



United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food and
Agriculture

**National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Federal Assistance
Policy Guide:
Section II: Pre-Award
pp. 24-45**

NIFA Office of Grants and Financial Management

April 21, 2021

The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

II. Pre-Award

A. *Types of NIFA Financial Assistance ALL AWARDS*

NIFA financial assistance is generally classified by the type of funding mechanism. The primary funding mechanisms are competitive grants, capacity grants, and non-competitive grants and agreements. The various funding mechanisms establish the nature of the relationship that will exist between NIFA and the recipient throughout the duration of funding. Different funding mechanisms also carry different application and eligibility requirements. However, the RFA will communicate all applicable requirements to potential recipients; award recipients will receive this information through the RFA, Notice of Award, and award terms and conditions.

1. Competitive grants

NIFA awards grants for fundamental and applied research, extension, and higher education activities, as well as for projects that integrate research, education, and extension functions on a competitive basis. Competitive programs enable NIFA to attract a large pool of applicants to work on agricultural issues of national interest, and to select the highest quality proposals submitted by highly qualified eligible individuals, institutions, or organizations. Competitive grant awards are made following a rigorous peer-review process. Eligibility, administrative rules, and procedures vary for each specific program according to its authorizing statute. Although NIFA typically enters into grants and cooperative agreements only after competition in accordance with the applicable regulations, there are certain situations in which NIFA will issue a non-competitive award (see Item 3 in this section). A list of NIFA's competitive programs is [available online](#).

2. Capacity grants

Capacity grants are formula-funded grants awarded to: 1) land-grant institutions (1862 and 1890 institutions), as defined in Section 1404 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA); and 2) schools of forestry; colleges of veterinary medicine; and funds provided for research, education, and extension. In addition, 1994 institutions, as defined in Section 532 of the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994, and Hispanic-Serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities, as defined in Section 1404 of NARETPA, are authorized to receive established amounts of money through endowments. The amount of funds each institution receives is determined by statutorily-defined formulae that may include variables such as the rural population, farm population, and population living at or below the poverty level. NIFA is required by statute to distribute funds to eligible recipients.

Capacity programs are arranged by the applicability of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (AREERA), which imposes specific reporting requirements on certain programs. Reporting is discussed in Section V.J of this Policy Guide.

AREERA Capacity Programs	Non-AREERA Capacity Programs
Smith Lever 3(b) & (c), including the District of Columbia	Renewable Resources Extension Act (RREA)
Hatch Act (Regular and Multistate)	McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Research Program
Extension at 1890 Land-Grant Colleges, Including Tuskegee University, Central State University, and West Virginia State University (NARETPA Section 1444)	Smith-Lever Special Needs
Evans-Allen (Agricultural Research at 1890 Land-Grant Colleges, Including Tuskegee University, Central State University, and West Virginia State University) (NARETPA Section 1445)	Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)
Animal Health and Disease Research*	Animal Health and Disease Research*

* Animal Health and Disease Research (AHDR) falls under AREERA Capacity Programs and Non-AREERA Capacity Programs.

3. Non-Competitive Grant Programs

Projects that are directed by Congress to specifically support a designated institution or set of institutions for particular research, education, or extension on topics of importance to a state or region are included in the Non-Competitive Grants Program. These projects receive funds through Special Research Grants or Direct Federal Administration Research or Education Grants. Non-Competitive RFAs might also be available when competition for a particular program has been waived by NIFA in accordance with 2 CFR 415.1. Under 2 CFR 415.1, NIFA has authority to waive the competitive review process for awards of less than \$75,000. NIFA can also waive the competitive process for:

- Nonmonetary awards of property or services,
- Awards to fund continuing work already started under a previous award,
- Awards that cannot be delayed due to an emergency or a substantial danger to health or safety, when it is impracticable to secure competition, or
- When the award will fund a unique and innovative unsolicited application (2 CFR 400.1(d)).

4. Cooperative Agreements

When NIFA will be substantially involved in carrying out the project or program for which funds are awarded, NIFA awards a cooperative agreement rather than a grant. Substantial involvement pertains to programmatic involvement. The NIFA Policy Guide pertains to grants and cooperative agreements; however, NIFA may apply specific terms and conditions to cooperative agreements consistent with the nature of its involvement under cooperative agreements.

B. Application Information ALL AWARDS

NIFA publishes funding opportunity announcements, called Requests for Applications (RFAs), for capacity and competitive grant programs on [Grants.gov](#). NIFA's [RFA Schedule](#), a listing of the competitive programs and the anticipated publication date of the RFAs is available online. NIFA's [open RFAs](#) are posted on the NIFA website, as well as on the government-wide [Grants.gov](#) site. [Capacity grants RFAs](#) are posted to the "Capacity Grants" section of the NIFA website.

RFAs will be published in the Federal Register when required by legislation. Potential applicants may also subscribe to [Grants.gov](#) and NIFA listservs (via the [NIFA website](#)) to receive notification of RFAs that meet the specified criteria. NIFA may also issue press releases to announce when a new funding opportunity is accepting applications.

