

Distance Education Grants (DEG) Program for Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas

FY 2015 Request for Applications (RFA)

APPLICATION DEADLINE: May 15, 2015

ELIGIBILITY: See Part III, A of RFA



United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food and
Agriculture

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

DISTANCE EDUCATION GRANTS (DEG) FOR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INSULAR AREAS

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.322.

DATES: Applications must be received by **5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on May 15, 2015**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding (see Part IV, C. of this RFA). Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within 6 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) seeks your comments about this RFA. We will consider the comments when we develop the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and we'll use them 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)). Submit written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice to Policy and Oversight Division; via e-mail to: Policy@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 Distance Education Grants Program for Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas (DEG) RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the Distance Education Grants (DEG) Program for Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas for fiscal year (FY) 2015 to strengthen the capacity of Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas to carry out resident instruction, curriculum, and teaching programs in the food and agricultural sciences through distance education technology. The amount available for support of this program in FY 2015 is approximately \$800,000.

This notice identifies the objectives for DEG projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a DEG grant.

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PART I-FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

Legislative Authority

The Distance Education Grants for Insular Areas (DEG) program is administered under the provisions of 7 U.S.C. 3362, to strengthen the capacity of Insular Area institutions to carry out distance food and agricultural education programs using digital network technologies. Funds will be awarded to individual eligible institutions of higher education in Insular Areas (Insular Area Institutions) to carry out a distance education program in the food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences.

B. Purpose and Priorities

Background

In efforts to carry out research, education and extension, the Insular Area Program (DEG) aligns its purpose and priorities with recommendations from the following reports: “New Biology for the 21st Century: Ensuring the United States Leads the Coming Revolution” (<https://www8.nationalacademies.org/cp/projectview.aspx?key=48967>, 2008); National Academy of Sciences’ Report on Agricultural Education, Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) Whitepaper on Human Capacity Development (<http://www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=1639>), and “*Transforming Agricultural Education for a Changing World*” (<http://dels.nas.edu/Report/Transforming-Agricultural-Education-Changing/12602>), 2009. Furthermore, in 2012, the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) Report attested: “At the baccalaureate level, a comprehensive array of undergraduate programs relevant to agriculture and the food industry, as well as applied social and natural sciences, must remain strong and well-supported”. The full PCAST report is available at: http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/pcast_agriculture_20121207.pdf.

The DEG grants program is soliciting applications that will align to the mission and goal of REE and NIFA. The DEG Program directly aligns with the USDA Research, Education and Economics Action Plan (http://www.ree.usda.gov/ree/news/USDA_REE_Action_Plan_03-2014.pdf) and specifically addresses Goal 6 – Education and Science Literacy, by recruiting, cultivating, and developing the next generation of scientists, leaders, and highly-skilled workforce for food, agriculture, natural resources, forestry, environmental systems, and life sciences to out-educate our global competitors.

The program contributes to the USDA NIFA Strategic Goal #1, “Catalyze exemplary and relevant research, education and extension programs”, (http://nifa.usda.gov/about/pdfs/strat_plan_2014.pdf) and Sub-Goal #1.7: “Ensure the development of human capital, communities, and a diverse workforce through research, education, extension and engagement programs in food and agricultural sciences to support a sustainable agricultural system.

Grants awarded under DEG shall be used:

(1) To acquire the equipment, instrumentation, networking capability, hardware and software, digital network technology, and infrastructure necessary to teach students and teachers about technology in the classroom.

(2) To develop and enhance educational services (including faculty development) to prepare students or faculty seeking a degree or certificate that is approved by the State or a regional accrediting body recognized by the Secretary of Education.

(3) To provide teacher education, library and media specialist training, and preschool and teacher aid certification to individuals who seek to acquire or enhance technology skills in order to use technology in the classroom or instructional process.

(4) To implement a joint project to provide education regarding technology in the classroom with a local educational agency, community-based organization, national nonprofit organization, or business; or

(5) To provide leadership development to administrators, board members, and faculty of eligible institutions with institutional responsibility for technology education.

Applicants to the DEG program are reminded of a closely related competitive grants program administered by NIFA for eligible Insular Area Institutions: The Resident Instruction Grants Program for Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas (RIIA). As separate programs under their respective authorization and appropriation and RFA, applicants are advised to coordinate RIIA and DEG project applications to ensure overall coordinated project objectives and to efficiently integrate proposed teaching and evaluation assessment practices for both projects.

Both programs for the Insular Areas (DEG and RIIA) promote and strengthen the ability of eligible institutions in the Insular Areas (see definition in Part VIII, E.) to carry out education within the broadly defined food and agricultural sciences and related disciplines. However, DEG funding enables the institutions in the Insular Areas to acquire the necessary equipment, instrumentation, networking capability, hardware and software, digital network or the needed IT infrastructure to deliver teaching and classroom learning across the ocean.

Priority will be given to those projects that: enhance educational equity for under-represented students; strengthen institutional educational capacities; prepare students for careers related to the food, agricultural, and natural resource systems of the United States: and, maximize the development and use of resources to improve food and agricultural sciences teaching programs.

DEG encourages projects that develop content suitable for delivery through the Cooperative Extension System's eXtension Initiative. Funds may be used to contribute to existing Communities of Practice (COPs) or form new COPs that focus on **Stakeholder/Land Grant Institutions Partnership: Integrated Research, Extension and Education**. Projects must align with the eXtension vision, mission and values. A letter of acknowledgement from eXtension is required, and a letter of support may be required from one or more of the

Communities of Practice. For detailed guidance on how to partner with eXtension, go to <http://create.extension.org/node/2057>.

