

Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program – Organic Transitions

FY 2018 Request for Applications (RFA)

APPLICATION DEADLINE: March 29, 2018

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

INTEGRATED RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND EXTENSION COMPETITIVE GRANTS PROGRAM – ORGANIC TRANSITIONS

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.303.

DATES: Applications must be received by **5 p.m. Eastern Time** on March 29, 2018. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding (see Part IV, C of this RFA). Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: We at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) seek your comments about this RFA. We will consider your 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 your written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this notice via email to Policy@nifa.usda.gov. (This email address is only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and *not* for requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program – Organic Transitions RFA.

Visit the [NIFA website](#) to access a factsheet on the Center of Excellence (COE) designation process, including COE criteria, and a list of programs that offered COE opportunities in FY 2018. You may also review a recording of COE outreach webinars held in February and March of 2015 and COE implementation webinars held in August and September of 2015 from the site. We will update COE webpages as appropriate.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program – Organic Transitions (ORG) for fiscal year (FY) 2018 to solve critical organic agriculture issues, priorities, or problems. The anticipated amount available for grants in FY 2018 is approximately \$3,800,000. This RFA is being released prior to the passage of an appropriations act for FY 2018. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program

This notice identifies the objectives for ORG projects, deadline dates, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for an ORG grant.

Table of Contents

PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION	3
A. Legislative Authority	3
B. Purpose and Priorities	3
PART II—AWARD INFORMATION.....	7
A. Available Funding.....	7
B. Types of Applications	7
C. Project Types	7
D. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research.....	8
PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION.....	9
A. Eligible Applicants.....	9
B. Cost Sharing or Matching	10
C. Multiple Submissions	12
D. Centers of Excellence	12
PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION	13
A. Electronic Application Package	13
B. Content and Form of Application Submission	14
C. Submission Dates and Times	20
D. Funding Restrictions	21
E. Other Submission Requirements	21
PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS	22
A. General.....	22
B. Evaluation Criteria	22
C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality	24
D. Organizational Management Information	24
E. Application Disposition.....	24
PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION	25
A. General.....	25
B. Award Notice	25
C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.....	25
D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements	25
PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT	27
PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION	28
A. Use of Funds; Changes.....	28
B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards.....	28
C. Regulatory Information	29
D. Definitions	29
E. Materials Available on the Internet	29

PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

Section 406 of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (AREERA) (7 U.S.C. 7626), as reauthorized by Section 7302 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (H.R. 2642; P.L. 113–79), authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a competitive grants program that provides funding for integrated, multifunctional agricultural research, extension, and education activities. Subject to the availability of appropriations to carry out this program, the Secretary may award grants to colleges and universities [as defined by section 1404 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA) (7 U.S.C. 3103)], as amended, on a competitive basis for projects that address priorities in United States agriculture and involve integrated research, education, and extension activities, as determined by the Secretary in consultation with the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board (NAREEEAB). The RFA will be developed each fiscal year based on these established priorities and approaches to solving the critical agricultural issues. Section 7206 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 amended section 406(b) of AREERA to add the 1994 Land-Grant Institutions as eligible to apply for grants under this authority. Section 7129 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (FCEA) (P.L. 110-246) amended section 406(b) of AREERA (7 U.S.C. 7626(b)), adding Hispanic-serving agricultural colleges and universities (HSACU) as eligible entities for competitive funds awarded under this authority (see Part III, A. for more information).

B. Purpose and Priorities

In FY 2018, ORG anticipates funding standard Integrated Research, Education, and Extension projects with a project period of 1 to 3 years. Budgets may not exceed \$200,000 per year with the total amount awarded not to exceed \$500,000. NIFA expects to make a total of seven to eight awards.

Practices and systems to be addressed include those associated with organic crops, organic animal production (including dairy), and organic systems that integrate crop and animal production.

ORG strongly encourages applicants to develop partnerships that include collaboration with: small- or mid-sized, accredited colleges and universities; 1890 Land-Grant Institutions, 1994 Land-Grant Institutions, Hispanic-serving institutions, and/or other institutions that serve high-risk, under-served, or hard-to-reach audiences as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that are engaged in organic agriculture research, education, and outreach. International partnerships, linkages, and exchanges that contribute to solving or solve critical organic agriculture issues, priorities, or problems in the United States are also encouraged.

