

Equipment Grants Program Frequently Asked Questions

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Note: Relevant questions from the FY2020 Webinar conducted on May 21st, 2020 have been included in this document.

What is the definition of equipment?

The definition of equipment is the tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established by the non-Federal entity for financial statement purposes*, or \$5,000. [2 CFR 200.33](#) (link is external)

*Note: the capitalization threshold is NOT the amount set by your institution for internal equipment purchase approval.

What is the definition of shared-use equipment?

Shared-use equipment is a piece of equipment used by more than one research group, extension unit or multidisciplinary team to conduct fundamental or applied research. Shared-use equipment is also equipment used by multiple departments or multiple institutions for multidisciplinary activities for the benefit of a community of users engaged in research, training, and/or extension.

What is meant by well-integrated piece of equipment?

Well-integrated means that the ensemble of equipment that defines the instrument enables specific fundamental or applied research experiments in the food and agriculture sciences, including data science and data systems, programs to be undertaken. Separating or removing an element or component of such an integrated instrument would preclude that research or extension activity from occurring or succeeding.

What if equipment needs a data server, would this be included in the well-integrated piece of equipment?

Requests for computer equipment are allowed if they are part of a well-integrated instrument, meaning that without the data server, or other computer equipment, the specific fundamental or applied research experiment in the food and agriculture sciences would fail or could not take place.

We wish to acquire an integrated equipment system made up of 3 components purchased from 3 different vendors. Although each of these 3 components can be used individually, the novel application for our investigations requires all 3 to be integrated together. Would this be an example of a well-integrated piece of equipment?

Yes. If all three (3) components are necessary to conduct your specific fundamental or applied research experiment in the food and agriculture sciences this meets the definition of a well-integrated instrument.

Does equipment purchased under a grant belong to the Project Director (PD)?

Equipment grants are made to an organization on behalf of the PD. Title to equipment acquired with NIFA funds vests in the organization receiving financial assistance to acquire a piece of equipment, subject to certain restrictions described at 2 CFR Part 200.313 (see next question).

Can NIFA require the transfer of equipment from the grantee to another party?

Yes, NIFA has the right to require equipment (including title) purchased with grant funds to be transferred to the Federal Government or to an eligible third party named by NIFA, under the conditions specified in 2 CFR Part 200.313 (e3). Although it is seldom necessary to do so, this right may be invoked in cases where a grant is transferring to a new organization and the equipment purchased with grant funds is needed to continue the research at the new grantee organization.

Who may apply for equipment grants?

Eligibility is limited to the following institutions, as defined in 7 U.S.C. § 3103:

1. a College or University

a. In general.-The terms "college" and "university" mean an educational institution in any State which (i) admits as regular students only persons having a certificate of graduation from a school providing secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such a certificate, (ii) is legally authorized within such State to provide a program of education beyond secondary education, (iii) provides an educational program for which a bachelor's degree or any other higher degree is awarded, (iv) is a public or other nonprofit institution, and (v) is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association.

b. Inclusions. -The terms "college" and "university" include a research foundation maintained by a college or university described in subparagraph (A).

2. State Cooperative Institution including:

a. 1862 and 1890 land-grant institutions;

b. State-certified Schools of Forestry as stipulated in accordance with 16 U.S.C.582a et seq. (the McIntire-Stennis Act of 1962);

c. State Agricultural Experiment Stations located in the 50 States, the District of Columbia and the Insular Areas in accordance with 7 U.S. C. 361a et seq. (the Hatch Act of 1887);

d. "Cooperative extension services" meaning the organizations established at the land-grant colleges and universities under the Smith-Lever Act of May 8, 1914 (38 Stat. 372–374, as amended; 7 U.S.C. 341–349), and section 209(b) of the Act of October 26, 1974 (88 Stat. 1428, as amended; D.C. Code, sec. 31–1719(b));

- e. Accredited schools or colleges of veterinary medicine or State agricultural experiment stations that conduct animal health and disease research in accordance with section 1433(c) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977;
- f. Hispanic-serving institutions as defined in section 1101a of title 20; and
- g. Eligible institutions in insular areas including, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; Guam; American Samoa; the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; the Federated States of Micronesia; the Republic of the Marshall Islands; the Republic of Palau; and the Virgin Islands of the United States.

Is a letter of intent required?

No. A letter of intent is neither required nor accepted.

Would proposals seeking funding for non-food and non-agriculture related equipment be appropriate for this program?

No. The USDA, NIFA Equipment Grants Program (EGP) serves to increase access to shared-use special purpose equipment/instruments for fundamental and applied research for use in the food and agricultural sciences programs at institutions of higher education, including State Cooperative Extension Systems.

