

For Immediate Release: October 23, 2020

Contact: Julius Kolawole at info@africanallianceri.org

Karen Spiller at karen@kasconsults.com



AARI Receives Grant Award from USDA for Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program Development Program

The African Alliance of Rhode Island (AARI), as part of the Southern New England Farmers of Color Collaborative, is pleased to announce the award of \$280,863 from the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) of the US Department of Agriculture.

AARI was founded in 2004 as a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of low-income African immigrants and refugees living in the state of Rhode Island. At the beginning of 2020, AARI joined with other regional collaborators and farmers of color to found the Southern New England Farmers of Color Collaborative. The Southern New England Farmers of Color Collaborative (SNEFCC) is a nascent organization of beginning farmers of color and collaborators who want to increase the success of farmers of color in our New England states. It is important to note that several SNEFCC members first met and are actively involved in Food Solutions New England (FSNE), a regional, collaborative network organized to support a New England food system that drives healthy food access, racial equity, sustainable farming and fishing, and thriving communities.

This particular investment will help beginning farmers of color (including Black, Indigenous, Latinx and other People of Color) in Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island to develop important skills in business management, to receive advanced agricultural technical training and to use new strategies to gain access to farmland. Our collective work has shown a strong demand for locally grown, healthy and affordable food in communities of color and an emerging group of farmers of color ready and able to meet this challenge.

“We are extremely excited about this USDA BFRDP award which will benefit the Southern New England Farmers of Color Collaborative. It will provide a much needed training and necessary skills in all aspects of local farming practices. The funding will provide training for up to 90 farmers of color.”

- Julius Kolawole, Director and Co-founder of the African Alliance of Rhode Island, and Steering Committee member of the Food Solutions New England (FSNE) network

Funded by this award, the Business Training and Land Access for Farmers of Color in Southern New England Project will give these farmers the training and networking necessary to advance their careers in local agriculture. Participating farmers will receive access to training on:

1. Advanced Soil and Nutrient Management
2. Land Access
3. Grant Writing and Fundraising
4. Business Planning and Marketing

“The intersectionality inherent in our regional Collaborative is a unique asset that seeks to bring farmers, farm advocates of color, and their partners together. This grant provides more pathways to extend resources. For farmers of color, this grant will support and strengthen the relationships among farm businesses; build long-lasting capacity for producing and marketing local foods; and expand our collective reach within the southern New England region and beyond.”

- Karen Spiller, Principal of KAS Consulting and Steering Committee member of the Food Solutions New England (FSNE) network

The training program will launch in the winter of 2021.

For more information, please contact at info@africanallianceri.org.



African Alliance of Rhode Island

Position Announcement:

Project Assistant

SNEFCC – Business Training and Land Access for Farmers of Color in Southern New England

Organization Overview:

The African Alliance of Rhode Island (AARI) was founded in 2004 as a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of low-income African immigrants and refugees living in the state of Rhode Island. Today, AARI assists refugees, immigrants and families of all nationalities to work together to improve their communities, engage in urban agriculture projects to help alleviate local food insecurity and bring farmers markets to underserved areas. AARI provides several multicultural celebrations and community health events, including an annual Neighborhood Health Summit. In a state where the price of arable land is highest in the country, AARI has been successful in developing several urban mini farms and a 6-acre farm where a diverse community of growers works to improve family food security, achieve earned income through sales at farmers markets, and contribute to Rhode Island's food economy. AARI also provides a range of educational projects focused on helping beginner farmers use English as a common language, develop good financial practices, and understand the basics of farm management.

At the beginning of 2020, AARI joined with other regional collaborators and farmers of color to found the Southern New England Farmers of Color Collaborative. The **Southern New England Farmers of Color Collaborative (SNEFCC)** is a nascent organization of beginning farmers of color (including Black, Indigenous, Latinx and other People of Color) and collaborators who want to increase the success of farmers of color in our New England states. It is important to note that several SNEFCC members first met and are actively involved in Food Solutions New England (FSNE), a regional, collaborative network organized to support a New England food system that drives healthy food access, racial equity, sustainable farming and fishing, and thriving communities. SNEFCC members recognize that agriculture in our region faces major challenges which are fundamentally reshaping farming and local food systems, that are even more amplified now with COVID-19. SNEFCC hopes to position farmers of color to be ready for new opportunities that will arise, and to provide them with the necessary skills and capabilities to build and sustain successful farm enterprises now and in the future. The goal of the *Business Training and Land Access for Farmers of Color in Southern New England Project* is to develop training programs that will meet these needs and establish a strong network of beginning farmers of color who will work collaboratively across the region.