Applications are expected to contain descriptions of stakeholder involvement in problem identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation. Applicants are strongly encouraged to assemble project teams that include those with expertise in research, education, extension, and evaluation and to utilize a systems approach. Projects should plan to deliver applied

production information to producers, students, or their information providers, such as extension agents/educators, agricultural consultants, or college teaching faculty. Organic agricultural systems and practices provide many ecosystem services, and natural resources stewardship is a key principle in organic farming. For example, the use of cover crops, crop rotation, and erosion control measures; proper manure management; and livestock operation guidelines are cross-compliant with many Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) practice standards. How specific practices and combinations of practices interact in organic systems—including their contributions to conservation outcomes and climate change mitigation potential—is neither well documented nor understood, especially in the case of long-term organic soil management. The most meaningful metrics or models to quantify these services in organic systems are also not clear. A better understanding and documentation of these outcomes will allow for the adjustment of organic practices in order to optimize ecosystem services and to quantify and document those services in the areas of conservation practices, pollinator health, and climate change mitigation, including the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. This information will help farmers better assess the financial benefits and costs of their practices and improve their ability to qualify for current and possible future incentives in the climate change and environmental markets. This process will also help justify consumer expectations that organically-grown and certified food, feed, fiber, or other value-added organic products are produced using the most environmentally-sound and sustainable production practices possible.

To be successful, organic agriculture also needs essential ecosystem processes and components, such as biodiversity, to be intact. This requires better understanding and assessment of the contribution of organic agricultural systems to maintaining biodiversity. However, for organic agriculture to provide these ecosystem benefits, producers need viable crop and livestock management tools. The National Organic Program (NOP) maintains a list of management tools for certified organic producers. Recommendation for removal of certain tools from the NOP creates the need for research-based alternatives. [NOP](http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop) (www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop)

The NOP has specifically requested research directed to finding replacements for these materials that are critical for many segments of the industry—from producers already certified for organic production to those in transition or considering transition. 7 CFR Part 205 – the National Organic Program lists the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances.

National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (<https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&SID=9874504b6f1025eb0e6b67cadf9d3b40&rgn=div6&view=text&node=7:3.1.1.9.32.7&idno=7>)

The NOP National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic/nosb> maintains a list of research priorities that is updated annually and accessible using the menu on the website. The NOP Research priorities for 2017 can be accessed using the following link: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/MS2017ResearchPrioritiesNOPFall2017.pdf>

Research findings will not have their intended impact on the organic agriculture industry unless they reach and are adopted by producers. Effective extension or other outreach efforts are required. Because few extension tools and other resources are available to organic farmers and ranchers, stakeholders have cited the need for these to help guide transitioning producers and their advisors during this critical period.

Priority Areas for FY 2018: Proposals consistent with the Legislative Authority (See Part A.) will be accepted for the competitive peer review process involving an external panel of experts. NIFA is soliciting applications for ORG under the following areas (not listed in order of importance):

Priority 1: Document and understand the effects of organic practices including, but not limited to, crop rotation; livestock-crop integration; organic manure, mulch, and/or compost additions; cover crops; reduced or conservation tillage on soil health and fertility; ecosystem services; greenhouse gas mitigation; biodiversity; and weeds, pests and diseases dynamics.

Priority 2: Develop improved technologies, methods, models, and metrics to document, describe, and optimize the ecosystem services and the climate variability adaptation and mitigation ability of organic crop, livestock, and integrated crop-livestock production systems.

Priority 3: Develop cultural practices and other allowable alternatives to substances recommended for removal from NOP's National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (<https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&SID=9874504b6f1025eb0e6b67cadf9d3b40&rgn=div6&view=text&node=7:3.1.1.9.32.7&idno=7>). This may include effective substitutes or new technologies, cultural practices, cultivars, or breeds that render the NOP-cited substance in question less limiting to production under organic growing conditions. Studies of alternatives should include evaluation of efficacy based on resulting productivity, profitability, and natural resources stewardship effects. We encourage a sustainable whole-systems approach, but will also consider proposals that are narrower in scope.

Priority 4: Develop practical information and tools to help producers overcome barriers to organic transition. Projects under this priority should address major barriers that limit the transition to organic agriculture in a specific region, crop, or animal production systems. These can include, but are not limited to, production challenges during the transition period, local and regional infrastructure constraints, marketplace challenges, and administrative or policy barriers. Any constraint must be acknowledged by growers and other stakeholders. Proposals to improve organic animal or crop management strategies and production systems should be submitted to the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI). Lobbying and advocacy activities do not fit under this priority.

Important Notes for All Priorities:

- 1) Fieldwork to set up treatments or collect data on organic practices must be done on certified organic land. Refer to the USDA National Organic Program link

www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop) for organic production standards. However, as appropriate to project objectives, comparisons can include land in transition to organic certification and land not managed using organic practices. If land in transition is to be used, documentation should be provided from the certifying agent confirming a transition plan has been developed and is in progress. In addition, the use of conventional production technologies (including the use of GMOs) for comparative purposes or proof of concept is permissible, if cross-contamination with the organic and transitional treatments is prevented.

- 2) Projects should use combinations of research plus education and/or extension activities and describe expected outcomes and impacts. All projects must develop and implement an evaluation plan that captures project outcomes and demonstrates the impact of the project. The evaluation section should describe how the project evaluator or evaluation team will determine whether project goals have been met and their impacts. Evaluation should be based on benchmarks, indicators, or expected outcomes related to project goals and activities. Project goals are expected to be related to immediate, short-term, and intermediate-term expected changes that result from the project activities and measured outputs, outcomes, and impacts. The budget must include adequate resources for project evaluation, and evaluation procedures must be adequately described in the methods section.

