



REQUEST FOR APPLICATION

Assistive Technology Program for Farmers with Disabilities (*AgrAbility*)

FUNDING YEAR:	Fiscal Year 2021
APPLICATION DEADLINE:	January 13, 2021
LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE:	Not Applicable
FUNDING AVAILABLE:	Approximately \$4.1 million
ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER:	10.500

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

National Institute of Food and Agriculture, United States (U.S.) Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance. This program is listed in the Assistance Listings under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number 10.500.

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
Application:	5:00 P.M. Eastern, January 13, 2021 [<i>Ref to Part I § C of this RFA</i>]
Letter of Intent:	Not Required
Applicants Comments:	Within six months from the issuance of this notice (<i>NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month</i>)

Stakeholder Input. The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) seeks comments on all request for applications (RFAs) so it can deliver programs efficiently, effectively, with integrity, and with a focus on customer service. NIFA considers comments, to the extent possible when developing RFAs and use comments to help meet the requirements of [Section 103\(c\)\(2\) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 \(7 U.S.C. 7613\(c\)\(2\)\)](#). Applicants may submit written comments to Policy@nifa.usda.gov (email is for comments only). Please use the following subject line: Response to the AgrAbility RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NIFA requests applications for the **Assistive Technology Program for Farmers with Disabilities through the AgrAbility program**, for fiscal year (FY) 2021. The AgrAbility program works to increase the likelihood that farmers, farm workers and farm family members with disabilities, including veterans with disabilities, and their families who engage in farming, farm-related occupations, or are pursuing new farming opportunities, will experience success in agricultural production.

This RFA is being released prior to the passage of a full appropriations act for FY 2021. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. The anticipated amount available for grants in FY 2021 is approximately \$4.1 million. NIFA anticipates that approximately \$540,000 will be available for support of new State and Regional AgrAbility Projects (SRAPs) and approximately \$531,000 will be available for support of a new National AgrAbility Project (NAP). The remainder of funds will be used to support 17 previously awarded SRAP awards eligible for continuation.

Applications for the continuing SRAPs are not included in this solicitation and are completed separately. **This RFA is soliciting applications for new SRAPs and a new National AgrAbility Project.**

This notice identifies the objectives for AgrAbility projects, deadlines, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions.

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PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The Assistive Technology Program for Farmers with Disabilities (**AgrAbility**) is authorized at [7 U.S.C. 5933](#) as amended.

B. Purpose and Priorities

AgrAbility works to increase the likelihood that individuals with disabilities, including veterans, and their families engaged in production agriculture (AgrAbility customers) will become more successful. The program supports cooperative projects in which State Cooperative Extension based at either 1862 or 1890 Land-Grant universities subcontract to private, non-profit direct service disability organizations. The AgrAbility program supports United States rural communities by

- i. supporting cooperative programs between State Cooperative Extension Service agencies and private nonprofit disability organizations to provide on-the-farm agricultural education and assistance directed at accommodating disability in farm operations for individuals with disabilities who are engaged in farming and farm-related occupations and their families and
- ii. enabling a national private nonprofit disability organization to provide technical assistance, training, information dissemination and other activities to support community-based direct service programs of on-site rural rehabilitation and assistive technology for individuals (including veterans) with disabilities, and their families, who are engaged in farming or farm-related occupations or, in the case of veterans with disabilities, who are pursuing new farming opportunities.

The AgrAbility Program is aligned with the USDA Science Blueprint Theme 05 strategy to identify and remove barriers to assist socially disadvantaged and limited-resource producers, beginning farmers, women producers and veterans in joining the workforce for farming. The AgrAbility Program focus on identifying technologies that support farmers with disabilities to continue in agriculture production also aligns with the USDA Agricultural Innovation Agenda.

The AgrAbility Program is aligned with the following FY 2018 – FY 2022 [USDA Strategic Goals](#):

1. Strategic Goal 1: Ensure USDA Programs Are Delivered Efficiently, Effectively, With Integrity and a Focus on Customer Service;
2. Strategic Goal 2: Maximize the Ability of American Agricultural Producers to Prosper by Feeding and Clothing the World; and
3. Strategic Goal 4: Facilitate Rural Prosperity and Economic Development.

C. Program Area Description

NIFA is soliciting applications under the following AgrAbility program areas:

1. National AgrAbility Project (NAP)
2. State and Regional AgrAbility Projects (SRAPs)

To address the specialized needs of AgrAbility customers, the program builds service capacity on national, regional, state, and local levels through education and networking. The program provides direct assistance to individuals with disabilities who engage in farming and farm-related occupations. The form of assistance for the AgrAbility customer is dependent on the immediate needs that are inadequately addressed by health, farm, and government service providers. Finally, AgrAbility projects use marketing activities to direct the public to initiatives in AgrAbility-related education, networking and assistance.

The AgrAbility program funds projects that deliver education, networking, direct assistance and marketing activities with following elements:

1. Education

- a. Within the context of production agriculture, learning objectives focus on enhancing competencies necessary to accommodate disabilities and avoid secondary injuries in persons with disabilities.
- b. Audience includes farmers, rural agricultural professionals, rehabilitation and health care providers, vocational counselors, and other providers of service to individuals with disabilities and their families who engage in farming or farm-related occupations. This element applies also to veterans with disabilities and their families who engage in farming, farm-related occupations, or are pursuing new farming opportunities
- c. Delivery formats include authoring or adapting printable resources, presentations delivered in person or remotely, and recorded presentations that may encourage audience interaction, and internet presence.
- d. Projects must have means to appraise efficacy of AgrAbility educational efforts.

2. Networking

- a. Objectives encourage the sharing of information among, and the provision of services, value, or funds from, individuals or organizations not employed by AgrAbility.
- b. Partners include customers, peer supporters, volunteer groups, university student groups, stakeholders, and public and private funding organizations.
- c. Delivery formats include the donation of goods and services of direct benefit to AgrAbility customers.
- d. Projects must have means to appraise economic value of services rendered to AgrAbility and its customers.

3. Direct Assistance

- a. Objectives focus on the early identification of farm and rural families who are in need of services related to the disability of an individual and to provide individualized consultative services that increase the likelihood that AgrAbility customers and their farm operations experience success.

