

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program

Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Request for Applications (RFA)

APPLICATION DEADLINE: February 8, 2018

ELIGIBILITY: See Part III, A of RFA



United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food and
Agriculture

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

BEGINNING FARMER AND RANCHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (BFRDP)

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under **10.311**

DATES: Applications must be received by **5 p.m. Eastern Time** on February 8, 2018. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding (see Part IV, C of this RFA). Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six (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 Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) for fiscal year (FY) 2018 to support the delivery of education, mentoring, and technical assistance programs to help beginning farmers and ranchers in the United States (U.S.) and its territories with entering, establishing, building and managing successful farm and ranch enterprises. This RFA is being released prior to the passage of an appropriations act for 2018. 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 2018 is approximately \$17.7 million. A webinar will be held Wednesday, December 19, 2017 at 1:00 – 3:00 pm EST. To join the webinar please use the following link: <https://nifa-connect.usda.gov/bfrdp2018/>

This notice identifies the objectives for BFRDP projects, deadline dates, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a BFRDP grant in FY-2018.

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

Section 7405(c) of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Pub. L. 107-171) (7 U.S.C. 3319f(c)), as amended by section 7410 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (FCEA) (Pub. L. 110-246) and section 7409 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Pub. L. 113-333), requires the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a competitive grants program to support new and established local and regional training, education, outreach and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers or ranchers in the United States (U.S.). Programs and services (as appropriate) include the following:

- A. Basic livestock, forest management, and crop farming practices;
- B. Innovative farm, ranch, and private, nonindustrial forest land transfer strategies;
- C. Entrepreneurship and business training;
- D. Financial and risk management training (including the acquisition and management of agricultural credit);
- E. Natural resource management and planning;
- F. Diversification and marketing strategies;
- G. Curriculum development;
- H. Mentoring, apprenticeships, and internships;
- I. Resources and referral;
- J. Farm financial benchmarking;
- K. Assisting beginning farmers or ranchers in acquiring land from retiring farmers and ranchers;
- L. Agricultural rehabilitation and vocational training for veterans;
- M. Farm safety and awareness; and
- N. Other similar subject areas of use to beginning farmers or ranchers.

Section 7405(d) of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (7 U.S.C. 3319f(d)) requires the Secretary of Agriculture to establish beginning farmer and rancher education teams to develop curricula and conduct educational programs and workshops for beginning farmers or ranchers in diverse geographical areas of the United States.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program is aligned with the USDA Research, Education, and Economics Action Plan (<http://nifa.usda.gov/resource/ree-action-plan>) and specifically addresses Goal 6 – Education and Science Literacy, by providing educational and training opportunities to beginning farmers and ranchers. BFRDP is aligned with the NIFA Strategic plan http://nifa.usda.gov/about/pdfs/strat_plan_2014.pdf and specifically addresses Strategic Goal 1 (Science), by advancing our ability to fight hunger and ensure global food security (Sub-goal 1.1).

The primary goal of BFRDP is to help beginning farmers and ranchers in the U.S. and its territories to enter and/or improve their success in farming, ranching, and management of nonindustrial private forest lands, through support for projects that provide education, mentoring,

and technical assistance to give beginning farmers the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to make informed decisions for their operations, and enhance their sustainability. The term “farmer” is used in the broadest sense and should be interpreted to include agricultural farmers, ranchers, and non-industrial private forest owners and managers. **Applications from partnerships and collaborations that are led by or include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and school-based agricultural educational organizations (SAEOs) with expertise in new agricultural producer training and outreach will be given priority in funding.**

1. Target Audience:

The target audience for BFRDP is farmers and ranchers who have not operated a farm or ranch, or have operated a farm or ranch for not more than ten (10) years. In addition, a portion of BFRDP funding is targeted set aside for projects that address the needs of two (2) subsets of beginning farmers and ranchers:

- A. At least five percent (5%) of the program funds available for standard BFRDP projects will be allocated to address the needs of limited resource beginning farmers and ranchers; socially disadvantaged beginning farmers or ranchers; and/or farm workers (including immigrants) desiring to become beginning farmers or ranchers.
- B. At least five percent (5%) of the program funds available for standard BFRDP projects will be allocated to address the needs of beginning farmers and ranchers who are military veterans. A recipient of such a grant may coordinate with a recipient of a grant from the AgrAbility program <http://www.agrability.org/> in addressing the needs of veteran farmers and ranchers with disabilities.

Please note: Not all applications need to address the needs of these two (2) subsets of the beginning farmers and ranchers.

Priority may be given to applications that address any of the two (2) subsets, if necessary to achieve the targets, by awarding funding to the highest-ranked proposals that meet the set-aside.

- A. For applications to be considered under any of the two (2) subsets, they must: Identify the target audience of any of the groups identified above and state what percentage of the project budget will be allocated to serving these group(s);
- B. Explain how the beginning farmers and ranchers in the identified target audience will be recruited and provided with appropriate training, education, outreach and mentoring;
- C. Provide evidence of the ability to serve the needs of the identified audience, e.g., involvement of partner(s) with expertise and a strong track record of having previously done so.