Proposals with significant overlap in objectives and scope cannot be submitted to both ORG and OREI (Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative) programs. The second submission will be rejected. Additional information on the [scope of OREI and ORG](#) may be found at the following link: <http://nifa.usda.gov/program/organic-agriculture-program> under “Program Specific Resources”.

The ORG program directly aligns with the USDA Strategic Plan FY 2014 – 2018 (<http://www.usda.gov/documents/usda-strategic-plan-fy-2014-2018.pdf>) and specifically addresses Strategic Goal 1- Assist rural communities to create prosperity so they are self-sustaining, re-populating, and economically thriving, Objective 1.2. -- Increase agricultural opportunities by ensuring a robust safety net, creating new markets, and supporting a competitive agricultural system. ORG is aligned with the Research, Education, and Economics Action Plan <http://nifa.usda.gov/resource/ree-action-plan> and specifically addresses: Goal 1. Sustainable Intensification of Agricultural Production, Subgoals 1.A., 1.B., 1.D. (which focus on Crop and Animal Production, Health, Outreach and Markets); Goal 2. Responding to Climate and Energy Needs, Subgoal 2.A. (which focuses on Climate Variability); Goal 3. Sustainable Use of Natural Resources, Subgoal 3.A. (which focuses on Water); Goal 5. Food Safety; Goal 6. Education and Science Literacy; and Goal 7. Rural Prosperity/Rural- Urban Interdependence by supporting systems-based research to enhance the sustainability of food production, including environmental, economic, and social factors. ORG is aligned with the NIFA Strategic plan (<https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/nifa-strategic-plan-fy2014-fy2018>), and specifically addresses Strategic Goal 1: Science, Subgoal 1.1 by advancing our Nation’s ability to achieve global food security and fight hunger.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The anticipated amount available for ORG grants in FY 2018 is approximately \$3,800,000. The funds will be awarded through a competitive grants process described in this RFA. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. “This RFA is being released prior to the passage of an appropriations act for FY 2018. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.”

The Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP), operated by the Department of Treasury’s Bureau of the Fiscal Service, is the designated payment system for awards resulting from this RFA. For more information see

https://www.fiscal.treasury.gov/fsservices/gov/pmt/asap/asap_home.htm.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2018, you may submit an application to the **ORG** Program as one of the following two types of requests:

New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to ORG Program. We will review all new applications competitively using the screening for administrative requirements, review panel evaluation of proposals using evaluation criteria and selection process described in Part V—Application Review Requirements. NIFA may choose to issue a new award on a continuation basis. A continuation award is an award instrument by which NIFA agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined period of time with a statement of intention to provide additional support at a future date, provided that performance has been satisfactory, appropriations are available for this purpose, and continued support would be in the best interest of the federal government and the public.

Resubmitted application. This is an application that had previously been submitted to the NIFA but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (see Response to Previous Review, Part IV). We must receive resubmitted applications by the relevant due dates. We will evaluate resubmitted applications in competition with other pending applications in the appropriate area to which they are assigned and review them according to the same evaluation criteria (Part V, B) as new applications. If you are submitting a resubmission application, enter the NIFA-assigned proposal number of the previously-submitted application in the Federal field (Field 4 on the form).

C. Project Types

ORG anticipates funding standard Integrated Research, Education, and Extension projects with a project period of 1 to 3 years. Budgets may not exceed \$200,000 per year with the total amount awarded not to exceed \$500,000. NIFA expects to make a total of seven to eight awards.

Integrated projects aim to resolve problems through the application of science-based knowledge and address needs identified by stakeholders. Integrated projects clearly identify anticipated outcomes and have a plan for evaluating and documenting the success of the project. ORG projects should include Research and at least one of the other two functions of the agricultural knowledge system (extension, and education) focused around a problem or issue; however, single-function projects with sufficient justification will be considered. The functions addressed in the project should: be interwoven throughout the life of the project; complement and reinforce each other; and be interdependent and necessary for the success of the project. Integrated projects must include a data management plan that clearly describes how the data will be disseminated and accessible to the public.

D. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research

In accordance with sections 2, 3, and 8 of 2 CFR Part 422, institutions that conduct USDA-funded extramural research must foster an atmosphere conducive to research integrity, bear primary responsibility for prevention and detection of research misconduct, and maintain and effectively communicate and train their staff regarding policies and procedures. In the event an application to NIFA results in an award, the Authorized Representative (AR) assures, through acceptance of the award that the institution will comply with the above requirements. Award recipients shall, upon request, make available to NIFA the policies, procedures, and documentation to support the conduct of the training. See <http://nifa.usda.gov/responsible-and-ethical-conduct-research> for more information.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may only be submitted by colleges and universities as defined in section 1404 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA, 7 U.S.C. 3103). Failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award. Section 1404 of NARETPA was amended by sections 7101 and 7129 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Public Law (P.L.) 110-246, sections 7101, 7129 (c) (4)) to define Hispanic-serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities (HSACUs) and to include research foundations maintained by eligible colleges or universities. (See Definitions in Part VIII, E.)

