

Women and Minorities in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Fields Program (WAMS)

**Modification: Due Date changed to May 29, 2015
(4/30/2015).**

Fiscal Year 2015 Request for Applications (RFA)

APPLICATION DEADLINE: May 29, 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**

**WOMEN AND MINORITIES IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND
MATHEMATICS FIELDS PROGRAM (WAMS)**

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.318.

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) **May 29, 2015** (5:00 pm Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) seeks your comments about this RFA. We will consider the comments when we develop the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and we'll use them to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). Submit written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice to Policy and Oversight Division via e-mail to: Policy@nifa.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Women and Minorities in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Fields Program (WAMS) Grants Program RFA. Stakeholder input/feedback are also solicited through annual Project Directors' Meetings/Conferences, webinars, electronic, formal and informal communications with clientele, federal, academic and other collaborators.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the Women and Minorities in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Fields Program (WAMS) for FY 2015 to support research and Extension activities that increase the number of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas who will pursue and complete a postsecondary degree in science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) disciplines. The amount available for support of this program in FY 2015 is approximately \$400,000.

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

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

Legislative Authority

This program is administered under the provisions of Section 7209 of the Agricultural Act of 2015. (Pub. L. 110-246). This authority amends Section 1672 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 5925(e)(49). for the Secretary of Agriculture to make competitive grants to increase the participation of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas (definition Part VIII, E) in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) in higher education (7 U.S. C. section 5925 (e) (49). Priority is extended to eligible institutions that carry out continuing programs funded by the Secretary.

Background

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

B. Purpose and Priorities

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

The program contributes to the USDA NIFA Strategic Goal #1 “Catalyze exemplary and relevant research, education and extension programs,” (http://nifa.usda.gov/about/pdfs/strat_plan_2014.pdf) and Sub-Goal #1.7: “Ensure the

development of human capital, communities, and a diverse workforce through research, education, extension and engagement programs in food and agricultural sciences to support a sustainable agricultural system.”

The FY 2015 WAMS grant opportunity should be aligned with the six NIFA Priority Areas:

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

The legislative purpose of this program is to support research and extension projects that increase participation by women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas in fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). NIFA intends this program to address educational needs, as determined by each institution, within broadly defined areas of food and agricultural sciences and related disciplines.

7 U.S. C. section 5925(d) provides a priority to those grant proposals, found in the peer review process to be scientifically meritorious, that involve the cooperation of multiple entities. WAMS applicants are encouraged to submit applications that will result in building linkages with other institutions (including other colleges and universities, units of State government, and private sector entities) having a significant, ongoing commitment to the food and agricultural sciences generally and to the specific Need Area(s) for which a grant is requested (see below). The goals of such joint initiative should include:

- maximizing the development and use of limited resources (including faculty, facilities, and equipment) by generating a critical mass of expertise and activity focused on a targeted Need Area(s);
- increasing cost-effectiveness through achieving economies of scale; strengthening the scope and quality of a project’s impact; and
- promoting coalition building likely to transcend the project’s lifetime and lead to future ventures.

NIFA encourages the applicant’s consideration of the recommendations in the “New Biology for the 21st Century: Ensuring the United States Leads the Coming Revolution; National Academy of Sciences’ Report on Agricultural Education; Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) Whitepaper on Human Capacity Development, “*Transforming Agricultural Education for the Changing World*”; and, the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST) Report to the President on Agricultural Preparedness and the Agriculture Research Enterprise in developing the application.

Priority will be given to those projects that ensure a competent and qualified workforce to guide the food and agricultural sciences system. WAMS funded projects should improve the economic health and viability of rural communities by developing research and Extension initiatives that focus on new and emerging employment opportunities in STEM occupations. Hence, the goal of WAMS projects is to meet the national challenge to increase the number and diversity of students entering food and agriculture-related STEM disciplines (i.e. having a food and agricultural sciences workforce representative of the nation's population). Projects that contribute to the economic viability of rural communities are also encouraged.

WAMS encourages projects that develop content suitable for delivery through the Cooperative Extension System's eXtension Initiative. Funds may be used to contribute to existing Communities of Practice (COPs) or form new COPs that focus on **Stakeholder /Land Grant Institutions Partnership: Integrated Research, Extension and Education**. Projects must align with the eXtension vision, mission and values. A letter of acknowledgment from eXtension is required, and a letter of support may be required from one or more of the Communities of Practice. For detailed guidance on how to partner with eXtension, go to <http://create.extension.org/node/2057>.

