

# URBAN AGRICULTURE AND INNOVATIVE PRODUCTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## PUBLIC MEETING SEPTEMBER 17, 2025 | 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM (ET) MEETING MINUTES

The Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Advisory Committee (UAIPAC) is established by section 12302 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill), Public Law 115-334, 7 U.S.C. § 6923(b)(1), to advise the Secretary of Agriculture on the development of policies and outreach relating to urban, indoor, and other emerging agriculture production practices; and other aspects of the implementation of that section of the Farm Bill. This Federal advisory committee operates in compliance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act, as amended.

In accordance with the provisions of Public Law 92-463, the UAIPAC was convened for a public meeting on September 17, 2025, from 2:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M (ET). The meeting was held virtually and open to the public to join via Zoom.

A [Federal Register notice](#) was published on August 26, 2025, providing general information and public participation details for the meeting. Secondary notices were also sent out to the public directly by the agency.

Committee web page: <https://www.usda.gov/partnerships/federal-advisory-committee-urban-ag>

General inquiries: [UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov](mailto:UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov)

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## ACRONYMS

- **DFO** – Designated Federal Officer

USDA Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Advisory Committee

- **FPAC** – Farm Production and Conservation
- **NRCS** – Natural Resources Conservation Service
- **OUAIP** – Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production
- **UAIPAC** – Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Advisory Committee

## MEETING AGENDA

Item #	Topic
1.	Welcome
2.	Address Public Comments
3.	Deliberation/Proposed Recommendations
4.	Adjourn

See official copy on the [Committee Website](#).

## MEETING ATTENDANCE

UAIPAC Members			
Name	Represented Industry	Attendance	Attendance Type
Allison Papp	Financial Entity	Present	Virtual
Tony Minnick	Related Experience	Present	Virtual
Carl P. Wallace	Non-Profit Entity	Present	Virtual
Jerry Ann Hebron	Urban Production	Absent	N/A
Catherine Campbell	Higher Education/Extension	Present	Virtual
Kate Greenberg	Business/Economic Development	Absent	N/A
Kaben Smallwood	Innovative Production	Present	Virtual
Jeff Young	Higher Education/Extension	Absent	N/A
Qiana Mickie	Related Experience	Present	Virtual
Viraj Puri	Innovative Production	Present	Virtual
Dion Dawson	Supply Chain	Present	Virtual

For a full list of member biographies, visit: <https://www.usda.gov/partnerships/federal-advisory-committee-urban-ag/members>

USDA Staff	
Name	Position/Title

Markus Holliday	Acting Designated Federal Officer, Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production
Sharonte Williams	Grants Program Manager, Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

To request a copy of the public attendee list contact:

[UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov](mailto:UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov).

## PUBLIC COMMENTS

The public comment period was open from August 26, 2025 – September 30, 2025. Written comments were accepted via Zoom registration, email, and during the public meeting via Zoom Q&A. All comments that align with the statutory purpose and duties of UAIPAC are reviewed and may be considered for further discussion at a future public meeting. Oral comments were not accepted for this meeting.

To request a copy of the written public comments contact:

[UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov](mailto:UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov).

## MEETING RECORDING

To request a copy of the Zoom meeting recording contact:

[UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov](mailto:UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov).

## MEETING MINUTES

### Welcome

*Markus Holliday (Acting DFO)* welcomed and thanked everyone for joining. He also reviewed the meeting agenda and objectives before taking attendance to ensure the meeting quorum.

## Addressing Public Comments

***Kaben Smallwood (Chairperson) and Qiana Mickie (Co-Chairperson)*** thanked the public attendees from the previous meeting who contributed to the oral comment segment and others who provided comments in writing. They both stressed the importance of providing feedback for the Committee to stay informed on the issues occurring in urban agriculture and innovative production communities across the nation. Specific comment highlights included topics of funding opportunity announcements, the future of urban agriculture and innovative production under the new administration, farm-to-school programs, and agriculture education.

## Deliberation/Proposed Recommendations

***Markus Holliday (Acting DFO)*** provided an overview of the deliberation and voting ground rules.

### Proposed Recommendation #1: Permanent Federal Advisory Committee for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

Establish a discretionary and permanent federal advisory committee for urban agriculture and innovative production.

***Carl P. Wallace (Member)*** presented the proposed recommendation and provided background information. He stressed the importance of the Committee being in the public's interest and that the motivation to propose the recommendation was based on several public comments made by various stakeholders who have experienced the value it brings to both USDA and the farmers who are impacted. He then made a motion for the Committee vote.

