Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program

FY 2016 Request for Applications (RFA)

APPLICATION DEADLINE: January 21, 2016

ELIGIBILITY: See Part III, A of RFA

USDA United States Department of Agriculture — National Institute of Food and Agriculture

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

BEGINNING FARMER AND RANCHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under **10.311.**

DATES: Applications must be received by **5:00 p.m. Eastern Time** on **January 21, 2016.** 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. (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 **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program** RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the **Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP)** for fiscal year (FY) **2016** to support the delivery of education, mentoring, and technical assistance programs to help beginning farmers and ranchers in the United States (U.S.) and its territories with entering, establishing, building and managing successful farm and ranch enterprises. The anticipated amount available for grants in FY 2016 is approximately $18 million.

This notice identifies the objectives for BFRDP projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a BFRDP grant.

A webinar will be held on **December 2, 2015** at **1:00 p.m. Eastern Time** for potential applicants. The Adobe Connect link is: http://nifa-connect.nifa.usda.gov/bfrdp16/.

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

Section 7405(c) of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Pub. L. 107-171) (7 U.S.C. 3319f(c)), as amended by section 7410 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (FCEA) (Pub. L. 110-246) and section 7409 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Pub. L. 113-333), requires the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a competitive grants program to support new and established local and regional training, education, outreach and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers or ranchers in the United States (U.S.). Programs and services (as appropriate) include the following:

    A. Basic livestock, forest management, and crop farming practices;
    B. Innovative farm, ranch, and private, nonindustrial forest land transfer strategies;
    C. Entrepreneurship and business training;
    D. Financial and risk management training (including the acquisition and management of agricultural credit);
    E. Natural resource management and planning;
    F. Diversification and marketing strategies;
    G. Curriculum development;
    H. Mentoring, apprenticeships, and internships;
    I. Resources and referral;
    J. Farm financial benchmarking;
    K. Assisting beginning farmers or ranchers in acquiring land from retiring farmers and ranchers;
    L. Agricultural rehabilitation and vocational training for veterans;
    M. Farm safety and awareness; and
    N. Other similar subject areas of use to beginning farmers or ranchers.

Section 7405(d) of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (7 U.S.C. 3319f(d)) requires the Secretary of Agriculture to establish beginning farmer and rancher education teams to develop curricula and conduct educational programs and workshops for beginning farmers or ranchers in diverse geographical areas of the United States.

NIFA has invited stakeholder input on BFRDP via webinars, conference calls, and written means every year since the program began in FY 2009. For information about stakeholder input and how it was utilized in the development of the RFA see Part VIII, F.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development 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), and specifically addresses Goal 6 – Education and Science Literacy, by providing educational and training opportunities to beginning farmers and ranchers. BFRDP is aligned with the NIFA Strategic plan (http://nifa.usda.gov/about/pdfs/strat_plan_2014.pdf), and specifically addresses Strategic Goal 1 (Science), by advancing our ability to fight hunger and ensure global food security (Subgoal 1.1).

The primary goal of BFRDP is to help beginning farmers and ranchers in the U.S. and its territories to enter and/or improve their success in farming, ranching, and management of nonindustrial private forest lands, through support for projects that provide education, mentoring, and technical assistance to give beginning farmers the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to make informed decisions for their operations, and enhance their sustainability. The term "farmer" is used in the broadest sense and should be interpreted to include agricultural farmers, ranchers, and non-industrial private forest owners and managers. **Applications from partnerships and collaborations that are led by or include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and school-based agricultural educational organizations (SAEOs) with expertise in new agricultural producer training and outreach will be given priority in funding**.

1. Target Audience:

The target audience for BFRDP is farmers and ranchers who have not operated a farm or ranch, or have operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 years. In addition, a portion of BFRDP funding is set aside for projects that address the needs of two subsets of beginning farmers and ranchers:

- At least 5 percent (5%) of the program funds available for standard BFRDP projects will be allocated to address the needs of limited resource beginning farmers and ranchers; socially disadvantaged beginning farmers or ranchers; and/or farm workers (including immigrants) desiring to become beginning farmers or ranchers.

- At least 5 percent (5%) of the program funds available for standard BFRDP projects will be allocated to address the needs of beginning farmers and ranchers who are military veterans. A recipient of such a grant may coordinate with a recipient of a grant from the AgrAbility program (http://www.agrability.org/) in addressing the needs of veteran farmers and ranchers with disabilities.

Please note: Not all applications need to address the needs of these two set-aside categories.

Priority may be given to applications that address the two categories, if necessary to achieve the targeted set-asides, by awarding funding to the highest-ranked proposals that meet the set-aside.

For applications to be considered under either set-aside audience category, they must:
a. Identify the target audience of any of the groups identified above and state what percentage of the project budget will be allocated to serving these group(s);
b. Explain how the beginning farmers and ranchers in the identified target audience will be recruited and provided with appropriate training, education, outreach and/or mentoring; and
c. Provide evidence of the ability to serve the needs of the identified audience, e.g., a strong track record of having previously done so.

SPECIAL NOTE:
Identified priorities are factors that will be given additional weight in the evaluation of proposals. In instances where proposals are found to be equally meritorious with the application purpose and priorities, based on peer review, selection for funding will be weighed in favor of applicants meeting the BFRDP grants program priorities.

2. Priority Topics for FY 2016:

To achieve program goals, BFRDP projects will be expected to conduct training and assistance for beginning farmers and ranchers on one or more of the topics listed in Part I. A, items A-N. Applicants should carefully consider the topics that will be addressed by the proposed project and clearly identify the topics that will be addressed in the project narrative, and why those topics are the most appropriate for the project's audience. Evidence of farmer input on topic selection is very important. Applicants should make use of existing curriculum (whether USDA funded or not), including entries in the BFRDP curriculum and training clearinghouse FarmAnswers.org (http://farmanswers.org/), and justify the decision to develop new curriculum if needed.

