



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Agriculture Recommendations

Progress Update Report, January 2025

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Executive Summary

According to the [2022 Census of Agriculture](#), there are 140 producers of color in Connecticut or approximately 1.5% of all Connecticut producers. Yet approximately 35% of the state's population are people of color ([US Census Bureau, 2020](#)).

Establishing and building a viable farm business is a difficult venture for all but it's even harder for producers who identify as Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC); this is largely due to systemic inequities, historical racial discrimination, and lack of access and connection to agriculture resources, service providers, and land. Acknowledging the disparities, the agency embarked on an effort to engage BIPOC producers and seek their feedback on how the agency and industry service providers could reshape programming and assistance to be more inclusive and intentional to support BIPOC farmers.

In June 2023, after a year and a half of meetings amongst 43 individuals and four, topic-specific working groups, 23 high-level recommendations and 39 sub-recommendations for implementation were put before the agency.

Since its release, the agency has worked to implement 24% of the recommendations, with the remaining recommendations at 49% in progress towards completion and implementation, and 27% currently in development. The following report will provide a detailed update on the status of each recommendation and sub-recommendations.

After reading the DEI Report Annual Update in its entirety, we encourage you to take the agency's [feedback survey](#) to assist the agency in evaluating priorities going forward and areas where redirection may be considered.

To view the full DEI in Agriculture working group report or for more information on the agency's work and state-wide initiatives, please visit the [agency's website](#).

Success Stories

Short-Term Goal: 6.1 Increase Representation of BIPOC Producers in Consumer-Facing Agency Marketing

DoAg engaged [Camelo Communications](#), to photograph BIPOC farmer's and established a photo bank for utilization in agency promotional materials. Camelo Communications also created a [marketing plan](#) for the agency with recommendations for increasing visibility of

and access to agency programs and other relevant resources to diverse audiences who are either farming or who may be looking to farm.



A feature article in the [2024 edition of the CT Grown magazine](#) highlighting BIPOC producers in Connecticut and several programs led by BIPOC producers such as the [Leaders of Color in Conservation Farming](#), the [Venture Farming Institute](#), and the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation's [Meechooôk Farm](#).

Several BIPOC farmers were highlighted in social media posts throughout 2024 on the agency Meta sites (Facebook and Instagram), including [Juneteenth](#) and [farmer profiles](#).

DoAg increased the number of non-DoAg announcements and programming in the CT Weekly Ag Report to include programming by and/or for BIPOC producers.

A blog post was written and featured on CTGrown.org and shared with subscribers of the CT Grown newsletter about [Black Farmers in CT Working Toward a More Inclusive CT Grown Future](#).

Medium-Term Goal: 2.1 Improve funding and resources to support BIPOC producer training

Prior to the 2023 growing season, the agency launched a Pilot BIPOC Apprenticeship Program. DoAg developed the framework, including a skill list, a mentor/apprenticeship agreement, and an application.

10 BIPOC specialty crop producers were selected out of 20 applicants, to be mentors. The mentors worked with 19 of BIPOC apprentices from May 2023 to the end of September 2023.

Each mentor received \$5,000 for payment to their apprentice(s) for the 2023 growing season.

1. 19 BIPOC apprentices were engaged in work on specialty crop farms through the 2023 growing season
2. 17 out of the 19 apprentices have active plans/aspire to own their specialty crop farm business (mixed vegetables, herbs, and mushrooms)
3. As concluded in final reporting, all felt like the apprenticeship program provided a solid foundation towards their goals. The other two apprentices expressed that while they were unlikely to start their own farm, they were pursuing paths to become service providers to aid specialty crop producers

Long-Term Goal: 3.2 Improve Access to Technical Assistance

Under the [Land, Capital, Market Access program](#) (LCMA), a new position, the New Farmer Business Navigator was established at UConn Extension. This position is currently filled by a BIPOC farmer and active leader in the state. One of the responsibilities of this position is to establish and coordinate a new [Land Ownership Readiness Course](#) at Extension.

Also, under the LCMA program the agency is assembling a list of professional consultants for participants to engage with. The agency commits to having this list of service providers be at least 25% BIPOC consultants. Fees up to \$1,500 will be paid by the LCMA program for participating eligible participants. Interested, eligible, applicants can submit the [non-competitive interest form](#) at any time and the Farm Business Navigator will make the connections with professional consultants from the list as needed. The [application for consultants](#) is open on a rolling basis.

This roster will continue to be built out in and producers who complete the LCMA interest form will be able to access services coordinated by the New Farmer Business Navigator at UConn in 2025.

Overview on Progress

The recommendations contained herein have been identified as either a short-term, medium-term, or long-term goal. Below is a summary of the progress for each recommendation sorted by the completion date. Details about the implementation of the recommendation itself can be found within the update provided for each recommendation

Overall Progress on Recommendations:

- 24.2% Complete & Ongoing
- 49% In Progress
- 26.8% In Development

The recommendations are color coded below for quick reference as to the status:

- **Green** indicates the recommendation is complete and implemented.
- **Blue** indicates the recommendation response and implementation is in progress.
- **Red** indicates the recommendation response is still in development.

SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS, 1-2 YEARS

The short-term recommendations consist of nine (9) high-level recommendations to be completed by June of 2025. To date:

- 60% Complete & Ongoing
- 30% In Progress
- 10% Development

1.1 Establish Agency Goals for BIPOC Producer Inclusion and Tracking of Associated Data

1.2 Improve BIPOC Representation on Agency Boards, Councils, Commissions

2.5 Work with stakeholders to organize an annual or biannual conference (virtual or in person) on anti-racist work in Connecticut agriculture.

3.1 Improve Access to Grants

4.3 Commission a report on cooperative land trusts and other models of cooperative ownership/incubators models and how they could function in Connecticut with a focus on urban and suburban areas.

5.1 Improve Community Engagement to Shape Agency Programs

5.2 Solicit public feedback during the development of grant guidance documents and publicly post comments

5.3 Improve Producer Tools & Guides Published by the Agency

6.1 Increase Representation of BIPOC Producers in Consumer-Facing Agency Marketing

MEDIUM-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS, 3-5 YEARS

The medium-term recommendations consisted of 8 high-level recommendations to be completed by June of 2028. To date:

- 12.5% Complete & Ongoing
- 50% In Progress
- 37.5% Development

1.3 Increase DEI Trainings for Agency Staff

1.4 Establish a non-discrimination clause to be associated with usage of the CT Grown logo to work to rectify and prevent instances of price discrimination and unfair treatment.

2.1 Improve funding and resources to support BIPOC producer training

2.3 Improve Funding and Resources to Support BIPOC Agricultural Career Development

2.4 Develop and strengthen programming, in partnership with University of Connecticut Extension, for BIPOC youth to increase exposure to agriculture and agriculture as a career path.

3.1 Improve Access to Grants

4.4 Take an active role in educating realtors who have agricultural lands listed on MLS and town planners on options to sell agricultural land.

5.4 Improve Marketing of Agency Programs and Resources

5.6 Establish a dedicated agency marketing fund to conduct outreach to BIPOC farmers and farmworkers.

6.2 Improve Marketing of Agency Administered Nutrition Assistance Programs

LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS, 5-7 YEARS

The long-term recommendations consisted of 6 high-level recommendations to be completed by June of 2030. To date:

- 0% Complete & Ongoing
- 67% In Progress
- 33% Development

2.2 Support the establishment of a BIPOC-owned farm-based training center(s) which can contribute to the success and growth of the BIPOC farmer community.

3.2 Improve Access to Technical Assistance

4.1 Increase Land and Parcels Available to BIPOC Farmers

4.2 Pursue an expanded policy around education of Connecticut's PA 490 law so that it's agricultural classification can be applied to urban parcels.

4.4 Work with Municipalities to Increase Land Access.

5.5 Develop the digital hub in 5.4 into physical hubs in partnership with local community groups already doing the work that can serve as conduit/gateway for getting information to BIPOC urban farmers.

FUTURE PLANS

Within each recommendation, future plans for implementation are noted. A summary of all expected future actions is included at the end of this report.

Recommendations Category 1: Success Metrics and Accountability to DEI Principles

These recommendations focus on creating accountability and transparency around engagement and funding priorities of BIPOC producers within agency programming. Two subgroups, Access to Capital and Resources and Market Access and Diversification, contributed to this list of recommendations.