***Kaben Smallwood (Chairperson)*** suggested allowing all the present members to provide feedback before a vote was officially called.

***Allison Paap (Member)*** asked for clarification on the difference between discretionary and permanent advisory committees.

***Markus Holliday (Acting DFO)*** responded to explain the various ways federal advisory committees are established and clarified how the current statutory establishment structure of the committee would differ from a separate agency discretion and permanent establishment structure.

***Qiana Mickie (Co-Chairperson)*** recommended any clarification for the term “discretionary” be added as sub-bullets in the proposed recommendation language.

***Kaben Smallwood (Chairperson)*** made a point of order to recommend the Committee did not make any final votes for any proposed recommendations on the docket until the following meeting and instead focused on deliberating each topic.

***Allison Paap (Member)*** asked if the Committee should also address the membership composition in addition to changing the establishment classification.

***Kaben Smallwood (Chairperson)*** mentioned that doing so would be a good idea to align with the Committee’s goals and objectives. He also suggested all committee members take this into consideration when drafting any sub-bullets to add to the proposed language before the final vote was called at the next meeting.

## Proposed Recommendation #2: Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Grants

Release a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Grants for Fiscal Year 2026.

***Kaben Smallwood (Chairperson)*** presented the proposed recommendation, mentioning that it was also motivated by public comments submitted to the Committee. He provided background information about the USDA funding announcement made earlier in the year that was cancelled prematurely and never reannounced to the public. He also stressed the importance of USDA releasing the announcement and pre-allocated funds through the competitive process to continue building stronger and more resilient food networks for the farmers and communities they serve.

***Catherine Campbell (Member)*** highlighted the importance of gathering data to support recommendations that are evidence-based and provided a few examples of her recommendations for USDA grant funding to support urban agriculture and innovative production. One of her recommendations was to establish competitive grant funding for integrated research between higher education/extension and non-profits to support rigorous research on the impacts of youth education, community development, workforce development, food access, and health outcomes. She mentioned that previous grant funding opportunities for urban agriculture have not allowed institutions of higher education to apply which has limited the efforts to build foundational evidence and data to support future program development and models. She also mentioned the

need for broader systematic data collection to parallel the census of agriculture to help better understand the scope and impact of urban agriculture across the nation. She supported her claim by highlighting a 2018 report to Congress that found urban agriculture practices are systematically excluded.

**Kaben Smallwood (Chairperson)** agreed with Campbell's points and suggested she propose her recommendations separately to distinguish between the presented recommendations and to allow for proper deliberation on new topics.

**Qiana Mickie (Co-Chairperson)** also agreed with Campbell's points and suggested the Committee may want to entertain a separate proposal on the general use of data integration for grant funding.

**Allison Paap (Member)** asked for clarification on the current process to arrange and announce USDA funding opportunities to the public.

**Markus Holliday (Acting DFO) and Sharonte Williams (OUAIP Staff)** clarified that any new funding opportunity announcements would be released for Fiscal Year 2026 instead of 2025 and provided background information on the USDA process to release announcements.

**Tony Minnick (Member)** suggested everyone review the grant awardee list from previous years to gain a better understanding of what the grant funding has helped eligible entities accomplish. He also applauded Campbell's efforts on additional recommendation proposals to use data and focus on integrated research.

### Proposed Recommendation #3: FSA Urban/Suburban County Committees

Authorize the Farm Service Agency (FSA) Urban/Suburban County Committee (UCOC) program to be permanent instead of a pilot project and adjust responsibilities of the program to better match existing County Committees.

- a. The current list of 27 cities should have full and active UCOCs. The committees are made up of three to 11 members who serve three-year terms.
- b. Resources to support the operations and activities of UCOCs should be provided by FSA.
- c. Collaboration and engagement with local FSA Urban Service Center staff should be supported by FSA and NRCS.

**Qiana Mickie (Co-Chairperson)** presented the recommendation with background information while continuing to highlight the public feedback received to support the proposal.

**Carl P. Wallace (Member)** asked where the list of 27 cities can be reviewed by the group.

**Qiana Mickie (Co-Chairperson)** clarified the list was publicly available online via USDA website.

**Kaben Smallwood (Chairperson)** asked Mickie to clarify where the UCOCs were physically located.

**Qiana Mickie (Co-Chairperson)** provided background information on the USDA pilot program that created the UCOC's. She also highlighted the importance and value they bring to coordinating local efforts for urban agriculture and innovative production frameworks.

