

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program: 2012 Progress Report

The Land Stewardship Project
December 2012

Background

The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) is a competitive grant program which provides organizations and educational institutions resources for assisting and training the next generation of agriculture producers. The BFRDP was authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill but not fully realized until the 2008 Farm Bill when it was reauthorized and provided \$75 million in mandatory funding for fiscal years 2009-2012.

USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is responsible for administering BFRDP and will continue to manage the program. The Office of Advocacy and Outreach, which has a Small and Beginning Farmers and Ranchers key program area, also coordinates between overall USDA beginning farmer initiatives and BFRDP.

This year (2012) represented the final allotment of dedicated funding for the BFRDP which has been a popular and highly sought program.

As with numerous other farm programs, the future of BFRDP remains unclear as farm bill deliberations stalled after September 30, 2012. While companion farm bill legislation advanced through the U.S. Senate and U.S House Committee on Agriculture include the BFRDP and varying levels of funding and policy modifications, as of the writing of this progress report the program has expired. As a result of Congress's inability to pass a new farm bill, no Request For Applications has been released and at the moment USDA lacks the ability to commit additional support for this program beyond the contractual obligations of existing grants.

Numerous stakeholders have voiced concerns at the impacts of the farm bill impasse and the consequences our nation faces as funding and policy to assist beginning farmers and ranchers fades. Included as Appendix 1 is a November 13, 2012 national sign-on letter highlighting the need for new farmer and rancher support as is provided through the BFRDP and Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Program.

Progress Report

This report provides an analysis of BFRDP's administrative and programmatic strengths and weaknesses based on feedback from FY 2012 grant recipients. In addition, it evaluates trends over the past four years and reviews changes NIFA made to the program in an attempt to respond to stakeholder input, maximize program effectiveness, and ensure

congressional intent is fulfilled. The progress report includes a summary and new recommendations based on historical trends and data from FY 2012.

The progress report will not address the issue of merit or value of granted projects. Though beyond the scope of this report, evaluation of merit and the individual, as well as the collective effectiveness of awarded projects is something stakeholders and agency personnel should aim to assess.

We are hopeful this, and previous progress reports, along with NIFA's own program review¹ will provide clarity and helpful insights on merits of the program. The BFRDP currently is the only competitive grant program exclusively dedicated to training beginning farmers and ranchers. With program demand the past four years far exceeding available resources, understanding the program's true value as well as how to better administer, offer and target it is of great importance to the next generation of American agriculture.

Methodology

Following the announcement of FY 2012 BFRDP grant awardees on August 30, 2012, representatives from the Land Stewardship Project and the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition conducted the research for this progress report. Data was collected from two sources: project briefs posted on NIFA's website and phone or email interviews with principal investigators or representatives from the FY 2012 BFRDP grantees. Phone interviews were conducted with 36 of the 40 grantees and two grantees responded by email. Alabama A&M University and Growing Power, Inc. were unable to be reached. The methodology of data collection is consistent and similar in scope with the reviews published for FY 2009², FY 2010³, and FY 2011⁴

Quantitative Analysis of 2012 BFRDP Awards

According to the national program leader, NIFA accepted a total of 109 proposals for funding consideration in FY 2012. This is consistent with past years as is shown in Table I: BFRDP Funding and Demand.

¹ Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program 2010 Outcomes Report. Available on NIFA's website at http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/bfrdp/pdfs/bfrdp_2010_outcomes.pdf

² *Analysis and Recommendations for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program*, The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

³ *Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program: 2010 Progress Report and Recommendations*, The Land Stewardship Project, February 2011.

⁴ *Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program: 2011 Progress Report*, The Land Stewardship Project, December 2011

Table I: BFRDP Funding and Demand

Year	Grant Recipients	Applicants	Funding Awarded	Success Rate
2009	29	194 *	\$17,185,504	15%
2010	40	117	\$18,140,803	34%
2011	36	108	\$18,154,513	33%
2012	40	109	\$17,886,643	37%
Total	145	528	\$71,367,463	27%

* We surmise the first year of the program quite naturally had higher than average applications reflecting pent up demand.

Of the 109 applications received in FY 2012, only 40 projects (or 37 percent of submitted applications) were funded for a total of \$17,886,643.

For a list of 2012 grants see Appendix 1.

Of the 40 projects that were funded (see Table II):

- 26 (65%) were led by community-based organizations (CBO) or non-governmental organizations (NGO);
- 14 (35%) were led by universities/colleges or other academic institutions.

Of the \$17,886,643 in awarded grants (see Table III):

- \$9,623,311 (54%) supported projects led by CBOs/NGOs;
- \$8,263,332 (46%) supported projects led by universities/colleges or other academic institutions.

Table II: Historical Distribution of Grants by Lead Institution Type

Institution Type	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012
CBOs/NGOs	38%	62.5%	61%	65%
Academic Institutions	59%	37.5%	36%	35%
Trade Associations	-	-	2%	-
Federal Agencies	3%	-	-	-

See Appendix 2 for historical pie charts

Table III: Historical Distribution of Grant Funding by Lead Institution Type

Institution Type	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012
CBOs/NGOs	34%	50%	54%	54%
Academic Institutions	57%	50%	42%	46%
Trade Associations	-	-	4%	-
Federal Agencies	9%	-	-	-

See Appendix 3 for historical pie charts

Further review of the university/college or other academic institutions category found that 11 of the 14 grantees were 1862 land grant universities (one of which collaborated with a 1994 tribally-controlled land grant college), two 1890 land grant or historically black institutions, and one Hispanic-serving publicly funded institution.

Of the 40 grant recipients, six received development grants, one received an educational enhancement grant, and 33 received standard grants. Please see Appendix 4, Chart I for grant distribution by type.

Of the 40 grants, 33 are three years in duration, one is two years in duration, and the six development grants are all one year in duration. In addition, six standard grants were renewed for an additional three years, one was renewed for an additional two years, and one development grant recipient from 2011 was awarded a standard grant in 2012.

In terms of grant size distribution, 22 of the grant projects and over 73.7% of total funding (\$13,187,140) was awarded to grants larger than \$500,000. Examination of the spread of awards in the top three percentiles by the grant institution types, NGO/CBO and universities/colleges, found a relatively equal distribution (Table IV).

This distribution of resources between grant applicant types continues to be an improvement and changing dynamic when compared to 2009 and 2010 when the amount of funding going to universities/college or academic institutions was substantially greater than to NGO/CBO's.

It does appear, however, that universities/colleges received a greater proportion of the largest grants, with the vast majority of smaller grants going to CBO/NGO's. As Tables II and III show, CBO's received a sizably greater number of grants while capturing only a slightly greater percentage of all funding.

Table IV: 2012 Grant Amount Distribution by Range

Dollar range	# of Grants	Total Funding	% of Funding	CBO/NGO compared to Univ/Academic
Up to \$100,000	6	\$373,862	2.09%	6 to 0
\$100-\$200,000	2	\$331,192	1.85%	2 to 0
\$200-\$300,000	0	\$0	0.00%	0
\$300-\$400,000	6	\$2,191,446	12.25%	5 to 1
\$400-\$500,000	4	\$1,803,003	10.08%	3 to 1
\$500-\$600,000	13	\$7,098,116	39.68%	8 to 5
\$600-\$700,000	8	\$5,339,024	29.85%	1 to 7
\$700-\$750,000	1	\$750,000	4.19%	1 to 0
Total	40	\$17,886,643	100%	40

Partnerships and Collaboration:

Partnerships⁵ and collaborations⁶ are an important element of BFRDP. These related, but distinctly different aspects of the program are outlined in statute and specifically defined in the FY 2012 RFA. The additional guidance below was also provided in the RFA for determining priority in grant making as it relates to partnerships and collaborations.

