New Technologies for Ag Extension (NTAE) Competitive Grants Program

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Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Request for Applications (RFA)

APPLICATION DEADLINE: June 6, 2019

ELIGIBILITY: See Part III, A of RFA

USDA

United States Department of Agriculture

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

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

New Technologies for Ag Extension (NTAE) Competitive Grants Program

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Assistance Listings under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number 10.500.

DATES: Applications must be received by **5 p.m. Eastern Time** on **June 6, 2019.** 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 FY 19 New Technologies for Ag Extension (NTAE) Competitive Grants Program RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the New Technologies for Ag Extension (NTAE) Competitive Grants Program RFA for fiscal year (FY) 2019 that contribute to "Enhancing Electronic Extension (E^3)," a national web-based information and education delivery system. E^3 engages land-grant institutions and the Cooperative Extension Service to provide objective, scientific information to the public that answer questions and guide decisions. By creating web-based access to high-quality, non-duplicative, research-based information, E^3 can help better serve the needs of the public seeking real-time information. In FY 2019, NIFA plans to support E^3 strategic direction in providing leadership for innovation and technology that advances education through the promotion of CES growth and competencies. The anticipated amount available for a grant agreement in FY 2019 is approximately $1,488,000.

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

Table of Contents

PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

Funding for the NTAE Program is authorized under section 3(d) of the Smith-Lever Act of May 8, 1914, as amended (7 U.S.C. 341, et seq.). Section 7403 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act (FCEA) of 2008 amends section 3(d) of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 (7 U.S.C. 343(d)) in regards to eligibility.

To learn more about the programming and current activities funded under "Electronic Extension (E²)," see https://www.extension.org/about/. Interested applicants are encouraged to review the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy "Emphasis Areas and Ongoing Priorities for the Cooperative Extension Section" (http://www.aplu.org/members/commissions/food-environment-and-renewable-resources/CFERR_Library/ecop-goals/file) that identifies Enhancing Electronic Extension (E^3) (under the currently funded program name 'eXtension') among its 2019 priorities.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The purpose of the NTAE Program is to increase the capacity of the Cooperative Extension System (CES) to adopt new and innovative technology applications for delivering science-based educational resources from land-grant and other partner institutions about matters of high importance to the general public. Applications are being solicited for the NTAE to deliver state of the art technology and software applications, high quality leaders and staff, training for an exceptional CES workforce, legally binding contractual and financial instruments, and comprehensive evaluation, communications and marketing activities that promote governance, collaboration and organization, a toolkit of evidence-based delivery models, and an entrepreneurial resource base.

Work conducted with NTAE funding helps advance USDA Strategic Plan 2018-2022, Goals 2-7 (https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/about-usda/strategic-goals):
- Goal 2: Maximize the ability of American agricultural producers to prosper by feeding and clothing the world.
- Goal 3: Promote American agricultural products and exports.
- Goal 4: Facilitate rural prosperity and economic development.
- Goal 5: Strengthen the stewardship of private lands through technology and research.
- Goal 6: Foster productive and sustainable use of our National Forest System Lands.
- Goal 7: Provide all Americans access to a safe, nutritious and secure food supply.

C. Program Area Description

Program Code:	NTAE
Program Code Name:	New Technologies in Ag Extension
CFDA:	10.500
Project Type:	Extension Project only
Grant Type:	Standard Grant only
Grant Duration:	12 months, with eligibility for continuation funding

Proposed Budget Requests:
- Applications must not exceed $1,488,000 <u>total</u> (including indirect costs) for a project period of 12 months.
- Applications with budget requests exceeding the budgetary guidelines will not be reviewed.

Program Area Contact – Mr. Brent Elrod (belrod@nifa.usda.gov)

NIFA encourages the development of information and educational content using new, emerging, and innovative technologies that advance the widespread adoption of research-based practices and technologies by agricultural producers and other end users.

In FY 2019, NIFA plans to support E^3 through NTAE and enable a technology-conscious nation to make use of the valuable information and education that the CES has to offer. NTAE funds complement, enhance, and accelerate the implementation of E^3 by building upon the infrastructure currently operating as "eXtension," to include the hardware, software, staffing, training, business agreements, and communication and evaluation activities. The successful applicant will demonstrate the ability to build upon past work while igniting innovation and impact.

