

Farm Business Management and Benchmarking Competitive Grants Program (FBMB)

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

APPLICATION DEADLINE: April 9, 2019

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

FARM BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND BENCHMARKING COMPETITIVE GRANTS PROGRAM (FBMB)

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Assistance Listings under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number **10.319**.

DATES: Applications must be received by **5 p.m. Eastern Time** on April 9, 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 (6) 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 Farm Business Management and Benchmarking Competitive Grants Program 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 Farm Business Management and Benchmarking Competitive Grants Program for fiscal year (FY) 2019 to improve the farm management knowledge and skills of agricultural producers, and maintain the national, publicly available farm financial management database to support improved farm management. The anticipated amount available for grants in FY 2019 is approximately \$1.3 million. This RFA was released prior to the passage of an appropriation act for FY 2019. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an appropriation act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.

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

Table of Contents

PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION.....	4
A. Legislative Authority	4
B. Purpose and Priorities.....	4
C. Program Area Description	5
PART II—AWARD INFORMATION.....	7
A. Available Funding.....	7
B. Types of Applications	7
C. Project and Grant Types.....	8
D. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research	9
PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION.....	10
A. Eligible Applicants	10
B. Cost Sharing or Matching	11
C. Center of Excellence.....	11
PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION.....	12
A. Electronic Application Package.....	12
B. Content and Form of Application Submission.....	13
C. Submission Dates and Times.....	18
D. Funding Restrictions.....	18
E. Other Submission Requirements.....	19
PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS	20
A. General.....	20
B. Evaluation Criteria.....	20
C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality.....	23
D. Organizational Management Information.....	23
E. Application Disposition	23
PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION.....	24
A. General.....	24
B. Award Notice	24
C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.....	24
D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements	24
PART VII—AGENCY CONTACTS	26
PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION.....	27
A. Use of Funds; Changes	27
B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards.....	27
C. Regulatory Information.....	28
D. Definitions	28
E. Materials Available on the Internet.....	29

PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The authority for this program is under section 1672D of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990, 7 U.S.C. 5925f, as amended by section 7208 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Pub. L 110 – 246), which authorizes the Secretary, acting through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, to establish a competitive research and extension grants program to improve farm management.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The FBMB Program leads to improved farm management knowledge and skills of individuals directly involved in the production of agriculture, and thus, directly align with the USDA Strategic Plan FY's 2018-2022 (<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-strategic-plan-2018-2022.pdf>), specifically with the following goals:

1. Goal 2: Maximize the ability of American agricultural producers to prosper by feeding and clothing the world.
 - Objective 2.1: Provide an Effective Financial Safety Net for Farmers and Ranchers to Sustain Economically Viable Agricultural Production and Support Rural Jobs and Economic Growth.
 - Objective 2.2: Increase Agricultural Opportunities and Support Economic Growth by Creating New Markets and Supporting a Competitive Agricultural System.
2. Goal 4: Facilitate rural prosperity and economic development.
 - Objective 4.1: Expand Rural Business Opportunity and Rural Quality of Life with Access to Capital; Improved Infrastructure, Broadband Access, and Connectivity; and Support for Workforce Availability.
3. Goal 5: Strengthen the stewardship of private lands through technology and research.
 - Objective 5.1: Enhance Conservation Planning With Science-Based Tools and Information.

As specified in 7 U.S.C. 5925f, NIFA is soliciting applications for the FBMB grant under the following areas:

Improving the farm management knowledge and skills of agricultural producers by maintaining and expanding a national, publicly available farm financial management database to support improved farm management.

The assistance provided by these programs, to the extent practicable, shall be coordinated with, and delivered in cooperation with similar services or assistance by other Federal Agencies or programs supporting improved farm management. The Secretary will give priority to applicants that:

- (1) Demonstrate an ability to work directly with agricultural producers;
- (2) Collaborate with farm management, education programs and associations;
- (3) Address the farm management needs of a variety of crops and regions of the United States; and
- (4) Contribute data to support the national farm financial management database <https://finbin.umn.edu/>.