Recommendation Summary

- 1.1 Establish Agency Goals for BIPOC Producer Inclusion and Tracking of Associated Data
- 1.2 Improve BIPOC Representation on Agency Boards, Councils, Commissions
- 1.3 Increase DEI Trainings for Agency Staff
- 1.4 Implement a Non-Discrimination Clause for CT Grown logo Usage

1.1 Establish Agency Goals for BIPOC Producer Inclusion and Tracking of Associated Data:

Establish measurable goals and a quantitative and qualitative data gathering system to demonstrate the equitable delivery of services and programs for BIPOC producer usage and participation in programs administered by the Department of Agriculture.

These are **short-term goals**, specific to the **agency only**, and would be a **change to current programs**.

1.1.1 – Establish goals for each agency program, with guidance from stakeholders/clients, and publish publicly in a location of the agency’s choosing.

UPDATE & FUTURE PLANS

For the 2025 grant program year, DoAg’s goal is to increase by 10% the number of BIPOC producers and BIPOC led organizations who are engaged in grant outreach, participate in the technical assistance provided, and who apply to grants. These goals will be based on the baseline demographic data collected in the 2024 funding cycle and prior years when available.

Other agency programs are in the process of evaluating what the program goals could be as it relates to the DEI recommendations.

1.1.2 – Establish an agency funding goal to be allocated to BIPOC producers and BIPOC led organizations. Further, data should be released on agency website on the number of awards/amounts allocated to BIPOC producers and BIPOC led organizations.

UPDATE & FUTURE PLANS

In 2025 and beyond, DoAg will work to increase outreach targeted outreach of its grant opportunities with the aim of increasing the number of applications received and subsequent awards to BIPOC producers and BIPOC led organizations.

1.1.3 – All agency programs, including permits and licensing, should ask applicants to report race/ethnicity. DoAg should release the data, in aggregate by program, permit, and license, annually.

UPDATE & FUTURE PLANS

Below are demographic questions incorporated into all agency grants for producers.

- What gender do you identify as?
- What historically underserved group do you identify with?
- What describes your racial/ethnic heritage?

Questions may be incorporated into license and permit applications based on the license or permit.

A separate set of demographic questions are being refined and incorporated into agency grants for non-profits, municipalities, and school applicants where the beneficiary of the funds vs the applicant itself is considered.

DoAg is building out an area of the agency website to highlight the aggregated data to be launched in 2025. The example questions below were tested through the 2025 CT Grown for CT Kids Grant to determine if the information provided would generate the necessary information and outcome:

- What is the primary age of the students served?
- Which race(s) most closely align with the racial identities of the majority of your students?
- Which ethnicity most closely aligns with your students' ethnic identities?
- Which languages have you identified are the primary languages spoken in the homes of your students?

OUTCOMES from 1.1.1-3:

CT Farm Transition Grant Data

YEAR	# OF APP'L REC'D	BIPOC APP'L	% APP'L	% AWARDED TO BIPOC
2024	71	10	14%	13%
2023	58	4	6.80%	5%
2022	57	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN	UNKNOWN
2021	65	5	7.7%	10%

CT Grown for CT Kids Farmer Microgrant Data

YEAR	# OF APP'L REC'D	BIPOC APP'L	% APP'L	% AWARDED TO BIPOC
FY 2025	8	2	25%	50%
FY 2024	10	0	0%	0%
FY 2023	13	1	7.7%	14%

1.1.4- Collect qualitative data on programming about perceptions, ability to access, and satisfaction via surveys, testimonials, short interviews, feedback sessions, and/or focus groups where farmers are compensated for their time and valuable input.




UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

In June 2023, the agency contracted with Camelo Communications working with Market Street Research, to host four (4) focus groups with 23 producers comprised of beginning and tenured producers, those farming in urban and rural areas, BIPOC producers, LGBTQIA+ producers, and Spanish-speaking producers.

This research, along with other data points, informed a producer focused [marketing and communication plan](#) for the agency developed by Camelo Communications.

Producers are looking for specific information and resources that will help them manage and grow their farm.

The three areas where producers are most in need of information are:

 Practical Resources	 Financial Aid	 Business Management
<p>Producers are looking for advice on how to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access land • Buy the best supplies • Fix equipment 	<p>There are many problems with how grants are organized right now, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex language and jargon • Difficulty accessing writing support • Third-parties disseminating grants <p>Grants are particularly complex for beginning producers who may not have the infrastructure or insight to handle grant deliverables.</p>	<p>Business management advice is especially important for small and beginning producers.</p> <p>These producers are often learning the business-side of farming on the fly; many desire:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A guide to the tax system • Advice on maintain records • Assistance in hiring employees
<p>"One of the most difficult things is getting land to cultivate. That is one of the biggest obstacles we as farmers have."</p> <p>"Where can I get straw or hay or aged wood chips? Where is the local compost? What's the best quality compost?"</p> <p>"I want to know vocational stuff, metalworking."</p>	<p>"There are so many grants out there. How do we get them? Who are the grant writers?"</p> <p>"Direct, no-cost grants for farmers, especially beginning farmers."</p>	<p>"What do I need insurance-wise? I didn't know how to set up with the state, now I need to go to the federal government?"</p> <p>"How do you do your taxes? And what information do you need to be tracking?"</p>

Sample qualitative results gathered from the focus groups.

In 2025, the agency will work to implement findings from the focus groups into agency programs to improve perceptions, ability to access and satisfaction in addition to incorporating aspects of the marketing plan into the CT Grown RFP and other agency communication.

Through the FY 2025 CT Grown for CT Kids Grant application, DoAg integrated demographic and grant accessibility feedback questions to serve as a test for evaluating whether this was an effective place to integrate request for feedback. Below are the questions that were incorporated into the grant application:

	Very Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
How satisfied were you with the grant application's schedule and timing? *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
How would you rate this application process? *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
How would you rate the quantity of interaction and communication during the application period? *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
How effective do you think this grant program is in reaching its purpose and goals? *	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
How long did it take you to complete this application? * <input type="radio"/> 0-2 hours <input type="radio"/> 2-4 hours <input type="radio"/> 4-6 hours <input type="radio"/> 6-8 hours <input type="radio"/> 8+ hours <input type="text" value="Other"/>					
Did you attend any office hours related to this grant or talk to DOAG staff? * <div> <input type="text" value="Choice (Drop Down)"/> </div>					

From the 78 applications received through the CTG4CTK Grant program, 100% of the applications completed the feedback questions:

- 77 out of the 78 applications selected “Neutral,” “Satisfied,” or “Very Satisfied” on the multiple-choice questions.
- Additionally, applicants were asked what languages were spoken at home (of students to be served by the grant) and responses indicated English as the highest, followed by Spanish, and then Portuguese.

1.2 Improve Diversity of Representation on Agency Boards, Councils, Commissions: *Ensure that there is increased diversity on each agency administered board, council, commission such that at least 10% of the members identify as BIPOC, or if unable to meet that, from another protected class.*

This is a **short-term goal**, specific to the **agency only**, and would be a **change to current programs**.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

Below is the current makeup of agency boards, councils, and commissions. An average of 50% of the currently seated boards are held by [historically underserved](#) individuals and an average of 16.25% of the currently seated board members are held by BIPOC individuals.

- **CT Food Policy Council:** 11 members, 2 members of color, 7 women, 1 vacancy
- **Farmland Preservation Advisory Board:** 10 members, 1 person of color, 3 women, 2 vacancies
- **CT Milk Promotion Board:** 7 members, 1 woman
- **CT Farm Wine Development Council:** 11 members, 2 members of color, 4 women, 1 vacancy
- **CT Seafood Advisory Council:** In process of being seated
- **Governor's Council for Agricultural Development:** In process of being seated

In 2025, the agency will establish a public application, to be available on the agency website, for people to apply when there is an opening with responses to be passed onto the appointing authority. Not all board appointments are at the discretion of the Department, and the Department will encourage appointing authorities to diversify their appointments as often as possible.

1.3 Increase DEI Trainings for Agency Staff: *Through engagement with CT Department of Administrative Services, work to improve frequency and type of DEI trainings for agency staff to be more than once annually and include speakers and engagement-type trainings.*

This is a **medium-term goal**, specific to the **agency only**, and would be a **change to current programs**.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

In 2023 and 2024, DoAg employees were encouraged to participate in the Food Solutions New England [21 Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge](#) and staff from the Agriculture Development Unit held several discussions about the material.