***Partnerships and Collaborations:** Priority will be given to partnerships and collaborations that are led by or include NGOs and CBOs with expertise in new agricultural producer training and outreach. Only applications with a minimum of 25 percent of the Federal budget allocated to these partner organizations (i.e., NGOs and CBOs) will be given this priority. In addition, these partner organizations must have been involved and played an important role in the project design and development. Projects must also employ an equitable and appropriate decision-making and oversight process that includes all partners to be given this priority.*

In interviews, grantees were asked a series of questions in regard to the partnerships associated with their projects. Questions included: 1) number of partners, 2) names of partners, 3) degree to which partners are participating (low, medium, and high), and 4) percentage of funding partners will receive while participating in the project.

While these questions were asked of each grant recipient, varied responses and the unique nature of each awarded project makes analysis of the role of partners difficult to quantify and assess. Below is the best characterization of the information gathered.

⁵ “Partnership” means a relationship involving close cooperation between parties having specified and joint rights and responsibilities in the management of the project. 2011 BFRDP RFA Part VIII – OTHER INFORMATION

⁶ “Collaborator” means the person or an organization that cooperates with the applicant in the conduct of the project but is not immediately connected to the management of the project. 2011 BFRDP RFA Part VIII – OTHER INFORMATION

In review and interviews with 38 grant recipients and a careful reading of a grant summary of one non-respondent, we found that most projects included partnerships with one or more NGO/CBO or University partner. Partners represented a wide range of types of organizations. Table V shows partnerships by type.

Table V: Partnership by Type

Primary Grantee	Partners	Engagement of Partners
Univ/College	NGO/CBO	10
Univ/College	NGO/CBO and Univ/Coll	2
Univ/College	Univ/Coll	2
Univ/College	none	0
NGO/CBO	NGO/CBO	10
NGO/CBO	NGO/CBO and Univ/Coll	7
NGO/CBO	Univ/Coll	3
NGO/CBO	none	5
Total		39

Overall, when universities, colleges or academic institutions were the primary grantee they were most likely to partner with an NGO/CBO.

When projects were led by NGO/CBOs, they typically included a more diverse set of partnership arrangements. The most common type of partnership arrangement was with another NGO/CBO, but also common was a partnership arrangement hybrid of NGO/CBO and universities, colleges or academic institutions (See Table V).

A small number of recipients specified that no partners existed; these were all NGO/CBOs, two of which were development grants, a reduction in scale that could explain the reduced number of partnerships.

Degree of Engagement with Partners

Of the 32 respondents that spoke to the degree of participation of their partners, 16 rated the participation of their partners as high. 16 respondents rated their partnership involvement as medium and none as low (See Table VI).

Of the 29 respondents that identified their partners as sub-grantees, 15 estimated that their partners in total received at least 25% of the grant while 14 estimated that their partners received less than 25%. Our estimation is that in FY 2012, approximately 22% of the total funds were disbursed to sub-grantees (See Table VII).

Table VII: Resource Distribution to Sub-Grantees

% to sub-grantees	0 to 24%	25 to 49%	50 to 74%	75 to 100%	Total sub-grantee
Number of grants	14	11	4	0	29

The role of collaborators was even more difficult to assess and ranged so significantly that we were unable to make any coherent conclusions from the data. Under the “Qualitative Aspects” section of this report, we do provide some additional feedback regarding partnerships and collaborations that grant recipients articulated during interviews.

Socially Disadvantaged and Limited Resource Farmers

The authorizing language for BFRDP stipulates that at least 25 percent of funds must be designated for projects benefiting limited resource and socially disadvantaged beginning farmers (SDA), as well as farm workers desiring to become farmers or ranchers.⁷ Evaluations of posted briefs and interviews quantified how many grants assisted these targeted populations and the degree of focus these projects had with socially disadvantaged and limited resource producers.

Of the 40 total awards, 33 of the projects targeted outreach efforts to socially disadvantaged and limited resource producers. The large majority (23 of 33) focused at least 75 percent of efforts on those select constituencies.

In total, 83 percent of grantees engaged SDA’s, committing a total of \$10,412,569, or 58 percent of BFRDP funds for 2012. This is a two million dollar increase over 2011 when 46 percent of BFRDP funds were used for work with these specified populations.

Table VIII: Number of Grants and Resources that Support SDA Groups

	0-24%	25 to 49%	50 to 74%	75 to 99%	100%	Total
Number of grants	3	5	2	9	14	33
Total Resources	\$328,527	\$832,754	\$404,551	\$3,754,415	\$5,092,321	\$10,412,569

⁷ FCEA 2008, Public Law 110-246, Section 7410

“Not less than 25 percent of funds used to carry out this subsection for a fiscal year shall be used to support programs and services that address the needs of—

- (A) limited resource beginning farmers or ranchers (as defined by the Secretary);
- (B) socially disadvantaged beginning farmers or ranchers (as defined in section 355(e) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act (7 U.S.C. 2003(e)); and
- (C) farmworkers desiring to become farmers or ranchers.”

Reflections on the Application Process

Grant recipients were asked to provide input on the application process itself, including level of difficulty compared to other grant writing and development processes they've experienced (See Table IX).

Table IX: Level of difficulty compared to other grants

Level of Difficulty	Grantee responses
More	19
Same	16
Less	3
Total	38

A number of respondents did reflect that NIFA grants overall are typically more difficult than most USDA agency granting processes. Also, many of those who indicated that the BFRDP grant was similar in difficulty often qualified that it was similar in relation to other federal grants, but much more difficult than most other types of grants.

The number of hours estimated in the grant application process has ranged greatly. This in part reflects a range of proposal writing capacity and administrative support across applicants. Many of those with more extensive grant-writing experience, such as those within university systems or larger, more well-established CBO/NGO's expressed little concern over the time taken, while others, for many of which this was a first federal grant, were surprised and overwhelmed by the number of hours required. The estimated average for grantees to develop and submit an application was 170 hours per grant, a slight decrease from 2011.

Regional Distribution

In reviewing the regional balance⁸ the distribution of grants in FY 2012 can be summarized in Table X below. Overall the Midwest received the greatest number of grants and share of funding for BFRDP in 2012 with the other regions receiving roughly equal amounts. This is a noted shift from 2011 when the Midwest received the least amount of resources.

Table X: FY 2011 Regional Distribution of Grants and Resources

Region	Number of grants	Funding allocation	Percent of grants	Percent of funding
South	7	\$2,628,322	18%	15%
Northeast	7	\$2,753,136	18%	15%
West	9	\$4,761,228	23%	27%
Midwest	17	\$7,743,957	43%	43%
Total	40	\$17,886,643	100%	100%

⁸ FCEA 2008, Public Law 110-246, Section 7410 "REGIONAL BALANCE. – in making awards under this section, the Secretary shall to the maximum extent practicable, ensure geographic diversity."

See Appendix 5 for a pie chart of the above table, and Appendix 6 for a map displaying the distribution of BFRDP grants by state for fiscal years 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012.

Service Area

Grant awardees were asked to define the service area of their projects. While receiving substantial variation, service areas generally broke down into five groupings. These results are generally in line with what was observed in 2011, with the exception that there are no nationwide projects this cycle.

