Supplemental and Alternative Crops Competitive Grants Program

FY 2013 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: June 14, 2013

U.S. Department of Agriculture

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

SUPPLEMENTAL AND ALTERNATIVE CROPS COMPETITIVE GRANTS PROGRAM

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.200.

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on **June 14, 2013 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time)**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is requesting comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and will be used to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). This section requires the Secretary to solicit and consider input on a current RFA from persons who conduct or use agricultural research, education and extension for use in formulating future RFAs for competitive programs. Written stakeholder comments on this RFA should be submitted in accordance with the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice.

Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by mail to: Policy and Oversight Division; Office of Grants and Financial Management; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: Policy@nifa.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Supplemental and Alternative Crops Competitive Grants Program RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA announces the availability of grant funds and requests applications for the Supplemental and Alternative Crops Competitive Grants Program (SACC) for fiscal year (FY) 2013**.** The goal of the SACC program is to significantly increase crop production and/or acreage by developing and testing superior germplasm, improving methods of planting, cultivation, and harvesting, and transferring new knowledge to producers (via Extension) as soon as practicable. The amount available for support of this program in FY 2013 is approximately $780,000 for a total of 3-5 awards.

This notice identifies the objectives for SACC projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a SACC grant. NIFA additionally requests stakeholder input from any interested party for use in the development of the next RFA for this program.

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

Pursuant to Section 1473D of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 USC 3319d(c)) as amended, the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), is authorized to make competitive grants to colleges and universities, other Federal agencies, and private sector entities to conduct fundamental and applied research related to the development of new commercial products derived from natural plant material for industrial, medical, and agricultural applications.

For canola to be considered a viable supplemental and alternative crop in the United States, knowledge gaps must be filled, including: 1) the adaptation of varieties of canola to address emerging issues of importance to U.S. agriculture; 2) the establishment and extension of various methods of planting, cultivating, harvesting, and processing canola; and 3) the transfer of such applied research to on-farm practice as soon as practicable.

B. Purpose and Priorities

In FY 2013, the SACC program will support the development of canola as a viable supplemental and alternative crop in the United States. Proposals submitted to this program should be comprehensive and integrated in nature. Successful applicants will have experience with stakeholder involvement in priority setting, project development and implementation, and national coordination of research. Priority will be given to applications that provide evidence of multi-state cooperation and will use the expertise and resources of other Federal agencies and land grant colleges and universities.

The goal of the SACC program is to significantly increase canola production by developing and testing superior germplasm, methods of planting, cultivation, and harvesting, and then transferring new knowledge to producers as soon as possible. Extension, education, and/or communication activities related to the research areas above must be addressed in the project proposal.

Project Directors Workshop: It is the intent of the SACC program to require successful applicants to attend at least one Project Directors Workshop during the term of their project. This workshop will typically be held in Washington, D.C., in conjunction with other related grant programs or may be in conjunction with the Canola Board meeting. For the purposes of budget development, applicants are required to request funds for attendance to at least one such workshop (see Part IV, B, 6.).

The SACC program directly aligns with the Research, Education, and Economics Action Plan (www.usda.gov/documents/usda-ree-science-action-plan.pdf) and specifically addresses: Goal 1 – Local and Global Food Supply and Security, Subgoals 1A, 1B, and 1C (which focus on Crop Production, Health, Genetics, Genomics, Genetic Resources, and Biotechnology); Goal 2, Sustainable Use of Natural Resources, Subgoal 2A. Responding to Climate Variability; and Goal 4. Nutrition and Childhood Obesity.

C. Program Area Description

Program Name: Canola Research
Program Code: HW

Recent U.S. canola acreage is approximately 1.5 million acres, of which 90 percent is grown in North Dakota and Minnesota, according to data obtained from the U.S. Canola Association (www.uscanola.com/crop-production; March 2013). By contrast, Canada has planted 18 to 21 million acres of canola in recent years (Canola Council of Canada, http://www.canolacouncil.org/markets-stats/statistics/harvest-acreage/ (data from 2011-2012).

