

Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Education Grants Program

Modification on page 17 (3/17/2015).

FY 2015 Request for Applications

Application Deadline:

Strengthening Projects Deadline: April 16, 2015

Standard Projects Deadline: April 21, 2015

Collaboration Deadline: April 23, 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

HISPANIC-SERVING INSTITUTIONS EDUCATION GRANTS PROGRAM

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.223, Hispanic-Serving Institutions Education Grants Program.

DATES: All **Strengthening Project** applications must be received by **5:00 p.m. Eastern Time** on **April 16, 2015**. All **Standard Project** applications must be received by **5:00 p.m. Eastern Time** on **April 21, 2015**. All **New Collaboration Project** applications must be received by **5:00 p.m. Eastern Time** on **April 23, 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@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 Hispanic-Serving Institutions Education Grants Program RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Education Grants Program for fiscal year (FY) 2015 to promote and strengthen the ability of Hispanic-Serving Institutions to carry out higher education programs that attract, retain, and graduate outstanding students capable of enhancing the nation's food, agricultural, and natural resource scientific and professional work force. The amount available for support of this program in FY 2015 is approximately \$9.2 million.

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

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

Section 1455 of National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA), reauthorized by section 7115 of the Agricultural Act of 2014, provides the Secretary of Agriculture with the authority to make competitive grants to Hispanic-Serving Institutions for the purpose of promoting and strengthening Hispanic-Serving Institutions ability to carry out education, applied research, and community development programs. This program is administered under the provisions of section 1455 of (NARETPA) (7 U.S.C. 3241) pursuant to section 815 of Public Law 104-127 and Public Law 110-246.

Per section 7128 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Pub. L. 110-246), activities funded under this program are no longer required to benefit a consortia of Hispanic-Serving Institutions to be supported by the grant. Consequently, the definition of a “Strengthening Project” under the HSI Education Grants Program has been revised to a project where the applicant or applicant and one other Hispanic-Serving Institution will be involved in the execution of the project.

Stakeholder Input Solicitation

The process of gathering and reviewing stakeholder input for NIFA’s HSI Education Grants Program is ongoing and occurs in a variety of formal and informal settings. Regardless of the setting, the goal for gathering stakeholder has five major objectives, and helps national program staff to achieve the following: 1) Determine programmatic priorities for this competitive grants program 2) Improve peer review processes and merit review processes; 3) Ensure that programmatic goals are meeting the needs of NIFA as well as its partners, collaborators, and other stakeholders; 4) Strengthen partnerships and collaborations with all stakeholders – including university, industry, and government partners; and 5) Ensure our efforts are neither redundant nor duplicative.

Grant programs in NIFA are developed and modified using extensive stakeholder input obtained via several mechanisms such as hosting listening sessions at the Project Director’s meetings, at the North America Colleges and Universities annual meeting, RFA input request, informational webinars, and through informal conversations and discussions with our federal, academic, and industry partners. This request for applications also takes in consideration feedback received on April 7, 2014 during a public meeting at the Washington Marriot at Metro Center Hotel from 9:00 until 10:00 am regarding before the HACU Capitol Forum.

B. Purpose and Priorities

Purpose

The Department of Agriculture is designated as the lead Federal Agency that supports higher education in the food and agricultural sciences. In this context, NIFA has specific responsibility to initiate and support projects to strengthen higher education teaching programs in the food and agricultural sciences.

The Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) Education Grants Program directly aligns with the Research, Education, and Economics Action Plan (March 2014 version) (http://www.ree.usda.gov/ree/news/USDA_REE_Action_Plan_03-2014.pdf) and specifically addresses: Goal 6 – Education and Science Literacy. The HSI program is also aligned with the NIFA Strategic plan (2014-2018) (http://nifa.usda.gov/about/pdfs/strat_plan_2014.pdf), specifically addressing Strategic Goal No 1, (Science – Catalyze exemplary and relevant research, education, and extension programs); Subgoal 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 agriculture system).

The purpose of NIFA’s HSI Education Grants Program is to support innovative teaching or education proposals with potential to impact Hispanic-Serving Institutions to become models for other institutions that serve underrepresented students, at the regional or national level. While research and extension activities may be included in a funded HSI Education project, the primary focus must be to improve teaching, enrollment, and graduation rates within a degree-granting program.

HSI Education projects should develop human capital relevant to overall program goals for U.S. agriculture. An education or teaching activity is formal classroom instruction, laboratory instruction, and practicum experience in the food and agricultural sciences and other related matters. Project activities should include student recruitment and services, curriculum development, instructional materials and equipment, and innovative teaching methodologies.

Priorities

In order to support the future workforce needs of the food and agriculture sector, the HSI Grants Program must align with NIFA priorities. NIFA has refocused its mission by directing agricultural sciences research, education, and extension programs to address the following six Priority Areas:

1. Agricultural and Natural Resources Science for Climate Variability and Change
2. Food Security and Hunger
3. Food Safety
4. Water for Agriculture
5. Childhood Obesity and Prevention
6. Sustainable Bioenergy

In addition, legislatively, the purpose of this program is to promote and strengthen the ability of Hispanic-Serving Institutions to carry out education, applied research, and related community development programs. NIFA intends this program to address educational needs, as determined by each institution, within a broadly defined area of food and agricultural sciences and related disciplines.

C. Program Description

1. HSI Education Grant Program Objectives.

In addition, grant applications must address how the proposed projects will be able to contribute to the goals above by aligning the projects to the following HSI Education Grants Program Objectives:

- a. Strengthen institutional educational capacities to develop and enhance curriculum, faculty, instruction delivery systems, and infrastructure including libraries and scientific instrumentation, in order to respond and serve the needs of underrepresented students in identified State, regional, national, or international educational needs in the food and agricultural sciences;
- b. Recruit, retain, and support undergraduate and graduate students from underrepresented groups in order to prepare them for careers related to the food, agricultural, and natural resource systems of the United States;
- c. Facilitate cooperative initiatives between two or more Hispanic-Serving Institutions or between Hispanic-Serving Institutions and public or the private sector, in order to maximize the development and use of resources and to improve the food and agricultural sciences teaching programs; and
- d. Support the activities of Hispanic-serving institutions to enhance educational equity for underrepresented students.

2. Educational Need Areas

There are different educational need areas that HSI projects should focus on and develop in order to contribute to the HSI education program goals and objectives. If addressing more than one Educational Need Area in the application, please list, in the Project Summary, the most representative area first, (See Part IV, B.3). All these Educational Need Areas present opportunities for USDA collaboration and involvement.

Projects addressing the HSI Program Objectives (Part I, C.3.) or Educational Need Areas below must demonstrate how proposed activities will provide more efficient and effective approaches than existing institutional programs in order to increase both the quality and quantity of targeted students.

Applicants should propose to improve mainstream instructional practices and address future needs within the food and agricultural sciences system. Applicants should consider projects that meet the various Educational Need Areas:

(a) Curricula Design, Materials Development, and Library Resources (including development of courses of study and degree programs).

The purpose of this strategy is to promote new and improved curricula, materials, and library resources to increase the quality of and continuously renew the academic programs of HSIs in the food, natural resources, and agricultural sciences. The overall objective is to stimulate the development and facilitate the use of exemplary education models and materials that incorporate the most recent advances in subject matter, research on teaching and learning theory, and instructional technology and to demonstrate

the benefit of new technologies. Proposals may emphasize, but are not limited to: the development of courses of study, degree programs, and instructional materials; the use of new approaches to the study of traditional subjects; the introduction of new subjects or new applications of knowledge pertaining to the food and agricultural sciences; or the acquisition of books and journals relating to the food and agricultural sciences.

(b) Faculty Preparation and Enhancement for Teaching.

The purpose of this strategy is to advance faculty development in the areas of teaching competency and leadership, subject matter expertise, or student recruitment and advising skills. Proposals 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 of instruction delivery or student advising skills; or pursuing further graduate-level study in a field related to the food and agricultural sciences. Each faculty recipient of support for developmental activities must be an "eligible participant" as defined in the definitions section of this RFA. Training of faculty and encouraging faculty to develop them in Leadership in Agriculture to serve as role models is encouraged.

(c) Instruction Delivery Systems.

