

Contact:

Sarah Grace Fowler
Director, Communications
(202) 296-9680
sarah.fowler@nasda.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 16, 2025

NASDA Announces 2025 Honor Award Recipients

Rogers, Arkansas — At its 2025 annual meeting, the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture recognized three exemplary employees of state departments of agriculture for their service, communication and administration on behalf of their state.

“Every year, we have the honor of celebrating the individuals whose dedication and innovation help advance agriculture in meaningful ways,” NASDA President, Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture Wes Ward said. “These awards reflect our deep appreciation for those who work wholeheartedly to support our communities, strengthen our food systems and secure a thriving future for agriculture.”

This year, NASDA also awarded the NASDA Public-Private Partnership Award. Congratulations to the 2025 NASDA Honor Award recipients:

Communications Award:

Director of Communications Heather Lansdowne, Kansas Department of Agriculture

Heather Lansdowne, Director of Communications of the Kansas Department of Agriculture, received the 2025 Communications Award. This award honors distinguished efforts in media and public communications that enhance public understanding of agriculture.

Over the last decade, Heather has cultivated a deep respect for and strong connection to Kansas farmers and ranchers, while skillfully ensuring external communication resonates with the general public. This perspective has proven invaluable in helping convey complex animal and plant health issues in a clear and relatable way. Heather brings humility, passion, and a steadfast belief in the power of teamwork to everything she does.

Douglass-Irvin Administration Award:



Administrative/Financial Manager Julie Cook, Wyoming Department of Agriculture

Julie Cook, Administrative/Financial Manager of the Wyoming Department of Agriculture, has been selected as the 2025 Douglass-Irvin Administration Award in recognition of her exceptional contributions to a state agency, leading to enhanced administrative efficiency and greater organizational impact.

Julie has dedicated over 25 years to the Wyoming Department of Agriculture, currently serving as the Administration Division Manager, overseeing fiscal, human resources, reporting, public information and IT efforts. With deep expertise in accounting and state regulations, she is a trusted resource both within the department and across Wyoming's government. Known for her integrity, problem-solving skills and willingness to take on challenges, Julie has been a steady, highly respected leader instrumental to the department's success.

James A. Graham Award for Outstanding Service:



Deputy Commissioner Katie Howard, New York State Department of Agriculture

Katie Howard, Deputy Commissioner of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets is the recipient of the James A. Graham Award for Outstanding Service. This award honors outstanding

efforts in delivering meaningful support and service to farmers and ranchers.

Katie has served the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets for five years, progressing from Special Counsel for Ethics, Risk and Compliance to Deputy Commissioner in 2024, where she now oversees the Division of Food Safety and Inspection, Division of Milk Control and Dairy Services, and the New York State Food Laboratory. She has played a pivotal role in New York's proactive response to highly pathogenic avian influenza, leading complex testing and surveillance initiatives in coordination with federal and state partners to protect dairy herds, poultry and public health. Katie's leadership, professionalism and collaborative approach have been instrumental in maintaining New York's status as unaffected by avian influenza, earning her the respect of colleagues, regulators and agricultural producers statewide.

NASDA Public-Private Partnership Award:



The NASDA Public-Private Partnership Award honors a NASDA Partner organization that has worked alongside state departments of agriculture to deliver a program, project, or service with a meaningful impact at the state or national level. This year, the award is presented to SAS.

While all NASDA partners raise NASDA's ability to serve state agriculture departments and provide quality member value, SAS has gone above and beyond. SAS has been an active NASDA partner since 2022, and since joining our network, the SAS team has proactively sought solutions to the issues they hear about in the room at our meetings. This year, SAS has brought about four regional and national solutions that address issues our members face with an inaccurate drought system, international market development, and regional food system resiliency.

###

NASDA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit association which represents the elected and appointed commissioners, secretaries and directors of the departments of agriculture in all 50 states and four U.S. territories. NASDA enhances American food and agricultural communities through policy, partnerships and public engagement. To learn more about NASDA, please visit www.nasda.org.