For the purposes of this program, the terms “college” and “university” mean an educational institution in any state which (1) admits as regular students only persons having a certificate of graduation from a school providing secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such a certificate; (2) is legally authorized within such state to provide a program of education beyond secondary education; (3) provides an educational program for which a bachelor’s degree or any other higher degree is awarded; (4) is a public or other nonprofit institution; and (5) is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association. Applications also may be submitted by 1994 Land-Grant Institutions (defined in 7 CFR 3430), HSACUs, and research foundations maintained by eligible colleges or universities. The 2014 Farm Bill required NIFA to establish an ongoing process allowing public colleges and universities that offer 4-year or advanced degrees in the food and agricultural sciences to apply for designation as Non-Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture (NLGCA) institutions. Hispanic Serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities (HSACUs) are given the opportunity to opt out of their status to be considered for designation as a NLGCA; however, this decision will be binding on them until September 30, 2018. Failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award.

Pursuant to section 406 of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (AREERA) (7 U.S.C. 7626) which authorized the Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grant Program, all four year Hispanic Serving Institutes (HSIs) are eligible to apply for Integrated Projects as identified in the FY 2018 ORG RFA. Two year HSIs may be eligible to apply only if the institution has been certified as a HSACU for the fiscal year in which funding is being provided. Approximately by January 2018, a list of the institutions certified and therefore eligible to apply as HSACUs for grants under FY 2018 RFAs, including this RFA, will be made available at <https://nifa.usda.gov/hispanic-serving-agricultural-colleges-and-universities-hsacu>. Institutions appearing on this list are granted HSACU certification by the Secretary for the period starting October 1, 2016, and ending September 30, 2018. Certifications are valid for FY 2018 only. Additional questions on HSACU eligibility can be addressed to hsacu@nifa.usda.gov. Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. Failure to meet an

eligibility criterion by the time of application deadline will result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award.

B. Cost Sharing or Pa

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 (. P.L. 113-79), for grants awarded after October 1, 2014, the recipient of an award from the ORG 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 unless one of the exemptions described herein is applicable. Note that NIFA included information at http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/matching_require.html to further assist you in determining if you must meet the new matching requirement.

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. Entities eligible to receive funds under the 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. Entities eligible to receive funds under the 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 certifications at <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/form/form.html>, and for attaching the certification in Part IV, B. of this RFA).
- i. Entities eligible to receive 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).

Proposal submissions to this RFA may indicate that multiple entities will complete work as a collaborative partnership. All partners must have a substantial involvement in the project throughout the life of the project. Proposals for partnerships among multiple entities must clearly identify the following:

- 1) A narrative that clearly establishes each entity's role in the project;
- 2) How each project partner will contribute to execution of project objectives; determine experimental design; develop the project work plan and time table; and submit 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 multiple entities, as partners, complete work on the project, and at least one entity is exempt from the matching requirement under #2 above, the entire project will be exempt from the matching requirement. Any partner entity may serve as the lead entity on the project. All partners must be significantly involved in the project.

NIFA will examine proposals recommended for award to determine if the proposed division of work reflects substantial involvement of all entities involved. If a proposal is recommended for award to a lead entity that is 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 for 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 (NAREEEAB) for the year involved. Refer to the [2014 Research, Education and Economics Action Plan](#) to determine whether proposed activities are consistent with the priorities of the NAREEEAB. See R&R Budget under Part IV, B, of this RFA.

C. Multiple Submissions

Duplicate, essentially duplicate or predominantly overlapping applications submitted to both ORG and OREI in any one fiscal year will not be reviewed. In addition, applicants may not submit to ORG an application that is considered duplicate, essentially duplicate, or predominantly overlapping with an application submitted to another NIFA program in the same fiscal year. In case of duplicate submissions, the second submission will be rejected.

D. Centers of Excellence

Pursuant to Section 7214 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (P.L 113-79), beginning in Fiscal Year 2015, for applicable competitive research and extension programs, NIFA will recognize and provide priority in the receipt of funding to applications from “centers of excellence” that carry out research, extension, and education activities that relate to the food and agricultural sciences. NIFA held listening sessions in July 2014 and accepted written comments from stakeholders to inform NIFA’s implementation of the COE provision. Information from the webinars and a summary of the input are available on NIFA’s website at <http://nifa.usda.gov/centers-excellence>.

A COE is composed of one or more of the following entities that provide financial or in-kind support to the COE:

- 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, foundations, or corporations;
- h. Individuals; or
- i. Any group consisting of two or more of the entities described in (A) through (H).

