

Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program – National Integrated Food Safety Initiative

FY 2011 Request for Applications

Application Deadline: June 27, 2011



**U. S. Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture**

**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE;
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program – National Integrated Food Safety Initiative

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.303, Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program.

DATES: Applications must be received by Grants.Gov by close of business (COB) on June 27, 2011 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. Comments regarding this Request for Applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is requesting comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program. Such comments will be used to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). This section requires the Secretary to solicit and consider input on a current RFA from persons who conduct or use agricultural research, education and extension for use in formulating future RFAs for competitive programs. Comments should be submitted by the deadline provided in the **DATES** portion of this Notice.

Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by mail to: Policy and Oversight Division; Office of Grants and Financial Management; USDA-NIFA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: RFA-OGFM@nifa.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program – National Integrated Food Safety Initiative RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA announces the availability of funding and requests applications for the Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program – National Integrated Food Safety Initiative (NIFSI) for fiscal year (FY) 2011 to support integrated, multifunctional agricultural research, extension, and education activities that address food safety priorities in the United States. Approximately \$9.5 million is available for support of this program in FY 2011.

This notice identifies the objectives for the Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program – National Integrated Food Safety Initiative projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for an Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program –

National Integrated Food Safety Initiative (hereafter referred to as National Integrated Food Safety Initiative) grant. NIFA additionally requests stakeholder input from any interested party for use in the development of the next RFA for this program.

Table of Contents

PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION	5
A. Legislative Authority and Background	5
B. Purpose and Priorities	6
PART II—AWARD INFORMATION	12
A. Available Funding.....	12
B. Types of Applications	12
C. Project Types.....	12
PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION.....	14
A. Eligible Applicants.....	14
B. Hispanic-serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities.....	14
C. Cost Sharing or Matching	15
PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION.....	16
A. Electronic Application Package	16
B. Content and Form of Application Submission.....	17
C. Submission Dates and Times	22
D. Funding Restrictions	23
E. Other Submission Requirements.....	23
PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS	25
A. General	25
B. Evaluation Criteria	25
C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality.....	27
D. Organizational Management Information	28
PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION	29
A. General.....	29
B. Award Notice	29
C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.....	30
D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements	31
PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT	32
PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION.....	33
A. Access to Review Information	33
B. Use of Funds; Changes	33
C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards	34
D. Regulatory Information.....	34
E. Definitions.....	34

PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

Section 406 of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (AREERA) (7 U.S.C. 7626) as amended by section 7129 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (FCEA) re-authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to provide funding for integrated, multifunctional agricultural research, extension, and education activities through a research, education, and extension competitive grants program. Subject to the availability of appropriations to carry out this program, the Secretary may award competitive grants for integrated research, education, and extension projects to colleges and universities as defined by section 1404 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA) (7 U.S.C. 3103) as amended. Grants are to be awarded to address priorities in United States agriculture that involve integrated research, education, and extension activities as determined by the Secretary in consultation with the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board (NAREEEAB). Section 7129 of the FCEA amended section 406(b) of AREERA (7 U.S.C. 7626(b)), adding Hispanic-serving agricultural colleges and universities (HSACUs) as eligible entities for competitive funds awarded under this authority (see Part III, B. for more information).

NIFA will administer the Integrated Research, Education and Extension Competitive Grants Program by determining priorities in U.S. agriculture through Agency stakeholder input processes in consultation with the NAREEEAB. Each RFA will be developed each fiscal year based on these established priorities and approaches to solving the critical agricultural issues. Recommended priorities identified by the President's Food Safety Working Group (<http://www.foodsafetyworkinggroup.gov/>) will also be incorporated into the RFA where appropriate. While the overall approach to solving critical agricultural issues, priorities, or problems will be through an integration of research, education, and extension activities within each individual program, component RFAs, depending on the priority addressed, may request applications that are research, education, or extension only, or a combination thereof.

In April 2010 all individuals on the competitive review panel for the National Integrated Food Safety Initiative were given the opportunity to provide stakeholder input on the FY 2010 RFA, the competitive process, and the panel proceedings. Where appropriate, their comments and suggestions were incorporated into the FY 2011 RFA. In addition, stakeholder input from all interested parties was solicited with the release of the FY 2010 RFA for the National Integrated Food Safety Initiative. This ongoing process will be repeated with the release of the FY 2011 RFA. In July 2010, a Project Directors Meeting was held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the International Association for Food Protection, in Anaheim, California. The meeting solicited input about future program priorities from recipients of National Integrated Food Safety Initiative (NIFSI) grants. Where appropriate, their comments and suggestions were incorporated into the FY 2011 RFA. Previously, in July 2009, a Project Directors Meeting was held in conjunction with annual meeting of the International Association for Food Protection, in Grapevine, Texas. Where appropriate, their comments and suggestions were incorporated into the FY 2011 RFA.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The purpose of the National Integrated Food Safety Initiative (NIFSI) is to support food safety projects that demonstrate an integrated approach (as defined in 7 CFR 3430) to solving problems in applied food safety research, education, or extension. The National Integrated Food Safety Initiative requests integrated research, education, and extension applications that address a broad spectrum of food safety concerns – from on-farm production, post-harvest processing, and distribution, to food selection, preparation, and consumption. Various models for integration of applied research, education, and extension will be considered for funding. Applications describing multi-state, multi-institutional, multidisciplinary, and multifunctional activities (and combinations thereof) are encouraged. A single university may apply for a grant, but the university must demonstrate significant collaboration with various agencies or organizations within the host state. Applicants are strongly encouraged to assemble project teams that include those with expertise in research, education, extension, and evaluation. All members of the project team should be involved in the development and writing of the application. For tips on developing integrated grant applications, applicants may visit <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/food/pdfs/tipsheet.pdf> on the web.