NIFA is soliciting applications for the BFRDP under two areas: Standard Grants, and Educational Enhancement Teams (EETs). There are three types of EETs: Evaluation, Assistance, and Other.

    (1) Standard Grants and/or
    (2) Educational Enhancement Teams (EETs)
        a. Evaluation
        b. Assistance
        c. Other

C. Program Area Description

(1) Standard Grants

    Program Code: BFRDA
    Program Code Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Standard
    Maximum Award: $200,000 per year for up to three (3) years for large standard grants; $80,000 per year for up to three years for small standard grants

    Both small and large standard BFRDP projects support new and established local and regional training, education, outreach and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers and ranchers, on the priority topics listed above. They differ in their scale. Most of the funding in the BFRDP will be directed to Standard Grants. The primary goal of Standard Grants is to increase the number of beginning farmers and ranchers and enhance their success and sustainability by providing them and their families the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to make informed decisions. Standard Grant applications are expected to identify the audience of beginning farmers and ranchers that they aim to serve, describe their characteristics and needs, demonstrate knowledge and experience in educational and assistance methods that are appropriate and effective in engaging the audience and meeting their needs, and propose an ambitious yet achievable plan of work that will accomplish meaningful and measurable success in enhancing the number and success of beginning farmers and ranchers. Most successful standard grant applicants provide training and assistance on business and financial management as well as production and marketing topics from the priority list above (Part 1.A. Items A thru N).

Small and large standard grants will be reviewed by the panel, but will be discussed as two different groups and ranked separately within each group to provide equitable evaluation. Both large and small proposals will be evaluated using the same evaluation criteria (see Part V.B), including priority for partnerships and collaborations that are led by or include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), or school-based agricultural educational organizations (SAEOs) with expertise in beginning agricultural producer training and outreach. The expectations for smaller projects, however, will be commensurate with their size (e.g., smaller audiences, more limited geographic reach, less complex collaborative arrangements) and provide an opportunity for smaller or less experienced organizations to propose projects that have smaller budgets and less complex administration.

(2) Educational Enhancement Teams (EETs)

Program Code: BFRDB
Program Code Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Enhancement
Maximum Award: **$150,000 for one (1) year for EET-Evaluation**
                         $250,000 over two (2) years for EET-Assistance
                         $200,000 per year for up to three (3) years for EET-Other

The purpose of an Educational Enhancement Team (EET) grant is to fund a team of experts to review beginning farmer and rancher curricula and programs (including review and evaluation of previously-funded BFRDP projects), identify gaps, and develop, disseminate and facilitate the use of materials and tools to address these gaps. Educational Enhancement Teams are not designed to train beginning farmers and ranchers directly, but rather to train-the-trainers and help enhance funded and non-funded beginning farmer and rancher education programs in the nation. Applicants interested in applying for an EET grant are strongly encouraged to confer with the Programmatic Contacts listed in Part VII to discuss the suitability of the topic prior to submitting an application.

In FY 2016, NIFA is particularly interested in EET applications which will:
- Evaluate the portfolio of all completed BFRDP standard projects, to identify and summarize short- and long-term outcomes and impacts; analyze factors contributing to success; and communicate results. Proposals should include analyzing quantitative and qualitative data from annual and final project reports. The portfolio is comprised of approximately 140 completed projects and 65 active projects. Further, follow-up is required with a sample of projects to assess long-term impacts. **EET-Evaluation** applications are limited to a total of $150,000 for one (1) year. In addition, NIFA may choose to invite and consider funding additional follow-on work by the successful applicant.

  And/or

- Work with NIFA to assist less experienced applicants to understand and meet the requirements of a successful BFRDP grant application. Proposals should include

assessing the most common errors and points of confusion for applicants; working with NIFA to develop outreach and training tools; and communicating with organizations who may apply for BFRDP grants in **FY 2017 and FY 2018**. **EET-Assistance** applications are limited to a total of $250,000 over a period of two (2) years. In addition, NIFA may choose to invite and consider funding additional follow-on work by the successful applicant.

NIFA is also soliciting proposals designed to enhance beginning farmer efforts based on a particular topic, region, or audience. Such **EET-Other** applications should complement previously-funded EETs, which have addressed environmental management and leadership, regional networks, farmer-to-farmer curricula, financial management, and individual development accounts; and currently active EETs, which are addressing immigrant farming incubators, land access, and women farmers. Topical, regional, or audience-focused EETs should involve educational teams of experts with diverse backgrounds (e.g., NGO, CBO, SAEO, farmers, university, government) to
(1) identify, collect, and assess existing curricula and programs;
(2) identify gaps and develop and deliver curricula and train-the-trainer programs to fill the identified gaps; and
(3) collaborate with the BFRDP Clearinghouse (http://farmanswers.org) and BFR education providers to enhance successful use of the EET curricula and programs.
EET-Other applications are limited to $200,000 per year for up to three (3) years.

Applicants are encouraged to coordinate efforts with their StrikeForce area coordinators and/or partnering entities. USDA's StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity Initiative is part of our commitment to growing economies, increasing investments and creating opportunities in poverty-stricken rural communities. See www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=STRIKE_FORCE for more information.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The anticipated amount available for grants in FY 2016 is approximately $18 million. The funds for Standard Projects will be awarded through grants. The funds for Educational Enhancement Teams (EETs) may be awarded through a cooperative agreement, which includes substantial involvement of NIFA staff. 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 2016, applications may be submitted to the BFRDP Program as one of the following types of requests:

New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to BFRDP Program. We will review all new applications competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements. Project Directors (PDs) and Co-PDs of active BFRDP awards are strongly discouraged from applying, unless that active award is in its final year.