The purpose of this strategy is to encourage the use of alternative methods of delivering instruction to enhance the quality, effectiveness, and cost efficiency of teaching programs. Proposals may emphasize, but are not limited to: incorporating alternative instructional methodologies that respond to differences in student learning styles; inter-institutional collaborating in such a manner to deliver instruction in ways that maximize program quality and reduce unnecessary duplication; and considering and implementing innovative instructional techniques, methodologies, and delivery systems in response to advances in knowledge and technology. This includes the development of capacity for distance education in these particular areas in which institutions partner with one another to optimize resources in offering high quality distance educational opportunities.

(d) Scientific Instrumentation for Teaching.

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

(e) Student Experiential Learning.

The purpose of this strategy is to further the development of student scientific and professional competencies through experiential learning programs outside the formal classroom that provide students with opportunities to solve complex problems in the context of real-world situations. Proposals may emphasize knowledge and applications that provide student graduates with skills desired by employees, but are not limited to: preparing future graduates to advance knowledge and technology, enhancing quality of life, conserving resources, and revitalizing the Nation's economic competitiveness; advancing student decision-making and communication skills; and improving real-life

technological expertise. Applicants are encouraged to find a USDA agency, non-profit, and/or private sector organization to assist in the development of these student experiential learning activities, including international experiences.

(f) Student Recruitment and Retention

The purpose of this strategy is to strengthen student recruitment and retention programs in order to promote and strengthen the Nation's scientific, professional, and technical work force in the food and agricultural sciences. Proposals may emphasize, but are not limited to: supplementing efforts to attract increased numbers of outstanding academic underrepresented students to prepare for careers as food and agricultural scientists, professionals, and technicians; promoting opportunities for students from Hispanic-Serving Institutions to engage in a robust exchange of ideas and a more effective use of the full breadth of the Nation's intellectual resources; or mentoring programs and other initiatives (including financial assistance) to attract and retain outstanding students. Strengthening project applicants may request funding (up to \$25,000) to provide financial assistance to one student beyond their participation in the project that will address this purpose.

3. Student Eligibility

Each student recipient must be enrolled at an eligible institution and meet the requirement of an "eligible participant" as defined in the definitions section of this solicitation. The following criteria must be taken into consideration when selecting scholarship recipients:

- Be a citizen or national of the United States, as defined in the definition section;
- Must be attending a public or other non-profit Hispanic-Serving Institution as defined in the definitions section of this RFA;
- Leadership activities and community service;
- Desire to pursue a career at USDA or in food and agricultural sciences;
- Major related to the food and agricultural sciences;
- Participation in HSI's Education Grants Program Activities;
- G.P.A.;
- Essay indicating interest in food and agricultural sciences; and
- Potential for adding diversity.

A student earning a two-year degree could be sponsored to complete a four-year degree or a student earning a four-year degree could be sponsored to complete a master's degree. The student should be selected within the first 18 months of the award and encouraged to complete funded schoolwork within 54 months of the initial award date (4.5 years). Two-year colleges must have an articulation agreement allowing the student to complete a bachelor's or professional degree at the selected granting institution.

4. Disciplines and Subject Matter Areas Supported

In the FY 2014 Farm Bill, USDA and NIFA will continue to be committed to identifying and meeting research, education, and extension priorities in the following six discipline areas:

1. Plant Health and Production and Plant Products – Plant systems

2. Animal Health and Production and Animal Products - Animal systems
3. Food Safety, Nutrition, and Health - Nutrition, food safety and quality, and health
4. Renewable Energy, Natural Resources, and Environment – Natural resources and environment
5. Agriculture Systems and Technology - Engineering products and processes
6. Agriculture Economics and Rural Communities – Markets, trade and policy

Eligible institutions may, within the Educational Need Area targeted for support, propose projects in any discipline(s) or subject matter area(s) of the food, agriculture, natural resources or human sciences. According to Section 1404(9) of NARETPA as amended by Section 7101 of Public Law 110-246, the term "food and agricultural sciences" means basic, applied, and developmental teaching activities in food and fiber, agricultural, renewable energy and natural resources, forestry, and physical and social sciences, or rural economic, community, or business development including activities relating to the following: (1) Animal health, production, and well-being; (2) Plant health and production; (3) Animal and plant germ plasm collection and preservation; (4) Aquaculture; (5) Food safety; (6) Soil and water conservation and improvement; (7) Forestry, horticulture, and range management; (8) Nutritional sciences and promotion; (9) Farm enhancement, including financial management, input efficiency, and profitability; (10) Home economics; (11) Rural human ecology; (12) Youth development and agricultural education, including 4-H clubs; (13) Expansion of domestic and international markets for agricultural commodities and products, including agricultural trade barrier identification and analysis; (14) Information management and technology transfer related to agriculture; (15) Biotechnology related to agriculture; and (16) The processing, distributing, marketing, and utilization of food and agricultural products.

5. Levels of Study Supported

Applications must be directed to formal, for-credit academic programs at the undergraduate and/or graduate levels of study.

6. Institutional Collaboration

Applicants are encouraged to collaborate with a **USDA agency**. USDA agencies are listed below:

Farm Service Agency (FSA); Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS); Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS); Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); Rural Development Agency (RD); the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS); Economic Research Service (ERS); Forest Service (FS); Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyard Administration (GIPSA); Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS); Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS); Risk Management Agency (RMA); Agricultural Research Service (ARS); and the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) to leverage grant funds and/or contribute towards overall goals and objectives.

Examples of collaborative activities with USDA could include but are not limited to internships, USDA Career Days, Hispanic-Serving Institution student visits or tours, and USDA staff presentations to students and faculty. The USDA Office of Human Capital Management has identified 20 Mission Critical Occupations (MCO's) in its FY 2008 Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program Plan. Using this information the HSI Education Grant Program encourages

collaboration on food, agriculture, natural resources and human science fields, which are primarily the top fifteen occupations listed below:

1. Forestry Technician
2. General Biological Scientists
3. Biological Science Technician
4. Soil Conservation Specialist
5. Soil Conservation Technician
6. Forestry Specialist
7. Dietician and Nutritionist Specialist
8. Consumer Safety Specialist
9. Soil Science Specialist
10. Veterinary Medical Officer
11. General Business and Industry
12. Statistician Specialist
13. Consumer Safety Inspection
14. Food Inspection Specialist
15. Agricultural Commodity Grader

All projects are also required to provide opportunities for Leadership Skills Development. The development of leadership skills, knowledge and qualities are necessary for preparing students for agricultural related careers in private sector, government and academia. Applications must demonstrably incorporate a leadership development component to ensure that students are equipped with both technical and leadership abilities upon graduation.

Specific activities may include:

- Developing practical applications to increase understanding of leadership roles, including critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills, ethics and professionalism, and working in teams,
- Connecting the academic classroom experience with daily leadership roles and organizational activities,
- Providing opportunities for mentoring and shadowing, and
- Organizing leadership academies, workshops, trainings, etc.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The amount available for support of this program in FY 2015 is approximately \$9.2 million. 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

In FY 2015, applications may be submitted to the HSI Program as one of the following two types of requests:

1. New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the HSI Program. All new Strengthening, Standard, and Collaboration applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

2. Resubmitted application. This is an application that had previously been submitted to the HSI Program 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 the area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications. **Applications that do not address comments from previous reviewers in an attachment will not be accepted or considered for funding.**

Important References

As you prepare your application, please refer to the following three references:

- In order to address the shortage of the agriculture workforce, particularly from underrepresented groups, a useful guide for applicants is the NRC report on the “*New Biology for the 21st Century*” (<http://www.nap.edu/catalog/12764.html>).
- For supporting their proposal and improving their project, applicants are also strongly encouraged to refer to the recommendations for change from the National Academy of Science 2009 report entitled, *Transforming Agricultural Education for a Changing World*. This report recommends that academic institutions with undergraduate programs in agriculture implement the following nine steps to better meet the needs of students, employers, and the broader society. These recommendations are:
 - Implement Strategic Planning;
 - Broaden Treatment of Agriculture in the Overall Curriculum;

- Broaden the Student Experience;
- Prepare Faculty to Teach Effectively;
- Reward Exemplary Teaching;
- Build Stronger Connections among Institutions;
- Start Early—K-12 Outreach;
- Build Strategic Partnerships; and
- Focus Reviews of Undergraduate Programs in Agriculture.

For information on the full report, please refer to http://dels.nas.edu/ag_education/report.shtml and click on recommendations.