The goal of the FBMB is to strongly support the intellectual talent and collaborative efforts to maintain the national, publicly available farm financial management database needed to meet the challenges facing the nation's agriculture and food systems. Meeting these challenges will require innovative approaches that foster multi-disciplinary projects. This means that farm management producers must be educated and prepared to work effectively across disciplines in order to work to solve agricultural and educational challenges. The FBMB program engages producers in improving the United States farm management knowledge and skills by encompassing the USDA/NIFA's food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences.

FBMB supports social and behavioral science disciplines, as well as leadership skills development opportunities. Incorporation of social/behavioral sciences and leadership development is important for addressing many of the challenges facing agriculture and farm communities, such as increasing global demand for food production in the face of limited natural resources; improving health and reducing obesity by engaging in healthy diets; and alleviating poverty by fostering economic opportunity.

C. Program Area Description

Key Information:

Program Code – FBMB

Program Code Name – Farm Business Management and Benchmarking

Code of Federal Domestic Assistance – 10.319

Requested Project Types – Extension Projects

Requested Grant Types – Standard Grants

Application Deadline – April 9, 2019

Grant Duration – up to three (3) years

Maximum Award Amount – \$500,000

The FBMB program outlined in this RFA seeks to expand upon work begun in FY 2010 to improve the farm management knowledge and skills of individuals directly involved in production agriculture. Specifically, FY 2019 applications are being solicited to address one (1) or more of the following objectives:

- (1) Maintain and expand the already established national, publicly available farm financial management database to support improved farm management for producers of a variety of crops and livestock throughout multiple regions of the United States.

- (2) Establish or expand collaborative farm management and producer association partnerships with the existing national farm financial management and benchmarking database to improve the farm management knowledge and skills of agricultural producers.

In addition, the FBMB program anticipates funding projects that demonstrate one (1) or more of the following measures:

- (1) Advancing data gathering and conducting research on cost of production, farm profitability factors, and farm policy;
- (2) Developing or expanding cooperation and data sharing among existing farm management associations and business management education programs across the nation to convert their financial analysis activities to a uniform system;
- (3) Providing training, assistance, and software to states with farm management associations to facilitate uniform financial procedures and software;
- (4) Improving the profitability and competitiveness of small and medium-sized farms and ranches by providing access to high quality, uniform farm business management benchmarking information; or
- (5) Improving producers' abilities to successfully manage their agricultural operations through periods of high risk, volatility, and financial stress.

FBMB encourages (but does not require) projects that develop content suitable for delivery through eXtension (<https://extension.org/>).

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The anticipated amount available for FBMB grants in FY 2019 is approximately \$1.3 million. Proposed project budgets may not exceed \$500,000. Projects may be up to three (3) years in duration. This RFA was released prior to the passage of an appropriations act for FY 2019. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.

Number of New Awards Anticipated for FY 2019	Estimated Minimum Award	Estimated Maximum Award
4-6	\$100,000	\$500,000

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

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 submit an application to the FBMB Program as one (1) of the following types of requests:

New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the FBMB 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 of this RFA (Application Review Requirements).

Renewal application. This is a project application that requests additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in an original or amended award. Applications for renewed funding must contain the same information as required for new applications; they also must contain a Progress Report (see Part IV(3)(b) of this RFA, Project Narrative). We must receive renewal applications by the relevant due dates. We will evaluate renewal applications in competition with other pending applications in the area to which they are assigned and review them according to the same evaluation criteria listed in Part V(B) of this RFA. If submitting a renewal application, enter the NIFA-assigned award number of the previously funded application in the Federal field (Field 4 on the form).

C. Project and Grant Types

Extension Projects

Single-function Extension Projects conduct programs and activities that deliver science-based knowledge and informal educational programs to people, enabling them to make practical decisions. Program delivery may range from community-based to national audiences and use communication methods from face-to-face to electronic or combinations thereof. Extension Projects may also include related matters such as certification programs, in-service training, client recruitment and services, curriculum development, instructional materials and equipment, and innovative instructional methodologies appropriate to informal educational programs.