Resubmitted application. This is an application that had previously been submitted to BFRDP 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.

C. Project Types

Applications will be accepted for two (2) project types: (1) Standard BFRDP Projects; and/or (2) Educational Enhancement Team Projects (EETs). There are three sub-types of EETs: Evaluation, Assistance, and Other.

1. Standard BFRDP Projects:

The long-term goals of the Standard BFRDP projects are to enhance the sustainability of beginning farmers and ranchers through education, training, mentoring and outreach programs that enhance self-employment in farming, ranching and forestry opportunities. Applications that seek to develop coursework for credit at Colleges and Universities offering four-year degree programs are not appropriate for this program and will not be accepted for review. Applications

that seek to educate students for careers in agriculture other than as farmers or ranchers will not be accepted for review.

All work must be completed within three (3) years. The Statutory time limitation for this project is three (3) years from the project start date on the Award Face Sheet (Form NIFA-2009). Extensions of time beyond the three (3) years will not be permitted.

2. Educational Enhancement Team Projects:

The long-term goals of the Educational Enhancement Team (EET) projects are to identify gaps in beginning farmer and rancher training by evaluating all existing programs, and to develop and conduct train-the-trainer projects to address these gaps. In 2016, applications are invited for three types of EETs: Evaluation, Assistance, and Other.

EETs are awarded for up to three years, and may continue into a fourth year with a no-cost extension of time. However in 2016, each of the three types of EET proposals has a different maximum budget and duration (see Program Description in section I.C.2 and the chart below).

The following are NIFA funding estimates for FY 2016, number of awards anticipated, maximum project budgets, and acceptable project periods for each of the Project Types.

Project Type	Number of Awards Anticipated	Maximum Project Budget	Acceptable Project Period
Standard Grant – **Program Code BFRDA**	30-35	$200,000/yr.	2-3 yrs.
Educational Enhancement Team – **Program Code BFRDB**			
EET - Evaluation	1	$150,000 total	1 yr.
EET - Assistance	1	$250,000 total	2 yrs.
EET – Other	0-2	$200,000/yr.	2-3 yrs.

Applications that include requests for annual project budgets in excess of the maximum annual project budgets established above, or propose project periods outside the acceptable project ranges above, for the applicable Program Area, will be at risk of being excluded from NIFA review.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may only be submitted by a collaborative state, tribal, local, or regionally-based network or partnership of qualified public and/or private entities. These collaborations may include the following entities: State Cooperative Extension Services; Federal, State, or tribal agencies; community based organizations (CBOs); nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); junior and four-year colleges or universities or foundations maintained by a college or university; private for-profit organizations. Inclusion of beginning and/or non-beginning farmers and ranchers as part of the collaborative group is strongly encouraged.

Applications submitted by individuals, or by organizations that do not involve other entities in a network or partnership, are not eligible for consideration under any category applicable to the BFRDP.

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

Pursuant to the authorizing legislation for the BFRDP, NIFA requires that in order to receive an award under this program, the recipient must provide a match in the form of cash or in-kind contributions in an amount at least equal to 25 percent (25%) of the federal funds provided by the award. The matching funds must be from non-Federal sources except when authorized by statute. An award will not be issued unless all matching funds over the life of the grant are secured with pledge letters. See Part IV, B, 6 of this RFA for requirements for pledge letters. There can be no stipulations on the matching amount.

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**. **This is a complicated application, and if you wait until the last few days before the due date to start entering your application, you risk missing the deadline**. 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 to 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-BFR-005436 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

>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

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. <u>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.</u> 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
- 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 following items should be included in the summary:
   1. Project Title;
   2. List of Project Directors (PDs) and Co-PDs and their institutions/organizations;
   3. Concise (250 words or less) description of the project;
   4. List of other collaborating institutions/organizations;
   5. Percent of total federal funds requested that are allocated to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and school-based agricultural educational organizations (SAEOs);
   6. For applications to be considered under either of the target audience set-asides:
      a. Percent of budget allocated to serving military veterans; and/or
      b. Percent of budget allocated to serving socially disadvantaged, limited-resource, or farmworker audiences; and
   7. List of any previous or current BFRDP projects that PD or co-PDs have been a part of leading (list project director and award number (20XX-#####-#####); see Part VIII.F for a link to the full list of abstracts of previously funded projects)

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.**

NOTE: The Project Narrative must not exceed 16 pages of written text regardless of whether it is single- or double-spaced. This total includes pages for figures and tables. We have established this maximum (16 pages) to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following clearly-defined sections. Organizing your proposal in this way, clearly labeling each section and sequencing them as indicated below, will help reviewers find the information to evaluate your proposal. A table of contents is not required, but if included, will not count in this page limit.

For Standard Grants and EETs-Other applications:

1) **Introduction.** The introduction should include a clear statement of the long-term goal(s) of the proposed project. Justify the need for the program by identifying the target audience and explaining their needs (size, region, value of sales, structure of the industry (the number of small, medium and large farms), critical barriers, etc.); and by briefly summarizing all the other similar beginning farmer and rancher education and training programs that are available for the identified target audience. If necessary, provide a map of the region. Show evidence that beginning farmers and ranchers were involved in conceptualizing the project and designing the activities. If the project type is Educational Enhancement Team, present the rationale for the geographic, topic or other appropriate focus of the Team and the Team's composition. All works cited should be referenced (see 7(i) Bibliography & References Cited in this section). Applicants are encouraged to use approximately 2 of the 16 pages for this section. (Related evaluation criteria (see Part V.B): Relevancy.)