1. Federal Assistance Listings ALL AWARDS

Federal Assistance Listings (formerly CFDA) provide general information about Federal assistance programs, organized by grantor agency.³ The Assistance Listing is the basic reference source of Federal financial and non-financial assistance programs, projects, services, and activities. Programs included in the Assistance Listings are defined as any function of a Federal agency that provides assistance or benefits for a state or states, territorial possession, county, city, other political subdivision, grouping, or instrumentality thereof; any domestic for-profit or non-profit corporation, institution, or individual, other than an agency of the Federal government. The Assistance Listings are updated twice a year. The most recently updated print edition and the frequently updated online version are both [available online](#). Although the Assistance Listing does provide a general description of NIFA-funded programs, [Grants.gov](#) and the NIFA website are updated more frequently with program information.

³ The Assistance Listings are published pursuant to the requirements of 31 U.S.C. § 6104 and OMB Circular No. A-89, *Federal Domestic Assistance Program Information* (Aug. 17, 1984).

2. Request for Applications ALL AWARDS

An RFA is a formal statement used to solicit grant or cooperative agreement applications. An RFA may include all or a portion of the following items:

- a. Contact information;
- b. Directions for interested stakeholders or beneficiaries to submit written comments in a published program solicitation or RFA;
- c. Assistance Listing number;
- d. Legislative authority and background information;
- e. Purpose, priorities, and fund availability;
- f. Program-specific eligibility requirements;
- g. Program-specific restrictions on the use of funds;
- h. Matching requirements;
- i. Acceptable types of applications;
- j. Types of projects to be given priority consideration, including maximum anticipated awards and maximum project lengths;
- k. Program areas;
- l. Funding restrictions;
- m. Information about how to obtain application forms and the instructions for completing such forms;
- n. Information and requirements for submitting applications, including submission deadline(s);
- o. Explanation of the application evaluation process;
- p. Specific evaluation criteria used in the review process; and
- q. Type of Federal assistance awards (i.e., grants and/or cooperative agreement, 7 CFR 3430.17).

NIFA issues RFAs for all competitive and capacity awards on Grants.gov; in addition, all applications must be submitted through Grants.gov. NIFA also issues RFAs for non-competitive awards, however, those RFAs may not be listed on Grants.gov.

3. Grants.gov ALL AWARDS

[Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) is an Internet site established by the General Services Administration (GSA), as the single site for giving the public access to posted opportunities for financial assistance awards and submitting applications for such awards. On Grants.gov, VIEW GRANT OPPORTUNITY provides a synopsis of each funding opportunity, the minimum information people need in order to quickly decide whether they want to review the full announcement for that opportunity; a way to access the full announcement electronically; and a link to Grants.gov APPLY. Grants.gov APPLY is the portion of Grants.gov applicants' access to submit applications. You must have Adobe Reader software to apply through Grants.gov. This software, including system requirements and other information, is available for download at the Grants.gov "[Adobe Software Compatibility](#)" page.

a. Grants.gov Registration **ALL AWARDS**

All prospective applicants for NIFA grants must register with Grants.gov prior to applying to a funding opportunity. Failure to register with Grants.gov will prevent the submission of an application from a potential applicant. Potential applicants should ensure that they are registered with Grants.gov prior to preparing an application. Visit Grants.gov for additional information on the [registration process](#). The registration process may take as long as four weeks to complete. Grants.gov registration needs to be completed only once, and there is no separate registration required with NIFA.

The registration process includes obtaining a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and registering with the System for Awards Management (SAM), and registering in Grants.gov. PDs do not need to register with Grants.gov unless they are also the Authorized Representative, the person authorized to submit an application on behalf of their organization.

b. NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide **ALL AWARDS**

This guide includes general guidelines for submission via Grants.gov as well as NIFA general guidelines for submission via Grants.gov. Applicants must follow the guidelines associated with the applicable funding opportunity. A sample version of the NIFA Grants.gov is available [online](#). Application Guides for specific RFAs will be located in Grants.gov.

The guide contains formatting requirements for attachments to an application. All attachments must comply with the specified font, spacing and margin, and PDF requirements of the guide unless stated otherwise in the RFA. NIFA recommends producing the documents electronically using text or word-processing software and then converting the document to PDF. This will allow the text to be searched electronically (i.e., do not scan files that have text as an image, scan as text file only).

4. DUNS Number **ALL AWARDS**

All applicant organizations must obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number as part of the Grants.gov registration process. The DUNS number serves as the Universal Identifier when applying for Federal grants or cooperative agreements. The DUNS number is a unique nine-digit number assigned by Dun and Bradstreet Information Services (D&B). Organizations without a DUNS number may obtain one free [online](#). The DUNS number is an identifier for organizations and is not a number specific to a particular PD/PI. All subrecipients must also provide a DUNS number to the grantee organization.

5. System for Awards Management **ALL AWARDS**

GSA's Office of Government-wide Policy consolidated the government-wide acquisition and award support systems into one new system – the System for

Award Management (SAM). Unless exempted under 2 CFR 25.110, applicant organizations must register in SAM and ensure their information remains current when they have an application under consideration for NIFA funding. If an award is made, recipients must “maintain an active SAM registration with current information, including information on a recipient’s immediate and highest level owner and subsidiaries, as well as on all predecessors that have been awarded a Federal contract or grant within the last three years, if applicable, at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by an Federal awarding agency”. The award is considered active until a final financial report is submitted or the final payment is received, whichever is later (2 CFR part 25.200). If NIFA makes a determination that there are exigent circumstances that prohibit the applicant from receiving a unique entity identifier and completing SAM registration prior to receiving a Federal award. In these instances, NIFA must require the recipient to obtain a unique entity identifier and complete SAM registration within 30 days of the Federal award date.