Stakeholder Input

Stakeholder Input solicitation is announced in the DEG RFA annually. Stakeholder Input/feedback are also solicited through annual Project Directors' Meetings/Conferences, webinars, electronic, formal and informal communications with clientele, federal, academic and other collaborators. Overall, NIFA gathers and reviews stakeholder feedback for incorporation into the respective RFA with assurance of meeting the requirements of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998.

Through the ongoing communications including the latest webinar in early November 2014, Stakeholder Feedback have been integrated into the 2015 RFAs for education programs in the Insular Areas, Alaska and Hawaii in accordance and compliance with legislative authority. Refer to the November 6, 2014 webinar link at: <http://nifa-connect.nifa.usda.gov/p6ai8po3zbe>.

C. Program Area Description

A proposed project may address one or more Educational Need Areas and/or be an Applied Project that address research, outreach and capacity building to benefit the communities they serve, especially their students.

1. Educational Need Areas

DEG projects should focus on an Educational Need Area listed below. Please note that at least one of these Need Areas must be indicated on the Project Summary (See Part IV, B.3). Need Areas for FY 2015 are defined below:

a. Curricula Design, Materials Development, and Library Resources

The purpose of this initiative is to promote the development of courses of study and degree programs, new and improved curricula, and instructional materials and technology; to enable the acquisition of library resources including books and journals relating to food and agricultural sciences; and to stimulate the use of new approaches to the study of traditional subjects, new research on teaching and learning theory, and new applications of knowledge. The overall objective is to increase the quality of, and continuously renew, the academic programs of Insular Area Institutions in the food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences.

b. Faculty Preparation and Enhancement for Teaching

The purpose of this initiative is to advance faculty development in the areas of teaching competency and leadership, subject matter expertise, or student recruitment and advising skills. Applications may emphasize, but are not limited to: obtaining experience with recent developments and new applications in a field; expanding competence in innovative technologies and new methods to deliver instruction; developing new skills in a field of science or education including student advising skills; or pursuing graduate-level study in a field related to the food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences.

Each faculty recipient of support for developmental activities must be an “eligible participant” as defined in Part VIII, E. Definitions.

c. Instruction Delivery Systems

The purpose of this initiative is to encourage the development and use of alternative methods of delivering instruction to enhance the quality, effectiveness, and cost efficiency of teaching programs, while simultaneously addressing the unique geographical challenges of Insular Area Institutions. Applications may emphasize, but are not limited to: conducting needs assessments of institutional academic and technological capacities; developing inter-institutional and inter-disciplinary partnerships and collaborations that deliver instruction in ways that maximize program quality and reduce unnecessary duplication; and consideration and implementation of innovative instructional techniques, methodologies, and delivery systems in response to advances in knowledge and technology.

d. Scientific Instrumentation for Teaching and Research

The purpose of this initiative is to provide students and faculty in science-oriented courses with suitable, up-to-date equipment in order to involve them in work central to scientific understanding and progress. Applications may emphasize, but are not limited to: acquiring new, state-of-the-art instructional, laboratory, classroom, and research scientific equipment to help assure the achievement and maintenance of outstanding food and agricultural sciences education programs; and upgrading existing equipment, or replacing non-functional or clearly obsolete equipment.

e. Student Experiential Learning

The purpose of this initiative is to further the development of student scientific and professional competencies through experiential learning programs that provide students with opportunities to solve complex problems in the context of real-world situations. Applications may emphasize, but are not limited to: preparing future graduates to advance knowledge and technology that enhance quality of life, conserve resources, and address community and economic development issues. Projects should focus on advancing student problem-solving, decision-making and communication skills, and improving real-life technological expertise. Activities may include, but are not limited to: field-based internships; laboratory research; work-study practicum experiences; study abroad opportunities; and participation with faculty on applied research and related community development projects.

f. Student Recruitment, Retention, and Educational Equity (including the provision of student financial assistance)

The purpose of this initiative is to enhance educational equity for students from under-represented groups, and to strengthen student recruitment and retention programs that ensure the future strength of the Nation's scientific, professional, and technical work force in the food and agricultural sciences. Applications may emphasize, but are not limited to: initiating new projects (or supplementing current efforts) in order to attract and increase the numbers of students from under-represented groups to attend college in order to prepare them for careers as food and agricultural scientists, professionals, and technicians; agricultural and science literacy programs at the high school level to attract students to college and careers in the food and agricultural

sciences; mentoring programs and other initiatives for student retention; and the provision of student financial support to attend college.

Each student recipient of monetary support for education costs or developmental purposes must be enrolled at an eligible institution and meet the requirement of an “eligible participant” as defined in Part VIII, E. Definitions.

2. Applied Projects

In addition to the Educational Need Areas, applications may choose to develop studies that have relevancy and application within the communities that these institutions serve.

a. Applied Studies in the Food and Agricultural Sciences

The purpose of this initiative is to apply the body of knowledge in those natural and social sciences that comprise the food and agricultural sciences to address real-world problems, including applied research activities focusing on community and economic development issues related to food, nutrition, conservation, and renewable natural resources. Illustrative examples include, but not limited to:

- (i) Conduct plant or animal breeding programs to develop better crops, forests, or livestock (e.g., more disease resistant, more productive, yielding higher quality product(s);
- (ii) Conceive, design, and evaluate new bio-processing techniques for eliminating undesirable constituents from or adding desirable ones to food products;
- (iii) Propose and evaluate ways to enhance utilization of the capabilities and resources of institutions to promote rural development (e.g., exploitation of new technologies by small rural businesses);
- (iv) Identify control factors influencing consumer demand for agricultural products;
- (v) Analyze social, economic, and physiological aspects of nutrition, housing, and life-style choices, and of community strategies for meeting the changing needs of different populations groups; and
- (vi) Study other identified State, regional, community, national and global problems such as human nutrition and obesity prevention, sustainable agriculture, bio-energy, climate change, food safety, food security, biotechnology, agribusiness management and marketing, and aquaculture (see Part I. B on areas of priorities).

