



Farm Production and Conservation  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

# USDA URBAN AGRICULTURE AND INNOVATIVE PRODUCTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## Public Meeting Minutes

October 23, 2024 | 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm (et)

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 its eleventh public meeting on October 23, 2024, from 2:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M (ET). The meeting was held at the USDA Urban Service Center in Dallas, TX and was open to the public to join virtually via Zoom webinar.

A [Federal Register notice](#) was published on October 4, 2024, 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

**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

**USDA** – United States Department of Agriculture

## MEETING AGENDA

Item #	Topic
1.	Welcome
2.	Opening Remarks
3.	Address Public Comments
4.	Deliberation/Voting on Proposed Recommendations
5.	Closing Remarks

## MEETING ATTENDANCE

UAIPAC Members			
Name	Represented Industry	Attendance	Attendance Type
Allison Papp	Financial Entity	Present	In-person
Angie Mason	Related Experience	Present	In-person
Carl P. Wallace	Non-Profit Entity	Present	In-person
Jerry Ann Hebron	Urban Production	Present	In-person
John Erwin	Higher Education/Extension	Absent	N/A
Kate Greenberg	Business/Economic Development	Absent	N/A
Kaben Smallwood	Innovative Production	Present	In-person
Jeff Young	Higher Education/Extension	Present	In-person
Qiana Mickie	Related Experience	Present	In-person
Viraj Puri	Innovative Production	Present	Virtual
Zachari Curtis	Food 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
Brian Guse	Director/Designated Federal Officer, Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production
Markus Holliday	Coordinator, Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production

To request a copy of the general audience attendee list contact: [UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov](mailto:UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov).

## PUBLIC COMMENTS

The public comment period was open from October 4, 2024 – November 6, 2024. Written comments were accepted via Zoom Webinar registration, email ([UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov](mailto:UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov)), 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 also accepted during the meeting. To request a copy of the public comments contact: [UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov](mailto:UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov).

## MEETING RECORDING

To request a copy of the meeting recording contact: [UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov](mailto:UrbanAgricultureFederalAdvisoryCommittee@usda.gov).

## MEETING MINUTES

### Welcome

*Markus Holliday (Coordinator)* welcomed and thanked everyone for joining. He also took attendance of committee members to ensure the meeting had a quorum.

### Opening Remarks

*Brian Guse (Director/DFO)* took time to acknowledge member, Ted Fang, who recently passed away. He also took attendance of committee members to ensure the meeting had a quorum. He then called the meeting to order and proceeded to go over the meeting agenda and provide an overview of the UAIPAC purpose and duties.

### Addressing Public Comments

*Kaben Smallwood (Chairperson) and Qiana Mickie (Co-Chair)* addressed previous public comments regarding supply chain issues faced by urban farmers and innovative producers, technical resources available for USDA programs, and programs available to non-profit organizations and veterans by the Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production.

### Deliberation/Voting

*Brian Guse (Director/DFO)* provided an overview of the deliberation and voting ground rules.

### **Proposed Recommendation #8: NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)**

Develop and integrate innovative producers into the eligibility criteria of the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

- a. Increase technical knowledge of NRCS staff to better support innovative urban agriculture producers' access NRCS EQIP resources and technical assistance.
- b. Modify current EQIP program requirements to better align with relevancy of innovative urban agriculture models/practices such as Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA), hydroponics, aquaponics, and indoor vertical production, etc.

**Qiana Mickie (Co-Chair)** presented the recommendation with background information and opened the floor for deliberation.

**Kaben Smallwood (Chair)** provided additional background information on the NRCS EQIP program.

**Jeff Young (Member)** asked for additional clarification on program eligibility requirements for urban and innovative producers.

**Kaben Smallwood (Chair)** provided clarification and made a motion to amend subsection b to add "and other types of innovative production".

**Brian Guse (DFO)** called for a vote to the motion of amended language and a subsequent vote to approve the recommendations as amended.

#### **FINAL RESULT:**

With no additional comments from other members, the recommendation passed as amended by majority vote.