C. Program Area Description

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

1. Educational Need Areas

WAMS projects should focus on the purpose of one or more of the FY 2015 Need Areas. Please note that at least one of these Need Areas must be indicated on the Project Summary (Part IV, B.3.).

a. Curriculum Design, Materials Development, and Library Resources

Promotes the development of courses of study and degree programs, new and improved curricula, and instructional materials and technology; to promote the acquisition of library resources including books and journals relating to the food and agricultural sciences; and to stimulate the use of new approaches to the study of traditional subjects, new research on teaching and learning theory, and new applications of knowledge. The overall objective is to increase the quality of, and continuously renew, the academic programs of the eligible institutions in the food and agricultural sciences.

b. Faculty Preparation and Enhancement of Teaching

Advances faculty development in the areas of teaching competency and leadership, subject matter expertise, or student recruitment and advising skills. Applications may emphasize, but are not limited to: obtaining experience with recent developments and new applications in a field; expanding competence in innovative technologies and new methods of instruction delivery;

developing new skills in a field of science or education including student advising skills; or pursuing graduate-level study in a field related to the food and agricultural sciences.

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

c. Instruction Delivery Systems

Encourages the use of alternative methods of delivering instruction to enhance the quality, effectiveness, and cost efficiency of teaching programs. Applications may emphasize, but are not limited to: incorporating alternative instructional methodologies that respond to differences in student learning styles; inter-institutional collaborations that deliver instruction in ways that maximize program quality and reduce unnecessary duplication; and consideration and implementation of innovative instructional techniques, methodologies, and delivery systems in response to advances in knowledge and technology.

d. Scientific Instrumentation for Teaching and Research

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

e. Student Experiential Learning

Furtheres the development of student scientific and professional competencies through experiential learning programs that provide students with opportunities to solve complex problems in the context of real-world situations. Applications may emphasize, but are not limited to: preparing future graduates to advance knowledge and technology, enhancing quality of life, conserve resources, and addressing community and economic development issues. Projects should focus on advancing student decision-making and communications skills, and improving real-life technological expertise. Activities may include, but are not limited to, internships, practicum experiences, study abroad opportunities, and participation with faculty on applied research and related community development projects. For example, 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. CBG teaching 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.

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

Enhances educational equity for under-represented students, and to strengthen student recruitment and retention programs in order to promote the future strength of the Nation’s scientific, professional, and technical workforce in the food and agricultural sciences.

Applications may emphasize, but are not limited to:

- initiating new projects or supplementing current efforts to attract increased number of students from under-represented groups, their families, and communities to engage in a robust exchange of ideas on more effective use of the full breadth of the Nation’s intellectual resources;
- agricultural and science literacy program at the high school level to attract students to college and careers in the food and agricultural sciences; mentoring programs and other initiatives for student retention; and the provision of student financial support to attend college.

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

2. Applied Projects

In addition to the Education Need Areas, applications may choose to develop studies that have relevancy and application within the communities that these institutions serve. The purpose of each initiative is defined.

a. Applied Studies in the Food and Agricultural Sciences

Apply the body of knowledge in those natural and social sciences that comprise the food and agricultural sciences to address real-world problems, including applied research activities focusing on community and economic development issues related to food, nutrition, conservation, and renewable natural resources. Examples include:

- (i) Conducting plant or animal breeding programs to develop better crops, forests, or livestock (e.g., more disease resistant, more productive, yielding higher quality products);
- (ii) Conceiving, designing, and evaluating new bio-processing techniques for eliminating undesirable constituents from or adding desirable ones to food products;

(iii) Proposing and evaluating ways to enhance utilization of the capabilities and resources of WAMS institutions to promote rural development (e.g., exploitation of new technologies by small rural businesses);

(iv) Identifying control factors influencing consumer demand for agricultural products;

(v) Analyzing social, economic, and physiological aspects of nutrition, housing, and lifestyle choices, and of community strategies for meeting the changing needs of different population groups; and,

(vi) Studying other identified State, regional, community, national and global problems such as human nutrition and obesity prevention, sustainable agriculture, bio-energy, climate change, food safety, food security, biotechnology, agribusiness management and marketing, and aquaculture.

b. Applied Research Support Systems

Establish centralized support systems to meet State, regional, or community needs, or serve clientele that cannot otherwise afford or do not have ready access to the support in question, or to provide such support more economically thereby freeing up resources for other applied research uses. Examples include:

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

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

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

c. Technology-based Information Delivery Systems

Promote innovations and improvements in the delivery of benefits of food and agricultural sciences to producers and consumers, particularly those who are currently disproportionately low in receipt of such benefits. Examples include:

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

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

d. Other Applied Research and Community Development Applications

Encourage other creative projects, outside the areas previously outlined, that are designed to provide needed enhancement to the capacity of WAMS institutions to conduct applied research and related community development projects.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The amount available for NIFA support of this program in FY 2015 is \$400,000. The funds will be awarded competitively through a peer panel review process. 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://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/method_of_payment.html.