b. Applied Research Support Systems

The purpose of this initiative is to establish centralized support system to meet State, regional, or community needs, or serve clientele that cannot otherwise afford or do not have ready access to the support in question, or to provide such support more economically thereby freeing up resources for other applied research uses. Examples include, but are not limited to:

(i) Storage, maintenance, characterization, evaluation, and enhancement of germplasm for use by animal and plant breeders (including those using the techniques of biotechnology);

(ii) Computerized data banks of important scientific information (e.g. epidemiological, demographic, nutrition, weather, economic, crop yields, animal migration patterns); and,

(iii) Expert service centers for sophisticated and highly specialized methodologies (e.g., evaluation of nutritional quality of foods, toxicology, taxonomic identifications, consumer preferences and demographics).

c. Technology-based Information Delivery Systems

The purpose of this initiative is to promote innovations and improvements in the delivery of benefits of food and agricultural sciences to producers and consumers, particularly those who are currently disproportionately low in receipt of such benefits. Examples include, but are not limited to:

(i) Computer-based decision support systems to assist small-scale farmers, ranchers, headers, or fishermen to take advantage of relevant technologies, programs, policies, etc., and,

(ii) Efficacious delivery systems for nutrition information or for resource management assistance for low-income families and individuals.

d. Other Applied Research and Community Development Applications

The purpose of this initiative is to encourage other creative projects, outside the areas previously outlined, that are designed to provide needed enhancement to the capacity of RIIA institutions to conduct applied research and related community development projects.

PART II-AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The amount available for support of this program in FY 2015 is approximately \$800,000. The funds will be awarded through a grant. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

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://fms.treas.gov/index1.html>.

B. Types of Applications

Supporting the many components of agriculture under the constraints of a growing population, pressure on natural resources, and the challenges of climate variability and change, requires research, education, extension, and integrated programs that increase agricultural and natural resource sustainability. The term "sustainable agriculture" (NARETPA, 7 U.S.C. 3103) means an integrated system of plant and animal production practices having a site-specific application that will over the long-term achieve the following goals: 1) Satisfy human food and fiber needs; 2) Enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base upon which the agriculture economy depends; 3) Make the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm resources and integrate, where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls; 4) Sustain the economic viability of farm operations; and 5) Enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole.

In FY 2015, you may submit applications to the DEG Program as one of the following types of requests:

(1) New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the DEG program. 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; they also must contain a Progress Report (see Project Narrative, Part IV). Renewal applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in the 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 DEG program only but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (see Response to Previous Review, Part IV). Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending

applications in appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

(4) Resubmitted renewal application. This is a project application that requests additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in the original award. In addition, this is an application that had previously been submitted for renewal to the DEG Program but not funded. Therefore, PDs must provide a Progress Report as required under the Project Narrative, Part IV. Resubmitted renewal applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in the competition with other pending applications in the areas to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

C. Project Type

1. Standard Project

The only grant type DEG will accept in 2015 is Standard Project. In FY 2015, each eligible institution may submit a maximum of two DEG Standard Applications.

An eligible institution may submit a standard project application for project activities undertaken principally on behalf of its own students or faculty, and managed primarily by its own personnel. In a Standard Project, the applicant executes the project without the requirement of sharing grant funds with other project partners (See award size limit below in item E).

2. Project Duration

A project application may request funding for a project period from 18 to 36 months duration. The project start date should not occur prior to August 2015.

3. Number and Size of Grant Awards

The number of grants awarded in FY 2015 will depend on the number of applications recommended for funding in response to this notice.

This DEG RFA is announcing funding opportunities for Integrated Research, Education, and/or Extension Projects.

NIFA estimates that awards for Standard Grant applications may not be greater than \$85,000 in FY 2015. Budget forms submitted with the grant applications should reflect this estimate.

Note that actual amounts awarded by NIFA under the DEG grants program may differ from the amounts requested in the application submitted to the program. Awardees may be required by NIFA to submit revised budgets and plans of work before an award is made.

4. Proposal Submission Limitations

An eligible university system (an institution of higher education with more than one campus) may receive up to two grant awards per competition. Institutions receiving a grant under this program in any one competition are eligible to receive DEG grants in subsequent years. Receiving a grant under any other authority does not affect eligibility for this DEG grants program.

5. Grant Limitations per Institution

For the FY 2015 program, each eligible, individual institution, independent branch campus, and branch institution of a State system may receive, or be a part to, a maximum of two Standard grant awards. USDA may fund an institution simultaneously under both applications. Institutions that received a grant under this program in a prior year are still eligible to receive a grant this year.

6. Funding Limitations per Institution

For FY 2015, there are no limits to the funds that may be awarded to any one institution. However, applicants should take note of the proposal submission limitations (see Part II, C.5) and anticipated range of awards (see Part II, C.4).

D. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research

The responsible and ethical conduct of research (RCR) is critical for excellence, as well as public trust, in science and engineering. Consequently, we consider education in RCR essential to the preparation of future scientists. In accordance with sections 2, 3, and 8 of 2 CFR Part 422, institutions that conduct USDA-funded extramural research must foster an atmosphere conducive to research integrity, bear primary responsibility for prevention and detection of research misconduct, and maintain and effectively communicates and train their staff regarding policies and procedures. In the event an application to NIFA results in an award, the Authorized Representative (AR) assures, through acceptance of the award that the institution will comply with the above requirements. Per award terms and conditions, grant recipients shall, upon request, make available to NIFA the policies, procedures, and documentation to support the conduct of the training.