- b. Audience includes AgrAbility customers and others working on the same farms, including veterans with disabilities and their families who engage in farming, farm-related occupations, or are pursuing new farming opportunities.
- c. Delivery formats include product selection advice, accessibility and ergonomic recommendations, life activities and farm operations planning guidance, and advocacy to obtain service and financial aid. Assistance can occur in person or remotely.
- d. Projects must have means to appraise successes experienced following intervention.

4. Marketing

- a. Objectives concentrate on program and project awareness, intended to make key audiences aware of SRAP efforts. This excludes information required to provide education, assistance, or facilitate networking.
- b. Audience includes the general public.
- c. Delivery formats include public appearances with displays and the production or distribution of program awareness materials; press releases; public service announcements; print advertisements; web pages with awareness content; newsletters; or electronic notices.
- d. Projects must have means to link their marketing activities with registration, requests for information and consultation, and networking successes.

All delivery formats, training and educational materials and products should be marketed as being part of the AgrAbility program and use the AgrAbility logo (see below). Other branding on any materials produced through this grant requires consent of the NIFA program contact.

Figure 1: AgrAbility Logo



Table 2: National AgrAbility Project Key Information

	Title	Description
Program Code:	LQ	
Program Code Name:	AgrAbility	
CFDA Number	10.500	
Project Type:	Extension Projects	
Grant Type:	Cooperative Agreement	
Application Deadline	January 13, 2021	
Grant Duration:	48 Months	
Anticipated # of Awards:	1	
Maximum Award Amount:	Estimated at \$531,000	

The National AgrAbility Project (NAP)

The NAP has a dual mission:

1. To ensure SRAPs become more successful at meeting their objectives by providing them with timely and appropriate information, training and technical assistance; and
2. To provide limited, on-demand SRAP-type services in geographic areas without SRAPs.

NAP typically produces or recommends the education materials or forums, networking tactics, assistance protocols, and marketing products for SRAPs to adopt for their own use. NAP connects all SRAPs by: moderating information sharing forums; identifying, promoting, and addressing opportunities and challenges for AgrAbility; recognizing and capitalizing on economies of scale; and evaluating the program's impacts annually. The NAP also provides limited, on-demand SRAP-type services in geographic areas without SRAPs.

Annually, NAP develops and implements the AgrAbility National Training Workshop (NTW). NTW educates project personnel in addition to the standard education audience. The workshop delivers many sessions, including those focused on new staff orientation; staff development; forums for discussing pressing issues and project progress, successes and failures; and presentation of reports of interest to the entire program.

Over the past years, the NAP met the needs of the AgrAbility program in the areas of education, networking, assistance, marketing, and evaluation by conducting all the following:

- a. Producing and/or recommending the education materials and/or forums, networking tactics, assistance protocols, and marketing products for SRAPs to adopt for their own use and success. Much of the information produced and collected by AgrAbility to date has been housed and can be viewed on the current NAP's AgrAbility website at <http://www.agrability.org/>;
- b. Connecting all SRAPs by: moderating information sharing forums; identifying, promoting, and addressing opportunities and challenges for AgrAbility; and recognizing and capitalizing on economies of scale. Teleconferencing, virtual meetings and webinars are used in place of face-to face meetings whenever possible. For example, see <http://www.agrability.org/Online-Training/virtualntw/index.cfm> for information about AgrAbility Virtual National Training Workshops (NVTW) conducted annually by NAP;
- c. Assisting SRAPs in finding and cataloging (e.g., in form of printable manuals, CDs, online databases) assistive technology devices and products that improve the accessibility and productivity of agricultural workers with disabilities. For examples, see <http://www.agrability.org/Toolbox/index.cfm>;
- d. Addressing disability in agriculture and assistive technology needs of special populations, specifically: African-American farmers, Native American farmers, Hispanic/Latino farmers, veterans engaged in farming, and beginning farmers in conjunction/cooperation with institutions and organizations that serve them (e.g., 1890 and 1994 Land Grant institutions, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Farmer Veteran Coalition, etc.). For information about success to date in AgrAbility outreach to special populations via NAP, visit <http://www.agrability.org/> and http://www.agrability.org/Documents/2013-14_Special_Pops_Summary.pdf;

- e. Organizing an annual National AgrAbility Training Workshop (NTW) for SRAP personnel, AgrAbility clients, AgrAbility partners, and other education and assistive technology professionals of import to the success of the AgrAbility program. The workshop offers orientation for new grantees/staff; staff development forums for discussing pressing issues and SRAP progress, successes, and challenges; special forums (e.g., veterans in agriculture; collaborations with minorities serving institutions); special speakers; networking opportunities; and presentation of reports of interest to the entire program. To view agendas and presentations from the past NTWs, go to <http://www.agrability.org/AgrAbility-National-Training-Wkshp/index.cfm>;
- f. Annually assessing the level of effort and effectiveness of the AgrAbility program in serving farmers, farm workers, and farm family members with disabilities. The NAP does this by outreach and impact evaluations of SRAPs and process, outcome and impact evaluations of NAP. The evaluations are focused on assessing SRAP successes in reaching their intended customers and increasing their quality of life, the NAP's efforts in increasing/strengthening SRAP outreach and service capacity, and the NAP's success in serving customers living in states with currently no active SRAPs; and
- g. Engaging SRAPs in identifying and sharing best practices in developing project sustainability beyond USDA/NIFA funding.

Given that the primary source of funding for the AgrAbility are Federal funds, the NAP should contract with hotels for lodging at or below the Federal per diem rate for the national training workshop and any other meetings that require travel. NIFA retains the right to disallow use of NIFA funds for any travel that does not meet these requirements.

Table 3: State and Regional AgrAbility Projects Key Information

Title	Description
Program Code:	LQ
Program Code Name:	AgrAbility
CFDA Number	10.500
Project Type:	Extension Projects
Grant Type:	Standard Grants
Application Deadline	January 13, 2020
Grant Duration:	48 Months
Anticipated # of Awards:	3
Maximum Award Amount:	Estimated at \$180,000

State and Regional AgrAbility Projects (SRAPs)

SRAPs operate within a geographic area defined on the basis of states or regions. SRAPs within the same State may function independently of each other. States with insufficient potential clientele to merit individual AgrAbility projects or seeking to partner with 1862, 1890, and/or 1994 Land-Grant Universities, or Minority-Serving and/or Hispanic-Serving institutions outside their state, may submit regional, multi-state proposals.