B. Types of Applications

This WAMS RFA is requesting applications supportive of integrated research, education, and/or extension projects; increase participation of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas in STEM fields; and address one or more of the Educational Need Areas or Applied Projects.

Supporting the many components of agriculture under the constraints of a growing population, pressure on natural resources, and the challenges of climate variability and change, requires research, education, extension, and integrated programs that increase agricultural and natural resource sustainability. The term "sustainable agriculture" (National Agriculture Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA), (7 U.S.C. 3103) means an integrated system of plant and animal production practices having a site-specific application that will over the long-term achieve the following goals: 1) Satisfy human food and fiber needs; 2) Enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base upon which the agriculture economy depends; 3) Make the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm resources and integrate, where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls; 4) Sustain the economic viability of farm operations; and 5) Enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole.

In FY 2015, applications may be submitted to the WAMS program as one of the following types of requests:

(1) New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the WAMS Program. All new 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 WAMS Program but not funded. Applicants must respond to the previous review panel summary, (see Responses to Previous Review, Part IV). Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending

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

C. Project Types

1. Regular Grant

An eligible institution, individual institution, independent branch campus, or branch institution of a State system may submit a Regular Grant application for project activities to be undertaken principally on behalf of its own students or faculty and to be managed primarily by its own personnel.

2. Consortium Grant

To facilitate inter-institutional cooperation and collaborative initiatives, two or more eligible, individual institutions, independent branch campuses, or branch institutions of a State system within a State may form a consortium, or use an existing consortium of which they are members, and submit a Consortium Grant application under a consortium agreement. In such cases, one institution or fiscal agent is to be designated as the “lead institution”. The designated lead institution, fiscal agent, and PD, will receive the award on behalf of all the consortium members, will be responsible for managing the grant, and may allocate awarded funds among the consortia members. Eligible consortium members may be sub-grantees of the primary award. Other entities not eligible to receive an award directly from NIFA under this program may also participate in fulfilling grant objectives and receive a sub-grant via the designated lead institution.

A Consortium Grant application must contain a separate plan of work and a separate budget for each consortium member receiving funds as a sub-grantee, as well as an overall project plan of work and overall budget from the lead institution. Sub-grantees may not normally receive less than 10 percent of total grant funds. Applications proposing that sub-grantees receive less than 10 percent of total grant funds must be fully justified. Only in exceptional instances will NIFA approve involvement by sub-grantees at a lower level.

Sub-grantee arrangements by the lead institution with consortium members and others must be approved in advance by NIFA. The cumulative amounts of any such arrangements may not be for more than 70 percent of total grant funds.

3. Project Duration

A project duration may request funding for a project period from 12 months to 36 months duration (from one to three years).

4. Number and Size of Awards

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

NIFA estimates that awards for Regular Grant applications will be in the range of \$75,000 to \$150,000 (total amount – not per year) for a Regular Project. Budget forms submitted with the grant applications should reflect this estimate. In a Regular Project, the applicant executes the project without the requirement of sharing grant funds with other project partners.

NIFA estimates that awards for Consortium Grant applications will be in the range of \$300,000 (total, not per year). Note that the amount of grant funds going to eligible consortium members as sub-grantees does NOT have to be the same for each sub-grantee; however, a sub-grantee will not normally receive less than 10 percent and the applicant institution submitting an application must retain at least 30 percent but not more than 70 percent of the awarded funds. Requests for deviations from these restrictions must be fully justified for review and approval by the panel of reviewers and NIFA before a final decision is made on the application. Such approval will be made only under the most exceptional circumstances.

Note the actual amounts awarded by NIFA under the WAMS program may differ from the amounts requested in the application submitted to the program, and the revised budgets can revised plans of work may be required by NIFA before an award is made.

5. Proposal Submission Limitations

Each eligible, individual institution, independent branch campus, and branch institution of a State system may submit, or be a party to, a maximum of two applications for funding. An institution (or its fiscal agent) may submit one application as an individual institution (see Part II, C.1., Regular Grant) and also may be a party to one other application as a part of a consortium arrangement (see Part II, C.2., Consortium Grant). Institutions may not apply as part of more than one consortium arrangement.

6. Grant Limitations per Institution

For the FY 2015 program, each eligible, individual institution, independent branch campus, and branch institution of a State system may receive, or be a party to, a maximum of two grant awards – one Regular Grant and one Consortium Grant – under the WAMS program. This ceiling includes sub-grant awards made under a consortium arrangement (i.e., an institution may participate as the lead institution or as a sub-grantee on a Consortium Grant, and also receive one Regular Grant on its own). USDA may fund an institution simultaneously under both applications. Institutions that received a grant under this program in a prior year are still eligible to receive a grant this year.