2. Priority Topics for FY 2018:

To achieve program goals, BFRDP projects will be expected to conduct training and assistance for beginning farmers and ranchers on one (1) or more of the topics listed in Part I. A. items A-N. Applicants should carefully consider the topics that will be addressed by the proposed project,

i.e., clearly identify the topics in the project narrative, and why those topics are the most appropriate for the project's audience. Evidence of farmer input on topic selection is very important. Applicants should make use of existing curriculum (whether USDA funded or not), including entries in the BFRDP curriculum and training clearinghouse: FarmAnswers.org (<http://farmanswers.org/>). New curriculum should be proposed only if the need can be clearly justified. Applications that seek to develop coursework for credit for four-year degrees at colleges and universities are not appropriate for this program and will not be accepted for review. **Applications that seek to educate students for careers in agriculture other than as farmers or ranchers will not be accepted for review.**

NIFA is soliciting applications for the **BFRDP** under the following areas:

- (1) Standard Grants and/or**
- (2) Educational Enhancement Teams (EETs).**

C. Program Area Description

(1) Standard Grants

Program Code: BFRDA

Program Code Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Standard
Maximum Award: \$200,000 per year for up to three (3) years for large standard grants;
\$100,000 per year for up to three (3) years for small standard grants

Both small and large standard BFRDP projects support new and established local and regional training, education, outreach and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers and ranchers, on the priority topics listed in Part I. A. items A-N. They differ in their scale. Most of the funding in the BFRDP will be directed to Standard Grants. The primary goal of Standard Grants is to increase the number of beginning farmers and ranchers and enhance their success and sustainability by providing them and their families with the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to make informed decisions. Standard Grant applications are expected to identify the audience of beginning farmers and ranchers they aim to serve; describe their characteristics and needs; demonstrate knowledge and experience in educational and assistance methods that are appropriate and effective in engaging the audience and meeting their needs; and propose an ambitious yet achievable plan of work that will accomplish meaningful and measurable success in enhancing the number and success of beginning farmers and ranchers. Most successful standard grant applicants provide training and assistance with business and financial management, as well as production and marketing topics aligned with the priority list in (Part 1.A. Items A - N).

Small and large standard grants will be reviewed by the same panel, but will be discussed as two (2) different groups and ranked separately within each group to provide equitable evaluation. Both large and small proposals will be evaluated using the same evaluation criteria (see Part V.B), including priority for partnerships and collaborations that are led by or include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), or school-based agricultural educational organizations (SAEOs) with expertise in beginning agricultural producer training and outreach. The expectations for smaller projects, however, will be

commensurate with their size (e.g., smaller audiences, more limited geographic reach, less complex collaborative arrangements) and provide an opportunity for smaller or less experienced organizations to propose projects that have smaller budgets and less complex administration.

(2) Educational Enhancement Teams (EET)

Program Code: BFRDB

Program Code Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Enhancement

Maximum Award: \$200,000 per year for up to three (3) years

The purpose of an Educational Enhancement Team (EET) grant is to enhance beginning farmer efforts based on a particular topic, region, or audience. Such applications should complement previously-funded EETs, which have addressed environmental management and leadership, regional networks, farmer-to-farmer curricula, financial management, and individual development accounts; as well as currently active EETs, which are addressing immigrant farming incubators, land access, women farmers, apprenticeships, and the Farm Beginnings curriculum. EETs should involve educational teams of experts with diverse backgrounds (e.g., NGO, CBO, SAEO, farmers, university, government) to:

- (1) Identify, collect, and assess existing curricula and programs;
- (2) Identify gaps and develop and deliver curricula and train-the-trainer programs to fill the identified gaps; and
- (3) Collaborate with the BFRDP Clearinghouse (<http://farmanswers.org>) and BFR education providers to enhance successful use of the EET curricula and programs.

Applicants interested in applying for an EET grant are strongly encouraged to confer with the Programmatic Contacts listed in Part VII to discuss the suitability of the topic prior to submitting an application.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The anticipated amount available for BFRDP grant in FY 2018 is approximately \$17.7 million. This RFA is being released prior to the passage of an appropriations act for FY 2018. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.

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 2018, applications may be submitted to the BFRDP 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 BFRDP Program or an application from a previously funded BFRDP project that has completed its project work and is applying for a continuation or starting a completely new project. We will review all new applications competitively using the screening for administrative requirements, review panel evaluation of proposals using evaluation criteria, and selection process described in Part V—Application Review Requirements. Applications from previously funded and terminated BFRDP projects seeking grant funds to start new BFRDP projects are also considered new applications. The new applications from PD or a Co-PD who has received a prior BFRDP award must contain the same information as required for new applications; they also must contain an additional one-page “Accomplishment-Based” narrative (see Project Narrative, Part IV). All previously funded and terminated BFRDP project applications must be received by the relevant due date, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in the area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications, plus based on performance during the previous BFRDP grant(s) and adequacy of plans for continuous improvement. Evaluation of performance during the previous BFRDP grant(s) will include the outcomes achieved and (where appropriate) contributions to the BFRDP Clearinghouse and Project Directors’ Annual Meeting.

Project Directors (PDs) and Co-PDs of active BFRDP awards are strongly discouraged from applying, unless that active award is in its final year.

Resubmitted application. This is an application that had previously been submitted to BFRDP Program but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (see Response to Previous Review, Part IV). Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending

applications in appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications. Addressing previous comments is important, but since each year is a new competition, resubmitting applicants should strengthen their proposals in every way possible.

C. Project Types

Applications will be accepted for two (2) project types: (1) Standard BFRDP Projects; and/or (2) Educational Enhancement Team (EET) Projects.

1. Standard BFRDP Projects:

The long-term goals of the Standard BFRDP projects are to enhance the sustainability of beginning farmers and ranchers through education, training, mentoring and outreach programs that enhance self-employment in farming, ranching and forestry opportunities.

The maximum award for a standard grant is \$200,000 per year for up to three (3) years. All work must be completed within three (3) years. The Statutory time limitation for this project is three (3) years from the project start date on the Award Face Sheet (Form NIFA-2009). Extensions of time beyond the three (3) years will not be permitted.