SAM will send automated notifications to registrants when registration is set to expire. All applicants should [confirm their institutional information](#) is in SAM and is current before submitting their application. A current, valid email address is required for each SAM account. This email address serves as a primary means of communicating features such as notifications, alerts, and password resets. Information for a specific institution is available in SAM by searching by name or DUNS number. SAM will also note if an entity’s status is as a small business. All SAM users will have access to public information.

SAM registration is required for all entities being considered for Federal subawards and contracts. All NIFA grantees entering into subawards and contracts in furtherance of a NIFA grant must confirm an active contractor registration with SAM.

All parties not eligible to receive a Federal award are listed in SAM. Exclusions are now categorized into four Exclusion Types: (1) ineligible (proceedings pending), (2) ineligible (proceedings completed), (3) prohibition/restriction, and (4) voluntary exclusion. Entity types include: Firm, Individual, Vessel, and Special Entity Designation. Additional information on registering with and using SAM is available [online at www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov).

6. ezFedGrants CAPACITY AWARDS

In 2013, NIFA launched a grants modernization initiative to streamline its grant application and award processes. This business transformation initiative will increase efficiency and reduce costs for NIFA grantees and staff. One main component of this initiative is to transition to a new grants and financial management system offered by USDA, called ezFedGrants. NIFA staff began using ezFedGrants in fall 2016 to process all FY 2017 capacity program applications. Capacity grantees may now use

ezFedGrants to check application and agreement status and submit Federal Financial Reports (SF-425). For more information and updates, visit the [NIFA Grants Modernization](#) webpage or email NIFA. In the future, NIFA anticipates adding competitive grants; the NIFA website and RFAs will be updated accordingly.

7. Applicant Eligibility ALL AWARDS

Authorizing legislation and annual appropriations law determine eligibility for all NIFA grant programs. NIFA awards are made only to eligible applicants. Capacity grant eligibility is determined by statute and specified in the RFA. For competitive awards, eligible organizations generally include all levels of government (state, local, and Indian tribal governments), including Federal institutions, institutions of higher education, other non-profit organizations, hospitals, and, in rare occasions, individuals. RFA and program guidelines will specify any special criteria imposed by NIFA for applicant eligibility, such as the qualifications of the PD/PI or other staff or participants and/or limitations to the number or types of applications that may be submitted by an institution.

Applicants must review the eligibility requirements included in the RFA and make their own assessment whether the requirements are met and whether to submit an application. As noted in Part V of the RFA, the application review process includes a check to see if administrative requirements have been met. NIFA will closely review applications recommended for funding to determine if the eligibility requirements have been met. During the pre-award administrative review process, NIFA may request additional information (e.g., organizational management information) and make a preliminary assessment of applicant organization eligibility. The applicant may be required to provide proof of its status by submitting documentation to determine applicant eligibility.

Unless stated otherwise in an RFA, or where the grant programs' authorizing legislation sets particular limits, acceptable evidence of non-profit eligibility includes the following:

- A copy of a currently valid Internal Revenue Service tax exemption certificate
- A statement from a state taxing body, State Attorney General, or other appropriate state official certifying that the applicant organization has a non-profit status
- A certified copy of the organization's certificate of incorporation or similar document that clearly establishes non-profit status or
- Any of the above proof for a state or national parent organization and a statement signed by the parent organization that the applicant organization is a local non-profit affiliate.

In addition to reviewing organizational eligibility, NIFA may consider other factors relating to the applicant's ability to responsibly handle and account for Federal funds and to carry out the project. These factors include the applicant's intended role in the project, the location where the project will be performed, and the role

of the PD/PI in the project, and the PD/PI's employment and citizenship status. NIFA will not make an award to an applicant that does not have a substantive role in the project and would simply serve as a conduit for another entity.

8. Organizational Management Information ALL AWARDS

Before an award can be made, certain information is required from applicant to ensure eligibility, assure compliance with the civil rights laws, and to effectively assess the potential recipient's capacity to manage Federal funds, which is necessary for NIFA's pre-award risk assessment. The type of information gathered are the legal name of the grantee, articles of incorporation, bylaws, certification that the organization has the legal authority to accept Federal funding, identification and signatures of the key officials of the organization, the organization's practices in regard to compensation rates and benefits of employees, insurance for equipment, subcontracting with other organizations, etc., as well as the financial condition of the organization. This information is provided on a one-time basis and updated as necessary.

9. Applicant Citizenship ALL AWARDS

Any requirements, such as citizenship, affecting the eligibility of the PD/PI, grant funded employees, or others (e.g., Fellows, trainees) will be specified in the RFA. In most cases, individuals must have the required citizenship status when the award is made, rather than when the application is submitted.

NIFA's 7 CFR 3430, Competitive and noncompetitive non-formula Federal assistance programs – general award administrative provisions, includes provisions for citizenship for individual applicants and participants. These provisions govern competitive awards. 7 CFR 3430 states that eligible participants must be a citizen or national of the United States. Further, unless otherwise specified in the RFA, only United States citizens, non-citizen nationals of the United States, and lawful permanent residents of the United States are eligible to apply for and receive NIFA awards to individuals, which typically applies to Fellows. If the RFA is silent on citizenship of grant-funded employees not covered by 7 CFR 3430, e.g., PD/PI, or if employees are funded by capacity grants, then the institution must follow its own internal policies and procedures regarding citizenship of its employees.