The applicant is expected to continue building upon the competitive advantages of CES such as being customer-focused, a trusted and impartial brand, and community-based by: 1) Fostering opportunities for innovation by connecting CES personnel with new and innovative technologies that engage a wide array of learners; 2) Providing professional development opportunities that promote use of open networked learning and other forms of online-based teaching resources; 3) Building capacity within and across the CES to effectively engage strategic partners so more customers and end users can be reached across multiple platforms in real-time with science/research-based content; 4) Update existing and develop necessary new policies to support the business aspects of E^3; and 5) Developing and implementing a comprehensive evaluation, and communications and marketing effort for E^3.

Specifically, the applicant is expected to meet each of the following NTAE objectives within the context of the stated goals above:

1. Foster opportunities for innovation by connecting CES personnel with new and innovative technologies that engage a wide array of learners.
The successful applicant must:
　　(a) Enhance and upgrade existing functionalities;
　　(b) Provide customer support, including help-desk staffing, web hosting, training, and software licenses for E^3; and
　　(c) Provide infrastructure support for technical and architectural standards.

Funds will be used to support the core infrastructure (i.e., data architecture, protocols, processes, content management, and learning management systems). This includes system engineering, content integration and standardization, data management, system security, usability testing, performance benchmarking, search optimization, and monitoring system performance and scalability to meet both current and future demands. Funds will be used to enhance the

collaborative work environment and ways to connect people with similar interests across flexible online platforms to support the development of educational content, learning modules, events, news articles, and multimedia information products, (i.e., apps, video, audio, and hybrid technologies). Such tools provide educational opportunities for the public, and may include curation, filtering technologies, and functionality in applications such as "Ask an Expert," "Learn," and People to make content more publically discoverable and more easily shared. To expand CES content so that it reaches a broader range of learners, funds will be used annually to identify priority program areas based on technology advancements, learner needs, and innovation. Funds will further be used to develop educational programs on how to apply emerging technologies to CES programmatic efforts and monitor and evaluate the Extension System's adoption and use of these new technologies. Explore making content more easily accessible through handheld devices and related applications (apps), while also considering how dedicated landing pages for populations with limited English proficiency skills might increase access to information translated in their native languages.

2. Provide professional development opportunities that promote use of open networked learning and other forms of online-based teaching resources.
NIFA anticipates supporting strategies to develop an effective 21st Century CES workforce that engages customers through social networks and in formats of the customer's choosing. Funds will be used to develop a full complement of professional development opportunities designed to prepare CES to work with customers interested in online, as well as traditional learning opportunities. Such professional development opportunities may include mastery of technologies, program and content development, andragogy and pedagogy, effective collaboration and teamwork, and legal and policy considerations of working in online environments. Funds will be used to help develop and measure the effectiveness of hybrid learning opportunities designed to reach a broader audience, and engage more leaders and innovators. Examples include research-led teams that contribute to the advancement of NIFA Science Emphasis Areas and related priorities, engage project directors administering other competitive funding awarded by NIFA and other federal agencies, and including an outreach component. Funds will be used to engage the CES on important technology and subject matter topics, and enlist federal and state partners, institutional teams, and others to contribute to training programs and new professional development resources using http://campus.extension.org/ or similar platforms.

3. Build capacity within and across the CES to effectively engage strategic partners so more customers can be reached across multiple platforms in real-time with science/research-based content.

E^3 will employ innovative and highly skilled people to lead this initiative in areas such as administration, content and instructional development; development of teams and collaboratives; network and software engineering; communications and marketing; evaluation; professional development; strategic partnerships; and network literacy. By staying abreast of the most current trends and digital innovations, the CES staff will become more proficient in E^3 by blending the electronic availability of education and expertise with their traditional ways of working. Similarly, increasing awareness of how to effectively develop broad-based, strategic partnership opportunities, including regional approaches, which include federal and state government

agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector has the potential to increase the reach and adoption of CES evidence-based practices in advancing shared mission interests. Funds will be used to reach the public with targeted content by developing and training extension faculty and staff on the use of new and traditional media for content dissemination. By refining performance metrics that are shared with the CES, and developing evaluation strategies and tools for documenting social media reach and engagement with partners, customers and collaborative teams, the successful applicant will demonstrate proficiency in the evaluation of E^3 products and services to ensure competitiveness in the marketplace.