In July 2024, Governor Lamont issued [Executive Order 24-2](#) "Advancing Equity in Connecticut State Government". This executive order established the Office of Equity and Opportunity within the Office of the Governor. One of the tasks of the office shall be to "Identify diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings opportunities for all state employees". The agency shall engage in all trainings identified and put forward by this new office.

1.4 Establish a non-discrimination clause to be associated with usage of the CT Grown logo to work to rectify and prevent instances of price discrimination and unfair treatment. *The agency will develop and make known to all producers the CT Grown logo has non-discrimination language associated with it and its usage.*

This is a **medium-term goal**, specific to the **agency only**, and would be a **change to current programs**.

UPDATE/FUTURE PLANS

The agency plans to develop and implement in 2025, nondiscrimination language associated with the CT Grown logo.

Recommendation Category 2: Increasing Funding and Resources to Support BIPOC Training Initiatives

These recommendations focus on increasing support to initiatives that build and uplift BIPOC producers' and communities' success in agriculture. Subgroups Access to Education and Training and Access to Resources and Capital contributed to this list of recommendations.

Recommendations:

- 2.1 Improve Funding and Resources to Support BIPOC Producer Trainings
- 2.2 Improve Funding and Resources to Support BIPOC Agricultural Career Development

2.1 Improve funding and resources to support BIPOC producer training: *Provide grant funding for the formation of programs for training, mentoring, apprenticeship programs, farmer circles, trips to conferences/stipends etc. for BIPOC producers.*

These are **medium-term goals**, which impact both the **agricultural industry and the agency**, has a **fiscal impact** and would be a **change to current programs**.

2.1.1 – Put in place priority consideration for programs and projects that support BIPOC producer trainings.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

In the 2023 [Farmland Restoration, Climate Resiliency, and Preparedness](#) Grant an eligible project for which grant funds could be utilized was for the coordination of producer training programs.

Priority was given to projects supporting historically underserved farmers, including but not limited to: BIPOC producers, veterans, new and beginning farmers (farming for 1-3 years), anyone in a protected class, anyone that speaks English as a second language.

Awarded projects that incorporated producer trainings: [University of Connecticut Extension, Solid Ground](#)

In the [2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program](#), two (2) new priority areas were added that would support BIPOC producer trainings.

1. Programs for training, mentoring, apprenticeships, farmer circles, specialty crop conferences/stipends to support specialty crop farmers who identify as black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).
2. Projects and programs which support agricultural career development for specialty crop farmers who identify as BIPOC

No applications were received in 2024 under these priorities. For the 2025 round, DoAg commits to pursuing eligible organizations who may want to apply under one these categories through direct outreach and targeted outreach to increase awareness of this funding.

In the [2024 Agricultural Enhancement](#) Grant program, the agency incorporated a new Question of Focus:

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in Agriculture: DoAg acknowledges the importance of supporting a diverse, equitable, and inclusive agricultural community and working towards achieving an industry that addresses structural and systemic inequities faced by many producers who identify as BIPOC, veterans, members of the LGBTQ+ community or people with a disability.

Question of Focus for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in CT Agriculture: Please propose a project which directly responds to or supports the agency with responding to one of the recommendations identified in the DEI Working Group Report, or another identified area of need by your population of focus. Projects must directly benefit, and be informed by, farmers in one or more of the following classifications: BIPOC, veterans, members of the LGBTQ+ community or people with a disability.

A Micro Grant Opportunity through the Agricultural Enhancement Grant was also added: Up to \$5,000 to make materials, workshops and/or other agricultural resources more accessible. These activities may include hiring a translation service for translation of agriculture-specific or culturally relevant materials, offering an in-person translator or interpreter during a workshop or training, or developing plain language guides for technical programs.

As a result, the following projects were awarded:

1. CT Resource Conservation & Development Area: *Addressing Issues of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in CT Agriculture: Empowering, Equipping, & Enabling Historically Underserved CT Veterans*; \$49,999
2. Gather New Haven: *New Haven BIPOC Farmer Incubator Program*; \$40,650. Gather New Haven (in partnership with the Liberated Land Cooperative) will provide new and beginning BIPOC farmers with technical assistance, hands-on training of various agricultural growing techniques, opportunities to experience working on an established urban farm and operating a Community Share of Agriculture (CSA) program, to support the establishment of new BIPOC farming operations.

2.1.2 – For an organization proposing a BIPOC apprenticeship program;

- **Tie the program to established standards and core competencies.**
- **Provide a stipend to BIPOC apprentices to provide additional income above what is made with their farm work.**
- **Strong consideration should be given to match new farmers with experienced farmers which may spur the possibility of a farm succession in the future.**
- **DoAg to provide support to verify the mentors for experience, range of learning opportunities, safety, and mentoring experience.**

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

Prior to the 2023 growing season, the agency launched a Pilot BIPOC Apprenticeship Program. DoAg developed the framework, including a skill list, a mentor/apprenticeship agreement, and an application.

10 BIPOC specialty crop producers were selected out of 20 applicants, to be mentors. The mentors worked with 19 of BIPOC apprentices from May 2023 to the end of September 2023.

Each mentor received \$5,000 for payment to their apprentice(s) for the 2023 growing season.

1. 19 BIPOC apprentices were engaged in work on specialty crop farms through the 2023 growing season
2. 17 out of the 19 apprentices have active plans/aspire to own their specialty crop farm business (mixed vegetables, herbs, and mushrooms)

3. As concluded in final reporting, all felt like the apprenticeship program provided a solid foundation towards their goals. The other two apprentices expressed that while they were unlikely to start their own farm, they were pursuing paths to become service providers to aid specialty crop producers

In 2025, the agency will pursue federal funds to issue a request for proposal for a statewide, BIPOC-led organization to continue this work.

2.2 Support the establishment of a BIPOC-owned farm-based training center(s) which can contribute to the success and growth of the BIPOC farmer community. *This farm/education center could offer training in farming practices as well as food enterprises and other adjacent food/farm/health skills.*

This is a **long-term goal**, which impacts both the **agricultural industry and the agency**, and has a **fiscal impact**.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

The agency is providing support and advice to two entities interested in establishing a BIPOC owned, farm-based training center in the areas of central and southern Connecticut.

2.3 Improve Funding and Resources to Support BIPOC Agricultural Career Development: *Provide funding for training and mentorship for BIPOC specialists to become service providers for BIPOC farmers in production practices, natural resource management, navigating requirements for marketing, etc.*

These are **medium-term goals**, which impact both the **agricultural industry and the agency**, would be a **new program**, and has a **fiscal impact**.

2.3.1 – Offer training to existing non-agricultural BIPOC service providers such as business consultants, accountants, etc. to gain exposure to agriculture so they can provide basic technical assistance in their area of expertise.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

In the [2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program](#) (SCBG), a new priority area was added that would support BIPOC producer trainings. Training programs for individuals who identify as BIPOC that are aspiring to become agriculture service providers but require additional training and exposure to agriculture.

No applications were received in 2024 under this priority. For the 2025 round, DoAg commits to pursuing eligible organizations who may want to apply under one this priority area through direct and targeted outreach to increase awareness of this funding.

2.3.2- Prioritize BIPOC led organizations to receive this training to facilitate knowledge dissemination to the community.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

For the 2025 SCBG application, an additional set of demographic questions will be added to ask about the demographic information of organizational leadership.

2.4 – Develop and strengthen programming, in partnership with agricultural education organizations like University of Connecticut Extension, Future Farmers of America (FFA), 4H, and others, for BIPOC youth to increase exposure to agriculture and agriculture as a career path.

These are **medium-term goals**, which impact both the **agricultural industry and the agency**, and would establish a **new program**.

2.4.1- Increase outreach and creation of pathways into farming with youth organizations.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

In the [2024 Agricultural Enhancement Grant](#), a new category was added "Enhancing Youth Ag Education" which solicited projects to expand or improve agricultural programming and education for youth. The grant required applicants to include the target audience or beneficiaries of the project, of which BIPOC farmers are a prioritized group. Funding will open in February 2025 for the next round.