2. Educational Enhancement Team (EET) Projects:

The long-term goals of the Educational Enhancement Team (EET) projects are to identify gaps in beginning farmer and rancher training by evaluating all existing programs, and to develop and conduct train-the-trainer projects to address these gaps.

The maximum award for an EET is \$200,000 per year for up to three (3) years. EETs are awarded for up to three (3) years, and may continue into a fourth (4th) year with a one-year no-cost extension of time.

Applications that include requests for annual project budgets in excess of the maximum annual project budgets established above, or that propose project periods outside the acceptable project ranges above, will be at risk of being excluded from NIFA review.

Requesting funding for any project work, standard or EET for less than \$100,000 total for a project duration is strongly discouraged.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may only be submitted by a collaborative state, tribal, local, or regionally-based network or partnership of qualified public and/or private entities. These collaborations may include the following entities: State Cooperative Extension Services; Federal, State, or tribal agencies; community based organizations (CBOs); nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); junior and four-year colleges or universities or foundations maintained by a college or university; and private for-profit organizations. Inclusion of beginning and/or non-beginning farmers and ranchers as part of the collaborative group is strongly encouraged.

Applications submitted by individuals, or by organizations that do not involve other entities in a network or partnership, are not eligible for consideration under any category applicable to the BFRDP and will be excluded from review.

Multiple awards will not be made to the same organization or Project Director in the same calendar year. Further, applications from current awardees will not be accepted for consideration unless the current project is in its final year. EET awards are exempt from this restriction. An organization with an EET award may receive a standard grant, and an organization with a standard grant may receive one (1) but no more than one concurrent EET grant.

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 provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

Pursuant to the authorizing legislation for the BFRDP, NIFA requires that in order to receive an award under this program, the recipient must provide a match in the form of cash or in-kind contributions in an amount equal to 25 percent (25%) of the federal funds provided by the award.

The matching funds must be from non-Federal sources except when authorized by statute. An award will not be issued unless all matching funds over the life of the grant are secured with match support documentation, which will be requested of applicants at the time they are recommended for an award. There can be no contingencies on the matching amount.

The Budget Justification must list matching sources along with the identification of the entity(ies) providing the match as well as the total dollar amount being pledged. NIFA is no longer requiring written verification of commitments of matching support (a pledge agreement). However, you are still subject to documentation, valuing and reporting requirements, etc. as specified in 2 CFR Part 200, "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (the Uniform Guidance)," 7 CFR 3430, "Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-Formula Federal Assistance Programs – General Award Administrative Provisions," and program-specific regulations, as applicable. In instances where match is required, any resulting award will require the signature of an Authorized Representative. Only

when NIFA receives the award signed by the AR will award funds be released and available for drawdown.

The applicant must establish the value of matching contributions in accordance with applicable cost principles. Refer to 2 CFR Part 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards,” for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

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. **This is a complex application, and if you wait until the last few days before the due date to enter your application, you risk missing the deadline.** We encourage inexperienced applicants to submit their applications several days or a week before the deadline, and then submit a subsequent application with improvements if there is time before the deadline. For information about the pre-award phase of the grant life cycle see <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/learn-grants/grants-101/pre-award-phase.html>.

New Users of Grants.gov

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

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

To receive application materials:

1. You must download and install a version of [Adobe Reader](#) compatible with Grants.gov to access, complete, and submit applications. For basic system requirements and download instructions, see <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html>. Grants.gov has a test package that will help you determine whether your current version of Adobe Reader is compatible.
2. To obtain the application package from Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/download-application-package.html> and enter the **Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-BFR-006411** from the search result, click “Select Package” to access the application package. A Grant Application Package is tied to a particular funding opportunity. You may submit an application ONLY to the particular funding opportunity to which the Grant Application Package is associated.

Contained within the application package is the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.” This guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information

about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

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

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

Grants.gov iPortal (see <https://grants-portal.psc.gov/Welcome.aspx?pt=Grants>):
Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self-service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7 a.m. - 9 p.m. EST).
Have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov:

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

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

You should prepare electronic applications 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 (2) documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.**

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

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

- Email: electronic@nifa.usda.gov
- Phone: 202-401-5048
- Business hours: Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. EST, excluding [federal holidays](#).

1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. See Part V, Section 2.18 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for the required certifications and assurances (e.g., Prohibition Against Entities Requiring Certain Internal Confidentiality Agreements).

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

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

3. R&R Other Project Information Form

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

Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract. The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of BFRDP. See Part V, 4.7 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template. The following items should be included in the summary:

1. Project Title;
2. List of Project Directors (PDs) and Co-PDs and their institutions/organizations;
3. Concise (250 words or less) description of the project;
4. List of other collaborating institutions/organizations/farmer and rancher groups;
5. Percent of total federal funds requested that are allocated to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and school-based agricultural educational organizations (SAEOs);
6. For applications to be considered under either of the target audience set-asides:
 - a. Percent of budget allocated to serving military veterans; and/or
 - b. Percent of budget allocated to serving socially disadvantaged, limited-resource, or farmworker audiences; and
7. List of any previous or current BFRDP projects that PD or co-PDs have been a part of leading (list project director and award number (20XX-XXXXX-XXXXX); see Part VIII.F for a link to the full list of abstracts of previously funded projects)

Since there are relevant questions needing response when you complete the project summary, you are strongly encouraged to use the BFRDP Project Summary Format (template) provided at <https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/bfrdp-project-summary-format-0>

You are strongly encouraged to include key words most relevant to your topic area in the project summary so as to better make a distinct connection with the topic being addressed in your application. Spaces occupied by these key words will not count against the 250-word limit in your project summary.

