Resident Instruction Grants Program for Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas (RIIA) and Agriculture and Food Science Facilities and Equipment Program for Insular Areas (AGFEI)

FY 2019 Frequently Asked Questions

Please refer to the FY19 RIIA AND AGFEI REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS for complete application instructions.

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Purpose of the RIIA and AGFEI Grant Program

- **What is NIFA and what is its mission?**
  o Established in 2009, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture is a federal science agency within the United States Department of Agriculture. Congress created NIFA through the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008. NIFA provides leadership and funding for programs that advance agriculturally-related sciences. The agency seeks to invest in and support initiatives that ensure the long-term viability of agriculture.

- **What is the purpose of the RIIA and AGFEI Grant Program?**
  o RIIA projects strengthen institutional educational capacities, including libraries, curriculum, faculty, scientific instrumentation, instruction delivery systems, and student recruitment and retention, in order to respond to education needs in the food and agricultural sciences.
  o AGFEI projects support activities to acquire or renovate facilities and relevant equipment necessary for conducting agricultural research and support tropical and subtropical agricultural research, including pest and disease research.

- **What are the expectations for funded RIIA and AGFEI projects for Fiscal Year (FY) 2019?**
  o Applications for the RIIA program shall do the following:
    ▪ Improve formal, postsecondary agricultural sciences education/instruction to ensure a competent and qualified workforce to serve the FANH sciences and meet current and future national food and agricultural science needs.
    ▪ Improve the economic health and viability of rural communities through the development of degree programs emphasizing new and emerging employment opportunities in FANH sciences.
    ▪ Increase the number and diversity of students who will pursue and complete a 2-or 4-year post-secondary education in the FANH sciences, or Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines.
  
  o Applications for the AGFEI program shall do the following:
    ▪ Acquire or renovate facilities or relevant equipment necessary for conducting agricultural research and support tropical and subtropical agricultural research, including pest and disease research.

  o See RFA for more information.

RIIA and AGFEI Grant Support

- **What types of applications are expected for the RIIA and AGFEI Grant Program?**
  o In FY 2019, you may submit applications to the RIIA AND AGFEI Program as one of the following types of requests:
- **New application.** This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the RIIA AND AGFEI Program. We will review all new applications competitively using the screening for administrative requirements, review panel evaluation of proposals using evaluation criteria and selection process described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

- **Resubmitted application.** This is an application that had previously been submitted to the RIIA AND AGFEI Program but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (see Response to Previous Review, Part IV). We must receive resubmitted applications by the relevant due dates. We will evaluate resubmitted applications in competition with other pending applications in the appropriate area to which they are assigned and review them according to the same evaluation criteria (Part V, B) as new applications.

- **Is there a cost sharing or matching requirement for RIIA and AGFEI grant projects?**
  - NIFA does not require matching support for this program, and matching resources will not be a factor in the review process as evaluation criteria.

- **What are RIIA and AGFEI funding restrictions?**
  - Section 713 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016 (Pub. L. 114-113) limits indirect costs to 30 percent of the total Federal funds provided (or 42.857 percent of total direct costs) under each award. If your institution does not have, or cannot obtain, a negotiated rate, you must calculate an indirect cost rate in order to request indirect costs.

  - The use of RIIA grant funds to plan, acquire, or construct a building or facility is not allowed under this program. With prior approval, and in accordance with the cost principles set forth in 2 CFR part 220 (Circular No. A-21), some grant funds may be used for minor alterations, renovations or repairs deemed necessary to retrofit existing teaching or research spaces in order to carry out a funded project. However, requests to use grant funds for such purposes must demonstrated that the work is essential to achieving the major purpose of the project.

  - Grant funds may not be used for endowment funding.

  - Statutory language or agency policy limits the maximum potential funding period (including any awards transferred from another institution or organization) to five years in duration. The funding period will commence on the effective date cited in the award notification. Any such limitation also applies to subcontracts made under awards subject to a funding period limitation.

  - See RFA for a complete description of funding restrictions.
• What is the duration of the RIIA and AGFEI award?
  o The project period may range from 24 to 36 months (two to three years) for standard grants and up to 24 months for planning activity grants.

Eligibility Requirements
• Who is eligible to apply for a RIIA and AGFEI Grant?
  o Applications may only be submitted by eligible institutions as described in the RFA (Part III, A). Failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration.
  o See RFA for a complete description of eligibility.

• Will I be eligible to apply for a RIIA and AGFEI grant if I have an active award with NIFA through another program?
  o Institutions receiving a grant under this program are eligible to receive RIIA and AGFEI grants in subsequent years. Receiving a grant under any other authority does not affect eligibility for this RIIA and AGFEI grants program.