There are similarities between modern canola development and the evolution of soybean as a major crop during the 20th century. In the early 1900s, the soybean was a minor prostrate legume harvested primarily as a forage crop. Within 60 years, the soybean became a major crop due to changes in agriculture, including production technology, genetics, post harvest management, and market utilization. Similarly, recent technological advancements in agriculture have improved canola production.

The three major uses of canola oil are human and animal food, industrial applications, and biofuels.

Food uses: Canola oil may provide a health advantage in human food use. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration authorized a qualified health claim for canola oil for its ability to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease, due to its high unsaturated fat content. Canola oil is high in oleic acid relative to other vegetable oils and has been competitive in price with other cooking oils.

Canola meal is fed to livestock as a protein supplement and consists of about 38 percent protein. In Canada, canola meal is recommended for up to 10-20 percent of the daily protein supplement for chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, pigs, dairy and beef animals. Alternative livestock feed sources are in high demand in the current marketplace.

Industrial uses: The U.S. Army has demonstrated that canola oil is acceptable as hydraulic fluid; a major contractor for elevators in New York City uses canola oil based hydraulic fluid. These industrial uses have the environmentally positive characteristics of low toxicity and environmental biodegradability.

Biofuels: Canola has a high oil content (38 to 39 percent) meaning more oil is available per unit of seed, which ultimately makes more of the feedstock available for biodiesel production and creates less by-product relative to other oilseeds. On a per acre basis, the net oil content is much higher with canola than other oilseeds.

The SACC program encourages projects that develop content and programs suitable for delivery through the Cooperative Extension System's eXtension Initiative. Funds may be used to contribute to existing Communities of Practice (CoP) or to form a new CoP focused on canola. Projects must align with the eXtension vision, mission, and values. A letter of acknowledgement

from eXtension is required, and a letter of support may be required from one or more of the Communities of Practice. For detailed guidance on how to partner with eXtension, go to http://create.extension.org/node/2057.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. The amount available for support of this program in FY 2013 is approximately $780,000 for a total of 3-5 awards.

On March 26, 2013, the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2013 (Public Law 113-6) was signed into law. Title I of this bill provides appropriations for the majority of NIFA's discretionary grant programs, including this one, and continues Agency operations for the remainder of FY 2013.

Awards issued as a result of this RFA will have designated the Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP), operated by the Department of Treasury's Financial Management Service, as the payment system for funds. For more information see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/method_of_payment.html.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2013 applications may be submitted to the SACC program as one of the following types of requests:

(1) New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the SACC program. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

(2) Renewal application. This is a project application that requests additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in an original or amended award. Applications for renewed funding must contain the same information as required for new applications, and additionally must contain a Progress Report (see Project Narrative, Part IV). Renewal applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

(3) Resubmitted application. This is an application that had previously been submitted to the SACC program but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (see Response to Previous Review, Part IV). Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

(4) Resubmitted renewal application. This is a project application that requests additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in the original award. In addition, this is an application that had previously been submitted for renewal to the SACC program but not funded. Therefore, PDs must provide a Progress Report as required under the Project Narrative,

Part IV, and must respond to the previous review panel summary as required under Response to Previous Review, Part IV. Resubmitted renewal applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in appropriate areas to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

C. Project Types

Requests for funding of an individual application may not exceed $210,000. Pursuant to section 1472(c) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 USC 3318(c)), project periods may be up to five years; however, if applicants receive funding for a five-year project period, the agency will not be able to grant any extension of time for those projects. Priority will be given to applications that provide evidence of multi-state cooperation and will use the expertise and resources of other Federal agencies and land grant colleges and universities.

D. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research

The responsible and ethical conduct of research (RCR) is critical for excellence, as well as public trust, in science and engineering. Consequently, education in RCR is considered essential in the preparation of future scientists. In accordance with sections 2, 3, and 8 of 7 CFR Part 3022, institutions that conduct extramural research funded by USDA must foster an atmosphere conducive to research integrity, bear primary responsibility for prevention and detection of research misconduct and are to maintain and effectively communicate and train their staff regarding policies and procedures. In the event an application to NIFA results in an award, the AOR assures, through acceptance of the award that the institution will comply with the above requirements. Per award terms and conditions, grant recipients shall, upon request, make available to NIFA the policies and procedures as well as documentation to support the conduct of the training.