Field 8. Project Narrative.

NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 16 pages of written text, regardless of whether it is single- or double-spaced, using font no smaller than 12 point and with at least 1-inch margins. This total includes figures and tables. We have established this maximum (16 pages) to ensure fair and equitable competition. Organizing your proposal, clearly labeling each section and sequencing them as indicated below, will help reviewers find the information to evaluate your proposal. **It is encouraged that you include a one-page table of contents in the project narrative, which will not count towards the narrative's 16-page limitation.** The Project Narrative must include all of the following clearly-defined sections:

Introduction. The introduction should include a clear statement of the long-term goal(s) of the proposed project. Justify the need for the program by identifying the target audience and explaining their needs (size, region, value of sales, structure of the industry (the number of small, medium and large farms), critical barriers, etc.); and by briefly summarizing all the other similar beginning farmer and rancher education and training programs that are available for the identified target audience, including all programs at FarmAnswers.org. If necessary, provide a map of the region. Show evidence that beginning farmers and ranchers were involved in conceptualizing the project and designing the activities. If the project type is Educational Enhancement Team, present the rationale for the geographic, topic or other appropriate focus of the Team and the Team's composition. All works cited should be referenced (see 7(i) Bibliography & References Cited in this section). Applicants are encouraged to use approximately two (2) of the 16 pages for this section. (Related evaluation criteria (see Part V.B): Relevancy.)

1) **Objectives and Outcomes.** Concisely present the goals, associated objectives and expected outputs and outcomes of the project in relation to the audience and needs identified in the introduction. Provide numbers of beginning farmers and ranchers that will be served. Estimate how many of them will attain specific, anticipated knowledge gains or actions (e.g., starting farming; improving production practices; entering new markets) and project the expected resulting impacts of those gains and actions on the success of their operations. Discuss whether and how this program can be adapted to other regions, communities and/or agricultural systems. Applicants are encouraged to use approximately two (2) of the 16 pages for this section. (Related evaluation criteria: Technical merit.)

2) **Approach.** The activities proposed to achieve each objective must be clearly stated and the approaches being applied clearly described. Applicants are encouraged to use approximately six (6) of the 16 pages for this section. Specifically, this section must include:

- a) A description of the activities proposed for each objective.
- b) A timeline of the proposed project. The timeline should include activities and major outputs and associated outcomes for each year of the project.
- c) Discuss how and where the activities will be provided and the appropriateness of the approach for the target audience.
- d) For Standard BFRDP Projects: how will the beginning farmers and

ranchers be recruited for this training?

- e) For Education Enhancement Team Projects: how will beginning farmer and rancher curricula and programs be identified and evaluated? How will you help guide curriculum and program development and delivery in future years?
- f) How will the project, and its partnerships and collaborations, be sustained beyond the life of the grant (e.g., plans for eventual self-support or institutionalization or other sources of support)? If there are no plans to sustain the effort, explain why not, and how the impact of the project will be lasting.
- g) Any novel ideas or contributions of the proposed project?
- h) Pitfalls that may be encountered and limitations to proposed procedures, and how you will address them. For Standard BFRDP Projects, identify possible challenges to your proposed strategy for participant recruitment and how you plan to address those challenges. (Related evaluation criteria: Technical merit; Achievability.)

3) **Personnel and Resources.** Describe in detail the Key Personnel’s experience in serving the identified or other audiences of beginning farmers and ranchers and ability to provide effective education, training, outreach and mentoring programs for the identified audience. For any audience, but particularly for socially disadvantaged audiences and/or veterans, it is very important to have partner(s) who have knowledge and experience working with such audiences, and that such partner(s) be involved in the leadership of the project (see “Management and Collaboration Plan” below). Describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed project, and their impacts. This information may include: the years and locations of prior activities; number of training assistance or education activities previously carried out; number of participants and graduates from the program; success rate in completing the program; percentage of graduates who are still in farming; and/or percentages of those who improved their operations. Applicants are encouraged to use approximately two (2) of the 16 pages (of the Project Narrative) for this section. (Related evaluation criteria: Expertise and track record; Adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel.)

4) **Plan for Outcome Based Reporting.** Clearly identify a minimum of two (2) expected project specific outcomes within the life of the project, and explain the plan to document and evaluate these outcomes. Third-party evaluators are strongly recommended but not required. Participatory evaluation, and formative as well as summative evaluation, are encouraged. All projects must describe methods and resources for documenting and evaluating their outcomes and impacts. Because of the diversity in the types of BFRDP projects funded, it is not possible to require all applicants to report on identical measurable outcomes. However, all Standard BFRDP applicants should consider using as their outcomes:

- 1) The expected number of new farm startups that would result from their project, and
- 2) The expected number of new farmers (i.e., those who are already farming but in

their first ten (10) years of operation) who will make beneficial changes (and describe those changes) as a result of the project.

Additional, more specific outcomes, may include the number of new farmers who will learn and/or act on their learning (e.g. develop a business plan, and adopt a new production or marketing practice). Reporting of evaluation measures is managed through the Results Verification System at <https://sites.google.com/a/umn.edu/rvs-bfrdp-help/> For greater detail on appropriate evaluation measurement for a BFRDP grant, please see the Outcomes Guide: https://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource/Outcomes%20Based%20Reporting%20Guide%20for%20BFRDP_2.pdf All Educational Enhancement Team applicants should consider using the anticipated number of users of information products created as a result of their Educational Enhancement Team activities as one (1) of their metrics. Include a table summarizing the two (2) to five (5) primary outcome targets and related measurements:

Outcome	Target Number	How Measured
Number of new farm start-ups		
Number of new farmers who will...[describe action and/or condition change]		
Number of new farmers who will...[describe another action and/or condition change]		
(if EET) Number of users of [describe info/product(s)]		
(if EET) Number of trainers trained or # of organizations assisted who will then [describe actions taken]		

Applicants are encouraged to use approximately two (2) of the 16 pages for this section. (Related evaluation criteria: Adequacy of plans for the participatory evaluation process.)