- Also refer to a 2009 whitepaper on Human Capacity Development prepared by the Academic Programs Section of the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities. Copies of the whitepaper entitled “*Human Capacity Development The Road to Global Competitiveness and Leadership in Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (FANRRS)*,” can be found at: <http://www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=1639>

C. Grant Types

Only **Education projects** will be accepted for funding in FY 2015.

There are three grant types: **Strengthening, Standard, and Collaboration**. Approximately one-third of the funds available will be used to fund Strengthening projects. The intent of the projects is to build capacity at participating institutions and to promote collaboration, open communication, the exchange of information, and the development of resources that accelerate education of underrepresented students.

Activities supported should better position the institution(s) involved to engage on its (their) role as a Hispanic-Serving Institution and reach out to the current or potential underrepresented student population. Applicants must describe in the budget narrative how these funds will be allocated. Projects with budget requests exceeding the budgetary guidelines will not be reviewed.

1. Strengthening Project for this program may be submitted by a single Hispanic-Serving Institution (two or 4-year degree granting College or University), a set of Hispanic-serving Institutions, or a Hispanic-Serving Institution as a lead working with other non-Hispanic-Serving Institutions. The lead institution must be an HSI. These funds are expected to **enhance institutional capacity** with the goal of leading to future funding in the project area, as well as strengthen the competitiveness of the applicant’s education activities. The educational activities should be designed to: (1) increase the pool of highly-qualified underrepresented students in professional careers in the food and agricultural sciences and USDA’s workforce; (2) make more state-of-the-art scientific knowledge readily available to the Hispanic-Serving Institutions; (3) provide technical and financial assistance through grant and scholarship programs to recruit and retain talented students and faculty; and (4) provide support for utilizing and developing the professional faculty and staff as a source of expertise deemed important.

2. Standard Project is a project in which a group of up to three Hispanic-Serving Institutions form a **bridging arrangement** for the purpose of carrying out common objective(s) on the group's behalf in order to promote and strengthen their abilities to carry out higher education programs related to the food, agricultural, and natural resources and human sciences. Grants are designed to help institutions develop competitive projects, and to attract new students into careers in high-priority areas of national need. These institutions will work together to support fifteen undergraduate and ten graduate students from underrepresented groups to complete Baccalaureate, and MS or PhDs when applicable in the disciplines and subject matter areas supported. Each project will recruit, retain, and graduate at least 25 students in a discipline (or closely aligned field) at the baccalaureate or graduate level.

3. Collaboration is an application from four or more Hispanic-Serving Institutions that will **build linkages to generate** a critical mass of expertise to address an activity focused to carry out higher education programs related to the food, agricultural, and natural resources and human sciences. Projects that assemble critical mass of expertise to enhance education programs on NIFA Priority Areas (see Part I B, above) with the goal of leading to larger integrated funding applications in the future is encouraged. A successful collaborative project that builds linkages to generate critical mass of expertise is expected to increase cost effectiveness, achieve economies of scale, strengthen the scope and quality of a project's impact, and reach a larger number of institutions and students. Awards will be made based on funding available for FY 2015. Collaboration projects will fund and conduct recruitment activities to select 50 students (44 B.S., 5 M.S., and 1 Ph.D.) interested in food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences.

In addition, applicants could apply for a one time conference funds to support a meeting that will bring together HSIs educators, scientists, and administrators to identify education needs, best practices, or advance an area of science. These supplemental funds are not expected to exceed \$50,000 for one conference and are not renewable. Indirect costs are not permitted on conference supplements.

Standard and Collaboration Projects shall:

- Seek to bring together a team of HSIs to develop and implement a Hispanic-serving initiative to recruit, retain, and support undergraduate and graduate students from underrepresented groups.
- Aim to coordinate efforts and integrate activities among individuals, institutions, states, and regions. Applications should clearly articulate how a Standard or Collaboration award will complement and/or link with existing programs or projects to make a significant impact on the education of underrepresented students. Fund and conduct recruitment activities to select **at least 25 students interested in careers in food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences.** Include a K-12 outreach and recruitment component supporting the development of a student pipeline.
- Track students and document student progress to show 90 percent retention until graduation.
- Recruit an advisory board, including a minimum of five representatives from different institutions that have doctoral programs on the field selected.
- Applications shall include summer programs for screening potential undergraduate or graduate students and enroll them in an agriculture related program that includes completion of a degree.

- Negotiate summer paid internships off campus with USDA/affiliate agency each summer and document efforts and results or local non-profit organizations serving the food and agriculture community and use existing student programs available.
- The intent of the Standard and Collaboration projects is to build capacity at participating institutions and to promote collaboration, open communication, the exchange of information, and the development of resources that accelerate education of underrepresented students.
- Encourage more effective partnerships and reduce duplication of efforts among participating academic institutions;
- Develop an advisory board that includes at least 5 members from different graduate programs on the discipline.
- Leverage funding to maximize the number of students participating in the project;
- Document measurable impacts and target audiences;
- Develop a project website with information on the students funded;
- Work with USDA to develop a plan for Summer Internship placement;
- Assist participating students to develop a resume;
- Hold USDA internship application workshops for students twice a year;
- Participate on a meta-analysis for collaboration proposals. Request and receive Institutional Research Board (IRB) approval.
- This grant program also supports the goals and objectives of the “100,000 Strong” study abroad initiatives (<http://100kstrong.org>; <http://www.100kstrongamericas.org>), and grant applicants may consider the same in their applications.

Guidance for undergraduate and graduate student’s activities:

- Cross-institutional and multi-disciplinary exchanges that will give graduate students brief exposure to work at a collaborating institution and a new team;
- Summer internships (or research/extension experience) opportunities that provide actual field work for undergraduate students;
- Opportunities to serve as institutional ambassadors to recruit other students into their programs;
- At both the undergraduate and graduate levels, curricula and training should incorporate the principles of professionalism and professional ethics.
- A degree-appropriate understanding of the scientific method, experiment design and methods, analyzing, interpreting, and communicating data;
- General communication skills; international experience leading to an understanding of the global and societal aspects.
- Lead to measurable, documented changes in learning, actions, or conditions; and
- Provide academic guidance and tutoring as required as well as an internship search.
- Include in the application travel support for four students to attend professional conferences and make presentations.
- Assist students to maintain academic good standing of a 3.0 GPA or higher with a minimum of 15 credit hours a semester as an undergraduate.
- Provide assigned Faculty (compensated) mentoring.
- Provide students the opportunity to engage in research with faculty.
- Recruit students to replace any drop outs and meet the minimum students’ goal.

Collect student letter of commitment stating expectation for reimbursement if they do not fulfill the requirements of their program participation.

Application Submission Limitations

For the FY 2015 program, an applicant may not submit as a lead institution more than four Strengthening applications, two Standard applications, and two Collaboration application. Only two awards will be made to an institution as a lead. Only one Standard and Collaboration application will be funded per institution.

**Individually accredited institutions can only participate in two Standard applications.
Individually accredited institutions can only participate in one Collaboration application.**

Project Duration

No project may be active for longer than five (5) years, including no-cost extensions.

a. Strengthening Project will be fully funded for durations of 48 months.

b. Standard Projects will be funded for 12 months and up to \$250,000 per year with the opportunity for renewal for three additional years at a similar level, for a maximum of four years or \$1,000,000, based on the availability of funds for this purpose and the projects' previous performance.

c. Collaboration Projects will be funded for 12 months and up to \$500,000 per year, including indirect costs, with the opportunity for renewal for three additional years at a similar level, for a total of four years and \$2,000,000, based on availability of funds and previous performance.

Award Size

The award size varies by type of project as follows:

a. Strengthening Project. An applicant may request up to \$250,000 (total, not per year) for a Strengthening Project. Additional funds up to \$25,000 may be requested by the applicant to take advantage of their position as an HSI to recruit and support one outstanding student. Therefore, the total or maximum for a Strengthening grant award size is \$275,000, including indirect costs. Applicants must describe in the budget narrative how these funds will be allocated. Note that the funds requested do not have to be divided equally between institutions or among project years. We expect to fund about 12 Strengthening proposals, depending on funding availability.

b. Standard Projects. Standard Projects will not exceed \$250,000 per year for each of the 4 years totaling up to \$1,000,000, including indirect costs, if funded for 4 years. Applicants must describe in the budget narrative how these funds will be allocated to the participating HSIs. Grantees will have the opportunity for renewal at a similar level based on the availability of funds and the project's previous year performance towards the accomplishment of specified timelines and outcomes. We expect to fund about 7 Standard proposals, depending on funding availability.

c. Collaboration Projects. Collaboration proposals will be funded up to \$500,000 per year for up to four years and will require the participation of at least four HSIs. Grantees will have the opportunity for renewal at a similar level based on the availability of funds and the project's previous year performance towards the accomplishment of specified timelines and outcomes. We expect to fund about seven Collaboration proposals, depending on the availability of funds.