7. Funding Limitations per Institution

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

D. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research

The responsible and ethical conduct of research (RCR) is critical for excellence, as well as public trust, in science and engineering. Consequently, education in RCR is considered essential in the preparation of future scientists. In accordance with sections 2, 3, and 8 of 7 CFR Part 3022, institutions that conduct extramural research funded by USDA must foster an atmosphere conducive to research integrity, bear primary responsibility for prevention and detection of research misconduct and are to maintain and effectively communicate and train their staff regarding policies and procedures. In the event an application to NIFA results in an award, the AOR 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 and procedures as well as 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, at a minimum, will 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 (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

1. Individual Applicants

As contained in Section 7204 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (FCEA) (Pub. L. 110-246 which amends Section 1672 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 5925)), applications may only be submitted by eligible applicants and may be a collaborative state, tribal, local, or regionally-based network or partnership of public or private entities. Eligible applicants are: (a) State agricultural experiment stations; (b) colleges and universities; (c) university research foundations; (d) other research institutions and organizations; (e) Federal agencies; (f) national laboratories; (g) private organizations or corporations; (h) individuals; or (i) any group consisting of two or more of the entities described in subparagraphs (a) through (h). Priority will be given to eligible institutions that carry out continuing programs funded by the Secretary.

An applicant's failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of an application deadline will result in NIFA failing to review, or even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award.

2. Consortium Arrangements

For a Consortium Project (with two or more partners), only the applicant institution/organization must meet the definition of an eligible institution/organization as specified in this RFA; other entities participating in a Consortium Project are not required to meet the definition of an eligible institution/organization. Award recipients may subcontract portions of the project to organizations not eligible to apply, provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

For institutions of higher education, individual branches of a State university system, or other system of higher education, separately accredited as degree granting institutions, are treated as separate and are therefore eligible to apply for WAMS Program awards. Accreditation must be by an agency or association recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

3. Certification of Eligibility

At the time of application, primary applicants (lead applicants or Project Directors) must demonstrate their institution of higher education is accredited as a degree granting institution. If an institution currently has a Title III, Part A grant from the U.S. Department of Education that does not end prior to September 30, 2015, the institution shall submit a copy of the "Notice of Award" letter for that grant along with its application to satisfy the demonstration of eligibility requirement.

Otherwise, an institution must submit a letter, signed by the institution's Authorized Representative (AR) certifying that it meets the requirements of WAMS as defined above.

The AR must certify that:

- a. The institution, or parent institution in the case of an independent branch campus, is legally authorized by the State in which it is located to provide an educational program for which it awards an associate's or bachelor's degree, or that it is a junior or community college;
- b. The institution, or parent institution in the case of an independent branch campus, 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 making reasonable progress toward such accreditation;
- c. At least 50 percent of enrolled degree students are receiving need-based assistance under Title IV of the Higher Education Act, or that a substantial percentage of students are receiving Pell Grants in comparison with the percentage of students receiving Pell Grants at all similar institutions (institution of higher education, or junior or community college);
- d. Unless waived by the Secretary of Education, the average educational and general expenditure per full-time equivalent undergraduate student are low in comparison with the average educational and general expenditures per full-time equivalent student at institutions that offer similar instructions; and,

Eligibility documentation must be submitted with the application. See Part III, A5.

4. Fiscal Agent

If an institution cannot accept Federal funds directly, it must admit a letter stating that it will accept the award, but that funds must be administered through a fiscal agent. This agent must be identified in the letter for the applicant and the letter must be countersigned by a representative of the fiscal agent organization. The letter should include the fiscal agent's point of contact, address, telephone number, fax number and email address. Both the fiscal agent and the applicant institution must submit complete management information (see Part V, D.). Nevertheless, the legal recipient of the award must be an eligible, individual institution, independent branch campus, or branch institution of a State system, or a consortium of eligible institutions. Submission of fiscal agent information (above) is not requested now, but will be required, before an award is made.

Please note that consortia may designate fiscal agents for the members of the consortia and allocate funds among the consortia members.

Examples of fiscal agent arrangements include, but are not limited to the following scenarios:

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

b. A State university system or a public system of higher education may apply on behalf of two or more eligible, individual institutions, independent branch campuses, or branch institutions in its State under the consortium arrangement. In such cases, the State system will act as fiscal agent for the eligible institutions under a Consortium Grant award to advance the purposes of the WAMS grants program.

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

d. A research foundation, or other similar foundation established and maintained by an eligible, individual institution to facilitate the application and management of externally-funded grant awards may apply on behalf of its parent institution and at least one additional eligible, individual institution, independent branch campus, or branch institution of a State system under a consortium arrangement. In such cases, the foundation will act as fiscal agent for the eligible institutions under a Consortium Grant award to advance the purposes of the WAMS grants program.