Note that the training referred to herein shall be either on-campus or off-campus training. The general content of the ethics training will, at a minimum, emphasize three keys to areas of research ethics: authorship and plagiarism, data and research integration, and reporting misconduct. Each institution will be responsible for developing its own training system, as schools will need flexibility to develop training tailored to their specific student needs. Grantees should consider the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program for RFC (<https://www.citiprogram.org/rcrpage.asp>). Typically, this RCR education addresses the topics of: Data Acquisition and management – collection, accuracy, security, access: Authorship and Publication; Peer Review; Mentor/Trainee Responsibilities; Collaborations; Conflict of Interest; Research Misconduct; Human Subject Research; and, Use of Animals in Research.

PART III-ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may only be submitted by an Eligible Institution. For the purposes of the DEG grants program, an eligible institution means an institution of higher education, as defined in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1995 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)), that is located in an Insular Area and that has a demonstrable capacity to carry out teaching and extension programs in the food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences. Individual land-grant colleges and universities, and other institutions that have secured land-grant status through Federal legislation, and which are located in Insular Areas are automatically eligible for awards under the DEG grants program.

The eight insular areas are the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Virgin Islands of the United States.

The following criteria must also be met by Eligible Applicants to this grants program:

1. Branch Institutions of a State System:

For the purposes of the DEG program, the individual branches of a State university system or public system of higher education that are separately accredited as degree granting institutions are treated as separate, individual institutions eligible to apply for and receive awards, provided they otherwise satisfy the definition of “eligible institution” as specified above.

2. Independent Branch Campuses:

Independent branch campuses of individual institutions may apply for and receive grant awards under this program, provided that they otherwise satisfy the definition of “eligible institution” as specified above. An “independent branch campus” means a unit of a 2-year or 4-year institution of higher education that is geographically apart from the main campus, is permanent in nature, offers courses for credit and programs leading to an associate or bachelor’s degree, and is autonomous to the extent that it has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization and its own budgetary and hiring authority.

3. Certification of Eligibility:

At the time of application, each primary applicant will be required to certify that it is an eligible institution as defined by this RFA. A non-Land-grant institution must submit a letter, signed by the institution’s Authorized Representative (AR) certifying that it meets the requirements of an “eligible institution” as defined in paragraphs 1, 2, or 3 above. The AR must also certify the institution, or parent institution in the case of an independent branch campus:

(a) 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;

(b) Is legally authorized by the State in which it is located to provide a program of education beyond secondary education;

(c) Provides an educational program for which the institution awards a bachelor's degree or provides not less than a 2-year program that is acceptable for full credit toward such a degree; and

(d) Is a public or other nonprofit institution; and is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association, or if not so accredited, is an institution that has been granted pre-accreditation status by such an agency or association that has been recognized by the Secretary for the granting of pre-accreditation status, and the Secretary has determined that there is satisfactory assurance that the institution will meet the accreditation standards of such an agency or association within a reasonable time.

All eligible institutions must demonstrate that they have a significant commitment to higher education programs in the food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences and to each specific subject area for which grant funds are to be used.

Eligibility documentation must be submitted as part of the applicant's Project Narrative. See Part IV, B.3, b.

4. Fiscal Agents:

If an institution cannot accept Federal funds directly, it must submit a letter stating that it will accept the award, but that funds must be administered through a fiscal agent. This agent must be identified in the letter from the applicant and the letter must be countersigned by a representative of the fiscal agent organization. The letter should include the fiscal agent's point of contact, address, telephone number, fax number and e-mail address. Both the fiscal agent and the applicant institution must submit complete management information (see Part V, D.).

Nevertheless, the legal recipient of the award must be an eligible, individual institution, independent branch campus, or branch institution of a State system. Examples of fiscal agent arrangements include, but are not limited to, the following scenarios:

(a) A State university system or a public system of higher education may apply on behalf of an eligible, individual institution, independent branch campus, or branch institution in its State. In such cases, the State system will act as fiscal agent for the eligible institution under a Standard Project award to advance the purposes of the DEG grants program.

(b) A research foundation or other, similar foundation established and maintained by an eligible, individual institution to facilitate the application and management of externally funded grant awards may apply on behalf of its eligible, parent institution. In such cases, the foundation will act as fiscal agent for the eligible, individual institution under a Standard Project award to advance the purposes of the DEG grants program.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply to this DEG grants program provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. An applicant's failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of an application deadline shall result in the

application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

NIFA does not require matching support for this program, and matching resources will not be a factor in the review process as evaluation criteria.

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. We urge you to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process see <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/grant-application-process.html>.

New Users of Grants.gov

Prior to preparing an application, we recommend 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 Grants.gov. If not (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 long as 2 weeks to complete the registration process so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations, the AR should go to **“Register” in the top right corner of the Grants.gov web page (or go to <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html>) for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov.** Item 2. below mentions the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.” Part II.1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide contains additional explanatory language regarding the registration process.

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

To receive application materials:

1. You must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov to access, complete, and submit applications. For basic system requirements and download instructions, see <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/software/adobe-reader-compatibility.html>. Grants.gov has a test package that will help you determine whether your current version of Adobe Reader is compatible.
2. To obtain the application package from Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>. Under Step 1 click on “Download a Grant Application Package,” and enter the funding opportunity number

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-RIGP-005075

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.” 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 you require assistance to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms) **or submitting the application**, refer to resources available on the Grants.gov website (<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-resources.html>). Grants.gov assistance is also available at:

Grants.gov customer support
800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035
Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on [federal holidays](#).
Email: support@grants.gov

Grants.gov iPortal: Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self-service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7 am - 9 p.m. ET). Get help now!