Distribution of funds among participating members will be decided by the applicants.

Subcontract Arrangements. If it will be necessary to enter into a formal subcontract agreement with another institution, financial arrangements must be detailed in the "R&R Sub-award Budget Attachment(s) Form." Annual and cumulative budgets and a cumulative budget justification are required for each subcontract agreement. Refer to Part V, 8. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions on completing this form. **A Letter of Commitment signed by the Authorized Representative of the subcontracting institution is also required.**

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 communicate 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 key 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 RCR (<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; Collaboration; Conflict of Interest; Research Misconduct; Human Subject Research; and Use of Animals in Research.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Awards may only be made to public or other non-profit Hispanic-Serving Institutions as defined **below** and in the definitions section of this RFA. To be eligible for competitive consideration for an award under this program, a Hispanic-Serving Institution must at the time of application certify that it has an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25 percent Hispanic students. By submitting an application, the applicant organization certifies that it is eligible to receive funding under this program.

Eligible institution means an institution of higher education:

- (1) that has an enrollment of needy students as defined in this section;
- (2) except if waived by the Secretary of Education, the average educational and general expenditures of which are low, per full-time equivalent undergraduate student, in comparison with the average educational and general expenditures per full-time equivalent undergraduate student of institutions that offer similar instruction;
- (3) that is legally authorized to provide, and provides within the State, an educational program for which the institution awards a bachelor's degree; or that is a junior or community college as defined in this section;
- (4) that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary of Education to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered or that is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation;
- (5) that meets such other requirements as the Secretary of Education may prescribe; and
- (6) that is located in a State.

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 organization. This agent must be identified in the letter from the applicant and the letter must be countersigned by an authorized 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 organization and the applicant school or institution must submit complete organizational management information (see Part V, D.).

Nevertheless, the legal recipient of the award must be a Hispanic-Serving Institution. (Submission of fiscal agent information (above) is not requested now, but will be required, before an award is made.) An applicant's failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of an application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award.

1. Branch Institutions

For the purposes of this 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 institutions eligible for awards. Accreditation must be by an agency or

association recognized by the Secretary, U.S. Department of Education. Institutions also must be legally authorized to offer at least a two-year program of study creditable toward an associate's or bachelor's degree. Separate branches or campuses of a college or university that are not individually accredited as degree granting institutions are not treated as separate institutions.

2. Subcontracts

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. Budget for subcontractors must be included with the corresponding budget narrative.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

In accordance with section 1492 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3371), as added by section 7128 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Pub. L. 113-79), for grants awarded after October 1, 2015, the recipient of an award from the HSI program must provide funds, in-kind contributions, or a combination of both, from sources other than funds provided through such grant in an amount that is at least equal to the amount awarded by NIFA. The matching funds requirement does not apply to grants awarded:

1. To a research agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA); or
2. To an entity eligible to receive funds under a capacity and infrastructure program (as defined in section 251(f)(1)(C) of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994, 7 U.S.C. 6971(f)(1)(C)), including a partner (see Part VIII, E. Definitions for definition of partnership) of such an entity.

Entities eligible to receive funds under a capacity and infrastructure program and exempt from the matching funds requirement include:

- a. 1862 Land-grant Institutions, including State Agricultural Experiment Stations receiving funding under the Hatch Act of 1887
- b. 1890 Land-grant Institutions
- c. 1994 Land-grant Institutions
- d. Recipients of Continuing Animal Health and Disease, Food Security, and Stewardship Research, Education, and Extension Program Funds — Capacity and Infrastructure Program (CIP)
- e. Hispanic-Serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities (HSACU)
- f. Insular Area Schools Eligible to Receive Funds from the Distance Education/Resident Instruction Grant Programs
- g. Recipients of McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Program Funds
- h. Non-Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture (NLGCA) – (for exemption from the new matching requirement, these applications must include NLGCA certification, see instructions for requesting certification at <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/form/form.html>, and for attaching the certification in Part IV, C. of this RFA)
- i. Recipients of funds under a program established under section 1417(b) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of

1977 (7 U.S.C. 3152(b)), including: (1) 1890 Institution Teaching, Research, and Extension Capacity Building Grants Program; (2) Higher Education Challenge Grants Program; (3) Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program; and (4) Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate and Postgraduate Fellowship Grants Program

- j. Individual public or private, nonprofit Alaska Native-Serving and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions of higher education (see 20 U.S.C. 1059d).

A proposal submitted in response to this RFA may indicate that the work will be completed by multiple entities as a collaborative partnership. All partners must have a substantial involvement in the project throughout the life of the project. If a partnership among multiple entities is proposed, the proposal must clearly identify the following:

- 1) A narrative of each entity's clearly established role in the project;
- 2) How each entity involved as a partner on the project will contribute to execution of project objectives, determination of experimental design, development of the project work plan and time table, and submission of collaborative, timely reports; and
- 3) A comprehensive project budget that reflects each entity's financial or third party in-kind contribution (see section 2 of 7 CFR 3430 or section 96 of 2 CFR part200) to the total project budget costs.

If a proposal indicates that the work on the project will be completed by multiple entities as partners, and at least one entity is exempt from the matching requirement under #2 above, the entire project will be exempt from the matching requirement regardless of whether all entities involved are otherwise exempt. Any partner entity can serve as the lead entity on the project. All partners must be significantly involved in the project.

After proposals have been recommended for award, NIFA will determine if the submitted proposal and proposed division of work reflects substantial involvement of all entities involved. If a proposal is recommended for award to a lead entity not otherwise exempt from the matching requirement and the proposal does not reflect substantial involvement of at least one partner that is exempt under #2 above, then the matching requirement will apply. Exemption from the matching requirement for an entity not otherwise exempt is limited to the project for which it is a partner.

Waiver of Match - NIFA may waive the matching funds requirement for a recipient for one year with respect to a competitive grant that involves research or extension activities that are consistent with the priorities established by the National Agricultural Research, Education, Extension and Economics Advisory Board for the year involved. To determine whether proposed activities are consistent with the priorities of the NAREEEAB, please refer to the [2014 Research, Education and Economics Action Plan](#). Instructions for requesting a waiver are included in Part IV, C. of this RFA.

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:

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. 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 in the appropriate box and click “Download Package.” From the search results, click “Download” to access the application package.

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-HSI-004977

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.
<http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/snow-dismissal-procedures/federal-holidays/> .
Email: support@grants.gov

Grants.gov iPortal (see <https://grants-portal.psc.gov/Welcome.aspx?pt=Grants>):
Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self-service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7 a.m. - 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 BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM 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.

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. SF 424 (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.

Field 7 – Project Summary/Abstract – (Required Attachment – Must be PDF format)

Project Summary/Abstract is required in all applications and is limited to 1-2 pages (Times New Roman font size 12, Normal Margin). 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.** See Part V. 4.7 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template. List the **primary USDA Educational Need Areas (from Part I, C.4) addressed by this project**; the primary NIFA Priority Need Area (from Part I, B.1.); and the **Primary Discipline** (from Part I, C.5.). Briefly summarize the project objectives and include all measurable project outcomes, including the number and type of beneficiaries, including the level A.A., B.S., M.S. or Ph.D., supported by the HSI program. The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the HSI Program Goals.

Include the following underlined text along with your responses:

- List the **Project Title: The character limit on the title is 140 characters. The title should not be too similar to previously funded awards.**
- **Project Code: NJ**
- 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** (See Part I, B.1.):
- List your project's **Educational Strategy(s):**
- List your **project's Primary Discipline/Subject Matter:** (the academic major where the project's primary focus will occur; e.g., forestry, animal sciences, food safety, human nutrition, etc.)
- **Partners:** If Collaboration Project, list all partner institutions/organizations that will share grant funding (Note: Each Partner identified needs to have their budget information submitted on a separate Subaward Budget Attachment). If not a Standard or Collaboration Project, enter: 'N.A.'
- **Total Funds Requested:** (List total Federal funds requested for this application. If this project is a Collaboration Project, also list each partner's total funds requested next to the institution's name).
- **Summary Text** - Provide a very concise (approx. 250 word) summary of your project to include:
 - **Purpose:** What is the major problem your project will address?
 - **Audience:** Who are the intended beneficiaries? Who will be impacted? How many?
 - **Number of students that will benefit from the project:** How many? Degree level?

