small group of projects focused solely on the opportunities to: 1) establish a new focus area for an existing food sovereignty/traditional foods program; 2) explore "scaling up" existing food sovereignty or traditional foods programs to increase acreages under production involved within those programs or to expand the scope of those "scaling up" activities already in place; or 3) secondary or follow-up activities to implement an existing food sovereignty assessment process. By seeking proposals in these more narrow and focused areas, NAAF seeks to augment existing work being done by others; leverage other 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 no more than \$75,000 per project in this area. NAAF intends to provide a total of \$500,000 in funding in this area.

2. Hemp Production Analysis

a. NAAF seeks proposals in a very narrowly focused area to explore the potential for industrial hemp production and value-added activities among Tribal communities. Due to the complexities of this newly emerging area of fiber production, there are many Tribal governments and Native farmers and ranchers who are considering the impact of this new opportunity for diversified agriculture investments. There are a wide range of issues yet to be resolved in this new arena, central among them is the multi-departmental federal and state regulatory horizon, availability of bank financing, development of markets, value-added opportunities, and a wide range of related concerns. While being prepared to engage in a new national production system for industrial hemp is important, NAAF firmly believes that to do so without proper analysis of the myriad of business, regulatory and production issues is problematic to the success of those seeking to engage in this area. Therefore, NAAF is seeking to fund a group of projects that can be focused on any of the following areas: 1) partial funding for project

feasibility and market analysis studies for emerging industrial hemp crop production; 2) partial project feasibility and market analysis for emerging value-added hemp product manufacturing businesses; 3) analysis of transportation, testing, self-regulation and Tribal government regulatory needs in order to engage in the market; or 4) development of Tribal plans authorized under the 2018 Farm Bill for regulation that will support Tribal self-governance in the emerging industrial hemp industry. NAAF will fund projects of no more than \$50,000-\$75,000 per project. NAAF will not entertain funding for CBD-related production or analysis as the emerging medical and labeling regulatory issues facing CBD are complex and the regulatory environment at this point in time is too premature and uncertain. Instead NAAF is seeking projects focused on the thousands of industrial uses for hemp production. No applications will be entertained for projects including recreational or medical marijuana production systems. NAAF intends to provide a total of \$500,000 in funding in this area.

3. Youth Programming

- a. NAAF believes that the presence of Native youth in agriculture is important to the continued growth of Native food systems and to that end is seeking projects that focus on the inter-generational shift that is happening across Indian Country. Youth engagement in agriculture can occur in many ways: classroom, K-12, community youth gardens, community youth ag policy councils, FFA, 4-H, youth food summits, and in many other ways. NAAF believes that our Native youth are the future of Native agriculture and are planning many future efforts focused on their support. These 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; travel 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. NAAF is also interested in investing in programs that provide information and guidance to those Native youth who are interested in choosing food and agriculture (farming and ranching or food system businesses) as their career choice. By investing in this manner, NAAF can assist other organizations that are likewise investing in our youth. NAAF is seeking to fund small projects in the range of \$25,000 to allow as large a number of projects to be funded as possible. NAAF intends to provide a total of \$500,000 in total funding in this area.

4. The Agriculture Sciences

- a. NAAF is interested in providing funding through scholarships to attend existing agriculture sciences programs, regardless of the type of degree-awarding institution or regardless of whether the educational program is undergraduate, graduate, professional degree, legal, veterinary or other agriculture-related professions or training in agricultural business-related fields. The agriculture sciences including technical as well as the economics and business areas are important to the future of Native agriculture. NAAF believes that development of a “bench” of agriculture-related professionals is critical to continued growth of the sector within our communities. To that

end, we are interested in applications of at least two types: 1) programs that are broad scholarship programs for individual students that are focused on competitive annual scholarships/stipends to attend agricultural science programs regardless of location; or 2) programs that are single- or multiple-institution based agricultural science programs focused on recruitment and engagement of Native students for a specific degree program or a specific course of study. NAAF is also interested in programs that specifically focus on the need to advance Native students from undergraduate programs into graduate or agricultural professional degree programs or on programs that focus on national needs such as veterinary programs or pre-veterinary programs. But, projects across all technical and agricultural sciences are important and such applicants are encouraged to apply. Educational institutions or nonprofit organizations are the only two types of entities for which funding will be entertained in this category. NAAF intends to provide a total of \$500,000 in funding in this category. There is no upper budget request limit to any individual application received.

Outcomes/Results Based Projects

All projects of any type for which funding is sought during this request for application cycle are expected to identify at least two (2) and no more than five (5) outcomes expected/anticipated or results expected/anticipated from the project work for which funding is sought. NAAF intends to fund, over the life of NAAF (20 years) grant-making processes, a body of work that can demonstrate specific progress towards several interlocking goals.