The lead (i.e., primary) institution on a SRAP grant must partner and subcontract to a private, non-profit direct service disability organization.

Applicants proposing to serve remote and/or diverse customer populations may wish to form partnerships that include one or more Land-Grant Institutions, Non-Land-Grant Institutions, Hispanic-serving Institutions, or additional private non-profit organizations necessary to effectively serve the entire population eligible to receive AgrAbility services.

SRAP applicants may propose projects with budgets not to exceed \$180,000 per year for a maximum project duration of four years. The project period should begin approximately July 30, 2021. It is anticipated that FY 2021 appropriations will fund the awarded project's first-year budget. Each project may submit a request for up to \$180,000 per year for each year of requested funding.

Funding levels will be adjusted based on technical review of the projects and budget constraints. Multi-year funding will depend on the availability of funds and the demonstration of satisfactory annual progress.

In addition to delivering education, networking, direct assistance and marketing activities, SRAP commitments must include:

1. Attending annual AgrAbility National Training Workshops with at least one representative from each of the lead university and one non-profit disability organization partner;
2. Participating in efforts to collect project outcome and impact data across AgrAbility projects; and
3. Submitting annual and final reports to NIFA (see Part VI, D.).

SRAP applicants may request, within their proposed budgets and budget justification, funds to pay for these commitments.

All delivery formats, training, and educational programs should be marketed as the AgrAbility Project and use the AgrAbility logo shown in Figure 1. Other branding on any materials produced through this grant requires consent of the NIFA program contact.

All SRAPs receive technical assistance and networking support from the National AgrAbility Project (NAP). SRAPs also submit cumulative client demographics data and monthly activities reports to NAP. NIFA views the relationship between the SRAPs and the NAP as critical to the success of the AgrAbility program overall. Because SRAPs symbiotically interact with NAP, failure to comply with NAP's operating, documentation, and reporting requirements will result in NAP suspending service and NIFA suspending funding to the non-compliant SRAP. Hence, prior to applying for AgrAbility funding from NIFA, applicants should contact the current NAP for information concerning standard operating procedures, best field practices, and access to the NAP's library of AgrAbility-related materials.

Prior to applying, applicants should contact NAP for detailed information concerning standard operating procedures and best field practices. Since FY 2008, NAP has been housed with and led by Purdue University. Applicants may contact NAP at:

National AgrAbility Project; c/o Purdue University; Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering; 225 S. University St.; West Lafayette, IN 47907-2093 Voice/TT (800) 825-4264; Fax: (765) 496-1356; Web: <http://www.agrability.org>.

The program encourages collaborations among 1862 and 1890 Land-Grant Institutions within or across state lines on joint, single grant applications, as well as with Land-Grant Institutions not eligible to apply as lead institutions (such is the case with 1994 Land-Grants), within or across state lines. Furthermore, the program encourages proposals from 1890 Land-Grant Institutions as lead institutions.

All applications must show that Land-Grant Institutions collaborating on a joint SRAP proposal have a substantial and equitable involvement in the project throughout the life of the project. The lead applicant on a proposal must collaborate on the project with, and subcontract part of work to, a private, non-profit organization providing direct service to individuals with disabilities.

Projects are encouraged to explore possible coordination with existing assistive technology institutions and programs in their state/region in order to tap into, expand, and/or enhance prospective clients' access to already available state-wide assistive technology resources.

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

This RFA is being released prior to the passage of a full appropriations act for FY 2021. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. The anticipated amount available for grants in FY 2021 is approximately \$4.1 million. NIFA anticipates that approximately \$1 million will be available to support new NAP and SRAPs.

The remainder of funds will be used to support 17 previously awarded SRAP awards eligible for continuation funding. Applications for the continuing SRAPs will be solicited via a separate request.

USDA is not committed to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. The [Automated Standard Application for Payments](#), operated by the Department of Treasury, Bureau of Fiscal Service, is the designated payment system for awards resulting from this RFA.

B. Application Restrictions

NIFA will evaluate applications using the criteria described in [Part V](#) of this RFA. Application for FY 2021 is limited to the following applications types:

1. *New application*: New applications will be evaluated using the criteria described in [Part V](#) of this RFA and are subject to the due dates herein (see [Appendix III](#) for definition).
2. *Resubmitted application*: Resubmitted applications must include the respond to the previous review panel summary and are subject to the same criteria and due dates herein. Resubmitted applicants must enter the NIFA-assigned proposal number of the previously submitted application in the *Federal Field (Field 4)* on the application form (see [Appendix III](#) for definition).
3. *Renewal application*. Renewal applications must contain the same information as required for new applications and must contain a *progress report*. The progress report must include the implementation of the data management plan (DMP) of the previously funded project. Renewal applications are subject to the same criteria and due dates herein. Applicants submitting a renewal application must enter the NIFA-assigned proposal number of the previously approved application in the *Federal Field (Field 4)* on the application form (see [Appendix III](#) for definition).

C. Project and Grant Types

AgrAbility supports two Extension project types – State and Regional AgrAbility Projects (SRAPs) and the National AgrAbility Project (NAP). NIFA is soliciting applications for both SRAP and NAP projects for FY 2021.

Grant Types

Applicants for NAP must select Cooperative Agreements only and applications for SRAPs must select Standard Grants only.

D. Ethical Conduct of Funded Projects

In accordance with sections [2, 3, and 8 of 2 CFR Part 422](#), institutions that conduct USDA-funded extramural research must foster an atmosphere conducive to research integrity, bear primary responsibility for prevention and detection of research misconduct, and maintain and effectively communicate and train their staff regarding policies and procedures. In the event an application to NIFA results in an award, the Authorized Representative (AR) assures, through acceptance of the award that the institution will comply with the above requirements. Award recipients must, upon request, make available to NIFA the policies, procedures, and documentation to support the conduct of the training. See [Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research](#) for further information.