2) **Objectives and Outcomes.** Concisely present the goals, associated objectives and expected outputs and outcomes of the project in relation to the audience and needs identified in the introduction. Provide numbers of beginning farmers and ranchers that will be served. Estimate how many of them will attain specific, anticipated knowledge gains or actions (e.g., starting farming; improving production practices; entering new markets) and project the expected resulting impacts of those gains and actions on the success of their operations. Discuss whether and how this program can be adapted to other regions, communities and/or agricultural systems. Applicants are encouraged to use approximately 2 of the 16 pages for this section. (Related evaluation criteria: Technical merit.)

3) **Approach.** The activities proposed to achieve each objective must be clearly stated and the approaches being applied clearly described. Applicants are encouraged to use approximately 6 of the 16 pages for this section. Specifically, this section must include:
   a) A description of the activities proposed for each objective.
   b) A timeline of the proposed project. The timeline should include activities and major outputs and associated outcomes for each year of the project.
   c) Discuss how and where the activities will be provided and the appropriateness of the approach for the target audience.
   d) For Standard BFRDP Projects: how will the beginning farmers and ranchers be recruited for this training?
   e) For Education Enhancement Team Projects, how will Beginning Farmer And Rancher Curricula and Programs be identified and evaluated? How will you help guide curriculum and program development and delivery in future years?;
   f) How will the project, and its partnerships and collaborations, be sustained beyond the life of the grant (e.g., plans for eventual self-support or institutionalization or other sources of support)? If there are not plans to sustain the effort, explain why not, and how the impact of the project will be lasting.
   g) Any novel ideas or contributions of the proposed project.

h) Pitfalls that may be encountered and limitations to proposed procedures. For Standard BFRDP Projects, please identify possible challenges to your proposed strategy for participant recruitment and how you plan to address those challenges. (Related evaluation criteria: Technical merit; Achievability.)

4) **Personnel and Resources**: Describe in detail the Key Personnel's experience in serving the identified or other audiences of beginning farmers and ranchers and ability to provide the appropriate (e.g., effective, socio-economically and culturally sensitive, etc.) education, training, outreach and mentoring programs for the target audience. Describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed project, and their impacts. This information may include: the years and locations of prior activities; number of training assistance or education activities previously carried out; number of participants and graduates from the program; success rate in completing the program; percentage of graduates who are still in farming; and/or percentages of those who improved their operations. It is recommended that applicants use approximately 2 of the 16 pages (for the Project Narrative) for this section. (Related evaluation criteria: Expertise and track record; Adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel.)

5) **Plan for Outcome Based Reporting.** Clearly identify a minimum of two expected outcomes within the life of the project, and explain the plan to document and evaluate them. Third-party evaluators are strongly recommended but not required. Participatory evaluation, and formative as well as summative evaluation, are encouraged. All projects must describe methods and resources for documenting and evaluating their outcomes and impacts. Because of the diversity in the types of BFRDP projects funded, it is not possible to require all applicants to report on identical measurable outcomes. However, all Standard BFRDP applicants should consider using (1) the expected number of new farm startups that would result from their project as one of the outcomes, and (2) the expected number of new farmers (i.e., those who are already farming but in their first 10 years of operation) who will make beneficial changes as a result of the project. All projects should have measures of the degree of change or strength of impact or benefit to participants. The identified outcomes and impacts must be measurable: a total number, percentage of participation, or percentage change (e.g., percentage increase in the value of sales of beginning farmers and ranchers, or percentage of participants who improve their business or production practices). Therefore, plan to take baseline measurements before the work of a project or each measured event. Additionally, capture total numbers used to develop percentages for each measurement. All Educational Enhancement Team applicants should consider using the anticipated number of users of information products created as a result of their Educational Enhancement Team activities as one of their metrics. Include a table summarizing the 2-5 primary outcome targets and related measurements:

Outcome	Target #	How Measured
# new farm start-ups		
# new farmers who will…[describe change/benefits]		
(if EET) # users of [describe info/product(s)]		

Many expected outcomes may occur beyond the grant period. Hence, also identify measurable outputs for each of the expected outcomes. Outputs for Standard BFRDP Projects may include:
(a) Number of beginning farmers and ranchers to receive significant training or assistance; and
(b) Number of courses developed.

Outputs for Educational Enhancement Teams (EETs) may include:
(a) Number of trainers trained;
(b) Number of training programs offered; and/or
(c) Number of BFRDP organizations assisted.

See the "Outcomes Guide for BFRDP Grants" under Section VIII.F. Applicants are encouraged to use approximately 2 of the 16 pages for this section. (Related evaluation criteria: Adequacy of plans for the participatory evaluation process.)

6) **Management and Collaboration Plan.** It is critical to have a clearly articulated management plan that describes the roles and functions of all partners, collaborators and the organizations, as related to the proposed project. See "Definitions" (Part VIII.E) for definitions of Partner and Collaborator. Include time allocated by each partner for attainment of objectives; key roles of each partner and collaborator; and plan for administration of the proposed project and its maintenance and partnerships. Describe the plans for coordination, communication, data sharing and reporting among members of the project team and stakeholder groups. Describe the commitment of the organization and partners to this project; and how the collaboration and its impact will be sustained beyond the period of the award. An applicant's failure to provide the requested information in the Management and Collaboration Plan may preclude NIFA from making an award. Applicants are encouraged to use approximately 2 of the 16 pages for this section. In addition, letters of commitment signed by the AR of the partnering organization demonstrating that the partners involved have agreed to abide by the **Management Plan** should be provided (see "Other Attachments" below). (Related evaluation criteria: Partnerships and collaboration; Achievability.)