NIFSI creates opportunities for new collaborations between individuals and institutions in an effort to address problems in new ways and/or improve communication with high risk, under-served, or hard-to-reach audiences. In order to fully realize these potential benefits, NIFA strongly encourages applicants to develop applications describing integrated activities that include collaboration with 1890 Land-Grant Institutions, 1994 Land-Grant Institutions, Hispanic-serving institutions, Hispanic-serving agricultural colleges and universities, and/or other institutions that serve high risk, under-served, or hard-to-reach populations. Collaborations with local, state, and/or Federal governments, professional associations, public or private organizations, and/or international entities are also strongly encouraged.

NIFSI promotes advances in American agriculture as they relate to food safety. Agriculture, however, is increasingly worldwide in scope and reach. To attain NIFSI's goals for U.S. agriculture and food safety, and as appropriate, applicants may include international partnerships or engagement in proposed projects. Applicants are asked to keep in mind that while international activities supported by NIFSI may contribute to the *Feed the Future global food security initiative* (<http://www.Feedthefuture.gov>), any international activity proposed under NIFSI must first and foremost support domestic food safety program goals. Applicants must clearly describe and demonstrate how proposed international activities will contribute to, and support advances in American agriculture as supported through NIFSI.

If international activities (e.g. partnerships, exchanges, travel, etc) are proposed, then applicants shall describe indicators that will be used to assess those activities. Appropriate indicators include but are not limited to those posted at the U.S. Government's Feed the Future global food security initiative website (<http://www.feedthefuture.gov/monitoringevaluation.html>).

Applicants are strongly encouraged to address at least two of the three functional areas of research, education, and extension (i.e., research and extension, research and education, or

extension and education). Applications that focus on one functional area (i.e., research only, education only, or extension only) will also be considered for funding, but only if they: (1) provide a strong rationale for the limited focus; and (2) explain clearly how addressing that separate functional area will meet the overall goal of a total integrated, multifunctional research, education, and extension approach (as defined in 7 CFR 3430). A focus has been prescribed for each function or component of the National Integrated Food Safety Initiative:

1. Scope of Projects

(a) **Research.** The research component will focus on applied food safety research. The outcome of the applied research should enable extension and/or education personnel in applying the results of the research to solving food safety problems and/or enhancing educational curricula in food safety. Basic research will be considered for funding only under special circumstances for which adequate justification has been provided. In addition to traditional laboratory and field research, applied research may include educational research, behavioral or social research, and/or research focused on defining the behavioral determinants of food safety practices.

(b) **Education.** The education component will address food safety education and training implemented in a formal classroom setting. This may include elementary, secondary, undergraduate, or graduate education.

All educational interventions **must include a referenced research base** that fully justifies the choice of the intervention, and provides a rationale for the selection of the specific target audience(s). **All educational interventions must also include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the educational intervention in accomplishing intended objectives (e.g., improving knowledge, changing behavior, attitudes, or perceptions). Where possible, applicants should include a sample protocol of their evaluation instrument(s).**

(c) **Extension.** The extension component will address food safety education and training implemented in a non-formal setting. Where there is no extension program, outreach activities that deliver science-based knowledge and informational education to people in a variety of non-formal settings are an acceptable substitute. In addition to education and training, extension components may include the development and distribution of educational materials such as pamphlets, fliers, fact sheets, training curricula, videotapes, audiotapes, CD ROMS, interactive software, website development, and a variety of other audiovisual and print media.

All extension interventions **must include a referenced research base** that fully justifies the choice of the intervention, and provides a rationale for the selection of the specific target audience(s). **All extension interventions must also include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the extension intervention in accomplishing intended objectives.** If the extension intervention is primarily focused on the distribution of educational materials, audio-visual, or other print media, the application must include: (a) an evaluation of the effectiveness of the distribution mechanism(s); and/or (b) an evaluation of the effectiveness of the materials in accomplishing their intended objective(s) (e.g., improving knowledge, changing behavior, attitudes, or perceptions). The focus should be on behavior change or adoption of safe practices,

rather than on information dissemination. **Where possible, applicants should include a sample protocol of their evaluation instruments.**

2. Applied Priority Areas for Fiscal Year 2011

(a) Standard Projects. Two types of standard projects will be awarded in FY 2011. Standard projects for a maximum of \$600,000 for up to three (3) years will be awarded. In addition, larger standard projects entitled “special emphasis projects” will be awarded for up to \$2 million per award (total award, not per year). Special Emphasis Projects may be up to four (4) years in duration (see 2(b) below).

Applied priority areas have been established for applications seeking standard projects for a maximum of \$600,000 for up to 3 years (described in Part II, C. 1.). These include the following:

- (111.A) Providing food safety education and training for consumers of all ages, including those at increased risk for foodborne illnesses**
- (111.B) Providing food safety education, training, and certification for farmers, industry, and for retail, including small farm direct-food-sales vendors and processors**
- (111.C) Filling knowledge gaps about sources and persistence of microbial pathogens in meat, poultry, dairy, and fish, and applying control measures for reducing those pathogens**
- (111.D) Improving the safety of fresh and fresh-cut fruits and vegetables**
- (111.E) Applying new or improved food processing technologies to prevent and reduce foodborne pathogen loads in foods**
- (111.F) Strengthening national traceback systems; promoting an outbreak response system that shortens the time between outbreak detection, resolution, and recovery; and improving methods for communicating with consumers about traceback and foodborne illness outbreaks**
- (111.G) Improving national support and coordination of food safety programs by conducting national and international conferences, building collaborative networks, and exchanging information about integrated food safety**

Applications for national support and coordination of food safety programs and resources (111.G) will support the development of integrated food safety resources and outreach programs that facilitate national and international networking and coordination among the various users of food safety information, from production to consumption (e.g., farmers, producers, growers, packers, shippers, retailers, food service workers, processors, inspectors, veterinarians, sanitarians, educators, researchers, consumers). Integrated food safety resources may include the development of databases and interactive software that support decision-making and problem-

solving among food safety researchers, educators, consumers, and others. **Outreach-related applications may include support of international, national, and regional conferences, multi-user distance education programs, satellite video-teleconferences, and other communication transfer technologies.** Educational resources and activities may include the support of course or curriculum development, recruitment and career counseling, and participation in university-sponsored competitions related to food safety.