PART III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligibility Requirements

Applications may be submitted only by Cooperative Extension at 1862 and 1890 Land-Grant Colleges and Universities including the University of the District of Columbia, Tuskegee University, West Virginia State University, and Central State University.

Applicants must partner on their projects with private non-profit organizations providing direct service to individuals with disabilities. Applications must include commitment letters from non-profit partner organizations.

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.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply (such as 1994 Land-Grant Colleges, Hispanic-Serving Institutions) provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. Also, the 1862 and 1890 Land-Grant Institutions may partner with each other and/or other Land-Grant Institutions (e.g., 1994 Land-Grants) and Non-Land-Grant Institutions within their state or their region on joint proposals. Applications proposing such partnerships must include commitment letters from all partnering organizations.

Applicants for the AgrAbility Program must meet all the requirements discussed in this RFA. Failure to meet the eligibility criteria by the application deadline may result in exclusion from consideration or, preclude NIFA from making an award. For those new to Federal financial assistance, NIFA's [Grants Overview](#) provides highly recommended information about grants and other resources to help understand the Federal awards process.

Duplicate or Multiple Submissions – duplicate or multiple submissions is not allowed. NIFA will disqualify both applications if an applicant submits duplicate or multiple submissions. For those new to Federal financial assistance, NIFA's [Grants Overview](#) provides highly recommended information about grants and other resources to help understand the Federal awards process.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

No Match Required - The AgrAbility Program has ***NO*** matching requirement. NIFA will not factor matching resources into the review process as an evaluation criterion.

C. Centers of Excellence

Pursuant to 7 U.S.C. 5926 as amended, NIFA will recognize and prioritize Centers of Excellence (COE) applicants that carry out research, extension, and education activities that relate to the food and agricultural sciences. A COE is composed of one or more of the following entities that provide financial or in-kind support to the COE.

1. State agricultural experiment stations;
2. Colleges and universities;
3. University research foundations;
4. Other research institutions and organizations;
5. Federal agencies;
6. National laboratories;
7. Private organizations, foundations, or corporations;
8. Individuals; or
9. Any group consisting of two or more of the entities described in (1) through (8).

PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

A. Method of Application

Applicants must apply to this RFA electronically; no other method or response is accepted. The electronic application for this RFA and additional resources are available on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and [Grants 101](#). **Table 4** provides instructions on how to obtain an electronic application. **Part II § 1** of the [NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide](#) (Application Guide) contains detailed information regarding the [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) registration process.

Table 4: Steps to Obtain Application Materials

Steps	Action
Step One: Register	<i>New Users</i> to Grants.gov must register early with Grants.gov prior to submitting an application (Register Here).
Step Two: Download Adobe	Download and Install Adobe Reader (see Adobe Software Compatibility for basic system requirements)
Step Three: Find Application	Using this Funding Opportunity Number, USDA-NIFA-SLBCD-007772 , search for application here: Opportunity Package .
Step Four: Assess Readiness	Contact an AR prior to starting an application to assess the organization’s readiness to submit an electronic application.

Table 5: Help and Resources

Grants.gov Support	NIFA Support
Grants.gov Online Support Telephone support: 800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035 Email support: support@grants.gov Self-service customer based support: Grants.gov iPortal <i>Key Information: Customer service business Hours 24/7, except federal holidays.</i>	For application questions, please email policy@usda.gov

B. Content and Form of the Application

The [Application Guide](#) is part of the corresponding application package for this RFA. The RFA overrides the [Application Guide](#) if there is a discrepancy between the two documents. NIFA will accept subsequent submissions to an application until the application deadline. However, applicants that do not meet the application requirements, to include partial applications, risk being excluded from NIFA’s review. NIFA will assign a proposal number to all applications that

meet the requirements of this RFA. Applicants must refer to the proposal number when corresponding with NIFA. **Table 6** outlines other key instructions for applicants.

Table 6: Key Application Instructions

Instruction	References (All references are to the <u>Application Guide</u>)
Attachments must be in a portable document format (PDF) format.	Part III § 3
Check the manifest of submitted files to verify attachments are in the correct format.	Part III § 6.1
Conduct an administrative review of the application before submission.	Part VII and
Follow the submission instructions.	Part IV § 1.5
Provide an accurate email address, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R.	Part IV § 1.5
Contact the Grants.gov helpdesk for technical support, and keep a record of the correspondence.	N/A
Contact NIFA if applicant does not received correspondence from NIFA regarding an application within 30 days of the application deadline.	N/A

SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet. See **Part V § 2** and **Part V § 2.17** of the [Application Guide](#) for the required certifications and assurances.

SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s). See **Part V § 3** of the [Application Guide](#).

R&R Other Project Information Form. See **Part V § 4** of the [Application Guide](#).

Field 7. Project Summary (PS)/Abstract. The PS must show how the project goals align with the project goals of the AgrAbility Program. See **Part V § 4.7** of the [Application Guide](#) for instructions and suggested templates. Project Summary must provide the following information, in the order listed below:

1. Project title;
2. List of Project Directors (PDs) and Co-PDs and their institutions/organizations;
3. List of other collaborating institutions/organizations/farmer groups;
4. Concise (250 words or less) description of the project;
5. Funding amount requested, per year (2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024) and in total;
6. List of any previous or current AgrAbility projects that PD or co-PD(s) have led in the past (list project director and award number; 20XX-41590-XXXXX); and
7. Proposal type (New, Resubmission, or Renewal).

Please **include a one-page Table of Contents in the project narrative, which will not count**

towards the narrative's page limitation.

Field 8. Project Narrative (PN) for National AgrAbility Project only.

The PN must not exceed **[30]** *1.5 spaced* pages of written text and up to **[5]** *1.5 spaced* additional pages for figures and tables (the font size for tables should be no smaller than 11 points, Times New Roman). The response to previous review must not exceed **[1]** *1.5 spaced* page. This does not count towards the page limit for the PN. The page limits outlined here ensure fair and equitable competition. Appendices to the PN are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. Do not add appendices to circumvent the page limit. The PN must include all of the following:

- (a) Project Justification;
- (b) Work Plan;
- (c) Division of Labor;
- (d) Management Plan;
- (e) Budget Justification;
- (f) Project Communication and Dissemination; and
- (g) Centers of Excellence Request and Justification (if applicable).

