

# EPA Awards \$6.2M for Hempcrete and Green Building Materials

## EPA Awards \$6.2M Grant for Hempcrete and Biogenic Building Materials

In a significant move towards sustainable construction practices, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has awarded nearly \$6.2 million to the Hemp Building Institute. This grant, totaling \$6,186,200, is part of a larger initiative to advance the use of eco-friendly materials in the construction industry, particularly those derived from agricultural crops like hempcrete, soy, and straw bale. These materials are considered vital in addressing climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with traditional building materials such as concrete.

### Grant Overview and Objectives

The EPA's grant aims to promote the adoption of biogenic building materials, which are made from renewable biological resources. The funds will support the development of environmental product declarations (EPDs) and life cycle assessments (LCAs) for these materials, providing a comprehensive understanding of their environmental impacts from production to disposal. This effort is expected to foster greater transparency and trust in the environmental benefits of using biogenic materials in construction.

The Hemp Building Institute plans to use the grant to establish an open-source database that will serve as a repository of information on biogenic materials. This database will be accessible to builders, architects, and policymakers, facilitating informed decision-making. Additionally, the Institute will offer education, training, and technical assistance to industry professionals, helping to bridge the knowledge gap and promote the widespread use of these sustainable materials.

### Key Partnerships and Project Locations

The project will be implemented across several states, including Maryland, Tennessee, California, and Alabama. A diverse group of partners will collaborate on the initiative, including EntreVator, Alabama State University, the California Straw Bale Association, the Parsons Healthy Materials Lab, and the National Hemp Association. These partnerships bring together expertise in agricultural research, sustainable architecture, and education, ensuring a comprehensive approach to promoting biogenic materials.

### Significance of the Grant

This grant is part of a broader \$160 million funding initiative announced by the EPA, aimed at supporting 38 entities nationwide. The focus on biogenic materials like hempcrete reflects a growing recognition of the need for sustainable building practices in environmental policy. Hempcrete, in particular, has garnered attention for its carbon-negative properties, meaning it can sequester more carbon dioxide than is emitted during its production, making it a particularly attractive option for green construction.

## **Previous Efforts and Future Implications**

The EPA's grant builds on earlier federal efforts to promote hemp-based building materials. In 2022, the Department of Energy (DOE) awarded \$3.47 million to Texas A&M University for research into 3D printing hempcrete products. This project emphasized hempcrete's potential to revolutionize the construction industry by providing a sustainable, carbon-negative alternative to conventional materials. Furthermore, in 2021, the DOE supported research into hemp fiber insulation, further underscoring the potential of hemp in sustainable building practices.

The growing federal interest in hemp-based materials is indicative of a broader shift towards sustainability in the construction industry. As concerns about climate change and environmental degradation intensify, there is an increasing demand for building materials that are not only sustainable but also contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. Biogenic materials like hempcrete offer a viable solution, combining ecological benefits with functional performance.

The EPA's \$6.2 million grant to the Hemp Building Institute marks a significant step forward in the promotion of sustainable construction materials. By supporting the development of environmental product declarations and life cycle assessments, the grant will help build a solid foundation of knowledge and trust in biogenic materials. The initiative's emphasis on education, training, and technical assistance ensures that industry professionals are equipped with the tools they need to adopt these materials widely.

As the construction industry continues to seek ways to mitigate its environmental impact, biogenic materials like hempcrete represent a promising avenue for achieving significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. This grant not only supports the immediate goals of promoting sustainable materials but also contributes to the long-term vision of a greener, more sustainable built environment.

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