

# **Renewable Resource Extension Act – National Focus Fund Projects (RREA-NFF)**

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## ***FY 2015 Request for Applications (RFA)***

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: June 1, 2015**

**ELIGIBILITY: See Part III, A of RFA**



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

National Institute  
of Food and  
Agriculture

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

**RENEWABLE RESOURCES EXTENSION ACT – NATIONAL FOCUS FUND PROJECTS (RREA-NFF)**

**INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**

**CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE:** This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under **10.500**.

**DATES:** Applications must be received by **5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on June 1, 2015**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding (see Part IV, C. of this RFA). Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within 6 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) seeks your comments about this RFA. We will consider the comments when we develop the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and we'll use them 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)). Submit written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice: via e-mail to: [Policy@nifa.usda.gov](mailto: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 Renewable Resource Extension Act – National Focus Fund Projects RFA.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** NIFA requests applications for the Renewable Resource Extension Act – National Focus Fund Projects (RREA-NFF) for fiscal year (FY) 2015 to provide for expanded and comprehensive extension programs for forest and rangeland renewable resources at a national, regional, or multi-institutional level. The amount available for support of this program in FY 2015 is approximately \$300,000.

This notice identifies the objectives for RREA-NFF projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for an RREA-NFF grant.

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## **PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION**

### **A. Legislative Authority and Background**

The Renewable Resources Extension Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-306, 92 Stat. 349, 16 U.S.C. 1671 et seq.) provides for an expanded and comprehensive extension program for forest and rangeland renewable resources. The majority of the appropriated funds (over 92% of the Payments to States Amount) are distributed to eligible institutions based on a formula that considers the geographic extent, ecosystem productivity, economic contribution, and population for each state.

Since FY 2002, a small amount (about 7.7% of the Payments to States amount) of Renewable Resources Extension (RREA) Act (P.L. 95-306 (92 Stat. 349, 16 U.S. C. 1671 et seq.)) Program funds appropriated has been used to fund National Focus Fund Projects (RREA-NFF). For Fiscal Year 2015, the appropriation for RREA is \$4,060,000. From this appropriation, \$162,400 is for Federal Administration. The amount available for RREA-NFF projects is \$300,000. RREA-NFF has expanded comprehensive extension programs for forest and rangeland renewable resources on a national, regional, or multi-institutional scale through better program coordination, innovative technologies, and extension models that can be easily duplicated.

### **B. Purpose and Priorities**

The purpose of the grant program for FY 2015 is to provide funds for projects that:

- (1) Address emerging forest and rangeland resource issues, have national or regional relevancy, or develop new and innovative projects that can be replicated at other institutions; and
- (2) Plan and conduct national forum(s)/symposium(s) to address the current and future needs and issues of existing and yet-to-be-identified clientele and how extension forestry and rangeland resources programs can adapt to increasing demands and forces for change to more effectively plan, deliver, and evaluate the impacts on people and natural resources.

The goal of the RREA-NFF program is to enhance the sustainability of the nation's forest and rangeland resources and to enable landowners and managers to achieve their desired goals and objectives. These projects must provide opportunities for the Cooperative Extension System to maximize its impact and demonstrate capacity and relevance by directly working across state boundaries to bring expertise to bear on common problems. NFF priorities include those that have been described in the FY 2012-2016 RREA Strategic Plan

([http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/reporting/planrept/pdf/rrea\\_strat\\_plan\\_2012\\_2016.pdf](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/reporting/planrept/pdf/rrea_strat_plan_2012_2016.pdf)).

These focus areas, identified through a strategic planning process with the state and federal partners, represent critical issues and/or areas of emphasis that have broad applicability and relevance across the national at scales ranging from national to single states.

The NFF program is intended to foster innovative program delivery approaches and to economize on RREA resources for issues that are not bound by state boundaries. The FY 2015 NFF program will fund projects that address the two priorities described below.