The 2024 awardees under the "Enhancing Youth Agricultural Education" were:

1. 4-H Education Center at Auerfarm, Bloomfield: \$49,999 for *Auerfarm Discovery Barn: Where Agriculture Science Comes Alive*
2. Monroe Farmers' Market: \$4,150 for *Kids Experience Programming Expansion*
3. Town of Wethersfield: \$4,000 for *Kids on Kycia Farm*
4. Benincasa Community, Guilford: \$30,000 for *Connecting Deeply to our Roots- Advancing Soil and Self Health with Youth*
5. Hartford County 4-H Fair Association: \$36,900 for *Enhancing Agricultural Education at the Hartford County 4-H Fair*

6. Connecticut Junior Republic, Litchfield: \$49,999 for *Polebarn Replacement to Support Agricultural Education for At-Risk Youth*
7. Lebanon Lions Club: \$8,800 for *Sheep/Goat Pens*

In the 2024 [CT Grown for CT Kids Grant program](#) (CTG4CTK), 16 projects were funded which incorporated experiential learning and youth agriculture education. The complete list of grantees is available on the [agency website](#).

Additional experiential learning and youth agriculture education projects were funded in previous years.

2.4.2 – Support efforts to bring agricultural programming to urban youth in urban environments to diversify existing programs and structures such as 4H and FFA.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

The 2024 CTG4CTK Grant program awarded urban farm to school programs and included:

- Urban Fresh Gardens, Waterbury
- 333 Valley, New Haven
- Community Placemaking Engagement Network (CPEN), New Haven
- Common Ground, New Haven
- High School in the Community, New Haven
- Keney Park Sustainability Project, Hartford

The complete list of grantees is available on the [agency website](#).

Additional farm to school programs in urban communities were funded in previous years. In 2025 and beyond as funding allows, the agency will continue to fund efforts to bring agricultural programming to urban youth through the CT Grown for CT Kids Grant.

2.4.3 – Encourage and support placement of vocational agriculture schools/programs in urban areas.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

In 2024, the agency provided support to the newly established vocational agricultural program at the W.F. Kaynor Technical High School in Waterbury and will continue to do so in 2025.

2.5 – Work with stakeholders to organize an annual or biannual conference (virtual or in person) on anti-racist work in Connecticut agriculture: *This should include updates on progress towards the recommendations bringing together stakeholders for networking and disseminating resources to interested communities. It will serve to coordinate efforts around the state and obtain feedback on ongoing programs, connect with organizations already doing the work to elevate and support them.*

These are **short-term goals**, which impact both the **agricultural industry and the agency**, and have a **fiscal impact**.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

The agency will pursue available federal funds in 2025 to issue a request for proposal for a statewide, BIPOC-led organization to host the conference in collaboration with the agency to bring together stakeholders for networking and dissemination of resources to interested communities. It will serve to coordinate efforts around the state and obtain feedback on ongoing programs, connect with organizations already doing the work to elevate and support them. There shall be specific sessions regarding youth engagement and BIPOC leadership in agriculture training.

2.5.1 – Include a session on youth engagement focused on creating opportunities in CT to reach and retain youth in agriculture, particularly in BIPOC communities.

2.5.2 – Include a session on BIPOC leadership in agriculture training to build diversity in leadership in agricultural commodity groups and agricultural organizations.

UPDATE & FUTURE PLANS

There are numerous local, and community led initiatives that are focused on engaging BIPOC youth in agriculture as well as several building up BIPOC leadership in agricultural groups and organizations. This conference shall be an opportunity to highlight, connect, and build support for these efforts as well as discuss additional opportunities to expand and coordinate efforts.

Recommendation Category 3: Access to Capital and Technical Assistance

These recommendations focus on increasing access to agency grant programs, identifying priorities most relevant to BIPOC farmers, boosting access to technical assistance, and removing barriers that impede access. Subgroup Access to Capital and Resources contributed to this list of recommendations.

Recommendations:

3.1 – Improve Access to Grants

3.2 – Improve Access to Technical Assistance

3.1 Improve Access to Grants

These are **short, medium, and long-term goals**, intended for both **the agricultural industry and the agency**, makes **changes to existing programs** and may have **a policy change**.

3.1.1 – All grant review panels should have representation of a diverse group of farmers in terms of scale, sector, BIPOC farmers and BIPOC led organizations and urban farmers to ensure DoAg is properly serving the BIPOC community.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

Demographic questions were added to the agency's newly created [grant reviewer interest form](#) posted on the website to begin collecting this data to enable the formation of more diverse review panels beginning in 2025.

Under the agency's new [Land, Capital, Market Access](#) program funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, the agency created a nine-member Advisory Committee of which eight (8) of the nine (9) members of the Advisory Committee identify as BIPOC. The advisory committee provides guidance on the development of the program and in the future will serve as the grant review committee.

3.1.2 – Work to improve the agency's reimbursement and matching requirement flexibility, through administrative and legislative revisions, so that at least 50% of any grant funds are available up front to initiate projects similar to some USDA programs for farmers that are categorized as 'socially disadvantaged'.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

DoAg made changes to the percentage of funds available for advancement to producers under the [Farm Transition Grant](#) and now the New Farmer/Micro Grant category (1-3 years) are entitled to a 50% advance. As of 2024, farmers with over three (3) years are now entitled to a 25% advance.

For many other DoAg grant programs, such as [CTG4CTK](#) (since program implementation in 2021), [Agricultural Enhancement](#) (since the 2021 round), [Farmland Restoration, Climate Resiliency, and Preparedness](#) (since the 2023 round), and the [Resilient Food System Infrastructure grant](#) (since program implementation in 2024) all awardees can receive a 50% advancement.

3.1.3 – Provide support for completion of business plans as a requirement in grant applications and focus on matching awardees who don’t have a business plan or want to improve theirs with a technical advisor to develop one during the lifetime of the grant.

UPDATE & FUTURE PLANS

Connecticut’s agriculture industry, including producers, food businesses, and non-profits sourcing CT Grown farm products, can now access new one-on-one business technical assistance and grant coaching. DoAg is utilizing funds available through the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Resilient Food System Infrastructure Grant Program (RFSI) to contract with three (3) separate entities to provide an array of services, including but not limited to, market diversification and development, supply chain coordination, and business and financial planning. The three entities are:

- CT Small Business Development Center (SBDC)
- Carrot Project
- New England Farmers of Color Land Trust (NEFOC).

For more information, please visit the [RFSI webpage](#).

Awardees of the 2025 Farm Transition Grant who don’t have a business plan will be connected with the SBDC to help develop one during the lifetime of the grant.

3.1.4 – Eliminate limits to funding levels that are tied to farming experience, i.e. aspiring farmers should be eligible for the same amounts of grant assistance as existing farmers.

UPDATE & FUTURE PLANS

The agency is working to determine alternative ways to assess risk in lieu of associating a higher risk with a newer/younger farm or agribusiness.

Upon completion of this evaluation, DoAg will adjust programming accordingly in response to the data analysis. The target implementation is 2026.

3.1.5 – Prioritize funding for micro-grants for very early-stage producers (0–3 years) to enable BIPOC farmers to diversify and strengthen their business. If funds are not available from the agency for this purpose, support agency partners in securing funds for this purpose.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

Climate Smart Agriculture Grant: Sub granted to five (5) entities to design and implement their own Climate Smart Agriculture Grant program which allowed for a variety of different opportunities and smaller, more accessible grants.

In the grant guidance, the agency stated priority will be given to projects which support historically underserved farmers, including but not limited to:

- a. BIPOC producers
 - b. Veterans
 - c. New and beginning farmers (farming for 1–3 years)
 - d. Anyone in a protected class
 - e. Anyone that speaks English as a second language
- 31.5% of the awards made by UConn Extension (to date) have been to BIPOC farmers.
 - 41% of the awards made by New CT Farmers Alliance have been awarded to BIPOC farmers.
 - 36.6% of the awards made by the CT Resource Conservation and Development went to BIPOC farmers.

Farm Viability Grant: Through the 2023 Farm Viability Grant (now Agriculture Enhancement Grant), the agency awarded City Seed funding totaling \$49,999 to implement a BIPOC farmer micro grant program.

In round one, City Seed issued 14 awards to BIPOC farms totaling \$37,500 for projects that directly relate to the success and longevity of a BIPOC-owned farming business and promote the growth of CT Grown products. The second round of the

stipend program was announced by City Seed in October 2024 and accepted applications through November 22, 2024. This iteration of the stipend program sought applications for projects that would support winter education and professional development for BIPOC farmers.