For purposes of applicant citizenship, NIFA follows the U.S. Customs and Immigration Service (USCIS) definitions, unless otherwise stated in the RFA. U.S. citizens are individuals born in the United States, Puerto Rico, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, and U.S. Virgin Islands, (persons born in American Samoa, or Swains Island are generally considered nationals of the United States); foreign-born children, under age 18, residing in the United States with their birth or adoptive parents, at least one of whom is a U.S. citizen by birth or naturalization; and individuals granted citizenship status by USCIS.⁴

The term "national of the United States"⁵ means a person who, though not a citizen

of the United States, owes permanent allegiance to the United States (for example, persons born in American Samoa or Swains Island).⁶

C. Submitting an Application ALL AWARDS

The RFA will include all instructions on how to complete an application referring, where appropriate, to the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. The RFA will specify that all applications are to be submitted through Grants.gov and will include instructions on how to access the electronic application forms and how to apply through Grants.gov. The RFA also will specify what forms are to be submitted, which generally include forms from the following:

- R&R SF424 Cover Sheet
- R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)
- R&R Other Project Information
- R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)
- R&R Personal Data
- R&R Budget
- R&R Subaward Budget Attachment
- Supplemental Information
- AFRI Project Type Form
- SBIR/STTR Information
- Key Contact Form
- Attachment Form

All attachments to an application must comply with NIFA font, spacing and margin requirements, and must be in PDF format. NIFA recommends producing the documents electronically using text or word-processing software and then converting the document to PDF. This will allow the text to be searched electronically (i.e., do not scan files that have text as an image, scan as text file only).

1. Competitive Types of Applications COMPETITIVE AWARDS

The RFA will specify the types of applications that may be submitted in response to the RFA, which may include any of the following:

a. New

An application being submitted to NIFA for the first time ([7 CFR 3430.14](#)).

⁴ <https://www.uscis.gov/policymanual/HTML/PolicyManual-Volume12-PartA-Chapter2.html>

⁵ 8 USC 1101 (a)(22)

⁶ https://www.uscis.gov/tools/glossary?topic_id=n#alpha-listing

b. Continuation

A continuation award is an award instrument by which NIFA agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined period of time with a statement of intention to provide additional support at a future date, provided that performance has been satisfactory, appropriations are available for this purpose, and continued support would be in the best interest of the Federal government and the public. A continuation award is issued for the subsequent years of a new award. Using a streamlined process implemented in FY 2018, recipients of a continuation award no longer need to apply for subsequent year funding by submitting a noncompeting application for an additional funding/budget period within the previously approved project scope and objectives. Instead, to provide the next allotment of funding, NIFA only needs to document satisfactory progress on the project and verify a sound plan of work going forward. To do this, the recipient must submit a signature page, SF 425 Financial Report, continuation justification, budget and budget narrative for requested year of funding, changes in budget, personnel or assurances status; and the annual REEport update. Recipients will receive a letter from the NIFA National Program Leader (NPL) with a due date and job aids for submitting the required continuation award documentation.

c. Resubmission

A resubmission is an application that was submitted to a program for consideration under the same program, but was not funded, and is being submitted again to the program for consideration. For competitive programs, this type of application is evaluated in competition with other pending applications in the area to which it is assigned. In addition, applicants must respond to the previous panel review summaries, unless waived by NIFA. When reviewing a resubmission application, the panel will evaluate the application as now presented, taking into consideration the responses to comments from the previous scientific review group and changes made to the project ([7 CFR 3430.14](#)).

d. Renewal

A renewal is an application requesting additional funding for a period beyond that provided by a current award. These applications must contain the same information as required for new applications; they also must contain a Progress Report. For competitive programs, a renewal application will be considered in competition with all other applications for the award and must be fully developed, as though the applicant is applying for the first time. Unless otherwise provided, a progress report for each year the project was already active must be submitted via REEport for a renewal application to be considered ([7 CFR 3430.14](#)).

e. Resubmitted Renewal

A resubmitted renewal application is an application that has been previously funded and previously submitted for renewal but not funded for renewal.

Review panels will consider resubmitted renewals in competition with all other applications submitted. Reviewers will review the applicant's response to the comments from the unsuccessful review (7 CFR 3430.14).

f. Supplement

Supplement awards provide small amounts of additional funding under a standard, renewal, or continuation award and may involve a short-term (usually six months or less) extension of the project period beyond that approved in an original or amended award, but in no case may the cumulative period of the project, including short term extensions, exceed any statutory time limitation of the award. Supplemental awards are for needs or opportunities not present at the time of original application. Needs or opportunities may be identified by the awardee or the program. Supplements must be less than \$75,000, except in extremely rare instances. Supplemental awards are given on a non-competitive basis (7 CFR 3430.14) to assure adequate completion of the original scope of the work. Award of supplemental funding requires sufficient justification. Competition may be necessary for the award of a supplemental grant and if so, all applicants will be so notified.

g. Revision Applications

A revision application is an application that proposes a change to NIFA's financial obligations or contingent liability or the changes to the award terms and conditions of an existing award (7 CFR 3430.14).

h. Fixed Amount Awards

A fixed amount award is a type of grant agreement under which the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity provides a specific level of support without regard to actual costs incurred under the Federal award. This type of Federal award reduces some of the administrative burden and record-keeping requirements for both the non-Federal entity and Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity. Accountability is based primarily on performance and results. 2 CFR 200 Subpart E does not apply to fixed amount awards. See 2 CFR 200.201 for additional information on use of grant agreements including fixed amount awards and subawards.