NIFA is soliciting applications for the RREA-NFF under the following priorities:

- (1) Regional Initiatives to Address Critical Issues Faced by Forest and Rangeland Owners;
- (2) National Forums/Symposia on what the Second Century of Extension Forest and Rangeland Programs must look like to meet the Needs of Our Clientele to effectively address the resource issues and opportunities faced by forest and rangeland owners.

The Renewable Resources Extension Act – National Focus Funds Program is aligned with the USDA Research, Education, and Economics Action Plan ([http://www.ree.usda.gov/ree/news/USDA\\_2014\\_REE\\_Action\\_Plan\\_08-2014\\_Final.pdf](http://www.ree.usda.gov/ree/news/USDA_2014_REE_Action_Plan_08-2014_Final.pdf)), and specifically addresses Goal 3 – Sustainable Use of Natural Resources, by providing funding to the Cooperative Extension System to conduct educational programs for private forestland owners that contribute to well-managed forests and the nation’s and world’s fiber supply in support of rural economic systems. RREA is aligned with the NIFA Strategic Plan ([http://nifa.usda.gov/about/pdfs/strat\\_plan\\_2014.pdf](http://nifa.usda.gov/about/pdfs/strat_plan_2014.pdf)), and specifically addresses Strategic Goal 1 (Science), to optimize the production of goods and services from working lands while protecting the Nation’s natural resource base and environment (Subgoal 1.3)

### **C. Program Area Description**

The NFF projects to be funded in FY 2015 will provide opportunities for the Cooperative Extension System to maximize its impact and demonstrate capacity and relevance by directly working across state boundaries to bring expertise to bear on issues that are regional or landscape in scale. In FY 2015 applications are requested for the following program priorities:

- (1) Regional Initiatives to Address Critical Issues Faced by Forest and Rangeland Owners: Maximum award: \$60,000; Maximum project period: 24 months.

Forest and rangeland issues are rarely and unique to a single state. The main purpose of this priority is to foster collaborative efforts among Extension educators to address issues that are regional in scale by sharing unique areas of knowledge and expertise. Applications for regional initiatives are requested. They must be: 1) Regional in nature, 2) Directly supportive of forest and rangeland owner issues and needs; 3) Either new and unproven, but theoretically sound, or represent a significant change to an existing national or regional project, and 4) Address one or more of the strategic issues in the current RREA Strategic Plan, FY 2012-2016

([http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/reporting/planrept/pdf/rrea\\_strat\\_plan\\_2012\\_2016.pdf](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/reporting/planrept/pdf/rrea_strat_plan_2012_2016.pdf))

- (2) National Forums/Symposia: The Second Century of Extension Forest and Rangeland Programs That Meet the Needs of Our Clientele. Maximum award: \$90,000; Maximum project period: 24 months.

The Cooperative Extension System has started its second century of service to the Nation's forest and rangeland owners. In a mere 100 years, Extension programs have evolved from the prominence of face-to-face, in-the-field delivery of programs to a delivery system that is highly reliant on new and emerging electronic technologies that are complemented by face-to-face program delivery. In the past few decades, state and federal agencies and non-governmental organizations greatly expanded their capacities to conduct research and transfer it to end users. How will Extension Forest and Rangeland Resources Programs most effectively and efficiently deliver research-based information and education to clientele when and how they want it, and in an environment where a wide range of program providers offer numerous and similar programs? The answers to these questions require a reexamination of how the Cooperative Extension System will serve forest and rangeland owners going forward into the next 20 years.

**PART II—AWARD INFORMATION**

**A. Available Funding**

The amount available for NIFA support of this program in FY 2015 is approximately \$300,000. The funds will be awarded through grants for Priority (1) and grants or cooperative agreements for Priority (2). In the case of cooperative agreement(s), the agency will be substantially involved in the planning of the symposium/forum. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

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 Bureau of the Fiscal Service, as the payment system for funds. For more information see <http://fms.treas.gov/index1.html>.

