The following details Part V of the Education and Workforce Development Request for Applications

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

B. Evaluation Criteria

Projects supported under the AFRI program shall be designed, among other things, to accomplish one or more of the purposes of agriculture research, education, and extension, subject to the varying conditions and needs of States. Therefore, in carrying out its review, the peer review panel will take into account the following factors.

A reviewer’s written evaluation entails two levels of assessment. First, the reviewer summarizes how well the application addressed each evaluation criterion. After the application has been assessed for strengths and weaknesses of each criterion, the reviewer then evaluates the overall likelihood that the project will have significant outcome and impact. An application does not need to be equally meritorious in all criteria to be judged likely to have major impact on U.S. food and agriculture. Standard grant applications are evaluated primarily for scientific merit, with evaluation of the project team qualifications, adequacy of facilities and project management to determine if the necessary qualifications, expertise and facilities are available to complete the project as proposed.

1. Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowship Applications

   a. Merit of the Application for Research, Education, and/or Extension

      1. Novelty, multidisciplinary innovation, uniqueness, originality, and advancing current knowledge;
      2. Conceptual adequacy of the research, education, and/or extension, as applicable;
      3. Project objectives and outcomes are clearly described and measurable, adequate, and appropriate;
      4. Proposed approach, procedures, or methodologies and data management plan are appropriate, clearly described, and feasible;
      5. The predoctoral or postdoctoral fellow has documented achievement of high educational quality and excellence (e.g., GPA, list of scholarly activities, honors, professional society membership, etc.)
      6. Appropriate educational opportunities and curriculum plan for proposed area of study.
      7. Novelty and innovation in the training and career development plans supports the career trajectory of the Fellows and provides sufficient time to obtain teaching credentials or competencies


Updated June 26, 2018
b. **Qualifications of Project Personnel, Adequacy of Facilities, and Project Management**

1. Roles of the Fellow(s), mentor(s), and other key personnel are clearly defined;
2. Assessment of predoctoral or postdoctoral applicants’ critical thinking and analytical skills based on organization and details provided in the application; ability to develop into a leader in the food and agricultural sciences; level of maturity of thought, alignment between career goals and objectives and appropriate activities and opportunities presented to achieve those goals; documented achievement of high educational quality and excellence (e.g., GPA, program of study, publications, presentations, awards); appropriate educational opportunities, mentoring, and curriculum plan for proposed area of study;
3. Fellow(s), along with mentor(s) and other key personnel, have sufficient preparation/expertise to ensure successful completion of the proposed project, and where appropriate, partnerships with other relevant disciplines and institutions are established;
4. Evidence provided that the proposed work is original and developed by the applicant in consultation with other key personnel;
5. Evidence that the identified institution has capacity and competence in the proposed area of work and support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation are sufficient;
6. A clear plan is articulated for project management, including time allocated for attainment of objectives, responsibilities for deliverables, and delivery of products;
7. Appropriate mentor engagement and training in research, education, and/or extension is described.

c. **Project Relevance**

1. Documentation that the proposed research, education, and/or extension activity is directed toward specific Program Area Priorities identified in this RFA;
2. Plan and methods for evaluating success of project activities and documenting potential impact against measurable short and mid-term outcomes are suitable and feasible;
3. Science-based knowledge, skills, and capabilities gained are related to the NIFA foundational programs and challenge areas and will enhance and sustain human capital beyond the life of the project; and
4. Potential of the proposed project and training in serving as a good foundation for the applicant predoctoral or postdoctoral fellow to complete PhD degrees or provide the requisite, individualized and mentored experiences that will develop his/her research skills that help them become independent and productive scientists.

*Updated June 26, 2018*
2. Research and Extension Experiential Learning for Undergraduates Applications

   a. Scientific Merit of the Application for Research, Education, and/or Extension
      1. Novelty, multidisciplinary innovation, uniqueness, originality, and advancing current knowledge/practice in student learning;
      2. Project objectives and outcomes are clearly described and measurable, adequate, and appropriate;
      3. Proposed approach, procedures, or methodologies and data management plan are appropriate, clearly described, and feasible;
      4. The following elements must be described: institutional long-range goals, identification of a problem or opportunity to be addressed, justification for the project, innovation, advancing educational equity, student recruitment plan, multidisciplinary and/or problem-based focus, and potential for adoption by other institutions/organizations.

   b. Qualifications of Project Personnel, Adequacy of Facilities, and Project Management
      1. Roles of key personnel and mentors are clearly defined;
      2. Key personnel, have sufficient preparation/expertise to ensure successful completion of the proposed project, and where appropriate, Partnerships with other organizations, industry, and institutions are established with letters of support;
      3. Evidence provided that the proposed work is original and developed by the applicant in consultation with other key personnel;
      4. Evidence that the identified institution has capacity and competence in the proposed area of work and support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation are sufficient;
      5. A clear plan is articulated for project management, including time allocated for attainment of objectives, responsibilities for deliverables, and delivery of products;

   c. Project Relevance
      1. Documentation that the proposed research, education, and/or extension activity is directed toward specific Program Area Priorities identified in this RFA;
      2. Plan and methods for evaluating success of project activities and documenting potential impact against measurable short and mid-term outcomes are suitable and feasible;
      3. Project will enhance and sustain human capital beyond the life of the grant;
      4. Any perceived pitfalls and alternative strategies or approaches are addressed.
3. Professional Development for Secondary School Teachers and Educational Professionals (PD-STEP)

a. Pedagogical Merit of the Application
   1. Novelty, multidisciplinary innovation, uniqueness, originality, and advancing current knowledge/practice in K-14 FANH education;
   2. Project objectives and outcomes are clearly described and measurable, adequate, and appropriate;
   3. Proposed approach, procedures, or methodologies and data management plan are appropriate, clearly described, and feasible;
   4. The following elements must be described: institutional long-range goals, identification of a problem or opportunity to be addressed, justification for the project, innovation, advancing educational equity, multidisciplinary and/or problem-based focus, and potential for adoption by other institutions/organizations.

b. Qualifications of Project Personnel, Adequacy of Facilities, and Project Management
   1. Roles of key personnel and mentors (if applicable) are clearly defined;
   2. Key personnel, have sufficient preparation/expertise to ensure successful completion of the proposed project, and where appropriate, partnerships with other organizations, industry, and institutions are established with letter of support;
   3. Evidence provided that the proposed work is original and developed by the applicant in consultation with other key personnel;
   4. Evidence that the identified institution has capacity and competence in the proposed area of work and support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation are sufficient;
   5. A clear plan is articulated for project management, including time allocated for attainment of objectives, responsibilities for deliverables, and delivery of products;
   6. Appropriate participant engagement and training in research, education, and/or extension is described.

c. Project Relevance
   1. Documentation that the proposed research, education, and/or extension activity is directed toward specific Program Area Priorities identified in this RFA;
   2. Methods for evaluating success of project activities and documenting potential impact against measurable short and mid-term outcomes are suitable and feasible;
   3. Project will enhance and sustain human capital beyond the life of the grant.
   4. Any perceived pitfalls and alternative strategies or approaches are addressed.