Farm Transition Grant: A New Farmer Micro Grant category was established to fund new and beginning individuals or partnerships with one full year to three years of production history, seeking long-term careers in the CT agricultural industry. The maximum award amount is \$5,000 with a 25% match requirement for total project costs.

Awards made under the New Farmer Microgrant category:

- a. 2021: 6 awards
- b. 2022: 9 awards
- c. 2023: 9 awards
- d. 2024: 17 awards

Local Food Purchase Agreement Program: Sub granted to eight (8) entities to purchase local farm product (at least 80% CT Grown) and distribute to underserved communities.

As of September 2024, \$4,152,716 has been spent on purchasing local farm products from 140 farms (136 in CT). Of those farms, 33 self-identified as socially disadvantaged and approximately \$1 million was paid to those farmers. Food was distributed through 516 local organizations. The LFPA program will continue through 2028 and prioritize purchase from socially disadvantaged and small businesses.

3.1.6 – Prioritize funding for equipment (e.g. walk-behind tractors) and processing/storage facilities (e.g. walk-in cooler) that can be shared among farmers through an organization or shared equipment library. If funds are not available from the agency for this purpose, support agency partners in securing funds for this purpose. Consider adding this priority to the Farm Viability Grant Program and the Specialty Crops Block Grant Program. Be sure to prioritize not just the purchase of equipment or infrastructure for shared use, but also their long-term sustainability.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

Under the [Resilient Food System Infrastructure grant](#), the agency listed the following as a funding priority, which will also be reflected in the 2025 grant round.

Projects that increase delivery infrastructure (such as vehicles) benefiting multiple farm business with eligible products and cold storage for aggregated produce, dairy, and aquaculture products.

The agency submitted a letter of support to UConn Extension Solid Ground and received funding from USDA through the Beginning Farmer Rancher Development Program to purchase and implement small tool equipment sharing libraries at several urban farming locations.

As a result of the 2023 [Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry Grant](#) awards:

- CT Resource Conservation & Development Area established three (3) equipment-sharing hubs and the expanded one (1) previously established equipment-sharing hub for farmers in Connecticut. The shared equipment included no-till and low-till tractor attachments such as flail mowers, compost/manure spreaders, chippers, shank subsoilers, roller crimpers, seed drills, planters, and power harrows.
- Green Village Initiative for the purchase of shared landscape equipment and expanded vegetative cover, increased soil health and supported farming accessibility and knowledge of climate smart gardening practices to historically underrepresented populations.

3.1.7 – Adopt new practices for grant programs to ensure all assistance serves those with limited English proficiency, individuals with disabilities, and persons lacking computers or internet access.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

All DoAg grant programs have guidance translated and posted in Spanish. Applications are available in several languages and applications submitted in another language are accepted and translated for review panels.

For the [CTG4CTK](#) Grant program, the agency saw a need for additional technical assistance in Spanish and technical assistance in Spanish is now a standing practice for this program.

In FY 2024, the agency received three (3) grant applications in Spanish, two (2) were funded. In FY 2025, the agency received two (2) grant applications in Spanish, one (1) was funded.

In 2025, the agency shall sustain translation initiatives and identify further practices to adopt for improving the accessibility of grant programs for those with limited English proficiency, individuals with disabilities, and persons lacking computer or internet access.

3.2 Improve Access to Technical Assistance: *Create a new program that will provide BIPOC farmers with funds to access professional consulting (when existing free options have been exhausted) in business planning, financial management services, legal entity formation, and related business planning/management/optimization services. This new program may take the shape of an accelerator/turnkey/microgrant fund. Whatever programmatic model works, we would like BIPOC farmers to be able to access this opportunity easily without a cumbersome grant application process, to be able to choose which consultants they get to work with, and we want BIPOC farmers not to wait an unreasonable amount of time to get these services.*

These are **long-term goals**, intended for both **the agricultural industry and the agency**, has a **fiscal impact**, requires the **establishment of a new program**, and may have a **policy change**.

3.2.1 – Provide financial support to external BIPOC-led community-based organization(s) to compile and maintain a list of consultants for BIPOC farmers, review farmer applications for funds to access consultants, disperse funds to BIPOC farmers, and report impacts to the agency.

UPDATE

Under the [Land, Capital, Market Access program](#) (LCMA), this recommendation is being fulfilled through the establishment and hiring of the new Farmer Business Navigator. This position is currently filled by a BIPOC farmer and active leader in the state.

3.2.2 – Assemble and maintain a list of vetted professional consultants that are trusted and experienced working with communities of color or who identify as BIPOC that can provide business and technical assistance services to BIPOC farmers; engage these professionals on a state contract or on retainer to provide

consulting services. Be sure to engage a mix of new and established service providers along with a mechanism for newer business, particularly new service providers of color, to be added to the list.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

Under the newly launched [LCMA program](#), the agency along with its project partner, UConn Extension, is assembling a list of professional consultants for participants to engage with. The agency commits to having this list of service providers be at least 25% BIPOC consultants. Fees up to \$1,500 will be paid by the LCMA program for participating eligible participants. Interested, eligible, applicants can submit the [non-competitive interest form](#) at any time and the Farm Business Navigator will make the connections with professional consultants from the list as needed.

The [application for consultants](#) is open on a rolling basis.

This roster will continue to be built out in and producers who complete the LCMA interest form will be able to access services coordinated by the New Farmer Business Navigator at UConn in 2025.

3.2.3 – Prioritize funding for training programs targeting BIPOC individuals that are aspiring to become agriculture service providers and already have the skills and trust from communities of color but could use more training and exposure to agriculture.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

In 2023, E&G Community Builders, a BIPOC operated non-profit, and University of Connecticut Extension, started a program called [Leaders of Color in Conservation Farming](#). This program was funded through a USDA NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant. The agency submitted a letter of support to USDA for this proposal and will continue to provide support to similar initiatives.

The Leaders of Color in Conservation Farming trained eight (8) BIPOC individuals who were then able to provide training to 14 BIPOC farmers on basic conservation practices and facilitate opportunities to work with NRCS.

While this program was funded by USDA, not DoAg, the agency encourages programs such as this to apply for funding under the Agricultural Enhancement Grant or the Specialty Crop Block Grant as previous noted in 3.2.3.

A consistent goal of the [Agricultural Enhancement Grant](#) has been to support a diverse, equitable, and inclusive agricultural community and work towards achieving an industry that addresses structural and systemic inequities faced by many producers who identify as BIPOC, veterans, members of the LGBTQ+ community, or people with a disability.

The 2025 Agricultural Enhancement Grant is anticipated to be restructured to offer awards up to \$250,000, to nonprofit organizations, municipalities, or councils of government to conduct sub granting programs with a priority funding area to BIPOC farmers or service providers for training, infrastructure, equipment, or other agricultural resources to support their businesses and/or professional development.

3.2.4 – Prioritize activities, in partnership with UConn Extension, New CT Farmers Alliance, and others, that will lead to the success of shared equipment libraries and shared farm infrastructure projects. This includes a) increasing access to knowledge, expertise, and other professional services needed to successfully launch and manage a shared equipment library or cooperative managed infrastructure; and b) assisting with the marketing and promotion of the availability of shared equipment and infrastructure through the agency’s website and ongoing outreach and engagement with BIPOC producers.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

The 2025 [Agricultural Enhancement Grant](#) continues to prioritize and fund projects that respond to, or support the agency with responding to one of the recommendations identified in the [DEI Working Group Report](#), or another identified area of need, to support farmers in one or more of the following classifications: BIPOC, veterans, members of the LGBTQ+ community or people with a disability.

Additionally, the grant funds projects that establish or expand support and resources for urban agriculture and developing plans for food processing facilities. The establishment of shared-use facilities, kitchens, and resources would be well-aligned with the goals of the Agricultural Enhancement program.

In the 2024 Agriculture Enhancement Grant program, the agency included several questions of focus that address this recommendation. The complete guidance document can be viewed on the [agency website](#). The 2024 Agricultural Enhancement Grant projects funded:

- City Seed for a project which will identify the specific food supply chain needs of farmers through formal surveys and expanded outreach, increase procurement of local produce, and outfit a shared-use commercial kitchen with processing equipment.
- CLiCK, Inc. to increase capacity for local procurement, processing, and distribution, through a shared use commercial kitchen and food hub.