Extension Projects address one (1) or more of the following key strategic actions:

- (1) Support informal education to increase food and agricultural literacy of youth and adults;
- (2) Promote science-based agricultural literacy by increasing understanding and use of food and agricultural science data, information, and programs;
- (3) Build science-based capability in people to engage audiences and enable informed decision making;
- (4) Develop new applications of instructional tools and curriculum structures that increase technical competency and ensure global competitiveness;
- (5) Offer non-formal learning programs that increase accessibility to new audiences at the rate at which new ideas and technologies are tested and/or developed at the community-scale; and
- (6) Develop programs that increase public knowledge and citizen engagement leading to actions that protect or enhance the nations' food supply, agricultural productivity, environmental quality, community vitality, and/or public health and well-being.

These projects should lead to measurable, documented changes in learning, actions, or conditions in an identified audience or stakeholder group. These projects should synthesize and incorporate a wide range of the latest relevant research results

In FY 2019, the FBMB program will accept regular grant applications.

Regular Grants

Regular grants support targeted original scientific Research, Education/Teaching, Extension, or Integrated Projects. An eligible, individual institution, independent branch campus, or branch institution of a State system may submit a grant application for project activities to be undertaken principally on behalf of its own students or faculty, and to be managed primarily by its own personnel. The applicant executes the project without the requirement of sharing grant funds with other project partners.

D. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research

In accordance with 2 CFR Part 422, sections 2, 3, and 8, 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 accordance 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.

For information about the Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research, see <https://nifa.usda.gov/responsible-and-ethical-conduct-research>.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may be submitted by numerous entities. Pursuant to 7 U.S.C. 450i (b) (7), eligible applicant means:

- (A) State agricultural experiment station;
- (B) College and universities;
- (C) University research foundation;
- (D) Other research institutions and organizations;
- (E) Federal agencies;
- (F) National laboratories;
- (G) Private organizations or corporations;
- (H) Individuals; or
- (I) Any group consisting of two (2) or more of the entities described in subparagraphs (A) through (H).

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, an [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

The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (HR 2) removed the matching requirements for some NIFA competitive grants imposed by the Agricultural Act of 2014. Therefore, there are changes to the matching requirements for some funds awarded in 2019.

For FY 2019, NIFA does not require matching support for the Farm Business Management and Benchmarking program and matching resources will not be factored into the review process as evaluation criteria.

C. Center of Excellence

Pursuant to Section 7214 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Pub. 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 <https://nifa.usda.gov/centers-excellence>. A COE is composed of one (1) 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) Group consisting of two (2) or more of the entities described in (A) through (H).

COE designation is available only to CAP and standard grant applicants. Part IV (B) (3) of this RFA contains additional requirements for COE consideration.

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 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 (2) weeks to complete the registration process so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations, the AR should go to “**Register,**” in the top right corner of the Grants.gov web page (or go to <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 section below entitled “Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials,” to locate the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.”

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

To receive application materials:

- You must download and install a version of [Adobe Reader](#) compatible with Grants.gov to access, complete, and submit applications. For basic system requirements and download instructions, see <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.
- (a) 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-FBMB-006694.

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. ET).

Have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov:

- (a) Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
- (b) Name of agency you are applying to
- (c) 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 application guide.

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’s 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 application guide for how to check the manifest of submitted files.

Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. NIFA 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).

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

(a) Email: electronic@nifa.usda.gov

(b) Phone: 202-401-5048

(c) Business hours: Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. ET, excluding [federal holidays](#).