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 information about the pre-award phase of the grant lifecycle see <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/learn-grants/grants-101/pre-award-phase.html>.

New Users of Grants.gov

Prior to preparing an application, we recommend that the Project Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) first contact an Authorized Representative (AR, also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative, or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grants.gov. If not (e.g., the institution/organization is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov), then the one-time registration process must be completed PRIOR to submitting an application. It can take as long as two weeks to complete the registration process so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations, the AR should go to **“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.** Part II,1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide contains detailed information regarding the registration process. Refer to item 2, below, to locate the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.”

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/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html>. Grants.gov has a test package that will help you determine whether your current version of Adobe Reader is compatible.
2. To obtain the application package from Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/download-application-package.html> and enter the funding opportunity number where appropriate

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-ICGP-006464

Click “Search.” On the displayed page, click the corresponding link to continue. A Grant Application Package is tied to a particular funding opportunity. You may submit an application ONLY to the particular funding opportunity to which the Grant Application Package is associated.

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 (<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support.html>). Grants.gov assistance is also available at:

Grants.gov customer support

800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on [federal holidays](#).

Email: support@grants.gov

Grants.gov iPortal (see <https://grants-portal.psc.gov/Welcome.aspx?pt=Grants>):

Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self-service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7 a.m. - 9 p.m. EST).

Have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov:

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

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Electronic applications are to be prepared following Parts V and VI of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A of this part). The following is additional information you need to prepare an application in response to this RFA. If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.

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

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

- Email: electronic@nifa.usda.gov
- Phone: 202-401-5048

- Business hours: Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. EST, 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. See Part V, Section 2.18 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for the required certifications and assurances (e.g., Prohibition Against Entities Requiring Certain Internal Confidentiality Agreements).

2. SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 3 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

3. R&R Other Project Information Form

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 4 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract.

The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of **ORG** Part V. 4.7 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

b. Field 8. Project Narrative.

NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 20 pages of written text including figures and tables. We have established this maximum 20 pages to ensure fair and equitable competition.

The Project Narrative must include all of the following: Applicants requesting consideration of COE status must include their justification at the end of their Project Narratives and within the page limits provided for the project narratives.

See instructions in NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for detailed instruction on page and text formatting. <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/opportunities/instructions/oppUSDA-NIFA-EXCA-005297-cfda10.500-instructions.pdf>. Margins, in all directions, must be at least one inch and font size at least 11 points. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

- 1) Introduction: Include a clear statement of the long-term goals and supporting objectives of the proposed activities. Summarize the body of knowledge or past activities substantiating the need for the proposed project. Describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed activity, including the work of key project personnel. Include preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed project. In addition, include in-depth information on the following, when applicable:

- a) Estimates of the magnitude of the issues and their relevance to stakeholders and to ongoing state-federal food and agricultural Research, Education, and Extension programs;
- b) Description of the role stakeholders, including end users, play in problem identification, planning, and implementation and evaluation as appropriate; and
- c) Reasons for performing the work at the proposing institution.
- d) Objectives: Include clear, concise, complete, and logically arranged statements of specific aims of the proposed effort, including the suitability of scale and transferability of project results or developed materials beyond the project scale. Projects must include specific objectives for Research, Education, and Extension functions (as appropriate); include evidence of necessary involvement from interdisciplinary teams; and demonstrate the extent to which partnerships with other institutions (federal, state, other) are developed.

2) Methods: Explicitly state the procedures or methods to be applied to the proposed effort. Include, but do not necessarily limit to:

- a) Description of how the project will solicit and use stakeholder involvement;
- b) Description of the proposed project activities and the sequence in which they are to be carried out;
- c) Review of Co-PD roles will be included in project review. Please be clear about Co- PDs vs sub-contractors.
- d) Techniques and methodology to be employed in the project, including their feasibility and rationale;
- e) Results expected within a reasonable time frame;
- f) How you will monitor and evaluate (as appropriate) Research, Extension, and Education activities;
- g) How you will analyze and interpret data;
- h) Limitations to proposed procedures;
- i) Pitfalls that might be encountered;
- j) Suitability of scale and transferability of project results or developed materials beyond the project scale;
- k) Details of plans to communicate results to stakeholders and the public; and
- l) Plan to sustain activities beyond this funding period

3) Project Timetable: Outline all important phases as a function of time, year-by-year, for the entire project, including periods beyond the grant funding period. Include specific, measurable goals or projected accomplishments for each year of ORG funding and expected impacts or outcomes of the work.

Response to the previous panel review: An application with substantive similarities to a prior, unsuccessful application should be presented as a resubmission. Resubmitted applications must

provide a response to the previous panel review. The response should be as concise as possible, and limited to a maximum of three pages. The response to the previous review is not counted against the page limit of the Project Narrative. A NIFA-issued proposal number must be included in the response to the previous review.