- **Products: What will be produced?**
- **Outcome/Impact: What is the intended result (consequence) of your project? Describe as the primary benefits to your audience. Note: outcomes/impacts should be measurable, and should be included in your project's assessment/evaluation plan to demonstrate how you will assess whether or not these benefits were achieved. Please include a Table of Content after the summary.**

Field 8. Project Narrative – (Required Attachment – Must be PDF format). Application 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 double-spaced (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. 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.**

The Project Narrative must include all of the following: (Note: To facilitate proposal review and evaluation, include the following, underlined wording as headings in the Project Narrative, followed by the applicant's response for each item.)

(A) NIFA Priority Need.

The first section of the project description should define the NIFA Priority described above in Part I, to be addressed in the project.

(B) HSI Education Grants Program Goals.

Applicants must include a statement that shows how the proposed projects will advance the goals of the HSI Education Grants Program, which are:

- To attract and support undergraduate and graduate students from underrepresented groups in order to prepare them for careers related to the food, agricultural, and natural resources and human sciences of the United States;
 - Enhance the quality of postsecondary instruction within these disciplines;
 - Provide opportunities and access to food, agricultural, and natural resources and human sciences careers in the public and private sector; and
- Align the efforts of HSIs and other non-profit organizations in support of the academic development and career attainment of underrepresented groups.

(C) Potential for Advancing the Quality of Education; Significance of the Problem:

1. Institutional Long-range Goals. Demonstrate how the institution attributes a high priority to the project, discuss how the project will contribute to the achievement of the institution's long-term (five- to ten-year) goals, explain how the project will help satisfy the institution's high-priority objectives, or how the project is linked to and supported by the institution's strategic plan.

2. Identification of Educational Problem(s) and Project Impact. Clearly identify and explain how the proposed project will address at least one of the Educational Need Areas described in Part I, C.4. Briefly explain the project’s anticipated, overall impact on improving the quality of food and agricultural sciences education and how it will advance the goals of the HSI Education Grant Program.

3. Project Justification. Clearly state the specific instructional problem or opportunity to be addressed. Describe how and by whom the focus and scope of the project were determined. Summarize the body of knowledge justifying the need for the proposed project. Discuss how the project will be of value at the State, regional, national, or international level(s). Describe any ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed project for which previous funding was received under this program.

4. Innovation. Describe the proposal’s creative approach to improving the quality of food and agricultural sciences education, solving a higher education problem, or advancing educational equity.

5. Multidisciplinary and/or Problem-based Focus. Identify the **Discipline(s)** (described in Part I, C) supported and how it relates to the NIFA Priority selected and the collaborating USDA agency. Also, discuss whether the project may be adapted by, or serve as a model for other institutions.

6. Level of Study. Include a table describing the expected number of students benefiting (described in Part IV, C. 5), from this project and the level of education such as associate, baccalaureate, Masters, or doctoral degrees at each of the institutions participating in the program. Please include in your project narrative a table similar to the one presented below to summarize the students supported by level of study.

Institutions Participating in the Project (1to X)	Number of Students Supported by Level of Study Supported					
	K to 12	K-12 Teachers	Associate Arts/ Associate in Science	Bachelor’s in Science	Masters’ in Science	Doctoral Degree
Institution 1						
Institution 2						
Institution 3						
Institution 4						
Institution 5						
Institution 6						
Institution 7						

(D) Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages:

1. Objectives. Cite and discuss the specific project objectives to be accomplished and how these align with the HSI Education Grant Program Objectives. Performance-based objectives are strongly recommended. The objectives section should include the following:

- Answers the question, “What should the project or participants be able to do?” Performance-based objectives should be used and they should guide the evaluation tools that will measure the successful completion of a project or activity.

You can use the ABCD method for creating a performance objective (Heinich, Molenda, Russell & Smaldino, 2002) to systematically think about writing appropriate performance objectives towards your project goals:

- **A is for audience** - Who are the learners? Are they adult learners? Are they workshop participants? Are they young students? How many? At what level?
- **B is for behavior** - What learning is overt and observable?
- **C is for condition** - How? In what context or under what circumstances will learning occur? Will the audience be expected to know pieces of information to accomplish learning?
- **D is for degree** - How much will be accomplished? How well or to what level does this learning need to be perfected?

2. Plan of Operation and Methodology. Describe procedures for accomplishing the objectives of the project. Describe plans for management of the project to ensure its proper and efficient administration. Describe the way in which resources and personnel will be used to conduct the project.

3. Timetable. Provide a timetable for conducting the project. Identify all important project milestones and dates as they relate to project start-up, execution, evaluation, dissemination, and close-out.

4. Products, Results, and Measurable Outcomes. Explain the expected products and results, and their potential impact (outcome) on strengthening food and agricultural sciences education in the United States. (Important Note: “Products” may be actual items or services acquired with funds, e.g., “...developed three, new Web-based courses containing supplemental materials”; “Results” are intended or unintended consequences of the project, e.g., “...additional course materials now available online to reinforce student learning during non-classroom hours”; and “Outcomes/Impacts” are a measure of the results by comparing what might have happened in the absence of the funded project, e.g., “...an observed, overall increase in student learning based upon 8% higher average test scores of those students who both attended class and used the supplemental, web-based course materials”.) Quantify outputs and/or outcomes.

5. Evaluation Plans. Provide a methodology and implementation plan for evaluating the accomplishment of stated products, results and measurable outcomes during the project. Indicate the criteria, and corresponding weight of each, to be used in the evaluation process, describe any data to be collected and analyzed, and explain the methodology that will be used to determine the extent to which the needs underlying the project are met. Identify data to be used as baseline data. Demonstrate that the project’s impact on improving education will be evaluated. Please see Appendix A for suggested potential indicators and units of measurement. Finally, all applicants should actively participate and fund a meta-evaluation.

Baseline Data. For quantitative, baseline, student enrollment, degrees granted and employment data to make comparisons in meeting HSI Education Grants Program Goals, applicants could reference the Food and Agricultural Education Information System (FAEIS) resource at:

<http://faeis.ahnrit.vt.edu/>; the publication: *Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in the U.S. Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resources System 2005-2010* at: <http://faeis.ahnrit.vt.edu/supplydemand/2005-2010/>, or other, similar source(s).

Independent Evaluator. Grantees are encouraged to obtain an independent evaluation to secure appropriate documentation of the project's outcomes and impacts. Up to 5 percent of grant funds may be used for this purpose on Strengthening Projects and up to 5 percent on Standard Projects. Collaboration projects could use up to one percent of their grant funds for this purpose.

Meta Evaluation. All applicants should actively participate and fund a meta-evaluation and should plan to fund a project data collector as part of the evaluation project. Collaboration projects should assign about \$18,000 for a meta-evaluation. Finally, Strengthening and Standard projects should plan to spend an additional \$5,000 per year for the purpose of a meta-evaluation.

6. Logic Model. Applications for projects must include the 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 tool that should be used to develop your project **before** writing your proposal. Two additional pages are allowed for this information. See Part IV, B.f. for details on where to attach this information to your application. More information and resources related to the logic model planning process are provided at http://www.nifa.usda.gov/about/strat_plan_logic_models.html.

7. Sponsoring USDA agency. Document, if applicable, how applicants will find and partner with a sponsoring USDA agency in order to leverage grant funds and/or contribute towards the proposed project overall goals and objectives.

8. Dissemination Plans. Applicants must include in the project's Dissemination Plan 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 plan should include the following: educational journals; professional discipline publications; a website; presentations at regional or national conferences and workshops; and the Annual HSIs Project Director's Conference. Discuss the institution's commitment to disseminate project results and products. Identify target audiences and explain methods of communication. Consider distributing materials to other Hispanic-Serving Institutions, especially HSI grantees. **Applicants are encouraged to develop a project web page within the first six months of the project as part of their dissemination activities.**

As part of the award, you will be required to disseminate your findings and best practices at two types of meetings (see Part VI, D). **The proposed budget should reflect the attendance to a new project director's meeting and end of the year meeting the first year and an annual meeting every year after the life of the project. These meetings and a budget for four students to travel to meetings designated by the agency.**

(E) Institutional Capability and Capacity Building:

1. Institutional Commitment and Capability. Demonstrate that the program administration is committed to the project and has the capability to ensure its completion. Discuss how the benefits to be derived from the project will transcend the applicant institution or the grant period.

