

NIFA National Program Leader (NPL) Specialist Webinar – April 30, 2020 at 2:00PM CT

1. Where can I find the vacancy announcement for the NIFA National Program Leader?

NIFA currently has one vacancy currently posted on [USAJobs](#), an interdisciplinary Biological/ Science Specialist at the GS 13-15 level. Those are the positions with the working title of National Program Leader. These are standing vacancies so feel free to apply anytime. The earlier you apply the earlier we will consider your application.

2. Is a doctoral degree required to apply for a National Program Leader position?

No, a doctoral degree is not a requirement to be able to apply for a National Program Leader position. Many of our NPLs do have doctorates in a variety of fields.

3. What are qualities of a successful National Program Leader?

There are a number of qualities that contribute to National Program Leaders' success. Successful National Program Leaders have expertise recognized by peers and stakeholders. They use their networks and relationships to identify opportunities within NIFA and work with other federal agencies to address national challenges. NPLs are great listeners and assimilators of relevant information that address national interests. Successful NPLs recognize continuous learning is fundamental to their public service and contribution.

4. What are some responsibilities of a National Program Leader?

Specific responsibilities of National Program Leaders vary by program area, but there are some common responsibilities that all share, such as:

- Providing national leadership and inter-agency coordination in assigned program areas;
- Reviewing and approving Plan of Work and Annual Report accomplishments for Land Grant Institutions and conducting site visits;
- Attending and participating in various conferences and workshops that relate to programs assigned, and promote NIFA programs and solicitations;
- Reviewing progress of awardees and utilizing program accomplishments and progress to make program adjustments and recommendations; and
- Conducting peer panel reviews for competitive grant programs from writing the program priority solicitation (Request For Applications) through initiating the funding process and subsequent post award progress follow-up with awardees.

5. Do National Program Leader positions require a lot of travel for work?

Occasional travel is required. The travel requirements for the National Program Leader varies by program needs. Common travel by the NPL includes attending conferences and workshops, conducting site visits, and conducting Project Directors meetings (meetings of awardees).

6. Who do National Program Leaders report to, and who does that person report to, etc.? Can you please elaborate on the organizational structure?

National Program Leaders report to Division Directors. If you go to our [organizational chart](#), you can see how Division Directors fit into the agency. NIFA is comprised of four Program Institutes and the Office of Grants and Financial Management, each headed by a Deputy Director, and other operational and support staff in the Office of the Director. Each Program Institute is comprised of Divisions. Divisions are the first level organizational structure for the Institute's area of focus and is comprised of programs of related theme. The Division Directors and the National Program Leaders, and other team members such as Program Specialist, Program Assistants and support staff are all part of the Institute and their respective Divisions.

7. What other roles in NIFA support National Program Leaders?

NIFA is a team-based organization. Most of the work responsibilities of NPLs require team support. For programmatic work, the NPL works primarily with the Program Specialist, Program Assistants, and the Administrative Officers of the Division and Institute. The NPL also works regularly with Policy Specialists in the release of Requests for Applications (RFA), Planning, Accountability, and Reporting staff, and Communications staff to communicate impacts.

8. Can National Program Leaders telework?

Yes, NIFA does offer telework for eligible positions (noted on each job announcement). For those eligible, telework is currently allowed with supervisor approval for up to two days per pay period (a pay period is 2 weeks). Also, alternative work schedules are a flexibility that may help an employee be productive and enjoy work-life balance.

9. What does the training/on-boarding process look like for a National Program Leader?

Training opportunities are broad for all staff at NIFA. In addition to mandatory training, there are both formal and informal professional career development opportunities. National Program Leaders are required to develop their own Individual Development Plan (IDP) which allow the NPL and Division Director to work together to support professional and career development. On-boarding to get acquainted specifically with NIFA programs, operations and processes is also required.

10. Is the National Program Leader position a supervisory position?

No. However, there are opportunities for National Program Leaders to move into supervisory positions.

11. Are there opportunities for National Program Leaders to publish peer-reviewed work?

While it is not a requirement or expectation of the position, some National Program Leaders publish peer-reviewed work; others do not

Don't see your question answered above from the NIFA National Program Leader Webinar? Please contact the HR Specialist listed on vacancy announcements in the USAJobs system.