(b) Special Emphasis Projects. In FY2011, two (2) applied priority areas have been established for applications seeking special emphasis projects (111.H and 111.I). These are up to four (4) year projects. In FY2011, up to two (2) special emphasis projects will be awarded in priority area 111.H, for up to \$2 million each (\$4 million total). Up to two (2) special emphasis projects will be awarded in priority area 111.I, for up to \$2 million each (\$4 million total).

(111.H) Minimizing Microbial Food Safety Hazards of Fresh and Fresh-Cut Fruits and Vegetables

In recent years, USDA and the Food and Drug Administration have jointly issued guidance for minimizing microbial hazards for fresh and fresh-cut fruits and vegetables. The guidance provided an overview of the microbial food safety hazards, good agricultural practices (GAPs), and good manufacturing practices (GMPs) common to the growing, harvesting, washing, sorting, packing, and transporting of most raw or minimally-processed fruits and vegetables sold to consumers. The guidance suggested methods for minimizing these microbial food safety hazards. However, despite these efforts, foodborne illnesses associated with fresh produce continue to occur. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have estimated that at least 12 percent of foodborne illnesses in the U.S. were linked to fresh and fresh-cut produce items.

The goal of this special emphasis area is to reduce contamination of fresh and fresh-cut fruits and vegetables with foodborne pathogens, by filling needed knowledge gaps and communicating new methods for reducing contamination through improved education and outreach.

Knowledge gaps that need to be filled may include, but are not limited to:

- Assessing routes of introduction of foodborne pathogens into the produce environment at all levels of the food chain (production, processing, packaging, transportation, storage, distribution, preparation, and consumption)
- Understanding factors influencing the persistence and survival of the pathogens in fresh and fresh-cut fruits and vegetables in the entire food chain, from farm to fork
- Reducing and/or eliminating foodborne pathogens, while enhancing communication and management throughout the food chain
- Identifying challenges to traceability and potential solutions for quickly tracing the source of produce implicated in a foodborne illness outbreak
- Identifying what packing, processing, and distribution processes and practices are associated with microbial cross contamination of fresh produce, such as leafy greens, tomatoes, and peppers (Serrano and jalapeno)
- Understanding the mechanisms for cross contamination of fresh produce
- Identifying on-farm water quality management practices that improve food safety by reducing potential water and foodborne disease-causing pathogens

Topics to be addressed may include, but are not limited to:

- E. coli 0157:H7 in lettuce, spinach, and other leafy green vegetables
- Salmonella in cantaloupes, mangoes, tomatoes, etc.
- Hepatitis A virus in green onions, etc.
- Shigella in parsley, cilantro, etc.
- Improving traceback investigations for foodborne illness outbreaks involving produce
- Enhancing the safety of imported produce

Providing food safety training, education, extension, outreach, and technical assistance to owners and operators of farms, small food processors, and small fruit and vegetable merchant wholesalers

(111.I) Minimizing Antibiotic Resistance Transmission throughout the Food Chain

Antibiotics are increasingly used in human and veterinary medicine, in food animal production, and in agricultural applications. Over the past two decades, there has been extensive research on the correlation between the use of antibiotics and the development of antibiotic resistance in human and foodborne pathogens. This has led to several federal policy changes in both the European Union and in the United States. However, significant scientific gaps remain in the study of antibiotic resistance, and these knowledge gaps hinder the development of effective mitigation strategies. The potential impact of commensal bacteria on antibiotic resistance origination, dissemination, and persistence across the food chain, and across host and environmental ecosystems, has become increasingly recognized by the scientific community as a critical area of interest.

The goal of this special emphasis area is to support systematic studies that promote a comprehensive understanding of antibiotic resistance, both at the macroscopic and microscopic levels. This knowledge is needed before targeted and integrated intervention strategies for effective mitigation can be developed and implemented. Multiple targeted interventions that can be combined to minimize and control antibiotic resistant bacteria, and resultant human illness, are encouraged. **Project teams should include university, government, and industry collaborators.**

Applications for this special emphasis area should describe projects that:

- Investigate the role of the environment, commensals, and the molecular mechanisms involved in the persistence and dissemination of antibiotic resistant microorganisms in the food system;
- Develop, implement, and measure the impact of agriculture, aquaculture, and industrial practices and interventions that help minimize and control the persistence and dissemination of antibiotic resistance in the pre- and post-harvest food environments; and
- Conduct education, extension, and outreach programs on effective mitigation strategies that involve universities, government agencies, industry, and consumers. Mitigation strategies must focus on reducing the use of antibiotics in food animals. Education, extension and outreach programs should include producers, veterinarians, and veterinary students among the targeted audiences.

Special emphasis projects will only be awarded for applied priority areas 111.H and 111.I. Up to two (2) special emphasis projects will be awarded in priority area 111.H, for up to \$2 million each (for a total of up to \$4 million). Up to two (2) special emphasis projects will be awarded in priority area 111.I, for up to \$2 million each (for a total of up to \$4 million). All special emphasis project applications must involve multi-disciplinary teams from multiple states and/or multiple institutions. **International collaborations, as well as collaborations with minority-serving institutions, are encouraged.** Multi-disciplinary teams may include, among others, investigators in nutrition, nutrition education, food science, food safety, food microbiology, public health, sociology, psychology, economics, and program evaluation. There must be strong evidence of integration, and equally strong evidence that individuals from collaborating institutions (or organizations) worked cooperatively to develop the application. Evidence of involvement of stakeholders (e.g., producers, processors, distributors, regulators, other Federal agencies, and consumers), from concept to completion, should be documented.