Funds will also be used to support a "NIFA National Enhancing Electronic Extension (E^3) Fellowship Program" for faculty interested in using sabbatical or other leave to contribute to the initiative. The work of the Fellows' may support applied and developmental research in electronic delivery of educational programs, studying the effects of E^3 on the transformation of the CES and its partners, or assisting in evaluating the efficacy of blending electronic and traditional ways of working on the quality of life for citizens. The successful applicant will use these funds to form, manage, and administer advisory and working groups in such areas as technology and innovation, content management, editorial functions, diversity and limited English proficiency audiences, institutional teams, evaluation, end users, internal and external partners, and identify near and future trends.

4. Update existing and develop any new policies that may be needed to support the business aspects of Enhancing Electronic Extension (E^3).
The successful applicant will update existing and develop any new policies needed to manage, operate, and E^3 in close alignment with the eXtension Foundation and/or other sponsoring organization(s). Key policies include, but are not limited to:
> 1) Rules of Operation;
> 2) Contributor and Business Agreements for both institutions and individuals;
> 3) Terms of Use;
> 4) Community of Practice Business Agreements;
> 5) Policy for Non-Payment of Institutional Investment;
> 6) Policy for Institutional Branding and Searching;
> 7) Privacy;
> 8) Disclaimers;
> 9) Community of Practice Policies;
> 10) Content Sharing Policy;
> 11) Non-discrimination;
> 12) Grievance Procedures and Removal of Content;
> 13) Data Collection and Services;
> 14) Community of Practice Leadership Policy;
> 15) Collaboration, Intellectual Property and Publishing Guidelines;
> 16) Sponsorship Agreements;
> 17) Partnership Policy;
> 18) State Affiliate Membership;
> 19) Sponsorship Policy & Sponsorship Recognition Levels;
> 20) Ask an Expert;
> 21) Social Media Guidelines;
> 22) Prospective Partnership Agreements;

23) Partner and Member Institution Grants and Contracts Agreements; and
24) 501c3 Non-Profit Organization Sponsorship.

5. Develop and implement a comprehensive evaluation, and communications and marketing effort for Enhancing Electronic Extension (E^3).
Funds will support the general evaluation aimed at assessing the products and services of Enhancing Electronic Extension (E^3) against the criteria of: 1) competitiveness in the information and education marketplace; 2) the design of new and exceptional curricula for traditional and expanded audiences; and 3) alignment with the USDA Strategic Plan (https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/about-usda/strategic-goals), as appropriate. Evaluations will include the design of appropriate performance metrics with expected outcomes and impacts, and will align with the NIFA budget performance integration process. Funds will be used to maintain and implement a comprehensive communications and marketing plan for E^3 as a whole and that supports the CES and strategic partners for analyzing potential markets, initial characterization of audience need for products and services, and for effectively marketing products and services to targeted users.

Applicants should note that E^3 is a Federal-State-Local partnership that includes land-grant institutions, State and county partners, the CES as a whole, and NIFA. The grantee is required to coordinate E^3 activities on behalf of all CES partners in the context of the national, regional, state, and local priorities during the award period.

NTAE applications typically will include funds to support core functions (e.g., community development, content development, travel, technology support, communication, evaluation, etc.) and development of project-specific deliverables for Enhancing Electronic Extension (E^3). The application must demonstrate an understanding and application of a whole system(s) approach with the potential for the project to contribute to long-term impacts and outcomes. The successful NTAE applicant will have a project period of up to five years based upon available funding and satisfactory annual project performance and reporting.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The anticipated amount available for one NTAE grant award in FY 2019 is approximately $1,488,000. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application. The award made in FY 2019 will provide approximately $1,488,000 in funds for the first year of this 4-year continuation project.