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, 2014, the recipient of an award from the [WAMS] 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 part 200) 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 National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board (NAREEEAB), please refer to the 2014 Research, Education and Economics Action Plan http://www.ree.usda.gov/ree/news/USDA_REE_Action_Plan_03-2014.pdf
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, it is suggested that the PD/PI first contact an Authorized Representative (AR) (also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grant.gov. If not (e.g., the institution/organization is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov), then the one-time registration process must be completed **PRIOR** to submitting an application. It can take as long as 2 weeks to complete the registration process so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations, the AR should go to **“Register” in the top right corner of the Grants.gov web page (or go to <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html>) for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov.** Item 2. below mentions the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.” Part II.1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide contains additional explanatory language regarding the registration process.

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

To receive application materials:

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

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-WAMS-005116

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

Contained within the application package is the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide”. This guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

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

Grants.gov customer support
1-800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035
Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on [Federal Holidays](#).
Email: support@grants.gov

Grants.gov iPortal: Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7:00 A.M. - 9:00 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

See <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html> for additional resources for applying electronically.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

You should prepare electronic applications following Parts V and VI of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guided. This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed in order to prepare an application in response to this RFA. **If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.**

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the Guide. ANY PROPOSALS THAT ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS (i.e., content format, pdf file format, file name restrictions, and no password protected files) WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR NIFA REVIEW. Grants.gov does not check for NIFA required attachments or that attachments are in PDF format, see Part III section 6.1 of the guide for how to check the manifest of submitted files. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. We will accept subsequent submissions of an application until close of business on the closing date in the RFA (see Part V, 2.1 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further information).

Grants.gov provides online tools to assist if you do not own PDF-generating software. You will find PDF conversion software at: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/software/pdf-conversion-software.html>.

For any questions related to the preparation of an application, review the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide and the applicable request for applications. 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, 7:00 am – 5:00 pm Eastern Time, 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. SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)

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

3. R&R Other Project Information

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

a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract – (Required Attachment – Must be PDF format) Project Summary/Abstract is required in all applications and is limited to 2 pages. Applicants are encouraged to revisit the page numbers after converting the narrative to PDF format and make the necessary adjustments if the required page limit has been exceeded. **Project Summary/Abstract that exceeds this page limit requirement will not be accepted for review.**

b. Field 8. Project Narrative – (Required Attachment – Must be PDF format). **Applications will not be accepted for review if the project narrative is not included or not in PDF format.**

NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 20 pages of written text (excluding up to a maximum of 5 additional pages for supporting figures and tables). We have established this maximum (25-page limit) to ensure fair and equitable competition for both types of applications. Project Narratives that exceed this page limit requirement will not be accepted for review (no exceptions). Applicants are encouraged to revisit the page numbers after converting the narrative to PDF format and make the necessary adjustments if the required page limit has been exceeded. **Project Narratives that exceed this page limit requirement will not be accepted for review.**

Include the following underlined text along with your responses:

- List the Project Title;
- List the Project Director (and any) Co-Project Director(s) (include institutional affiliation of each);

- List your project's Degree Level: (i.e. associates of science, Bachelors of Science, masters of science, etc.);
- List your project's Educational Need and/or Applied Project Area: (Part I, C.);
- Consortium Grant: Yes or No? (Do you plan to share Federal grant funds with other partners? See 'Definitions', Part VIII. E.);
- Partners: If Consortium Grant, list all partner institutions/organizations that will share grant funding (Note: Each Partner so identified needs to have their budget information submitted on a separate Subaward Budget Attachment). If not a Consortium Grant, enter: 'N.A.'; and,
- Total Funds Requested: (List total Federal funds for this application. If this project is a Consortium Grant, 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?
 - Products: What will be produced?
 - Outcome/Impact: What is the intended result (consequence) of your project? Describe 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.

The **Project Narrative** for a Regular Grant application shall not exceed 20 double –spaced pages of written text and up to 5 additional pages for figures and tables. This maximum of 25 pages has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition.

The **Project Narrative** for a Consortium Grant application must contain an overall plan of work limited to 10 double-spaced pages of written text for the lead institution. A Project Narrative, limited to 10 double–spaced pages for each consortium member receiving funds as a sub-grantee should also be submitted. Up to 5 additional pages for figures and tables are allowed for each consortium member receiving funds (lead institution and sub-grantees).

The Project Narrative for both a Regular Grant and a Consortium Grant (required for both the lead institution and consortium institutional partners) must include all of the following:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(11) **Evaluation Plan**

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

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

In addition to measuring progress toward achieving specific outcomes, the Evaluation Plan (see Part IV, B.3. Field 12) must also include a strategy for assessing how the project advances the WAMS Program Goals.