Is there a limit to the number of Equipment Grants Program proposals and organization is eligible to submit?

In response to a particular Request for Applications, an eligible organization may not submit more than three (3) applications to this program as a lead institution. As a result, eligible organizations may not receive more than three (3) awards in a fiscal year.

Are installation, alteration and renovation expenses allowable costs on an equipment grant?

No. The Equipment Grants Program does not support renovation of facilities.

Are costs of insuring equipment to be acquired allowable costs on an equipment grant?

No. The Equipment Grants Program does not support insurance.

Are operation and maintenance of facilities allowable costs on an equipment grant?

No. The Equipment Grants Program does not support the operation and maintenance of facilities. Proposals should demonstrate organizations' commitment to undertake the responsibility of maintaining and operating the equipment for the benefit of a community of users engaged in research, training, and/or extension.

Are equipment maintenance costs allowed on an equipment grant?

No. The Equipment Grants Program does not support equipment maintenance costs or equipment maintenance contract costs.

Are extended warranty costs for equipment allowed on an equipment grant?

No. The Equipment Grants Program does not support extended warranties for equipment purchased with EGP funds.

Are salary and benefits for an equipment technician allowable costs on an equipment grant?

No. The Equipment Grants Program does not support salaries, wages or benefits.

Are training expenses as part of a vendor contract allowable costs on an equipment grant?

No. The Equipment Grants Program does not support training equipment technicians to operate the equipment. Proposals should demonstrate organizations' commitment to undertake the responsibility of maintaining and operating the equipment for the benefit of a community of users engaged in research, training, and/or extension.

Are travel expenses for a company representative to perform installation, set-up and training allowable costs?

No. The Equipment Grants Program does not support installation costs. The EGP does not support travel of vendors, engineers or company representatives.

Are costs to conduct research, education or extension activities allowable costs on an equipment grant?

No. The Equipment Grants Program does not fund research, education or extension activities, including activities that use the equipment acquired with support from the program. However, descriptions of planned uses of acquired equipment may be included in the grant proposal, if desired, to illustrate the potential impacts of equipment acquisition.

Would proposals for the acquisition of equipment the needs to be designed and fabricated, instead of an off-the-shelf product be appropriate for this program?

No. The Equipment Grants Program does not support the design or fabrication of original equipment.

Does the Equipment Grants Program require matching?

No. Matching is not required. NIFA will not factor matching resources into the review process.

If an institution would like to acquire a piece of equipment that costs greater than \$500,000, but only \$500,000 would be requested in federal funds and the institution would provide matching for costs beyond the \$500,000 maximum, would the proposal be considered and reviewed?

Yes. A proposal requesting, but not exceeding the maximum \$500,000 budget meeting all application content and format requirements would be considered for peer review. NIFA will not factor matching resources into the review process.

May indirect costs be charged on equipment grants?

No. Indirect costs are not authorized for the Equipment Grants Program.

Does Grants.gov run error checks to alert applicants to missing components or application documents that are noncompliant?

No. It is the responsibility of the applicant to review the applications documents for page limit and PDF compliance before submission.

Are operation charges on equipment to be acquired allowable costs on an equipment grant?

No. The Equipment Grants Program does not support operation charges or charges to cover the costs of supplies, staff time, and/or other resources necessary to operate the equipment. However, the *Management Plan* should include the anticipated costs and technical expertise needed to maintain and operate the instrument and a description of procedures for allocating instrument time, if appropriate, and plan for attracting and supporting new users. Including information on anticipated usage and downtime. See Part IV. B. Management Plan of the RFA for more information.

What is meant by operations and maintenance?

“Operations and maintenance” includes only those activities which are required to keep the instrument ready for use by the research community, such as calibration, routine maintenance (e.g. lubrication, replacement of limited-life components), performing start-up/shutdown procedures as required, etc. “Operations” does not include operating the instrument for the purpose of conducting research or to obtain research results or demonstrating the usefulness of the instrument to interested parties.

When does the equipment need to be acquired?

An instrument acquired with support from the Equipment Grants Program is expected to be operational for use by the end of the award period.

Is the duration of this grant limited to one year for acquisition, or can the duration include more than one year?

Applicants may request an award period of up to three years for acquisition of equipment. It is expected for the instrument to be operational for use by the end of the award period.

May my organization request an upgrade of an existing instrument?

Yes. Equipment Grants Program proposals are intended to help fund items of equipment that will upgrade infrastructure. This may include the upgrade of an existing instrument.

May my organization request a used/refurbished instrument, or must it be a new model?