Note that the training referred to herein shall be either on-campus or off-campus training. The general content of the ethics training, at a minimum, will emphasize three key areas of research ethics: authorship and plagiarism, data and research integration and reporting misconduct. Each institution will be responsible for developing its own training system, as schools will need flexibility to develop training tailored to their specific student needs. Grantees should consider the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program for RCR (https://www.citiprogram.org/rcrpage.asp). Typically RCR education addresses the topics of: Data Acquisition and Management - collection, accuracy, security, access; Authorship and Publication; Peer Review; Mentor/Trainee Responsibilities; Collaboration; Conflict of Interest; Research Misconduct; Human Subject Research; and Use of Animals in Research.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may be submitted by colleges and universities, other Federal agencies and private sector entities. Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. An applicant's failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of the application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

NIFA does not require matching support for this program and matching resources will not be factored into the review process as evaluation criteria.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA. **Applicants are advised to submit early to the Grants.gov system.**

New Users of Grants.gov

Prior to preparing an application, it is suggested that the PD/PI first contact an Authorized Representative (AR)(also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grants.gov. If the organization is not prepared (e.g., the institution/organization is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov), then the one-time registration process must be completed **PRIOR** to submitting an application. It can take as much as two weeks to complete the registration process so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations the AR should go to **"Get Registered" on the Grants.gov left navigation bar (or go to http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp) for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov. A quick reference guide listing the steps is available as a 4-page PDF document at the following website: http://www.grants.gov/assets/Grants.govRegistrationBrochure.pdf.** Item 2. below mentions the "NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide." Part II.1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide contains additional explanatory language regarding the registration process.

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

1. In order to access, complete and submit applications, applicants must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov. This software is essential to apply for NIFA Federal assistance awards. For basic system requirements and download instructions, please see http://www.grants.gov/help/download_software.jsp. To verify that you have a compatible version of Adobe Reader, Grants.gov established a test package that will assist you in making that determination. Grants.gov Adobe Versioning Test Package: http://www.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp.

2. The application package must be obtained via Grants.gov, go to http://www.grants.gov, click on "Apply for Grants" in the left-hand column, click on "**Step 1:** Download a Grant Application Package and Instructions," enter the funding opportunity number **USDA-NIFA-OP-004269** in the appropriate box and click "Download Package." From the search results, click "Download" to access the application package.

   Contained within the application package is the "NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov." This Guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

If assistance is needed to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms), **or submitting the application** then refer to resources available on the Grants.gov Web site first (http://www.grants.gov/). Grants.gov assistance is also available as follows:

Grants.gov customer support
1-800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035
Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on Federal Holidays.
Email: support@grants.gov

Grants.gov iPortal: Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7:00 A.M. - 9:00 P.M. ET). Get help now!

Please have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov, to help expedite your inquiry:

- Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
- Name of Agency You Are Applying To
- Specific Area of Concern

See http://grants.gov/applicants/app_help_reso.jsp or http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html for additional resources for applying electronically.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Electronic applications should be prepared following Parts V and VI of the document entitled "A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov." This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed in order to prepare an application in response to this RFA. **If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.**

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the Guide. ANY PROPOSALS THAT ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS (i.e., content format, pdf file format, file name restrictions, and no password protected files) WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. With documented prior approval, subsequent submissions of an application will be accepted until close of business on the closing date in the RFA.

If you do not own PDF-generating software, Grants.gov provides online tools to assist applicants. Users will find a link to "Convert Documents to PDF" on http://grants.gov/help/download_software.jsp#pdf_conversion_programs.

For any questions related to the preparation of an application please review the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide and the applicable request for applications. If assistance is still needed for preparing application forms content, contact:

- Email: electronic@nifa.usda.gov
- Phone: 202-401-5048
- Business hours: Monday through Friday, 7:00 am – 5:00 pm Eastern Time, excluding Federal holidays.

1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

2. SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 3. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

3. R&R Other Project Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 4. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract. The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of SACC. See Part V. 4.7 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

b. Field 8. Project Narrative.