For example, substantiate that the institution attributes a high priority to the project, discuss how the project will contribute to the achievement of the institution's long-term (five- to ten-year) goals, explain how the project will help satisfy the institution's high-priority objectives, or show how this project is linked to and supported by the institution's strategic plan.

2. Institutional Resources. Document that the necessary institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials), and other appropriate resources, will be made available to the project. Demonstrate how the institutional resources to be made available to the project, when combined with the support requested from USDA, will be adequate to carry out the activities of the project.

3. Academic Enhancement. Document how this project will improve and strengthen teaching at the institution (including any partner institutions). Discuss how the benefits to be derived from the project will transcend the applicant institution or the grant period.

4. Continuation Plans. Discuss the likelihood of, or specific plans for, continuation or expansion of the project beyond the period of USDA support. For example, does the institution's long-range budget or academic plan provide for the realistic continuation or expansion of the initiative undertaken by this project after the end of the grant period, are plans for eventual self-support built into the project, are plans being made to institutionalize the program if it meets with success, and are there indications of other continuing non-Federal support?

(F) Key Personnel:

Discuss the adequacy and specific attributes and project responsibilities of each key person associated with the project. Also include the background and qualifications of those personnel who will be responsible for assessing project results and administering the project evaluation and reporting process. Appropriate bilingual and bicultural personnel should be included to better serve and attract underrepresented students to the programs offered. Include a current and pending support form that lists time commitment in percentage for each key staff. You are encouraged to include personnel knowledgeable of the culture of underrepresented students expected to be found at a Hispanic-serving Institution.

(G) Budget and Cost-effectiveness:

In addition to providing detailed information as part of the Budget Justification, include the following information as part of the Project Narrative:

(1) Discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed project activities. Explain how such budget items as professional or technical staff, travel, equipment, etc., are essential to achieving project objectives.

(2) Justify that the total budget will be adequate to carry out the activities of the project.

(3) Justify the project's cost-effectiveness. Show how the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes educational value for the dollar, achieves economies of scale or leverages additional funds. For example, discuss how the project has the potential to generate a critical

mass of expertise and activity focused on an Educational Need Area, or to promote coalition building that could lead to future ventures.

(4) Include the percentage of time key personnel will work on the project, both during the academic year and summer. The salaries of university personnel (i.e. their total compensation) must not exceed the faculty member's regular annual compensation. In addition, the total commitment of time devoted to the project, when combined with time for teaching and research duties, other sponsored agreements, and other employment obligations to the institution, must not exceed 100 percent of the normal workload for which the employee is compensated, in accordance with established university policies and applicable Federal cost principles.

(5) If the proposal addresses more than one Educational Need Areas or Discipline (e.g., student experiential learning and instruction delivery systems) state which one (primary) is most representative and list all the others in descending order of importance, and ii) estimate the proportion of the funds requested from USDA that will support each respective Priority Need Area or Discipline. **Make sure you explain how the primary Priority Need (or Discipline) supports one or more of the six current USDA Educational Need Areas (see Part I, C.4).**

(6) The table below can be used as a guide to determine and document the appropriate level of student stipend support.

Education Level: BS, MS, Ph.D.	Student Scholarship-Total Amount (\$)
Institution	Name/Department
Degree/Discipline	
Tuition	\$
Computer	\$
Stipend	\$
Travel to Professional Conference	\$
Expense X	\$
Expense Y	\$

Field 9. Bibliography & Cited References - (Optional Attachment – Must be PDF format)

If needed, provide a complete list of all references cited in the application. **For each reference, provide the complete name for each author, the year of the publication, full title of the article, name of the journal or book published volume, and the page numbers.** The references should be listed in alphabetical order using the last name of the first author.

Field 10. Facilities & Other Resources - (Optional Attachment – Must be 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 PDF format)

Equipment purchased (defined as in excess of \$5,000 for each item) must be fully justified under this section. Other purchases (e.g., computers, laboratory materials, etc.) are described, instead, in the Budget Justification section under the ‘Materials and Supplies’ line item.

Field 12. Other Attachments - (Must be 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.
- **Appendices to Project Narrative – PDF Attachment.** Title the attachment as ‘Appendices’ in the document header and save file as ‘Appendices’. 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.
- **Collaborative Arrangements – PDF Attachment. No Page Limit.** Title the attachment as ‘Collaborative Arrangements’ in the document header and save file as ‘CollaborativeArrangement’. 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.
- **Logic Model – PDF Attachment. 1-Page Limit per Award** Title the attachment as ‘Logic Model’ in the document header and save file as ‘LogicModel.’
Results from Prior HSI support - If the PD or a Co-PD has received HSI support in the past five years, information on results from that prior funding period is required. This information will be used in the review of the application. For each award, list the NIFA award number, the amount and period of support, the title of the project, a summary of the progress or results of the completed work, the long-term effects of these results, and the publications resulting from the award.
- **Expected Outcomes – PDF Attachment**
Title the attachment “Expected Outcomes” in the document header and save file 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.
- **Non-Land Grant College of Agriculture (NLGCA) Certification – PDF Attachment.** Applicants claiming exemption from the new matching requirement as NLGCA, must attach the NLGCA certification letter they requested and received from NIFA. Title attachment ‘NLGCA Certification’ and save file as ‘NLGCACertification’. To request certification as an NLGCA, complete the form at

<http://www.nifa.usda.gov/form/form.html>. Note that certification can take up to 30 days from submission of request form.

Recommended Format for Submitting Expected Impacts

Primary Project Function: (Choose one)		
EDUCATION: <input type="checkbox"/>	EXTENSION : <input type="checkbox"/>	RESEARCH: <input type="checkbox"/>
Total expected impact during entire grant period		Expected Number
Number of farmers to be served		
Number of products to be developed for students through grant funds Curricula Academic programs Recruitment/retention programs Materials Experiential learning opportunities		
Number of collaborations to be developed between institutions		
Number of faculty attending professional development: Sabbaticals Workshops Conferences Other		
Number of individuals who indirectly will benefit from the projects Using the curriculum/instrumentation, Enrolled in the program Recruited Retained		
Total number of students to be directly supported by grant Scholarships Fellowships Assistantships Internships Research experiences		
Number of underrepresented students to be supported during the grant period		
Number of women students to be supported during the grant period		
Number of students who will graduate as a result of the grant during grant period		
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 and other experiential learning during the grant-period		
Number of students who will complete international experiential learning as a result of this grant		
Number of students who will complete post-doctoral experiences as a result of this grant		

4. R&R Senior/Key Person (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.

A R&R Senior/Key Person Profile should be completed, at a minimum, for the PD, each co-PD, senior associate, and other professional personnel. A paraprofessional is an individual who through formal education, work experience and/or training has the knowledge and expertise to

assist a professional person. **Note: Even if no other funding is currently reported under the ‘Active’ section of this attachment, you must still list information for this grant application under the ‘Pending’ section of this attachment for each senior/key person identified above.**

The time commitments for this project stated on the Current and Pending include Federal and any cost shared salaries. Time commitments stated on the Current and Pending should not be lower than the combined Federal and match percentage of salary on the budget.

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. **DO NOT PROVIDE THE SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER OF THE PROJECT DIRECTOR/PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR.**

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. The following, additional information may be helpful:

Complete one R&R Fed and Non-Fed Budget Form for each 12-month period. If your project involves partners with whom you plan to share Federal funds, make sure (a) you include a subaward attachment for each project partner (subaward), for each 12-month period and (b) your budget figures reflect the required budget sharing criteria. Reasonable travel expenses to attend the Project Director’s Conference may be included in the travel expenses. Standard Projects should request to support five students to travel and attend national meetings recommended by the agency.

Field K. Budget Justification – (Required Attachment – Must be PDF format)

Application will not be accepted for review if this document is not included or not in PDF format (no exceptions). Applicants must include a budget request that is appropriate for this solicitation. Applications with a budget request that exceeds this cap will be excluded from review.