Applications for special emphasis projects must include a management plan that is thoroughly described. The plan should include details for a steering or coordinating committee and a formative meeting of committee members. Also, a project evaluation plan must be included in the application. Where possible, applicants should include a sample protocol of their evaluation instrument(s).

(c) Conferences. Applications are being solicited for professional meetings (see applied priority area 111.G) that bring together food safety researchers, educators, and extension professionals to identify targeted areas in food safety that can best be addressed using an integrated approach. Professional meetings will focus on: (1) enhancing collaboration among food safety researchers, educators, and extension professionals; (2) updating information and advancing the field of food safety, thus providing producers, processors, regulators, and consumers the ability to make informed food safety decisions; and (3) identifying future research, outreach, and educational needs. International conferences may be held outside of the United States only when conference results directly benefit the U.S. and can be immediately applied to U.S. food safety programs and policies. An evaluation plan for the conference should be included. Where possible, applicants should include a sample protocol of their evaluation instruments(s). Applicants considering submission under this category are strongly advised to consult the program contact identified in Part VII of this RFA for the Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program – National Integrated Food Safety Initiative before preparation and submission of this application. It is expected that grantees will plan and conduct a national and/or international food safety conference that results in the publication of conference proceedings. Publication in refereed journals is highly encouraged. The maximum award is \$50,000 per award (total, not per year). Project periods may not exceed two (2) years.

(d) Bridge Funding. Bridge funding is designed to assist small, mid-sized, and minority-serving institutions by enhancing collaboration among institutions, states, disciplines and functions (research, education, and extension) that might lead to future funding opportunities. For bridge funding, the maximum award is \$100,000 per award (total) for up to two (2) years. **Applicants may not apply directly for bridge funding (see Part II, C.4. for eligibility information).**

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. Approximately \$9.5 million is available to fund new and renewal projects in FY 2011. Awards issued as a result of this RFA will have designated the Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP), operated by the Department of Treasury's Financial Management Service, as the payment system for funds. For more information see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/method_of_payment.html.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2011, applications may be submitted to the NIFSI as one of the following three (3) types of requests:

- 1. New application.** This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the NIFSI. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.
- 2. Renewal application.** This is a project application that requests additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in an original or amended award. Applications for renewed funding must contain the same information as required for new applications, and additionally must contain a Progress Report (see Project Narrative). Renewal applications must be received by the application due date, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in the appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.
- 3. Resubmitted application.** This is an application that had previously been submitted to the NIFSI, but was not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (see Part IV.3.c. Other Attachments, “Response to Previous Review”). Resubmitted applications must be received by the application due date, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in the appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

C. Project Types

All NIFSI awards will be made as standard grants. A standard grant is an instrument by which NIFA agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined project period without any statement of intention to provide additional support at a future date.

In FY 2011, the NIFSI will support standard projects, special emphasis projects, conferences, and bridge funding. The following guidelines will apply:

- 1. Standard Project.** In FY 2011 for applied priority areas 111.A through 111.G (listed in Part 1, B. 2(a)), the maximum award is \$600,000 per award (total project period, not per year) and

project periods may not exceed three (3) years. For these priority areas, applications requesting smaller awards for one (1) to two (2) year project periods also are encouraged.

2. **Special Emphasis Projects.** For special emphasis projects (applied priority area 111.H and 111.I in Part I, B. 2(b)), **the maximum award is \$2 million per award for 111.H and \$2 million per award for 111.I (total project period, not per year). Special Emphasis Projects may be up to four (4) years in duration.** All special emphasis project applications must involve multi-disciplinary teams from multiple states and/or multiple institutions.
3. **Conferences.** Conference awards awarded under applied priority area 111.G are intended to support professional meetings that bring together researchers, educators, extension professionals and others to identify needs, update information, or advance an area recognized as integral to research, education, and extension. A limited number of such meetings will be considered for partial or total support. For conference awards, the maximum award is \$50,000 per award (total project period, not per year). Project periods may not exceed two (2) years.
4. **Bridge Funding.** Bridge funding is designed to assist small, mid-sized, and minority-serving institutions by enhancing collaboration among institutions, states, disciplines and functions (research, education, and extension) that might lead to future funding opportunities. Following the review of all applications submitted to the NIFSI, bridge funds are awarded to eligible applicants (as defined in Part III, A.) who have submitted project applications that are considered meritorious, but: (a) rank below the funding cut-off during the peer review process; and (b) are identified as likely to benefit from funding for project development. For bridge funding, the maximum award is \$100,000 per award (total project period) for up to two (2) years. **Applicants may not apply directly for bridge funding.**

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Colleges and universities (as defined in section 1404 of NARETPA) (7 U.S.C. 3103) are eligible to submit applications for the National Integrated Food Safety Initiative. Section 1404 of NARETPA was amended by section 7101 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (FCEA) to define Hispanic-serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities (HSACUs) (see Part III, B. for more information), and to include research foundations maintained by eligible colleges or universities.

For the purposes of this program, the terms “college” and “university” mean an educational institution in any state which (1) 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; (2) is legally authorized within such state to provide a program of education beyond secondary education; (3) provides an educational program for which a bachelor’s degree or any other higher degree is awarded; (4) is a public or other nonprofit institution; and (5) is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association. Applications also may be submitted by 1994 Land-Grant Institutions (as defined in 7 CFR 3430), HSACUs, and research foundations maintained by eligible colleges or universities.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply directly for funds provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

B. Hispanic-serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities

Section 7101 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 amended section 1404 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA) to add a new group of cooperating institutions, Hispanic-serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities (HSACUs). HSACUs are colleges and universities that qualify as Hispanic-serving Institutions (HSIs) and offer associate, bachelors, or other accredited degree programs in agriculture-related fields. HSACUs do not include 1862 land-grant institutions.