5) Management and Collaboration Plan. It is critical to have a clearly articulated management plan that describes the roles and functions of all partners, collaborators and the organizations, as related to the proposed project. Strong partnerships among complementary organizations (e.g. NGOs, CBOs, SAEOs and universities) with shared leadership are essential to most successful BFRDP projects, see “Definitions” (Part VIII.E) for definitions of Partner and Collaborator. Include time allocated by each partner for attainment of objectives; key roles of each partner and collaborator; and plan for administration of the proposed project and its maintenance and partnerships. Describe the plans for coordination, communication, data-sharing and reporting among members of the project team and stakeholder groups. Describe the commitment of the organization and partners to this project; and how the collaboration and its impact will be sustained beyond the period of the award. An applicant’s failure to provide the requested information in the Management and Collaboration Plan may preclude NIFA from making an award. Applicants are encouraged to use approximately two (2) of the 16 pages for this section. In addition, letters of commitment signed by the AR of the partnering organization

demonstrating that the partners involved have agreed to abide by the **Management Plan** should be provided (see “Other Attachments” below). (Related evaluation criteria: Partnerships and collaboration; Achievability.)

- 6) The following situations **represent exceptions**, and require **Additional Narrative Pages**. In addition to the 16-page limit for the above sections of Narrative, proposals should use additional pages to provide the sections specified below if the proposals fall into the following categories:
- i. **Response to Previous Review.** Required for “Resubmitted Applications” as described under Part II, B of this RFA, “Types of Applications”. PDs must respond to the previous review panel summary. **The Response to Previous Review should be limited to one (1) page. Use the subheading “Response to Previous Review”.** (Related evaluation criteria: Responsiveness to previous comments.)
 - ii. **Prior BFRDP Accomplishments.** If the Project Director (PD) and/or Co-PDs have been involved in leading prior BFRDP project(s), list those projects in the Project Summary (see 3.A above) and add to the narrative 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 ongoing project more effective and successful at meeting program goals. This information should be added at the end of the narrative, **in no more than one (1) page. Use the subheading “Prior BFRDP Accomplishments”.** (Related evaluation criteria: Prior performance; Adequacy of plans for continuous improvement.)

The following table summarizes the sections of the Project Narrative for Standard Grant and EET-Other applications, suggests an approximate number of pages to allocate to each section, and shows the evaluation criteria most relevant to each section:

Narrative Section	Suggested Number of Pages	Related Evaluation Criteria (see Part V, B. of this RFA)
Introduction	2 of 16	Relevancy
Objectives and Outcomes	2 of 16	Technical merit
Approach	6 of 16	Technical merit; Achievability
Personnel and Resources	2 of 16	Expertise and track record of the applicants; Adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel, facilities and instrumentation
Plan for Outcome Based Reporting	2 of 16	Adequacy of plans for the participatory evaluation process, outcome-based reporting, and the communication of findings and results beyond the immediate target audience

Narrative Section	Suggested Number of Pages	Related Evaluation Criteria (see Part V, B. of this RFA)
Management and Collaboration Plan	2 of 16	Partnerships and collaboration; Achievability
Response to Previous Review (if resubmission)	Limit of 1 additional page	Responsiveness to previous comments and recommendations by reviewers
Prior BFRDP Accomplishments (if applicable)	Limit of 1 additional page	Performance during the previous BFRDP grant(s); Adequacy of plans for continuous improvement

Field 12. Add Other Attachments

1) **Commitment Letters. PDF attachment(s). No page limit.**

Letters of commitment from all partners (signed by the AR of the partnering organization) stating that the partners involved have agreed to their stated roles in the project and have agreed to abide by the **Management Plan**. Letters from other organizations or people whose participation is important to the success of the project, committing those collaborators to specific roles, are also encouraged. Title the attachment(s) as ‘Letter of Commitment – Organization Name’ in the document header and save file as ‘Letter of Commitment Organization Name’. Other more general letters of support (i.e., from those who are not committing to a specific role in the project) are not needed and should not be included. See Part VIII.F for an example of a commitment letter.

Do not add any other attachments not specifically requested in this RFA. Specifically, do not attach examples of curricula or other appendices that were allowed in previous years’ BFRDP RFAs. **Attaching additional narrative or figures or tables other than those specifically requested in this RFA will result in disqualification from review.**

2) **Check List**-Please ensure that you check off on the list below and include with project narrative. This inclusion will not count towards the narrative’s page limitation.