#### **Proposed Recommendation #4: USDA Urban Service Centers: Urban Agriculture Technical Assistance**

Integrate dedicated USDA staff with specialized technical expertise in the USDA Urban Service Centers where the Urban County Committees (UCOC) are, to improve technical assistance, outreach, and opportunities relevant to urban agriculture and innovative producers/growers.

- a. Staff should make joint site visits to urban farms with other FSA and NRCS Service Center representatives to provide specific guidance on indoor or other emerging production practices.
- b. Staff should provide specific guidance to eligible urban farmer entities to help them better apply for FSA and NRCS programs such as establishing a farm record and applying for program support.
- c. Solidify engagement with staff and UCOC Board Committees to gather insight and feedback on needed modifications to FSA and NRCS program eligibility guidelines and resources in the service centers to better serve the breadth of urban agriculture and innovative growers and producers.
- d. Solidify formal partnerships with community-based organizations, farm businesses, and technical assistance providers to expand the impact of Urban Service Centers' outreach and work with demonstration farms for more hands-on, peer-to-peer technical assistance.

**Tony Minnick (Member)** presented the recommendation and highlighted the motivation for the proposal to enhance the quality of the experience farmers have while working with USDA Urban Service Centers.

**Qiana Mickie (Co-Chairperson)** highlighted the importance of technical assistance and the value and connection it brings to community-based organizations and other small for-profit businesses who may be considered beginners in the industry.

**Allison Paap (Member)** asked for clarification on whether the proposal was recommending USDA create a new position to include the outlined duties or if the duties be approved and embedded in the performance of existing USDA employees who currently worked at USDA Urban Service Centers.

**Qiana Mickie (Co-Chairperson)** mentioned that any proposal to create new positions should be outlined and deliberated separately and clarified her understanding was that USDA has existing roles that may not yet be filled that could include the duties as outlined in the proposal to meet the needs of customers.

**Kaben Smallwood (Chairperson)** suggested following up with the original authors of the proposal to include the requested clarifications in the next meeting deliberation session.

### **Proposed Recommendation #5: Grant Funding to Build Evidence-Based Urban Agriculture Programs**

The Committee recognizes that urban agriculture has the potential to contribute significantly to economic and workforce development, youth education, healthy food access, and community health. However, the current evidence base is fragmented and insufficient to guide both large-scale federal programs and policies and local policies, programs, and businesses. To ensure that future investments are effective, scalable, and grounded in data, the Committee emphasizes the need for dedicated research funding, structured pilot programs with strong evaluation components, and improved national data collection.

- a. The Committee recommends that USDA, with leadership from National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) in coordination with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and DOE, establish integrated research and education competitive grant programs to support rigorous research on the impacts of urban agriculture on youth education, community development, workforce development, food access, and health outcomes.
- b. The Committee recommends that federal agencies USDA, with leadership from NIFA and in partnership with relevant USDA sub-agencies, funds pilot programs in urban

agriculture that require partnerships between community organizations and institutions of higher education with built-in evaluation components, ensuring that findings generate reliable evidence to inform future program development and federal policy guidance.

- c. The Committee recommends that USDA expand systematic, recurring national data collection efforts, including through ERS and the Census of Agriculture, to quantify the scope of urban agriculture activities, practices and outcomes, to support standardized data collection that allows for valid comparisons across states and regions, and to support partnerships with universities and Extension for longitudinal and generalizable research.

**Catherine Campbell (Member)** presented the proposed recommendation and reiterated some of her earlier points to highlight the need for data to provide evidence-based support for grant funding.

**Qiana Mickie (Co-Chairperson)** asked for clarification about the agriculture census information Campbell mentioned during previous deliberation.

**Catherine Campbell (Member)** highlighted various metrics for census data collection in urban agriculture and gave examples of how it would better serve the needs of communities if there was a systematic approach to collecting data compared to ad-hoc and less formal collection efforts completed in the past.

**(Full Committee)** All committee members then had a general discussion related to planning the next public meeting and reassuring action items.

### **Closing Remarks**

**Markus Holliday (Acting DFO)** thanked the committee members and the public for their participation. He also provided additional instructions on how the public can provide formal written comments during the open comment period.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:00 P.M (ET).

## CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

/s/

Kaben Smallwood

Chairperson, Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Advisory Committee

/s/

Markus Holliday

Acting Designated Federal Officer, Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Advisory Committee