**B. Types of Applications**

In FY 2015, you may only submit a new application to the RREA-NFF Program:

**New application.** This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the RREA-NFF Program. We will review all new applications competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

**C. Project Types**

The following are NIFA funding estimates for FY 2015, number of awards anticipated, maximum annual project budgets, and acceptable project periods for the RREA-NFF program area.

<b>Program Area: Pilot Projects for National Focus Areas/Emergent Issues</b>	<b>Type of Application (New or Renewal)</b>	<b>Funding Estimate FY 2015</b>	<b>Maximum Project Budget</b>	<b>Maximum Project Duration</b>	<b>Number of Awards Anticipated FY 2015</b>
Regional Initiatives to Address Critical Issues Faced by Forest and Rangeland Owners	New	\$120,000	\$60,000	24 months	2
National Forum/Symposia: The Second Century of Extension Forest and Rangeland Programs	New	\$180,000	\$90,000	24 months	2

#### **D. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research**

RREA-NFF funding may not be used to conduct research.

## **PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

### **A. Eligible Applicants**

Applications may only be submitted by 1862 and 1890 land-grant institutions. Project Directors must have an extension appointment.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. Failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of 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. We urge you to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process see <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/grant-application-process.html>.

### **New Users of Grants.gov**

Prior to preparing an application, we recommend that the Project Director/Principal Investigator (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 not (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 long as 2 weeks to complete the registration process so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations, the AR should go to **“Register” in the top right corner of the Grants.gov web page (or go to <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html>) for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov.** Part II.1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide contains detailed information regarding the registration process. Refer item 2. below to locate the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide”.

### **Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials**

To receive application materials:

1. You must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov to access, complete, and submit applications. For basic system requirements and download instructions, see <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/software/adobe-reader-compatibility.html>. Grants.gov has a test package that will help you determine whether your current version of Adobe Reader is compatible.
2. To obtain the application package from Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>. Under Step 1 click on “Download a Grant Application Package,” and enter the funding opportunity number

### **Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-OP-005136**

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.” 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 you require assistance to access the application package** (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms) **or submitting the application**, refer to resources available on the Grants.gov website (<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-resources.html>). Grants.gov assistance is also available at:

Grants.gov customer support

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](mailto:support@grants.gov)

Grants.gov iPortal (see <https://grants-portal.psc.gov/Welcome.aspx?pt=Grants>):

Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self-service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7 a.m. - 9 p.m. ET). Get help now!

Have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov:

- Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
- Name of agency you are applying to
- Specific area of concern

See <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html> for additional resources for applying electronically.

## **B. Content and Form of Application Submission**

You should prepare electronic applications following Parts V and VI of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed 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., PDF) in Part III section 3. of the guide. ANY PROPOSALS THAT ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS (e.g., content format, PDF file format, file name restrictions, and no password protected files) WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Grants.gov does not check for NIFA required attachments or that attachments are in PDF format; see Part III section 6.1 of the guide for how to check the manifest of submitted files. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. We will accept subsequent submissions of an application until close of business on the closing date in the RFA (see Part V, 2.1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further information).**

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

- Email: [electronic@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:electronic@nifa.usda.gov)
- Phone: 202-401-5048
- Business hours: Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. ET, 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 RREA-NFF. 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.**

**Program Area/Priority #1: Regional Initiatives to Address Critical Issues Faced by Forest and Rangeland Owners**

The Project Narrative shall not exceed 20 pages (all of which must be numbered sequentially) of written text (double-spaced), figures and tables. The first sentence of the Project Narrative must specifically state the priority for which the application is being submitted. Applications exceeding the page limit will be excluded from NIFA review. This maximum (20 pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. Title the attachment “Project Narrative” in the document header and save file as “Project Narrative”. The Project Narrative must conform to the required sections for each priority area, and must be clearly labeled to include all of the sections listed below, as applicable. Incomplete applications, i.e. with missing sections, will be excluded from NIFA review. The Project Narrative must include the following components:

1. **Title.** Provide an appropriate title for the project.
2. **Subtitle.** State the priority (from Part I, Section C) that the proposal addresses.
3. **Introduction.** The introduction should include a clear statement of the long-term goal(s) and supporting objectives for the proposed project, and the nature of the issue that the project is intended to address.