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 2019 you may only submit a new application to the NTAE Program.

New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the NTAE Program. We will review all new applications competitively using the screening for administrative requirements, and review panel evaluation of proposals using evaluation criteria and selection process described in Part V of this RFA, 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.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may be submitted by Cooperative Extension Directors for 1862 land-grant institutions and Extension Administrators for 1890 land-grant institutions, including Central State University, Tuskegee University, West Virginia State University, and the University of the District of Columbia. Only these institutions are eligible to submit an application and receive an NTAE award. 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 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.

For those new to Federal financial assistance, a grants overview page is available on the NIFA website. This page includes information about free Grants 101 Training and other resources that are highly recommended for those seeking an understanding of Federal awards.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

NIFA does not require matching support for this program and matching resources will not be factored into the review process as evaluation criteria.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA.

We urge you to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For information about the pre-award phase of the grant lifecycle see https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/learn-grants/grants-101/pre-award-phase.html.

New User 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** https://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 https://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 https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/search-opportunity-package.html and enter the funding opportunity number where appropriate

    Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-OP-006747.

    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 move forms amongst different Grant Application Packages but you may ONLY submit an application 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. <u>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</u>. 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. ET, excluding federal holidays.

1. <u>SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet</u>
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 2.17 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 NTAE. See 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 whether it is single- or double-spaced and up to 10 additional pages for figures and tables. We have established this maximum (30 pages) to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

> **(1) Introduction:** Describe past and current involvement with eXtension or similar electronic/online capacity.
> **(2) Objectives and Procedures:** Discuss planned procedures for achieving each NTAE objective (listed in Part I, B.). For each task, identify key personnel involved, and timelines for achieving milestones. Where appropriate, describe how planned procedures align with the USDA Strategic Plan.
> **(3) Collaborators:** List partner institutions and contacts' names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses.
> **(4) Evaluation:** Provide a plan for evaluating accomplishments and outcomes that meet each NTAE objective (listed in Part I B.).

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 for this field.

Data Management Plan. A Data Management Plan (DMP) is required and is to clearly articulate 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.

The requirements for preparation and inclusion of a DMP in your application is included on the following web page, https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/data-management-plan-nifa-funded-research-projects. Also included on the web page are FAQs and information about accessing examples of DMPs.

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.
For further information and instructions regarding indirect costs, refer to Part V, section 7.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. For indirect cost funding restrictions, refer to Part IV, D. of this RFA.

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.
a. **Field 2. Program to which you are applying.** Enter the program code name (i.e., enter "New Technologies for Ag Extension") and the program code (i.e., enter "AA-R"). Note that accurate entry of the program code is very important for proper and timely processing of an application.
b. **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.

8. Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants
This is a required form for corporate applicants. See Part VI, 2 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for a description of the term, "corporation," and detailed information related to the questions on this form.

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. The list includes:
- Data Management Plan
- Current and Pending Support

This is not an exhaustive list of required items; it only serves to highlight items that may be overlooked.
Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.5 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by **5 p.m. Eastern Time on** June 6, 2019 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

Pursuant to Section 1473 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended, 7 U.S.C. 3319, indirect costs and tuition remission are not allowable costs under Section 3(d) of Smith-Lever projects, and no funds will be approved for this purpose. Further, costs that are a part of an institution's indirect cost pool (e.g., administrative or clerical salaries) may not be reclassified as direct costs for the purpose of making them allowable.

NIFA has determined that grant funds awarded under this authority may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

The use of grant funds to plan, acquire, or construct a building or facility is not allowed under this program. With prior approval, and in accordance with the cost principles set forth in 2 CFR part 00, some grant funds may be used for minor alterations, renovations, or repairs deemed necessary to retrofit existing teaching or research spaces in order to carry out a funded project. However, requests to use grant funds for such purposes must demonstrate that the alterations, renovations, or repairs are essential to achieving the major purpose of the project. Grant funds may not be used for endowment investing.

