

National Needs Fellowships (NNF)

Project director meetings were held August 2015 in Washington, DC, and also during the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) conference in Indiana during July 2017. Stakeholder input is also requested annually within the program Request for Applications.

Stakeholder input generally surrounded a need to increase both the funding for and number of new graduate students (master and doctoral levels) within the food and agricultural sciences. This is the intent of the NNF program, with funding appropriated by Congress. Comments also included the opportunity for NNF Fellows to work with industry, while also generally enhancing soft-skills for use in the workplace. Partnerships with industry are indicated as a funding preference within the FY 2018 NNF RFA. In addition, skills necessary for employment, such as leadership, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, are also discussed in the RFA.

NIFA Predoctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowship Programs (NIFA Fellows)

Project director meetings have been held annually in August for the past three years in Washington, DC. Stakeholder input is also requested annually within the program Request for Applications.

Stakeholders cited the uniqueness of the program, in that the predoctoral or postdoctoral fellow serves as the sole project director of the award. This enhances the career development of the individual, providing a valuable opportunity for independence in conducting a project. Said professional development is a significant objective of the Fellowships Program. Discussions also centered upon the duration of the fellowship, and whether the performance period for both predoctoral and postdoctoral fellows should be extended from (up to) two years to (up to) three years. The associated FY 2018 RFA indicates up to two years for both fellowship programs.

NIFA Listens

Through the NIFA Listens initiative, stakeholders are invited to provide input to help ensure the strategic positioning and relevancy of NIFA's investments in advancing agricultural research, extension, and education. Four in-person events were held in Hartford, CT, New Orleans, LA, Minneapolis, MN, and Albuquerque, NM. Responses can be submitted through <https://nifa.usda.gov/NIFAlistens> or NIFAlistens@nifa.usda.gov until Friday, Nov. 30, 2018. Input will be analyzed for the NNF and NIFA Fellows programs.