4. **Justification, Rationale, and Significance.** Concisely present the justification for why this project is important to forest and rangeland owners at a national or regional scale and how they will benefit. New and innovative ideas, program delivery approaches, or products should be clearly and explicitly described. Demonstrate the feasibility of the proposed project through preliminary data.
5. **Relevant Literature Review.** Provide a narrowly-focused and concise review of relevant literature that supports the need and importance of the project (not to exceed 2 pages).
6. **Objectives.** Include clear, concise, complete and logically arranged objective statements.
7. **Approach.** This section must include:
  - Who are the project stakeholders and how they will be involved in the project and its evaluation;
  - An Extension logic model (in the form of a figure) for the proposed project and a narrative description of the inputs, outputs, participants, short- and medium-term outcomes, and projected/estimated impacts (long-term outcomes).
  - A description of the proposed outputs and activities and the sequence in which the activities are to be performed;
  - How, when, and where the activities will be provided;
  - Expected outputs;
  - Expected outcomes;
  - A timeline for the project; and
  - A detailed evaluation plan for the project:
    - For outputs, activities, participants, outputs, and outcomes – what will be measured, how, and when; and
    - How the evaluation results will be reported, where, and to whom.
8. **Project Sustainability and Replication.** Describe plans for assisting other institutions/states/regions in replicating the project. Describe any plans for sustaining the project beyond the project period.
9. **Budget.** The budget must support the outputs and outcomes described in the logical model and in the Approach section. Provide a narrative justification for each of the budget lines. Include travel to the ANREP Biennial Conference and/or other professional meeting where you will present the project and its accomplishments.

**Program Area/Priority #2: National Fora/Symposia: The Second Century of Extension Forest and Rangeland Programs that Meet the Needs of Our Clientele.**

The Project Narrative shall not exceed 20 pages (all of which must be numbered sequentially) of written text (double-spaced), figures and tables. The first sentence of the Project Narrative must specifically state the priority for which the application is being submitted. Applications exceeding the page limit will be excluded from NIFA review. This maximum (20 pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. Title the attachment “Project

Narrative” in the document header and save file as “Project Narrative”. The Project Narrative must conform to the required sections for each priority area, and must be clearly labeled to include all of the sections listed below, as applicable. Incomplete applications, i.e. with missing sections, will be excluded from NIFA review. The Project Narrative must include the following components:

1. **Title.** Provide an appropriate title for the project.
2. **Subtitle.** State the priority (from Part I, Section C) that the proposal addresses.
3. **Introduction.** The introduction should include a clear statement of the long-term goal(s) and supporting objectives for the proposed project, and the nature of the issue that the project is intended to address.
4. **Justification, Rationale, and Significance.** Concisely present the justification for why this project is important to forest and rangeland across the country. New and innovative ideas, program delivery approaches, or products should be clearly and explicitly described.
5. **Relevant Literature Review.** Provide a narrowly-focused and concise review of relevant literature that supports the need and importance of the project (not to exceed 2 pages).
6. **Objectives.** Include clear, concise, complete and logically arranged objective statements.
7. **Approach.** This section must include:
  - Who are the project stakeholders and how they will be involved in the project and its evaluation;
  - An Extension logic model (in the form of a figure) for the proposed project and a narrative description of the inputs, outputs, participants, short- and medium-term outcomes, and projected/estimated impacts (long-term outcomes).
  - A description of the proposed outputs and activities and the sequence in which the activities are to be performed;
  - How, when, and where the activities will be provided;
  - Expected outputs;
  - Expected outcomes;
  - A timeline for the project; and
  - A detailed evaluation plan for the project:
    - For outputs, activities, participants, outputs, and outcomes – what will be measured, how, and when; and
    - How the evaluation results will be reported, where, and to whom.
8. **Budget.** The budget must support the outputs and outcomes described in the logical model and in the Approach section. Provide a narrative justification for each of the

budget lines. Include travel to the ANREP Biennial Conference and/or other professional meeting where you will present the project and its accomplishments.