E. Other Submission Requirements

You should follow the submission requirements noted in Part IV, Section 1.5 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

NIFA evaluates 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.

NIFA selects 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 NTAE will recommend that your project be approved for support from currently available funds or be declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review.

NTAE 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

A reviewer's written evaluation entails two levels of assessment. First, the reviewer summarizes how well the application addressed each evaluation criterion. After the application has been assessed for strengths and weaknesses of each criterion, the reviewer then evaluates the overall likelihood that the project will have significant outcome and impact. These written reviews are used to begin panel discussions with other reviewers serving on the peer review panel. Through these discussions, peer review panelists come to consensus on the final rating and ranking of proposals. A complete description of NIFA's peer review process can be found at the NIFA website: https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/nifa-peer-review-process-competitive-grant-applications.

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

1. **Relevancy**: Explanation and documentation that the project is directed toward specific topic areas identified in Part I, B in this RFA. These topics are designed to increase the capacity of the Cooperative Extension System (CES) to adopt new and innovative technology applications for delivering science-based educational resources from land-grant and other partner institutions about matters of high importance to the general public. In addition, the relevancy will be evaluated by the description of the necessity of the project based on the needs identified for the target audience, and the degree to which the project aligns with the USDA Strategic Plan, Extension Committee on Organization and Policy priorities, and current initiatives funded under Electronic Extension (E^2) (https://www.extension.org/), where appropriate.

2. **Technical merit**:
   (a) Clarity and delineation of objectives, activities and outcomes;
   (b) Conceptual adequacy of the proposed activities to meet the needs of the targeted audience;
   (c) Innovation and originality of objectives and activities;
   (d) Expected performance targets, outcomes and impacts as indicated in the Plan for Outcome Based Reporting;
   (e) Adaptability to other locations, communities, and/or agricultural products and technologies;
   (f) Reasonableness of the budget for planned activities. (While the size of the budget is not an evaluation criterion, the reviewers will be asked to comment whether it matches logically with the program described in the narrative.)

3. **Achievability:** Probability of success of the project is appropriate given the level of originality, target audience and budget for each activity. The extent to which the applicant identifies potential pitfalls and how they will be addressed. There should be sufficient time commitment of project directors and co-directors for project activities including management. The plans for management and collaborative arrangements of the proposed project should be adequate, e.g., sufficient time allocated for systematic attainment of objectives; clearly defined project roles and relationships among the key participants and collaborators; plan for decision-making; and plan for administration of the proposed project and its maintenance, partnerships, and collaborative efforts.

4. **Expertise and track record of the applicants**: To what extent does the application demonstrate expertise through successful multi-year experience in administering efforts that encourage access to high-quality, non-duplicative, research-based information? The successful multi-year experience can be demonstrated by the number of inclusive partnerships with the institutions and State Extension Services currently participating in eXtension, assistance or education activities previously carried out; number of participants or graduates of the program; the number of years a program or activity has been offered. The extent to which the qualifications of the applicant (individual or team) to conduct the proposed project activities are detailed. The applicant's ability to evaluate project outcomes. The applicant's demonstration of

experience and competence in serving the needs of the identified target audience(s).

5. **Adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation**: Includes the expertise of consultants and collaborators, sufficiency of the educational facilities and equipment for the proposed education, and outreach methods.

6. **Adequacy of plans for a comprehensive evaluation process, outcome-based reporting, and the communication of findings and results beyond the immediate target audience**: Includes number and expertise of evaluation team members who have agreed to serve or who have been identified.

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 https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/nifa-peer-review-process-competitive-grant-applications 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 NIFA 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 https://nifa.usda.gov/terms-and-conditions 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 – https://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 https://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 https://nifa.usda.gov/terms-and-conditions for information about NIFA award terms). If there are any program or award-specific award terms, they will be identified in the award.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACTS

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Programmatic Contact –
Brent Elrod
National Program Leader
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Institute of Youth, Family, and Community
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PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Use of Funds; Changes

1. <u>Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility</u>
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. <u>Changes in Budget or Project Plans</u>
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 https://nifa.usda.gov/terms-and-conditions 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.