(a) Project Justification

1. Justify the need for the project clearly and concisely by describing the SRAP needs and lack of services in geographic areas not served by SARPs.
2. Review current related programs concentrating on limitations this application intends to address. Indicate what sets your proposed project apart from other programs you described.
3. Justify your team's ability to meet the needs of SRAPs and provide necessary services by detailing accomplishments from similar projects.
4. Describe the SRAPs' role in defining NAP's scope and future project planning.
5. Identify your non-profit disability partner(s) and provide detailed justification for selection of the non-profit disability partner.
6. Identify other partners on the project and provide justification for their inclusion on the proposed NAP.
7. If your grant application is a resubmission, a PD must respond to the previous review panel summary. (See section 7. d. *Field 12. Other Attachments* below for details.)

(b) Work Plan

1. NAP objectives must support the SRAPs' capacity to fulfill priority areas listed in Part I. B. and within the context of the NAP vision and current activities enumerated in Part II, C.
 1. Use an outline format for this section, with the following goals as primary headings: Education, Networking, Direct Assistance, Marketing, Evaluation, and SRAPs' Sustainability.
2. Under each goal, organize proposed objectives and related activities in a logical sequence, the sum of which must comprise an attainable project. The sum of activities under each objective must lead to completion of that objectives within the 4-year maximum project duration.

3. Under each activity, list expected outcomes, describe the proposed means of evaluating the activity's efficacy, and describe outcomes' value to the SRAP's and other stakeholders. The plan should allow evaluation results to refine and adjust objectives and activities while informing future plans.
4. Use a summary table at the end of this section to show the relationships between goals, objectives, the activities designed to attain the objectives, expected outcomes, desired impacts, and the data sources which will inform evaluations. Thus, this table should have a minimum of six rows (one for each goal) and five columns.
5. Objectives should have measurable outcomes, with quantitative and qualitative evaluation plans.
6. Objective(s) under the Evaluation goal must address, at a minimum:
 - i. How SRAPs' client demographics data will be collected from SRAPs and stored, analyzed and reported by the NAP;
 - ii. Proposed plans for assessment and reporting of traffic on the AgrAbility website (www.agrability.org);
 - iii. Interface with SRAPs and methodology the NAP evaluation team will use to continue to administer, analyze, and report results from the Quality of Life Survey;
 - iv. Opportunities for SRAPs staff to receive training on their evaluation interface with NAP and, to the extent possible, technical assistance on evaluation-related issues; and
 - v. Annual opportunities for the AgrAbility program staff at NIFA, SRAPs' PDs and Co-PDs, and the NAP staff to jointly dialogue about AgrAbility projects' evaluation implementation challenges and needs, best practices, evaluation results analyses, and reporting needs and opportunities.
7. Objective(s) under SRAPs' Sustainability should address the proposed NAP's plans to engage SRAPs in identifying and sharing best practices in developing projects' sustainability beyond USDA/NIFA funding.
8. Priority is placed on continuing with main activities of the current NAP, mainly contributions to and oversight of the NAP website (www.agrability.org); technical support, networking, and training for SRAPs; organizing and conducting the annual NTWs; and evaluating the level of outreach, outcomes and impacts of SRAPs and NAP. Hence, New and Resubmitted NAP applications should account in their plans for time and engagement necessary to make a successful transition from the current to a new NAP leadership. See www.agrability.org for information about past and current NAP activities and commitments.
9. Briefly describe challenges that might be encountered, limitations to proposed methodology, and how you plan to address them.

(c) Division of Labor

CES, non-profit disability organization, and prospective other partners on the proposal may jointly or individually provide leadership for different objectives. Define the responsibilities of the respective organizations under each objective. For each activity, include time frames, personnel, and their roles. Composition and roles of the NAP evaluation team should be addressed in this section as well. Applicants may consult with

SRAPs, or consumer advisory type groups in developing their cooperators' role assignments.

(d) Management Plan

1. Provide an explanation of how the relationship between the lead institution and each of the partner organizations (including the non-profit disability partner) will be managed.
2. Describe the fiscal and administrative oversight provided by the lead institution and the non-profit disability partner.
3. Briefly explain the lead institution's funds management strategy for funded projects. The funds management outlined in the Management Plan for NAP must comply with all administrative and national policy requirements listed in PART VI, C. of this RFA.
4. Briefly describe the proposed working relationship with NIFA staff, with a focus on communication, planning, and oversight; and
5. Provide timelines or Gantt charts to demonstrate the duration and the sequence of project activities. Use varied hatching for different cooperators. Chart against a quarterly scale, so that a schedule should depict no more than 16 quarters.

(e) Budget (as below #6. R&R Budget) and Budget Justification

1. There should be a direct relationship between the items in the budget and budget justification, as well as between budget justification and the objectives/activities contained in the Project Narrative.
2. Every item in the budget should be justified in the proposal. The amount of detail depends on the nature of the project and the breakdown of costs.
3. Proposed budgets should not exceed \$531,000 per year nor request funding for more than 4 years in total.
4. Budget breakdown and justification need to be provided for each year of funding being requested.
5. Annual budgets should include estimated 4-day travel costs for NAP staff to attend AgrAbility NTWs.
6. In Budget Justification, costs (e.g., personnel, materials, travel, etc.) should be broken down and itemized rather than shown as lump sums.

(f) Project Communication and Dissemination

1. Briefly describe how results from this project will be communicated to all partners on the proposed project; SRAPs; State, Regional, and National stakeholders; and the public.
2. Include your main project communication and dissemination activities in the proposal Timeline/Gantt chart.

(g) Center of Excellence Justification (if applicable)

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:

1. The ability of the COE to ensure coordination and cost effectiveness by reducing unnecessarily duplicative efforts in the research, teaching, and extension activities outlined in this application;

2. 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 be commensurate with the size of the award;
3. 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
4. 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 http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/pdfs/nlgca_colleges.pdf), and schools of veterinary medicine.