In the 2021 [Specialty Crop Block Grant](#) program a project was awarded to the City of New Haven that encouraged residents to develop community-informed pathways to diversify access specialty crops through the creation of a community garden and a multitude of trainings and workshops.

During the 2022 Specialty Crop Block Grant program, The New CT Farmers Alliance received funding to coordinate an active network of tool sharing for farmers in CT to be completed by December 2025.

Additionally, after incorporating new DEI based funding priorities in the 2023 Specialty Crop Block program, a project by the Huneebee Project is working to expand the involvement of the community to establish a honey training hub to provide critical information and access to those who otherwise would be unable to work with honey production across the region.

Recommendation Category 4: Land Access & Municipal Action

These recommendations focus on increasing access to farmland parcels and growing spaces while considering current programs and opportunities in Connecticut. Awareness of unique production arrangements that may be available, but do not currently exist in Connecticut, is considered. Subgroups Access to Secure Land Tenure and Access to Resources and Capital contributed to this list of recommendations.

Recommendations:

4.1 – Increase Land and Parcels Available to BIPOC Farmers:

4.2 – Work with Municipalities to Increase Land Access

4.1 Increase Land and Parcels Available to BIPOC Farmers: *Create a new program within DoAg, using \$10 million in bond funds to complement the already established Farmland Restoration and Climate Resiliency Grant Program, for the acquisition and use of lands for BIPOC producers to enable the utilization of parcels that are vacant, small, not prime soils, in urban environments as well as other locations. This program could be called the Farmland Purchase Assistance and Restoration Funding.*

These are **long-term goals**, intended for both **the agricultural industry and the agency**, and has a **fiscal impact**, requires the **establishment of a new program** and may have a **policy change**.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

For the first time in agency history, a program which provides a grant to farmers to purchase farmland is being offered. The [Land, Capital, Market Access Program](#), awarded by the USDA to CT DoAg, the only state agency awarded nationwide, is a multifaceted program to support the purchase of farmland by underserved producers.

4.1.1 – Create a unique set of scoring criteria for this program, that is not based on prime and important soils, for the restoration of vacant lots in urban/suburban settings that creates opportunities specifically for BIPOC farm development.

UPDATE & FUTURE PLANS

Part of the LCMA program is the CT Farmland Access Fund which will provide funding to aid in the purchase of agricultural land for BIPOC producers. The agency, program partners, and the advisory committee are working to establish evaluation criteria and a scoring rubric for applicants that shall be released as part of the grant guidance in early 2025.

4.1.2 – Establish an oversight board consisting of at least five individuals and not less than 60 percent BIPOC individuals or organizations to review applications for both the acquisition of lands and the use of such land.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

In 2024, with the beginning of the Land, Capital, Market Access Program (LCMA), the agency established a LCMA advisory committee comprised of nine individuals, eight of who identify as BIPOC. The roles and responsibilities of the committee include:

- provide feedback and recommendations on program design and implementation including timeline and process
- delivery of technical assistance
- criteria for making a grant award
- assist with developing a communications and outreach strategy to the target audience
- serve as advisors to review farmer applicants and make recommendations to the Commissioner of the CT Department of Agriculture on potential projects to be funded through the CT Farmland Access Fund

4.1.3 – In addition to acquisition of land, the program expands upon the Farmland Restoration Grant Program and provide funds for soil enhancement, access roads, fencing, water access, mulch/compost, removing invasive plants, soil testing, signage, cultivation tools and related steps to make a particular parcel ready for production.

UPDATE & FUTURE PLANS

The agency shall work to help awardees of the CT Farmland Access Fund access other grant opportunities offered such as the revised Farmland Restoration, Climate Resiliency & Preparedness Grant after acquiring farmland should improvements to the property be needed.

4.1.4 – Allow such lands to also be used for shared community garden spaces/community farms, demonstration/education purposes including outdoor classroom spaces, and shared pavilions for selling products.

UPDATE & FUTURE PLANS

Eligible entities for the LCMA program are Socially Disadvantaged Connecticut Producers, Agricultural Cooperatives of Socially Disadvantaged Producers, and Non-Profits operated by Socially Disadvantaged Individuals.

4.2 Pursue an expanded policy around Connecticut's PA 490 law so that this classification can be applied to urban parcels.

This is a **long-term goal**, intended for both **the agricultural industry and the agency**, and may have **a policy change**.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

In 2025, the agency will engage with industry partners such to explore potential pathways in response to this recommendation. This is a long-term policy change that will require industry partners and support to achieve.

4.3 Commission a report on cooperative land trusts and other models of cooperative ownership/incubators models and how they could function in Connecticut with a focus on urban and suburban areas.

This is a **short-term goal**, intended for **the agency**, and may have **a fiscal impact**.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

In December 2023, the agency commissioned the Connecticut Land Conservation Council to create this report. Yaw Owusu Darko, the organization's Senior Project Specialist conducted several months of research through desk research, interviews, and site visits and completed the report [*Farmland Access & Ownership: An Overview of Barriers, Models, and Actions to Increase Land Access for Connecticut's BIPOC Farmers*](#) in May of 2024.

In 2025, the agency plans to issue an RFP to further investigate findings of the report.

4.4 Work with Municipalities to Increase Land Access: *Explore pathways for how foreclosed public properties, such as schools and malls, could be transferred to a land bank and then funding could be accessed to remediate that land or shared infrastructure and utilize it for outdoor or indoor agriculture production and/or processing.*

These are **long- and medium-term goals**, intended for both **the agricultural industry and the agency**, and may have **a policy change**.

4.4.1 Recommend the required municipal Plan of Conservation and Development include an urban agriculture master plan if they have a population over a certain amount.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

Municipal plans of Conservation and Development are required by [CGS section 8-23](#). This recommendation would require legislative action to enact. A potential next step for the agency is to engage with the Sustainable CT program about incorporating urban agriculture master plans in their scoring criteria.

Additionally, the state is undergoing a revised [Conservation and Development plan](#) with a draft released in December 2024 and adoption by the CT General Assembly in winter 2025. DoAg has provided comment and feedback requesting urban agriculture is reflected in the adopted plan.

4.4.2 Take an active role in educating town planners and public officials on options to sell agricultural land.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

In 2024, [CT Farmlink](#), a program of the agency, hosted a planning presentation for CT Town Planners through the APA Connecticut Chapter. The presentation highlighted tools for identifying unused farmland and using the Farmlink website as a tool for finding farmers. 46 town planners attended this presentation. The intention is to attend and/or host more presentations and increase outreach in 2025 and going forward.

The agency has met with the Hartford Land Bank to explore potential opportunities for considering agricultural and urban production when land is acquired or under the purview of the land bank. There are two successful examples currently being implemented in Hartford with another one expected in 2025.

Recommendation Category 5: Outreach and Engagement of BIPOC Producers

These recommendations focus on improving outreach to and engagement with BIPOC producers and communities including creating clearer, multimedia resources. All four subgroups contributed to this list of recommendations.

Recommendations:

5.1 – Improve Community Engagement to Shape Agency Programs

5.2 – Improve Producer Tools & Guides Published by The Agency:

5.3 – Improve Marketing of Agency Programs and Resources

5.1 Improve Community Engagement to Shape Agency Programs: *Conduct a community needs assessment to inform a broad, equity-oriented community outreach strategy specific for agriculture. Develop methods to be able to continually collect community feedback*

These are **medium-term goals**, intended for both **the agricultural industry and the agency**, and may have **a fiscal impact and require a change to existing programs**.

5.1.1 – For the community needs assessment, focus on where farmers receive their information and what specifically do BIPOC farmers, farmers with disabilities, LGBTQ+ farmers need? What do communities identify as barriers that need to be worked on to facilitate greater communication?

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

In addition to the updates detailed in 1.1.4 the agency has taken the following actions to address this recommendation.

In June 2023, Camelo Communications worked with Market Street Research which hosted four (4) focus groups. 23 producers comprised of beginning and tenured producers, those farming in both urban and rural areas, BIPOC producers, LGBTQIA+ producers, and Spanish-speaking producers engaged in the research.

This research, along with other data points, informed a producer focused [marketing and communication plan](#) for the agency developed by Camelo Communications.