For project applications with more than one institution, indicate how funds will be distributed to the participating institutions. Please remember that collaboration projects cannot keep more than seventy percent of the award funds. Use the R&R Subaward Budget Attachment and attach as a separate file to indicate the names of the participating institutions with the amount(s) to be disbursed among them.

Provide a Budget Justification that reflects each 12-month period, plus a cumulative budget and budget justification for the entire project. If your project involves partners with whom you plan to share Federal funds, make sure the attachment includes the following information:

- (a) for the applicant institution as well as each project partner (subaward), for each 12-month period plus a cumulative column total for the entire project, and**
- (b) your budget figures reflect the required budget sharing criteria. Please note, Federal funds to be provided to collaborating institutions or subawards should be included in the budget line under “Other Direct Costs” Subcontracts.**

(c) Please note that all budgets, total, per year, and subcontracts, require a budget narrative.

The Budget Justification should follow a standard spreadsheet format ('Budget Line Item' = row; 'Budget Year' and 'Cumulative Project' = columns) including a detailed, itemized breakdown of each of the line item categories reported on the R&R Budget form. Please refer to the "Budgetary Details."

7. R&R Subaward Budget (Fed and Non-Fed) Attachment (Only required if submitting a project that includes subcontracting to any other organization).

8. Supplemental Information Form

a. Field 2. **Program to which you are applying.** Enter the program code name, 'Hispanic Serving Institutions Education Grants Program' and the program code, "NJ".

b. Field 8. **Conflict of Interest List. (Required Attachment – Must be PDF format)** See Part VI, 1.8 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template. Include this one-page attachment even if your responses to the questions are "N.A.".

C. Submission Dates and Times

a. **Strengthening applications** must be received by **5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on April 16, 2015**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

b. **Standard Projects** must be received by **5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on April 21, 2015**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

c. **Collaboration Projects** must be received by **5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on April 23, 2015**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

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

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 Authorized Representative (AR) has not received correspondence **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 30 days of the established deadline, 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

1. Use of Funds for Facilities

Under the Hispanic-Serving Institutions Education Grants Program, the use of grant funds to plan, acquire, or construct a building or facility is not allowed. With prior approval, in accordance with the cost principles set forth in OMB Circular No. A-21, some grant funds may be used for minor alterations, renovations, or repairs deemed necessary to retrofit existing teaching spaces in order to carry out a funded project. However, requests to use grant funds for such purposes must demonstrate that the alterations, renovations, or repairs are incidental to the major purpose for which a grant is issued.

2. Indirect Costs

Section 715 of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015 (Pub. L. 113-235) limits indirect costs to 30 percent of the total Federal funds provided under each award. 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. See Part V section 7.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further indirect cost information.

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 these 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 to producers and the general public of each application.

When each peer review panel has completed its deliberations, the responsible program staff of **HSI** 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.

HSI 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

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

Strengthening or Standard project applications will move directly to a panel review once the initial screening confirms these meet all the administrative requirements.

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 and agricultural sciences by strengthening institutional capacities to meet clearly delineated needs. Elements considered include institutional long-range goals, USDA's 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, logic model, 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 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 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 any collaborating institution(s); 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, and focuses expertise and activity on high-priority Educational 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 pre-award 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 **HSI** 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, 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:

- (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 NIFA;
- (5) Project period, specifying the amount of time NIFA intends to support the project without requiring re-competition for funds;
- (6) Total amount of financial assistance approved for the award;
- (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.

1. Project Directors Conferences

During the tenure of a grant, Project Directors must attend a New Project Director’s meeting. Project Directors are also required to attend a yearly National Project Directors’ meeting, if offered, in Washington, DC, or any other announced location. The purpose of the New Project Director’s meeting will be to discuss project and grant management, opportunities for collaborative efforts, and future directions for education reform. The Annual National Project Director’s meeting will build on the New Project Director’s meeting and will also provide opportunities to enhance dissemination of exemplary end products/results.

2. Annual Performance Report

An Annual Performance Report must be submitted within 90 days after the completion of the first year of the project and annually thereafter during the life of the grant (see #4 below). Generally, the Annual Performance Reports should include a summary of the overall progress toward project objectives, current problems or unusual developments, the next year's activities, and any other information that is pertinent to the ongoing project or which may be specified in the terms and conditions of the award. Applicants are also encouraged to develop an on-campus review committee to evaluate their progress and termination reports. This measure will help maximize the quality of the content within these reports.

ALL awards are expected to participate in grant program-wide meta-analysis. Finally, all applicants should actively include, participate and fund a meta-evaluation as part of their project plans.

3. Final Performance Report

A Final Performance Report must be submitted within 90 days after the expiration date of the project (see #4 below). The expiration date is specified in the award documents and modifications thereto, if any. Generally, the Final Performance Report should be a summary of the completed project, including: a review of project objectives and accomplishments; a description of any products and outcomes resulting from the project; activities undertaken to disseminate products and outcomes; partnerships and collaborative ventures that resulted from the project; future initiatives that are planned as a result of the project; the impact of the project on the project director(s), students, the departments, the institution, and the food and agricultural sciences higher education system; and data on project personnel and beneficiaries. The Final Performance Report should be accompanied by samples or copies of any products or publications resulting from or developed by the project. The Final Performance Report also must contain any other information which may be specified in the terms and conditions of the award and should include an independent and appropriate documentation of the project's outcomes and impacts. Applicants are also encouraged to develop an on-campus review committee to evaluate their progress and termination reports. This measure will help maximize the quality of the content within these reports. Finally, grantees are expected to track the students served.

Grantees are strongly encouraged to write and publish an article on the project's results and findings on a peer reviewed journal.

For quantitative, baseline, student enrollment, degrees granted and employment data to make comparisons in meeting HSI Education Grants Program Goals, applicants could reference the Food and Agricultural Education Information System (FAEIS) resource at: <http://faeis.ahnrit.vt.edu/>; the publication: *Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in the U.S. Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resources System 2005-2010* at: <http://faeis.ahnrit.vt.edu/supplydemand/2005-2010/>, or other, similar source(s).

4. Other Reports

Grantees should be aware that NIFA may, as a part of its own program evaluation activities, carry out in-depth evaluations of assisted activities. Thus, grantees should be prepared to cooperate with NIFA personnel, or persons retained by NIFA, in evaluating the institutional context and the impact of any supported project. Grantees may be asked to provide general information on any students and faculty supported, in whole or in part, by a grant awarded under this program; information that may be requested includes, but is not limited to, standardized academic achievement test scores, grade point average, academic standing, career patterns, age, race/ethnicity, gender, citizenship, and disability.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Programmatic Contact –

Dr. Irma A. Lawrence; National Program Leader; Division of Community and Education; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA; 1400 Independence Ave., SW; STOP 2250 Washington, DC 20250-2251; telephone: (202) 720-2082; fax: (202) 720-4924; e-mail: ilawrence@nifa.usda.gov.

Administrative/Business Contacts –

Duane Alphs; Team Leader, Branch II, Team II; Office of Grants and Financial Management; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Stop 2201 Washington, DC 20250-2201; telephone: (202) 401-4326; fax: (202) 401-6271; email dalphs@nifa.usda.gov.

Rochelle McCrea; Team Leader, Branch II, 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) 401-2880; fax: (202) 401-6271; email: rmccrea@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 Financial Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions](#), for applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.

Educational and general expenditures means the total amount expended by an institution for instruction, research, public service, academic support (including library expenditures), student services, institutional support, scholarships and fellowships, operation and maintenance expenditures for the physical plant, and any mandatory transfers that the institution is required to pay by law.

Educational Need Areas means the specific area(s) of educational focus identified in the solicitation for applications and addressed by the applicant's proposal. Educational Need Areas are derived from statutory language authorizing the grants program and specific Educational Need Areas are targeted for funding support in the request for applications.

Eligible institution means an institution of higher education:

- (1) that has an enrollment of needy students as defined in this section;
- (2) except if waived by the Secretary of Education, the average educational and general expenditures of which are low, per full-time equivalent undergraduate student, in comparison with the average educational and general expenditures per full-time equivalent undergraduate student of institutions that offer similar instruction;

- (3) that is legally authorized to provide, and provides within the State, an educational program for which the institution awards a bachelor's degree; or that is a junior or community college as defined in this section;
- (4) that is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association determined by the Secretary of Education to be a reliable authority as to the quality of training offered or that is, according to such an agency or association, making reasonable progress toward accreditation;
- (5) that meets such other requirements as the Secretary of Education may prescribe; and
- (6) that is located in a State.