1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. 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 FBMB. 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 12 pages of written text and up to five (5) additional pages for figures and tables. We have established this maximum 17 pages) to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

- A Summary Statement of the applicant's Intentions in submitting a proposal that addresses the purpose and priorities of the Farm Business Management and Benchmarking Grants Program based on one (1) of the five (5) objectives listed under Part I, C. of this RFA.
- A clear Statement of Purpose, along with Goals and Objectives for the proposal enhancing the already established Farm Business Management and Benchmarking National Database, hereafter referred to as "FBMB National Database".
- A Discussion of the relevant Body of Knowledge sufficient to demonstrate the applicant's understanding of the needs of agricultural producers for farm financial management and benchmarking capabilities. The discussion should include estimates of the relative importance of the issues to stakeholders and to ongoing State-Federal food and

agricultural research, education and extension programs.

- A Description of Planned Data Management and Coordination of Efforts and Mechanisms to achieve them, sufficient to demonstrate the applicant's proficiency administering a database. This description should include discussion of any relevant past activities.
- A Plan of Work, including Methods and Procedures for maintaining a FBMB National Database, and Action Steps for implementation and management of a farm financial management database, collaboration with farm management and producer associations, and direct work with agricultural producers. This plan of work should provide a description of the Facilities in which the FBMB National Database will operate, along with the Personnel Needs, Assignments, and the Division of Labor anticipated for implementation of the proposed plan. The methods and procedures section of the plan of work should include but not necessarily be limited to:
 - (a) A description of the proposed project activities in the sequence in which it is planned to carry them out;
 - (b) Techniques to be employed, including their feasibility and rationale for their uses in program implementation;
 - (c) Kinds of results expected;
 - (d) Means by which data will be collected, analyzed, interpreted, and used;
 - (e) Details of plans to communicate programming and results to stakeholders and the public;
 - (f) Pitfalls that might be encountered and how they might be overcome;
 - (g) Limitations of the proposed project; and
 - (h) A project timetable outlining all important phases as a function of time, year by year, for the entire project, including, if appropriate, periods beyond the grant funding period.
- A Description of Prospective Partners for collaboration and the role of each will play in the FBMB National Database's efforts. The description should include the role of stakeholders in problem identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation, as appropriate.
- A Description of Performance Measurement to assess the effectiveness of the FBMB National Database's coordination efforts and database management and benchmarking outcomes.
- Evidence and Discussion of Past Experience and Compliance with Federal Reporting Requirements.
- Bibliography & References Cited – PDF Attachment. No Page Limit. Title the attachment as 'Bibliography & References Cited' in the document header and save file as 'Bibliography'.

- Response to Previous Review (if applicable). This requirement only applies to Resubmitted Applications or Resubmitted Renewal Applications as described in Part II, B. The Project Narrative attachment is to include two (2) components: 1) a one-page response to the previous review (containing the previous proposal number in the first line) titled “Response to Previous Review” as the first page of the attachment and 2) the 12 page Project Narrative, as required (see Part IV, C. 3. b., above). The one-page “Response to Previous Review” does not count against the 12-page limit of the Project Narrative.
- Progress Report (if applicable). This requirement only applies to the Renewal application or Resubmitted Renewal Applications (see Part II, B). These applications must include a progress report within the applicable page limitation of the Project Narrative.
- 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 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), COE 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 https://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 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.

Indirect Costs.

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 “**Farm Business Management and Benchmarking**” and the program code (i.e., enter “**FBMB**”). 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.

While you may use the checklist to check the application for completeness, the application should be checked for the following required item(s). The list includes:

- Conflict of Interest
- Current and Pending Support
- Felony Tax Certification

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 April 9, 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

Section 713 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (Pub. L. 115-141) 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 2019 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.

See Part V.7, of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further details.

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.

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 200, 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 work is 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

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

NIFA 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. Each evaluation criterion is given equal weight. 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>.