Have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov:

- Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
- Name of agency you are applying to
- Specific area of concern

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

You should prepare electronic applications following Parts V and VI of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed 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., PDF) in Part III section 3. of the guide. ANY PROPOSALS THAT ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS (e.g., content format, PDF file format, file name restrictions, and no password protected files) WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR NIFA REVIEW. Grants.gov does not check for NIFA required attachments or that attachments are in PDF format; see Part III section 6.1 of the guide for how to check the manifest of submitted files. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. We will accept subsequent submissions of an application until close of business on the closing date in the RFA (see Part V, 2.1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further information).

For any questions related to the preparation of an application, review the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide and the applicable RFA. If assistance is still needed for preparing application forms content, contact:

- Email: electronic@nifa.usda.gov
- Phone: 202-401-5048
- Business hours: Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. ET, excluding federal holidays.

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. **Complete all applicable fields. The following additional information may be helpful:**

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 Guided.

3. R&R Other Project Information

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V. 4 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. **Complete all applicable fields. Note: If a ‘Yes’ response is provided for Fields 1, 2, or 4.a, the applicant must provide the necessary assurances prior to an award being made.**

- a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract – (Required Attachment – Must be PDF format).** Project Summary/Abstract should be limited to one page. Applicants are encouraged to revisit the page numbers after converting the narrative to PDF format and make the necessary adjustments if the required page limit has been exceeded. **Project Summary/Abstract that exceeds this page limit requirement will not be accepted for review.**
- b. Field 8. Project Narrative – (Required Attachment – Must be PDF format).** **Applications will not be accepted for review if the project narrative is not included or not in PDF format.**

NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 20 pages of written text (excluding up to a maximum of 5 additional pages for supporting figures and tables). We have established this maximum (25 page-limit) to ensure fair and equitable competition. Project narratives that exceed this page limit requirement will not be accepted for review. Applicants are encouraged to revisit the page numbers after converting the narrative to PDF format and make the necessary adjustments if the required page limit has been exceeded. **Project narratives that exceed this page limit requirement will not be accepted for review.**

Include the following underlined text along with your responses:

- List the Project Title;
- List the Project Director, and any Co-Project Director(s) (include institutional affiliation for each);
- List your project’s Degree level: (i.e. Associates of Science, Bachelors of Science, Masters of Science, etc.);
- List your project’s Priority Need Area: (Part I, B.);
- List your project’s Educational Need and/or Applied Project Area: (Part I, C.1, C.2.);
- List the anticipated number of students to be served by the project (i.e. participating in a learning opportunity, using the developed curriculum or instrumentation, scholarships/fellowships, etc.).

- **Total Funds Requested:** List total Federal funds requested for this application.
- **Summary Text** - Provide a very concise (approx. 250 word) summary to include:
 - **Purpose:** What is the major problem your project will address?
 - **Audience:** Who are the intended beneficiaries? Who will be impacted?
 - **Products:** What will be produced?
 - **Outcome/Impact:** What is the intended result (consequence) of your project? Describe the primary benefits to the intended target audience. Note: Outcomes/impacts should be measurable and should be included in the project's Assessment/Evaluation Plan. These should demonstrate whether or not these benefits were achieved (See table on Part IV, B. Field 12 below).

The Project Narrative for the Standard Grant must include all of the following:

(1) A general statement of the **institution's long-range goals** and how the proposed project supports those goals including statements on: the institution's commitment to the project; **plans for continuation or expansion** of the project or program beyond the current level and period of support being requested; and, institutional resources or support available to carry out the project and a statement regarding their adequacy;

(2) A statement detailing the **educational, applied research, and/or related community development needs** the project will address;

(3) Clear, concise, complete **objectives** of the proposed project;

(4) A **justification** for the project explaining how the proposed project will help the institution enhance its academic programs, enhance educational equity for under-represented students, and promote and strengthen its abilities to carry out education, applied research, and related community development programs in the food and agricultural sciences as outlined in this notice;

(5) A **detailed plan of operation** giving an explanation of the methodologies and procedures that will be used to achieve the project objectives;

(6) A **description of the personnel** who will conduct the project, including an outline of who will be responsible for each activity;

(7) A detailed **timeline** showing the schedule for conducting the project;

(8) **Criteria and procedures to be used for tracking the progress and accomplishments** of the project, including any data and methodologies that will be used to analyze the extent to which project objectives were met;

(9) A **list of expected products and outcomes**, including partnerships and any plans for continuing the project beyond the period of USDA support;

(10) **Plans for disseminating anticipated products and outcomes** resulting from the project including publications, presentations, compact diskettes, web pages, workshops, etc.

(11) **Evaluation Plan**

All projects must have an Evaluation Plan that includes both a strategy for monitoring the project as it evolves (to provide feedback to guide these efforts), as well as a strategy for evaluating the effectiveness of the project in achieving its goals and for identifying positive and negative findings when the project is completed.

The complexity of the evaluation will depend on the scope of the project. Grantees are encouraged to obtain an independent evaluation to secure appropriate documentation of the project's outcomes and impacts. Such efforts should be led by knowledgeable and experienced individuals. As a guide, up to 10% of the grant funds may be used to support this purpose.