**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. This section of the Guide includes information about the people who require a Senior/Key Person Profile, 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.

**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.

Matching.

**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 (enter **Renewable Resource**) and the program code (enter **ME**). Note that accurate entry of the program code is very important for proper and timely processing of an application.
- 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**

Prior to electronic submission of the application via Grants.gov, it is strongly recommended that an administrative review be conducted to ensure that an application complies with all application preparation instructions. An application checklist is included in Part VII of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide to assist with this review.

**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 **5 p.m. Eastern Time on June 1, 2015**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

**If you have trouble submitting an application to Grants.gov, you should FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Part IV. A. for Grants.gov contact information.**

We send email correspondence to the AR regarding the status of submitted applications. 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 30 days of the established deadline, contact the Agency Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable 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**

Indirect costs are not allowed. Funds may not be spent on tuition remission, food, or gifts. Equipment costing more than \$2,000 must be fully justified in the Budget Narrative.

#### **E. Other Submission Requirements**

**You 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**

We evaluate each application in a 2-part process. First, we screen each application to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, a technical review panel will evaluate applications that meet the administrative requirements.

We select reviewers based upon their 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, and 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 of each application to producers and the general public.

When each peer review panel has completed its deliberations, the responsible program staff of RREA-NFF will recommend that the project: (a) be approved for support from currently available funds or (b) be declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review.

RREA-NFF staff reserves the right to negotiate with the PD/PI and/or with the submitting organization or institution regarding project revisions (e.g., reductions in the scope of work, funding level, period, or method of support) prior to recommending any project for funding.

### **B. Evaluation Criteria**

We will use the evaluation criteria below to review applications submitted in response to this RFA:

1. Project Justification
  - The issue that the project will address is well-defined and described.
2. Project Merit
  - The proposed objectives, outputs, outcomes, and impacts are clearly described, adequate, and appropriate;
  - The project utilizes theory-based non-formal adult education principles;
  - The project approaches and procedures are original, clearly described, and feasible;
  - The project is innovative in focus, methodology, program delivery, and products; and

- The project outcomes and projected impacts are clearly stated, measurable, and achievable.
3. Project Relevance
    - Adequacy of proposal in response to items required in the Project Narrative;
    - Evidence that partners and stakeholders play an active role in setting project direction and involved throughout the course of the project;
    - Planning and implementing methods for evaluating success of project activities and documenting potential impact in alignment with measurable short and mid-term outcomes; and
    - Demonstration of feasibility through preliminary and current relevant data.
  4. Project Personnel, Adequacy of Facilities and Equipment, Project Timeline, and Evaluation Plan.
    - Roles of key personnel are clearly described;
    - Key personnel have exemplary expertise to complete the proposed project;
    - Project personnel have extensive, documented experience in developing, leading, managing and evaluating extension programs;
    - Detailed, logical, and achievable timeline of project activities from project initiation through project completion and submission of final report;
    - Clear evidence of staff and budget resources to plan and conduct the project evaluation; and
    - Evidence of institutional capacity, competence, and experience in the proposed area of work is provided.

### **C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality**

During the peer evaluation process, we take extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. See [http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/competitive\\_peer\\_review.html](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/competitive_peer_review.html) for further information about conflicts of interest and confidentiality as related to the peer review process.

For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, we determine the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 1801 Robert Fulton Drive, Suite 555, Reston, VA, 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, are 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, to the extent permitted by law; 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. This requirement is 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. We will provide you 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 that 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).

#### **E. Application Disposition**

An application may be withdrawn at any time before a final funding decision is made regarding the application; however, withdrawn applications normally will not be returned. One copy of each application that is not selected for funding, including those that are withdrawn, will be retained by RREA-NFF for a period of three years.