7) The following situations **represent exceptions**, and require **Additional Narrative Pages**. In addition to the 16-page limit for the above sections of Narrative, proposals should use additional pages to provide the sections specified below if the proposals fall into the following categories:

i. **Response to Previous Review** – Required for "Resubmitted Applications" as described under Part II, B of this RFA, "Types of Applications". PDs must respond to the previous review panel summary. **The Response to Previous Review should be limited to one (1) page. Use the subheading "Response to Previous Review".** (Related evaluation criteria: Responsiveness to previous comments.)

ii. **Prior BFRDP Accomplishments** – If the Project Director (PD) and/or Co-PDs have been involved in leading prior BFRDP project(s), list those projects in the Project

Summary (see 3.A above) and add to the narrative a brief description of what was learned from the past project(s), what can be improved upon, and how those lessons and improvements are being incorporated into the current application to make the ongoing project more effective and successful at meeting program goals. This information should be added at the end of the narrative, in **no more than one page, under a subheading "Prior BFRDP Accomplishments".** (Related evaluation criteria: Prior performance; Adequacy of plans for continuous improvement.)

The following table summarizes the sections of the Project Narrative for Standard Grant and EET-Other applications, suggests an approximate number of pages to allocate to each section, and shows the evaluation criteria most relevant to each section:

Narrative Section	Suggested # Pages	Related Evaluation Criteria (see Part V, B. of this RFA)
Introduction	2 of 16	Relevancy
Objectives and Outcomes	2 of 16	Technical merit
Approach	6 of 16	Technical merit; Achievability
Personnel and Resources	2 of 16	Expertise and track record of the applicants; Adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel, facilities and instrumentation
Plan for Outcome Based Reporting	2 of 16	Adequacy of plans for the participatory evaluation process, outcome-based reporting, and the communication of findings and results beyond the immediate target audience
Management and Collaboration Plan	2 of 16	Partnerships and collaboration; Achievability
Response to Previous Review (if resubmission)	Limit of 1 add'l page	Responsiveness to previous comments and recommendations by reviewers
Prior BFRDP Accomplishments (if applicable)	Limit of 1 add'l page	Performance during the previous BFRDP grant(s); Adequacy of plans for continuous improvement

For EET-Evaluation applications:

1) Project Team: Describe the proposed team lead, partners, and other collaborators. The team should be led by person(s) with strong expertise in program evaluation and include person(s) with strong expertise in beginning farmer education, mentoring, and technical assistance. Describe the roles and responsibilities of each member of the team, and summarize their relevant expertise and experience. Provide a hyper-link to a sample report written by the lead evaluator.

2) Objectives: The overall purpose of the EET evaluation is to identify and summarize the short- and long-term outcomes and impacts; and to analyze factors contributing to success, of the completed BFRDP standard grants to date (i.e., projects funded in 2009-2012). Results are intended to provide suggestions for improvements to both NIFA management

and grantee performance in BFRDP. Propose specific objectives that are both achievable and most useful to that overall purpose.

3) Approach: Describe the proposed methods and activities for collecting and analyzing data (quantitative and qualitative), including, but not limited to, the data in the BFRDP project reports (see the link to Abstracts of Funded Projects in section VIII.F of this RFA).

4) Deliverables: Provide plans for summarizing and communicating results, including written products, verbal communications (e.g., monthly check-ins), and presentations. Suggested written deliverables include:
   a) quarterly reports;
   b) a draft cumulative report; and
   c) a final report with an executive summary that integrates, summarizes, and interprets key findings of the study.

   The report should be written for a non-technical audience and relate the narrative discussion to descriptive statistics, analyses, graphs, maps, and tables where appropriate. One or more journal articles may also be proposed. The grantee will provide NIFA with all relevant data compiled during the project, and metadata (field name description, definition, source, source date, and equation if computed) for all raw and computed data fields. Suggested presentations include: in-person and/or webinar presentations to NIFA program staff and leadership, and to BFRDP grantees at annual PD meeting. Include a timeline with milestones and deliverables.

For EET-Assistance applications:

1) Project Team: Describe the proposed team lead, partners, and other collaborators. The team should be led by person(s) with strong expertise in assisting organizations with grant programs and include person(s) with strong expertise in beginning farmer education, mentoring, and technical assistance. Describe the roles and responsibilities of each member of the team, and summarize their relevant expertise and experience.

2) Objectives: The overall purpose of this project is to assist inexperienced applicants to understand and meet the requirements of a successful BFRDP grant application.   Propose specific objectives to identify the most common errors, points of confusion, or other obstacles to successful applications for inexperienced applicants, and to work with NIFA to develop outreach and training tools and communicate with those who may apply to BFRDP in future years. Propose outcome measures and targets for each objective.

3) Approach: Describe the proposed methods and activities for achieving the proposed objectives. Provide evidence that the proposed methods are appropriate to the needs of the audience. Describe plans for regular, participatory evaluation to ensure that the project is achieving its objectives and performance targets.

4) Deliverables: Summarize a set of proposed written products, tools, webinars, in-person presentations, and other deliverables to the target audience and to NIFA. Include a timeline with milestones and deliverables.