In addition to measuring progress toward achieving specific outcomes, the Evaluation Plan (see Part IV, B. Field 12) must also include a strategy for assessing how the project advances the NIFA Strategic Goal 1 and Sub-Goal 1.7. It should state the overall goal of the project, identify the measurable objectives, and indicate the outcome measures that will determine the success of the project and the relevance of these to the NIFA Strategic Goals. At a minimum, project assessment should indicate a projected number of students or faculty impacted by the project as a result of the proposed activities as one assessment measure. Suggested resources for Project Evaluation:

- Department of Education's Report of the Academic Competitiveness Council, May 2007, Federal STEM Goals and Metrics, Education Undergraduate National Goals and Metrics.
- NSF 02-057: The 2002 User-Friendly Handbook for Project Evaluation, a basic guide to quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods for educational projects, <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2002/nsf02057/start.htm>
- Field-Tested Learning Assessment Guide (FLAG): This Web site is designed for Science, Math, Engineering and Technology Instructors who are interested in new approaches to evaluating student learning, attitudes, and performance. It has a primer on assessment and evaluation, classroom assessment techniques, discipline-specific tolls, and resources – all in a searchable, downloadable database, copy and paste the link into an address bar on Internet Explorer <http://www.flaguide.org/>
- American Evaluation Association. Online Resources <http://www.eval.org/>

Suggested resources to obtain quantitative, baseline, student enrollment, degrees granted, and employment data for comparison purposes, postsecondary institutions may find appropriate information in the Food and Agricultural Education Information System (FAEIS) at: <http://faeis.ahnrit.vt.edu/>, and from the publication: *Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in Food, Renewable Energy, and the Environment United States, 201002015 at: Graduates in Food*, <http://www3.ag.purdue.edu/USDA/employment/Pages/default.aspx> Other similar sources may also be consulted.

(12) **Dissemination and Continuation Plan**

Include in the project's Dissemination Plan (see Part VI, D.) a description of how the applicant plans to communicate project accomplishments (products, results and impacts, etc.) to the

broadest extent throughout the academic community. This may include educational journals or other professional discipline publications and presentations at regional or national conferences and workshops, including any scheduled Project Director's Conference (see Part VI, D).

(13) **Continuation Plan**

Applicants are also expected to include a statement describing how project outcomes are expected to continue after NIFA funding ends. This Plan should include expected outputs and how these will become institutionalized in the curriculum. Also describe any strategies for adapting or expanding these outputs for a larger audience. Provide details of these changes, what are the expected outcomes, and the targeted audience who benefits from the project.

Field 9. Bibliography & Cited References – (Optional Attachment – Must be PDF format)
If needed, provide a complete list of all references cited in the application.

Field 10. Facilities & Other Resources – (Optional Attachment – Must in PDF format)
Describe the types, location, and availability of instrumentation and physical facilities necessary to carry out the work proposed. **If special academic, private or government laboratories or facilities are being used, include a letter in the application from the authorized representative of the facility describing the proposed arrangements and availability.** Any such letter shall be included as a part of Other Attachments, see **Field 12** below.

Field 11. Equipment Documentation – (Optional Attachment – Must be in PDF format)

Field 12. Other Attachments (Must be in PDF format).

- **Response to Previous Review – PDF Attachment. 1 Page Limit.** Title the attachment as “Response to Previous Review” in the document header and save file as “ResponsetoPreviousReview”. This requirement only applies to “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”. IF desired, additional comments may be included in the text of the Project Narrative, subject to the page limitations of that section.
- **Collaborative Arrangements – PDF Attachment. No Page Limit.** Title the attachment as ‘Appendices’ in the document header and save file as ‘Collaborative Arrangement’. If it is 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 the application, a vitae or resume should be provided. In addition, evidence (e.g., letter of support signed by the AR of the consultant/collaborating organization) 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.
- **Applications** should include elements of a logic model detailing the activities, outputs, and outcomes of the proposed project. This information may be provided as a narrative or formatted into a logic model chart. The logic model planning process is a toll that should be used in the developing projects before writing the proposal. Two additional

pages are allowed for this information. More information and resources related to the logic model planning process are provided at:

<http://nifa.usda.gov/resource/logic-model-planning-process>

• **Expected Outcomes – PDF Attachment**

Title the attachment “Expected Outcomes” in the document header and name the file to be saved as “ExpectedOutcomes”. Please use a format, similar to what is provided below, to submit expected impacts and attach it as the last page of the application.

Recommended Format for Submitting Expected Impacts

Primary Project Function: (Choose one)		
EDUCATION: <input type="checkbox"/>	EXTENSION : <input type="checkbox"/>	RESEARCH: <input type="checkbox"/>
Data for Insular Area Program		
Total expected impact during entire grant period		Expected Number
Number of collaborations with K-12 and other institutions of higher education		
Number of products developed for students through grant funds this year		
- curricula, academic programs		
- recruitment/retention programs		
- teaching or educational materials, distance education capability, experiential learning opportunities		
Number of collaborations to be developed between institutions		
Number of faculty attending professional development: sabbaticals, workshops, conferences, etc.		
Number of faculty members who will complete advanced or additional degree programs		
Number of individuals who indirectly will benefit from the projects (i.e., using the curriculum/instrumentation, enrolled in the program, recruited or retained)		
Total number of students to be directly supported by grant (i.e., scholarships, fellowships, assistantships, internships)		
Number of underrepresented students to be supported during the grant period		
Number of female students to be supported during the grant period		
Number of students who will graduate as a result of the grant during grant period		
- Four year or higher degree		
- Two year degree		
- Certificate program		
Number of students who will complete advanced or additional degree programs as a result of the grant (graduate, professional)		
Number of students who will complete internships with outside organizations or governmental agencies during the grant period		
Number of students who will complete international experiential learning (or study abroad) during the grant period and who are supported by this grant		
Number of students who will complete other experiential learning during the grant period and who are supported by this grant		

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. Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide includes information about the individuals for which a Senior/Key Person Profile must be completed, and

details about the Biographical Sketch and the Current and Pending Support including a link to a suggested template for the Current and Pending Support.