It should state that overall goal of the project, identify the measurable objectives, and indicate the outcome measures that will determine the success of the project and the relevance of these to the

WAMS Program goals. At a minimum, project assessment should indicate a projected number of students or faculty impacted by the project as a result of the proposed activities as one assessment measure. Suggested resources Project Evaluation:

- Department of Education’s Report of the Academic Competitiveness Council, May 2007, Federal STEM Goals and Metrics, Education Undergraduate National Goals and Metrics;
- NSF 02-057: The 2002 User-Friendly Handbook for Project Evaluation, a basic guide to quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods for educational projects <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2002/nsf02057/start.htm>. Other similar sources may also be consulted.

(12) **Dissemination and Continuation Plan**

Include in the project’s Dissemination Plan (see Part IV, B.3. Field 8.2.e) a description of how the applicant plans to communicate project accomplishments (products, results, impacts, etc.) to the broadest extent throughout the academic community. This may include educational journals or other professional discipline publications and presentations at regional or national conferences and workshops.

(13) **Continuation Plan**

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

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

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

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

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

- **Response to Previous Review - PDF Attachment. 1 Page Limit.** Title the attachment as “ResponsetoPreviousReview” 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’ and save file as “ResponseToPreviousReview.’ 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 ‘Collaborative Arrangement’. If it is necessary to enter into formal consulting or collaborative arrangements with others, such arrangements should be fully explained and justified. If the consultant(s) or collaborator(s) are known at the time of the application, a vitae or resume should be provided. IN addition, evidence (e.g., letter of support signed by the AR of the consultant/collaborating organization) should be provided that the collaborators involved have agreed to render these services. The applicant also will be required to provide additional information on consultants and collaborators in the budget portion of the application.
- **Applications** should include elements of a logic model detailing the activities, outputs, and outcomes of the proposed project. This information may be provided as a narrative or formatted into a logic model chart. The logic model planning process is a tool that should be used in developing projects before writing the proposal. Two additional pages are allowed for this information. More information and resources related to the logic model planning process are proved at:
http://www.nifa.usda.gov/about/strat_plan_logic_models.html.

- **Expected Outcomes – PDF Attachment**

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

Primary Project Function: (Choose one)		
RESEARCH: <input type="checkbox"/>	EXTENSION : <input type="checkbox"/>	EDUCATION: <input type="checkbox"/>
DATA FOR MSI PROGRAMS: WAMS		
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 (i.e., 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, etc.		
Number of individuals who indirectly will benefit from the projects (i.e., using the curriculum/instrumentation, enrolled in the program, recruited or retained)		
Total number of students to be directly supported by grant (i.e., scholarships, fellowships, assistantships, internships)		
Number of underrepresented students to be supported during the grant period		
Number of 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 the link to a suggested template for the Current and Pending Support forms.

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 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 commitment of 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.

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 sub-award attachment for each project partner (sub-award/consortium), for each 12-month period and (b) your budget figures reflect the required budget sharing criteria (See “Definitions”, Part VIII, E).

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. All USDA WAMS grants have a cap of \$150,000 for regular grant and \$300,000 for consortium applications. Applications with a budget request that exceeds this cap will be excluded from review.

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

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

8. Supplemental Information Form

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

a. Field 2. Program Code. Enter the program code name (i.e. “Women and Minorities in STEM Fields”) and the program code “WAM”.

b. Field 8. Conflict of Interest – (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 Date and Time

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

Applications must be received by close of business on **May 29, 2015** (5:00 pm Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

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

We send email correspondence to the AR regarding the status of submitted application. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate email addresses, where designated, on the SF 424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received a confirmation message **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 or a delay in the issuance of an award. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

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

If your institution does not have, or cannot obtain, a negotiated rate, you must calculate an indirect cost rate in order to request indirect costs. You should calculate an indirect cost rate based on actual costs for the entire organization from the most recently completed accounting year. If no prior cost history exists, you should use budgeted costs for the entire organization. You should follow the example(s) found at http://nifa.usda.gov/business/indirect_cost_process.html for information regarding this process. You may elect not to charge indirect costs and, instead, use all grant funds for direct costs. If indirect costs are not charged, the phrase "None requested" should be written in the space."

You may not use grant funds awarded under this authority to renovate or refurbish research, education, or extension space; purchase or install fixed equipment in such a space; or to plan, repair, rehabilitate, acquire, or construction of buildings or facilities.

Program funds may only be used for research and extension activities in the training, outreach and mentoring of rural women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas in STEM fields relevant to USDA mission. Funds made available for grants in this program shall not be used for scholarship or fellowship purposes, the construction of a new building or facility or the acquisition, expansion, remodeling, or alteration of an existing building or facility (including site grading and improvement, and architect fees).

