



United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food
and Agriculture

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FACT SHEET

CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE IMPLEMENTATION FOR NIFA COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAMS

THE AGRICULTURAL ACT OF 2014 requires the National Institute of Food and Agriculture to identify centers of excellence for food and agricultural research, education, and extension beginning in fiscal year 2015. Applicants who meet the requirements of competitive grant funding opportunities are eligible to apply for center of excellence consideration as part of their grant application. If it is determined that the application meets centers of excellence criteria, the application receives priority consideration during the peer review process.

ELIGIBILITY

To be considered, one or more of the following entities has to provide financial or in-kind support to a proposed center as described in the grant application:

- State agricultural experiment stations
- Colleges and universities
- University research foundations
- Other research institutions and organizations
- Federal agencies
- National laboratories
- Private organizations, foundations, or corporations
- Individuals
- A group consisting of two or more of the entities described above.

The following programs will be offering centers of excellence opportunities in fiscal year 2015:

- Agriculture and Food Research Initiative— Foundational Program and Challenge Areas
- Aquaculture Research
- Biomass Research and Development Initiative
- Biotechnology Risk Assessment Research Grants Program
- Children, Youth, and Families at Risk
- Crop Protection/Pest Management
- Farm Business Management and Benchmarking
- Farm Safety and Youth Farm Safety Education and Certification
- Methyl Bromide Transition
- Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative
- Organic Transition Program
- Rural Health and Safety Program
- Specialty Crop Research Initiative

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

In fiscal year 2015, each request for application describes the type of grant application and criteria applicants must meet to be considered a center of excellence. Applications must justify the following as it relates to the implementation of the proposed research and/or extension activities:

- The ability of a center of excellence to ensure coordination and cost effectiveness by reducing unnecessarily duplicative efforts regarding research, education, and extension.
- The ability of a center of excellence to leverage available resources by using public-private partnerships among agricultural industry groups, institutions of higher education, and the federal government, in addition to any applicable matching requirements. Resources leveraged should be commensurate with the size of the award.
- The planned scope and capability of a center of excellence to implement teaching initiatives to increase awareness and effectively disseminate solutions to target audiences through extension activities.
- The ability or capacity of a center of excellence to increase economic returns to rural communities by identifying, attracting, and directing funds to high-priority agricultural issues.

Though it is not a requirement, and if practicable, centers of excellence applicants should describe proposed efforts to improve teaching capacity and infrastructure at colleges and universities, including land-grant colleges and universities, certified non-land-grant colleges of agriculture, cooperating forestry schools, and schools of veterinary medicine.

This brief justification statement is to be included as part of and within the page limits of their project narratives.

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PRIORITY CONSIDERATION

After all eligible applicants have been competitively peer-reviewed and ranked in accordance with the program's standard evaluation criteria, priority in funding will be provided to applications determined to have met the criteria for centers of excellence. Applications that rank as highly meritorious and request consideration as centers of excellence will be further evaluated by peer panels to determine whether they have met the support criteria described above.

In instances where they are found to be equally meritorious with applications that are not determined to be centers of excellence, selection for funding will be based on peer review and weighed in favor of applicants meeting centers of excellence criteria. NIFA will effectively use the centers of excellence prioritization to ensure these most critical research, education, and extension initiatives are being supported.

Applicants that rank as highly meritorious but who did not request consideration as a center of excellence, or who are not deemed to have met the criteria, may still receive funding.

The Applicant's Notice of Award will reflect that, for that particular grant program, the applicant meets all centers of excellence criteria. These entities will maintain that distinction for the duration of their award or as identified in the terms and conditions of that award.

USEFUL LINKS

CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE INFORMATION

nifa.usda.gov/centers-excellence

CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE WEBINARS

nifa.usda.gov/resource/centers-excellence-webinars

CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE FAQs

nifa.usda.gov/resource/centers-excellence-frequently-asked-questions

FARM BILL INFORMATION

nifa.usda.gov/farm-bill