2. Capacity Types of Applications CAPACITY AWARDS

All capacity applications are submitted annually to NIFA via Grants.gov; the designation is for a new award. RFAs are announced and posted to the NIFA website with updated application instructions.

3. Letters of Intent COMPETITIVE AWARDS

A NIFA RFA for a competitive program (not applicable to noncompetitive or capacity RFAs) may require submission of a letter of intent (LOI) in advance of submission of a full proposal. There are two types of LOIs: optional and required. In the case of optional, submission of an LOI does not require the applicant to submit a full application and does not require NIFA to fund the project. Optional LOIs help NIFA program staff gauge the size and range of the competition, enabling earlier selection and better management of reviewers and panelists. Furthermore, the information contained in an LOI is used to help avoid potential conflicts of interest in the review process. Required LOIs are used to determine if the potential applicant's proposal is suitable for the program in light of the specific program priorities, needs, and scope; those that address the program priorities and are deemed suitable will be invited to submit a full application. Applicants who are discouraged from submitting a full application can still submit the full application but are encouraged to contact the NIFA NPL to discuss the LOI decision. When an LOI is required, NIFA will only accept a full application from those applicants that submitted a LOI by the LOI deadline. If submission of an LOI is required, applications submitted without prior submission of the letter of intent by the NPL are returned without review (7 CFR 3430.13)

The solicitations identify all submission requirements and provide direction on developing an LOI. The LOI, usually a 1-2 page document, generally contains a descriptive title of the proposed project, names and roles of the PDs and other key personnel, along with the institution, and a brief statement of approaches and objectives, including the program priority to which the project is responding.

LOIs are submitted directly to the NPL or to a specific email address. LOIs are reviewed by NIFA program staff. LOIs are evaluated for how well they address the project or program goals and priorities. LOIs are not externally evaluated or used to make the funding decisions. However, program staff may use LOIs to communicate to the author whether or not a proposed project appears to be within program scope. The NIFA response to an LOI will be "encourage" or "discourage." If the project appears to be outside of program scope, submission of a full application is discouraged.

4. Application Budget COMPETITIVE AWARDS

A budget must be submitted with the application if required to do so by the RFA. Preparation of a budget requires determining costs in accordance with the applicable cost principles, indirect cost rate, and any matching requirements.

Applicants must consult the Uniform Guidance, 2 CFR 200, and prepare their application budget in accordance with the applicable cost principles. The RFA will include any further cost restrictions/unallowable costs or requirements that need to be considered (e.g., indirect cost limitation, tuition remission is unallowable, matching is required.) A budget will include a single set of figures. For additional information on cost considerations, please see 2 CFR Part 200, Part E, Cost Principles. For information and definitions of Direct and Indirect costs, see Section XI.F of this Policy Guide. For information on Fixed Amount award budget, please see 2 CFR 200.201.

5. Matching or Cost Sharing ALL AWARDS

a. Definition **ALL AWARDS**

Matching or cost sharing means the portion of project costs not paid by Federal funds (unless otherwise authorized by Federal statute, 2 CFR 200.1). Matching and cost sharing requirements will be identified in the RFA. If matching or cost sharing is required, the applicant must contribute non-Federal funds in support of the project for which they are requesting NIFA funds. If the RFA specifies that matching or cost sharing is required, it also will specify the following:

- The nature of the requirement, e.g., whether it is a fixed percentage or NIFA cannot fund more than a specified percentage of costs;
- Whether match must be cash, or can be cash and/or in-kind

Authorizing legislation governs matching requirements. If there is no matching requirement in the authorizing legislation, a statement will be included in the RFA to convey that there is no matching requirement (i.e., NIFA does not require matching support for this program and matching resources will not be factored into the review process as evaluation criteria). For grants that require matching funds, the RFA will specify, for example, that the Budget Justification must list the overall match amount as well as break out the overall match by the individual sources to identify the entity that is providing the match and the amount being provided.

Matching requirements are covered in the Uniform Guidance, 2 CFR 200.306. All matching or cost sharing contributions must be:

- Verifiable from the recipient's records;
- Not included as contributions for any other Federally-assisted project or program;
- Necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient accomplishment of project or program objectives;
- Allowable under the applicable costs principles;
- Not paid by the Federal government under another award, except where authorized by Federal statute⁷ to be used for cost sharing or matching;
- Provided for in the approved budget when required; and
- Conform to other provisions of the Uniform Guidance, as applicable.

Consistent with 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d) and 1469a note, notwithstanding any other provision of law, in the case of American Samoa, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands, NIFA will waive any requirement for local matching funds under \$200,000 (including in-kind contributions).

⁷ 1994 Endowment funds are authorized to be used for match on other Federal programs.

b. Competitive awards

For competitive awards, the source and amount of costs and/or the value of third-party in-kind contributions proposed by the applicant to meet a matching or cost sharing requirement must be identified in the application budget. Allowability of costs for cost sharing and matching purposes is determined by the applicable cost principles. The classification of a contributed cost as either direct or indirect must be consistent with the classification of other costs incurred by the recipient for the same purpose in like circumstances. Guidance on the valuation of in-kind contributions is located in 2 CFR 200.306.