Special Notices (Applicable to Grantees and Subcontractors)

1. NIFA will withhold all funds for a WAMS award to an applicant requesting indirect costs if the applicant has not negotiated an indirect cost rate with its cognizant federal agency.
2. If a grantee is in the process of negotiating an indirect cost rate with its cognizant federal agency, NIFA will withhold all funds from that grantee until the indirect cost rate has been established.
3. If an institution's indirect cost rate (with its cognizant federal agency) has expired or will expire in the near future, a clear statement on renegotiation efforts must be included in the application. (See Part IV B.6. R&R Federal & Non-Federal Budget, above.)
4. It is incumbent on all applicants to have a current indirect cost rate or begin negotiations (with its cognizant federal agency) to establish an indirect cost rate prior to the WAMS submission deadline. Because it may take several months to obtain an indirect cost rate, applicants needing an indirect cost rate are encouraged to start work on establishing these rates well in advance of submitting a WAMS application. (Also see Part IV.B.6 for further details.)
5. For organizations or entities which do not have a federal cognizant agency, the applicant may indicate "None—will negotiate with USDA/NIFA" and a reasonable dollar amount for indirect costs may be requested, which will be subject to approval by USDA. If a proposal is recommended for funding, an indirect cost rate proposal to support the amount of indirect costs requested must be submitted and a rate negotiated prior to those funds being released. NIFA will request an indirect cost rate proposal and provide instructions, as necessary. (Also see Part IV.B.6 for further details.)

An applicant may elect not to charge indirect costs and, instead, use all grant funds for direct costs. If indirect costs are not charged, the phrase "None requested" should be written in this space.

6. Indirect cost rates will be established for primary awardee, but not for sub-awardees. Sub-awardees who do not have a Federally negotiated rate will not be eligible for indirect costs.

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

Each application will be evaluated in a 2-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

WAMS proposals will be evaluated using a peer review process to find win-win matches between the proposed work, capabilities of applicant organization(s), and the WAMS grant program purpose, priorities and goals. Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, and managers/operators in STEM fields) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

B. Evaluation Criteria

We will use the evaluation criteria below to review applications submitted in response to this RFA. The percentage weight that will be given to each criterion is listed after the criterion.

Following the completion of a peer review process for grant proposals received under this section, the Secretary of Agriculture shall provide a priority to those grant proposals, found in the peer review process to be scientifically meritorious, that involve the cooperation of multiple entities [7 U.S.C. § 5925(d)]. NIFA encourages applicants to:

- (i) develop robust collaborations that include governmental, non-governmental, P-14 education, and community-based organizations with expertise in training and outreach to women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas in STEM fields relevant to USDA mission; and
- (ii) state what percentage of the project budget will be designated for use in **identifying, recruiting, and placing** women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas in STEM fields.

All project applications submitted for funding shall be technically evaluated by a review panel using the criteria below, specifically:

- **Relevancy (20%)** – Explanation and documentation that the project is directed toward: (a) specific areas identified in Part I C. These areas are designed to yield improvements in participation in STEM fields by women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas as defined in FCEA; and (b) stimulate collaborations that align with the proposed project’s objectives and WAMS grant program goals. Identify appropriate methodologies for reviewing and evaluating expected project outcomes and impacts (Project Evaluation).
- **Technical merit (35%)** – Will be evaluated on the basis of: (a) Necessity, innovation, and originality; (b) For proposed projects with research components, as practicable, scientifically sound approach, and potential to increase knowledge not only in STEM research but also in attracting women and minorities from rural areas in areas of STEM fields relevant to USDA mission; (c) Demonstrated awareness of previous and alternative research, Extension, training, outreach, mentoring, and education programs that address the needs identified for the target audience; (d) Clarity and delineation of objectives and outcomes and alignment of the proposed project with the WAMS program purpose, priorities, and goal; (e) Conceptual adequacy of the proposed activities to meet the needs of the targeted audience including suitability and feasibility of the approach; (f) Expected outcomes of the project in terms of the number of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas trained and placed in the STEM workforce, the value of their enterprise, and the needs of the targeted audience; (g) Probability of success of the project; and (h) Sustainability beyond the life of the grant.
- **Achievability (15%)** - Probability of success of the project is appropriate given the level of originality and target audience.
- **Key personnel (10%)** - Demonstration of feasibility through prior experience in research, Extension, education, outreach, mentoring, and training of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas. Also, qualifications of key personnel to conduct the proposed project and institutional experience and competence in serving the needs of the identified target audience.
- **Adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation and Adequacy of Plans for Management of the proposed project (20%)** – Demonstration that the personnel, collaborations, and facilities and instrumentation are available, committed, and well-positioned to achieve the integration needed to ensure that the WAMS project will recruit, lead/train, and place the target audience in STEM fields at the level and scale(s) to increase America’s competitiveness. **Document the time and resources allocated for:** (a) systematic attainment of objectives and effective functioning of collaboration(s) to facilitate successful achievement of program and project goals and objectives; (b) a plan for participatory evaluation of project activities, development, and use of outcomes-based measures and reporting; (c) an effective communication of activities, outputs, and impacts to wide-ranging audiences