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 18 pages with 12 point font and line spacing not exceeding 6 lines per vertical inch including all figures and tables. This maximum (18 pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. Proposals with project narrative exceeding 18 pages in length will not be reviewed and may not be resubmitted once the deadline has passed for this RFA. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

i) Introduction. A clear statement of the long-term goals and supporting objectives or research questions of the proposed project should be included. Clearly specify the high priority area of canola research and the methods for technology transfer (Extension) implementation. Summarize the body of knowledge or other past activities that substantiate the need for the proposed project. Describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed project, including the work of key project personnel. Describe the qualifications of key personnel, adequacy of facilities, including the national project management capability and capacity of the applicant institution. Preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed research should be included in this section.

ii) Rationale and Significance. Concisely present the rationale behind the proposed research as it relates to canola.

- Document the proposed priority setting process and method of engaging stakeholder involvement. Include any national coordination of research.

- Describe how the application relates to potential long-range improvements in and sustainability of U.S. agriculture.

- Document priority setting abilities, experience with stakeholder involvement in project development and implementation, and experience in national coordination of research.

- Describe multi-state cooperation, where applicable.

- Describe how this research will complement research being conducted by the Federal Agencies and land-grant colleges and universities.

- Discuss novel ideas or contributions that the proposed project offers.

iii) Approach. The activities proposed or problems being addressed must be clearly stated and the approaches being applied clearly described as they relate to canola. Specifically, this section must include:

- A description of the activities proposed and the sequence in which the activities are to be performed;

- Methods to be used in carrying out the proposed project, including the feasibility of the methods;

- Expected outcomes;

- Means by which results will be analyzed, assessed, or interpreted;

- Uses for results or products; and

- Description of Extension activities as related to the proposal.

iv) Response to Previous Review. This is only required for applications previously submitted to the SACC program, but not funded. Project directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary on no more than one page. Please include previous proposal number, if possible.

c. Field 12. Progress Report. Attach a Progress Report here (in PDF) if submitting a renewal application.

4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide includes information about the individuals for which a Senior/Key Person Profile must be completed, and details about the Biographical Sketch and the Current and Pending Support including a link to a

suggested template for the Current and Pending Support. **Note: Even if no other funding is currently reported under the 'Active' section of this attachment, you must still list information for this grant application under the 'Pending' section of this attachment for each senior/key person identified above.**

5. R&R Personal Data – As noted in Part V, 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award.

6. R&R Budget
Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. For the purposes of budget development, applicants are required to request funds for attendance to at least one Project Director's workshop during the term of their project. The request for these funds should be clearly indicated in the budget narrative section of the application.

7. Supplemental Information Form
Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part VI, 1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. **Field 2. Program to which you are applying.** Enter the program code name (i.e., enter "**Canola Research**") and the program code (i.e., enter "**HW**").

b. **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List**. See Part VI, 1.8 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by COB on **June 14, 2013** (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

Applicants who have problems with the submission of an application to Grants.gov are encouraged to FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Part IV. A. 2. for Grants.gov contact information.

Correspondence regarding submitted applications will be sent using e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received correspondence **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 15 days of the established deadline, please contact the Program Contact identified in Part VII of this RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once**

the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.

D. Funding Restrictions

Section 7180 of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2013 (P.L. 113-6) limits indirect costs to 30 percent of the total Federal funds provided under each award. Therefore, when preparing budgets, applicants should limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of their institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 30 percent of total Federal funds awarded.

Funds awarded under this program may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities

The statutory time limitation for awards issued under this authority is five years. No award may exceed this statutory time limitation. Any costs being charged to this award must be incurred within the project period.

E. Other Submission Requirements

The applicant should follow the submission requirements noted in Part IV, section 1.9 in the document entitled "NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide."

For information about the **status of a submitted application**, see Part III, section 6 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

Each application will be evaluated in a 2-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

B. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria below will be used in reviewing applications submitted in response to this RFA:

General criteria to be used to award applications: Value 50%

- Documented priority setting abilities, experience with stakeholder involvement in project development and implementation, and experience in national coordination of research.
- Description of the stakeholder processes by which priorities of the proposal were identified.
- Documented experience with collaborative, comprehensive research on canola.
- Demonstrated capability to implement a technology transfer (Extension) component.