To be allowable as a matching cost, the cost must be an allowable cost under the grant. If grant funds cannot pay for the cost, then match cannot pay for the cost. Compliance with match is determined at the end of an award and is based on the overall grant award amount. Matching requirements are stipulated in the RFA.

c. Capacity Matching requirements

The capacity RFA will outline the program's matching requirements. The required match amount is listed in the RFA. Compliance with match is measured at the end of the award and is based on the total amount allocated for the program. Match is not measured at the project level beneath overall annual program allocation.

6. Application Requirements COMPETITIVE AWARDS

The RFA will provide instructions on how to access the application and what is required for submission. Application information to be submitted typically includes a project narrative, with objectives and methods, budget and budget justification, biographical sketches of senior/key personnel, and other information specified in the RFA and/or in program guidelines, if any. Capacity program RFAs may differ and the RFA should be consulted for applicable submission requirements. Applicants should consult the cost principles and general administrative requirements to prepare the budget and complete other parts of the application. This section describes NIFA policies that affect application preparation and/or submission. For all programs, specific details on application requirements are addressed in application instructions and specific RFAs. NIFA officials should be consulted regarding any significant changes to the proposed project post-submission.

7. Resubmitting an Application COMPETITIVE AWARDS

An application is a resubmitted application if the application was previously submitted to the program but was not funded. A resubmitted application must include the following information:

- The NIFA-assigned proposal number of the previously submitted application
- A summary of the previous reviewers' comments

- Explanation of how the previous reviewers' comments or previous panel summary have been addressed in the current application. Please note that responding to the comments from a previously unsuccessful review will not guarantee funding.

A resubmitted application must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in the appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

8. Previously Funded Applications and Substantially Similar Efforts **COMPETITIVE AWARDS**

NIFA will not fund efforts that duplicate or overlap substantially with efforts already funded (or to be funded) by another organization or agency. NIFA programs generally do not support multiple projects that are essentially the same. NIFA staff check every recommended award for duplication against all current and previously funded projects. PDs who have had their projects funded previously are discouraged from resubmitting identical applications for further funding that are not sufficiently unique for a new project. This does not apply to continuation funding.

9. Assurances **ALL AWARDS**

Applicants must assure: 1) that the information submitted within the application is true, complete, and accurate to the best of the AR or PI's knowledge; 2) that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject the PI to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties; and 3) that the AR and/or PI agrees to accept responsibility for and ensure the scientific integrity and ethical conduct associated with the project and to provide the required progress reports if a grant is awarded as a result of the application.

By submitting an application, the applicant is also providing the following required assurances for:

- The protection of human subjects,
- Humane treatment of animals,
- Monitoring the use of recombinant DNA,
- Compliance with the Federal Information System Security Management Act of 2002 (FISMA), Pub. L. 107-347, if it will collect, store, process, transmit, or use information on behalf of NIFA,
- Ensuring, unless exemption under 2 CFR 25.110, they: (1) are registered prior to submitting an application or plan; (2) maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by an agency; and (3) provide its DUNS number in each application or plan it submits to NIFA, and
- Unless excepted under 2 CFR. 170.110(b), ensuring that they have the

necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the reporting requirements identified in Appendix A to Part 170 should they receive funding.

10. Certifications and Representations **ALL AWARDS**

When signing an application (electronic submission through Grants.gov), the AR is providing the certification for the accuracy and completeness of statements contained in the application, as well as certifying that the organization (or individual) agrees to accept the responsibility to comply with award terms and conditions and that he/she is aware that any false, fictitious, or fraudulent statements or claims may subject them to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties (18 USC 1001). By signing the application, other certifications also are provided including:

- Drug-Free Workplace;
- Debarment and Suspension;
- Civil Rights Compliance;
- Prohibition on Certain Internal Confidentiality Agreements; and
- Industrial Hemp.

[More information regarding certifications and representations](#) is available on the NIFA website.

a. Lobbying **ALL AWARDS**

By submitting the application package through Grants.gov, the applicant certifies the institution's compliance regarding disclosure of all lobbying activities. In the event that a recipient pays or agrees to pay any lobbying entity for influencing an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a member of Congress in connection with any Federal action, the applicant must submit a Disclosure of Lobbying Activities form to NIFA as soon as possible. Failure to report lobbying activities is punishable by fines from \$10,000 to \$100,000, for each failure, and/or imprisonment.

b. Felony and Tax Certification **ALL AWARDS**

In order to meet the requirements of Sections 745 and 746 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, Pub. L. 114-113, Division E, Title VII, General Provisions Government-wide, or successor provisions, applicants are to indicate whether they are a corporation and, if so, must certify that: 1) they have not been convicted of a felony criminal violation under Federal [or state law (applies if any funds from FYs 2012 or 2013 are used to fund the project)] in the 24 months preceding the date of signature, [nor has any officer or agent, (applies if any funds from FYs 2012 or 2013 are used to fund the project)], and 2) they do not have any unpaid Federal tax liability that has been assessed, for which all judicial and administrative remedies have been exhausted or have lapsed, and that is not being paid in a timely manner pursuant to an agreement with the authority responsible for collecting the tax liability. A [suggested template](#) for accomplishing the felony and tax requirement is available on the NIFA website.