Service Area	Number of Grants
Localized regions including metropolitan areas, cities, or reservations	8
County or numerous counties	12
Statewide	9
Multiple States	11
Total	40

Qualitative Comments

Respondents were asked two open-ended questions. First, respondents were asked, **“Is there anything you think is particularly strong about BFRDP?”**

There was a wide range of responses to this question. One of the most common reactions was to emphasize that this grant allowed them to do work that they otherwise would not be able to do.

Ten respondents explicitly made this point with one summarizing, “I think that if it weren't for these grants, people wouldn't be doing this work. It's essential for solving the problems that we have with agriculture in the US- aging farmers, big farms, and limited access to resources for people that want to start farming.”

Nine respondents also mentioned that the focus on socially disadvantaged and limited resource producers was a strength of BFRDP while another seven mentioned that its focus on immigrant farmers specifically was significant. One grantee spoke to this by responding, “This program really provides them with not only the ability to farm but the ability to become more professional and more knowledgeable as a farmer, and it gives them a network that allows them to succeed.” While another respondent addressed the RFA's support for this work: “Within the grant guidelines, there's lots that you could do, but what the grant said to me was, ‘if you've been thinking about doing work with socially disadvantaged farmers, do it.’”

Eight respondents indicated that the grant program encouraged collaboration, with one relating that, “We were encouraged to have a community-driven, collaborative effort. It’s not just for the university system. It really enabled us to be innovative in what we’re trying to do.”

Seven respondents stated that the 3-year funding period allows for projects to develop and be substantially implemented. In addition, four respondents thought the amount of funding an organization can be awarded is significant and “counters the hassle of writing the grant.”

Seven respondents mentioned that the grant program having a very clear target – beginning farmers – was a strength, while seven also indicated that the grant’s flexibility was an asset.

Seven respondents thought that the focus on NGO/CBO’s was a strength: “There’s also a focus on community-based organizations, so as they invest in beginning farmers, they’re also investing in communities.”

Notable were five affirmative remarks regarding the BFRDP National Program Leader, Dr. Suresh Sureshwaran. One grantee shared that, “He’s the best federal employee I’ve ever worked with,” while others appreciated responsiveness to requests for help.

The second more open ended question put to grantees was, “**What suggestions for improvements do you have?**”

Most of the recommendations for improvement were directed towards the application and review process at NIFA, a similar pattern as in past years.

Twelve focused on the awards process, after receiving the grant, as one of the largest struggles experienced.

Eleven suggested that a “simplification and streamlining” of the application process was needed. Of the post-award auditing process, one organization relayed that “the award process was more challenging than the actual grant-writing process. The correspondence back and forth was really tiring, and I never really understood what they needed.”

Eight respondents discussed ways in which the burdensome and complicated nature of the grant might limit which organizations or groups would be capable of applying, whether through lack of capacity or grant-writing experience. “A lot of community-based organizations couldn’t do this- especially if they have fewer or less capable staff. I think it’s a real barrier to entry,” stated one respondent.

Another topic that resurfaced throughout the interview process was the lack of a forum for granted projects to share information and experiences. One offered that, “We need a way to talk to other organizations doing similar work- to share ideas and learn from each

other,” and another called for “A space where cross-pollination can happen.” [It should be noted that in soliciting responses for analysis interviewers refrained from outlining the requirements of mandatory project directors meetings and CRIS reporting that are part of the obligation of being awarded. This may or may not change respondent’s feedback on this question.]

Four respondents communicated a need for increased cultural competency or awareness within NIFA and the USDA as a whole. Training and more outreach and engagement of these populations with USDA staff was suggested.

Four respondents also expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of work required in the ‘redo’ to apply for a development grant when downgraded from a standard grant. “You’re working harder for less money,” stated one grantee. Two thirds of all development grant recipients found this to be an issue.

Three funded projects found the indirect cost structure within the grant to be less than ideal, including representative of both university and CBO’s. From a University: “They need to have a more effective way to handle the indirect costs- we’ve lost so much funding recently that we can’t afford to lose all of that money to the black hole of the university, especially because so much of the work is done off campus.” A CBO also expressed concern over indirect costs and the process of procuring a sufficient amount to support their work.

Another reported concern involved the short turn-around time for requests of additional information. One of the four groups who shared this unease around expectations shared that, “What they needed from us was never communicated in a comprehensive way and that made the process very difficult. The Grants office would give us expectations and deadlines piecemeal, one at a time, and then would say that if we didn’t get it in on time that they would, ‘recommend that the grant be rescinded’. It felt very threatening.”

Summary

From our analysis we found the FY 2012 BFRDP outcomes to be markedly similar to the previous year’s [FY 2011] results. Increased consistency in the RFAs has continued to provide for a more clear and effective delivery and focus of the program. This has led to the funding of stronger, more relevant projects as well as satisfying many of the statutory aims of BFRDP including regional balance, priority for projects led by or involving CBO/NGOs, and work with socially disadvantaged and limited resource groups.

As with any national grant, there is a necessary evolution towards better serving the applicants and granted organizations. The BFRDP, while still capable of improvement, seems to have been optimized through valuable feedback and responsiveness by the granting body. The continuity of results from previous cycles speaks to this.

In 2012, CBO/NGO grant awardees received 65% of the grants awarded, a slight increase from 2011, illustrating a continued dedication to prioritizing community-based organizations. NIFA should be commended for reaching this target.

While there was a slight increase in the number of development grants issued in 2012, standard grants again were the most common grant type issued. This has remained consistent over the four years the program has been offered.

In a shift from 2011, there were a greater number of smaller grants (under \$500,000) with 18 awardees in 2012 as opposed to 13 in 2011. And of those 18 smaller grants, 16 were awarded to CBO/NGO's, a disproportionate number. Also, a greater percentage of the larger grants (above \$600,000) were awarded to Universities or Colleges with 7 grants out of 9 awarded to these projects.

As was true in 2011, the assessment of project partners found a strong collaborative element in most grants both for CBO/NGOs and university/college or academic institutions. While all CBO/NGOs met the priority in grant making as defined in statute,⁹ as in 2011 there were two university/college or academic institutions that did not partner with a CBO/NGO.

In 2012, as in 2011, the implementation of the socially disadvantaged and limited resource producer funding focus exceeded the 25% set-aside as detailed in law. Our estimates show that nearly 58% of entire funding targeted those constituencies- an increase over last year.

Roughly half of the grantees (19 out of 40) indicated that the granting process was more difficult than most. The other roughly half, who characterized the process as similar or less difficult, from our evaluation tended to be from Universities or CBO/NGO's with more grant writing experience.

The estimated time expended by grantees to develop and submit an application varied considerably but on average was 170 hours per grant. This is a slight decrease from 2011.

Regional distribution of grants did shift from 2011, and seemed to return to a pattern observed in 2009 and 2010 with the Midwest receiving the highest proportion of grants and resources. All other regions received similar proportions. The states with the greatest number of grants for 2012 were Minnesota and Illinois both with four. The states receiving the greatest funding included Illinois at \$2,445,000 Minnesota at \$1,755,000 and Washington at \$1,240,000.

By asking more focused questions surrounding partnerships, we were able to not only capture the degree of involvement, but also to estimate the amount of resources that sub grantees received.

⁹FCEA 2008, Public Law 110-246, Section 7410 "PRIORITY — In making grants under this subsection, the secretary shall give priority to partnerships and collaborations that are led by or include non-governmental and community-based organizations with expertise in new agricultural producer training and outreach."

