Awards issued prior to January 20, 2025, were funded under previous Administrations and may not reflect the priorities and policies of the current Administration.

United States Department of Agriculture
Project Initiation

Project Data for Accession Number 1035203

Project Title

Pacific Agribusiness and Food Systems Academy: Developing Regional Curriculum and Workforce Pathways through Distance Learning

Project Details

Sponsoring Institution National Institute of Food and Agriculture	**Project Status** ACTIVE
Funding Source NIFA Non Formula	**Grant Year** 2026
Grant No. 2026-70008-46932	**Cumulative Award Amt.** $199,997.00
Proposal No. 2026-07452	**Multistate No.** (N/A)
Project Start Date Sep 15, 2026	**Project End Date** Sep 14, 2029
Program Code [DEG] Distance Education Grants for Insular Areas	

Project Director

CAMACHO, J.

Recipient Organization

UNIVERSITY OF GUAM
303 UNIVERSITY DR
MANGILAO, GUAM 96913

Performing Department

(N/A)

Non Technical Summary

The University of Guam (UOG), in partnership with Northern Marianas College (NMC) and the College of Micronesia-Federated States of Micronesia (COM-FSM), proposes the Pacific Agribusiness and Food Systems Academy (PAFSA), a regional distance-learning initiative designed to strengthen food and agricultural sciences education and workforce development throughout Micronesia.Agricultural education institutions across Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia face common challenges, including geographic isolation, limited faculty capacity, restricted access to specialized coursework, and increasing disruptions caused by natural disasters such as Super Typhoon Sinlaku. These challenges have highlighted the need for resilient instructional delivery systems and expanded educational opportunities in agribusiness, food systems, agricultural leadership, and workforce development.PAFSA will address four USDA-NIFA Distance Education Grants (DEG)

educational need areas: (1) Curricula Design and Materials Development, (2) Faculty Preparation and Enhancement, (3) Instruction Delivery Systems, and (4) Student Experiential Learning. The project will: (1) develop and implement a shared regional online curriculum in agribusiness and food systems; (2) strengthen faculty capacity through professional development in distance education technologies and online pedagogy; (3) establish experiential learning, internship, mentoring, and leadership development opportunities; and (4) increase student recruitment, retention, workforce readiness, and leadership competency in food and agricultural sciences.The project will expand access to high-quality agricultural education for students across Micronesia, strengthen regional workforce pathways, enhance institutional resilience, and create a sustainable model for distance education collaboration among insular institutions. Outcomes include improved student learning, increased workforce preparedness, enhanced leadership development, and strengthened regional food and agricultural systems.

Animal Health Component

Animal Health Component: 0%

Research Effort Categories

Basic	0%
Applied	0%
Developmental	0%

Classification

Knowledge Area (KA)	Subject of Investigation (SOI)	Field of Science (FOS)	Percent
903	0001	3020	100%

Knowledge Area

[903] Communication, Education, and Information Delivery

Subject Of Investigation

[0001] Administration

Field Of Science

[3020] Education

Keywords

Agribusiness, Food System, Workforce Pathway

Goals / Objectives

Agriculture, food systems, and agribusiness are essential to economic development, food security, environmental stewardship, and community resilience throughout Micronesia. However, higher education institutions across Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) face persistent challenges in delivering comprehensive food and agricultural sciences education. Geographic dispersion across thousands of miles of ocean, limited faculty capacity in specialized disciplines, restricted access to advanced

coursework, and workforce shortages constrain educational opportunities for students interested in agriculture and related industries.The University of Guam (UOG), Northern Marianas College (NMC), and the College of Micronesia-FSM (COM-FSM) collectively serve students across some of the most geographically dispersed communities in the United States-affiliated Pacific. Although these institutions share common goals related to workforce preparation and community development, students often have limited access to coursework in agribusiness, agricultural economics, entrepreneurship, food systems management, and agricultural leadership. As a result, employers throughout the region continue to report shortages of qualified professionals capable of supporting agricultural business development, food system planning, value-added agriculture, marketing, and workforce leadership.Recent climate-related disruptions have further highlighted these challenges. Super Typhoon Sinlaku in 2026 disrupted educational operations across portions of the Northern Mariana Islands and Micronesia, underscoring the vulnerability of traditional classroom-dependent instructional systems. These events demonstrated the importance of resilient instructional delivery systems capable of maintaining educational continuity during emergencies while simultaneously expanding access to specialized educational opportunities.Major Objectives and GoalsRecent climate-related disruptions have further highlighted these challenges. Super Typhoon Sinlaku in 2026 disrupted educational operations across portions of the Northern Mariana Islands and Micronesia, underscoring the vulnerability of traditional classroom-dependent instructional systems. These events demonstrated the importance of resilient instructional delivery systems capable of maintaining educational continuity during emergencies while simultaneously expanding access to specialized educational opportunities.The proposed Pacific Agribusiness and Food Systems Academy (PAFSA) will address these challenges through a regional partnership among UOG, NMC, and COM-FSM. The project will strengthen educational quality by developing shared online curriculum resources, enhancing faculty capacity in distance education, creating experiential learning and leadership opportunities, and strengthening workforce pathways for students throughout Micronesia. The long-term impact will be a sustainable regional educational framework that improves educational access, workforce readiness, leadership capacity, and food system resilience.Objective 1: Develop and implement a regional online curriculum in agribusiness and food systems that can be shared among UOG, NMC, and COM-FSM. Objective 2: Strengthen faculty capacity through professional development in distance education technologies, curriculum design, and online pedagogy.Objective 3: Establish experiential learning, internship, and leadership development opportunities connecting students with agricultural industries, government agencies, and community organizations.Objective 4: Increase student recruitment, retention, workforce readiness, and leadership competency in food and agricultural sciences.

Project Methods

The Pacific Agribusiness and Food Systems Academy (PAFSA) will be implemented through a collaborative partnership among the University of Guam (UOG), Northern Marianas College (NMC), and the College of Micronesia-Federated States of Micronesia (COM-FSM). The project is designed to address four DEG educational need areas: Curricula Design and Materials Development, Faculty Preparation and Enhancement, Instruction Delivery Systems, and Student Experiential Learning. The University of Guam will serve as the lead institution and provide overall project administration, fiscal management, reporting, curriculum coordination, and evaluation oversight. A Project Steering Committee will be established during the first quarter of the project and will include representatives from UOG, NMC, COM-FSM, industry stakeholders, extension professionals, and workforce development partners. The Steering Committee will meet quarterly to review progress, monitor milestones, provide recommendations, and ensure that project activities remain aligned with workforce needs throughout Micronesia.Objective 1: Develop and Implement a Regional Online Curriculum in Agribusiness and Food SystemsThe project team will establish a Regional Curriculum Working Group composed of faculty members from agriculture, business, economics, and food systems disciplines at UOG, NMC, and COM-FSM. The Working Group will conduct curriculum mapping exercises, identify gaps in existing instructional offerings, and develop six online modules focusing on:Introduction to Agribusiness and Agricultural EconomicsPacific Food Systems and Food SecurityAgricultural Marketing and Value Chain ManagementAgribusiness Entrepreneurship and InnovationAgritourism and Rural Economic DevelopmentAgricultural Leadership and Workforce DevelopmentCourses will be developed using quality online instructional design principles and will incorporate asynchronous learning materials, interactive activities, case studies, guest lectures, and applied problem-solving

exercises. All materials will be designed for integration into existing Learning Management Systems at participating institutions.Objective 3: Establish Experiential Learning, Leadership Development, and Workforce PathwaysThe project will create a Regional Agribusiness Leadership Program that combines experiential learning with workforce preparation. Activities will include:Summer Agribusiness Training CampsVirtual Industry Mentorship ProgramRegional Internship ProgramStudent Leadership AcademyApplied Agribusiness Case Study CompetitionsIndustry and Government Guest Speaker SeriesStudents will work directly with agricultural businesses, government agencies, Cooperative Extension programs, conservation districts, and community organizations throughout Micronesia. These experiences will strengthen critical thinking, communication, teamwork, leadership, and professional skills identified by USDA as essential workforce competencies.Objective 4: Increase Student Recruitment, Retention, and Career ReadinessThe project will implement coordinated student recruitment and retention activities including:Regional outreach presentationsAgriculture career awareness campaignsStudent ambassador programFaculty advising supportPeer mentoring networkCareer pathway workshopsThese activities will be integrated with academic programs to encourage enrollment, persistence, and successful career transitions.