Program Overview:

This project targets farmers of color in Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts. In order to establish and grow their enterprises, farmers need access to land, strong business skills as well as some advanced agricultural technical training. The project will:

1. Document existing training for farmers on the topics of soil and nutrient management, land access, grant writing and fundraising, and business planning and marketing and use this to develop a curriculum tailored to farmers of color in the region.
2. Deliver new customized training programs to 30 farmers of color in each state annually for the next three years.
3. Establish a region-wide network of farmers of color for mentorship, mutual support and as a platform for additional collaboration and training (both online and in-person).

The project is guided by a Core Team of 8-10 leaders from the region. In addition, there is a growing set of Collaborators who are individuals and organizations who will support the project by contributing resources. Finally, there are Partners who are individuals and organizations who will help connect the project with farmer participants.

Position Overview:

AARI seeks to hire an experienced and committed individual as a Project Assistant. The Project Assistant will support the Project Director with administrative duties and financial record keeping. The Project Assistant will also work closely with and support the Project Coordinator toward implementing project deliverables and communications. Meetings will take place with the Steering Committee and Core Team members as needed. Presence invited to the tri-state annual meeting. AARI hopes to recruit an emerging leader of color with financial management skills, strong organizational and communication skills, and an understanding of the complexity of food and agriculture systems for this position.

The successful candidate will have a proven track record of:

- Financial record keeping
- Communications
- Small event planning
- Managing multiple project tasks simultaneously
- Outstanding networking and collaboration skills

The Project Assistant will report to the Project Director, Julius Kolawole. This position will be filled as soon as possible with a potential start date of December 1, 2020.

Responsibilities include:

Financial record keeping

- Work with AARI accountant, Project Director, Project Coordinator and all contractors, service providers, and speakers to gather invoices and coordinate payment for services rendered to the project.

Logistical and outreach support

- Assist Project Coordinator with Training Programs in RI, CT and MA
- Develop familiarity with the training subject matter
- Help coordinate, assist and attend 3 full day, intensive training events in RI, CT and MA, each year for the next three years. First year activities will be entirely online but subsequent years may be in person. Tasks associated with these training events could include scheduling with presenters, announcements, facility needs, refreshments, maintaining RSVP lists, implementing workshop evaluations, and follow-up with attendees
- Help coordinate, assist and attend 1 half day, intensive training event online, each year for the next three years. First year activities will be entirely online but subsequent years may be in person.
- Assist with development and implementation (in concert with Project Collaborators and Partners) of a marketing and outreach strategy for all training events. This includes travel and participation in several regional conferences to promote the program and recruit farmer participants.
- Assist with development and maintenance of a database of farmer participants in the training events
- Assist with gathering evaluation data from farmer participants as required by the Project

Overall Project Administration

- Participate and contribute to weekly meetings with the Project Steering Committee
- Assist the Project Director with annual progress reporting as required by USDA

Compensation:

We anticipate filling this position by December 1, 2020. This position is for a 12 month term with possibility for renewal up to 3 years (until August 2023). The compensation will be \$22/hour for approximately 500 hours per year of the project. Travel costs will be reimbursed at the applicable federal rate.

Qualifications:

Required:

- A minimum of 2-3 years of experience in financial record keeping in education, agriculture, or related work in a not-for-profit setting
- Excellent organizational skills with a solutionary mindset
- Sincere, honest, consistent communication skills
- Strong work ethic and reliable nature
- Experience working with diverse teams toward a common goal
- An understanding the challenges that farmers of color face
- Comfortable working with individuals and organizations committed to meaningful social change and food justice through sustainable agriculture
- Familiarity with agriculture service providers, including Extension, USDA Farm Services Agency, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Departments of Agriculture, Farm Bureau and NOFA

- Excellent competency with computer and communications technologies including Microsoft Office Suite and/or Google Application Suite
- Competency with online collaboration and presentation tools including Zoom
- Must be willing to travel across the region for events that will occur on weekends or weekday evenings. (Travel costs will be reimbursed at applicable federal rate)
- Must be able to work year-round, although the time commitment and tasks will vary. Between June to November there will be more planning tasks, and between November to May there will be more events/training/meetings to attend.
- Flexibility and optimism a must

Preferred:

- Experience farming in the Northeast
- Undergraduate or advanced degree in sustainable food systems, agriculture, natural resources, public health, education, or related field
- Experience managing or serving in a leadership role with a network, coalition, alliance, or other similar collaborative efforts
- Willing to commit up to three years to project

To Apply:

Send a cover letter, resume, and 3 references to AARI. Submit all documents in a single email to Julius Kolawole at info@africanallianceri.org with subject line “BFRDP Project Assistant Application”. Only competitive candidates will be invited to participate further in the recruitment process.