In 2024, with the beginning of the [Land, Capital, Market Access Program](#) (LCMA), the agency established a LCMA advisory committee comprised of nine individuals, eight of who identify as BIPOC. The roles and responsibilities of the committee include:

- provide feedback and recommendations on program design and implementation including timeline and process
- delivery of technical assistance
- criteria for making a grant award
- assist with developing a communications and outreach strategy to the target audience
- serve as advisors to review farmer applicants and make recommendations to the Commissioner of the CT Department of Agriculture on potential projects to be funded through the CT Farmland Access Fund

The initial [program guidance](#) was released in November 2024 after multiple sessions and methodologies to collecting feedback from the advisory committee.

The agency will be collecting public feedback to inform the revised 2025 Farmland Restoration, Climate Resiliency, and Preparedness grant.

5.1.2 – Include an evaluation component of processes for starting/growing agricultural enterprises and accessing new markets (e.g. farmers’ markets, business taxes). Where are the inefficiencies in the system? Are there opportunities to standardize and simplify processes?

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

In 2025, the agency will explore potential places to integrate brief surveys for producers to evaluate points of inefficiencies in various agency programs. Additionally, the agency will coordinate with various industry associations to help identify potential areas to standardize and simplify processes associated with agency programs.

5.2 – Solicit public feedback during the development of grant guidance documents and publicly post comments.

These are **short-term goals**, intended for **the agency**, and may have **a change to existing programs**.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

The agency issued Cognito surveys to gather public input on state priorities for the 2024 [Specialty Crop Block Grant](#) and for the 2024 [Resilient Food System Infrastructure Grant](#).

Three new priority areas from the DEI report were added for the 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant:

1. Programs for training, mentoring, apprenticeships, farmer circles, specialty crop conferences/stipends to support specialty crop farmers who identify as black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).
2. Projects and programs which support agricultural career development for specialty crop farmers who identify as BIPOC
3. Training programs for individuals who identify as BIPOC that are aspiring to become agriculture service providers but require additional training and exposure to agriculture

Funding priorities for the 2024 and 2025 Resilient Food System Infrastructure Grant include:

1. Projects that increase aggregation of farm products through food hubs and informal producer networks, which focuses on, but is not exclusive to, wholesale buyers.
2. Projects that increase the number of and access to processing facilities including commercial kitchens and co-packers, to preserve farm products and create value-added food products.
3. Projects that increase delivery infrastructure (such as vehicles) benefiting multiple farm business with eligible products and cold storage for aggregated produce, dairy, and aquaculture products. (Please note that there will be a smaller no match equipment only round in 2025.)

In 2025, the agency will establish an area on each respective grant webpage dedicated to public feedback collection and responses.

5.3 Improve Producer Tools & Guides Published by the Agency: *Create and disseminate multilingual resources guides, videos, and graphic guides (checklist, flow chart) to help farmers at multiple stages clearly understand the processes and requirements to gain access to various markets. For example, how to get plugged into markets, simple business guides, how to become a certified farmer, certifications and insurance needed, marketing tips, food safety best practices, and how to get into value-added production.*

These are **short-term goals**, intended for **the agency**, and may have **a fiscal impact**.

5.3.1 – Within materials, indicate other programs that may offer complementary funding assistance such as USDA programs to cover cost of a grant project before reimbursement.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

The 2025 [Farm Transition Guidance](#) includes a link to contact your local NRCS service center for funding to support greenhouse or hoop house projects. The Transition Guidance also includes links to RFSI for equipment only projects that support the middle of the food supply chain, as a comparable grant opportunity with advantageous award/match amounts that farms may prefer to apply for.

The 2025 [CT Grown for CT Kids](#) provided information about DEEP's urban/community garden programs.

The agency shall continue to indicate other programs that may offer complementary funding assistance in grant program guidance and other materials as appropriate.

5.3.2 – Improve language equity across all newsletters and resources.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

Starting in 2023, the CT Weekly Ag Report is translated and posted in Spanish with additional languages available on the [agency website](#).

All grant guidance documents since 2023 through current, have been translated to Spanish. Spanish guidance and other applicable documents are posted on each grant webpage.

The Bureau of Regulatory Services has translated *Farm Bulk Milk Collection and Sampling Procedures* and associated exams in Spanish.

In 2024, the agency held a farmer certification training meeting for the [Farmers' Market Nutrition Program](#) with an in-person translator to accommodate Spanish-speaking farmers who wished to participate in the program.

In 2024, the Animal Population Control Program launched a [new online application](#) which will be translated into other languages.

5.2.3 – Host info sessions led by BIPOC individuals on dedicated topics related to accessing markets, creating value added products, etc.

UPDATE& FUTURE PLANS

As funding allows through the LCMA program the agency, in collaboration with University of Connecticut Extension, will organize workshops and trainings led by BIPOC individuals on dedicated topics of interest such as accessing markets, creating value added products, and more.

5.4 Improve Marketing of Agency Programs and Resources: *Develop a digital information hub (a one stop shop) about all agricultural programs available to BIPOC farmers with information in different formats (e.g. video and audio, graphics) to facilitating organization and publicity of resources available for BIPOC farmers. To be implemented within a year once a host organization is identified.*

These are **medium-term goals**, intended for both **the agricultural industry and the agency**, and may have **a fiscal impact**.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

The agency is in the process of developing a website/informational hub with an expected launch in early 2025.

5.4.1 – Allow event organizers and any other persons providing educational outreach to BIPOC producers to utilize the site to disseminate information.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

The site will also contain a calendar feature allowing groups to submit events to be posted and viewable by all.

5.4.2 – Recommend working with a BIPOC organization to co-host the site to help prevent gatekeeping to resources.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

The agency will conduct outreach in 2025 to industry partners to compile needed resources for the site and provide feedback.

5.5 – Develop the digital hub in 5.4 into physical hubs in partnership with local community groups already doing the work that can serve as conduit/gateway for getting information to BIPOC urban farmers.

This is a **long-term goal**, intended for both **the agricultural industry and the agency**, and may have **a fiscal impact**.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

In 2025, after the website is fully operational, the agency will develop an outreach plan to identify potential community groups who could serve as conduits for getting information out to BIPOC urban farmers. The agency would initially start with New Haven, Hartford, Bridgeport, and Waterbury with the potential to expand further.

Several urban farming organizations currently house shared tool libraries, and those locations may provide a natural fit as physical resource hub. This is anticipated to occur in 2026.

5.6 – Support and establish a dedicated marketing program to conduct outreach to BIPOC farmers and farmworkers.

These are **medium-term goals**, intended for both **the agricultural industry and the agency**, and may require the **establishment of a new program**, have **a fiscal impact** and may require **a policy change**.

5.6.1 – This program should be used to engage existing BIPOC farmers and community organizations to ensure that they are aware of available marketing resources and opportunities.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

In 2025, within available federal funding, the agency will pursue the establishment of a producer focused marketing program with particular emphasis on BIPOC farmers and farmworkers, as well as disabled farmers, and queer farmers into the CT Grown marketing campaign.

5.6.2 – DoAg should facilitate the creation of a BIPOC marketing and development board to carry out marketing in a manner that will be the most beneficial to existing BIPOC farmers and to bring in new BIPOC producers who could apply for these programs and enter agricultural careers.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

In 2026, the agency will begin conversations with industry partners and service providers to discuss the creation of this board to carry out programmatic marketing to new and existing BIPOC farmers.

Recommendation Category 6: Marketing to Connecticut Residents

These recommendations focus on increasing awareness and incorporation of BIPOC farmers in DoAg marketing to Connecticut residents and in DoAg administered nutrition assistance programs. Subgroup Market Access and Diversification contributed to this list of recommendations.

Recommendations:

6.1 – Increase Representation of BIPOC Producers in Consumer-Facing Agency Marketing

6.2 – Increase BIPOC Participation in Agency Administered Nutrition Assistance Programs

6.1 Increase Representation of BIPOC Producers in Consumer-Facing Agency Marketing:

Highlight and promote BIPOC farmers and other BIPOC individuals in agriculture, share stories and highlight diverse crops that are grown by BIPOC farmers to reinforce cultural awareness and diversity of the industry.

This is a **short-term goal**, intended for **the agency**, and may require **a change to existing program(s)**.

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

DoAg engaged Camelo Communications, to photograph [BIPOC farmers](#) and established a photo bank for utilization in agency promotional materials. Camelo Communications also created a marketing plan for the agency with recommendations for increasing visibility of and access to agency programs and other relevant resources to diverse audiences who are either farming or who may be looking to farm. The marketing plan was established as a result of their professional opinion and feedback from the focus groups previously mentioned in 5.1.1.