At a minimum, applicants should provide evidence that they:

- (a) Demonstrate an ability to work directly with agricultural producers;
- (b) Address the farm management needs of a variety of crops and regions of the United States;
- (c) Establish and maintain collective partnerships with more than five (5) farm management or education programs and associations that are representative of agricultural diversity in multiple regions of the United States;
- (d) Maintained and continue to maintain farm financial analysis software applicable to the production and management of a wide range of crop and livestock agricultural commodities (including some organic commodities);
- (e) Establish procedures that enable producers to (i) benchmark their farms against peer groups; and (ii) to query the benchmarking database by location, farm type, farm size, and commodity at all overall business and individual enterprise levels;
- (f) Contribute data to support the national farm financial management database; and
- (g) Have provided and continue to provide public online access to farm and ranch financial benchmarking databases.

NIFA will use the evaluation criteria below to review applications submitted in response to this RFA. Each evaluation criterion will be given equal weight:

- Advance data gathering and conduct research on cost of production, farm profitability factors, and farm policy.

This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will have an impact upon and advance the knowledge and skills of agricultural producers and establishment or maintenance of the national publicly available farm financial management database. Elements considered include: identification of a problem or opportunity to be addressed; body of knowledge, and preliminary data and other past activities used to substantiate the need for the proposed project.

- Develop or expand cooperation and data sharing among existing farm management associations and farm business management education programs across the nation to convert their financial analysis activities to a uniform system.

This criterion is used to assess the soundness of the proposed approach. Elements considered include the adequacy of the scope of the project to produce expected outcomes/changes in knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and/or behaviors in targeted populations; objectives; and soundness/evidence-base of educational curricula to be used in the project.

- Provide training, assistance, and software to states with farm management associations to facilitate uniform financial procedures and software.

This criterion is used to assess the perceived quality of the proposed activities and sequence of activities; participant recruitment; methodology and limitation of the proposed approach; project timeline; and expected new products and results (e.g., educational approaches including training curricula, workshops, meetings, conferences, exhibits, publications, electronic communication, fact sheets, newsletters, and mass media.

- Improve the profitability and competitiveness of small and medium-sized farms and ranches by providing access to high quality, uniform farm business management benchmarking information.

This criterion is used to assess the adequacy of the performance measurements and its capacity to measure the extent to which program objectives are met. Elements considered include: evaluation question(s), the methodological approach proposed for answering these questions, justification for the type of data to be collected, a data collection plan, data analysis plan, and strengths and limitations of the proposed evaluation approach.

- Improve producers' abilities to successfully manage their agricultural operations through periods of high risk, volatility, and financial stress.

As above, this criterion is used to assess the adequacy of the performance measurements and its capacity to measure the extent to which program objectives are met. Elements considered include: evaluation question(s), the methodological approach proposed for answering these questions, justification for the type of data to be collected, a data collection plan, data analysis plan, and strengths and limitations of the proposed evaluation approach

Center 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, C. 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 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 <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 (1) 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 (3) 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 programs or award-specific award terms, they will be identified in the award.

To foster interaction and mutual learning among projects, the NIFA National Program Leader on record will facilitate networking among cohort grant awardees throughout the year. Three (3) organized conferences will be held; either by webinar or phone. During these conferences, each

award team will share their progress to date (including any ongoing challenges and those solved), present next steps, and consider collaboration opportunities with one (1) or more award teams on issues of mutual interest and for joint benefit.

At the end of the grantee's final year, the grantee must prepare a final report to USDA/NIFA that summarizes all significant activities undertaken towards achieving the outcomes of the project. The report should include basic demographics and total numbers on participants served or resources developed; tables, graphs, and other figures to facilitate comparing targeted project results with actual results, aggregated for the entire project; for projects expected to lead to measurable, documented changes in participants' learning, actions or conditions, final numbers of participants who showed/reported significant changes in learning, actions or conditions; project list of all educational materials (including web links when appropriate) produced by the project; and success stories and pictures showcasing project impacts. The NIFA Program Specialist on record will provide a form recommended for use in completing the final report as part of the post-award management process. Reports must be received in REEPort within 60 days of the expiration date of the award.

Reporting on Performance:

Projects are expected to develop and report on performance indicators that can demonstrate measurable changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of project participants. These indicators should demonstrate the project's success at achieving the proposals objectives and overarching goal. NIFA strongly encourages involving an evaluator on the proposal project to help develop outcome-based performance measures and a plan for evaluating the project's performance.