Eligibility under the National Integrated Food Safety Initiative (NIFSI)

Pursuant to section 406 of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (AREERA), 7 U. S. C. 7626, Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grant Program (IREECGP), all 4-year HSIs are eligible to apply for a grant under the NIFSI program. 2-year HSIs, however, may be eligible to apply only upon a determination by NIFA that the institution offers an associate or other accredited degree programs in agriculture-related fields. To seek an eligibility determination for grants under the FY 2011 NIFSI RFA, 2-year HSIs may submit a one-page request to NIFA certifying that they are a Hispanic-serving institution, as defined in section 502 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1101a), and providing a justification that they do offer associate or other accredited degree programs in agriculture-related fields. Eligibility determinations are valid for fiscal year 2010 only and must be renewed every fiscal year.

HSIs that seek a determination of eligibility may submit a request before the application due date to Dr. Lawrence directly or as a PDF attachment to the SF-424-R&R application package submitted through Grants.Gov.

Additional questions on HSACU eligibility can be addressed to Dr. Irma Lawrence, HSI National Program Leader, Division of Community and Education, at ilawrence@nifa.usda.gov, (202) 720-2082, or via fax (202) 720-3398.

C. Cost Sharing or Matching

If a grant provides a particular benefit to a specific agricultural commodity, the grant recipient is required to match the USDA funds awarded on dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources with cash and in-kind contributions (see Part IV, B. 6. for details).

NIFA may waive the matching funds requirement for a grant if NIFA determines that:

(a) the results of the project, while of particular benefit to a specific agricultural commodity, are likely to be applicable to agricultural commodities generally; or (b) the project involves a minor commodity, the project deals with scientifically important research, and the grant recipient is unable to satisfy the matching funds requirement.

D. Statutory Limitation

Statutory limitation for grants under this program authorization language limits the length of time an award under this program may run. The statutory time limitation for this program is five (5) years, including any approved no-cost extensions of time.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA. **Applicants are advised to submit early to the Grants.gov system.**

New Users of Grants.gov

Prior to preparing an application, it is suggested that the PD/PI first contact an Authorized Representative (AR)(also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grant.gov. If the organization is not prepared (e.g., the institution/organization is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov), then the one-time registration process must be completed PRIOR to submitting an application. It can take as much as two weeks to complete the registration process so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations the AR should go to **“Get Registered” on the Grants.gov left navigation bar (or go to http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp) for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov. A quick reference guide listing the steps is available as a 4-page PDF document at the following website: <http://www.grants.gov/section910/Grants.govRegistrationBrochure.pdf>.**

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

1. In order to access, complete and submit applications, applicants must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.Gov. This software is essential to apply for NIFA Federal assistance awards. For basic system requirements and download instructions, please see http://www.Grants.Gov/help/download_software.jsp. To verify that you have a compatible version of Adobe Reader, Grants.Gov established a test package that will assist you in making that determination. Grants.Gov Adobe Versioning Test Package: <http://www.Grants.Gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp>.
2. The application package must be obtained via Grants.Gov, go to <http://www.Grants.Gov>, click on “Apply for Grants” in the left-hand column, click on **“Step 1: [Download a Grant Application Package and Instructions](#),”** enter the funding opportunity number **USDA-NIFA-ICGP-003445** in the appropriate box and click “Download Package.” From the search results, click “Download” to access the application package.

Contained within the application package is the “NIFA Grants.Gov Application Guide: A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.Gov.” This Guide contains an introduction and general Grants.Gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.Gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

If assistance is needed to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms), refer to resources available on the Grants.Gov Web site first (<http://Grants.Gov/>). Grants.Gov assistance is also available as follows:

- Grants.Gov customer support
Toll Free: 1-800-518-4726
Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on [Federal Holidays](#).
Email: support@Grants.Gov

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Electronic applications should be prepared following Parts V and VI of the document entitled “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.Gov.” This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed in order to prepare an application in response to this RFA. If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the Guide. ANY PROPOSALS CONTAINING NON-PDF DOCUMENTS WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. With documented prior approval, resubmitted applications will be accepted until close of business on the closing date in the RFA.

If you do not own PDF-generating software, Grants.Gov provides online tools to assist applicants. Users will find a link to “Convert Documents to PDF” on <http://Grants.Gov/assets/PDFConversion.pdf>.

1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2. of the NIFA Grants.Gov Application Guide.

2. R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 3. of the NIFA Grants.Gov Application Guide.

3. R&R Other Project Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 4. of the NIFA Grants.Gov Application Guide.

a. Project Summary/Abstract (Field 7. on the Form). The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of the NIFSI. The summary should describe how applicants addressed any combination of the three functional areas of the agricultural knowledge system (i.e., research, education, and extension). The summary should also state which priority areas, as described in Part I, B., are being addressed by the project. Finally, the summary should describe the knowledge gaps that may be filled or improved by the proposed project.

b. Project Narrative (Field 8. on the Form).

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative for *ALL* project types shall not exceed 18 pages single- or double-spaced pages, including figures and tables. This page limit was established to ensure fair and equitable competition.

For standard project applications, the Project Narrative must include all of the following:

Justification: This section should include the following, when applicable:

- 1) A statement at the beginning that clearly identifies the priority area(s) (in Part I, B. 2.(a)) that is (are) addressed in the application;
- 2) Estimates of the magnitude of the food safety issues to be addressed and their relevance to stakeholders' needs, as well as ongoing state and national research, education, and extension programs; and
- 3) Reasons for having the work performed by the applying institution.