Field 12, Add Other Attachments. See Part V § 4.12 of the [Application Guide](#).

Field 8. Project Narrative (PN) for State and Regional AgrAbility Projects only.

The PN must not exceed [20] 1.5 spaced pages of written text and up to [4] 1.5 spaced additional pages for figures and tables (the font size for tables should be no smaller than 11 points, Times New Roman). The response to previous review must not exceed [1] 1.5 spaced page. This does not count towards the page limit for the PN. The page limits outlined here ensure fair and equitable competition. Appendices to the PN are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. Do not add appendices to circumvent the page limit. In developing the Project Narrative section of your application, indicate the Section letter and number in your response, e.g., type “A.1”, “A.2”, etc., before your response to each question. Please do not combine two or more questions or refer to another section of the Project Narrative in your response, such as indicating that the response for B.2 is in C.7. The PN must include all the following:

Section A: Introduction - Statement of Need and Significance of the Proposed SRA

Describe the nature and magnitude of the issue your SRAP is seeking to address. Provide the most recent relevant data for the State/Region in which your proposed SRAP will be implemented, including data on the incidence of injuries and health issues among the farming population. Provide references for data. Explain and substantiate any assumptions made.

1. Briefly describe ongoing or recently completed programs available to farmers with disabilities in the state(s) in which your proposed SRAP will operate.
2. Describe how your proposed SRAP fits within the context of those other State-level activities. Will your SRAP be duplicating/adding to/enhancing any existing/completed efforts with farmers? What is the expected public value/state or regional significance of what you are proposing to do?

3. *Prior AgrAbility Accomplishments*: If the Project Director (PD) and/or Co-PDs are involved/have been involved in leading SRAPs currently/previously funded by NIFA's AgrAbility program, **add to the Introduction section a subheading "Prior AgrAbility Accomplishments"** and **in no more than two (2) pages** provide the following:
 - a) A brief description of the project(s), focusing on project accomplishments in the areas of direct assistance, education, marketing, and networking.
 - b) Provide a brief description of what was learned from the past project(s), what can be improved upon, and how those lessons and improvements are being incorporated into the current application to make the project more effective and successful at meeting program goals.
 - c) Description of efforts to contribute to NAP-led national evaluation of SRAPs' outcomes and impacts (specifically client demographics data and Quality of Life Survey). If the SRAP was not able to make such contributions to date, briefly describe challenges faced and how those challenges will be addressed should your proposal be recommended for funding in FY 2021.
 - d) If your SRAP had a gap in funding from NIFA, explain how and at what level the SRAP was sustained since it last received funding from NIFA.

Section B: Proposed Approach

1. Clearly identify farming population(s) your proposed SRAP will reach out to and serve. In addition to farmers with disabilities in general, indicate if your SRAP will seek to serve specific farmer groups such as aging farmers, beginning farmers with disabilities, farmer veterans with disabilities, women farmers with disabilities, ethnic/racial and/or linguistic minority farmers with disabilities, etc.). Support for identifying these specific groups must be clearly reflected in the data and estimates provided for the state(s) in which the proposed SRAP will operate.
2. Provide an estimate for how many new and how many returning farmers with disabilities you expect to serve directly during each year of the proposed project. Indicate what percentage of your SRAP clients, per year, will be from minority farmer groups you identified in Section B.1.
3. How will farmers with disabilities be identified and how will they be recruited to receive direct assistance from your SRAP?
4. If proposing to work with specific minority/historically underserved farmer groups, describe prior experience your SRAP team has had in addressing the needs of that target audience. Describe your team's ability and readiness to provide appropriate (i.e., ethnically-, racially-, linguistically- and socio- economically-sensitive) education, training, and outreach for such an audience(s). For example, if you will be serving Spanish-speaking farmers or Native American communities, how will you ensure that your outreach and services are culturally appropriate, linguistically accurate, and literacy-level appropriate?
5. Provide a clear description of the activities you are proposing to undertake for each of the four (4) program objectives addressed in Part 1, Section B of the RFA (i.e., Direct Assistance, Education, Networking, and Marketing). All activities listed under an objective must be grouped by project year (FY 2021, FY 2022, FY 2023, and FY 2024) in a sequence in which the activities are to be performed. The sum of activities under each

objective must lead to completion of that objective within the 4-year maximum project duration. In addition, for each activity, indicate the following:

- a) Which target audience is the intended beneficiary;
- b) What are expected/desired result(s)/outcome(s) of the activity;
- c) Means (e.g. tools) by which results/outcomes will be monitored, captured and measured;
- d) How results will be used and by whom; and
- e) Possible Limitations to the proposed procedures and how you plan to mitigate them.

Please keep in mind that, and as indicated on pages 5-6 of this RFA, all SRAP proposals must show how they will appraise: efficacy of projects' educational efforts, successes experienced following intervention, economic value of services rendered to AgrAbility and its customers; and link between marketing activities and projects' successes with registration, requests for information and consultation, and networking.

Make sure this section of your proposal reflects activities your SRAP will be undertaking under the guidance from NAP, such as: 1) Submitting client demographics data so that we may assess national outreach of the AgrAbility program; 2) Contributing to monthly AgrAbility e-Note Newsletter; 3) Participating, if feasible, in Quality of Life Survey; and 4) Attending annual AgrAbility National Training Workshop.

Section C: Project Performance Assessment Plan

Project performance assessment plans allow projects to annually review outcomes achieved and to use results to inform, refine and adjust future project plans as needed. Applicants to the AgrAbility Program need to submit a plan for monitoring and measuring performance of their SRAPs. The plan must include the following elements:

1. A logic model, a theory of change or alternative schematic that illustrates the causal linkages between planned activities and desired outcomes. An example of a logic model template and explanation of its components can be found at: <https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/integrated-programs-logic-model-planning-process>.
2. A Timeline to demonstrate the duration and the sequence of project activities, as well as division of labor (as noted in the next section of this RFA). Each objective might have multiple activities. Chart against a quarterly scale, so that the Timeline depicts 4 years and 16 quarters.
3. Indicate who on the team will provide the project performance assessment oversight. NIFA does not require but it does encourage SRAPs to include on their team's project performance measurement expert or an evaluator who can help develop the monitoring plan and conduct outcomes reporting.
4. Data management – Describe planned interface with the non-profit disability organization partner around client demographics data and with NAP around SRAP client demographics data and, if participating, around the Quality of Life Survey.
5. Indicate the amount of funding that will be set aside for monitoring, performance measurement, and outcomes reporting.