The Equipment Grants Program does support the acquisition of used/refurbished instruments. A strong case must be made in any proposal that the requested instrument improves the quality and expands the scope of fundamental and applied research, research training or extension goals of the institution. The proposal will have to carefully document and justify the fair market price of the instrument.

My institution is currently leasing an instrument and would like to purchase it. Is this allowed?

Yes. The Equipment Grants Program will consider requests to purchase an instrument that is currently being leased. The proposal will have to carefully document and justify the fair market price of the instrument.

Does the grantee organization have an obligation to the government for equipment after the grant has ended?

Grantee organization holds title and are exempted from further obligation to the Federal Government for equipment acquired under a NIFA grant for support of basic or applied scientific research (except for the NIFA right to require transfer as described in 2 CFR Part 200.313 (e3)).

How may equipment be used after the end of a grant?

Title, Use, Management Requirements, and Disposition of equipment acquired under this program must follow 2 CFR 200.313 guidelines, where:

Equipment must be used by the non-Federal entity in the program or project for which it was acquired as long as needed, whether or not the project or program continues to be supported by the Federal award, and the non-Federal entity must not encumber the property without prior approval of the Federal awarding agency. When no longer needed for the original program or project, the equipment may be used in other activities supported by the Federal awarding agency, in the following order of priority:

(i) Activities under a Federal award from the Federal awarding agency which funded the original program or project, then

(ii) Activities under Federal awards from other Federal awarding agencies. This includes consolidated equipment for information technology systems.

During the time that equipment is used on the project or program for which it was acquired, the non-Federal entity must also make equipment available for use on other projects or programs currently or previously supported by the Federal Government, provided that such use will not interfere with the work on the projects or program for which it was originally acquired. First preference for other use must be given to other programs or projects supported by Federal awarding agency that financed the equipment and second preference must be given to programs or projects under Federal awards from other Federal awarding agencies. Use for non-federally-funded programs or projects is also permissible. User fees should be considered if appropriate.

When original or replacement equipment acquired under a Federal award is no longer needed for the original project or program or for other activities currently or previously supported by a Federal awarding agency, except as otherwise provided in Federal statutes, regulations, or Federal awarding agency disposition instructions, the non-Federal entity must request disposition instructions from the Federal awarding agency if required by the terms and conditions of the Federal award.

May grantees use equipment acquired with NIFA funds to provide services to non-Federal organizations?

Yes. However, grantees are specifically prohibited from doing so for a fee that is less than private companies charge for equivalent services, unless specifically authorized by Federal statute, for so long as the Federal Government retains an interest in the equipment (2 CFR 200.313(c3)). Operation charges will accrue as program income and must be reported on the Federal Financial Report (SF 425).

What should a grantee do if a piece of equipment is lost, damaged or stolen?

The grantee is responsible for maintaining an internal control system to ensure adequate safeguards to prevent loss, damage, or theft of equipment purchased with NIFA grant funds. If such a system does not exist or is lacking in any way, the grantee must implement any necessary corrective actions and any loss, damage, or theft must be investigated. (2 CFR 200.313(d4))

What happens to equipment when the PD moves to another organization?

The grantee organization is the legal entity to which a grant is awarded. When the PD moves to another organization, the following options apply

(i) The grantee organization may request continuation of the project under the direction of an alternate PD. If the alternate PD is approved by NIFA, the grant will continue and thus title to the equipment purchased under the grant will remain with the original grantee organization.

(ii) The organization may relinquish its interests and rights in the grant to the PD's new organization. If the new organization is approved by NIFA to continue the grant activity, then the grant will be awarded and any equipment purchased with grant funds and still needed for the grant project would be expected to transfer to the new grantee organization, which would assume title.

(iii) If an alternate PD is not accepted by the NIFA, and the original grantee refuses to relinquish its rights in the grant to the new organization, then the grant will be terminated. Title to equipment will remain with the original grantee organization, subject to disposition or use as described in 2 CFR 200.313.

Does the Equipment Grants Program allow for acquisition of multiple instruments in a single application?

No; however, a single instrument may consist of an ensemble of pieces of equipment. For definition integrated research instrument, see above. The statement of the specific research and research training for which the instrument will be used, and the management plan should serve to establish that an ensemble of equipment constitutes a single integrated instrument.

We want to purchase new growth chambers that allow for more than one experimental condition to be run and tested at the same time. Would this be appropriate?

No. The EGP does not support the acquisition a suite of equipment to outfit research laboratories/facilities or to conduct independent experiments simultaneously.

The requested equipment will be used for research, but it will also be available for educational purposes (e.g., courses) as well. Will this use disqualify the proposal?

No. The use of the equipment for educational efforts can be cited as an impact, but the preponderance of use must be for research, research training, and/or extension.