The term eligible institution also applies to any branch of any institution of higher education, described by the definition of an eligible institution, that by itself satisfies the requirements contained in clauses (1) and (2) of the definition of an eligible institution.

For purposes of determining whether an institution is an eligible institution, the factor described under clause (1) of the definition of an eligible institution shall be given twice the weight of the factor described under clause (2) of the definition of an eligible institution.

Eligible participant means an individual who: (1) Is a citizen or national of the United States, as defined in this section; or (2) Is a citizen of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, or the Republic of Palau. Where eligibility is claimed on the basis of owing permanent allegiance to the United States, documentary evidence from the Immigration and Naturalization Service as to such eligibility must be made available to USDA upon request.

Full-time equivalent students means the sum of the number of students enrolled full time at an institution, plus the full-time equivalent of the number of students enrolled part time (determined on the basis of the quotient of the sum of the credit hours of all part-time students divided by 12) at such institution.

Hispanic-Serving Institution means an institution of higher education that:

- (1) is an eligible institution as defined in this section; and
- (2) at the time of application, has an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25 percent Hispanic students.

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 providing a 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 preaccreditation status by

such an agency or association that has been recognized by the Secretary of Education for the granting of preaccreditation 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.

Junior or community college means an institution of higher education that:

- (1) admits as regular students persons who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance in the State in which the institution is located and who have the ability to benefit from the training offered by the institution;
- (2) does not provide an educational program for which the institution awards a bachelor's degree (or an equivalent degree); and
- (3) provides an educational program of not less than 2 years in duration that is acceptable for full credit toward such a degree; or offers a 2-year program in engineering, mathematics, or the physical or biological sciences, designed to prepare a student to work as a technician or at the semiprofessional level in engineering, scientific, or other technological fields requiring the understanding and application of basic engineering, scientific, or mathematical principles of knowledge.

Nonprofit 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.

Plan of Work means a detailed, step-by-step description of how the applicant intends to accomplish the project's objectives. At a minimum, the Plan of Work should include a time line of major activities to be undertaken, descriptions of protocols and procedures to be followed, an explanation of how resources will be acquired and used, and an outline of the qualifications and responsibilities of all key project personnel.

Strengthening project proposal means a proposal for a project: (1) where the applicant institution will be the sole entity involved in the execution of the project; or (2) which will involve the applicant institution and one other entity, but where the involvement of the other entity does not meet the requirements for a Collaboration Project proposal as defined in this section.

Underrepresented means proportionate representation as measured by degree recipients that is less than the proportionate representation in the general population--(i) As indicated by (A) The most current edition of the Department of Education's Digest of Education Statistics; (B) The National Research Council's Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities; or (C) Other standard statistical references, as documented by national survey data submitted to and accepted by the Secretary on a case-by-case basis.

APPENDIX A FOR PROJECT EVALUATION AND REPORTING:

Need areas that you might be addressing in your proposed project are listed below. Underneath the need areas are ways for you to quantify the products and individuals served by the projects. Ways in which to quantify your impact are listed too. To answer these impacts and outcomes questions, consider using valid and reliable methodology (i.e., pre/posttest instruments and surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc.). It would be best to present this information in your proposal - “what you intend to do” - and your annual and final reports “what you have done).”

CURRICULUM, MATERIALS, PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Products and Individuals Served:

Please identify: Program, course, curriculum, instructional materials

Please identify: on campus instruction, distance education

of courses developed

of modules developed

of degree programs developed

If applicable, degree level _____

of certification programs developed

of credits/credit hours

of students enrolled in new course/degree program

of students using technology/materials derived from project

of degrees conferred in new program

Outcomes and Impacts:

Does the curriculum, materials, or programs developed/changed affect students’ interest, engagement, or learning in the food and agriculture sciences?

To what extent do other institutions adopt the program or curriculum developed?

SCIENTIFIC INSTRUMENTATION FOR TEACHING

Products and Individuals Served:

Type of instrumentation obtained: lab equipment, computers, lab supplies, printed materials, books

Other (please specify): _____

of individuals using instrumentation within department

of individuals using instrumentation outside of department

Outcomes and Impacts:

Does the new scientific instrumentation affect students’ interest, engagement, or learning in the food and agriculture sciences?

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

Products and Individuals Served:

of faculty supported to attend or participate in the following training or developmental activities:

Degree or certification programs

Workshops

Experiential learning opportunities

Professional meetings

Sabbaticals/Visiting Scholar Programs

Other (please specify): _____

Outcomes and Impacts:

Does the faculty development opportunities supported by the grant affect faculty competencies in teaching food and agriculture sciences?

STUDENT EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Products and Individuals Served:

Location of activity: on campus, off campus, both

of experiential learning opportunities at the following locations:

- Businesses
- Organizations/non-profits
- Academic institutions
- USDA agencies
- Federal agencies other than USDA
- State/local government
- International
- Other (please specify) _____

of experiential learning opportunities:

- Internships
- Research opportunities
- International/ study abroad
- Peer mentoring
- Volunteer opportunities/community service
- Outreach/extension activities
- Other (please specify) _____

of publications (i.e., journal, newsletter articles or other media)

Citations: _____

of products (i.e., webpages, games, etc.)

of presentations (i.e., oral or posters)

Outcomes and Impacts:

Do the experiential learning opportunities developed affect students’ interest, engagement, or learning in the food and agriculture sciences?

COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

Products and Individuals Served:

of internal institutional partnerships

of external partnering institutions

Please identify: government, business, academic institution, non-profit

If academic institution, please specify: 1890, 1862, public non-land grant, 1994, MSI, HSI, private

Duration of partnership. From _____ to _____

of shared courses

of shared faculty

of shared facilities

Outcomes and Impacts:

Does the collaborative activity affect students’ interest, engagement, or learning in the food and agriculture sciences?

Do the collaborative activities strengthen the capability of the institution to recruit, retain, and graduate students in the food and agriculture sciences?

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Products and Individuals Served:

- # of students contacted (include K-12)
- # of students recruited in the current academic year
- # of students enrolled as a result of recruitment efforts
- # of underrepresented students recruited

Types of activities:

- a. institution field trips
- b. academic preparation workshops

- # of parent contacts

Outcomes and Impacts:

Do the techniques used in the project influence the number of students (or number of underrepresented students) recruited in comparison to recruiting techniques used prior?

STUDENT RETENTION

Products and Individuals Served:

- # of students retained in the current academic year
- # underrepresented students retained in the current academic year
- # of tutoring hours
- # of advisor hours

Outcomes and Impacts:

Do the techniques used in the project influence the number of students (or number of underrepresented students) retained in comparison to retention techniques used prior?

CONFERENCE PLANNING

Products and Individuals Served:

- Conference type: regional, national, state, local
- # of attendees
- # of presenters
- # of poster sessions
- # of presentations given

Outcomes and Impacts:

Did the conference result affect attendees' knowledge in the food and agriculture sciences?

INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY SYSTEMS

Products and Individuals Served:

- # of students using the new instructional delivery system
- # of capstone courses developed
- # of cooperative learning opportunities developed
- # of service learning opportunities developed
- # of case studies developed
- # of online classes developed

Outcomes and Impacts:

Does the new scientific instrumentation affect students' interest, engagement, or learning in the food and agriculture sciences?

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Products and Individuals Served:

- # of participating students
- # of participating faculty
- # of participating institutions
- # of conference poster presentations
- # of conference talks
- # of peer-reviewed journal articles
- # of publications besides peer-reviewed journal articles
- # of patents

Outcomes and Impacts:

What new discoveries were generated through this research project? What are the benefits and who will benefit?

EXTENSION PROJECTS

Products and Individuals Served:

- Primary grant type: agriculture, youth, natural resources, nutrition/health
- # of community members served (estimate):
 - # of farmer contacts
 - # of acres improved
 - # of youth contacts
 - # of youth clubs
 - # of community contacts
 - # of health and wellness activities
 - # of educational materials developed (i.e., CDs, brochures, etc.)

Outcomes and Impacts:

Did the project result in a change in knowledge or attitude by community members, youth, farmers, ranchers, or other extension personnel?