

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**NINE STATE AGRICULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM PROGRAMS TO RECEIVE
USDA/NIFA-NAITCO “FIRE-UP GRANT” FUNDING FOR SPECIAL PROJECTS**

The National Agriculture in the Classroom Organization (NAITCO) has selected nine state Agriculture in the Classroom (AIRC) projects for funding this year as part of a competitive grants program called the “USDA/NIFA-NAITCO Fire-Up Grants” program to support the growth of agricultural literacy in pre-kindergarten—12th grade classrooms across the country.

The purpose of the Fire-Up Grants program is to strengthen new and existing state AIRC programs with additional funding and create programs other AIRC state programs can replicate.

Projects funded this year include one in which the Florida program will develop a unit on aquaculture for teachers in 3rd through 8th grade and another in Oregon in which professional development workshops for teachers are developed to showcase children’s books and related resources tied to commodities in Oregon.

Funding for the competitive grants program comes from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA/NIFA).

“Strengthening state Agriculture in the Classroom programs is one of the goals of the USDA/NIFA grant funding NAITCO receives, and the Fire-Up Grant program is a great way to provide funds for innovative projects, expansion of successful existing ones and support for professional development for agricultural literacy educators,” said Dr. Carlos Ortiz, AIRC National Program Leader for USDA/NIFA.

“We are very appreciative of USDA/NIFA’s grant funding so we can support innovative projects being developed by our AIRC state programs,” said Tammy Maxey, president of NAITCO and programs director of Virginia Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom. “In addition to helping them reach even more teachers and students in their states, they’re creating programs other AIRC state programs can duplicate as well.”

Projects selected for funding this year are:

Start-Up Grants

- **Florida Agriculture in the Classroom** — “Increasing Knowledge and Understanding of Aquaculture: Aquaponics in the Classroom” will allow the Florida program to develop, pilot test and present to teachers aquaponics resources aligned to 3rd through 8th grade standards to educate students about an important agriculture industry in Florida.
- **Virginia Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom** — “Virginia AIRC Start-Up Grant Application: Virtual Teacher Training” will allow the Virginia program to develop and deliver an online professional development course for teachers in pre-kindergarten through 6th grade using agricultural concepts as the context to teach all subject areas.
- **Puerto Rico Agriculture in the Classroom** — “Strengthening Agricultural Literacy in Puerto Rico: Outreach and Resource Development” will allow the Puerto Rico program to develop new educational resources and a manual connected to videos and a YouTube channel, translate into Spanish some lessons from the [National Agricultural Literacy Curriculum Matrix](#), and hold seven teacher workshops.
- **Iowa Agriculture Literacy Foundation** — “A Bushel of Stories: Inspiring Young Authors – Writing about Agriculture!” will help the Iowa program hold a student competition that will encourage young authors in grades 3-8 to develop an agricultural, farm-based, or food-based story, and compete against each other to have the best stories published.

Scale-Up Grants

- **Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation** — “Interactive Map: Update Data and Develop Platform for Multi-state Use” will help the Nebraska program update and expand its online, interactive map featuring the state’s commodities based on the latest census data and the most recent state educational standards.

- **Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom** — “AgMags for All K-6 Students” expands the Minnesota program’s effort to broaden to third and fourth grades its popular, grade-specific AgMag series that connects Minnesota agriculture to academic standards in science, social studies, and language arts.
- **Maine Agriculture in the Classroom** — “Maine Harvest of the Month: From Farm to Cafeteria to Classroom” Maine Agriculture in the Classroom, in alliance with Maine Farm to School Network, will provide classroom resources to teachers and students across the state participating in the Maine Department of Education’s Harvest of the Month program. This program will increase awareness of selected foods each month in the school’s cafeteria.

Jump-Up Grants

- **Oregon Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation** — “Reading and Eating: Agricultural Literacy Nights for Educators” will provide funding for the Oregon program to hold four professional development workshops for teachers in which they are introduced to children’s books and related educational resources that use Oregon commodities as the context to teach core subject areas.
- **California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom** — California’s “Sowing to Growing” program will provide community-based agricultural education programs with a guidebook and workshop that trains volunteers and staff of local agriculture organizations about how to develop a well-rounded local program that reaches students and teachers in their communities.

USDA/NIFA is a U.S. federal government agency created by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008. Its purpose is to consolidate all federally funded agricultural research and is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It replaced the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service in 2009. To learn more about USDA/NIFA, please visit <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/>.

NAITCO is a non-profit organization representing most of the 50 state Agriculture in the Classroom programs around the country. Its mission is to educate PreK-12th grade teachers and students about the importance of agriculture by providing them with web-based materials, workshops, grants programs and awards programs that demonstrate how agriculture can be used to effectively teach core subject areas. To learn more about NAITCO, please visit <https://agclassroom.org/index.cfm>.

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