Objectives: Clear, concise, complete, and logically arranged statement(s) of specific aims of the proposed effort must be included in all proposals.

Methods: The procedures or methods to be applied to the proposed effort should be explicitly stated. This section should include, but should not necessarily be limited to:

- 1) A description of the proposed activities and the sequence in which they will be carried out;
- 2) Procedures, techniques, methods, or approaches to be employed, including their feasibility;
- 3) Means by which data will be analyzed or interpreted;
- 4) Evaluation methods or means by which education and extension or outreach activities will be evaluated;
- 5) Kinds of results or expected outcomes;
- 6) Details of plans to communicate results to stakeholders or to the public;
- 7) Pitfalls that might be encountered and possible solutions; and
- 8) Limitations to proposed procedures, techniques, methodologies, or approaches.

Literature Review: A summary of pertinent publications, with emphasis on their relationship to the effort being proposed, should be provided and should include all important and recent

publications from other institutions, as well as those from the applicant institution. The citations themselves should be accurate, complete, and written in an acceptable journal format.

Current Work: Relevant unpublished institutional activities should be described.

Equipment and Facilities: All facilities (as reported in Part IV, B.2.) which are available for use or assignment to the project during the requested period of support should be reported *and* described briefly. Any potentially hazardous materials, procedures, situations, or activities, whether or not directly related to a particular phase of the effort, must be explained fully, along with an outline of the precautions to be exercised. Examples include work with pathogenic organisms, toxic chemicals and experiments that may put human subjects or animals at risk. All items of major instrumentation available for use or assignment to the proposed project should be itemized. In addition, items of non-expendable equipment needed to conduct and bring the project to a successful conclusion should be listed, including dollar amounts. Justification must be provided if funds are requested for their acquisition (see Part IV, B. 6.).

Project Timetable: The application should outline all important phases as a function of time, year by year, for the entire project, including periods beyond the grant funding period.

For special emphasis project applications addressing applied priority area 111.H and 111.I, the Project Narrative also must include:

Management Plan: The application must clearly describe how the project will be managed throughout the duration of the project. Management of the project will be judged on the overall adequacy of: 1) the budget; 2) collaboration with co-PDs; 3) plans for reporting, assessing, and interpreting the results; 4) estimates of the magnitude of the food safety issues to be addressed and their relevance to stakeholders' needs; and 5) coordination of dissemination of information over the duration of the project. The plan must include a timetable, with adequate details for each year of the project.

For standard project applications that are renewal applications (as defined in Part II, B. 2.), the Project Narrative also must include:

Progress Report: A progress report must be included within the page limitation set for the Project Narrative portion of the application.

For conference applications, the Project Narrative must describe the conference proposed, and include all of the following:

- 1) Justification for the meeting;
- 2) Recent meetings on the same subject with dates and locations;
- 3) Names and organizational affiliations of the chairperson and other members of the organizing committee;

- 4) Proposed program (or agenda for the conference), including a listing of scheduled participants and their institutional affiliations; and
- 5) Method of announcement or invitation to be used.

c. Other Attachments (Field 12. on the Form).

- 1) Cooperation and Institutional Units Involved. Cooperative, multi-institutional and multidisciplinary applications are encouraged. Where applicable, identify each institutional unit contributing to the project and designate the lead institution or institutional unit. Clearly define the programmatic roles, responsibilities and budget for each institutional partner.
- 2) Appendices to Project Narrative. Appendices to the Project Narrative are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. The addition of appendices should not be used to circumvent the text and/or figures and tables page limitations.
- 3) Collaborative Arrangements. If it will be necessary to enter into formal consulting or collaborative arrangements with others, such arrangements should be fully explained and justified. If the consultant(s) or collaborator(s) are known at the time of application, a vitae or resume should be provided. In addition, evidence (e.g., letter of support) should be provided that the collaborators involved have agreed to render these services. The applicant also will be required to provide additional information on consultants and collaborators in the budget portion of the application.
- 4) Response to Previous Review. This requirement applies to **ALL** “Resubmitted Applications” as described under Part II, B., “Types of Applications.” PDs must respond to the previous review panel summary on no more than one page, titled “RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS REVIEW.” The addition of response to previous review should not be used to circumvent the text and/or figures and tables page limitations.

4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.Gov Application Guide.

Remember to attach the require Biographical Sketch or/and Curriculum Vitae for the Project Director and Senior/Key Person who will receive federal support for this project. The phone number, fax number and e-mail address fields for all individuals listed on the Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded) page must be completed.

Provide a list of all Current and Pending Support for the PD/PI (even if they receive no salaries support for projects) for ongoing projects and pending proposals. Show the total amount for the entire award period (including indirect costs as well as the number of person’s months per year to be devoted to the project by the Senior Key person, regardless of the source of support. Concurrent submission of a proposal to other organizations will not prejudice its review. Please note that the project being proposed must be identified as pending and the percentage of time

committed must not exceed 100% of effort for concurrent projects. All projects listed in current and pending must have a time commitment. No projects may have zero (0) commitment. A current and pending form is required for all key personnel.

A suggested template for the Current and Pending Support form is located at http://www.nifa.usda.gov/home/faq_apply.html#current

5. R&R Personal Data – As noted in Part V, 6. of the NIFA Grants.Gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award. If completing the information, **do not enter any data in the field requesting the social security number.**

6. R&R Budget

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7. of the NIFA Grants.Gov Application Guide.

Matching. If an applicant concludes that matching funds are not required (as specified under Part III, C.), a justification should be included in the Budget Narrative. NIFA will consider this justification when ascertaining final matching requirements. NIFA retains the right to make final determinations regarding matching requirements.