## **PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION**

### **A. General**

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the NIFA awarding official 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 NIFA awarding official 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. 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 may be used only for the purpose for which they are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, regulations, terms and conditions of the award, applicable federal cost principles, USDA assistance regulations, and 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:

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to which 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 PDs chosen to direct and control approved activities;
- (4) Identifying award number and the Federal Agency Identification Number assigned by NIFA;
- (5) Project period, specifying the amount of time NIFA intends to support the project without requiring recompetition for funds;
- (6) Total amount of financial assistance approved for the award;
- (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 the ones listed below.

2 CFR Part 25, “Universal Identifier and Central Contractor Registration”

2 CFR Part 170, “Reporting Subaward and Executive Compensation Information”

2 CFR Part 175, “Award Term for Trafficking in Persons”

2 CFR Part 180, “OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement)”

2 CFR Part 182, “Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)”

2 CFR Part 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards”

2 CFR Part 400, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards”

2 CFR Part 415, “General Program Administrative Regulations”

2 CFR Part 416, “General Program Administrative Regulations for Grants Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments”

2 CFR Part 417, “Nonprocurement Debarment and Suspension”

2 CFR Part 418, “New Restrictions on Lobbying”

2 CFR Part 421, “Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)”

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 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.

NIFA Federal Assistance Policy Guide—a compendium of basic NIFA policies and procedures that apply to all NIFA awards, unless there are statutory, regulatory, or award-specific requirements to the contrary.

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).

44 U.S.C. 3541 et seq. (Pub. L. 107-347) - Federal Information System Security Management Act of 2002 (FISMA), to improve computer and network security within the Federal Government. Applies to awardees if it will collect, store, process, transmit, or use information on behalf of NIFA.

#### **D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements**

Grantees are to use REEport, NIFA's electronic, web-based inventory system to submit an initial project initiation which documents expected products and outcomes of the project. Additionally, annual progress report documenting realized project outcomes must be submitted to the electronic system. The web-based system facilitates an electronic workflow between grantees and NIFA for project accomplishments to be easily searchable and allows for public access to information on Federally-funded projects. The details of these reporting requirements, including those specific to the annual and final technical reports, are included in the award terms and conditions.

## **PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT**

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

### **Programmatic Contacts –**

Eric Norland

Title: National Program Leader, Forest Resource Management

Unit: Division of Environmental Systems

Location: 3190 Waterfront Centre

Full Address and Directions

Phone: (202) 401 - 5971

Fax: (202) 401 - 1706

Email: [enorland@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:enorland@nifa.usda.gov)

James P Dobrowolski

Title: National Program Leader, Range and Grasslands Ecosystems

Unit: Division of Environmental Systems

Location: 3254 Waterfront Centre

Full Address and Directions

Phone: (202) 401 - 5016

Fax: (202) 401 - 1706

Email: [jdobrowolski@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:jdobrowolski@nifa.usda.gov)

### **Administrative/Business Contact –**

Rodney Vance

Title: Program Specialist, RREA Program

Unit: Division of Environmental Systems

Location: 3176 Waterfront Centre

Full Address and Directions

Phone: (202) 401 - 4044

Fax: (202) 401 – 1706

Email: [rvance@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:rvance@nifa.usda.gov)

## **PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION**

### **A. Access to Review Information**

We will send copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments 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, awardees 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. The awardee must request, and the ADO must approve in writing, all changes in approved goals or objectives prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests be approved for changes that are outside the scope of the original approved project.

c. The awardee must request, and the ADO must approve in writing, all changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel, prior to effecting such changes.

d. The awardee must request, and the ADO must approve in writing, all 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, prior to instituting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

e. The project period may be extended without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) 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. The terms and conditions of award include information about no-cost extensions of the award and when ADO's prior approval is necessary.

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, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Financial Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions](#), for applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.

For the purpose of this program, the following additional definition is applicable:

RANGELAND means land supporting indigenous vegetation that either is grazed or that has the potential to be grazed, and is managed as a natural ecosystem. Rangeland includes grasslands, savannas, grazable forestlands, shrub lands, pasturelands, many deserts, tundra, alpine communities, marshland and meadows.