

# FY 2016 Water for Agriculture Challenge Area FAQ's

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## Application and Submission Information

1. What is the deadline for submitting a full application?
  - August 4, 2016 (5 p.m., ET)
2. Is a Letter of Intent (LOI) required to submit a full application?
  - No. An LOI is not required this year for submission of a full application.
3. What is the deadline to submit a Letter of Intent?
  - A LOI is not required for this RFA.
4. What is the page limit for a Letter of Intent?
  - LOI is not required for this RFA.
5. What is the page limit for project proposal narratives?
  - Standard, New Investigator, Coordinated Agricultural Project (CAP), Conference, Strengthening Standard, Strengthening CAP and strengthening Conference Grant proposal narratives are limited to 18 pages with 12- point font; Sabbatical, Equipment, and Seed Grants proposal narratives are limited to 7 pages with 12-point font.
6. What are the eligibility requirements for integrated projects?
  - Eligible applicants for integrated projects include: Colleges and universities, 1994 land-grant institutions (tribal colleges), and Hispanic-serving agricultural colleges and universities.
7. What are the eligibility requirements for FASE projects?
  - FASE Grants have additional eligibility requirements; please see Part II, D of the RFA for details.
8. Who should I contact if I have question about my application?
  - For questions regarding the submission of your application please contact Dewell Paez at [dpaez@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:dpaez@nifa.usda.gov) or 202-401-4141. For question regarding your research or integrated ideas please contact Jim Dobrowolski at [jdobrowolski@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:jdobrowolski@nifa.usda.gov) or 202-401-5016.
9. How will my application be evaluated?
  - 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 scientific peer review process technically evaluates applications that meet these requirements, using the review panel.
10. How do I apply to the program?
  - Please go to <http://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/agriculture-and-food-research-initiative-water-agriculture-challenge-area> for more information on how to apply.
11. What is the deadline for submitting my application?
  - Application must be received by Grants.gov by 5:00pm EST on August 4, 2016. Application received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

12. What happens if my application is late?

- Late applications are rejected unless the applicant can provide documentation to establish an extenuating circumstance. A rejection from Grants.gov is not considered an extenuating circumstance.

13. Where can I obtain more information about the Water for Agriculture Program?

- For complete information please go to: <http://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/agriculture-and-food-research-initiative-water-agriculture-challenge-area>

### **Award Information and Administration**

1. What is the Water for Agriculture Challenge Area?

- The Water for Agriculture Challenge Area is NIFA's main water program to help address critical water problems such as drought, excess soil moisture, flooding, quality changes and others in rural and agricultural watersheds across the United States. Funding will be used to develop management practices, technologies, and tools for farmers, ranchers, forest owners and managers, public decision makers, public and private managers, and citizens to improve water resource quantity and quality. NIFA's approach will link social, economic, and behavioral sciences with traditional biophysical sciences and engineering to address regional-scale issues with shared hydrological processes and meteorological and basin characteristics.

2. What is the focus of the program?

- The program focuses on developing solutions for water management that link food, water, climate, energy, and environmental issues. In FY2016, the RFA continues its focus on finding solutions for conserving higher quality water, human health and nontraditional water, and understanding the human behavior and its influence on decision making for agricultural water use.

3. What Program Area Priorities are available this year?

- We have three program area priorities:
  1. Water Availability for Diverse Agricultural Uses: The Right Water for the Right Place and Time (A8101)
  2. Understanding Decisions and Behaviors Connected with Agriculture and Post-harvest Processing Industry Water Use (A8102)
  3. Understanding the Human Health Impacts to Exposure from Nontraditional Water Used in Agriculture (A8103)

4. What is the funding available for this year?

- In FY 2016 approximately \$10.7million will be made available in support of new awards. Funding of projects beyond FY 2016 is contingent upon the availability of funds, and the best interests of the US government. Funding in FY 2016 does not obligate NIFA to any future-year commitments.

5. How many awards will be made in FY2016?

- Approximately 9-12 awards will be made in FY2016.

6. What project types are available?
  - Both standard research-only and standard integrated projects. Standard integrated projects must include at least two of the three functions: research, education, and extension. Additional information on integrated projects is available at: <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/integrated/integrated.html>.
7. What grant types are available? The following grant types are available.
  - Coordinated Agricultural Projects (CAP)
  - Standard Grants
  - Conference Grants
  - Food and Agricultural Science Enhancement Grants (FASE) (NIFA's Strengthening Awards: New Investigator, Sabbatical, Equipment, Seed, CAP, and Conference)
8. What is an integrated project?
  - Integrated projects include two of the three functions of agriculture knowledge (i.e., research, education, extension). The functions should be interdependent and necessary for the success of the project, and no more than two-thirds of the project's budget may focus on a single component. Additional information on integrated programs, including tips for writing integrated project applications, is available at [www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/integrated/integrated.html](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/integrated/integrated.html).
9. What is a CAP project?
  - A Coordinated Agricultural Project (CAP) supports large-scale, multi-million dollar integrated projects that promote collaboration, open communication, and the exchange of information; reduce duplication of effort; and coordinate activities among individuals, institutions, states, and regions.
10. What is a FASE project?
  - Food and Agricultural Science Enhancement (FASE) grants help institutions develop competitive projects and attract new scientists and educators to careers in high-priority areas of national need in agriculture, food, and environmental sciences.
11. What is a Community-Engaged Research Framework (CEnRF)? (associated with Program Area Priority 3)
  - Community-Engaged Research (CEnR) is a framework or orientation for conducting research that supports the premise that people ought to be involved in the decisions, as well as the cultivation of information those decisions are guided by, that affect their lives. CEnR also acknowledges that communities harbor a wealth of information about their own experiences and perspectives that may be used to positively inform and shape research endeavors. It encourages recognition of the strengths of the community institutions and individual members. CEnR builds upon those strengths to help inform the research project and produce the results that may benefit both the academic or institutional researchers (henceforth referred to as just "researchers") and community partners (e.g. community-based organizations). CEnR may incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and can be applied to a range of topics including environmental science and engineering, public health, and social sciences. CEnR is not a uniform approach, but can occur along a continuum in a variety of forms, from outreach, through more shared