The number of grants with a socially disadvantaged producer component has increased markedly every year, and 2012 is no exception. In 2011, 17 grants were engaged in this work, and in 2012 that number increased to 33. There was also an attendant increase in the amount of funding dedicated to socially disadvantaged producer portions of projects. In total, 83% of grantees engaged socially disadvantaged producers, committing a total of \$10,412,569, or 58% of BFRDP funds for 2012.

The most identified critique provided by grantees of BFRDP was aimed squarely at the application process and administrative aspects.

A recurring complaint involved the awards process specifically, often citing it as more difficult than the application itself. Additionally, numerous grantees felt that the 'turn-around' time after being asked to submit documents or supplemental information was much too short and that the tone often felt "threatening."

Recommendations

As one grant recipient said of BFRDP: "It's one of the most necessary programs that the USDA has. The demand far outstrips the capacity, and it fills a very clear need." The momentum and capacity that BFRDP has built for beginning farmers within the agricultural landscape has been remarkable.

The recommendations below are developed with the intent to inform and assist USDA personnel, congressional leaders, and stakeholders who are interested in the continued success of the BFRDP. The BFRDP is an effective program in assisting beginning farmers and ranchers. The following recommendations were developed from the 2012 analysis and operation of BFRDP in previous years.

Congressional:

With the expiration of the 2008 Farm Bill and the prospect of a new farm bill with continued authority and funding for this program in question, this immensely important program is in danger. Also in danger; however, are the organizations that depend on its support to assist thousands of beginning farmers across the country every year. As another grantee put it, "Farmer development is a not a short-term endeavor."

- 1. *Reauthorize and dedicate funding for the BFRDP before the end of the calendar year.*** Whether within a full farm bill reauthorization or a short-term extension, we implore congressional leaders to not let this important investment languish. To do so would be irresponsible and unacceptable. Congress has the opportunity to re-invest in this highly successfully and much in-demand program. The Senate-passed and House Committee-passed farm bills include some mandatory funding for the BFRDP but we strongly urge Congressional leaders to increase the funding level to \$100 million over 5 years, or \$20 million annually. This funding request represents only a slight increase over level funding on an annual basis. Considering that in the

past four years there have been 528 projects requesting support and only 145 projects granted funding, it's clear the need and demand is present and legitimate.

Additional legislative recommendations:

- Refrain from establishing unneeded new subsections that would create grant types such as “state grants”. Grants to support services such as farm safety or any other purpose should not be elevated above the other 18 detailed programs and services that grants can be made for.
- Maintain the 25% set-aside of yearly funds for programs and services that address the needs of serving limited resources, socially disadvantaged beginning farmers and ranchers and farmworkers desiring to become farmers or ranchers.
- Within the socially disadvantaged producer set-aside, expand the parameters to include military veterans who are beginning farmers.
- Include agriculture rehabilitation and vocational training programs for military veterans within the grant project services that can be offered.
- Refrain from altering the matching proportion which currently requires applicants to match in the form of cash or in-kind contribution in an amount equal to 25% of the funds provided by the grant.
- Incorporate a provision to establish a 10% indirect cost option in lieu of a higher and time-consuming negotiated rates for community-based and non-governmental applicants.

Programmatic: We urge a similar programmatic approach for BFRDP as to that executed in FY 2012. Below is additional emphasis on specific aims that will strengthen and make BFRDP more effective in the years to come, if indeed the program is reauthorized.

1. ***Sustain total grants to CBO and NGO grantees at 65 percent.*** BFRDP is trending this way and has increased the number of grants to CBO/NGO's, but the percent funding remains lower than this target.
2. ***Continue the current distribution across the grant types: standard, educational enhancement and development, with standard grants as the most common and primary grant type.*** Additionally, continued use of development grants is encouraged, as is considering successful development grantees for standard grants in the future.
3. ***Keep the overall number of awards that primarily target socially disadvantaged producers at no less than the 25%.*** Strive to ensure the set-aside focuses its

efforts on those projects which target audience is at least 75% socially disadvantaged.

4. ***Offer grant writing support to first-time applicants or groups with limited capacity.*** Many respondents identified the application process as a potential 'barrier to entry' for groups unfamiliar with federal grants or large-scale funding requests. Support for these potential applicants resonates with BFRDP's focus and potentially other programs within NIFA and USDA. Webinars and trainings specific to these groups are recommended.
5. ***Maintain the partnership and collaboration guidance as established in the FY 2012 RFA.***

Administrative:

1. ***Establish a consistent process and expectations for supplementary information needed from grant recipients once they have been notified of grant awards.*** Respondents often do not differentiate between NIFA National Program staff and the Grants Administrative office. This recommendation is held over from 2011, but little improvement has been made in the awarding process. We recommend that this process be refined to better serve grantees while also meeting NIFA's requirements. NIFA should again consider convening a workgroup of past awardees to develop a more instructive and consistent process for the additional information needed after an applicant is awarded a grant.
2. ***Require less additional writing for grantees shifting from standard grants to development grants.*** Two-thirds of the projects receiving development grants identified the present expectation around 'redoing' the grant as an unreasonable requirement. Limiting the supplemental writing and reporting is recommended.
3. ***Once Congress has passed a new farm bill or a farm bill extension with funding for BFRDP, NIFA should make preparations to move the Request For Applications (RFA) out the door as quickly as possible.*** The RFA should be ready for publication as soon as possible after incorporating any statutory changes. Do not decrease the amount of time for applications to be submitted unless absolutely necessary, and do plan to do one or more webinars on the program and the application and review process, and have them all finalized and ready for publication so they can be scheduled and publicized with the release of the RFA.

Credits

This report was compiled and developed by the Land Stewardship Project. The Land Stewardship Project is membership-based organization in the Upper Midwest which focuses on family farm and sustainable agriculture issues. Core program areas concentrate on policy and organizing efforts, supporting beginning farmers and strengthening community based food systems and economic development.

A special thanks goes out to Anders Gurda, MS Agroecology candidate at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Gurda has worked in agriculture, food systems and environmental education throughout the country for the past 6 years. He was responsible for conducting the bulk of interviews, research duties and initial drafting of the progress report.

Additional review and support for was provided by the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC). NSAC is an alliance of grassroots organizations that advocates for federal policy reform to advance the sustainability of agriculture, food systems, natural resources, and rural communities. Special thanks to Marni Salmon, who is currently a policy intern for NSAC and assisted in conducting the interviews for this report. Salmon has an MA in Sustainable Development at the SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, VT and has advocated around food and farming issues for over two years.

Appendix 1: November 13, 2012 National Sign-on Letter Supporting New Farmers and Ranchers

November 13, 2012

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow
Chairwoman
U.S Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry
328A Russell SOB
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The Honorable Pat Roberts
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The Honorable Collin Peterson
Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Agriculture
1305 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Lucas and Ranking Members Roberts and Peterson,

Opportunities in the agricultural sector are thriving and strong, despite current disaster-related setbacks. The contributions of farm families are the economic and social lifeblood of many towns, cities and counties through-out America. Agriculture is a jobs creator, where the dedication and commitment of farmers and ranchers ultimately feed, clothe, and fuel our nation.

Yet as a profession farming and ranching continues to be one of the most difficult careers to enter. Even with encouraging market conditions in many parts of agriculture – be it local, regional or international; or organic, conventional or niche – those who want to farm face daunting challenges. Access to land, high input and start-up costs, and insufficient training and networking options can deter prospective new agricultural producers.

The 2008 Farm Bill made significant progress in addressing some of the struggles beginning farmers and ranchers wrestle with. The bill included improved beginning farmer conservation and credit measures, and more training and assistance support, than ever before.