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program – Checklist for FY2018 Applications. This checklist is a tool to help applicants review that they have included all the forms and attachments. It is *not* a substitute for carefully following all of the instructions in the RFA and the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

File Name for PDF Attachment (or application form/section)	Contents (see the FY2017 Request for Applications (RFA), the Application Package, and Instructions (NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide)	Check Off
SF-424 R&R Cover Sheet Project/Perf. Site Location(s) Other Project Information	Forms in the Application Package – see instructions in the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for all three (3) forms	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

File Name for PDF Attachment (or application form/section)	Contents (see the FY2017 Request for Applications (RFA), the Application Package, and Instructions (NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide)	Check Off
Project Summary (pdf)	Use the suggested template at: http://nifa.usda.gov/resource/application-support-templates or include all of the same information on one (1) page:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Table of Contents	Have you included a one-page table of contents	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Title	<input type="checkbox"/>
	List of Project Directors/Co-PDs & Institutions	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Project description - 250 words or less	<input type="checkbox"/>
	List of other collaborating organizations not on PD/co-PD list	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Percent of total federal funds allocated to NGO/CBO/SAEOs	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Percent of budget allocated to serving military veterans	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Percent of budget allocated to serving socially-disadvantaged audiences	<input type="checkbox"/>
	List of previous BFRDP projects that PD/co-PDs have led	<input type="checkbox"/>
Project Narrative (pdf)	No more than 16 pages, include the following Sections:	<input type="checkbox"/>
	1. Introduction	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. Objectives and Outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3. Approach	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4. Personnel and Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>
	5. Plan for Outcome Based Reporting	<input type="checkbox"/>
	6. Management and Collaboration Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Additional section(s) beyond 16-page limit if applicable:	
	1. Response to Previous Review (if Resubmission) – limit one (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. Prior BFRDP Accomplishments – limit one	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bibliography (pdf)	Bibliography and References (no page limit)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Letter of Commitment_ Org Name (pdf attachment(s))	Signed letter(s) that Partners have agreed to their role in the project and to abide by management plan; often multiple attachments, no page limit	<input type="checkbox"/>

File Name for PDF Attachment (or application form/section)	Contents (see the FY2017 Request for Applications (RFA), the Application Package, and Instructions (NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide)	Check Off
R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (form)	Information and Biographical Sketch form for each person. Current and Pending Support is required with this application)	<input type="checkbox"/>
R&R Personal Data (form)	Providing this information is required	<input type="checkbox"/>
R&R Budget Federal and Non- Federal (form)	Complete three (3) R&R budget forms reflecting each year of the project; annual budgets are required at the time of application. Plus a total budget for the entire project duration is required.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Budget Justification (pdf)	Explain each item; no page limit. The Budget Justification must list matching sources along with the identification of the entity(ies) providing the match as well as the total dollar amount being pledged. NIFA is no longer requiring written verification of commitments of matching support and pledge agreements).	<input type="checkbox"/>
R&R Sub-award Budget (form)	Required if any sub-awards	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supplemental Information Form (form)	Program Code = BFRDA for Standard Grants Program Code = BFRDB for Educational	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conflict of Interest (pdf)	Complete a Conflict of Interest form for each key /senior person http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/templates/conflict_of_interest.doc then combine them into one (1) pdf document to attach	<input type="checkbox"/>

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 forms for current and pending support.

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.

R&R Budget Federal and Non-Federal

This form (accompanied by the required Budget Narrative attachment) contains the itemized listing and description of your project’s budget. Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Include budget for each year of project work as well as one (1) composite budget for the entire project duration. Include the travel costs for the Project Director and any other key staff member(s) to attend the annual Project Directors’ meeting beginning in the first year of funding and during each year of the project.

Matching. As stated in Part III, B of this RFA, all applicants are required to provide from non-Federal sources (unless otherwise specified by law) cash or in-kind contributions in an amount equal to twenty-five percent (25%) of the Federal funds requested. All matching contributions must be specifically for the project objectives as proposed.

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

You must establish the value of applicant contributions in accordance with applicable cost principles. Refer to 2 CFR Part 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (the Uniform Guidance),” for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

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.

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 and the program code according to the chart below. Note that accurate entry of the program code is very important for proper and timely processing of an application.

Proposal Type	Program Code Name	Program Code
Standard Grant	Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Standard	BFRDA
Educational Enhancement Team	Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Enhancement	BFRDB

- 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.

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 the checklist should be used to check the application for completeness, the application should be checked for the following required item(s). This is not an exhaustive list of required items; it only serves to highlight items that are critical to BFRDP review.

Applications that fail to include these items will not be accepted. The list includes:

- Summary/Abstract;
- Narrative with all required sections: Introduction; Objectives and Outcomes; Approach; Personnel and Resources; Plan for Outcome Based Reporting; and Management and Collaboration Plan;
- Budget for each year of project work, plus a total budget for the entire project duration; and
- Budget Narrative.

In addition, applications will not be accepted for review if they do any of the following:

- Exceed the maximum pages allowed for the Project Narrative, or attach any extra narrative or graphic materials not specifically requested in the RFA
- Exceed the maximum federal budget request for the type of application proposed
- Propose objectives or approach that do not fit the purpose and scope of BFRDP.

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

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by **5 p.m. Eastern Time on February 8, 2018**. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding, except under very rare circumstances (see NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, Part IV 1.9, for details).

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.**

Funding Restrictions

Section 7132 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 amended the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3310(a)), limiting indirect costs for grants to 22 percent (22%) of the total Federal funds provided under each award. However, Section 7409 of the Agriculture Act of 2014 limits indirect costs for Standard Grants to 10 percent (10%) of the total Federal funds provided under each Standard Grant award, providing they have an approved Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate.

Therefore, when preparing budgets, applicants for a Standard Grant proposal should limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to 10 percent (10%) of the total funds requested. Proposals for Educational Enhancement Teams (EETs) may request the lesser of their institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 22 percent (22%) of total Federal funds awarded.