The following table summarizes the sections of the Project Narrative and related evaluation criteria most relevant to each section for EET-Evaluation and EET-Assistance applications:

Narrative Section	Suggested # Pages	Related Evaluation Criteria (see Part V, B. of this RFA)
Project Team	2-3 of 16	Expertise and track record of the applicants
Objectives	2-3 of 16	Technical merit
Approach	4-8 of 16	Technical merit
Deliverables	2-4 of 16	Technical merit

c. Field 9. Bibliography & References Cited – PDF attachment. No page limit. if any references were cited in the Narrative, include their citations in this attachment. Title the attachment "Bibliography and References" in the document header and save the file as 'Bibliography'.

d. Field 12. Other Attachments

1) **Commitment Letters – PDF attachment(s). No page limit.** Letters of commitment from all partners (signed by the AR of the partnering organization) stating that the partners involved have agreed to their stated roles in the project and have agreed to abide by the **Management Plan.** Letters from other organizations or people whose participation is important to the success of the project, committing those collaborators to specific roles, are also encouraged. Title the attachment(s) as 'Letter of Commitment – Organization Name' in the document header and save file as 'LetterofCommitment_OrganizationName'. Other more general letters of support (i.e., from those who are not committing to a specific role in the project) are not needed and should not be included. See Part VIII.F for an example of a commitment letter. If an organization is also providing a pledge of matching support (see part IV, B, 6 of this RFA), the information required in the letter of commitment may be added to the pledge agreement in one combined letter, as long as the required elements of both the commitment letter and the pledge agreement are included.

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 Federal and Non-Federal**

This form (accompanied by the required Budget Narrative attachment) contains the itemized listing and description of your project's budget. Complete all applicable fields for each 12-month period. Include the travel costs for the Project Director and any other key staff member(s) to attend the annual Project Director meeting beginning in the first year of funding and during each year of the project. 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: As stated in Part III, B of this RFA, all applicants are required to provide from non-Federal sources (unless otherwise specified by law) cash or in-kind contributions in an amount at least equal to twenty-five percent (25%) of the Federal funds requested. All matching contributions must be specifically for the project objectives as proposed.

The Budget Narrative should include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Written verification means:

(a) For any third party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each donation, signed by the authorized representatives of the donor organization (and the applicant organization ONLY if provided after submission of the application), must include: (1) The donor's name, address, and telephone number; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project; (4) the dollar amount of the cash donation (the budget narrative must describe how the cash donation will be used); (5) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period; and (6) whether the applicant can designate cash as the applicant deems necessary or the cash contribution has been designated to a particular budget item.

(b) For any third party in-kind contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each contribution, signed by the authorized representatives of the donor organization (and the applicant organization ONLY if provided after submission of the application), must include: (1) The donor's name, address, and telephone number; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project; (4) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the third party in-kind contribution and a description of how the fair market value was determined; and (5) a statement that the donor will make the contribution during the grant period.

Summarize on a separate page the sources and amount of all matching support from outside the applicant institution and place that information in the proposal as part of the Budget Narrative. You must place all pledge agreements in the proposal immediately following the summary of matching support.

Establish the value of applicant contributions in accordance with applicable cost principles. Refer to 2 CFR Part 200, "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards", for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

7. **R & R Budget Subaward Federal and Non-Federal Attachment(s) Form**

If a formal subcontract agreement is needed with another organization(s), annual and cumulative budgets and a budget justification will be required for each subcontract agreement. Refer to Part V, 8. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions on completing this form.

8. **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 and the program code according to the chart below. Note that accurate entry of the program code is very important for proper and timely processing of an application.

Proposal Type	Program Code Name	Program Code
Standard Grant	Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Standard	BFRDA
Educational Enhancement Team	Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Enhancement	BFRDB

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.

While the checklist should be used to check the application for completeness, the application should be checked for the following required item(s). This is not an exhaustive list of required items; it only serves to highlight items that are critical to BFRDP review. **Applications that fail to include these items will not be accepted for review.** The list includes:
- Summary/Abstract
- Narrative with all required sections
    a) for Standard Grant and EET-Other applications: Introduction; Objectives and Outcomes; Approach; Personnel and Resources; Plan for Outcome Based Reporting; Management and Collaboration Plan
    b) for EET-Evaluation and EET-Assistance: Project Team; Objectives; Approach; and Deliverables
- Budget for each 12-month period
- Budget Narrative

In addition, **applications will not be accepted for review if they do any of the following**:
- Exceed the maximum pages allowed for the Project Narrative, or attach any extra narrative or graphic materials that effectively exceed the Project Narrative page limit
- Exceed the maximum federal budget request for the type of application proposed
- Propose objectives or approach that do not fit the purpose and scope of BFRDP.

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 **5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on January 21, 2016.** 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

Section 7132 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 amended the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3310(a)), limiting indirect costs for grants to 22 percent (22%) of the total Federal funds provided under each award. However, Section 7409 of the Agriculture Act of 2014 limits indirect costs for Standard Grants to 10 percent (10%) of the total Federal funds provided under each Standard Grant award.

Therefore, when preparing budgets, applicants should limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to 10 percent (10%) of the total funds requested for a Standard Grant proposal. Proposals for Educational Enhancement Teams (EETs) may request the lesser of their institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 22 percent (22%) of total Federal funds awarded.

Claiming of indirect costs. The maximum allowed indirect costs may be claimed under the Federal portion of the award budget or, alternatively, the maximum allowed indirect costs may be claimed as a matching contribution (if no indirect costs are requested on the Federal portion of the budget). However, the maximum allowed indirect costs may not be claimed on both the Federal portion of the budget for the award and as a matching

contribution, unless the total claimed on both the Federal portion of the budget for the award and as a matching contribution does not exceed the maximum allowed indirect costs. An awardee may split the allocation between the Federal and non-Federal portions of the budget only if the total percentage of indirect costs under the project does not exceed the maximum allowed indirect costs. For example, for a standard grant, indirect costs are capped at 10 percent (10%), so the grantee may request 5 percent (5%) of the indirect costs on both the Federal portion of the budget for the award and as a matching contribution. Or, the grantee may request any other, similar percentage combination that, when combined, does not exceed the maximum indirect cost rate for the type of grant requested.

Applicants may request a 10% de minimis indirect cost rate, subject to statutory limitations.

Applicants who cannot obtain a negotiated rate from their cognizant agency, or who do not wish to go through the negotiation process, may request a 10% de minimis rate if eligible. Applicants who have never received a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) are eligible to request a 10% de minimis indirect cost rate.