Center of Excellence Justification

For consideration as a COE, you must provide a brief justification statement, as part of your Project Narrative and within the page limits provided, which describes how you meet the standards of a COE, based on the following criteria:

- (A) The ability of the COE to ensure coordination and cost effectiveness by reducing unnecessarily duplicative efforts in the research, teaching, and extension activities outlined in this application;
- (B) In addition to any applicable matching requirements, the ability of the COE to leverage available resources by using public-private partnerships among agricultural industry groups, institutions of higher education, and the federal government in the proposed research and/or extension activities outlined in this application. Resources leveraged should be commensurate with the size of the award;
- (C) The planned scope and capability of the COE to implement teaching initiatives that increase awareness and effectively disseminate solutions to target audiences through extension activities of the proposed research and/or extension activity outlined in this application; and
- (D) The ability or capacity of the COE to increase the economic returns to rural communities by identifying, attracting, and directing funds to high-priority agricultural issues in support of and as a result of the implementation of the proposed research and/or extension activity outlined in this application.

Additionally, where practicable (not required), center of excellence applicants should describe proposed efforts to improve teaching capacity and infrastructure at colleges and universities (including land-grant colleges and universities, cooperating forestry schools, certified Non-Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture (NLGCA) (list of certified NLGCA is available at http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/pdfs/nlgca_colleges.pdf), and schools of veterinary medicine).

c. Field 12. Add Other Attachments

See Part V. Section 4.12 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide (Field 12 on the form) for instructions regarding mandatory Felony Convictions or Tax Delinquent Status.

Non-Land Grant College of Agriculture (NLGCA) Certification. If you claim exemption from the new matching requirements as a NLGCA, then you must attach the NLGCA certification letter you requested and received from NIFA. Title the attachment 'NLGCA

Certification’ and save the file as ‘NLGCACertification.’ To request certification as an NLGCA, complete the form at

<http://www.nifa.usda.gov/form/form.html>. Note that certification can take up to 30 days from submission of request form. **See Part III Section 3.1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for NIFA attachment specifications.**

Data Management Plan PDF Attachment. Required for all ORG proposals. Two-Page Limit. Title the attachment as ‘Data Management Plan’ and save file as ‘Management Plan’. Projects must budget sufficient resources to develop and implement the proposed data management plan. Letters of support are welcome but not required.

Data Management Plan. Clearly articulate in the Data Management Plan (DMP) how the project director (PD) and co-PDs plan to manage and disseminate the data generated by the project. The DMP will be considered during the merit review process (see Part V, B.). **See Part III Section 3.1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for NIFA attachment specifications.**

Further guidance for preparation of a DMP is included on the following web page [Links to be developed by NIFA, e.g., FAQ or DMP instructions] and at [Link to NAL guidance]. Applicants are encouraged to consider using platforms, catalogs, and workspaces provided by USDA (e.g., the Ag Data Commons (<https://data.nal.usda.gov>)), and include adequate funds in the budget to support data management and submission fees as required by the platforms, catalogs, etc.

The DMP must contain the following components.

a. Expected Data Type

Describe the type of data (e.g., digital, non-digital), how will they be generated, and whether the data are primary or metadata. Research examples include: lab work, field work and surveys; Education examples include: number of students enrolled/participated, degrees granted, curriculum, and training products; Extension examples include: outreach materials, number of stakeholders reached, number of activities, and assessment questionnaires.

b. Data Format

For data to be readily accessible and usable, it is critical to use the existing appropriate community-recognized standard, and machine readable format. If the data will be managed in domain-specific workspaces or submitted to public databases (see section c and d) indicate that their required formats will be followed. Regardless of the format used, the data set must contain enough information to allow independent use of the data.

c. Data Storage and Preservation

Data must be stored in a safe environment with adequate measures taken for its long-term preservation. Applicants must describe the plans for storing and preserving the data during and after the project and specify the data workspaces and repositories, if they exist. Databases or data repositories for long-term preservation may be the same that are used to provide Data Sharing and Public Access (see section d). Estimate how much data will be preserved and state the planned retention period. Include an outline of strategies, tools, and contingency plans that will be used to avoid data loss, degradation, or damage.

d. Data Sharing and Public Access

Describe your data access and sharing procedures during and after the grant (e.g., publication or public release). Name specific repositories and catalogs as appropriate. Outline any restrictions such as copyright, confidentiality, patent, appropriate credit, disclaimers, or conditions for use of the data by other parties.

e. Roles and Responsibilities

Who will ensure DMP implementation? This is particularly important for multi-investigator and multi-institutional projects. Provide a contingency plan in case key personnel leave the project. Also, what resources will be needed for the DMP? If funds are needed, have they been added to the budget request and budget narrative? Projects must budget sufficient resources to develop and implement the proposed DMP.

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

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 5 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This section of the guide includes instructions about senior/key person profile requirements, and details about the biographical sketch and the current and pending support, including a link to a suggested template for the current and pending support.

5. R&R Personal Data – As noted in Part V, 6 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award. Part V.6 also notes the importance and use of the information.