The inability to date to pass a new farm bill so far this year, however, has brought a dozen critical programs to a screeching halt. As of October 1, many of the most innovative, forward looking farm bill programs have at least temporarily been terminated.

Two of those programs have proven their ability to help new farmers and ranchers -- the **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program** and the **Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Program**.

These two programs are uniquely situated to help new agricultural producers. The programs enable community-based organizations and educational institutions to provide and strengthen local training and assistance efforts that support new farmers and ranchers. Considering the broad diversity of agriculture and regional variability this decentralized approach is smart and practical.

The **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program** (BFRDP) awarded 145 projects in the past four years providing nearly \$75 million to grow a base of new farmers and ranchers. From community groups to land grant universities, this program has reached 48 states and, according to USDA, by 2011, had served 38,000 beginning farmers and ranchers. While 145 projects have received awards, 528 projects have requested support since 2009, demonstrating that there remains an unmet need.

The **Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Program** is specifically aimed at one of the exploding areas of growth in agriculture -- farmers and ranchers from communities of color, first nations people and military veterans. Individuals in these communities, who are often just getting started, come to agriculture with very distinctive and specific needs such as language barriers, cultural differences, and service disabilities. In the most recent three years for which data is available, 158 grants worth \$45 million were made to groups and university programs in 34 states around the country in both rural and urban communities.

These competitive grant programs are the only federal programs exclusively dedicated to training beginning and minority farmers and ranchers. The projects funded through these programs make a real and lasting difference for new farmers and ranchers. Allowing these programs to lapse within a stalled farm bill is unacceptable and irresponsible.

In a new farm bill Congress has the opportunity to re-invest in these highly successfully and much in-demand programs. We appreciate the fact that the Senate-passed and House Committee-passed farm bills include some mandatory funding for both programs but strongly urge you to increase the funding level for each program to \$100 million over 5 years (\$20 million annually) during negotiations over the final bill.

We, the undersigned organizations, request that Congress advance a 2012 Farm Bill, before the end of the calendar year, which helps foster the next generation of agriculture producers. You have the support in the countryside, the need is real, and the time to act is now. Public policy that supports and promotes new farmers and ranchers is an investment worth making.

Sincerely,

Adelante Mujeres, OR
Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association, CA
AgriSystems International, PA
Alabama State Association of Cooperatives, AL
Alternative Energy Resources Organization, MT
American Federation of Government Employees (AFL-CIO), MO
American Sustainable Business Council, DC

Angelic Organics Learning Center, IL
Ashley Ridge High School, SC
Beginning Farmers LLC, MI
BioRegional Strategies, NM
Black Farmers & Agriculturalists Association, NC
Black Oaks Center for Sustainable Renewable Living, IL
California Certified Organic Farmers, CA
California FarmLink, CA
Carolina Farm Stewardship Association, NC
Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas, KS
Center for Rural Affairs, NE
Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment, CA
Centro Ashé, MD
Centro Campesino, MN
ChangeLab Solutions, CA
Chicago Botanic Garden, IL
Clemson University New and Beginning Farmer Program, SC
Community Food and Justice Coalition, CA
Cultivating Community, ME
Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship, WI
Dakota Rural Action, SD
Delaware Local Food Exchange, DE
Delta Land & Community, AR
Dreaming Out Loud, Inc., DC
Earth Learning, FL
Ecological Farming Association, CA
EcoPraxis, DC
Empire State Family Farm Alliance, Inc., NY
Fair Food Network, MI
Family Farm Defenders, WI
Farley Center, WI
Farm Aid, MA
Farm Business Development Center, IL
Farm Fresh Rhode Island, RI
Farmer Veteran Coalition, CA
Farmers' Egg Co-op, MI
Farms Not Arms, CA
Farmworker Association of Florida, Inc., FL
Federation of Southern Cooperatives, GA
Flats Mentor Farm, MA
Florida Certified Organic Growers, FL

Food & Water Watch, DC
Food Democracy Now!, IA
Food Field, IA
Food Works, IL
Friends of Family Farmers, OR
Georgia Organics, GA
Gorge Grown Food Network, OR
GrassWorks, Inc, WI
Green Party of Seattle, WA
Groundswell Center for Local Food & Farming, NY
GrowNYC New Farmer Development Project, NY
Haitian International Youth Leadership Institute, Inc., NC
Hawthorne Valley Farm, NY
Healthy Farms Healthy People Coalition, DC
Hmong National Development, Inc., DC
Housing Assistance Council, DC
Illinois Stewardship Alliance, IL
Independent Living Services of Northern California, CA
Indian Springs Farmers Association, MS
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, MN
Intertribal Agriculture Council, MT
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, IA
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, MD
Just Food, NY
Kansas Farmers Union, KS
Kansas Rural Center, KS
Kids At Work!, NC
Land For Good, NH
Land Stewardship Project, MN
Latino Economic Development Center, MN
Latino Farmers Cooperative of Louisiana, Inc., LA
Liberty Prairie Foundation, IL
Living Agriculture Aquaculture Sanctuary, SC
Local Food HUB, VA
Lowcountry Local First, SC
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, ME
Maine Rural Partners, ME
Michael Fields Agricultural Institute, WI
Michigan Land Trustees, MI
Michigan Land Use Institute, MI
Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance, MI

Michigan State University Extension, MI
Michigan Young Farmer Coalition, MI
Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES), WI
Minnesota Catholic Conference, MN
Minnesota Citizens Organized Acting Together, MN
Minnesota Farmers Union, MN
Minnesota Food Association, MN
Minnesota National Farmers Organization, MN
Mississippi Association of Cooperatives, MS
Missouri Farmers Union, MO
Missouri Rural Crisis Center, MO
Mvskoke Food Sovereignty Initiative, OK
National Catholic Rural Life Conference, IA
National Center for Appropriate Technology, MT
National Family Farm Coalition, DC
National Farmers Organization, IA
National Farmers Union, DC
National Hmong American Farmers Inc., CA
National Immigrant Farming Initiative, DC
National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Trade Association, DC
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, DC
National Wildlife Federation, DC
National Women In Agriculture Association, OK
National Young Farmers' Coalition, NY
Nebraska Sustainable Agriculture Society, NE
New England Farmers Union, VT
New Entry Sustainable Farming Project, MA
New Mexico Acequia Association, NM
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Connecticut, CT
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Hampshire, NH
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey, NJ
Northeast Organic Farming Associations of Vermont, VT
Northeast Organic Farming Associations of New York, NY
Northeast Pasture Consortium, NC
Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, MA
Northern California Regional Land Trust, CA
Northwest Farm Bill Action Group, WA
Nutrition First, WA
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association, OH
One in Ten San Diego, CA
Organic Farming Research Foundation, CA

Organic Valley, WI
Organizacion en California de Lideres Campesinas, Inc., CA
Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success, NH
Our Local Food - Twin Rivers, KS
Pesticide Action Network North America, CA
Practical Farmers of Iowa, IA
Rogue Farm Corps, OR
Rural Coalition, DC
School Food FOCUS, NY
Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee, TN
Silas H Hunt Community Development Corporation, AR
South Carolina Agricultural Council, SC
South Carolina New and Beginning Farmers Program, SC
Southeast North Carolina Food Systems Program, Feast Down East, NC
Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, AR
Stonybrook Meadows Farm, NJ
Sustainable Tompkins, NY
Texas Mexico Border Coalition, TX
The Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture, OK
Union of Concerned Scientists, MA
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Duluth, Green Sanctuary Committee,
MN
United Farmers USA, SC
University of the District of Columbia, DC
Virginia Association for Biological Farming, VA
Western Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, NV
WhyHunger, NY
Winston County Self Help Cooperative, MS
Wisconsin Farmers Union, WI
Women, Food and Agriculture Network, IA
World Farmers Inc., MA
Youth Farm Project, NY