The 10% de minimis rate should be applied to Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC). MTDC means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first $25,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs and the portion of each subaward in excess of $25,000. Violation of cost accounting principles is not permitted when charging costs to awards. Rather, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs. If the cognizant agency issues a negotiated rate subsequent to award, the negotiated rate may not be retroactively applied.

An award made under this program may not be used for planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of a building or facility. Program funds may not be used to buy land, match Individual Development Account funds, or purchase equipment for starting farm or ranch businesses. Program funds may not be used for research activities. Program funds may only be used for education, training, outreach and mentoring of beginning farmers and ranchers.

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 BFRDP 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. BFRDP also checks for duplication or overlap in the workplans of recommended proposals and with previously-funded projects, to ensure geographical diversity to the extent practicable (7 U.S.C. § 3319f(6)).

BFRDP 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:

For Standard Grants and EET-Other applications:

- **Partnerships and Collaborations** – To what extent does the application represent a substantial and effective collaborative network or partnership of public and/or private entities? Does the proposal include the necessary partners to meet the needs of the audience, and does it make appropriate use of the expertise and other strengths of each of the partners? Priority will be given to partnerships and collaborations that are led by or include NGOs, CBOs or SAEOs with expertise in new agricultural producer training and outreach. Only applications with a minimum of 25 percent (25%) of the Federal budget

allocated to these partner organizations (i.e., NGOs, CBOs and SAEOs) will be given this priority. In addition, these partner organizations must have been involved and played an important role in the project design and development. Projects must also employ an equitable and appropriate decision-making and oversight process that includes all partners to be given this priority.

- **Relevancy –** Explanation and documentation that the project is directed toward specific topic areas identified in Part I, B in this RFA. These topics are designed to yield improvements in and sustainability of beginning farmers and ranchers as defined in the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Pub. L. 113-79). In addition, the relevancy can be evaluated by the description of the necessity of the project based on the needs identified for the target audience, the inclusion of beginning farmers and ranchers in the conceptualization and development of project activities, and the demonstrated awareness of previous and alternative training, outreach, mentoring and education programs that address these needs.

- **Technical merit** – will be evaluated on the basis of:

  (a) Clarity and delineation of objectives, activities and outcomes;
  (b) Conceptual adequacy of the proposed activities to meet the needs of the targeted audience including suitability and feasibility of the approach (e.g., social, economic and cultural relevance, distance based versus face-to-face);
  (c) Innovation and originality of objectives and activities;
  (d) Expected performance targets, outcomes and impacts as indicated in the Plan for Outcome Based Reporting;
  (e) Adaptability to other locations, communities, and/or agricultural products and technologies;
  (f) Sustainability of the project partnerships and collaborations beyond the life of the grant, or a compelling explanation of how the project impact will be lasting if the collaboration itself is not sustained; and
  (g) Reasonableness of the budget for planned activities. (While the size of the budget is not an evaluation criterion, the reviewers will be asked to comment whether it matches logically with the program described in the narrative.)
  (h) **For Educational Enhancement Team applicants, this includes**: Adequacy of dissemination plans for evaluation reports, including number and description of activities planned for disseminating evaluation reports and new curricula.

- **Achievability –** Probability of success of the project is appropriate given the level of originality, target audience and budget for each activity. Importance will be given to the description of potential pitfalls and how they will be addressed. There should be sufficient time commitment of project directors and co-directors for project activities including management. The plans for management and collaborative arrangements of the proposed project should be adequate, e.g., time allocated for systematic attainment of objectives; clearly defined project roles and relationships among the key participants and collaborators; plan for decision-making; and plan for administration of the proposed project and its maintenance, partnerships, and collaborative efforts.

- **Expertise and track record of the applicants** – Importance will be given to the demonstration of expertise through successful multi-year experience in education, outreach, mentoring and/or technical assistance for beginning farmers and ranchers. The successful multi-year experience can be demonstrated by the number of training, assistance, or education activities previously carried out; number of participants or graduates of the program, success rate and their current occupation; the number of years a program or activity has been offered. Also important are qualifications of applicant (individual or team) to conduct the proposed project activities and in evaluating project outcomes; and demonstrable institutional experience and competence in serving the needs of the identified target audience.

- **Adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation.** Includes the expertise of consultants and collaborators, sufficiency of the educational facilities and equipment for the proposed education and outreach methods.

- **Adequacy of plans for the participatory evaluation process, outcome-based reporting, and the communication of findings and results beyond the immediate target audience.** Includes number and expertise of evaluation team members who have agreed to serve or who have been identified.

Additional evaluation criteria for Resubmitted Applications:

- **Responsiveness to previous comments and recommendations by reviewers.** Includes the response to the previous review panel summary.

Additional evaluation criteria for New and/or Resubmitted Applications from Project Directors (PDs) and Co-PDs of prior BFRDP projects:

- **Performance During the Previous BFRDP grant(s).** As indicated in the annual and/or final report(s) submitted to the Agency and listed in the summary and narrative of the application. Includes achievement of outcomes and contributions of curriculum to the BFRDP Clearinghouse described in the report(s).

- **Adequacy of Plans for Continuous Improvement.** Includes what was learned from the past project(s), what can be improved upon, and how those lessons and improvements are being incorporated into this application to make the ongoing project more effective and successful at meeting program goals.

For EET-Evaluation and EET-Assistance applications:

- **Expertise and track record of the applicants –** including credentials and experience relevant to the topic (i.e., evaluation or applicant assistance) and knowledge and experience related to beginning farmer education, mentoring and technical assistance.

