Enhancing Participation Through Outreach and Technical Assistance for USDA Programs in Wisconsin

Cally Ehle, Easter Seals Wisconsin Director - Grants Management
Paul Leverenz, Easter Seals Wisconsin Vice President FARM
Section 2501 Program administered by USDA’s Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement (OPPE)

Introduced in 1990 Farm Bill

Grant helps historically underserved farmers directly access USDA programs

Historically underserved farmers include

- Socially Disadvantaged include:
  - African Americans
  - American Indians or Alaskan Natives
  - Hispanics
  - Asians
  - Pacific Islanders

- Military Veterans
Program Priorities

- Assist socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers and ranchers in owning and operating successful farms and ranches.
- Improve participation among socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers and ranchers in USDA programs.
- Build relationships between current and prospective socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers and ranchers and USDA’s local, state, regional and national offices.
- Introduce agriculture-related information to socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers and ranchers through innovative outreach and technical assistance techniques.
- Introduce agricultural education targeting socially disadvantaged youth and beginning farmers and ranchers, in rural and persistent poverty communities.
Grant Eligibility

- organizations that develop outreach programs and provide technical assistance to underserved farmers
- Organizations must have demonstrated expertise in working with underserved, socially disadvantaged (SDA) and/or veteran farmer communities
- Maximum amount that organizations can apply for is $250,000 per year for a 3-year grant project
ESW FARM’s Enhancing Participation through Outreach and Technical Assistance for USDA Programs in Wisconsin project

- Partnership with UW Extension AgrAbility of Wisconsin
- Three year grant to serve SDA and veteran farmers in Wisconsin
- Focus on Hmong and veterans
- Project long-term goal is to increase
  - Knowledge and awareness of USDA programs
  - Engaged and effective participation in USDA programs
Project Priority Areas

- Assist socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers in owning and operating successful farms and ranches
- Improve participation among socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers in USDA programs
- Introduce agriculture-related information to socially disadvantaged or veteran farmers through innovative training and technical assistance techniques
- Introduce agricultural education targeting socially disadvantaged youth, and/or socially disadvantaged beginning farmers, in rural and persistent poverty communities
Project Goals

- Increase the number of current and new SDA and veteran farmers who will be made aware of USDA services
- Increase the number of current and new SDA and veteran farmers who will apply for USDA programs after learning about the available services
- Increase the number of SDA and veteran farmer applications that will be approved for funding
- Increase in the number of USDA Agency’s programs and services utilized by socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers referred to USDA Agencies
Focus on Hmong and Veteran Populations

- **Hmong Population**
  - 49,240 Hmong in Wisconsin
  - third-highest state population in the nation

- **Military Veterans**
  - 8,478 veterans identify as agriculture producers in Wisconsin
  - Only 14 veterans received farm loans from the USDA Farm Service Agency last year
  - 11% of AgrAbility clients served are veterans
Partner Responsibilities

- **ESW FARM**
  - Provide individual support and assistance
    - Individualized support
    - Technical assistance
    - Guidance and consultation
    - Follow-up and support
  - Educational Opportunities
    - Exploring Job Options in Rural Wisconsin
      - Expanding existing material and presentations to include USDA program information
Partner Responsibilities

- UW Extension - AgrAbility of Wisconsin
  - Provide outreach through various avenues including
    - Farm and Trade Shows
    - Newsletters/Digital & Social Media
    - Annual AAW Summit
    - Education Presentations
    - Participation in groups/organizations targeting SDA and veteran farmers
    - Farmer Network Meetings
    - USDA State Agencies Collaboration
Three Year Project Outcomes

- One hundred new SDA and veteran farmers will be made aware of USDA programs
- 50 current and new Hmong, other socially disadvantaged, and veteran farmers will apply for USDA services after learning about the available services
- 50 current and new SDA and veteran farmers will have increased access to and participation in USDA’s programs and services
- 25 new SDA and veteran farmer USDA applications will be approved for funding as a result of the project activities
- 25% increase in the number of USDA Agencies’ programs and services utilized by SDA and veteran farmers referred to USDA Agencies
Measured Impacts of Project

- Tracking the number of individuals who stated that they have contacted USDA agencies about potential interest in programs

- Surveys provided to SDA and veteran farmers that participated in the project
  - Surveys created by UW Extension and ESW FARM staff in collaboration
  - USDA Agencies do not track this information creating a challenge for the project to track outcomes
Questions?