Specific criteria to be used to award applications: Value 50%

1. **Scientific Merit of the Application for Research: Value 25%**

    - Novelty, innovation, uniqueness, and originality.
    - Documented program to transfer knowledge gained from this research.
    - Clarity and delineation of objectives.
    - Adequacy of the description of the undertaking and suitability and feasibility of methodology.

- Probability of success of project.
- Degree of comprehensiveness and integration.
- Likelihood that the proposed project will fill knowledge gaps.

2. **Qualifications of Project Personnel, Adequacy of Facilities, and Project Management Capability: Value 25%**

   - Qualifications of applicant (individual or team) to conduct the proposed project, including performance record.
   - Qualifications of applicant (individual or team) to conduct the technology transfer (Extension) component of proposed project, including performance record in this field and in this area.
   - Description of how this research will complement research being conducted by the Federal Agencies and land-grant colleges and universities.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution shall be determined by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 1801 Robert Fulton Drive, Suite 340, Reston, Virginia 20191. Phone: (888) 349-7715. Web site: http://www.hepinc.com.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one time basis, with updates on an as needed basis, as part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another NIFA program. NIFA will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the preaward process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of NIFA shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the awarding official of NIFA as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by NIFA under this RFA shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015 and 3019 of 7 CFR), and the NIFA General Awards Administration Provisions at 7 CFR part 3430, subparts A through E.

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the following:

(1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the Director has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;

(2) Title of project;

(3) Name(s) and institution(s) of PD(s) chosen to direct and control approved activities;

(4) Identifying award number assigned by the Department;

(5) Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring recompetition for funds;

(6) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Director during the project period;

(7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;

(8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;

(9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html to view NIFA award terms and conditions);

(10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and

(11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by NIFA to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to:

2 CFR Part 220 – Cost Principles for Educational Institutions (OMB Circular A-21).

2 CFR Part 225 – Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments (OMB Circular A-87).

2 CFR Part 230 – Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-122).

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A—USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR Part 331 and 9 CFR Part 121—USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21, A-87, and A-122, now codified at 2 CFR Parts 220, 225 and 230), and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224)), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3016 – USDA Implementation of Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments.

7 CFR Part 3017—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement).

7 CFR Part 3018—USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3019—USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations (2 CFR Part 215).

7 CFR Part 3021—USDA Implementation of Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants).

7 CFR Part 3022—Research Institutions Conducting USDA-Funded Extramural Research; Research Misconduct.

7 CFR Part 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3407—USDA procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

7 CFR 3430—Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Financial Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute) —prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in Federally assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq. —Bayh Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

Grantees are to submit initial project information and annual and summary reports to NIFA' s electronic, Web-based inventory system that facilitates both grantee submissions of project outcomes and public access to information on Federally-funded projects. The details of these reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions. Details of annual and final technical reporting requirements also are included in the award terms and conditions.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Dr. Ann Marie Thro; National Program Leader; Institute of Food Production and Sustainability; USDA/NIFA; Stop 2240; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2240; telephone: (202) 401-6702; fax: (202) 401- 4888; e-mail: athro@nifa.usda.gov.

Alternate contact is Ms. Pushpa Kathir, Program Specialist; Institute of Food Production and Sustainability; USDA/NIFA; Stop 2240; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2240; telephone (202) 401-5015; fax (202) 401–6488; email pkathir@nifa.usda.gov.

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access to Review Information

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, the awardee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

2. Changes in Project Plans

a. The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.

b. Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.

c. Changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes.

d. Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

e. The project period may be extended by NIFA without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed any applicable statutory limit or expiring appropriation limitation. Project periods may be up to five years; however, if applicants receive funding for a five-year project period, the agency will not be able to grant any extension of time for those projects. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the awardee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of award.

f. Changes in Approved Budget: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes, if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of NIFA transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of three years. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

D. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

E. Definitions

Please refer to 7 CFR 3430, 7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Federal Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions, for applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.