### **Proposed Recommendation #9: Alternative Reimbursement Process (NRCS and Rural Development)**

Require eligible vendors to accept vouchers from urban farmers and innovative producers as opposed to requiring urban farmers and innovative producers to pay out-of-pocket then be reimbursed. Vendors then submit vouchers to the USDA for reimbursement.

**Kaben Smallwood (Chair)** presented the recommendation with background information and opened the floor for deliberation.

**Jeff Young (Member)** questioned if there are other USDA programs that could benefit from vouchers.

**Carl P. Wallace (Member)** responded to clarify there are other USDA programs that could benefit from vouchers and suggested for the Committee to consider adding Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) programs which vouchers may be more applicable to.

**Allison Paap (Member)** raised a concern about a lack of consistency in percentages for programs that are applicable for reimbursement (i.e., 50% versus 100%). She also raised a concern about the order in which the reimbursement would apply.

**Kaben Smallwood (Chair)** agreed with Allison's concerns and mentioned it could create potential issues for USDA to release a voucher for uncomplete work, which could also create a burden for farmers and business owners.

**Jerry Ann Hebron (Member)** shared a personal example where she was able to claim a hardship.

**Qiana Mickie (Co-Chair)** shared comments presented by the public in the Zoom webinar Q&A box.

**Kaben Smallwood (Chair)** raised concerns about the various parties involved in the process and how to determine who is the main beneficiary considering that vendors can receive benefits multiple times based on the number of farmers recruited, however each farmer may only receive benefits one time.

**Qiana Mickie (Co-Chair)** mentioned the Committee should also consider businesses with smaller operation capacities to eliminate the potential of creating barriers for those who may want to become vendors to support farmers.

**Angie Mason (Member)** questioned the possibility for a farmer to have a choice in working directly with a small business that doesn't meet the USDA requirements for the purpose of supporting the small business.

**Jeff Young (Member)** questioned the level of difficulty for businesses to become an eligible vendor.

**Carl P. Wallace (Member)** reiterated the suggested amendment for the recommendation to apply to all FPAC programs instead of NRCS and Rural Development. He also suggested to amend the language, adding "if desired" to provide the option to farmers and producers.

**Kaben Smallwood (Chair)** made a motion to postpone the recommendation to allow the Committee additional time to make revisions based on the suggestions mentioned during deliberation.

**Brian Guse (DFO)** clarified that Rural Development is not a sub-agency under FPAC. He then called a vote to postpone the recommendation.

#### **FINAL RESULT:**

The recommendation was postponed and will be scheduled for deliberation at the next public meeting.

#### **Proposed Recommendation #10: FPAC Grant Process: Utilizing Urban Service Center Staff to Assist with Grant Programs**

USDA Urban Service Center staff and affiliate extension staff provide customers with technical training and assistance regarding all FPAC grant programs.

**Qiana Mickie (Co-Chair)** presented the recommendation and opened the floor for deliberation.

**Kaben Smallwood (Chair)** provided additional background information and history from the previous meeting when the recommendation was originally presented.

**Jeff Young (Member)** raised a concern about extension staff not having the technical background to assist with USDA grant programs and suggested striking this language from the recommendation. He then provided examples of what extension staff can assist with based on their purview.

**Carl P. Wallace (Member)** agreed and made a motion to vote of the amended language.

*Brian Guse (DFO)* called for a vote to the motion of amended language and a subsequent vote to approve the recommendations as amended.

**FINAL RESULT:**

With no additional comments from other members, the recommendation passed as amended by majority vote.

**Proposed Recommendation #13: FSA Urban County Committees**

Authorize the Urban County Committee program to become permanent instead of a pilot project and adjust responsibilities of the program to better match standard County Committees.

*Qiana Mickie (Co-Chair)* presented the recommendation to provide background information and opened the floor for deliberation. She also suggested amending the language in include urban/suburban.

*Allison Paap (Member)* also suggested an amendment to replace the word “standard” with ‘existing”.

*Kaben Smallwood (Chair)* made a motion to make both suggested amendments.

*Brian Guse (DFO)* called for a vote to the motion of amended language and a subsequent vote to approve the recommendations as amended.

**FINAL RESULT:**

With no additional comments from other members, the recommendation passed as amended by majority vote.

