

# How to Turn Your Company Into a Multi-Million Dollar Firm

# MEA

Minority Enterprise Advocate

July - August 2015  
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**“Integrity in the World of Now”**  
**Craig Stowers, CEO of Ramarc Solutions**



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# Publisher's Message

There is so much trouble in the world today, especially in the African-American community. We are a very powerful, intelligent and success-driven people, but we are suffering economically and socially. This crisis has to be addressed by a leader that we can all rally around and respect. There are no more Martin Luther King Jr.'s to rally around and lead us. We need a leader that is not afraid to demand the change that will make the American system change to stop suffocating the African-American people. There needs to be a movement similar to the civil rights experience to wake up our nation. But who is going to be brave enough to lead us down that path without fearing life or limb? This crisis is real and we need to stop acting like everything will be alright. As long as no one is fighting to change laws and policies that are degrading and killing African-Americans we are not winning. And even then the laws must be upheld to protect us.

The purpose of the Black History Corner segment is to educate people everywhere about the contributions black people have given to the world throughout history and today. We will always play a large role in the world, but unfortunately in 2015 we still do not get any respect.

The photo review for the Federal Business Forum & Expo 2015 is our center spread. The event was very successful and the first time we combined our awards luncheon program with the form and a matchmaking session. This will be a continuous event each year. So get your nominations ready for the 2016 awards luncheon.

I hope you enjoy this issue.



Debra Williams,  
Publisher

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Debra Williams.

*The highest test of the civilization of any race is its willingness to extend a helping hand to the less fortunate. A race, like an individual, lifts itself up by lifting others up.*  
- Booker T. Washington

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*Pearl & Mel Shaw*

Customer service is at the core of business. Focus on the customer. Increase customer demand. Anticipate customer needs. Retain your customer. Grow the business associated with your current customers. Without a customer focus business walks and then runs in another direction. “The customer is always right” has been a business adage for years. While that’s not always true – see below – everyone can repeat it, and many businesses act on it.

But what about nonprofits? What role does customer service in the nonprofit sector? Like private sector businesses and government agencies, nonprofits are increasingly asked to focus on the people they serve. For many this is not news. So many employees, volunteers, board members and executives at nonprofits are all about the people they serve. They are passionate, compassionate, committed, and resourceful.

But how do people who are “served” actually feel about the “service” they receive? That’s something that donors and funders often want to know. It’s one thing to show data that illustrates the number of families served, for example, but how do those family members feel about the “service?” Too often data leaves out the experiences of the people at the core of a nonprofit’s work, resulting in a consistency of service that may not actually meet people’s needs. Related to this, “customer service” is also critical to management and board leadership: they want to know how well the organization is delivering on its mission and vision, and where improvements are needed. Many times organizations do the best they can with the resources available to them. But what if that’s not good enough? And who decides?

To learn more we talked with Lewis Rambo, Ph.D. “Typical customer service propositions for firms like Target, Walmart, Macy’s, Amazon, and countless other “brick and mortar,” and

## Customer Service- A Nonprofit Nonnegotiable

by Mel & Pearl Shaw

Internet-based merchandisers are fairly straightforward. But many nonprofits – including colleges and universities – have missions that are complex and often underfunded.” That’s how he began our conversation. Rambo should know, his experience includes years of helping organizations with the challenges of reframing their visions and changing their cultures.

“Higher education – for example – is increasingly asked to improve its customer service. However, a college or university is not a retail outlet. Because of this it is important that higher education host strategic conversations among their many stakeholders in order to arrive at a common understanding of exactly what “customer service” really means for students, administrators, faculty, staff, parents, and the countless other members of the broader community of stakeholders who have both realistic and unrealistic expectations of the institution.”

He continued, with this example, “The missions of educational institutions are often dauntingly complex. They often pit admission requirements, mandated programs of study, required courses, examinations, and the legally determined responsibility as ‘In loco parentis,’ to name just a few; against launching a set of ‘one size fits all’ initiatives to try to ‘super please’ its many different ‘customers.’”

Using an example from the private sector Rambo focused on Southwest Airlines and its realization that it is not necessarily a wise decision to always follow the well worn adage “the customer is always right!”

*How do you measure customer service? Can a nonprofit organization, college or university use the same processes that a retail business would use?*

“Let’s face it, the customer simply is not always right,” Rambo began. “In fact some customers can be completely unreasonable in their expectations and demands. Southwest found that it was often frustrating and disempowering its employees by trying to “super please” difficult customers. Southwest has decided to support its employees when one of its flying customers is out of line or verbally or even physically abusive.





“The important point here is making sure that an organization understands that it has both internal and external ‘customers.’ Simply focusing on making buying customers happy, regardless of what they do can lead to disengaged employees and lowered morale.” Recognizing, acknowledging and striking the right balance with all your customer groups is not an easy task but is essential, if a business is to grow and prosper.

Finally, Rambo encourages institutions to “discuss the undiscussable.” That means encouraging the many constituents of an organization to express their ideas, concerns, fears, biases, and experiences prior to launching a customer service program. This can help the process of defining customer service benchmarks.

Without this you may end up measuring the “wrong” benchmarks, or trying to satisfy a constituents whose satisfaction can only be measured in the long term. Our perspective: engage your constituents. Take the time to create a process that will work. It can be challenging, but it’s worth it.

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Mel and Pearl Shaw position nonprofits, colleges and universities for fundraising success. For help with your fundraising visit [www.saadandshaw.com](http://www.saadandshaw.com) or call (901) 522-8727.



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*Craig Stowers, CEO of Ramarc Solutions*

If you're following the rising stars of minority small businesses in the Federal marketplace, then keep an eye out for Craig Stowers of Vienna, Virginia-based Ramarc Solutions as one to watch. Stowers represents a new generation of IT companies. He got his start leading and managing IT services for high profile non-profit and private sector organizations ranging from GetWell Network to the ONE Campaign. Unlike most small businesses, whom often carry little experience and pursue the federal IT sector by marketing to Government Agencies and major prime contractors for subcontract work, Ramarc started just the opposite, by building a non federal government centric business base first. With that experience in tow, Ramarc Solutions is set on taking its talents to the federal government sector.

Over the last two decades, hundreds of small companies pursued the bullish \$6 Billion dollar Government IT marketplace with the intentions of getting their share of that market. But times are different with a myriad of market challenges that would make even the most storied small business owners of years past who are either still in business, were acquired, or forced to exit, have second thoughts about jumping into the market today. Long gone are the days of "walking the halls" as a newly minted 8(a) contractor. The bar and demands for access to opportunities are much higher and more complex. One must also have multiple GSA schedules, hold different Agency Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contracts, covet a meaningful Mentor-Protégé relationship with a major prime contractor and by the way, endure the lingering effects of sequestration and government shut downs. Still interested? Stowers answered with a resounding 'Yes!'

## Integrity in the World of Now Craig Stowers, Founder & CEO of Ramarc Solutions

by Lamont Hames

When I asked him why? His comment was, "because the Federal Government is still the most stable and consistent customer on the planet. I run a global business and I'm comfortable with uncertainty. I deal with multiple customers, cultures, time zones, and issues on a daily basis. I've been preparing for this a long time," he said with complete confidence.

As I got to know Stowers, I realized this is a humble and passionate business owner that appreciates the opportunity to forge his own path. He gives credit for his success to others, with accolades directed to his wife Marta who he recognizes as a very business-minded partner. She keeps him on track with customer service, staff, invoices, and new business issues. He jokingly laughs that he reports to her everyday. While he wishes she were in the office, they play better in different playgrounds, but she is his rock and the reason for Ramarc Solutions. The acronym Ramarc represents the first three letters of their first names spelled backwards.

Stowers staff has been with him for a long time and their commitment is not for financial gain as much as being aligned with the mission and purpose of the company. Stowers says he really works for his employees. Ramarc Solutions has been in business for ten years and his workforce tenure averages six years. "It's about loyalty, we love IT, and we love delivering IT together. They could easily go out and make more money elsewhere, but we all believe collectively we can achieve a shared vision to change the world. But Stowers also asserts, "the world is changing in the IT business and it's a not a very nice place. We love IT, we love playing with the new gadgets, but because we live in the world of now, everything is now, now, now and customers are less patient, if you can't deliver in time, you will be replaced. But on the flip side it creates opportunity; cloud, data security, more hardware purchases, mobility, desktops and Video Teleconferencing Systems to deliver. So on the business side, if Sony, Wall Street or the Government gets hacked, that creates more opportunity." Before, as a working professional, Stowers says he was the guy who you gave a computer to and he would be in a room and just fix it or make it do whatever you wanted. Now, as a business owner, he has to consider so many other variables, like budgets. "Customers don't need IT until they need IT. They might say why do I need it? I have Google Docs and shared drives, but when that data is lost, then you are calling us in to fix it. So, there is a constant tug of war between what customers think they need versus allowing us to help properly plan their needs," he said.