leadership/participatory research approaches (e.g. community-based participatory research) to community-driven/community-led research.

CEnR continuum includes:

#### *Outreach*

Outreach describes one-way flows of information from researchers to the community. It provides the community with information on the status of the research, findings or interpretation of findings such as communication of risk and risk modification strategies. There is very little to no input into the research design or methods by the community.

#### *Consultation*

Consultation describes the process of obtaining the feedback or advice from the community to help inform the research project conducted by the researchers. The community input is primarily in the form of consultation, whereby the bulk of the design and methods are determined by the researchers. Community involvement typically occurs after researchers predetermine issues. Community's input is limited.

#### *Involvement*

Involvement describes more community input and bidirectional communication between the academic researchers and community partners. Communities may be able to provide input into the design, aims, methods, or research questions before these have been predetermined. Both parties cooperate with each other in a more mutual partnership.

#### *Shared leadership/participatory*

Shared leadership/participatory describes equal shared power, decision-making abilities and ownership of the research project. This is the ideal community-based participatory research (CBPR) partnership. Community partners in CBPR typically have equal footing with academic researchers in determining the direction of the project, communicating finding and ownership of the data and information. These projects may also develop research aims that better reflect local concerns and may be more applicable to translating the research findings into actions. CBPR projects may also enable far greater flexibility in the choice of topics to be investigated.

#### *Community-driven*

Community-driven describes strong community-led research projects where communities take the lead and initiative in directing the research project. The final decision-making ability lies with the community. They may consult with external academic partners to assist with technical questions.

*Community* is defined as a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action within similar geographical locations or settings. Community is not only defined by a common geography; communities may also develop around a particular interest, issue, identity, or subject matter.

12. If I receive an award, what are some of my responsibilities?
  - If your project is funded you will be required to submit an annual progress report, a final technical report and will be required to attend annual investigator meetings.
13. If I receive an award, when can I expect to start?
  - At least 6 months after the submission deadline date for the program.

### International Partnership Information

1. How do I identify an international partner?
  - NIFA relies entirely on applicants to use their own networks to identify partners. Building on existing partnerships is often the best way to proceed. If you do not have an international partner, a good place to start is the international programs office on your campus or with colleagues who work internationally. Some of the international agreements that NIFA has entered into include additional means of identifying partners in other countries (see # 7 below).
2. Do international partnerships make my proposal more or less competitive?
  - International partnerships are just one dimension of a proposal, and are assessed as part of the entire proposal. However, merely including an international partnership, even those in which the foreign partner brings his/her own funding to the proposed work, does not make the proposal more or less competitive. NIFA uses a peer review process and the selection criteria described in the Request for Applications (RFA) to assess the merits of proposals. Any proposed international partnership should clearly address RFA goals.
3. What should I do if I want to make an application that includes an international partner?
  - Prior to the development of a full collaborative application with an international partner, we **strongly encourage** U.S. applicants to engage the RFA's point of contact to confirm that the topic meets NIFA's mission to support high priority issues relevant to agriculture, to clarify application procedures, and to receive further instructions for a joint application. For additional guidelines visit <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/globalengagement.cfm> under resources tab.
4. How do I plan a budget with an international partner?
  - Most international participants in NIFA research grants can receive funds from a sub-contract issued from the U.S award recipient's sponsored program management office. The roles and activities of the international collaborator should be clearly identified and integrated with the proposal objectives and described in the budget narrative. Funding modalities must be clear and, where needed, sub-contracts in place.
5. Is NIFA party to any current relevant international agreements of which I should be aware?
  - NIFA has entered into Memoranda of Understanding and other arrangements with several foreign governments and other entities. For further information on current agreements, please visit [Developing Global Partnerships](#)

6. How do I determine whether my proposal will benefit from global engagement?
  - As mentioned above, checking with your international programs office is a good first step. We also encourage applicants to check with the relevant NIFA point of contact, as indicated in the RFA, prior to developing a full application with a foreign partner.
  
7. Can I use NIFA support to travel internationally?
  - Yes, NIFA funds may be used to support foreign travel (the requested travel should clearly enhance achieving project goals).
  
8. Can I budget and provide funds to an institution/organization in another country?
  - Yes, funds may be distributed to most partner organizations/institutions in another country. The roles and activities of the international collaborator should be clearly identified and described in the budget narrative. If a foreign partner brings their own funding to the proposed program, this can be described in an annex to the proposal.