Cc:

Senate and House Agriculture Committee Members

Sen. Harry Reid
Sen. Mitch McConnell
Sen. Dick Durbin
Rep. John Boehner
Rep. Eric Cantor
Rep. Nancy Pelosi

Appendix 2

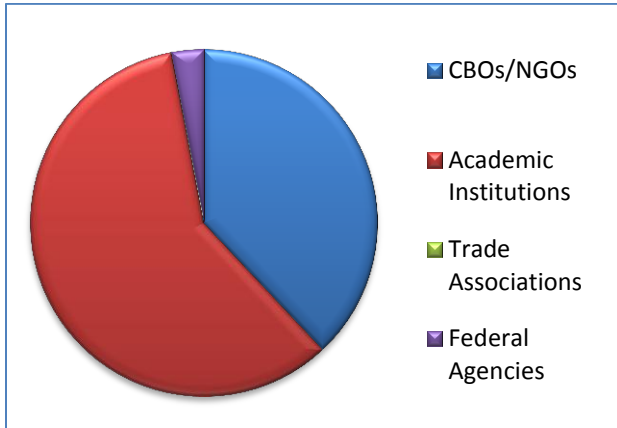
2012 BFRDP Grants

State	Awarded Institution	Project Title
AL	Alabama A&M University	Farm Incubator Educational Training Program and Web-Based Resource Center for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers
CA	Agriculture & Land-Based Training Association	Creating Beginning Farmer Opportunities in Farm Worker Communities
CA	University of California, Santa Cruz	Building a foundation for New Farmers: Training, Resources, and Networks
CO	Colorado State University, Fort Collins	Building Farmers in the West: Strengthening Foundations and Fortifying the Community Supporting Specialty Producers
CT	University of Connecticut, Storrs	To Help Beginner Farmers in Connecticut Scale Up Their Farm Enterprises through New Farm Management Training and Access to Technical Expertise
HI	Pacific Gateway Center	Marketing Strategies to Improve the Economic Viability of Beginning Farmers and Support Strategies to Support Beginning Farmers in Acquiring
HI	The Kohala Institute	KU I KA Mana New Farmer Training Initiative
IA	Women, Food and Agriculture Network	Growing New Women Farmers in Iowa and Nebraska through Networking, Mentorships and Business Planning
IL	Angelic Organics Learning Center	Farmer-to-Farmer Advanced Training Project
IL	Black Oaks Center for Sustainable Renewable Living	Rotating Apprenticeships Farmer Training in Chicago
IL	Chicago Horticultural Society	Training Beginning Farmers for Chicago's Urban Agriculture Community
IL	University of Illinois, Urbana	Preparing a New Generation of Illinois Fruit and Vegetable Farmers
KY	Kentucky State University, Frankfort	Farming for Cash: An Apprenticeship Program for Kentucky's Beginning, Limited-Resource and Small-Scale Farmers
KY	University of Kentucky, Lexington	KYFARMSTART II - A Whole Farm Management Education Program for Beginning Farmers
LA	Recirculating Farms Coalition, Inc.	Growing New Sustainable Urban Farmers in Greater New Orleans, Louisiana
MA	Community Involved in Sustainable Agriculture, Inc.	Building the Capacity through Training on Land Acquisition, Marketing and Business Strategies
MD	University of Maryland, College Park	Maryland Collaborative for Beginning Farmer Success
MI	Food System Economic Partnership	Farmer Residency and Farm Incubator Programs in Southeast Michigan
MI	Greater Lansing Food Bank	Lansing Roots: Beginning Farmer Training Program

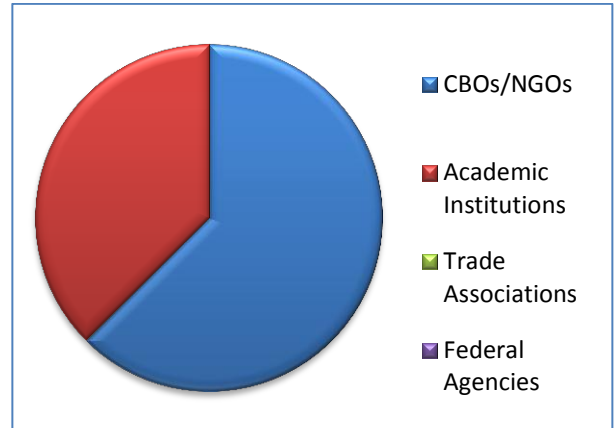
MN	Hmong American Partnership	Sustainable Economic and Environmental Development (SEED) Southeast Asian Farmer Entrepreneur Program
MN	Land Stewardship Project	Farm Beginnings Collaborative: Expanding and Strengthening Farmer-to-Farmer Training in a Multi-State Project
MN	Latino Economic Development Center	A Comprehensive Intercultural Training for Beginning Latino and Hmong Farmers and Ranchers
MN	Minnesota Food Association	Growing Farmers, Growing Food
MO	University of Missouri Extension, Columbia	Financial and Community Capacity-Building among Latino Farmers and Ranchers in Missouri and Nebraska
MS	Mississippi Delta Council for Farm Workers Opportunities, Inc.	Delta Farming Start
NE	Legal Aid of Nebraska	Legal Aid of Nebraska Beginning Farmers and Ranchers and Ranchers Development (BFRD) Project
NH	Organization for Refugee and Immigrant Success	New American Sustainable Agriculture Project
NM	Holistic Management International	Growing Successful Transitions with Beginning Women Farmer Programs in the Northeast and Texas
NM	New Mexico State University, Albuquerque	Southern Pueblos Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Project
NY	Council on the Environment, Inc.	Farm Beginnings for Multicultural and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers in the Hudson Valley and NYC Metropolitan Area
OH	Ohio State University, Columbus	Aquaculture Boot Camp (ABC): Enhancing Success of New and Beginning Aquaculture Farmers through Integrated Production and Business Training
OK	National Women in Agriculture Association	NWIAA's New Generation Innovative and Sustainable Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program
OR	Mercy Enterprise Corporation	Portland Beginning Farmer Partnership
PA	Nationalities Service Center	Philadelphia Farms: Philadelphia Community Farming Collaborative Develops New and Beginning Farmers to Grow Local Food for Philadelphia
PA	Pennsylvania State University	Building Sustainability for New and Beginning Women Farmers through Peer Learning, Farminars, Mentoring and Networking
SD	Dakota Rural Action	South Dakota Beginning Farmer Training, Mentoring, Networking and Marketing Support Project
TX	University of Texas Pan-American	Direct Marketing Initiative for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers in South Texas
WA	Rural Community Development Resources	Developing a Solid Foundation for Immigrant Farm Workers Transitioning to Farm Operators
WA	Washington State University, Pullman	Cultivating New Generation and Immigrant Farmers in Washington State
WI	Growing Power, Inc.	Urban Farms for Urban America with a Focus on Socially Disadvantaged Farmers in the Urban Ag. Sector

Appendix 3: Historical Distribution of Grants by Institution Type:

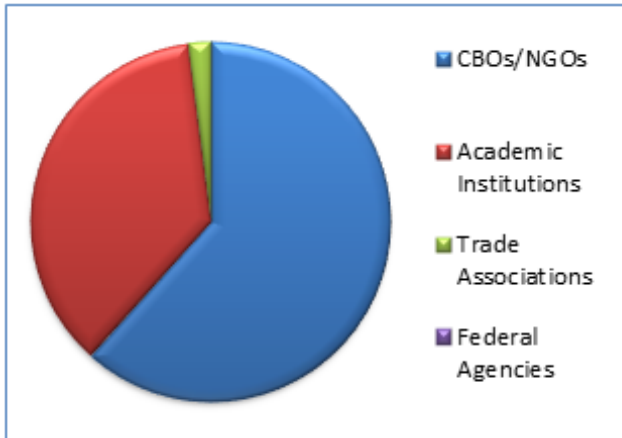
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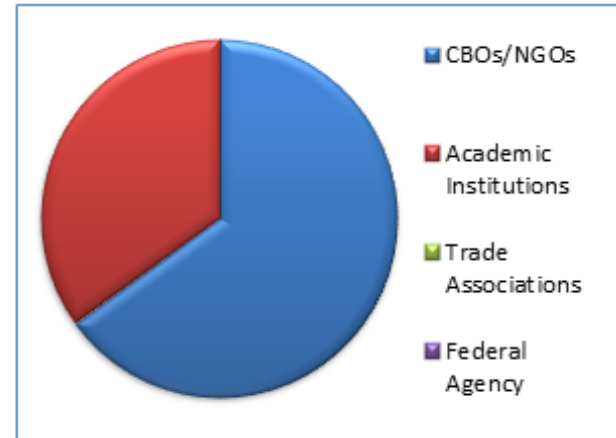
FY 2010



FY 2011

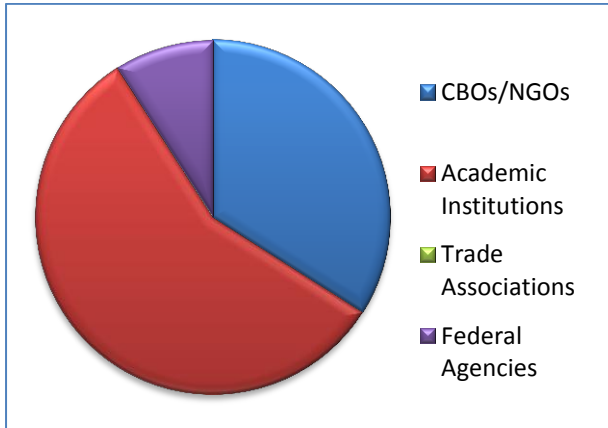


FY 2012

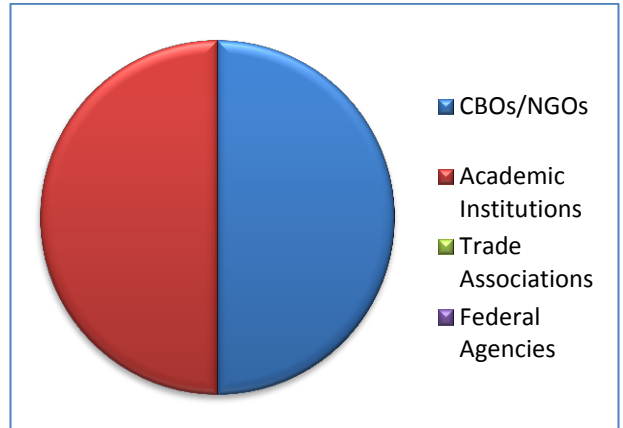


Appendix 4: Historical Distribution of Grant Funding by Institution

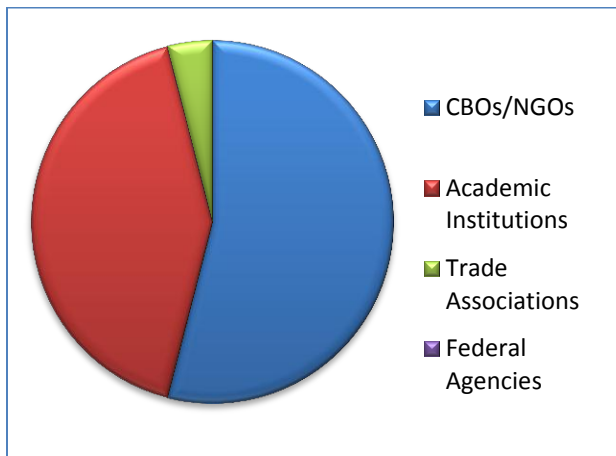
FY 2009



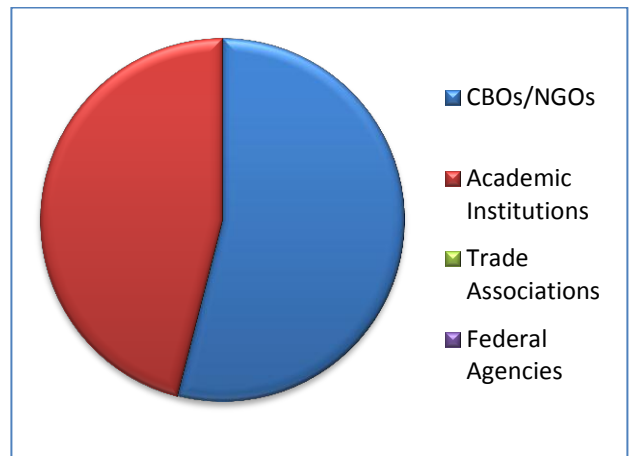
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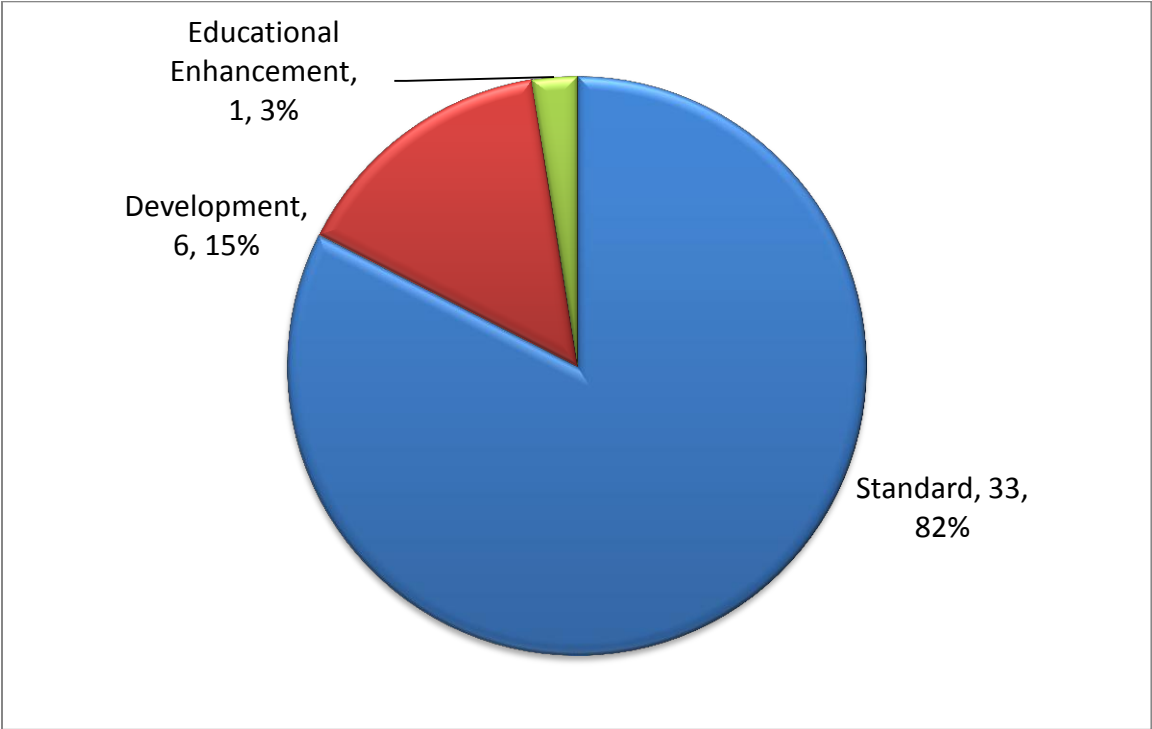
FY 2011