and for tracking success of participants in STEM fields; and (d) a plan for administration of the proposed project and its maintenance, partnerships, and collaborative efforts.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution shall be determined by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 1801 Robert Fulton Drive, Suite 340, Reston, Virginia 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, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one time basis, with updates on an as needed basis, as part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another NIFA program. NIFA will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on his/her status as one of these entities, there are factors which may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal financial and non-financial 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 WAMS for a period of three years.

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of NIFA shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the awarding official of NIFA as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by NIFA under this RFA shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015, 3019 of 7 CFR), and the NIFA General Awards Administration Provisions at 7 CFR part 3430, subparts A through E.

B. Award Notice

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

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to 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 PD's chosen to direct and control approved activities;
- (4) Identifying award number assigned by the Department;
- (5) Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring re-competition for funds;
- (6) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Director during the project period;
- (7) Legal authority (or authorities) 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 25, “Universal Identifier and Central Contractor Registration”

2 CFR Part 170, “Reporting Subaward and Executive Compensation Information”

2 CFR Part 175, “Award Term for Trafficking in Persons”

2 CFR Part 180, “OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement)”

2 CFR Part 182, “Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)”

2 CFR Part 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards”

2 CFR Part 400, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards”

2 CFR Part 415, “General Program Administrative Regulations”

2 CFR Part 416, “General Program Administrative Regulations for Grants Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments”

2 CFR Part 417, “Nonprocurement Debarment and Suspension”

2 CFR Part 418, “New Restrictions on Lobbying”

2 CFR Part 421, “Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)”

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

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

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

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

7 CFR Part 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.

7 CFR 3430—Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Grant Programs--General Grant 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

Project Director's Conference

During the tenure of a grant, PD's must attend at least one National Project Directors' meeting, if offered, in Washington, DC, or any other announced location. The timing and intervals for PD meetings are determined by the WAMS program office. A reasonable amount for travel costs to attend the meeting should be included in the budget. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss project and grant management, opportunities for collaborative efforts, partnerships and capacity building, project updates/presentations, future directions for program reform, and opportunities to enhance dissemination of exemplary end products/results.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Programmatic Contact -

Dr. Saleia Afele-Faamuli, PhD, M.P.H.

Title: National Program Leader

Unit: Division of Community and Education, Institute of Youth, Family and Community,
National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA

Location: 4446 Waterfront Centre; Stop 2251, 800 9th St. SW, Washington DC 20024

Telephone: (202) 720-0384; Fax: (202) 720-2030;

E-mail: sfaamuli@nifa.usda.gov.

Administrative/Business Contact –

Duane Alphs; Team Leader, Team II, Section 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; or

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

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access to Review Information

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

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, the awardee 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. Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.

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

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

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

f. Changes in Approved Budget: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of

amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

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

E. Definitions

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

For the purpose of this program, the following additional definitions are applicable:

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

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

Consortium project means an application for a project: (1) which will involve the applicant institution/organization working in cooperation with **two or more** other entities not legally affiliated with the applicant institution/organization, including other schools, colleges, universities, community colleges, junior colleges, units of State government, private sector organizations, or a consortium of institutions; and (2) where the applicant institution/organization and each cooperating entity will assume a significant role in the conduct of the proposed project. To demonstrate a substantial involvement with the project, **the applicant institution/organization submitting a joint project must retain at least 30 percent but not more than 70 percent of the awarded funds, and no cooperating entity may receive less than 10 percent of awarded funds.** Only the applicant institution/organization must meet the definition of an eligible institution/organization as specified in this RFA; other entities participating in a joint project are not required to meet the definition of an eligible institution/organization.

Rural Area means any locality that has a population of 50,000 inhabitants or less, and is generally characterized as having fewer than 1,000 inhabitants per square mile (U.S. Census Bureau).

Training means the planned and systematic acquisition of practical knowledge, skills or competencies required for a trade, occupation or profession delivered by formal classroom instruction, laboratory instruction, or practicum experience that prepares women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas for participation in STEM fields.

Underrepresented minority means any ethnic group – African American, Alaskan Native, American Indian, Asian American, Hispanic American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, or any other group – whose representation among food and agricultural professionals in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields is disproportionately less than their proportion in the general population as indicated in standard statistical references, or as documented on a case-by-case basis by national survey data submitted to and accepted by the Secretary.