For those projects where matching funds are required (as specified under Part III, C.), applications shall include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and fair market value of in-kind contributions) from third parties (non-federal sources) in an amount at least equal to the amount awarded by the Federal government. Written verification means:

For any third party in kind or cash contributions, separate pledge agreements for each donation, signed by the authorized representative of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) A good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the third party in kind contribution or the dollar amount of the cash donation; and (5) a statement that the donor will make the in kind or cash contribution during the grant period.

Note: In kind salary contribution should include the name and position, the normal hourly rate of pay for this position, the number of hours the employee will be donating toward the project, and a brief description of the job this person will be performing for this project.

Cash donations should include a statement that the grantee organization may use these donations as needed on a project or state specifically what they should be used for. The recipient organization should account for cash donations in their budget showing these funds in the appropriate categories where they intend to use them (salary, materials and supplies, equipment, etc.). A budget justification (Field K on the form) for these items must also be included.

The sources and the amount of all matching support from outside the applicant organization should be summarized on a separate page and placed in the application as a part of the Budget Justification attachment (see Field K on the Form SF 424 (R&R) Budget). Include the matching amount, the budget category for the match, and detail how the matching support, *from each source*, will be used (e.g., salary and position supported). Additionally, all pledge agreements must be included as a PDF attachment in Field K., as well.

The value of applicant contributions to the project shall be established in accordance with the applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circulars A-21, Cost Principles for Educational Institutions; A-87, Cost Principles for State, Local, and Tribal Governments; A-122, Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations; 2 CFR Part 215, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-110); and the cost principles in the Federal Acquisition Regulation at 48 CFR 31.2 for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

7. Supplemental Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part VI, 1. of the NIFA Grants.Gov Application Guide.

a. Field 2. Program Code. Enter the program code name “National Integrated Food Safety Initiative” and the one program code (111.A through 111.I) that most closely corresponds to the priority area addressed (see Part I, B. 2. (a) through (d)).

b. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List. A conflict of interest list is required for all key personnel under this program. Please include a conflict of interest list.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the NIFA Grants.Gov Application Guide.

In FY 2010, a number of applications were submitted with incorrectly formatted attachments (only PDF files are acceptable as attachments). In FY 2011, incorrectly formatted attachments will not be forwarded to panelists for review. It is the responsibility of the applicant to work with their individual sponsored programs offices or grants submission staff to ensure that all attachments are submitted in the correct PDF format. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit their electronic applications early (preferably at least one week before the due date of June 27, 2011), and confirm that all attachments were transmitted in the correct format. If attachments were incorrectly formatted, a corrected application may be re-submitted before close of business on the due date of June 27, 2011, if the program contact (see Part VII) is notified prior to resubmission.

The receipt of all applications will be acknowledged by e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received a confirmation message from NIFA within 30 days of submission of the application, please contact the Program Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

Section 7132 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act amended section 1462 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3310), increasing the limit on recovery of indirect costs from 20 percent to 22 percent of total Federal funds provided under the award. Therefore, the recovery of indirect costs on awards made by NIFA under this program area may not exceed the lesser of the institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 22 percent of total Federal funds awarded.

Funds awarded under this program may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

The statutory time limitation for grants awarded under this Program is five (5) years. Grant awards may not exceed this time limitation, which begins with the initial start date of the award.

E. Other Submission Requirements

The applicant should follow the submission requirements noted in the document entitled “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.Gov.”

Described below are the requirements for successful submission of an application, all of the following steps must be met for an application to be considered for peer review:

- 1) Meeting the deadline: To electronically send the application to Grants.gov the submit button is hit, which triggers a date and time stamp on the application. The date and time stamp is used to determine whether the application was received by Grants.gov before the deadline, which is prior to close of business (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time) on June 27, 2011. An application submitted or resubmitted after the deadline is late. Consideration of late applications is only given in extenuating circumstances (e.g., natural disasters, confirmed Grants.gov outage) with proper documentation and support of the Agency Contact (see Part VII). The occurrence of one of these situations does not automatically ensure that a late application will be accepted. If an applicant wants a late application considered under an extenuating circumstance, the applicant should contact the Agency Contact accordingly.

- 2) Successful Grants.gov validation: The Grants.gov system performs a limited check of the application, and applicants are notified by Grants.gov of the outcome of the initial review. Applications meeting Grants.gov requirements are made available to the funding agency for further processing. Applications that fail Grants.gov validation may be resubmitted to Grants.gov if the original agency deadline has not passed. (Note that the Grants.gov system may allow applications to be submitted after the deadline has passed, but the application is considered late by NIFA.)
- 3) Successful Agency validation: NIFA staff perform precursory review of the application. The agency validation process includes, for example, meeting eligibility requirements and following agency application guidelines (e.g., formatting, page limitations, limits on budget requests). Applicants are notified by NIFA of the outcome of this review.

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

Each application will be evaluated in a two-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

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 other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (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.

B. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria below will be used in reviewing applications submitted in response to this RFA:

For Standard and Special Emphasis Projects

1. Overall Merit of the Application.

- (a) Proposed goal, approach, or hypothesis is conceptually adequate and related to selected applied priority area(s) (see Part I, B. 2.(a) and (b));
- (b) Objectives are clearly described and related to selected applied priority area(s) (see Part I, B. 2.(a) and (b));
- (c) Need for proposed project is demonstrated;
- (d) Target audience(s) is identified (where appropriate);
- (e) Proposed technique, procedure, or methodology is clearly described;
- (f) Technique, procedure, or methodology is suitable and feasible for proposed project;

- (g) Evaluation procedures, or means by which data will be analyzed and interpreted, are clearly described and suitable for proposed project;
- (h) Expected results or outcomes are clearly stated; and
- (i) There is a high probability that the proposed project will be successful.

