



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Bureau of Ag Development & Resource Conservation**



Bryan P. Hurlburt
Commissioner

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CTGrown.gov

**Connecticut Department of Agriculture Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group
Access to Resources, Infrastructure, and Business Planning
Regular Meeting Minutes**

October 8, 2021

11:00-12:30 PM

Held virtually via WebEx Platform

Members Present: DiShaun Harris, Elizabeth Guerra, Kimberly Norman-Rosedam, Scott Kemp, Christine Kim, Robert Chang, Lisa Griffin, Dr. Kristin Cooksey-Stowers

Members Absent: No members absent

DoAg Staff Present: Mackenzie White, Jaime Smith, Cyrena Thibodeau

Public Present: No public present

1. **Welcome and Call to Order** – Cyrena called meeting to order at 11:00am
2. **Group Introductions** – quick intros since combining groups – (preferred name, preferred pronouns, farm/organization name, and favorite vegetable)
3. **New Business** - Overview and Review objectives/ hopes for both groups - Cyrena Capital Group- Department Grant Programs and qualifications, and other grant opportunities (examples) Resources - Business Planning, Is there enough resources in the state for farmers to access, in terms of the department and outside organizations? (examples)

Initial thoughts around what our group should focus on in regards to Capital, Resources, Infrastructure, and Business Planning

- Resources - currently look at grants that are offered by CT DoAg, are they accessible, three grant programs, has anyone used them. Was the process easy or challenging? Discuss the aspects of the process. How do we use the Doag to help with the process of the NRCS/FSA federal loans? What makes the process easier and more accessible?
- How do we address the financial needs of BIPOC farmers across the state? Give access to areas that they currently don't have access to? Do we create some sort of network?
- Joint Resources - create a cooperative of large equipment that could be shared across the state.
- Ways we can make farming successful, with the support of agencies like the Department of Ag.
- Review current programs and determine specific programs needed for BIPOC Farmers
- Some of these programs are not adequate enough for any beginning farmer. It just shouldn't be this hard for farmers to feed people. Are we expecting farm businesses to build a business off from grants? The needs for resources and infrastructure vary between the small rural farmers, larger farms, and urban ag producers. Don't want the Ag service agencies to think that BIPOC farmers are only urban farmers. Don't want to get siloed-thinking about BIPOC farming = Urban Farming

- Always worried about Capital - people loaning within the community amongst themselves. What's successful at different levels of farming? Urban suburban, and rural?
- Two most important things are education and capital. The more educated about the process can help with writing a successful business plan.
- Inclusive of all those involved in agriculture not just farmers, such as delivery folks etc.

Breakout Groups

- a) What should be our focus?
- b) Break out into groups - 20 minutes - next steps for our group

Notes - https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LAa1H9WE_WNKJpQqMH8NVQp5A-dhXMiM_V2TdBGSrJQ/edit

Other thoughts - Meet with the Commissioner, two years down the line there could be a change, it would be good to check on things, and work out the wrinkles of the recommendations

Next Step/Homework - familiarize ourselves with the programs that the agency has

4. Public Comment- no public comment
5. Next Steps
 - Next Meeting Dates and Times - November 12th at 11am
6. Adjourn - 12:30pm

Respectfully Submitted by Mackenzie White, AMIR 1, October 8, 2021.

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