When Stowers was asked to expand further on how he deals with changing customer budgets in the non-profit and commercial sectors, he described; "With commercial organizations, they budget, plan, and then go for it. But with non-profit organizations, you might hear a customer say, 'we know about it...we know about it...we- know- about- it...' and then until things come to a grinding

halt, they react. But that type of experience has prepared us to take on more, as we are used to dealing with a lot of different situations. There has been times when the decision was made to risk his own budget by making investments to help customers see and experience things more clearly, and those bets, while risky, paid off when the customers expand contractual services or make another purchase. You are always being tested and watched, particularly as a small business but we always rise to the occasion.”

As founder and CEO of Ramarc Solutions, LLC and Ramarc Solutions UK Limited, Stowers keeps busy overseeing both companies and has steered them to steady and consistent growth over the years. The companies are primary providers of IT solutions for Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and several non-profits including some large ones like Habitat for Humanity. When its CEO moved on to take the helm for music group legend U2 leader Bono’s ONE Campaign, Ramarc Solutions was called in to manage all IT infrastructure worldwide. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., Bono’s ONE Campaign is an international campaigning and advocacy organization to combat extreme poverty and preventable disease, particularly in Africa. Ramarc Solutions provides professional support, server, storage and network solutions to name a few their services. Supporting an organization that literally is changing the world fuels Stowers and his teams’ passion to do the same. Stowers said he can be in a foreign country participating in a several hour meeting with management and Bono is in attendance, participating and hard hitting; then later he is on stage that evening performing before a sold out stadium. Stowers remarked, “who knew Bono had such a strong business acumen?”

Fortunately for Ramarc Solutions, as their client portfolio has expanded, so has Ramarc, who not only supports the ONE Campaign Global Headquarters offices in Washington, DC, but their affiliate locations in New York, London, Paris, Brussels, Berlin and South Africa. Ramarc is a global solutions provider and supports other organizations throughout the world. Which brings Stowers back to why he is ready to expand his business to the Government sector.

Stowers believes Ramarc is uniquely qualified to deliver high quality IT services to the federal agencies. They have received their SBA 8(a) certification and hold a GSA Schedule 70 contract. Further, Ramarc Solutions has already secured a prime contract with the Army National Guard and a few other agencies. They are actively pursuing teaming agreements with key service providers and partners. Their strategy is to present a well rounded organization deeply rooted in a wide range of technical and professional support services by forming a consortium of a handful of small businesses that each brings a unique attribute attractive to Government clients. Ensuring there is little overlap, the consortium allows for shared services so the whole is greater than its parts. Further, he is keenly focused on Government opportunities that allow them to deliver highly quality services. This means they are not chasing

many Lowest Price Technically Acceptable procurements. “While the government likes them, it does not fit our business model. We are a high value player, and that does not result in lowest price all the time.” Ramarc is pursuing GSA 8(a) STARS, FAA’s eFast, Commerce’s ProTech, and State Department HITS vehicles as a prime or as a teaming partner. They are also in discussions with major prime contractors as strategic partners.

While commenting on the Government IT marketplace, Stowers expressed some strong opinions about marketing to the government. “Unfortunately, IT has become a double edge sword, Government officials are not as accessible as they once were. Technology, websites, portals, and social media platforms have replaced the face-to-face interaction in a substantial way. So while companies like ours are trying to market and sell those services, we’ve essentially made it harder for ourselves to get to the user and decision makers. Additionally, procurement officials are so adverse to protests that they hardly speak to anyone anymore beyond industry days where information is limited.” Stowers recalls the time when a handshake sealed a deal, but there are not many hands out there to shake as before. So, they have adopted other strategies like their consortium to scale their efforts. Stowers is making sure that Ramarc and its workforce have all the latest technical certifications so that its customers and future customers can be comfortable working with them.

Ramarc is excited about their future. They do expect changes with a looming election and new administration in the fall of next year, but feel like they are in good shape because they have a business base that is not government dependent. Stowers feels well prepared and positioned for the long haul. Although he has a lot on his plate, I asked him what

*“You are always being tested and watched, particularly as a small business but we always rise to the occasion.”*  
-Craig Stowers

does he do to relax? He laughed and said, he cover’s home plate, literally meaning, he is a Fast Pitch Softball high school and college league certified umpire including officiating games for both of his daughters teams. He loves this role almost more than running his business! Wow, I did not see that one coming. I asked him how does it help him unwind. Stowers said “well, you can’t take a call or read a text, when your calling balls and strikes or determining if a player is safe or out during a close play.” When asked what does he find in common between officiating a game and leading a company. Stowers raised his arm with a clinched fist and said “Integrity!” as if he were calling a third strike. That’s how I run my games and that is how I run my company.

About the Author: Lamont Hames is President & CEO of LMH Strategies, Inc., a Washington, DC based management consulting company. He was the former Chief of Staff of NASA’s Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) before venturing into the private sector where he has held executive level positions with small technology firms before starting his company.





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*Gary Shumaker*

If you want to be a multi-million dollar firm in the federal space, you've got to do a lot of different things.

**Talk about what your company does.** You need to talk about it every day, to people outside the company, and to people inside the company. You need to have several versions of your pitch, well-rehearsed and polished, that you can recite at the drop of a dime. You need to have everything from an elevator speech (so-called because you can recite the whole thing in the time from when you step into the elevator on the first floor, to the time you step out on the ninth floor. You need to have a 45-minute version that you can give with a slide deck or a Corporate Capabilities book for more formal occasions.

Practice them both in front of a mirror. But don't let not having rehearsed it enough stop you from using your pitch; even if you botch it up, you'll learn and get better.

**Know what your company does.** To talk about it, you need to know about it. You need to have all of your core competencies boiled down to three to five (no more, no less) main headings that describe everything your company does, or would like to do. You need to use this to build your collaterals—your web site, your one-pager, your slide deck. All of these things should show your company in similar styles with similar graphics.

**Research potential opportunities.** You need to allocate (to use an engineer's term) part of every working day to researching potential opportunities. In our web-centric world, this is a lot easier than it used to be.

FedBizOpps.gov has a pretty good search engine that will let you creatively search listings of every opportunity over \$25,000 that the government wants to buy, and gives you information occasionally even in advance of the release of the solicitation.

## How to Turn Your Company into a Multi-Million Dollar Firm

by Gary Shumaker

Every agency is required to publish a forecast of upcoming opportunities, and this is almost always done on a web site. Some agencies are better at this than other are, but this will let you get a little bit ahead of the power curve.

There are other free web sites that provide a wealth of information. There are also subscription-based business intelligence services that are very good.

**Go where the people are.** A lot of people would call this networking. There are numerous industry organizations that provide opportunities to talk to government folks in more or less informal settings. These often center around the cocktail hour or lunch. They can range from an hour to several days. There's a nominal charge for most of them; you might have to pay the price of lunch for a lunch event. (*MEA Magazine* is one good source for networking opportunities.) These events often have a guest speaker. Don't get too hung up on the speaker; he's just something to hang the real business of networking on. For some reason, some people think it looks better on an expense report if there was a speaker.

**Meet your potential customers.** Try to relate your networking events to the ones where the customers you'd like to have might be. (Are you getting the flow here? Know what your company does, research to find who buys what you do, and then go chat them up.

*The secret sauce for turning your company into a multi-million dollar firm is . . .*

*Wait a minute.*

*There is no secret!*

*It's just a lot of hard work.*

**Meet with your potential partners.** Your potential teammates are going to be at these industry events. The event is a great chance to meet with people from other companies who can fill in holes in your bid for a piece of work. They're also an opportunity to meet with other companies that are trying to find companies like yours to be a subcontractor on something they're pursuing.

**Meet your potential competitors.** They're the same people as your potential partners, except they're bidding against you.



Tomorrow they might be our partner. But if they're not your partner today, chat them up anyway. You'll be surprised how much you can learn.

**Follow up with the people you meet.** The networking lunch is only the beginning. Now you need to go back and talk again face-to-face with the people you met that have some importance for you. If you gave them the elevator version of your speech, you need to give them the expanded version. If all you did was trade cards and talk to someone for five minutes at a lunch, and you don't follow up within two or three weeks, you can pretty much be sure that he won't remember you six months later.

**Pursue real business.** This means writing to respond to Sources Sought notices. It means writing proposals. Your first government proposal can be a little intimidating. There are few rules in this business that are absolute and inflexible, but one rule that is always true: you won't win any business that you didn't submit a proposal for.

**Do a great job on the work for your contract.** You'll want to use it as a past performance citation for your next proposal.

\*\*\*

Everybody enjoys some of these things more than others, but it's a great mistake to just do the ones you like. You need to allocate your time so that you spend some time every day or every week

doing some of everything on this list. If you aren't able to talk about what your company does coherently, you won't be able to make the research intelligently. If you don't do the research, you won't know what to talk about after you finish your elevator speech. If you don't meet the people, you won't know who your potential partners and potential competitors are. And, you won't meet that company that came to lunch looking for a company that does exactly what you do and would like to be a subcontractor on a team for a large procurement.

If you don't write proposals, you won't win the work.

There's no secret to turning your company into a multi-million dollar firm. It's just a lot of hard work, pretty much every day. Do that and the success will follow!

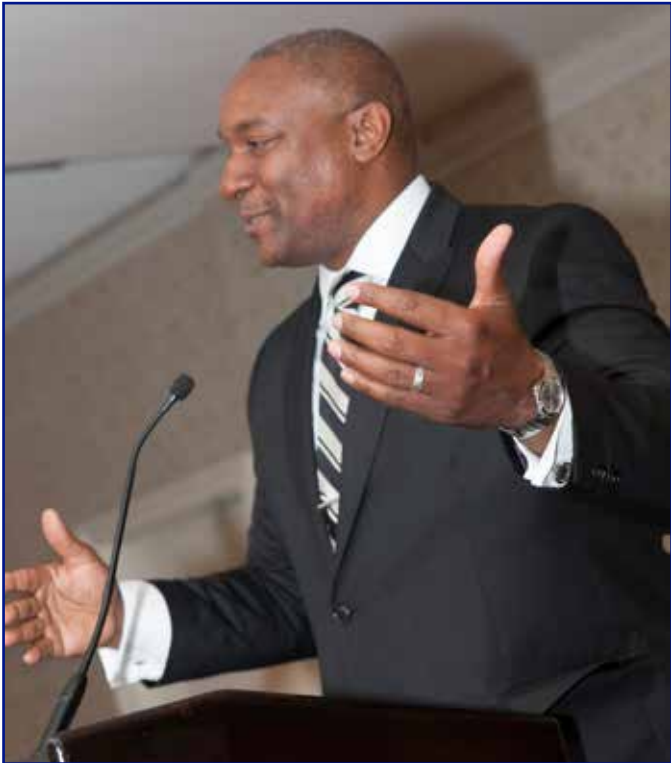
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# Federal Business Forum & Expo 2015









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Walid L. Petiri

My clients had needs for the future, but no idea how to get there. I looked them in the eye and told them how we would get to where they wanted – through a sound discipline of saving money automatically, year after year, religiously.

We set up monthly direct transfers from their bank account to investments, occurring right after they got paid every month. Their paycheck went into a completely separate bank from the one used to pay bills. This assured that the old concept of “pay yourself first” happened.

We also tackled debt with the same relentless system. They are very thankful and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve them.

Unfortunately, a lot of people don't adopt such a strict approach. And that's to their detriment. Most folks want the result, but don't know what is involved to attain it.

A few years ago, the television show that captivated Americans was called “Who wants to be a Millionaire?” Later, the film *Slumdog Millionaire*, based on the same show, was an international hit. So the desire to be wealthy clearly has a broad global appeal. But how do you gain wealth? It's not buying the correct lotto ticket. People often overlook a simple secret to building wealth *the time value of money*.

**Disciplined saving and investing is the key.** Oftentimes that lesson is lost in a consumption-based society that is always seeking the next hot thing, regardless of cost or value. Too many people, saving feels like a subtle punishment as though one is “losing” money that could be spent. Really saving is like building an ever-growing gift for you.

Ellen Rogin and Lisa Kueng, authors of a recently published book entitled *Picture Your Prosperity: Smart Money Moves to Turn Your Vision into Reality*. They cite a perceptual difference. Ask people if they can save 20% of their income, the answer may be a resounding “no” – but ask if they can live on 80% of their income, that may seem reasonable.

## How to Build Wealth

by Walid Petiri

Saving money should make everyone feel great. It means effectively “paying yourself” or at least building up cash on hand. A household with a save-first financial approach may find itself making progress toward near-term and long-term money goals.

**So why do some households save more than others?** Building household savings may depend not only on cash flow, but also on psychology. With the right outlook, saving becomes a commitment. With a less positive outlook, it becomes a task – and as we recall from our youth tasks and chores are almost always postponed.

Rogen and Kueng point to something a truth that's been around since the dawn of time, but only recently received academic study. That is the divergence between expectations and behavior. Since 2001, Gallup has asked Americans a poll question: “Thinking about money for a moment, are you the type of person who more enjoys spending money or more enjoys saving money?”

While more respondents have chosen saving over spending in every year the poll has been conducted, the difference in the responses never exceeded 5 percentage points from 2001-06. It hit 9 points in 2009, and has been 18 points or greater ever since. In 2014, 62% of respondents indicated they preferred to save instead of spend, with only 34% of respondents preferring spending.

So are Americans a nation of good savers? Not to the degree that these poll results might suggest. The most recently available Commerce Department data (January 2015) shows the average personal savings rate at 5.5% – a percentage point higher than two years ago, but subpar historically. During the 1970s, the personal savings rate averaged 11.8%; in the 1990s, it averaged 6.7%.

Economists know full well that a dollar received today is worth more than a dollar received a year from now. Why? Because that dollar could be invested, saved or spent to purchase an asset such

*Economists know full well that  
a dollar received today is worth  
more than a dollar received a  
year from now.*

as real estate that will appreciate in value. What's more, inflation slowly but steadily erodes the purchasing power of your money, rendering tomorrow's dollar less valuable than today's.



The relationship between time and money provides the foundation for virtually every financial decision you will make. Whether you are saving money for a future event or considering a loan to pay for a current financial need, you will be greatly affected by the time value of money. The following are some tips for making the most of your dollars, today and tomorrow.

Consider \$22,100 does in today's dollars – that's less than half. Looked at another way, that \$30,000 luxury car you've had your eye on will cost you a whopping \$67,872 just two decades from now.

The cost of some financial objectives will grow even faster than this. College costs, for example, have increased by some 9% over five years on average for private institutions, 12% for public. Planning for such cost increases will ensure that your asset accumulation level is sufficient to meet your objectives.

What's the best time to start preparing for a sound financial future? Twenty years ago, goes the old joke. Failing that, the second-best time is today.

#### **Ways to save more?**

Automated retirement plan contributions or payroll withdrawals into an investment account can assist the growth of savings, and are a means of paying oneself first.

There is the envelope system, where a household divides its paycheck into figurative (or literal) envelopes, assigning X dollars per month to different packets representing different budget categories. When the envelopes are empty, you can spend no more. The psychology is never to empty the envelopes, of course – leaving a little aside each month that can be saved.

Households take an incremental approach: They start by saving one or two cents of every dollar they make, then gradually increase that percentage, household expenses permitting.

Frugality may help as well. A decision to live on 70% or 80% of household income frees up some dollars for saving. Another route to building a nest egg is to invest (or at least save) the accumulated consumer savings you realize at the mall, the supermarket, the recycling center – even pocket change amassed over time.

How many households budget like businesses? Perhaps more should. A business owner, manager or executive may realize

savings through this approach. Take it line item by line item: spending \$20 less each week at the supermarket translates to \$1,040 saved annually.

**Working with financial professionals may encourage greater savings.** A study on workplace retirement plan participation from Natixis Global Asset Management had a couple of details affirming this. While employees who chose to go without input from a financial professional contributed an average of 7.8% of their incomes to their retirement plan accounts, employees who sought such input contributed an average of 9.5%.

The study also found that 74% of the employees who had turned to financial professionals understood how much money their accounts needed to amass for retirement, compared to 54% of employees not seeking such help.

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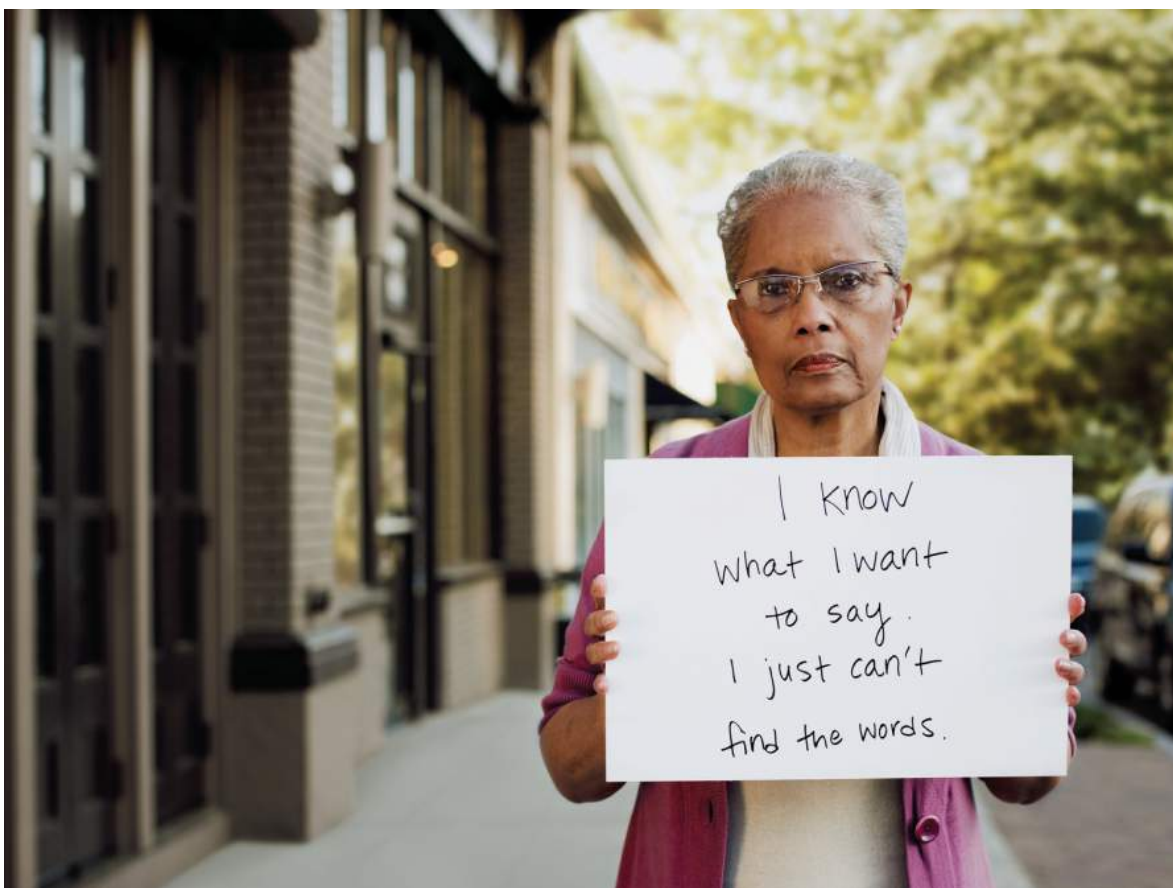


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## EPA Training Grants Create Job Opportunities Across the Country

RELEASE: EPA Training Grants Create Job Opportunities Across the Country

May 26, 2015

Contact: Julia P. Valentine (202) 564-2663

**WASHINGTON, May 26, 2015** – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced today the selection of 19 communities in 17 states and territories for approximately \$3.6 million in Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training (EWDJT) grants. Each grantee will receive up to \$192,300 to operate environmental training programs to clean up Brownfields sites in economically distressed communities.

"EPA's job training program advances economic development by creating job opportunities for workers to serve in their own communities," said Mathy Stanislaus, assistant administrator of EPA's Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response. "Many graduates—including ex-offenders and veterans-- secure meaningful employment that protects the environment and promotes economic development in some of our neediest communities."

On Friday, May 22, Assistant Administrator Stanislaus announced one of the EWDJT grants to St. Louis Community College to highlight the cross disciplinary environmental training EPA supports under the program. With the grant funding, St. Louis Community College plans to train 69 unemployed and underemployed individuals, and place 55 of those in full-time employment in the environmental field. Each student will receive 240 hours of core training in hazardous waste remediation; lead and asbestos abatement worker; mold remediation; lead renovator, repair, and painting; underground storage tank removal; stormwater management; and other advanced safety and ecosystem restoration coursework.

Participants who complete the training will earn 19 federal, state, or university certifications. St. Louis Community College is targeting underemployed and unemployed residents of the St. Louis metro area, including St. Louis City and County in Missouri and East St. Louis, Illinois. Recruitment efforts will focus on individuals living in areas affected by hazardous waste sites. Key partners include St. Louis Development Corporation, Eastern Missouri Laborers District Council, Connections to Success, St. Louis City and County Workforce Investment Boards, YouthBuild of St. Louis, among other environmental and community-based organizations.

The EWDJT program provides communities the flexibility to deliver training that meets the varying local labor market demands of the environmental sector in their communities. Graduates develop a broader set of skills that improves their ability to secure, not just short term contractual work, but full-time, sustainable employment in the environmental field. As a result of this funding, unemployed and under-employed individuals acquire training and certifications in a variety of environmental skills, such as: lead and asbestos abatement, Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response, environmental health and safety, wastewater treatment, stormwater management, brownfields assessment and

cleanup, electronics recycling, Superfund site-specific cleanup, Freon removal, emergency response, oil spill cleanup, native plant re-vegetation, and integrated pest management. As a result of this training, some graduates of the EWDJT program secured employment in activities related to the response and cleanup of the World Trade Centers in New York following the attacks of September 11, Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Sandy, as well as the BP Oil Spill. Since the program's inception in 1998, EPA has funded 256 job training grants exceeding \$54 million. More than 13,900 individuals have completed training, and of those, more than 10,000 have secured employment in the environmental field with an average hourly starting wage of \$14.18. This equates to a cumulative job placement rate of 72 percent.

The EWDJT program was developed in the 1990s, as a result of recommendations raised by environmental justice leaders suggesting that the EPA support environmental training to help benefit local residents, and from an EPA realization that often times local residents were not benefiting from local remediation and cleanup activities due to the lack of a locally trained workforce in their communities. Rather than filling local, environmental jobs with professionals from distant cities, these grants help to provide an opportunity for local, unemployed residents to secure careers that make a visible impact cleaning up their communities. Graduates of the program obtain employment within their communities, areas which may be affected by blight, economic disinvestment, and solid and hazardous waste sites.

These grants support training programs that recruit, train, and place unemployed and under-employed residents of waste-affected communities with the skills and certifications needed to secure employment in the environmental field. Projects are funded based on the comprehensiveness of the training curriculum, the likelihood that graduates will obtain employment, strong public-private partnerships, and diverse community-based organization and employer involvement.

EWDJT grants are awarded to a broad range of communities with multiple indicators of need, including communities affected by the closure of manufacturing facilities, communities affected by natural disasters, communities designated as Housing and Urban Development "Promise Zone Communities," (<http://www.hud.gov/promisezones>) Economic Development Administration "Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership" designated communities (<http://www.eda.gov/challenges/imcp>), and HUD/Department of Transportation/EPA "Partnership for Sustainable Communities" (<http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov>) designated communities. The program also serves unemployed, dislocated workers who have lost their jobs as a result of manufacturing plant closures. By gaining training through the EWDJT program, these individuals have re-entered the workforce, and many have secured employment working at other manufacturing facilities throughout the U.S. Some graduates have also participated in the cleanup and remediation of former manufacturing and auto plants, such as the cleanup of the "Chevy in the Hole" site in Flint, Mich.



# FAA Proposes Civil Penalties Against Three Companies for Alleged Hazardous Materials Violations

**WASHINGTON, May 27, 2015** – The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) proposes civil penalties ranging from \$54,000 to \$81,669 against three companies for allegedly violating Hazardous Materials Regulations.

In each case, the FAA alleges the shipments were not accompanied by shipping papers to indicate the hazardous nature of their contents and were not marked, labeled or packaged in accordance with the Hazardous Materials Regulations. The companies also allegedly failed to provide emergency response information and ensure their employees received required hazardous materials training.

The cases are as follows:

**\$81,669 against DGI Menard Inc.** The FAA alleges that on Jan. 12, 2015, DGI Menard knowingly offered an undeclared hazardous material shipment to FedEx for air transport from Carnegie, Penn., to Crystal Lake, Ill. The shipment included eight one-pint cans of Lubemaster's Fire Up, which is a flammable liquid, and six bottles of Diesel Mate All Seasons, which is a flammable petroleum distillate.

FedEx employees at the company's sort facility in Cary, Ill., discovered the package was leaking and notified the FAA.

DGI Menard has 30 days from receipt of the FAA's enforcement letter to respond to the agency.

Contact: Elizabeth Isham Cory

Phone: 847-294-7849; Email: elizabeth.cory@faa.gov

**\$54,000 against Aqua-Chem, Inc. of Knoxville, Tenn.** The FAA alleges that on April 3, 2013, Aqua-Chem offered UPS an undeclared shipment containing six, one-pint plastic containers of corrosive phosphoric acid solution. Workers at the UPS package sort facility in Louisville, Ky., discovered the shipment.

Aqua-Chem has contacted the FAA about the case.

Contact: Kathleen Bergen

Phone: 404-305-5100; Email: Kathleen.Bergen@faa.gov

**\$54,000 against Rust-Oleum Corp. of Vernon Hills, Ill.** The FAA alleges that on Jan. 5, 2015, Rust-Oleum offered four containers of spray paint to FedEx for shipment by air from Vernon Hills to Huntington Beach, Calif. Employees at the FedEx sort facility in Northbrook, Ill., discovered the flammable paint and notified the FAA.

Rust-Oleum has 30 days from receipt of the FAA's enforcement letter to respond to the agency.

Contact: Elizabeth Isham Cory

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## USDA to Expand Investment in Water Conservation, Resilience across Drought-Stricken States

Release No. 0139.15

Contact: Sam Jones-Ellard (202) 660-2268

*Targeted drought finding builds on substantial drought relief efforts*

**WASHINGTON, May 18, 2015** – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will invest approximately \$21 million in additional Farm Bill dollars to help farmers and ranchers apply science-based solutions to mitigate the short and long term effects of drought. These investments will focus financial and technical assistance in the most severely drought-stricken areas in eight states to help crop and livestock producers apply conservation practices that increase irrigation efficiency, improve soil health and productivity, and ensure reliable water sources for livestock operations.

"Since the historic drought of 2012, dry conditions have persisted in many parts of the country, particularly in the West," Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said. "Every day, NRCS conservationists work side-by-side with agricultural producers and help them conserve water and increase resilience in their operations. Today's investment will provide additional resources in drought-stricken

areas to help farmers and ranchers implement solutions to mitigate the impacts of sustained drought."

Today's announcement expands on the substantial efforts already underway to help producers conserve water, improve soil health and build long term agricultural resilience into their operations. Already this year, NRCS state offices have targeted significant portions of their fiscal year Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) allocations to address water conservation, soil health, and resilience. In California, for example, more than \$27 million of fiscal year 2015 EQIP funding is directed towards beneficial drought management practices.

With today's announcement, NRCS will provide an additional \$21 million in technical and financial assistance through EQIP to target areas that are experiencing either exceptional or extreme drought conditions as of the May 5, 2015 U.S. Drought Monitor, which includes parts of California, Kansas, Idaho, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, and Utah. The EQIP funding will allow NRCS to help producers apply selected conservation practices to better deal with the effects of drought in their operations, including prescribed grazing, livestock watering facilities, cover crops, nutrient



management, irrigation systems, and other water conservation practices. On average, farmers and ranchers contribute half the cost of implementing conservation practices.

Between 2012 and 2014, NRCS invested more than \$1.5 billion in financial and technical assistance to help producers implement conservation practices that improve water use efficiency and build long term health of working crop, pasture, and range lands. These practices include building soil health by using cover crops and no-till, which allow the soil to hold water longer and buffer roots from higher temperatures; improving the efficiency of irrigation systems; and implementing prescribed grazing to relieve pressure on stressed vegetation.

NRCS is also leveraging partner investments through the new Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to put further resources toward projects that foster water conservation and resilience. In the first round of RCPP funding last year, NRCS committed more than \$84 million in 35 projects that address water conservation and soil health. These funds will be matched dollar-for-dollar by our partners, resulting in a total investment of nearly \$190 million in water conservation and resilience across the country. In May, Vilsack announced a second round of RCPP funding availability that will make up to \$235 million available for targeted conservation, highlighting drought and water conservation as a resource concern for potential projects.

Earlier this month, NRCS announced \$6.5 million in additional drought-related funding through the Ogallala Aquifer Initiative. This investment will support targeted, local efforts to protect the quality and extend the availability of water from the Ogallala Aquifer,

which underlies about 225,000 square miles of the Great Plains and supports nearly one-fifth of the wheat, corn, cotton and cattle produced in the United States.

Through the creation of the National Drought Resilience Partnership, launched as part of the President's Climate Action Plan, federal agencies are working closely with states, tribes and local governments to develop a coordinated response to drought. For information on USDA's drought efforts, visit USDA Disaster and Drought Information. And to learn more about how NRCS is helping private landowners deal with drought, visit the NRCS' drought resources. View information by state.

Producers and landowners are encouraged to visit the NRCS website or stop by their local NRCS office to find out if they are eligible for this new funding. Learn more about and EQIP and other NRCS programs.

Today's announcement was made possible by the 2014 Farm Bill. The 2014 Farm Bill builds on historic economic gains in rural America over the past five years, while achieving meaningful reform and billions of dollars in savings for taxpayers. Since enactment, USDA has made significant progress to implement each provision of this critical legislation, including providing disaster relief to farmers and ranchers; strengthening risk management tools; expanding access to rural credit; funding critical research; establishing innovative public-private conservation partnerships; developing new markets for rural-made products; and investing in infrastructure, housing and community facilities to help improve quality of life.



## EPA Announces \$54.3 Million to Assess and Clean Up Contaminate Sites, Revitalize Communities, Leverage Jobs and Promote Economic Redevelopment Nationwide

May 28, 2015

Contact: Julia P. Valentine (202) 564-2663

**WASHINGTON, May 28, 2015** – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced today the selection of 243 new grant investments totaling \$54.3 million to 147 communities across the U.S. This investment will provide communities with funding necessary to assess, clean up and redevelop contaminated properties, boost local economies and leverage jobs while protecting public health and the environment. Recipients will each receive approximately \$200,000 - \$600,000 in funding toward EPA cooperative agreements.

EPA's Brownfields grants provide resources early which is critical for the success of communities' ability to leverage additional partnerships and resources. The community leaders - represented by local governments, states, tribes, quasi-governmental organizations, and non-profit entities have demonstrated strong partnerships and plan to leverage the EPA grants with other public-private investments. They use an inclusive process to help spur the redevelopment of vacant, former manufacturing and commercial sites for broader revitalization in their downtowns. This results in a

transformed economy and environment while addressing poverty and economic distress.

"Brownfield sites - because of their locations and associated infrastructure advantages - are community assets and a key component of the Obama Administration's efforts to provide tools to sustainably revitalize communities and foster economic development," said Mathy Stanislaus, assistant administrator for EPA's Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response. "These communities have demonstrated a plan to leverage their grants and partnerships to achieve economic and environmental revitalization to meet their needs for jobs. These critical EPA resources are going into communities with populations ranging from 89 to 1.4 million, and more than half under 100,000. The grants will help transform brownfield sites, such as former manufacturing and mill sites, into productive end uses which directly benefit community residents and create opportunities including increased housing options, recreational spaces, and jobs."

Among the communities selected for funding, more than thirty percent have been affected by plant closures, forty percent by significant economic disruptions, and forty-two percent by adverse natural disasters. The small City of Palatka, Florida for example,

was declared an emergency area following the devastation of two tropical storms, and has also suffered economically from the closing of Georgia-Pacific paper towel manufacturing line and the lay-off of 130 employees from the regional water management company. Being selected for a \$400,000 assessment grant will allow this town of just over 10,000 residents to support their downtown and riverfront redevelopment plans and help restore the local economy.

This latest funding advances EPA's broader commitment to making a visible difference in communities that focuses on better coordinating federal investments to help environmentally overburdened, undeserved, and economically distressed communities address local priorities. Communities selected this year demonstrate a high level of preparedness to undertake specific projects as they have firm commitments of leveraged funds to move projects forward. An impressive forty-five percent of the recipients have secured public and private resources which directly align and further the efforts of proposed projects.

San Antonio, Texas, selected for a \$400,000 assessment grant, will focus on three priority areas to restore urban waterways, attract commercial development, construct new multifamily housing, and sustainably reuse existing buildings. By creatively combining available resources, the city secured more than \$470 million to advance community goals which will help ensure success of revitalizing the priority areas.

EPA continues to help new communities to address Brownfields sites plaguing their neighborhoods. First-time recipient Columbus, Indiana plans to use a \$400,000 assessment grant award to perform assessments that align with and promote the city's strategic plan to expand residential and educational opportunities for its residents, enhance greenspace and boost the economy with new retail stores and services.

EPA's grant awards support both urban and rural communities in their efforts to address their brownfields concerns. More than fifty-five percent of the communities selected are cities and towns with populations of 100,000 or less, of which forty-four percent are

very small rural communities with populations of 10,000 or less. The Lower Brule Sioux Tribe in South Dakota, population 1,664, will use its \$200,000 cleanup grant to remove contamination from the Former Housing Authority Building located in the middle of town and directly adjacent to an elementary school. Addressing contamination of the deteriorating building will enhance the environmental and public welfare of the resident and provide other direct community benefits by allowing the tribe to relocate their local Boys & Girls Club.

Approximately \$17 million of the assessment and cleanup funding will go to applicants who are also Brownfields Area-Wide Planning grant recipients and HUD-DOT-EPA partnership communities. This funding will help communities clean up and reuse brownfield sites to produce community assets such as housing, recreation and open space, health facilities, create employment, education, social services, transportation options, infrastructure and commerce opportunities. For example, the Camden Redevelopment Agency in New Jersey will receive three \$200,000 cleanup grant awards, and a \$200,000 assess grant which will lead to the redevelopment of a 3.6-acre mercury and lead contaminated Camden Laboratories site into mixed residential and commercial use. Clark County in Nevada will receive a \$500,000 assessment coalition grant award to address the Maryland Parkway High Capacity Corridor in the heart of the Las Vegas' urban core. As the region's first multi-modal corridor, over the next 20 years, the development will generate much needed jobs and will spur additional development and investments in the area.

Since the inception of the EPA's Brownfields Program in 1995, cumulative brownfield program investments have leveraged more than \$22 billion from a variety of public and private sources for cleanup and redevelopment activities. This equates to an average of \$17.79 leveraged per EPA brownfield dollar expended. These investments have resulted in approximately 105,942 jobs nationwide. EPA's Brownfields Program empowers states, communities, and other stakeholders to work together to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields sites.



## EPA Strengthens Underground Storage Tank Requirements to Improve Prevention and Detection of Leaks

June 22, 2015

Contact: Julia P. Valentine (202) 564-2663

**WASHINGTON, June 22, 2015** – The U.S. Environmental Protection (EPA) is strengthening the federal underground storage tank (UST) requirements to improve prevention and detection of petroleum releases from USTs which are one of the leading sources of groundwater contamination. EPA's action will strengthen existing requirements and help ensure all USTs in the United States meet the same release protection standards.

"These changes will better protect people's health and benefit the environment in communities across the country by improving prevention and detection of underground storage tank releases," said Mathy Stanislaus, assistant administrator of EPA's Office of

Solid Waste and Emergency Response. "Extensive and meaningful collaboration with our underground storage tank partners and stakeholders was vital to the development of the new regulations. The revised requirements will also help ensure consistency in implementing the tanks program among states and on tribal lands."

Secondary containment and operator training requirements of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 will apply to USTs on tribal lands. In addition, these requirements improve EPA's original 1988 UST regulation by closing regulatory gaps, adding new technologies, and focusing on properly operating and maintaining existing UST systems.

Underground storage tanks are located at hundreds of thousands of facilities across America. Both marketers and nonretail facilities own USTs. Marketers include retail facilities such as gas stations and convenience stores that sell petroleum products. Nonretail

facilities include those that do not sell petroleum products, but may rely on their own supply of gasoline or diesel for taxis, buses, limousines, trucks, vans, boats, heavy equipment, or a wide range of other vehicles.

The revised requirements include:

- adding secondary containment requirements for new and replaced tanks and piping;
- adding operator training requirements;
- adding periodic operation and maintenance requirements for UST systems;
- removing past deferrals for emergency generator tanks, airport hydrant systems, and field-constructed tanks;
- adding new release prevention and detection technologies;
- updating codes of practice; and

- updating state program approval requirements to incorporate these new changes.

States and territories primarily implement the UST program. Many states already have some of these new requirements in place. For others, these changes will set standards that are more protective.

In developing the final UST regulation, EPA reached out extensively to affected and interested UST stakeholders. EPA carefully considered the environmental benefits of the UST requirements, while balancing those with the potential future costs of compliance for UST owners and operators. For example, EPA is not requiring owners and operators to replace existing equipment, but rather is focusing on better operation and maintenance of that equipment.

The docket for the UST regulation is EPA-HQ-UST-2011-0301 and can be accessed at <http://www.regulations.gov> when the final regulation is published.



## FAA Issues \$16.8 Million Grant to Baltimore Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport for Long-Term Airfield Project

**Improvements will enhance airport capacity.**

**WASHINGTON, June 11, 2015** – Today, the U. S. Department of Transportation's Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced a \$16.8 million grant to Baltimore Washington International Thurgood Marshall (BWI) Airport to complete the fourth phase of a multi-phase comprehensive taxiway improvement program for Runways 10/28 and 15R/33L.

"This grant demonstrates our commitment to airport infrastructure improvements that ensure the safe travel of the American public," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. "As a result of this long-term economic investment, Baltimore area residents and surrounding communities will experience the economic benefits of ongoing construction-related job opportunities."

This Airport Improvement Program (AIP) grant will help fund the fourth phase of the overall program, which includes the continued relocation and reconfiguration of various parts of the airport taxiway system to meet FAA safety and design standards, eliminate unclear

taxiway configurations, provide a dual parallel taxiway system, and enhance airport capacity to permit unrestricted operations during low-visibility conditions.

Construction on the FAA-funded phase of the program is scheduled to begin later this month and is expected to be completed in the next calendar year. The total program cost is estimated at \$67 million, with \$37,644,274 in federal funds being used for the first four phases.

"Investing in the long-term efficiency and capacity of our nation's airports is important to the national transportation system," said FAA Administrator Michael Huerta. "The improvements will enhance the efficiency of the airport, which will benefit both the airlines and the traveling public."

Over the last 15 years, the FAA has provided more than \$200 million in AIP funds to the airport for various airfield development projects.



## Biodiesel Fuel Company Owner Pleads Guilty to Fraud and Clean Air Act Crimes Connected to Renewable Fuels Scheme

June 16, 2015

Contact: Julia P. Valentine (202) 564-2663

*Philip J. Rivkin faces more than 10 years imprisonment and \$51 million in restitution*

**WASHINGTON, June 16, 2015** – Philip Joseph Rivkin, a.k.a. Felipe Poitan Arriaga, 50, today pleaded guilty to a Clean Air Act false statement and mail fraud as part of his role in a scheme to defraud EPA by falsely representing that he was producing millions of gallons of biodiesel fuel. According to the terms of the plea agreement, Rivkin faces more than 10 years in prison and will be

responsible for \$51 million in restitution to help reimburse victims.

"These crimes are a serious threat to an important program that helps combat climate change," said Cynthia Giles, Assistant Administrator for Enforcement and Compliance Assurance at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. "For undermining the Renewable Fuels Standard, Mr. Rivkin will pay substantial fines and restitution, and he also faces significant prison time. Companies and individual managers should get the message that there are serious consequences for breaking the rules and undermining the integrity of this program."



In the plea agreement, Rivkin admitted that from July 2010 to July 2011, he devised the biodiesel fraud scheme as his business operation falsely generated renewable fuel credits, known as renewable identification numbers (RINs), and sold them to oil companies and brokers for more than \$29 million.

On April 30, 2012, EPA issued Green Diesel, LLC a Notice of Violation (NOV). The NOV alleged the company generated more than 60 million invalid biomass-based diesel RINs without producing any qualifying renewable fuel, and transferred the majority of these invalid RINs to others. On June 18, 2014, two U.S. Secret Service Agents arrested Rivkin in Houston after he was expelled from Guatemala, which had expelled him for having fraudulently secured Guatemalan citizenship.

The next day, a 68-count indictment was returned against Rivkin for charges including Clean Air Act false statements, wire fraud, mail fraud, and for engaging in monetary transactions in property derived from unlawful activity. The indictment included a notice of forfeiture to include: cash in excess of \$29 million; three vehicles

including a Lamborghini, Maserati, and a Bentley; a Canadair LTD airplane; and millions of dollars worth of artwork that was previously seized from Rivkin in 2012 and was included in a civil action for forfeiture.

The Clean Air Act requires EPA to set annual volume targets for four categories of biofuels to ensure that transportation fuel sold in the United States contains a minimum volume of renewable fuel. By displacing fossil fuels, biofuels help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help strengthen energy security.

This case was investigated by U.S. EPA-Criminal Investigation Division, U.S. Secret Service, IRS-Criminal Investigation, with assistance from the Houston Area Fraud Task Force, Houston Ship Channel Initiative and Texas Environmental Crimes Task Force. The case was prosecuted by Leslie Lehnert, Trial Attorney, U.S. Department of Justice-Environmental Crimes Section, with assistance from J.T. Morgan, Attorney, U.S. EPA-Legal Counsel Division.



## Agriculture Secretary Vilsack Announces \$150 Million, New Partnership to Support Water Quality and Quantity in Drought-Stricken California

Release No. 0185.15

Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

*Resilient Lands and Waters partnership will focus public and private resources towards conserving and restoring the Sierra-Cascade California Headwaters*

**SUNOL, Calif., June 24, 2015** – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today joined Interior Deputy Secretary Mike Connor and California Secretary for Natural Resources John Laird to announce a new partnership focused on conserving and restoring the Sierra-Cascade California Headwaters, as part of President Obama's Resilient Lands and Waters initiative. Over the next two years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service (FS) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will invest \$130 million in the partnership, which also includes the Interior Department, the State of California, non-profits, and private landowners. In total, the partnership will yield a minimum investment of \$210 million by all partners. The Sierra-Cascade California Headwaters provides 25 million Californians with drinking water and much of the water for irrigated agriculture in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys.

In addition to the partnership, USDA is announcing that \$13.7 million is available to California producers and ranchers through NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and approximately \$6 million remains available to drought-stricken communities through Rural Development's Emergency Community Water Assistance Grants (ECWAG), making nearly \$20 million available to drought-affected communities.

"As several years of historic drought continue to plague parts of the Western United States, there is a significant opportunity and responsibility across federal, state and private lands to protect and improve the landscapes that generate our most critical water

supplies," said Vilsack. "Healthy forests and meadows play a key role in ensuring water quality, yield and reliability throughout the year. Looking beyond this particular drought, resources announced today will help us add resiliency to natural resource systems to cope with recurring drought and changing climate patterns."

The Resilient Lands and Waters initiative is a key part of the Obama Administration's Climate and Natural Resources Priority Agenda, a first of its kind, comprehensive commitment across the Federal Government to support the resilience of America's vital natural resources. Through this partnership under the Resilient Lands and Waters initiative, USDA, DOI, the State of California, and local partners will direct a minimum of \$210 million in combined resources towards restoration that will help improve water quality and quantity, promote healthy forests, and reduce wildfire risk in the Sierra-Cascade California Headwaters region.

"Climate change affects every corner of our nation from the Sierra-Cascades to the Everglades. The deepening impact of the ongoing drought is just one example of how it influences all of us," said Deputy Interior Secretary Michael L. Connor. "In collaboration with other governmental agencies and partners, we are taking a comprehensive, science-based long term view of how to best make our treasured lands and precious waterways more resilient to the impacts of climate change."

The federal partnership dovetails with Governor Jerry Brown's California Water Action Plan, a suite of short- and long-term goals to put California on a path to more resilient and reliable water systems and healthy ecosystems over the next five years. Over the next year, California will commit as much as \$81 million in ecosystem restoration in the Sierra Nevada.

"California's Cascade and Sierra Nevada mountain ecosystems are the lifeblood of water for 25 million Californians, our agricultural

industry, and the health of downstream estuaries and species,” said Secretary Laird. “Trying to maintain this ecosystem health, in the face of a changing climate, requires that all those responsible – especially the state and federal governments –work together to meet this challenge. That is why the California state administration is pleased with today’s announcement, and looks forward to continuing to work with our federal partners.”

Last month, USDA announced the availability of \$21 million through EQIP to help farmers and ranchers apply science-based solutions to mitigate the short and long term effects of drought. Today, Secretary Vilsack announced that 65 percent of the available funds, or \$13.7 million, are being reserved for California producers and ranchers. Applications are currently being accepted at local NRCS offices.

Vilsack also announced that USDA has provided \$2.7 million in ECWAG funds for eight California communities and \$1.98 million to the Coyote Band of Pomo Indians of California in 2015. The remaining ECWAG funding is available nationwide, and applications

are accepted at any time through USDA’s Rural Development state and area offices.

Today’s announcement builds on the Obama Administration’s commitment to do everything it can to help the farmers, ranchers, small businesses, and communities facing severe impacts from one of the worst droughts in over a century. Currently, 35 percent of the West is facing severe to exceptional drought. In California, the mountain snowpack that supplies most of the water during the summer months is only a trace above zero. Drought threatens multiple sectors of the economy and leads to increased risks to communities on many fronts. That’s why the Administration’s efforts will help to address the drought challenge from all angles, from employing workers and providing food assistance to making long-term investments to support water efficiency and conservation and addressing wildfire. Through the creation of the National Drought Resilience Partnership, launched as part of the President’s Climate Action Plan, federal agencies are working closely with states, tribes and local governments to develop a coordinated response to drought.



## USDA Names Seven Terra Preta do Indio Tribal Fellows in Five States

Release No. 0195.15

Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

*Fellows Will Address Research Needs Specific to Indian Country and Tribal Communities*

**WASHINGTON, July 9, 2015** – The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced the seven members of the 2015 class of the Terra Preta do Indio Tribal Fellowship Program. The Terra Preta do Indio Tribal Fellowship, commonly known as USDA’s “Tribal Fellowship”, matches tribal land-grant faculty and staff with USDA program and research staff to identify research needs specific to Indian Country and tribal communities.

“This Fellowship program is an important professional development opportunity for leaders in the Tribal College and University land-grant system and will enable USDA to learn more about the research and programmatic needs in Indian Country,” said Leslie Wheelock, Director of USDA’s Office of Tribal Relations. “I am very excited to see how this class of Tribal Fellows will contribute to the future of our Native communities.”

The 2015 Terra Preta do Indio Tribal Fellows are:

- Virgil Dupuis, Salish Kootenai College, Pablo, Montana;
- Pattie Means, Chief Dull Knife College, Lane Deer, Montana;
- Alexander McMahon, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, Albuquerque, New Mexico;
- Chad Waukechon, College of the Menominee Nation, Keshena, Wisconsin;
- Linda Hugelen, United Tribes Technical College, Bismarck, North Dakota;
- Pam Keller, United Tribes Community College, Bismarck, North Dakota;

- Adrian Quijada, Tohono O’odham Community College, Sells, Arizona.

As part of the Fellowship, Tribal Fellows participate in intensive training with USDA research experts and apply that training to their home institution. Fellows are chosen via an application process which evaluates the impact the Fellowship will have in strengthening knowledge and understanding of the needs of tribal communities in the United States. The Fellowship designation is for one year. This is the fourth year of the Tribal Fellowship, which is sponsored by the USDA 1994 Tribal Land-Grant Colleges and Universities Program. There are thirteen previous Terra Preta do Indio Tribal Fellows.

Terra Preta do Indio is Brazilian Portuguese for “Dark Earth of the Indians.”

Today’s announcement coincides with first-ever White House Tribal Youth Gathering where American Indian and Native Alaskan Youth are at the White House to discuss the unique challenges of youth in Indian Country with senior Administration officials. This event is part of Obama Administration’s Generation Indigenous (Gen-I) initiative to improve the lives of Native youth through new investments and increased engagement.

The 1994 Land Grant Institutions are Native American, tribally-controlled colleges and universities that were granted land-grant status under an Act of Congress in 1994. The 1994 Land Grant Institutions have missions to serve Tribal communities through higher education programs involving teaching, community outreach, and research. There are thirty-four 1994 Land Grant Institutions which primarily serve Native American populations that are typically located in remote, underserved communities that lack access to higher education.

# USDA Proposes New Ways to Help Meet Nutrition Needs of Low-Income, Homebound Seniors and People with Disabilities

Release No. 0201.15

Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

**WASHINGTON, July 13, 2015** – Today, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture is proposing to improve access to groceries for homebound seniors and people with disabilities who participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. USDA is proposing for the first time to permit grocery purchasing and delivery services run by government and non-profit organizations to accept SNAP benefits as payment, allowing for home delivery to those unable to shop for food. Vilsack will announce the proposal today during the 2015 White House Conference on Aging. Nationally, only 42 percent of eligible elderly individuals participate in SNAP, compared to 83 percent for all people who are eligible.

“Home delivery of groceries is an important step forward in serving the needs of these vulnerable populations. Allowing homebound seniors and people with disabilities to use their SNAP benefits through government and non-profit home delivery services will help ensure they have access to healthy foods,” Secretary Vilsack said, noting that one in five SNAP participants is either elderly or disabled. “This issue has a particular importance for seniors living in rural areas, as America’s rural population is older than the nation overall and rural seniors experience higher poverty than seniors nationwide.”

Authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill, the proposed rule outlines eligibility and participation criteria for purchasing and delivery services serving the homebound elderly and disabled, and seeks

comment from stakeholders.

In addition, USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service will soon begin seeking up to 20 food purchasing and delivery services to participate in a one year pilot program. Lessons learned during the pilot will be used to help shape the final rule.

As the nation’s first line of defense against hunger, SNAP helps put food on the table for millions of low income families and individuals every month and has never been more critical to the fight against hunger. SNAP is a vital supplement to the monthly food budget of more than 46 million low-income individuals. Nearly half of SNAP participants are children, nine percent are over 60 and more than 40 percent of recipients live in households with earnings.

For more information about the pilots, the proposed rule or to submit comments, please visit the FNS list of Federal Register Documents for SNAP.

Today’s announcement was made possible by the 2014 Farm Bill, which builds on historic economic gains in rural America over the past six years, while achieving meaningful reform and billions of dollars in savings for the taxpayer. Since enactment, USDA has implemented many provisions of this critical legislation, providing disaster relief to farmers and ranchers; strengthening risk management tools; expanding access to rural credit; funding critical research; establishing innovative public-private conservation partnerships; developing new markets for rural-made products; and investing in infrastructure, housing and community facilities to help improve quality of life in rural America.



## USDA Announces Three New Centers of Excellence with a Consortium of 1890 Colleges and Universities

Release No. 0205.15

Contact: Office of Communications (202) 720-4623

*New Centers to assist small farmers, develop a diverse workforce, and increase global food security*

**WASHINGTON, July 16, 2015** – Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced today that USDA is making a \$1 million initial investment to support three Centers of Excellence with the Council of 1890 Colleges, building and strengthening USDA’s historic partnership with 1890 Historically Black Land-Grant Colleges and Universities. Vilsack made the announcement during remarks at the Convocation commemorating the 125th Anniversary of the Second Morrill Act becoming law, creating the 1890 Land-Grant Universities.

“When Congress passed the act in 1890 creating additional Land-Grant Universities, they were creating access to economic mobility through educational opportunity for all. These schools have been instrumental in growing our nation into a multicultural economic power,” said Vilsack. “The three new Centers of Excellence will build on this legacy of cooperation and success to help sustain our nation for the next 125 years and beyond.”

These three new centers will serve as a consortium to increase coordination and collaboration between USDA and the 1890s schools. Each center will focus on a specific identified need:

- Creating an integrated center to benefit Small Farms, Ranches and Forest Landowners in high poverty areas;
- Establishing a virtual center to support the science, technology, engineering, agriculture, and mathematics (STEAM) pipeline of students and address the growing need for talented career candidates to meet future workforce needs;
- Satisfying the nation’s need in the areas of international engagement and global food security to increase international cooperation, trade and development.

Secretary Vilsack said USDA would provide additional related funding through existing programs and agreements, and that the initial funding will help the 1890s schools improve their access to USDA programs and attract additional outside investment.

Over the past six years, USDA has partnered with 1890s schools in a number of ways to make a positive impact in the lives of underserved farmers, youth and communities. Some recent actions include:

- Providing more than \$132 million in funding to 1890s schools through 350 different awards across the entire department last year;
- Continuing the 1890s Scholars program, currently assisting 55 Scholars in agencies throughout USDA with scholarships worth approximately \$35,000 each, and permanently employing more than 600 Land-Grant University graduates through the program.



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# Black History Corner



## *Shirley Chisholm (1924–2005) –*

Born in Brooklyn, New York, she was a professional educator. She was the first African-American Congresswoman in 1968. In 1972 she became the first major-party black candidate to make a bid for the U.S. Presidency. Her outspokenness made her very unpopular. She fought against the Vietnam War. She fought for federal assistance for education; fair housing and equal employment. She cofounded the Federal Political Congress for Black Women.



## *Matthew Henson (1866–1955) –*

The first African-American Arctic explorer who co-discovered the North Pole with Robert Peary in 1909. He was born in Charles County, Maryland. He was the son of free born sharecroppers. In 1937 he received acknowledgement for his achievements. The Explorers club in New York accepted him as an honorary member and the U.S. Navy awarded him a medal in 1946. He learned survival skills from Eskimos and successfully reached the North Pole.



## *Azie Taylor-Morton (1936–2003) –*

Money printed between 1977-1981 has the signature of Azie Taylor-Morton. She was the first and only African-American Treasurer of the U.S. under the Carter Administration. She was a teacher, politician and only African-American to hold the position of Treasurer of the United States. She was a member of the American Mission to the Soviet Union and China in 1986; was a representative to the first African-American Conference held in Africa. She worked for John F. Kennedy for the Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity for 20 years.



### *Hiram Revels (1827–1901) –*

The first African-American to serve in the United States Senate. He was born in Fayetteville, North Carolina. He was a minister and became a Republican Senator in 1870 representing the state of Mississippi. He was an ordained minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. He fought for the Union Army at the Battle of Vicksburg. He was a keen orator and very intelligent. He was a republican politician, born free, and a college administrator. He served as President of Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College now Alcorn State University from 1871-1873 and 1876-1882.



### *Queen Anna Nzinga (1583–1663) –*

She became Queen in 1626. Known as a ruthless and powerful 17th century African ruler who fought the Portuguese against the colonization of her kingdom. She fought against the slave trade against the Portuguese in Central Africa. She led a war against the Portuguese starting a 30 year war. She defeated the Portuguese in 1647. She was known as Anade Sousa Nzinga Mbande. She ruled Ndongo and Matamba Kingdoms of the Mbundu people in what is now modern day Angola.



### *Susie King Taylor (1848–1912) –*

The first black army nurse who attended the black troops during the Civil War. She openly taught school to farmer slaves in Georgia. She later published a memoir of her wartime experiences. She was the first teacher for freed African-American students operating freedman's school in Georgia. She taught until 1862.



### *Tunis Campbell (1812–1891) –*

A prominent politician of the 19th century and a major player during Reconstruction in Georgia. He was the highest ranking and most influential politician in Georgia. He was known by white society as a man determined to elevate the condition of persons of his color. He preached against slavery and established schools. He was from Middlebrook, New Jersey.



# heart&soul

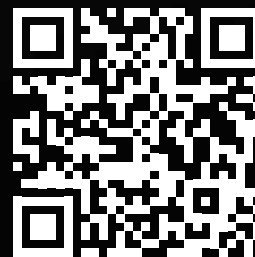
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