These goals are: 1) success of Native farmers and ranchers; 2) improved access to credit for Native farmers and ranchers; 3) improved food systems in Indian Country; 4) improved delivery of services to Native farmers and ranchers; 5) improved knowledge of Native farmers and ranchers on key issues relevant to their success; 6) enhanced food sovereignty within Native communities; 7) 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; 8) an increase in the number of Native professionals involved in the agricultural sciences and serving Native agriculture; and 9) the overarching important goal of ensuring Native youth are prepared for careers in agriculture and food areas and that Native farming and 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. Identify measurable goals. Identify the numbers of Native farmers and ranchers who will be involved in the project for which funding is sought. Identify the number and types of new or existing farms or ranches you will impact with the work. There are many ways to quantify your goals. Be creative but be specific as those metrics that you identify in your application will be the metrics against which your project will be measured when NAAF reviews project reports or conducts on-site reviews of progress.

Progress Reporting and Compliance

NAAF's Trust Agreement specifically requires financial responsibility on the part of all 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 provided. Therefore, all successful applicants will be required to provide periodic progress reports through an online or hard-copy system (as determined applicable by NAAF to the project funded). Those reports will be required by deadlines outlined in the funding agreement which all successful applicants will be required to execute with NAAF before funds are transferred. 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 on-site compliance visits will also be conducted by NAAF employees from time to time.

All applicants should spend time contemplating the types of outcomes/results they seek in their work as those outcomes/results sought will be the metrics against which their reporting compliance, progress and funding will be measured.

Special Note for Tribal Government Projects

All Tribal governments provided funding through NAAF are required to provide NAAF a limited waiver of sovereign immunity to address the amount of funding provided to the tribe. This is a non-negotiable term of the NAAF Trust Agreement and will be required with no exceptions. The waiver is not required in the application process, it is only required from successful applicants and will be due prior to any distribution of funding. If the waiver is not received in a reasonable time after award notification, the awardee will be removed from the successful applicant pool and another grant will be funded in their place.

Awardee Annual Meeting

All successful applicants are required to attend the annual grantee meeting sponsored by NAAF. Please include at least \$1000 in your project budget to cover the cost of at least one (1) project staff person to attend the annual grantee meeting. 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. Successful applicants will be advised of the date for the annual grantee meeting at the time funding determinations are announced.

Unsuccessful Applicants

NAAF anticipates that all rounds of funding which will be announced 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 improved 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 and will provide

webinar and in-person opportunities throughout the next year to assist applicants in achieving success in future funding cycles. 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 (private, federal, etc.).

Collaborators or Cooperators

While not specifically required for some applicant projects, please read carefully as collaboration and cooperation may be required for others. Where 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, is always important and all applicants are strongly encouraged to reach out to others who may have done work in the types of areas your project is designed to work within and to learn from others.

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.

Letters of Commitment/Cover Letters

All project submittals are required to have a cover letter from the senior project official, signed and dated and specifically discussing the project for which funding is sought. Clear commitment to the project must be expressed in the cover letter/letter of commitment. All project applications not including this information will not be reviewed for funding.

Support Letters

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.

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 or capacity or training necessary to provide the services outlined in the project narrative. Applications not including this information will not be reviewed for funding. The online system identifies the maximum number of characters for each area of the application.

Maximum and Minimum Narrative Pages

For projects seeking in excess of \$75,000 in available funding, a more robust narrative is expected in the range of no more than 10-12 pages in length. For projects below the \$75,000

funding level, a more simplified narrative is allowed which can be in the 5-7 page length range. Applications will not be penalized for going above the page length suggested but it is important that applications are succinct in their approach to describing the work for which funding is sought. 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 that shall be used will be provided to all applicants with the release of this Request for Applications. The form along with the full RFA will be located on the NAAF grant website for easy access. Any questions pertaining to how budget categories should be reflected can be posed at any time to designated 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 budget item for which funding is sought. Budget justifications are not limited in length but are usually no more than 1-2 pages in total length. Be succinct in your budget items requested and be specific as to the basis for your budget calculations. If budget forms or budget justification discussions are not included in the application, the application will not be reviewed for funding. No exceptions will be allowed for this requirement. 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, 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) applications that were not received by the closing deadline.

All applications cleared for review will be reviewed using the same criteria; the criteria is included in this Request for Applications, 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 for receipt of applications for funding. After the panel 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 Request for Applications. The panel review process is based on principles of confidentiality, fairness, equity, and adherence to the NAAF Trust Agreement and grounded in the principles shaping NAAF's work to support Native farmers and ranchers. A synopsis of review comments will be provided to all applicants

requesting review comments. The review panel is guided by the principles of consensus and fairness.