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.

(a) Budgets for each project year do NOT have to be the same from year to year. However, detailed budget information (budget and narrative) must be submitted for each year of the proposed project and, in the case of a Consortium Grant application, yearly budgets and narratives must be supplied for each institution in accordance with the instructions.

(b) During the tenure of a grant, PDs must attend at least one National Project Directors' meeting, if offered, in Washington, DC, or any other announced location. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss project and grant management, opportunities for collaborative efforts, future directions for education reform, and opportunities to enhance dissemination of exemplary end products/results of the projects. Reasonable travel expenses to attend this meeting may be included in the application's budget under travel expenses.

7. R&R Sub-award Budget Attachment (Only required if submitting a Collaboration Project Proposal or sub-awarding to another organization) All sub-awards' budgets must be included the R&R Sub-award Budget Attachment and a Budget Justification which includes an explanation for each budget item for each year.

8. 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 (i.e., "Distance Education Grants Program for Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas") and the program code (i.e., "DEG").

b. Field 8. Conflict of Interest. A conflict of interest list is required under this program. See Part VI, 1.8 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

C. Submission Date and Time

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

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by **5:00 p.m.** Eastern Time on **May 15, 2015**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

If you have trouble submitting an application to Grants.gov, you should FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Part IV. A. for Grants.gov contact information.

We send email correspondence to the AR regarding the status of submitted applications. 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 Agency 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 716 of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2014 (H.R. 3547) limits indirect costs to 30 percent of the total Federal funds provided under each award. Similar language may be included in the FY 2015 appropriation, therefore, when preparing budgets, you should limit your request for the recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of your institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 30 percent of total Federal funds awarded.

You may not use grant funds awarded under this authority for the planning, acquisition, construction, rehabilitation, or repair of a building or facility.

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 instrument. Any such limitation also applies to subcontracts made under awards subject to a funding period limitation.

E. Other Submission Requirements

You should follow the submission requirements noted in Part IV, section 1.9 in the document entitled "NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide."

For information about the **status of a submitted application**, see Part III., section 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

PART V-APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

We evaluate each application in a 2-part process. First, we screen each application to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, a review panel will technically evaluate applications that meet the administrative requirements.

We select reviewers based upon their 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, and 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 of each application to producers and the general public.

When each peer review panel has completed its deliberations, the responsible program staff of DEG will recommend that the project: (a) be approved for support from currently available funds or (b) be declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review.

DEG reserves the right to negotiate with the PD/PI and/or with the submitting organization or institution regarding project revisions (e.g. reductions in the scope of work, funding level, period, or method of support) prior to recommending any project for funding.

B. Evaluation Criteria

We will use the evaluation criteria below to review applications submitted in response to this RFA:

1. Potential for Advancing Quality of Education/Significance of the Problem (30 points).

This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will have an impact upon and advance the quality of food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences by strengthening institutional capacities to meet clearly delineated needs. Elements considered include institutional long-range goals, identification of a problem or opportunity to be addressed, justification for the project, innovation, advancing educational equity, multidisciplinary and/or problem-based focus, and potential for adoption by other institutions.

2. Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages (25 points).

This criterion relates to the soundness of the proposed approach including objectives, methodology, plan of operation, timetable, expected products and results, evaluation, and

dissemination plans. Emphasis is placed on the quality of educational or research support provided to the applicant institution through its inter-disciplinary partnerships and collaborative initiatives, and on the potential cooperative linkages likely to evolve as a result of this project.

3. Institutional Capability and Capacity Building (20 points).

This criterion relates to the institution's capability to perform the project and the degree to which the project will strengthen its teaching or research capacity. Elements include the institution's commitment to the project, the adequacy of institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials) available to carry out the project, potential for academic or research enhancement, and plans for project continuation or expansion beyond the period of USDA support.

4. Key Personnel (15 points).

This criterion relates to the adequacy of the number and qualifications of key persons who will develop and carry out the project, and the qualifications of project personnel who will provide for the assessment of project results and impacts and the dissemination of these findings.

5. Budget and Cost-Effectiveness (10 points).

This criterion relates to the extent to which the total budget adequately supports the project and is cost effective. Elements considered include the necessity and reasonableness of costs to carry out project activities and achieve project objectives; the appropriateness of budget allocations between the applicant and other needed personnel and collaborators; the adequacy of time committed to the project by key project personnel; and the degree to which the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes educational value for the dollar, achieves economies of scale, leverages additional funds, and focuses expertise and activity on high-priority educational or research need areas.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, we take extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, we determine the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 1801 Robert Fulton Drive, Suite 340, Reston, VA, 20191. Phone: (888) 349-7715. Web site: <http://www.hepinc.com>.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, are 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, to the extent permitted by law; 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, with updates on an as needed basis. This requirement is 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. We will provide you 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 that 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).

E. Application Disposition

An application may be withdrawn at any time before a final funding decision is made regarding the application; however, withdrawn applications normally will not be returned. One copy of each application that is not selected for funding, including those that are withdrawn, will be retained by DEG for a period of three years.

PART VI-AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the NIFA awarding official 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 NIFA awarding official 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. 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 may be used only for the purpose for which they are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, regulations, terms and conditions of the award, applicable federal cost principles, USDA assistance regulations (parts 3015 and 3019 of 7 CFR), and NIFA General Awards Administration Provisions at 7 CFR part 3430, subparts A through E.