- **Technical merit** – including clarity and appropriateness of the proposed objectives, activities, outcomes and deliverables, and reasonableness of budget. (While the size of the budget is not an evaluation criterion, the reviewers will be asked to comment whether it matches logically with the program described in the narrative.)

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 for further information about conflicts of interest and confidentiality as related to the peer review process.

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. Each application that is not selected for funding, including those that are withdrawn, will be retained by NIFA on behalf of BFRDP for a period of three (3) 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 may include, but are not limited to, the ones listed on the NIFA web page - http://nifa.usda.gov/federal-regulations.

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 is available at http://nifa.usda.gov/policy-guide.

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

The output and reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions (see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html for information about NIFA award terms). If there are any program or award-specific award terms, those, if any, will be identified in the award. For BFRDP, this will include contributing information to the BFRDP clearinghouse at FarmAnswers.org, including project results and entries in the Library.

If a project is funded, beginning in the first year of funding, the Project Director and any other key staff member(s) will be required to attend annual project director meetings. Reasonable travel expenses should be included as part of the project budget.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACTS

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Programmatic Contacts – for questions about scope, program types, narrative contents, and evaluation criteria:

> **Jill Auburn**
> **Title:** National Program Leader
> **Unit:** Division of Agricultural Systems
> **Location:** 3430 Waterfront Centre
> Full Address and Directions
> **Phone:** (202) 720 - 2635
> **Fax:** (202) – 401 - 6070
> **Email:** jauburn@nifa.usda.gov Or

> **Denis Ebodaghe**
> **Title:** National Program Leader
> **Unit:** Division of Agricultural Systems
> **Location:** 3466 Waterfront Centre
> Full Address and Directions
> **Phone:** (202) 401 - 4385
> **Fax:** (202) –401 - 1782
> **Email:** debodaghe@nifa.usda.gov

Administrative/Business Contacts – for questions about budgets, matching, and pledge agreement letters:

> **Adriene Woodin**
> **Title:** Branch Chief **Unit:** Awards Management Division
> **Location:** 2182 Waterfront Centre
> Full Address and Directions
> **Phone:** (202) 401 - 4320
> **Fax:** (202) 401 - 6271
> **Email:** awoodin@nifa.usda.gov Or

> **Susan Bowman**
> **Title:** Branch Chief, **Unit:** Awards Management Division
> **Location:** 2240 Waterfront Centre
> Full Address and Directions
> **Phone:** (202) 401 - 4324
> **Fax:** (202) 401 - 6271
> **Email:** sbowman@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. <u>Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility</u>

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. <u>Changes in Project Plans</u>

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 2 CFR part 415, subpart C , 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 Part 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Financial Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions](), for applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.

In addition, the following definitions apply:

Beginning Farmer: a farmer, rancher, or operator of non-industrial private forestland who is in the first ten years of operation, or a person intending or aspiring to begin such an operation.

Collaborator: a person or an organization that cooperates with the applicant in the conduct of the project but is not immediately connected to the management of the project.

Community Based Organizations (CBOs): private, non-profit organizations that are representative of a community or a significant segment of a community and that provide services to that local community.

Education: an act or process that delivers knowledge and informal educational programs to beginning farmers and ranchers, enabling them to make practical decisions.

Limited resource farmer or rancher: an operator of a farm or ranch that has both low levels of farm sales and low household income. See the USDA-ERS *Family Farm Report, 2010 Edition* for more information.

Military Veteran: a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released from the service under conditions other than dishonorable.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs): legally constituted, non-governmental organizations created by natural or legal persons with no participation or representation of any government and serving one or more communities.

Partnership: a relationship involving close cooperation between parties having specified and joint rights and responsibilities in the management of the project.

Performance target: a specific, verifiable change in people's actions or conditions. It defines how many people will change and what degree of change constitutes success.

Producer: an individual, family, or other entity in the U.S. engaged in the business of agriculture, crop, livestock, forestry, and range production, management and marketing.

Qualified Public and Private Entities: public or private groups, organizations, or institutions that have established and demonstrated capacities to conduct projects that accomplish the purposes of the program as designated in these guidelines.

Regions:
(1) The Northeast region consists of the 12 Northeast States and the District of Columbia (Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and West Virginia);

(2) The Southern Region consists of 13 States plus Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands (Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, and Oklahoma);

(3) The North Central Region consists of 12 States (Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota); and

(4) The Western Region consists of 12 States and the American Territories in the Pacific (Hawaii, Alaska, Washington State, Oregon, California, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, and American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and Micronesia).

School-based agricultural educational organizations (SAEOs): organizations that deliver career and/or technical education in agriculture, which may include classroom and/or experiential learning, for example, FFA (formerly known as the Future Farmers of America), National Young Farmer Educational Organization, or other similar organizations.

Socially disadvantaged beginning farmer or rancher: a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group (i.e., a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities) (7 U.S.C. 2003(e)).

Veteran farmer or rancher: a farmer or rancher who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released from the service under conditions other than dishonorable. (See 7 U.S.C. 2279(e) for further details.)

F. Materials Available on the Internet

BFRDP program information will be made available on the NIFA web site at
http://nifa.usda.gov/program/beginning-farmer-and-rancher-development-program
The following are among the materials available on the web page:
1. BFRDP Grant Applicant Webinar (recordings of past webinars and links to future)
2. BFRDP Educational Enhancement Projects
3. BFRDP Stakeholder Input Received
4. BFRDP Checklist for Applications
5. BFRDP Q&A – 2016 RFA
6. BFRDP Summary of Panel Member Duties
7. Best practices for mentoring farmers and ranchers
8. Best practices for mentoring disadvantaged farmers and ranchers
9. Abstracts of previously funded projects (via the link to BFRDP under Related Funding Opportunities)
10. Example of commitment letter and pledge agreement letter for BFRDP application