6. R&R Budget

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 7 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Matching. If you conclude that matching funds are not required as specified under Part III, B Cost-Sharing or Matching, you must include a justification in the Budget Narrative. We will consider this justification when determining final matching requirements or if required matching can be waived. NIFA retains the right to make final determinations regarding matching requirements.

- For grants that require matching funds as specified under Part III, B, the Budget Justification must list matching sources along with the identification of the entity(ies) providing the match as

well as the total dollar amount being pledged. NIFA is no longer requiring written verification of commitments of matching support (a pledge agreement). However, you are still subject to documentation, valuing and reporting requirements, etc. as specified in 2 CFR Part 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (the Uniform Guidance),” 7 CFR 3430, “Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-Formula Federal Assistance Programs – General Award Administrative Provisions,” and program-specific regulations, as applicable. In instances where match is required, any resulting award will require the signature of an Authorized Representative. Only when NIFA receives the award signed by the AR will award funds be released and available for drawdown.

Summarize on a separate page the sources and amount of all matching support from outside the applicant institution and place that information in the proposal as part of the Budget Narrative.

Additional Budget Information

ORG Project Directors must attend at least two Project Directors’ Workshops during the term of their project. Sufficient funds should be budgeted in the proposal and reserved in the course of the project for the PD to attend the workshops in the Washington, DC area, each lasting 2 days. The request for these funds should be clearly indicated in the Budget Narrative (Field K. of the R&R Budget).

Publication costs may include the additional cost of open-source publication if that is an option for the journal. Open source availability will increase the visibility and citation rate for NIFA-funded research publications and should be chosen if it is an appropriate option.

7. Supplemental Information Form

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part VI, 1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

1. **Field 2. Program to which you are applying.** Enter the program code **Organic Transitions**) and the program code (i.e., enter “**112.E**”). Note that accurate entry of the program code is very important for proper and timely processing of an application.
2. **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.** See Part VI, 1.8 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

C. Submission Dates and Times

We recommend that you conduct an administrative review of the application before submission of it via Grants.gov to ensure that it complies with all preparation instructions. An application checklist is included in Part VII of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide to assist with this review.

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

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by **5 p.m. Eastern Time** on March 29, 2018. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

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

We send email correspondence to the AR regarding the status of submitted applications. We strongly encourage you to provide accurate email addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received correspondence **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 30 days of the established deadline, contact the Agency Contact identified in Part VII of the RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, you should cite this number on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

Section 713 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016 (P.L. 114-113) limits indirect costs to 30 percent of the total federal funds provided (or 42.857 percent of total direct costs) under each award. Similar language may be included in the FY 2018 appropriation, therefore, when preparing budgets, you should limit your request for the recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of your institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 30 percent of total Federal funds awarded. See Part V section 7.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further indirect cost information.

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 space; or the plan, repair, rehabilitate, acquire, or construction of buildings or facilities

E. Other Submission Requirements

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

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

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

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

We select reviewers based upon their training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors:

- 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;
- the need to include experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields;
- the need to include other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs;
- the need to include experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and federal agencies, and private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations;
- the need to maintain a balanced composition with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and
- the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness of each application to producers and the general public.

After each peer review panel has completed its deliberations, the responsible program staff of ORG will recommend that your project be approved for support from currently available funds or be declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review.

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

We will send copies of reviews, *not* including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments to the PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Evaluation Criteria

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

Practices and systems to be addressed include those associated with organic crops, organic animal production (including dairy), and organic systems integrating plant and animal production.

Applications should describe stakeholder involvement in problem identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation. We strongly encourage project teams to have expertise in research, education, extension, and evaluation. Projects should plan to deliver applied production information to producers and students.

We also encourage description of how results at the field and farm scale can be extrapolated beyond the parameters of the proposed project.

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

- 1. Technical merit of all aspects of the application, including research, education, and extension components, as appropriate (50 points).**
 - a. Degree of integration of research, education, and extension (10 pts);
 - b. Extent to which proposed work addresses identified organic stakeholder needs in the priority areas described above (10 pts);
 - c. Suitability and feasibility of methodology for successfully completing work in the allotted time (10 pts);
 - d. Quality of monitoring, data management and evaluation plans (10 pts); and
 - e. Qualifications of key project personnel and institutions, including institutional experience and competence in the proposed area of work, and adequacy of available support personnel, equipment, and facilities (10 pts);

- 2. Relevance of proposed project to ORG purpose (see Part I, B.) (50 points).**
 - a. Justification for problem addressed (10 pts);
 - b. Evidence of appropriate involvement with interdisciplinary teams and institutional partners (federal, state, other) (10 pts);
 - c. Extent to which stakeholders, including end users, were and will be involved in future problem identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation (10 pts);
 - d. Probability that the project will be successful, have documentable impact, and produce transferable results (10 pts); and
 - e. Likelihood that the project will fill knowledge gaps that are critical to the development of organic practices and programs in the priority areas listed previously (10 pts).