Section D: Institutional Capacity, Division of Labor and Management Plan

1. Identify your non-profit direct service disability organization partner. Provide justification for selection of the non-profit disability organization partner. Clearly state the

organization's previous and current work that make it a good fit for the proposed project. If the non-profit organization has worked with/served farming communities in the past, in general, and farmers with disabilities, in particular, please indicate so and describe how the organization's past experiences and successes will be used to ensure quality service for your SRAP customers.

2. Briefly describe your institution's and team's ability to meet the gaps and limitations in services by detailing your accomplishments from similar projects and your experience serving the identified farmer audience. If the project involves collaboration between Land-Grant Institutions, clearly identify each institution's relevant previous work that speaks to its ability to successfully participate on the proposed SRAP.
3. Clearly identify any other partners on the proposed project and briefly indicate how the organizations' past experiences and successes will contribute to the success of your proposed SRAP.
4. Describe the fiscal and administrative oversight to be provided by the Land-Grant Institution(s) and the non-profit disability organization partner.
5. Provide a brief summary of key staff that will manage the proposed SRAP, their individual roles on the project, and percent of time they will be dedicating to the project. If the percentages are expected to change in Years 2, 3, or 4 of the proposed project, please indicate so and provide a brief explanation.
6. Describe how the relationship between the State Cooperative Extension System and the non-profit disability organization partner will be managed. If the proposed SRAP represents a collaboration between two or more Land-Grant Institutions, provide an explanation for how the relationship between the agencies will be managed, as well as the relationship of each agency to the non-profit disability organization partner.

Section E: Project Sustainability Plan

1. Describe steps you will undertake during the course of the proposed SRAP activities to ensure project's sustainability beyond the life of the NIFA AgrAbility grant. Include your proposed project sustainability activities in the proposal timeline.
2. Identify opportunities (e.g., resources, trainings, collaborations) you plan to tap-into/develop/enhance during the life of the proposed project that will help you sustain program operations after NIFA funding has expired.
3. Describe how you plan to track your project sustainability planning efforts during the course of the proposed SRAP implementation.

Section F: Center of Excellence Justification (if applicable)

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:

1. The ability of the COE to ensure coordination and cost effectiveness by reducing unnecessarily duplicative efforts in the research, teaching, and extension activities outlined in this application;
2. 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 be commensurate with

- the size of the award;
3. 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
 4. 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 http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/pdfs/nlgca_colleges.pdf), and schools of veterinary medicine.

1. Field 12, Add Other Attachments. See **Part V § 4.12** of the [Application Guide](#).

R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded). See **Part V § 5** of the [Application Guide](#) for profile requirements, details about the biographical sketch, and suggested support templates.

R&R Personal Data. This information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award (see **Part V § 6** of the [Application Guide](#)).

R&R Budget. See **Part V § 7** of the [Application Guide](#).

1. Match – No Match Required - The AgrAbility Program has NO matching requirement. NIFA will not factor matching resources into the review process as an evaluation criterion.
2. Indirect costs (IDC) – Not allowed.
3. **Data Management Plan.** A DMP is required for this program. Applicants should 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](#) of this RFA, [Part III § 3.1 of the Application Guide](#) and [NIFA's Data Management Plan](#)).

Supplemental Information Form. See **Part VI § 1** of the [Application Guide](#).

1. Field 2. Program to which the applicant is applying. Enter the program name **AgrAbility** and the program code **LQ**. Accurate entry is critical.
2. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List. See **Part VI § 1.8** of the [Application Guide](#).

Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants. This is required for corporate applicants. See **Part VI § 2** of the [Application Guide](#) for a description of the term, “corporation.”

C. Funding Restrictions

Successful applicants must not use grant funds awarded under the authority of this RFA to renovate or refurbish research, education, or extension space; purchase or install fixed equipment

in such space; or to plan, repair, rehabilitate, acquire, or construct buildings or facilities. Funds made available to eligible institutions shall not be used for payment of negotiated overhead or indirect cost rates.

PART V. APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. NIFA's Evaluation Process

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 scientific peer-review process will be used to technically evaluate applications that meet the administrative requirements using a review panel (see [NIFA Peer Review Process](#)).

Scientific Peer Review Process:

NIFA selects reviewers for the review panel based upon their training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors:

1. 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;
2. the need to include experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields;
3. 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;
4. 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;
5. the need to maintain a balanced composition with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and
6. 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 is either approved for support from currently available funds or declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review.

NIFA reserves the right to negotiate with the PD/PI and/or 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 AFRI project for funding.

After the review process has been completed, NIFA sends copies of reviews, *not* including the identity of reviewers, and a summary (if applicable) of the review panel comments to the PD.

Conflicts of interest. NIFA takes care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may influence the review or evaluation (see [NIFA Peer Review Process for Competitive Grant Applications](#)).

B. Evaluation Criteria

NIFA will use the following criteria to evaluate this RFA:

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 outcomes. 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 the National AgrAbility Project (NAP) area in this RFA:

Evaluation criteria that will be used in reviewing applications submitted in response to the NAP priority area will encompass all areas of the project summary and narrative as outlined and described in Part IV, B. Section 3 (R&R Other Project Information Form), Fields 7-12. As such, proposals will be evaluated on whether or not they include information requested in this RFA; the quality of information provided; and the feasibility of project's successful completion given proposed objectives, associated activities, time, and partner(s)' commitments. Each component of the Project Narrative is assigned a specific number of points, for a total of 100 points. The points are allocated as follows: Project Justification – 15 pts; Work Plan – 40 pts; Division of Labor – 10 pts; Management Plan – 10 pts; Budget and Budget Justification – 10 pts; and Project Communication and Dissemination – 15 pts.