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 no later than December 1, 2019 so that successful applicants can be notified by that deadline or shortly thereafter, and grant agreements finalized, and funds dispersed as soon as possible. Project start dates will be determined once this process is concluded but all project start dates will be in 2020.

Criteria for Review

NAAF panelists are required to use identified evaluation criteria for merit 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 response to the Request for Applications. Applications will be ranked on how the application addresses priority issues (if any) identified in the Request for Applications and on the applicant's capacity for execution of the proposed work. The primary focus of the evaluation criteria will be on whether or not the proposed results identified in the project have been clearly specified and whether there is a relatively high probability that a project can deliver on its articulated results through the criteria identified. The criteria 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. This category also will focus on whether the results as identified as a priority for investment of NAAF funds are important to the intended audience. As to CDFI applicants, the applicant will examine the amount and number of potential loans it will provide to Native farmers and ranchers. For educational institutions 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 that investment in the value-added activity will provide for Native farmers and ranchers. Discussion of proposed results should be included within each of the Special Emphasis areas for which funding may be sought by an eligible applicant.
- Farmer and Rancher Demand (20% weight). The applicant must demonstrate that the demand for the proposed activities exists within the farmer and rancher community they are seeking to serve. They must describe farmers and ranchers' willingness to participate in the activities proposed and the indicators (if any) that reflect interest in the proposed project activities. The clear identification of the intended audience is required, as is the identification of the location of the intended audience. As to CDFI applicants, the applicant will examine the demand for loans among an identified target audience. As to

educational institutions or education-focused projects conducted by nonprofit organizations or by Tribal governments, the applicant will discuss perceived demand for the content being delivered through the proposed project and could also project the number of anticipated participants. For Tribal governments, the applicant should discuss the demand for value-added agricultural activities among those Native farmers and ranchers who will be affected by and served through the funded project. Discussion of farmer and rancher demand should be included within each of the Special Emphasis areas for which funding may be sought by an eligible applicant.

- Team/Organizational Capacity and Collaborators (15% weight). NAAF is interested in evaluating 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. Among CDFIs, applicants will describe the qualifications and experience of the team within the organization focused on loan and/or technical assistance delivery to Native farmers and ranchers. Among educational institutions, nonprofit organizations or Tribal governments, the applicant will identify the relative qualifications and experience of primary project personnel and any identified partners or collaborators. For Tribal governments, the applicant should discuss the skills and/or professional qualifications of those who will be engaged for the project. Discussion of team/organizational capacity and collaborators should be included within each of the Special Emphasis areas for which funding may be sought by an eligible applicant.
- Impact on Access to Credit (10% weight). NAAF is interested in projects that encompass addressing the core issues regarding Native farmer and rancher access to credit. All applicants will identify how and to what extent the project focuses on core access to credit issues of Native farmers and ranchers. As the issue of access to credit is important to NAAF regardless of the project funded, all project eligible entities should discuss the impact on improving access to credit for Native farmers and ranchers. For Tribal governments, the applicant should discuss what impact the project will have on the improved ability of Native farmers and ranchers to access credit and/or their successfulness. Discussion of impact on access to credit should be discussed within each of the Special Emphasis areas for which funding may be sought by an eligible applicant.
- Results (10% weight). The effectiveness of the plan for evaluating and tracking farmer and rancher success or participation (results) is required. NAAF will examine whether these results are measurable and whether there is a good plan for tracking results. For all categories of eligible entities and project focus areas, the applicant should identify how results will be achieved and in what manner, as well as the plans for evaluating and tracking target audience success or participation. For educational institutions, the applicant should discuss what the anticipated results of education content delivery will be among the target audience of Native farmers and ranchers or future Native farmers and ranchers. For Tribal governments, the applicant should discuss what result the funding of the proposed project will have on the ability to track success among Native farmers and ranchers. Discussion of results proposed should be discussed within each of the Special Emphasis areas for which funding may be sought by an eligible applicant.

- 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; and how well the applicant builds upon existing knowledge in the field and/or collaborates with those who have been funded by NAAF before 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. Discussion of innovation proposed should be discussed within each of the Special Emphasis areas for which funding may be sought by an eligible applicant.
- 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 will identify and discuss replicability potential. NAAF acknowledges that some projects are not replicable; but nonetheless encourages all applicants to consider and discuss potential replicability. Discussion of application and replicability should be offered within each of the Special Emphasis areas for which funding may be sought by an eligible applicant.

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 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. All experts, should they be engaged to provide additional advice in review panels, will also be required to sign Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality pledges to NAAF concerning any and all information received through this request for application process.

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.

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.

- Registration Links for GoToWebinar
 - Aug 13: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7926956968599810828>
 - Aug 20: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/7635393972704348940>
 - Sep 3: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/6861891940610329100>