**Proposed Recommendation #14: USDA Urban Service Centers: Office Operations**

To better meet the unique needs and schedules of urban agriculture growers and producers, it is recommended that USDA Urban Service Center staff adjust office operations such as later office hours, weekend days of service, and on-site urban farm appointments in the 27 Urban County Committee (UCOC) city locations.

*Qiana Mickie (Co-Chair)* presented the recommendation to provide background information and opened the floor for deliberation.

*Carl P. Wallace (Member)* suggested an amendment to include both urban and innovative agricultural growers and producers. He also suggested striking “27” to include current and future Urban County Committee (UCOC) city locations.

*Kaben Smallwood (Chair)* suggested adding “all” in front of Urban County Committee (UCOC) city locations to provide further clarification of inclusion.

*Jerry Ann Hebron (Member)* agreed with the suggested amendments and shared how she and other producers could benefit.

*Kaben Smallwood (Chair)* shared additional examples of how producers may benefit from the recommendation, noting that many producers work on farms as a secondary job and having access to Urban Service Centers during irregular business hours adds more flexibility in scheduling.

*Allison Paap (Member)* questioned how office hours were currently set-up for the Urban Service Centers currently operating. (Several members responded to share the hours of operation for locations they have personally visited.)

**Kaben Smallwood (Chair)** reiterated the suggested amendments and made a motion to vote.

**Brian Guse (DFO)** called for a vote to the motion of amended language and a subsequent vote to approve the recommendation as amended.

**FINAL RESULT:**

With no additional comments from other members, the recommendation passed as amended by majority vote.

**Proposed Recommendation #15: USDA Urban Service Centers: *Urban Agriculture Technician Position***

Integrate an *Urban Agriculture Technician* in the USDA Urban Service Centers including the 27 cities 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.

**Qiana Mickie (Co-Chair)** presented the recommendation to provide background information and opened the floor for deliberation.

**Jeff Young (Member)** questioned if the Urban Agriculture Technician position already exists or if it would be a new position.

**Qiana Mickie (Co-Chair)** mentioned the intent of the recommendation was for USDA to recognize the position as one that should be introduced and implemented at Urban Service Centers.

**Kaben Smallwood (Chair)** shared his agreement with the recommendation and suggested the Committee consider proposing a separate recommendation specifically for innovative producers who may work outside of the urban/suburban locations.

**Carl P. Wallace (Member)** suggested striking “27 cities” from the proposed recommendation to include current and future Urban Service Center locations.

**Allison Paap (Member)** questioned if the word “technician” is associated with any specific USDA job level/grade.

**Brian Guse (DFO)** responded to Allison to share that specific word(s) used in job titles varies by agency based on each position description and classification.

**Kaben Smallwood (Chair)** questioned if the Committee should consider using a different term to describe the position for which they are proposing to be introduced.

**Jeff Young (Member)** questioned if the job duties being introduced are duties that existing staff already have in their job description.



**Jerry Ann Hebron (Member)** questioned if the job duties being introduced are considered additional work, does the staff have the capacity to fulfil the added work.

**Carl P. Wallace (Member)** suggested rephrasing the proposed recommendation language to capture the inclusion of work. He also suggested adding “innovative” to all applicable subparts of the proposed recommendation to be inclusive of urban and innovative growers and producers.

**Allison Paap (Member)** suggested amending the language to apply to USDA staff with specialized technical expertise.

**Kaben Smallwood (Chair)** suggested amending the title of the proposed recommendation to read “USDA Urban Service Centers: Urban Agriculture Technical Assistance”. He also made a motion to make all previous amended changes as suggested.

**Qiana Mickie (Co-Chair)** suggested amending all applicable sub-sections by striking the word “technician” and replacing with the “staff” to corresponded with the bolded text.

**Brian Guse (DFO)** called for a vote to the motion of amended language and a subsequent vote to approve the recommendation as amended.

#### **FINAL RESULT:**

With no additional comments from other members, the recommendation passed as amended by majority vote.

### **Closing Remarks**

**Brian Guse (Director/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.

## **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/  
Brian Guse

Director/Designated Federal Officer, Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production Advisory Committee