NIFA will use the evaluation criteria below to review applications submitted in response to the State and Regional AgrAbility Project (SRAP) area in this RFA. Your application will be reviewed and scored according to the quality of your response to the requirements in Sections A-F detailed in the project narrative. The SRAP evaluation criteria are listed below and in priority order of importance:

1. Statement of Need and Significance of the Proposed SRAP

This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will have an impact upon and advance the quality of life for farmers with disabilities and how the proposed project is of public value and significance, how it helps to solve a critical state or regional needs of farmers with disabilities. Factors include those identified in the project narrative.

2. Proposed Approach

This criterion relates to the development and delivery of proposed SRAP to farmers with disabilities, their families, and communities. Factors include those identified in the project narrative, such as specifics regarding farmer groups to be served and activities under each of the four program objectives (direct assistance, education, marketing, and networking), including activities to be undertaken under NAP guidance.

3. Project Performance Assessment

This criterion relates to program performance outcomes and program performance monitoring. Elements include the soundness of the proposed performance monitoring approach including delineation of appropriate objectives, methodology, plan of operation, timetable, logic model/theory of change, expected products and results, performance metrics/targets, and results dissemination plan. Factors include those identified in the project narrative.

4. Institutional Capacity, Division of Labor and Management Plan

This criterion relates to the institution's capability to perform the project and to the degree to which key personnel have expertise and management plan in place to successfully carry out the proposed work. Factors include those identified in the project narrative, including presence of commitment letters from key project partners stating partners' expected roles and readiness to collaborate.

5. Budget Justification

This criterion relates to how well the total budget supports the project and is cost effective. Elements considered include the necessity and reasonableness of costs to carry out project activities and achieve project objectives; the appropriateness of budget allocations between the applicant and any collaborating institution(s); the adequacy of time committed to the project by key project personnel; and the degree to which the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes educational value for the dollar, achieves economies of scale, and focuses expertise and activity.

6. Project Sustainability Plan

This criterion relates to the institution's readiness to develop, implement, and track progress on their SRAP sustainability plan during the course of the proposed work. Factors include those identified in the project narrative.

Center of Excellence Status

All eligible applications will be competitively peer reviewed (as described in Part V, A and B of this RFA), and ranked in accordance with the evaluation criteria. Applications that 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 an application is 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 applicant 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. Organizational Management Information

Applicants must submit specific management information relating to an applicant prior to an award and update the information as needed. Applicants may only have to update their information if they had previously provided the information under this or another NIFA program. NIFA provides the requisite forms during the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible for award under this program, 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, or a determination that an applicant is not responsible).

D. Application Disposition

Applicants may withdraw at any time before NIFA makes a final funding decision. NIFA will retain all applications, including withdrawn applications and unfunded applications.

PART VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds authorized, the NIFA awarding official will make grants to responsible and 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 must 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, 7 CFR part 3430, subparts A through E](#).

Award Notice. The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information as described in [2 CFR 200.210](#) (see [NIFA's Terms and Conditions](#)).

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications and the projects outlined in this RFA (some are listed here: [Federal Regulations](#)). Unless specifically noted by statute or award-specific requirements, [NIFA Policy Guide](#) applies to all NIFA awards.

PART VII. OTHER INFORMATION

A. Use of Funds and Changes in Budget

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.

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 (the awardee is subject to the terms and conditions identified in the award):

1. Change in the scope or the objective of the project or program without prior written approval (even if there is no associated budget revision requiring);
2. Change in a key person specified in the application or the federal award;
3. Disengagement from the project for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in time devoted to the project;
4. Inclusion of costs that require prior approval in accordance with [2 CFR 200 Subpart E \(Cost Principles\)](#), 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, unless waived by the federal awarding agency,
5. [Part 31, Contract Cost Principles and Procedures](#);
6. Transfer of funds budgeted for participant support costs to other categories of expense ([§200.75 Participant support costs](#));
7. Sub-awarding, transferring or contracting out of any work under a federal award, including fixed amount sub-awards (see [§200.332, Fixed Amount Sub-awards](#)), unless described in the application and funded in the approved federal awards. This provision does not apply to the acquisition of supplies, material, equipment, or general support services;
8. Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-federal entity; and
9. The need for additional federal funds to complete the project.

B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of NIFA transaction records, which are available to the public. Information that the Secretary of Agriculture determines to be confidential, privileged, or proprietary in nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, applicants should clearly mark any information within the application they wish to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary. NIFA will retain a copy of an application that does not result in an award for three years. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An applicant may withdraw 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](#).



APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACT

Table 7: Programmatic Contacts

Name	Email	Telephone
Brad Rein	brein@usda.gov	202-445-5442
Lelan Dixon	lelan.d.dixon@usda.gov	202-374-9776

Administrative Contacts

For administrative questions related to

- Grants.gov, see Part IV of this RFA
- Other RFA or application questions, please email policy@usda.gov
- Awards under this RFA, please email awards@usda.gov

NIFA's Mailing Address:

National Institute of Food and Agriculture U.S. Department of Agriculture
 2312 East Bannister Road
 Mail Stop 10000 (ten thousand)
 Kansas City, MO 64131



APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Table 8: Glossary of Terms

Name	Acronyms
Agriculture and Food Research Initiative	AFRI
Authorized Representative	AR
Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education reform Act of 1998	AREERA
Coordinated Agricultural Project	CAP
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance	CFDA
Center of Excellence	COE
Data Management Plan	DMP
National Institute of Food and Agriculture	NIFA
Request for Application	RFA
Research, Education, and Economics	REE
United States Department of Agriculture	USDA



APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS

Refer to 7 CFR 3430 [Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Federal Assistance Programs – General Award Administrative Provisions](#) for additional definitions.

Table 9: Definitions

Terms	Definitions
Continuation Award	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.
Matching	The process through which a grant recipient match awarded USDA funds with cash and in-kind contributions on a dollar-for-dollar basis. The matching funds must derive from non-Federal sources.
New Application	An application not previously submitted to a program.
Renewal Application	A project application that seeks additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in an original or amended award.
Resubmitted Application	A project application that was previously submitted to a program, but the application was not funded.
Resubmitted Renewal Application	A project application that requests additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in the original award. This is an application that had previously been submitted for renewal to but not funded.