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the following:

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to which 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 re-competition 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 awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

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 the ones listed below.

2 CFR Part 200 – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.

2 CFR Part 400 —USDA implementation of 2 CFR Part 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.

2 CFR Part 415 – USDA General Program Administrative Regulations.

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.

2 CFR Part 180 and Part 417--OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Government-Wide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and USDA Nonprocurement Debarment and Suspension.

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

2 CFR Part 416—USDA General Program Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments.

2 CFR Part 418—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.

2 CFR Part 421—USDA Implementation of Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants).

2 CFR Part 422—Research Institutions Conducting USDA-Funded Extramural Research; Research Misconduct.

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

7 CFR 3430—Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Financial 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).

44 U.S.C. 3541 et seq. (Pub. L. 107-347) - Federal Information System Security Management Act of 2002 (FISMA), to improve computer and network security within the Federal Government. Applies to awardees if it will collect, store, process, transmit, or use information on behalf of NIFA.

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

Grantees are to use REEport, NIFA’s electronic, web-based inventory system to submit an initial project initiation which documents expected products and outcomes of the project. Additionally, annual progress report documenting realized project outcomes must be submitted to the electronic system, the web-based system facilitates an electronic workflow between grantees and NIFA for project accomplishments to be easily searchable and allows for public access to information on Federally-funded projects. The details of these reporting requirements, including those specific to the annual and final technical reports, 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 awards terms and conditions).

Project Directors Conference

During the tenure of a grant, Project Directors must attend at least one National Project Directors’ Meeting/Conference, if offered, in Washington, D.C., or any other announced location. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss project and grant management, opportunities for collaborative efforts, future directions for education reform, and opportunities to enhance dissemination of exemplary end-products/results of the projects. Reasonable travel expenses to attend this meeting may be included in your application’s travel expenses.

PART VII-AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Programmatic Contact – Dr. Salei’a Afele-Faamuli; National Program Leader; Division of Community and Education; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; STOP 2251; 1400 Independence Ave, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2251; Telephone: (202) 720-0384; Fax: (202) 720-2030; E-mail: sfaamuli@nifa.usda.gov.

Administrative/Business Contacts –

Bruce Mertz; Team Leader, Team I, Office of Grants and Financial Management, National Institute of Food and Agriculture; 1400 Independence Ave., SW; STOP 2271 Washington, DC 20250-2271; telephone: (202) 401-5062; fax: (202) 401-6271; email: bmertz@nifa.usda.gov.

Sondra Watkins: Team Leader, Team II, Office of Grants and Financial Management, National Institute of Food and Agriculture; 1400 Independence Ave., SW; STOP 2271 Washington, DC 20250-2271; telephone: (202) 401-4249; fax: (202) 401-6271; email: swatkins@nifa.usda.gov.

PART VIII-OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access to Review Information

We will send copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments 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, awardees may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

2. Changes in Project Plans

a. The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project 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 awardee 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 program contact.

b. The awardee must request, and the ADO must approve in writing, all changes in approved goals or objectives prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests be approved for changes that are outside the scope of the original approved project.

c. The awardee must request, and the ADO must approve in writing, all changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel, prior to effecting such changes.

d. The awardee must request, and the ADO must approve in writing, all 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, prior to instituting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

e. The project period may be extended without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed any applicable statutory limit or expiring appropriation limitation. The terms and conditions of award include information about no-cost extensions of the award and when ADO's prior approval is necessary.

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 an award, 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 an award 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 2 CFR part 415, subpart C, 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.

Educational Need Area means the specific area(s) of educational focus identified in the RFA and addressed by the applicant's application. Educational Need Areas are derived from statutory language authorizing the grants program and specific Educational Need Areas may be targeted for priority funding support in the RFA.

Eligible institution means an institution of higher education, as defined in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1995 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)), that is located in an Insular Area as defined in this section, and that has a demonstrable capacity to carry out teaching and extension programs in the food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences. Land-grant colleges and universities in Insular Areas are automatically eligible institutions. The term eligible institution also applies to any branch of any institution of higher education that by itself satisfies the requirements contained in the definition of an Insular Area Institution, including:

- (1) The individual branches of a State university system or public system of higher education that are separately accredited as degree granting institutions, provided that they otherwise satisfy the definition of an eligible institution;

(2) Independent branch campuses of individual institutions, provided that they otherwise satisfy the definition of an eligible institution; or

Eligible participant means an individual who is a citizen or national of the U.S. as defined in this section.

Independent branch campus means a unit of a 2-year or 4-year institution of higher education that is geographically apart from the main campus, is permanent in nature, offers courses for credit and programs leading to an associate or bachelor's degree, and is autonomous to the extent that it has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization and its own budgetary and hiring authority.

Institution of higher education means an educational institution in any State that:

- (1) Admits as regular students only persons having a certificate of graduation from a school that provides 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 the institution awards a bachelor's degree or provides not less than a 2-year program that is acceptable for full credit toward such a degree;
- (4) Is a public or other nonprofit institution; and,
- (5) Is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association, or if not so accredited, is an institution that has been granted pre-accreditation status by such an agency or association that has been recognized by the Secretary of Education for the granting of pre-accreditation status, and the Secretary of Education has determined that there is satisfactory assurance that the institution will meet the accreditation standards of such an agency or association within a reasonable time.

Insular Area Institution means an institution of higher education as defined in this section that is located in an Insular Area.

Non-profit as applied to a school, college, university, agency, organization, or institution means a school, college, university, agency, organization, or institution owned and operated by one or more nonprofit corporations or associations, no part of the net earnings of which inures, or may lawfully inure, to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.