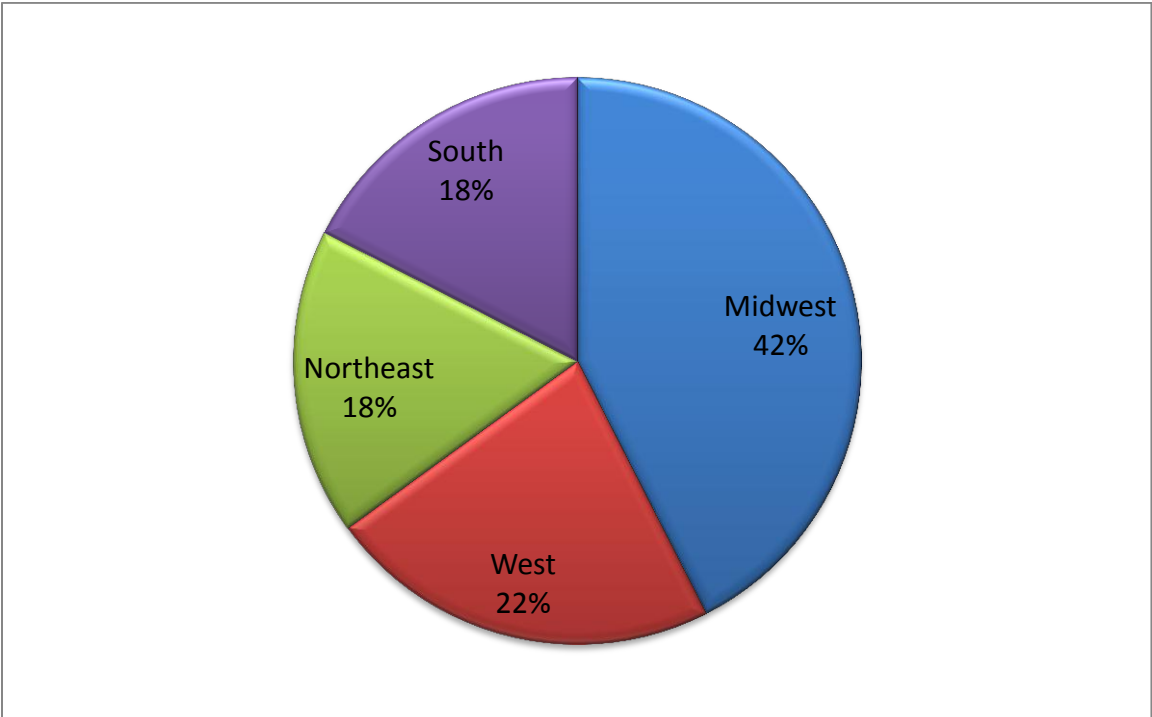
FY 2012



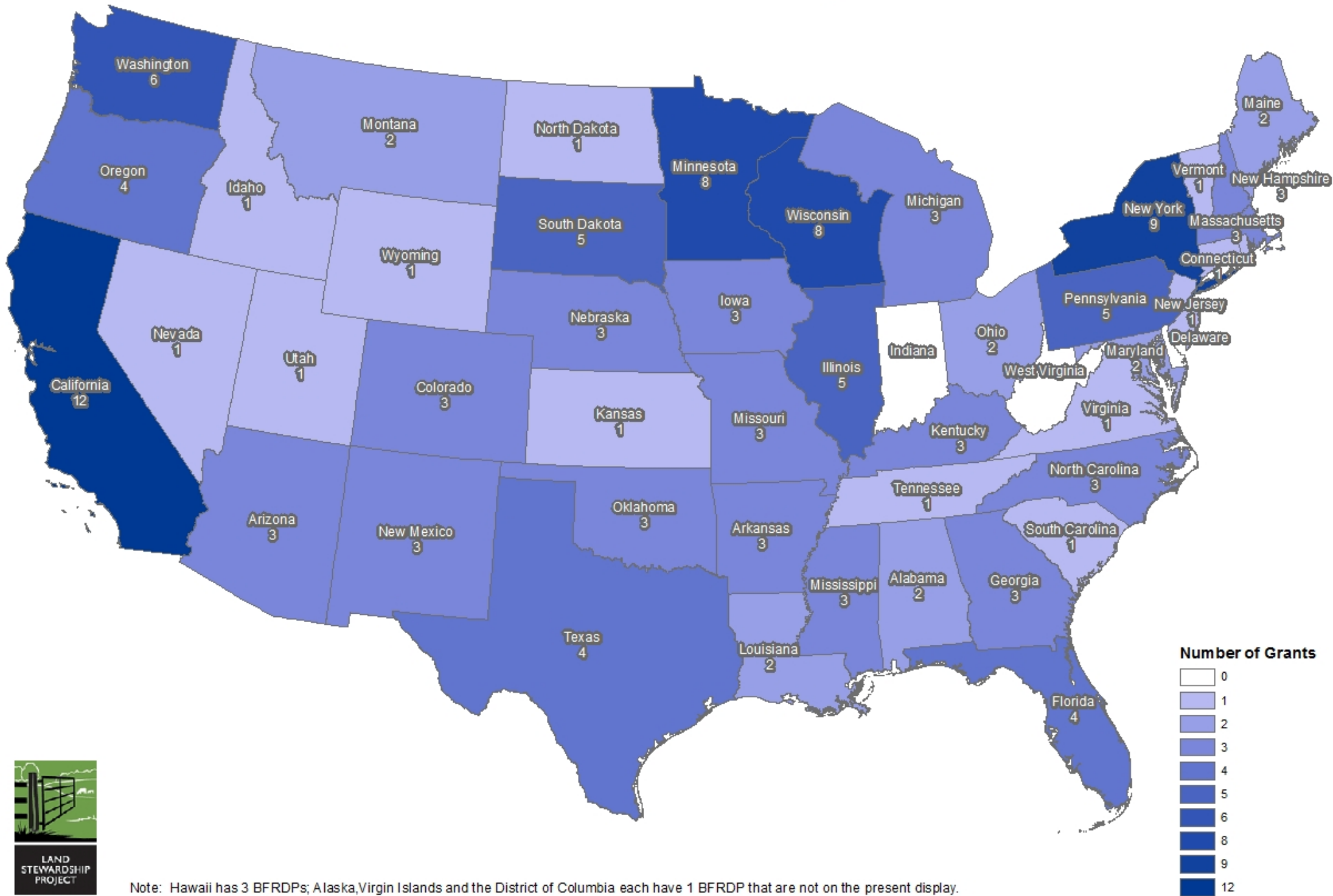
Appendix 5: Chart I: Grant distribution by type



Appendix 6: Chart 2: Regional Distribution



Distribution of BFRDP by State



Note: Hawaii has 3 BFRDPs; Alaska, Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia each have 1 BFRDP that are not on the present display.



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT