



United States Department of Agriculture

A graphic consisting of two triangles pointing towards each other, one orange and one blue.

**BRIDGES TO
OPPORTUNITY**
FARM SERVICE AGENCY

Connecting Customers to the Services they Need

Bridges Partners

Tuesday, June 7, 2016

3 p.m. ET

Today's Bridges Presentation Team

- Glenn Schafer, National Bridges Program Manager
- Shayla Watson, National Stakeholder Engagement Specialist

Audio is streaming – please ensure your computer's speakers are on. Call-in telephone number will be posted as a chat message for those experiencing audio trouble; however, you will be in listen-only mode.

Please use the “Chat” function in the ReadyTalk application to submit questions focused on today's subject matter; questions will be addressed throughout the Webinar.

Bridges Partners Webinar

Agenda

1. Bridges to Opportunity Background
2. Bridges Services
3. Bridges Partners
4. Bridges Participation Agreement
5. The Portal & Receiving Referrals
6. Collaboration as a Bridges Partner
7. Questions & Answers

Bridges to Opportunity (Bridges) Background

In 2013, USDA Secretary Vilsack challenged FSA to leverage its:

- Expansive nationwide network of 2,124 County Offices
- Established partnerships with state and local organizations
- Employees' knowledge of local agriculture

In early 2014, FSA convened a taskforce to come up with ideas

“Bridges to Opportunity” resulted as means to provide additional service to its customers and agricultural communities

Bridges Background (Cont.)

Bridges to Opportunity Vision:

“Connecting Customers to the Services they Need”

- Providing access to a wide range of agricultural resources
- Connecting customers to agricultural experts
- Facilitating partner collaboration to address the needs of the agricultural community

Bridges Background (Cont.)

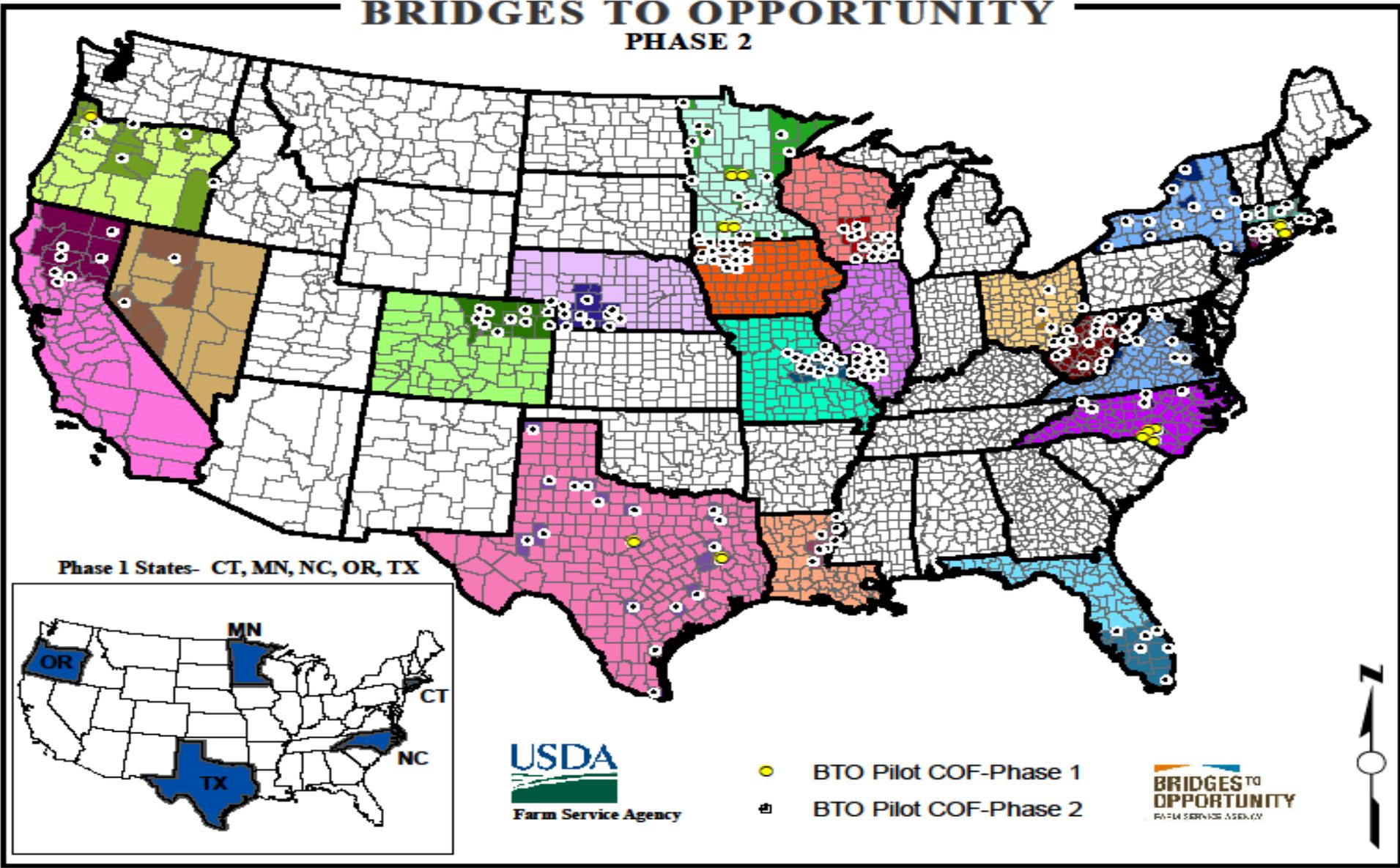
The Bridges Pilot was conducted in late 2014 and early 2015:

- Five states, through 12 FSA offices
- Focus on specific customer segments
- Gauge level of interest among partners & customers
- Determine FSA's capacity to deliver additional services

In April 2016, Phase 2 was launched in 20 states, through over 200 FSA offices, serving over 300 counties.

Check the Bridges to Opportunity Web site for participating counties: www.fsa.usda.gov/bridges

BRIDGES TO OPPORTUNITY PHASE 2



Bridges Services

- 1. Resources** – Providing free agricultural resources directly to customers by visiting or contacting participating FSA offices
- 2. Referrals** – Referring customers to agricultural experts for assistance, and gathering feedback from partners
- 3. Facilitation** – Facilitating collaboration among Bridges Partners to address the needs of the agricultural community

Note: Customers choose the resources they want; FSA does NOT recommend or endorse any resources or partners.

Delivering Bridges Services

- A Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software application is used to deliver Bridges services
- The software is able to store resources and search select online resources maintained by USDA and its partners
- There are two parts to the software:
 - “The Bridge” used by FSA employees
 - “The Portal” used by Bridges Partners

Note: Bridges is not accessible online for *customers* at this time.

Bridges Services (Cont.)

1. *Resources*

- Providing free agricultural resources directly to customers
- Resources developed by and available from USDA and non USDA organizations and individuals (i.e. partners)
- Information, fact sheets, how-to guides, videos, events, seminars, expertise & assistance
- Accessible and maintained on the Internet

Bridges Services (Cont.)

2. *Referrals*

- Referring customers to agricultural experts for assistance
- Ensuring customers get connected with experts
- Gathering feedback from partners on service provided
- Partners have access to *The Portal* to provide feedback and network with other partners

Bridges Services (Cont.)

3. Facilitation

- Facilitating collaboration among Bridges Partners to address the needs of the agricultural community
- Creating or sponsoring events, seminars, meetings, or other information for customers and communities
- Addressing specific issues of concern facing local farmers, ranchers, and other areas of the agricultural economy
- Providing advice and guidance to FSA on Bridges

Types of Partners

There are three types of partners for Bridges to Opportunity:

1. USDA Agency Partners – all USDA agencies and offices
2. **“Bridges Partners”** – non USDA organizations and individuals that have signed a “Bridges Participation Agreement”
3. Public Partners – non USDA organizations and individuals without a signed agreement

“Bridges Partner”

- Signs a “Bridges Participation Agreement”
- A working relationship with FSA to participate in Bridges to Opportunity
- Has free resources and expertise to provide to customers
- Willing to collaborate with FSA and other partners to address the needs of the agricultural community

Bridges Participation Agreement

- Simply formalizes the relationship with FSA to participate in Bridges to Opportunity
- Bridges Partner has free resources to provide to customers
- Agreement may be terminated at any time with 15 days written notice
- The agreement is reviewed annually

Bridges Participation Agreement (Cont.)

Establishes basic parameters of the relationship:

1. FSA/USDA/US Government does not endorse or promote Bridges Partner or its resources or services
2. Bridges Partner cannot use Bridges to Opportunity as a form of endorsement from FSA/USDA/US Government
3. No money is in involved
4. No claim can be made against FSA/USDA/US Government

Common Agreement Questions

Who can or should sign agreement for a partner organization?

- *The partner organization determines this, not FSA.*

At what level should the agreement be signed, leadership or locally?

- *Either works, but the scope of applicability must be defined with each agreement—i.e. statewide, multiple counties, individual.*

Common Agreement Questions (Cont.)

What value is there to being a Bridges Partner?

- *FSA helps Bridges Partners achieve their mission by providing customers access to their resources, information, and experts.*
- *Bridges Partners may, if they choose, receive referrals of customers from FSA.*
- *Bridges Partners, if they choose, have access to The Portal, through which they can provide feedback to FSA, create events, and network with other Bridges Partners.*
- *Bridges Partners are invited to collaborate with other Bridges Partners, FSA, and USDA.*

The Portal

The Portal is the portion of the software application that Bridges Partners may access to:

- Respond to referrals
- Create events to be shared with customers
- Network with other Bridges Partners

Only USDA and Bridges Partners have access to The Portal.

Note: Bridges Partners are not required to receive referrals or use The Portal.

Obtaining Access to The Portal

1. Sign a Bridges Participation Agreement:
 - Bridges Partner Organization & State or County FSA Office.
2. Load Bridges Partner organization & individuals in The Bridge:
 - State or County FSA Office
3. Create a Level 2 eAuth account at www.eauth.usda.gov:
 - Bridges Partner Individual
4. Provide Level 2 eAuth ID to State or County FSA Office:
 - Bridges Partner Individual

Obtaining Access to The Portal (Cont.)

5. Grant Bridges Partner Individual access to The Portal:
 - National FSA Office
6. “Welcome to USDA FSA BTO Partner Community” email:
 - sent automatically to Bridges Partner with URL to log in.
7. Contact local FSA office to run through referral process:
 - Bridges Partner
8. Start receiving referrals!
 - Bridges Partner

Receiving Referrals

1. FSA initiates a referral at the request of the customer.
2. Bridges Partner receives an email with the customer's contact information and a brief description of the issue.
3. Bridges Partner contacts customer to set up a meeting.
4. Upon completion of the meeting, the Bridges Partner logs into The Portal to complete the referral process and give feedback on the service they provided to the customer.
5. FSA reviews Bridges Partner feedback and closes referral.

Collaboration as a Bridges Partner

- ***“Bridges Bundles”***
 - Collection of online resources focused on specific topic
- ***“Knowledge Articles”***
 - Articles on topics referencing available related resources
- ***Events***
 - Working together to address specific concerns
- ***Networking with other Bridges Partners***
 - “Chatter” social media function in The Portal

Bridges Partner Training on The Portal

- Training videos will be available for Bridges Partners on how to log in and use The Portal.
- Learning resources will be posted on the Bridges to Opportunity Website at:
 - <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/bridges>
- Contact your local FSA Bridges Coordinator upon gaining access to The Portal to discuss the process further.

Questions & Answers Wrap-Up

- Type your question into the “Chat” field in the lower left of your screen.

Summary

1. Bridges was initiated to add value to service to customers
2. Bridges provides customers access to resources and referrals
3. Bridges Partners have close working relationship with FSA
4. The Agreement formalizes relationship with Bridges Partners
5. The Portal allows Bridges Partners to receive referrals, plus
6. Collaboration among Bridges Partners is facilitated
7. Additional training on using The Portal is forthcoming

Bridges To Opportunity Contacts:

Bridges to Opportunity Web Site:

- www.fsa.usda.gov/bridges

General questions regarding Bridges:

- Bridges2Opportunity@fsa.usda.gov

Questions about becoming a Bridges Partner in a participating state:

- Contact your FSA State Office and ask about “Bridges to Opportunity”
- Go to: www.fsa.usda.gov and select the “State Offices” tab
- Select your state for contact information



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