Application Process
• How do I apply for a RIIA and AGFEI grant?
  o Applicants submit their RIIA and AGFEI application through Grants.gov portal. Applicants are advised to prepare their material early and pass the complete package through their institution’s Grants Office for submission by 5:00 P.M (EASTERN) on the due date. Further information is included in the RFA.

• What must I submit to apply?
  o Application package as identified in the published Request for Applications (RFA).

• Is there a limit to the number of applications an institution can submit to the FY 2019 RIIA and AGFEI program?
  o For standard grants, up to three per institution as lead for RIIA, and up to two per institution as lead for AGFEI. For planning activity grants, up to two per institution. Further information is included in the RFA.

• When are the RIIA and AGFEI applications due to NIFA?
  o Applications must be received by Grants.gov by the date referenced on the RFA. Please see the RFA for detailed information.

• What if I miss the deadline?
  o You may apply when the RIIA and AGFEI program publishes another call for applications. The RIIA and AGFEI application submission deadline is adhered to rigorously.

Evaluation Process
• What is the administrative review?
The RIIA and AGFEI Grants Program team screen each application to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Only complete applications that meet all eligibility requirements, project requirements, and supporting documents described in the RFA will be considered for a merit review. Applications identified as incomplete or that do not meet the eligibility or complete application package requirements will be deemed ineligible.

- **What is the technical review?**
  - All complete RIIA and AGFEI applications from eligible institutions undergo a peer review by a panel of scientific experts in the areas of study related to the RIIA and AGFEI Grant Program. RIIA and AGFEI proposal will be evaluated using a peer review process to find win-win matches between the proposed work, capabilities of applicant organization(s), and the RIIA and AGFEI Grant Program purpose, priorities and goals. Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application. Panel members rate applications based on the evaluation criteria described below.

- **How will my application be evaluated?**
  - Applications are evaluated by a review panel on the following criteria:
    - Potential for Advancing Quality of Education/Significance of the Problem
    - Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages
    - Institutional Capability and Capacity Building
    - Key Personnel
    - Budget and Cost-Effectiveness
  - In addition, AGFEI applications must discuss the following topics:
    - Within the ‘Potential for Advancing Quality of Education/Significance of the Problem’ evaluation criterion section, address the advantage that will be gained from the proposed construction, renovation, or acquisition of laboratory equipment as well as how are the objectives and the facility to be linked to the university’s plans for programs in the Food, Agriculture, Natural Resource, and Human sciences.
Following the completion of a peer review process for RIIA and AGFEI grant proposals, the program staff will recommend that your proposal be approved for support from currently available funds or be declined to insufficient funds or unfavorable review.

See RFA for details.

Selection Process

- **When will I be notified with a decision?**
  - Applicants will generally be notified of their award status within six months of submitting an application.

- **Can I receive the review panel’s comments?**
  - Yes. Panel comments are sent to each applicant after awards have been made.

RIIA and AGFEI Program Grantees

- **What happens once I am selected as a potential RIIA and AGFEI award recipient?**
  - RIIA and AGFEI Grant Program staff submits an offer of funding letter and requests responses to clarifying questions raised in the peer panel meeting. Applicants must respond to all issues and queries.

- **How can I be a peer reviewer for this RIIA and AGFEI grant program?**
  - If you are not submitting an application, you may express your interest in serving as a reviewer and submit your curriculum vita via email. The selection of reviewers will be confirmed after the deadline for submission of applications.

- **Are there restrictions or conflicts that apply to serving as a reviewer?**
  - Yes. If any of the following apply as a relationship with any of the key personnel on a proposal, you are ineligible to serve as a peer reviewer for the proposal:
    - Co-author on any publication (print or digital), within the past three (3) years;
    - Collaborator on teaching, research and/or extension projects, within the past three (3) years, or pending/planned future collaborations;
    - Consulting arrangement, financial arrangement or any other conflict of interest, within the past three (3) years;
    - Advisee/advisor on thesis, or dissertation, or postdoctoral training. There is a lifetime conflict for a major professor-advisee relationship. There is a three-year conflict for service on graduate committees, or as academic or professional mentor, including postdoctoral mentor;
    - Belonging to same institution. If you have moved from an institution, there is a one-year institutional conflict.

- **If I am an applicant, can I serve as a reviewer for FY 2019 RIIA and AGFEI applications?**
  - No, as this is a potential conflict of interest.
- **How can I get answers about my RIIA and AGFEI application?**
  - The Request for Applications on NIFA’s website has contact information for program questions. Look on NIFA’s website for the RFA which has the contact number for the national program leader for NIFA.
  - (Electronic Application Process Issues) questions: call 202-401-5048 OR electronic@nifa.usda.gov.
  - For Submission Issues in [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) seek assistance by e-mail: support@grants.gov or phone: 1-800-518-4726. Hours of Operation: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**Disclaimer**

This FAQ document is not a substitute for reading the published Request for Applications and providing the information requested for a complete RIIA and AGFEI Grant Program application package.