Centers of Excellence Status

All eligible applicants will be competitively peer reviewed (as described in Part V, A and B of this RFA), and ranked in accordance with the evaluation criteria. Those that rank highly meritorious and requested to be considered as a COE will be further evaluated by the peer panel to determine whether they have met the standards to be a COE (Part III, D and Part IV, B). In instances where they are found to be equally meritorious with the application of a non-COE, based on peer review, selection for funding will be weighed in favor of applicants

meeting the COE criteria. NIFA will effectively use the COE prioritization as a “tie breaker.” Applicants that rank highly meritorious but who did not request consideration as a COE or who are not deemed to have met the COE standards may still receive funding.

In addition, the applicant’s Notice of Award will reflect that, for the particular grant program, the applicant meets all of the requirements of a COE. Entities recognized as excellence COE will maintain that distinction for the duration of their period of performance or as identified in the terms and conditions of that award

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, we take extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. See http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/competitive_peer_review.html for further information about conflicts of interest and confidentiality as related to the peer review process.

D. Organizational Management Information

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

E. Application Disposition

An application may be withdrawn at any time before a final funding decision is made regarding the application. Each application that is not selected for funding, including those that are withdrawn, will be retained by ORG for a period of three years.

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

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

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the information described in [2 CFR 200.210](#).

See <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> to view current NIFA award terms and conditions.

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 may include, but are not limited to, the ones listed on the NIFA web page – <http://nifa.usda.gov/federal-regulations>.

NIFA Federal Assistance Policy Guide—a compendium of basic NIFA policies and procedures that apply to all NIFA awards, unless there are statutory, regulatory, or award-specific requirements to the contrary—is available at <http://nifa.usda.gov/policy-guide>.

Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research

Refer to Part II, D for more information.

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

The output and reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions (see <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> for information about NIFA award terms). If there are any program or award-specific award terms, they will be identified in the award.

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

PDs are required to attend at least two PD workshops at a location and time to be designated at a later date. Budget amount should be sufficient to attend the 2-day workshops in the Washington, DC area. In the early years of a multiyear project, participation may be in the form of a poster presentation and submission of an abstract. In the final year of the project, an oral presentation should be made and a written report submitted.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Programmatic Contact –

Dr. Mathieu Ngouajio
National Program Leader, Plant Systems-Production Division Institute of Food
Production and Sustainability
National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA; STOP 2240 1400 Independence
Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-2240;
Telephone: (202) 401-4895
Fax: (202) 401-6488
E-mail: mngouajio@nifa.usda.gov

Dr. Steve Smith
National Program Leader, Animal Systems Division Institute of Food Production and
Sustainability
National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA; STOP 2240 1400 Independence
Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-2240;
Telephone: (202) 401-6134
Fax: (202) 401-1782
E-mail: sismith@nifa.usda.gov

Administrative/Business Contact –

Sondra Watkins
Awards Management Division
National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA; STOP 2240 1400 Independence
Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-2240;
Telephone: 202-401-4249
Email: swatkins@nifa.usda.gov

Rochelle McCrea
Awards Management Division
National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA; STOP 2240 1400 Independence
Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-2240
Telephone: 202-401-2880 Email: rmcrea@nifa.usda.gov

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

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

2. Changes in Budget or Project Plans

In accordance with [2 CFR 200.308](#), awardees must request prior approval from NIFA for the following program or budget-related reasons:

- (i) Change in the scope or the objective of the project or program (even if there is no associated budget revision requiring prior written approval).
- (ii) Change in a key person specified in the application or the federal award.
- (iii) The disengagement from the project for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in time devoted to the project, by the approved project director or principal investigator.
- (iv) The inclusion, unless waived by the federal awarding agency, of costs that require prior approval in accordance with 2 CFR 200 Subpart E—Cost Principles of this part or 45 CFR Part 75 Appendix IX, “Principles for Determining Costs Applicable to Research and Development under Awards and Contracts with Hospitals,” or 48 CFR Part 31, “Contract Cost Principles and Procedures,” as applicable.
- (v) The transfer of funds budgeted for participant support costs as defined in §200.75 Participant support costs to other categories of expense.
- (vi) Unless described in the application and funded in the approved federal awards, the subawarding, transferring or contracting out of any work under a federal award, including fixed amount subawards as described in §200.332 Fixed amount subawards. This provision does not apply to the acquisition of supplies, material, equipment, or general support services.
- (vii) Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-federal entity.
- (viii) The need arises for additional federal funds to complete the project.

The awardee will be subject to the terms and conditions identified in the award. See <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> for information about NIFA award terms.

B. 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 of Agriculture 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. We will retain for three years a copy of an application that does not result in an award. 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.

C. Regulatory Information

This program is not subject to the provisions of 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.

D. Definitions

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

E. Materials Available on the Internet

Information about the Organic Transitions program is available online at:
<http://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/organic-transitions-org>.