Claiming of indirect costs. The maximum allowed indirect costs may be claimed under the Federal portion of the award budget or, alternatively, the maximum allowed indirect costs may be claimed as a matching contribution (if no indirect costs are requested on the Federal portion of the budget). However, the maximum allowed indirect costs may not be claimed on both the Federal portion of the budget for the award and as a matching contribution, unless the total claimed on both the Federal portion of the budget for the award and as a matching contribution does not exceed the maximum allowed indirect costs. An awardee may split the allocation between the Federal and non-Federal portions of the budget only if the total percentage of indirect costs under the project does not exceed the maximum allowed indirect costs. For example, for a standard grant, indirect costs are capped at 10 percent (10%), so the grantee may request five percent (5%) of the indirect costs on both the Federal portion of the budget for the award and as a matching contribution. Or, the grantee may request any other, similar percentage combination that, when combined, does not exceed the maximum indirect cost rate for the type of grant requested.

Applicants who would like to claim indirect costs but who have never received a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) and do not wish to go through the negotiation process with their cognizant agency are eligible to request a 10% de minimis indirect cost rate.

The 10% de minimis rate is applied to Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC). MTDC means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first \$25,000 of each sub-award (regardless of the period of performance of the sub-awards under the award). MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships,

participant support costs and the portion of each sub-award in excess of \$25,000. Violation of cost accounting principles is not permitted when charging costs to awards. Rather, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs. If the cognizant agency issues a negotiated rate subsequent to award, the negotiated rate may not be retroactively applied.

An award made under this program may not be used for planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of a building or facility. Program funds may not be used to buy land, match Individual Development Account funds, or purchase equipment for starting farm or ranch businesses. Program funds may not be used for research activities. Program funds may only be used for education, training, outreach and mentoring of beginning farmers and ranchers.

Other Submission Requirements

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

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

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

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

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

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

After each peer review panel has completed its deliberations, the responsible program staff of BFRDP will recommend that your project be approved for support from currently available funds or be declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review. BFRDP program staff also check for duplication or overlap in the work plans of recommended proposals and with previously-funded projects, to ensure geographical diversity to the extent practicable (7 U.S.C. § 3319f(6)).

BFRDP 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.

Evaluation Criteria

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

- **Partnerships and Collaborations (20 points):** To what extent does the application represent a substantial and effective collaborative network or partnership of public and/or private entities? Does the proposal include the necessary partners to meet the needs of the audience, and does it make appropriate use of the expertise and other strengths of each of the partners? Priority will be given to partnerships and collaborations that are led by or include NGOs, CBOs or SAEOs with expertise in new agricultural producer training and outreach. Only applications that are led by, or have a minimum of 25 percent (25%) of the Federal budget allocated to these partner organizations (i.e., NGOs, CBOs and SAEOs), will be given this priority. In addition, these partner organizations must have been involved and played an important role in the project design and development. Projects must also employ an equitable and appropriate decision-making and oversight process that includes all partners to be given this priority.

- **Relevancy (10 points):** Explanation and documentation that the project is directed toward specific topic areas identified in Part I, B in this RFA. These topics are designed to yield improvements in and sustainability of beginning farmers and ranchers as defined in the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Pub. L. 113-79). In addition, the relevancy will be evaluated by the description of the necessity of the project based on the needs identified for the target audience, the inclusion of beginning farmers and ranchers in the conceptualization and development of project activities, and the degree to which the project addresses audience(s), needs, and/or geographic area(s) not served by previous and alternative training, outreach, mentoring and education programs.

- **Technical merit (15 points):**

 - (a) Clarity and delineation of objectives, activities and outcomes;
 - (b) Conceptual adequacy of the proposed activities to meet the needs of the targeted audience including suitability and feasibility of the approach (e.g., social, economic and cultural relevance, distance based versus face-to-face);
 - (c) Innovation and originality of objectives and activities;
 - (d) Expected performance targets, outcomes and impacts as indicated in the Plan for Outcome Based Reporting;
 - (e) Adaptability to other locations, communities, and/or agricultural products and technologies;
 - (f) Sustainability of the project partnerships and collaborations beyond the life of the grant, or a compelling explanation of how the project impact will be lasting if the collaboration itself is not sustained; and
 - (g) Reasonableness of the budget for planned activities. (While the size of the budget is not an evaluation criterion, the reviewers will be asked to comment whether it matches logically with the program described in the narrative.)
 - (h) **For Educational Enhancement Team applicants, this includes:** Adequacy of dissemination plans for evaluation reports, including number and description of activities planned for disseminating evaluation reports and new curricula.

- **Achievability (15 points):** Probability of success of the project is appropriate given the level of originality, target audience and budget for each activity. The extent to which the applicant identifies potential pitfalls and how they will be addressed. There should

be sufficient time commitment of project directors and co-directors for project activities including management. The plans for management and collaborative arrangements of the proposed project should be adequate, e.g., sufficient time allocated for systematic attainment of objectives; clearly defined project roles and relationships among the key participants and collaborators; plan for decision-making; and plan for administration of the proposed project and its maintenance, partnerships, and collaborative efforts.

- **Expertise and track record of the applicants (15 points):** To what extent does the application demonstrate expertise through successful multi-year experience in education, outreach, mentoring and/or technical assistance for beginning farmers and ranchers? The successful multi-year experience can be demonstrated by the number of training, assistance, or education activities previously carried out; number of participants or graduates of the program, success rate and their current occupation; the number of years a program or activity has been offered. The extent to which the qualifications of the applicant (individual or team) to conduct the proposed project activities are detailed. The applicant's ability to evaluate project outcomes. The applicant's demonstration of experience and competence in serving the needs of the identified target audience.
- **Adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation (10 points):** Includes the expertise of consultants and collaborators, sufficiency of the educational facilities and equipment for the proposed education and outreach methods.
- **Adequacy of plans for the participatory evaluation process, outcome-based reporting, and the communication of findings and results beyond the immediate target audience (15 points):** Includes number and expertise of evaluation team members who have agreed to serve or who have been identified.