Information is to be included in Field 12 as an “Other Attachment,” to the R&R Other Project Information Form, of the application.

11. Post-Submission Grant Application Materials **ALL AWARDS**

If an application is submitted and an applicant needs to change, correct, or submit additional information, applicants must contact the appropriate NIFA program contact.

For competitive programs, the program contact may accept a changed/corrected application to modify an application **ALREADY** submitted through Grants.gov if it is submitted **PRIOR** to the established deadline. Following the deadline, additional materials are not generally accepted prior to the competitive review process. Following the competitive review process, NIFA may accept additional materials as part of the negotiation and administrative review process that precedes issuance of an award.

12. Capacity Grant Application Documents **CAPACITY AWARDS**

All capacity grant applications are submitted to NIFA electronically through Grants.gov. The RFA will include instructions on how to access the electronic application forms and how to apply through Grants.gov. The Grants.gov application package includes general instructions and NIFA-specific instructions for the SF-424 (R&R), NIFA-specific forms, and assurances and certifications. The RFA will indicate which forms are necessary for completion and inclusion in an application in response to the RFA as well as any additional instructions necessary for completion of an application.

Similar to the competitive requirements, all attachments to an application must comply with NIFA font, spacing and margin requirements, and must be in PDF format. Further information is contained in the RFA or review the competitive sections above.

13. Key Contacts Form **CAPACITY AWARDS**

Each land-grant university is required to submit Key Contact forms once a year with the submission of the SF-424 R&R in response to the Request for Application and each time the institution’s points of contact changes. This information will be used to transmit important information such as the annual allocation amounts, the availability of funds, and the need for documents to be submitted before funds can be released. NIFA further requires this information as part of its contingency plan to maintain communications in the event of a business disruption. Key Contact records will not be revised without an updated Key Contacts form and an official request. For capacity awards, the Contacts form requires an updated name, address, telephone number, fax number, and email address for certain key positions (e.g. the Experiment Station Director, Extension Director/1890 Extension Administrator, 1890 Research Director, Administrative-Technical Representative (McIntire-Stennis), State EFNEP Coordinator, treasurer/custodian of funds, the business manager, accountant, the person responsible for drawdowns, and additional staff as needed).

14. Non-Land Grant College of Agriculture Designation COMPETITIVE AWARDS

NIFA maintains an official list of certified Non-Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture (NLGCA). Application to some NIFA grant programs may require proof of certification as an NLGCA. Institutions can electronically request designation as an NLGCA at any time. Visit the NIFA website to [request designation](#), please visit. Eligible institutions are public colleges or universities offering a baccalaureate or higher degree in the study of food and agricultural sciences, as defined in 7 U.S.C. 3103(9). Land-grant institutions are not eligible for this designation.

15. Submission ALL AWARDS

a. Electronically Submitted Applications **ALL AWARDS**

All competitive and capacity applications for NIFA grants must be received by the published deadline. An RFA might indicate several submission dates if an LOI and/or preliminary proposal are part of the application requirements.

Please note that Grants.gov will time stamp the submission of an application. NIFA will only accept applications submitted after the published deadline, in accordance with its late submission policy described in the next section of this guide.

If a submission date falls on a weekend, it will be extended to the following Monday. Any time the date falls on a Federal holiday,⁹ the submission date will be extended to the following business day. The application will be on time if it is submitted on or before the following business day.

Within two days of submitting a grant application, Grants.gov will send two email messages to the applicant. The first will confirm receipt of the application by the Grants.gov system. The second will indicate that the application has either been successfully validated by the system prior to transmission to the grantor agency or has been rejected due to errors. If the application was successfully validated, Grants.gov will send a third email that the application has been sent to NIFA for review. Grants.gov-registered applicants can check the status of an application at any time in Grants.gov.

⁹ The ten Federal holidays are: New Year's Day; Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr.; Washington's Birthday; Memorial Day; Independence Day; Labor Day; Columbus Day; Veterans Day; Thanksgiving Day; and Christmas Day.

b. Similar or Identical Applications **COMPETITIVE AWARDS**

Applications may only be submitted to NIFA one time in the same funding cycle. The submission of duplicate or substantially similar applications concurrently for review for more than one program in the same funding cycle will result in the exclusion of the redundant application from NIFA consideration. However, concurrent submission of an application to other organizations or agencies for simultaneous consideration will not prejudice an application's review. Applications submitted to another Federal agency, as well as NIFA, must be disclosed on the current and pending form.

c. Application deadline **ALL AWARDS**

Specific application and submission instructions will be provided in the RFA. RFAs generally will allow applicants a minimum of 60 days to prepare and submit applications (2 CFR 200.204(b)). Applications must be submitted to Grants.gov by the application deadline in the RFA on the due date indicated on the RFA. An application received after the deadline is considered late.

d. Meeting the deadline **ALL AWARDS**

A date and time stamp is attached to the application when the "Submit" button is clicked and the application sent to electronically send the application to Grants.gov. The date and time stamp determines whether the application was received by Grants.gov before the deadline on the date identified in the applicable RFA. An application submitted or resubmitted after the deadline is late. See Section 17 below for additional information.