In addition to tracking and reporting on project-specific outcomes, all grantees will report annually to NIFA on one (1) or both of the following performance indicators:

(1) Individuals and Families

- (a) Total number of individuals and separately, families who participated in the proposed project; and
- (b) The number of individuals and separately, families that gained an economic, environmental, or quality of life benefit from a change in resources, knowledge, attitudes, or behavior acquired by participating in the proposed projects.

(2) Counties Served

- (a) Total number of counties served by the proposed projects; and
- (b) The number of counties that gained economic, environmental, or quality of life benefit from a change in resources, knowledge or practice acquired by individuals or families participating in the proposed project.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACTS

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Programmatic Contact –

Toija Riggins
National Program Leader
Institute of Youth, Family and Community
Division of Family and Consumer Sciences
National Institute of Food and Agriculture,
USDA
Waterfront Centre, 800 9th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024
Phone: (202) 720-2297
Fax: (202) 690 – 2469
Email: toija.riggins@nifa.usda.gov

Administrative/Business Contacts –

Rochelle McCrea
Team Leader
Office of Grants and Financial Management
National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA
Waterfront Centre, 800 9th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024
Phone: (202) 401 – 2880
Fax: (202) 401 – 6271
Email: rmccrea@nifa.usda.gov

Or,

Towana DeShazo
Grant Support
Office of Grants and Financial Management
National Institute of Food and Agriculture,
USDA
Waterfront Centre, 800 9th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024
Phone: (202) 401-4155
Fax: (202) 401 – 6271
Email: TDESHAZO@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 (3) 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 (3) 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.

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

Benchmark, Benchmarking – The term “benchmark” or “benchmarking” means the process of comparing the performance of an agricultural enterprise against the performance of other similar enterprises, through the use of comparable and reliable data, to identify business management strengths, weaknesses, and steps necessary to improve management performance and business profitability.

Farm Management Association – A public or nonprofit organization or education program that

- (a) assists farmers, ranchers, and other agricultural operators to improve financial management and business profitability by providing training on farm financial planning and analysis, record keeping, and other farm management topics; and
- (b) is affiliated with a land-grant college or university, other institution of higher education, or nonprofit entity.

Farm Business Management & Benchmarking National Database – Determined by the Secretary: improves the farm management knowledge and skills of individuals directly involved in production of agriculture through:

- (a) Participation in a farm management education and training program; and
- (b) Direct access to a public farm-benchmarking database.

In addition to the FBMB National Database,

- (a) Forms collaborative partnerships with more than five (5) farm management associations that are representative of agricultural diversity in multiple regions of the United States;
- (b) Supports farm financial analysis software applicable to the production and management of a wide range of crop and livestock agricultural commodities (including some organic commodities);
- (c) Maintains procedures that enable producers to (i) benchmark the farms of the producers against peer groups; and (ii) to query the benchmarking database by location, farm type, farm size, and commodity at the overall business and individual enterprise levels; and
- (d) Provides public online access to farm and ranch financial benchmarking databases.

Partnership – Requires that all partners have a substantial involvement in the project throughout the life of the project. If a partnership between multiple entities is proposed, the proposal should be clearly identify the following:

- (a) A narrative of each entity's clearly established role in the project;
- (b) How each entity involved as a partner on the project will contribute to execution of project objectives, determine experimental design, develop the project work plan and time table, and submit collaborative, timely reports; and
- (c) A comprehensive project budget that reflects each entity's financial or in-kind contribution to the total project budget costs.

E. Materials Available on the Internet

FBMB program information will be made available on the NIFA website at <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/rfas/fbmb.html>. The following are among the materials available on the web page:

- (1) More information about the upcoming FBMB 2019;
- (2) Request for Applications
- (3) FBMB Abstracts of Funded Projects; and
- (4) FBMB Annual Reports.