

# Connecting Veterans to Agri-Food System Opportunities

*Education and skill development for Veterans pursuing careers in Iowa's farm, food and supply chain sectors, including networking and technical assistance from experienced advisors and immersive farm and ranch curricula.*

The Connecting Veterans to Agri-Food System Opportunities (AgVets) program from National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA) builds on an existing national program for Veterans who wish to explore careers in production agriculture and agri-food system supply chain businesses. Veterans in Agriculture, Iowa State University Extension, and Iowa Microloan will develop and offer integrated resources for apprenticeships including on-the-job training and required technical instruction, mentorship, and facilitated workshops. Activities will be designed to increase awareness about agriculture and agri-food supply chain career pathways for Veterans returning to civilian life, including successful transitions. This grant allows for a broad range of multi-faceted learning opportunities so each Veteran can choose from three career pathways: local food production, commercial agriculture, and food systems industry. Two registered apprenticeships, workshops and educational offerings will be available throughout the grant cycle. Each of the three career pathways will incorporate facilitated course instruction with curricula, resources, and mentorship. Technical assistance and mentorship will occur with participants as they complete regular course requirements and determine their next steps as a food business. One-on-one assistance will enhance each Veteran's ability to confirm unique business aspects such as financial management, whole farm and succession planning and business plan development.

## Career Pathways



### Local Foods Production

Small scale production for crops that may include fruit, vegetables, dairy, meat, grains, etc.



### Commercial Agriculture

Large scale production for crops such as corn, soy, beef, hogs, poultry, etc.



### Food Systems Industry

Businesses that increase value of raw products or enhance market options, like value-added processing, agri-food technology, market development, etc.

## Program Goals

- Help transitioning service members and Veterans become aware of opportunities available to them in employment, education and entrepreneurship opportunities at all levels along the food system
- Explain how transitioning service members and Veterans can contribute to and benefit from food and agriculture sectors and communities across rural America
- Ensure transitioning service members and Veterans know about and use programs and incentives offered by USDA
- Provide transitioning service members and Veterans with resources and training to assist in qualifying for loans, such as Beginning Farmer Loans



## Program Objectives

### Provide education on best practices for farm and agri-food system enterprise management, niche marketing and business planning

- Promote and build awareness of curricula and apprenticeships through marketing materials, outreach, fact sheets, curricula, and in person, virtual and hybrid learning methods

### Offer curricula and registered agricultural apprenticeships for veterans including practical research on farming practices, local food production techniques, financial management, niche marketing strategies, succession planning, agribusiness and food industry management and innovations

- Identify On-The-Job Training (OJT) and Required Technical Instruction (RTI) in registered apprenticeships
- Match mentor farms and veteran participants
- Offer curricula in local food production, commercial agriculture and food systems industry

### Provide technical assistance for veterans in relation to their business plan goals in production agriculture and agri-food business enterprises

- Host peer group webinars, or other coaching and mentoring activities
- Promote entrepreneur development
- Connect with innovative supply chain businesses and identify career opportunities
- Offer quarterly webinars/ workshops related to farm or farm business management, including risk management

### Increase agricultural production and agri-food business enterprise ownership by veterans

- Offer one-on-one contact for business development and/or technical assistance career planning
- Generate connections between retiring farmers and those wanting to enter farming
- Guide and mentor farmers on applications to USDA and/or state farm ownership and beginning farmer financing or as applications for business development capital and financing
- Participate in cooperative network meetings for on-farm research trials and angel investor networking programs
- Connect to food system industry

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Extension and Outreach  
Farm, Food and Enterprise Development Program



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