2. Qualifications of Proposed Project Personnel, Adequacy of Facilities and Budget Request.

- (a) Roles of project personnel are clearly defined;
- (b) Evidence that project personnel have sufficient expertise to complete proposed project is provided;
- (c) Evidence of quality partnerships with other disciplines and institutions is provided, where appropriate;
- (d) Sufficient time has been allocated for systematic attainment of objectives;
- (e) Evidence is provided of institutional experience and competence in the selected applied priority area(s) (see Part I, B. 2.(a) and (b));
- (f) Support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation are adequate;
- (g) All necessary budget information is provided and all figures are correctly tallied;
- (h) Budget narrative provides adequate justification for all budget categories; and
- (i) Proposed budget is appropriate for scope of proposed project.

3. Relevance of Proposed Project to Current Issues in Food Safety and Related Topical Areas.

- (a) Description of relevance to current issues in food safety is included; and
- (b) Proposed project makes a unique and original contribution to food safety.

Additional evaluation criteria for Special Emphasis Projects in priority area 111.H and 111.I are as follows:

For Special Emphasis Projects ONLY(Priority Areas 111.H and 111.I)

1. Involvement of multi-disciplinary teams from multiple states and/or multiple institutions.

(a) Strong evidence of integration and equally strong evidence that individuals from collaborating institutions (or organizations) worked cooperatively to develop the application.

(b) Evidence of involvement of the stakeholders (e.g., producers, processors, distributors, regulators, other Federal agencies, and consumers) from concept to completion.

2. Application clearly describes how the project will be managed throughout the duration of the project.

(a) The overall management plan addresses all of the following: 1) the budget; 2) collaboration with co-PDs; 3) plans for reporting, assessing, and interpreting the results; and 4) coordination of dissemination of information over the duration of the project.

(b) The plan includes a timetable, with adequate details for each year of the project.

(c) The plan includes details for a steering or coordinating committee and a formative meeting of committee members.

Conferences

The following evaluation criteria will be applied to applications that seek support for conferences under applied priority area 111.G:

1. Relevance of Proposed Conference to Food Safety in Fostering Interaction among Food Safety Researchers, Educators, Extension Professionals and Others;
2. Qualifications of Organizing Committee and Appropriateness of Invited Speakers to Topic Areas Being Covered;
3. Uniqueness and Timeliness of Conference; and
4. Appropriateness of Budget Request.

Bridge Funding

For standard project applications under consideration for bridge funding, depending on the applied priority area addressed, all of the evaluation criteria will be applied. In addition, applications under consideration for bridge funding will be evaluated based on the potential that funding of the proposed project would: (1) help to foster important collaborations and activities that will likely lead to future program success; or (2) lead to success in obtaining National Integrated Food Safety Initiative and/or other grant funding in the future.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, the academic and administrative autonomy of an academic institution shall

be determined by reference to the current edition of the Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 6400 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 648, Falls Church, VA 22042. Phone: (703) 532-2300. Web site: <http://www.hepinc.com>.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one-time basis as part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another NIFA program. NIFA will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the preaward process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of NIFA shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the awarding official of NIFA as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by NIFA under this RFA shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's assistance regulations and the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015 and 3019 of 7 CFR).

B. Award Notice

The grant award document shall include, at a minimum, the following:

1. Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the Director has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;
2. Title of project;
3. Name(s) and institution(s) of PDs chosen to direct and control approved activities;
4. Identifying award number assigned by the Department;
5. Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring recompetition for funds;
6. Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Director during the project period;
7. Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;
8. Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;
9. Applicable award terms and conditions (see <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> to view NIFA award terms and conditions);
10. Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and

11. Other information or provisions deemed necessary by NIFA to carry out its respective granting activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular grant.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to:

2 CFR Part 215 – Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-110).

2 CFR Part 220 – Cost Principles for Educational Institutions (OMB Circular A-21).

2 CFR Part 230 – Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-122).

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A—USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR Part 331 and 9 CFR Part 121—USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21 and A-122, now codified at 2 CFR Parts 220 and 230) and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3017—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and 7 CFR Part 3021—Governmentwide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace (Grants).

7 CFR Part 3018—USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3019—USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non profit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3407—NIFA procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

7 CFR Part 3430 – NIFA Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-Formula Federal Assistance Programs—General Award Administrative Provisions.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute) —prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in Federally assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq. —Bayh Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

Grantees are to submit initial project information and annual summary reports to NIFA’s electronic, Web-based inventory system that facilitates both grantee submissions of project outcomes and public access to information on Federally-funded projects. The details of these reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions.

Any additional reporting requirements will be identified in the terms and conditions of the award (see Part VI, B.9. for a link to view the NIFA award terms and conditions).

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Dr. Jan Singleton; Division Director, Food Safety; Institute of Food Safety and Nutrition; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA; STOP 2220; 1400 Independence Ave., SW; Washington, DC 20250-2220; Telephone: (202) 401-1954; Fax: (202) 401-4888; E-mail: jsingleton@nifa.usda.gov.

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access to Review Information

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, the grantee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of grant funds.

2. Changes in Project Plans

(a) The permissible changes by the grantee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project grant shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the grantee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the agency contact.

(b) Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.

(c) Changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes.

(d) Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

(e) Changes in Project Period: The project period may be extended by NIFA without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed five years. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the grantee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

(f) Changes in Approved Budget: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in a grant, it becomes a part of the record of NIFA transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. The original copy of an application that does not result in a grant will be retained by the Agency for a period of three years. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

D. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule-related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

E. Definitions

Please refer to [7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-Formula Federal Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions](#), for the applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.

For the purpose of this program, the following additional definition applies:

Director means the Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and any other officer or employee of the NIFA to whom the authority involved is delegated.