A feature article in the 2024 edition of the [CT Grown magazine](#) highlighting BIPOC producers in Connecticut and several programs led by BIPOC producers such as the [Leaders of Color in Conservation Farming](#), the [Venture Farming Institute](#), and the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation's [Meechooôk Farm](#).

Several BIPOC farmers were highlighted in social media posts throughout 2024 on the agency Meta sites (Facebook and Instagram), including [Juneteenth](#) and [farmer profiles](#).

DoAg increased the number of non-DoAg announcements and programming in the CT Weekly Ag Report to include programming by and/or for BIPOC producers.

A blog post was written and featured on CTGrown.org and shared with subscribers of the CT Grown newsletter about [Black Farmers in CT Working Toward a More Inclusive CT Grown Future.](#)

Camelo Communication for CT Dairy did specific outreach in fiscal year 2024 to reach Hispanic consumers and earned 79,700 impressions from Hispanic media outlets, Identidad Latina and El Sol, through blogs and social media posts.

The agency will continue to increase the diversity of farmers highlighted across agency media as well as diversify consumer audiences reached.

6.2 Improve Marketing of Agency Administered Nutrition Assistance Programs: *Increase targeted outreach to BIPOC producers and participants for benefit acceptance and redemption of Women, Infant, and Children Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) and Senior FMNP along with other nutrition assistance programs such as SNAP and doubling options through creating more grassroots campaigns.*

This is a **medium-term goal**, intended for both **the agricultural industry and the agency**, and may require **a change to existing program(s)**

UPDATE, OUTCOME, & FUTURE PLANS

Starting in the 2023 growing season, the agency transitioned the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) from paper checks to an electronic format making it easier for producers and participants to participate and allowing information to be available in English and Spanish.

In 2023, total redemption of FMNP benefits was \$611,590. In 2024, total redemption was \$1,032,996. There are 279 certified farmers currently in Connecticut and the number of BIPOC certified farmers that participate in the program is currently unknown. This data will be collected in 2025. The program served 61,724 age and income eligible seniors and WIC participants in 2024, of which the majority identify as BIPOC.

Bilingual informational materials were developed on state and federal nutrition assistance programs and were distributed to LFPA distribution partners for dissemination at pick up

sites as well as to CT Grown certified farmers' markets. DoAg also cooperated with the CT Department of Social Services and Public Health following the implementation of Public Act 24-82 to create a shared fact sheet containing the eligibility requirements for, instructions for applying to, and types of benefits shared across nutrition initiatives. This fact sheet will be translated and shared via agency websites and communications.

Future Actions & Implementation Efforts

1. A separate set of demographic questions are being refined and incorporated into agency grants targeted towards non-profits, municipalities, and school applicants.
2. DoAg is building out an area of the agency website to highlight the aggregated grant demographic data to be launched in 2025.
3. In 2025, the agency will work to implement findings from the focus groups into agency programs to improve perceptions, ability to access and satisfaction in addition to incorporating aspects of the marketing plan into the CT Grown RFP and other agency communication.
4. In 2025, the agency will establish a public application, to be available on the agency website, for people to apply when there is an opening with responses to be passed onto the appointing authority.
5. The agency shall engage in all trainings identified and put forward by the new Office of Equity and Opportunity.
6. The agency plans to develop and implement nondiscrimination language associated with the CT Grown logo in 2025.
7. For the 2025 round of the Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG), DoAg commits to pursuing eligible organizations who may want to apply under one of the categories added as a direct result of the DEI in Agriculture report through direct outreach and targeted outreach to increase awareness of the funding.
8. In 2025, the agency will pursue federal funds to issue a request for proposal for a statewide, BIPOC-led organization to continue a BIPOC farm apprenticeship program.
9. For the 2025 SCBG application, an additional set of demographic questions will be added to ask about the demographic information of organizational leadership.
10. Include "Enhancing Youth Ag Education" in the February 2025 round of the Agriculture Enhancement Grant.

11. Continue to fund efforts to bring agricultural programming to urban youth through the CT Grown for CT Kids Grant.
12. Continue engagement with Waterbury's newly established vocational agricultural program.
13. The agency will pursue available federal funds in 2025 to issue a request for proposal for a statewide, BIPOC-led organization to host a conference on anti-racist work in agriculture in collaboration with the agency to bring together stakeholders for networking and dissemination of resources to interested communities. It will serve to coordinate efforts around the state and obtain feedback on ongoing programs, connect with organizations already doing the work to elevate and support them. There shall be specific sessions regarding youth engagement and BIPOC leadership in agriculture training.
14. The agency shall work to increase diversity on grant review panels.
15. Awardees of the 2025 Farm Transition Grant who don't have a business plan will be connected with the CT Small Business Development Center to help develop one during the lifetime of the grant.
16. The agency is working to determine alternative ways to assess risk in lieu of associating a higher risk with a newer/younger farm or agribusiness. Upon completion of this evaluation, DoAg will adjust programming accordingly in response to the data analysis. Target implementation is 2026.
17. Continue the Local Food Purchase Agreement Program which prioritizes purchases from socially disadvantaged and small businesses.
18. Open the 2025 round of the Resilient Food System Infrastructure Grant which prioritizes shared processing and storage facilities in the middle of the supply chain.
19. In 2025, the agency shall sustain translation initiatives and identify further practices to adopt for improving the accessibility of grant programs for those with limited English proficiency, individuals with disabilities, and persons lacking computer or internet access.

20. In 2025, the agency will continue to build out the technical assistance roster and producers who complete the LCMA interest form will be able to access services coordinated by the New Farmer Business Navigator at UConn.
21. The 2025 Agricultural Enhancement Grant is anticipated to be restructured to offer awards up to \$250,000, to nonprofit organizations, municipalities, or councils of government to conduct subgranting programs with a priority funding area to BIPOC farmers or service providers for training, infrastructure, equipment, or other agricultural resources to support their businesses and or professional development.
22. The 2025 Agricultural Enhancement grant continues to prioritize and fund projects that respond to, or support the agency with responding to one of the recommendations identified in the DEI Working Group Report, or another identified area of need, to support farmers in one or more of the following classifications: BIPOC, veterans, members of the LGBTQ+ community or people with a disability.
23. In 2025, the agency will engage with industry partners such to explore potential pathways to create an expanded policy around Connecticut's PA 490 law so that the classification can be applied to urban parcels. This is a long-term policy change that will require industry partners and support to achieve.
24. In 2025, the agency plans to issue an RFP to further investigate findings of the report *Farmland Access & Ownership: An Overview of Barriers, Models, and Actions to Increase Land Access for Connecticut's BIPOC Farmers* from the Connecticut Land Conservation Council.
25. The agency shall attend and/or host more presentations and increase outreach in 2025 and going forward to town planners and public official on options to sell agricultural land.
26. The agency will be collecting public feedback to inform the revised 2025 Farmland Restoration, Climate Resiliency, and Preparedness grant.
27. In 2025, the agency will explore potential places to integrate brief surveys for producers to evaluate points of inefficiencies in various agency programs. Additionally, the agency will coordinate with various industry associations to help

identify potential areas to standardize and simplify processes associated with agency programs.

28. In 2025, the agency will establish an area on each respective grant webpage dedicated to public feedback collection and responses.
29. The agency will conduct outreach in 2025 to industry partners to compile needed resources for a new farmer resource site and to provide feedback. The site will also contain a calendar feature allowing groups to submit events to be posted and viewable by all.
30. In 2025, after the website is fully operational, the agency will develop an outreach plan to identify potential community groups who could serve as conduits for getting information out to BIPOC urban farmers. The agency would initially start with New Haven, Hartford, Bridgeport, and Waterbury with the potential to expand further.
31. In 2025, within available federal funding, the agency will pursue the establishment of a producer focused marketing program with particular emphasis on BIPOC farmers and farmworkers, as well as disabled farmers, and queer farmers into the CT Grown marketing campaign.

Feedback Survey Request

After reading the DEI Report Annual Update in its entirety, we encourage you to take the agency's [feedback survey](#) to assist the agency in evaluating priorities going forward, areas where redirection may be considered.

To view the full DEI in Agriculture working group report or for more information on the agency's work and state-wide initiatives, please visit the [agency's website](#).

For any inquiries about the report and recommendation progress, please contact Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov or Jaime.Smith@ct.gov.