Timeline for Process:

Request for Applications opens: October 26, 2020

Applications Due: November 9, 2020

Anticipated Start Date: December 1, 2020

Questions:

Please submit questions before November 2 via email:

To: Julius Kolawole (info@africanallianceri.org)

- Cc: Karen Spiller (karen@kasconsults.com)
- Cc: Robert Chang (r.chang365@gmail.com)



African Alliance of Rhode Island

Position Announcement:

Project Coordinator

SNEFCC – Business Training and Land Access for Farmers of Color in Southern New England

Organization Overview:

The African Alliance of Rhode Island (AARI) was founded in 2004 as a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of low-income African immigrants and refugees living in the state of Rhode Island. Today, AARI assists refugees, immigrants and families of all nationalities to work together to improve their communities, engage in urban agriculture projects to help alleviate local food insecurity and bring farmers markets to underserved areas. AARI provides several multicultural celebrations and community health events, including an annual Neighborhood Health Summit. In a state where the price of arable land is highest in the country, AARI has been successful in developing several urban mini farms and a 6-acre farm where a diverse community of growers works to improve family food security, achieve earned income through sales at farmers markets, and contribute to Rhode Island's food economy. AARI also provides a range of educational projects focused on helping beginner farmers use English as a common language, develop good financial practices, and understand the basics of farm management.

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Program Overview:

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1. Document existing training for farmers on the topics of soil and nutrient management, land access, grant writing and fundraising, and business planning and marketing, and use this to develop a curriculum tailored to farmers of color in the region.
2. Deliver new customized training programs to 30 farmers of color in each state annually for the next three years.
3. Establish a region-wide network of farmers of color for mentorship, mutual support and as a platform for additional collaboration and training (both online and in-person).

The project is guided by a Core Team of 8-10 leaders from the region. In addition, there is a growing set of Collaborators who are individuals and organizations who will support the project by contributing resources. Finally, there are Partners who are individuals and organizations who will help connect the project with farmer participants.

Position Overview:

AARI seeks to hire an experienced and committed individual as a Project Coordinator. The Project Coordinator will organize meetings of the Core Team, manage communications with Partners and Collaborators, take the lead on coordinating farmer training events in RI, CT and MA, and support all grant administrative duties and leadership functions of Julius Kolawole, Project Director. AARI hopes to recruit a leader of color with project management skills who brings an understanding of the complexity of food and agricultural systems for this position.

The successful candidate will have a proven track record of:

- Event coordination
- Managing multiple project tasks simultaneously
- Outstanding networking and collaboration skills

The Project Coordinator will report to the Project Director, Julius Kolawole. This position will be filled as soon as possible with a potential start date of November 1, 2020.

Responsibilities include:

- Coordinate Training Programs in RI, CT and MA
 - Develop familiarity with the training subject matter
 - Coordinate, assist and attend 3 full day, intensive training events in RI, CT and MA, each year for the next three years. First year activities will be entirely online but subsequent years may be in person. Tasks associated with these farmer trainings include scheduling with presenters, generating digital announcements and recruiting participants, maintaining rsvp lists, coordinating and managing webinar technology (if needed), managing facility reservations and organizing refreshments (if needed), implementing workshop evaluations, and conducting follow-up with attendees.

- Coordinate, assist and attend 1 half day, intensive training event online, each year for the next three years. First year activities will be entirely online but subsequent years may be in person.
- Develop and implement (in concert with Project Collaborators and Partners) a marketing and outreach strategy for all training events. This includes travel and participation in several regional conferences to promote the program and recruit farmer participants.
- Develop and maintain a database of farmer participants in the training events
- Gather evaluation data from farmer participants as required by the Project

Overall Project Coordination

- Coordinate meetings of the Core Team, Collaborators and Partners
- Assist Project Director and Project Assistant with the annual reports for USDA
- Partner with Project Assistant in order to complete project deliverables

Compensation:

We anticipate filling this position by November 1, 2020. This position is for a 12 month term with possibility for renewal up to 3 years (until August 2023). The compensation will be \$22/hour for approximately 700 hours per year of the project. Travel costs will be reimbursed at the applicable federal rate.

Qualifications:

Required:

- A minimum of 2-3 years of experience in program coordination in education, agriculture, or related work in a not-for-profit setting
- Excellent organizational skills with solution oriented mindset
- Sincere, honest, consistent communication skills
- Strong work ethic and reliable nature
- Oral speaking skills, including experience as a presenter
- Experience working with diverse teams toward a common goal
- Deep understanding the challenges that farmers of color face
- Comfortable working with individuals and organizations committed to meaningful social change and food justice through sustainable agriculture
- Familiarity with agriculture service providers, including Extension, USDA Farm Services Agency, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Departments of Agriculture, Farm Bureau and NOFA
- Excellent competency with computer and communications technologies including Microsoft Office Suite and/or Google Application Suite
- Competency with online collaboration and presentation tools including Zoom
- Must be willing to travel across the region for events that will occur on weekends or weekday evenings. (Travel costs will be reimbursed at applicable federal rate)
- Must be able to work year-round, although the time commitment and tasks will vary. Between June to November there will be more planning tasks, and between November to May there will be more events/training/meetings to attend.
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Preferred:

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