- i. Successful Grants.gov validation: The Grants.gov system performs a limited check of the application and Grants.gov will notify applicants of the outcome of the initial review. The Grants.gov validation process includes a check for an active SAM registration (**applicants with expired SAM registrations will be rejected**). The System for Award Management conducts SAM registration activities.
- ii. Grants.gov sends applications that are successfully validated to NIFA for further processing. Applications that fail Grants.gov validation may be resubmitted to Grants.gov if NIFA's deadline has not passed. (Note that the Grants.gov system may allow applications to be submitted after the deadline, but the application may be considered late by NIFA).

- iii. Successful agency validation: NIFA staff perform precursory review of the application. The agency validation process includes checking that the application meets eligibility requirements and follows NIFA application guidelines (e.g., formatting, page limitations, limits on budget requests, etc.). NIFA will notify applicants of the outcome of this review. For competitive awards, an applicant must complete all of the above steps for an application to be considered for competitive peer review.

16. Application Signature ALL AWARDS

The signature of an AR on the application certifies that the organization will comply with all applicable assurances and certifications referenced in the application. The applicant organization is responsible for verifying conformity with the most current guidelines for all administrative, fiscal, and scientific information in the application, including the facilities and administrative cost (F&A) or indirect cost, rate. The AR's signature further certifies that the applicant organization has the ability to provide appropriate administrative and scientific oversight of the project and agrees to be fully accountable for the appropriate use of any funds awarded and for the performance of the grant-supported project or activities resulting from the application. Applicants for, and recipients of, NIFA grant funds, whether such funds are received through a grant, indirectly under a contract or consortium agreement, or by a fiscal agent acting on another organization's behalf, or as student assistance, are responsible for, and must adhere to, all applicable Federal statutes, regulations, and policies, including income tax regulations. Applicants are also expected to be in compliance with applicable state and local laws and ordinances. Applicants may be required to provide proof of organizational eligibility (such as proof of non-profit status), trainee or fellow eligibility and citizenship, or other eligibility information. Applications also must demonstrate compliance (or intent to comply), through certification or other means, with a number of public policy requirements.

17. Late Submission Policy ALL AWARDS

According to 2 CFR 200, Notice of Funding Opportunities must describe the effect of missing a deadline (e.g., whether late applications are neither reviewed nor considered or are reviewed and considered under some circumstances). This document provides an overview of USDA NIFA Late Application Consideration policy. NIFA will consider applications submitted after the published deadline in accordance with NIFA's late submission policy, as reflected in this subsection.

Any grant application submitted or resubmitted after the deadline specified in the RFA for a competitive review is generally rejected unless the applicant provides documentation to establish an extenuating circumstance (e.g., natural disaster, confirmed Grants.gov outage, Grants.gov programming error) that prevented timely submission of the application. If technical problems arise with submission of an application, the problem must be documented and a case number obtained from Grants.gov to support any problems with submissions.

Late applications will only be accepted in extenuating circumstances. Applicants must follow the instructions in Part IV, 1.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide to inform NIFA of extenuating circumstances that gave rise to a late application.

Applicants may request reconsideration of their application in light of extenuating circumstances and NIFA will determine if reconsideration will be granted.

Grants.gov attaches a date and time stamp to the application when it is electronically sent to Grants.gov. The date and time stamp includes the submission time which is used to determine if an application is on time or late. As an example, if the deadline in the RFA is 5:00 p.m. EST, an application is generally considered on time at 5:00.59 p.m. EST but it is late at 5:01 p.m. EST.

In certain circumstances, due to broad reaching extenuating circumstances or system limitations, NIFA may decide to consider all late applications affected by the same extenuating circumstance. Extenuating circumstances affecting more than one applicant may include, but are not limited to, a natural disaster, confirmed Grants.gov outage, and Grants.gov programming error.

If an applicant submitted an application late due to an extenuating circumstance, the applicant should contact the Agency Contact, identified in Part VII of the request for applications (RFA), if they want a late application considered due to an extenuating circumstance. They will need to provide documentation to substantiate their claim of an extenuating circumstance. Once NIFA receives the documentation, NIFA will follow its review procedures. The applicant will be informed of the results of the review. If a late application is approved for consideration based on an extenuating circumstance, such acceptance is contingent upon the ability to include the application in the competitive review process (e.g., application cannot be included if the review of applications is complete).

If an applicant wants to appeal a decision on a late application based on an extenuating circumstance you should contact the Agency Contact, identified in Part VII of the request for applications (RFA), and inform him/her of your decision to appeal and provide any additional documentation you want considered in the appeal process. NIFA will follow its appeal procedures. You will be informed of the results of the appeal. The appeal decision is final; no further consideration will be given.

For USDA NIFA late application consideration policy questions, please email policy@usda.gov. With questions related to a particular RFA, please see the contact information in that RFA on grants.gov.

D. Public Access to Application Information ALL AWARDS

Information contained in grant applications submitted to NIFA that does not result in an award is not considered public information. Once an award is made, certain information may be considered proprietary or private information and will not be released, in accordance with applicable laws. Statutes and policies that require the release of award-related information are intended to foster an open system of government and accountability for governmental programs and expenditures and, in the case of research, to provide information about Federally-funded activities.

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of NIFA transaction records, which are available to the public. Information that the Secretary of Agriculture determines to be confidential, privileged, or proprietary in nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, applicants should clearly mark any information within the application they wish to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary. NIFA will retain a copy of an application that does not result in an award for three years. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An applicant may withdraw at any time prior to the final action thereon.