Additional evaluation criteria for Resubmitted Applications:

- **Responsiveness to previous comments and recommendations by reviewers.** Includes the response to the previous review panel summary.

Additional evaluation criteria for New and/or Resubmitted Applications from Project Directors (PDs) and Co-PDs of prior BFRDP projects:

- **Performance during the Previous BFRDP grant(s) (10 points).** As indicated in the annual and/or final report(s) submitted to the Agency and listed in the summary and narrative of the application. Includes achievement of outcomes and contributions of curriculum to the BFRDP Clearinghouse described in the report(s). Participation as well as contributions to the Annual Project Directors' meeting will be taken into consideration in evaluating project's success and ability to be successful in future projects.
- **Adequacy of Plans for Continuous Improvement (10 points).** Includes what was learned from the past project(s), what can be improved upon, and how those lessons and improvements are being incorporated into this application to make the ongoing project more effective and successful at meeting program goals.

Previously unfunded applicants will be evaluated on a denominator of 100 points whereas previously funded applicants will be evaluated on a denominator of 120 points.

Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, we take extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation.

See http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/competitive_peer_review.html for further information about conflicts of interest and confidentiality as related to the peer review process.

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).

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 on behalf of BFRDP 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.

Award Notice

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

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

Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These may include, but are not limited to, the ones listed on the NIFA web page – <http://nifa.usda.gov/federal-regulations>.

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

Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

The output and reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions (see <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> for information about NIFA award terms). If there are any program or award-specific award terms, those, if any, will be identified in the award. For BFRDP, this will include contributing information to the BFRDP clearinghouse at FarmAnswers.org, including project results and entries in the Library. If a project is funded, beginning in the first year of funding, the Project Director and any other key staff member(s) will be required to attend annual project director meetings. Reasonable travel expenses should be included as part of the project budget.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACTS

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Programmatic Contacts – for questions about scope, program types, narrative contents, and evaluation criteria:

Denis Ebodaghe

Title: National Program Leader

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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 (25%) 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 sub-awarding, transferring or contracting out of any work under a federal award, including fixed amount sub-awards as described in §200.332 Fixed amount sub-awards. This provision does not apply to the acquisition of supplies, material, equipment, or general support services.
- (vii) Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-federal entity.
- (viii) The need arises for additional federal funds to complete the project.

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

B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of NIFA transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary of Agriculture determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. We will retain for three (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

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 2 CFR Part 415, Subpart C, this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372, which requires intergovernmental consultation with state and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

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.

In addition, the following definitions apply:

Beginning Farmer: a farmer, rancher, or operator of non-industrial private forestland who is in the first ten (10) years of operation, or a person intending or aspiring to begin such an operation.

Collaborator: a person or an organization that cooperates with the applicant in the conduct of the project but is not immediately connected to the management of the project.

Community Based Organizations (CBOs): private, non-profit organizations that are representative of a community or a significant segment of a community and that provide services to that local community.

Education: an act or process that delivers knowledge and informal educational programs to beginning farmers and ranchers, enabling them to make practical decisions.

Limited resource farmer or rancher: an operator of a farm or ranch that has both low levels of farm sales and low household income. See the USDA-ERS https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/43913/50363_eib-132-report-summary.pdf?v=42103 for more information.

Military Veteran: a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released from the service under conditions other than dishonorable.

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs): legally constituted, non-governmental organizations created by natural or legal persons with no participation or representation of any government and serving one (1) or more communities.

Partnership: a relationship involving close cooperation between parties having specified and joint rights and responsibilities in the management of the project.

Performance target: a specific, verifiable change in people's actions or conditions. It defines how many people will change and what degree of change constitutes success.

Producer: an individual, family, or other entity in the U.S. engaged in the business of agriculture, crop, livestock, forestry, and range production, management and marketing.

Qualified Public and Private Entities: public or private groups, organizations, or institutions that have established and demonstrated capacities to conduct projects that accomplish the purposes of the program as designated in these guidelines.

Regions:

(1) The Northeast region consists of the 12 Northeast States and the District of Columbia (Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and West Virginia);

(2) The Southern Region consists of 13 States plus Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands (Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, and Oklahoma);

(3) The North Central Region consists of 12 States (Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota); and

(4) The Western Region consists of 12 States and the American Territories in the Pacific (Hawaii, Alaska, Washington State, Oregon, California, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, and American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and Micronesia).

School-based agricultural educational organizations (SAEOs): organizations that deliver career and/or technical education in agriculture to high school students, which may include classroom and/or experiential learning, for example, FFA (formerly known as the Future Farmers of America), National Young Farmer Educational Organization, or other similar organizations.

Socially disadvantaged beginning farmer or rancher: a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group (i.e., a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities) (7 U.S.C. 2003(e)).

Veteran farmer or rancher: a farmer or rancher who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released from the service under conditions other than dishonorable. (See 7 U.S.C. 2279(e) for further details.)

E. Materials Available on the Internet

BFRDP program information is available on the NIFA web site at <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/program/beginning-farmer-and-rancher-development-program-bfrdp>

The following are among the materials available on the web page:

1. BFRDP Grant Applicant Webinar (recordings of past webinars and links to future)
2. BFRDP Educational Enhancement Projects
3. BFRDP Stakeholder Input Received
4. BFRDP Checklist for Applications
5. BFRDP Q&A – 2017 RFA
6. BFRDP Summary of Panel Member Duties
7. Best practices for mentoring farmers and ranchers
8. BFRDP Outcomes Guide
9. Best practices for mentoring disadvantaged farmers and ranchers
10. Abstracts of previously funded projects (via the link to BFRDP under related Funding Opportunities)