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National Institute of Food and Agriculture
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NIFA

REQUEST FOR APPLICATION
Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program

FUNDING YEAR:	Fiscal Year 2020 & 2021
APPLICATION DEADLINE:	June 4, 2020 & May 3, 2021
LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE:	Not Required
FY 2020 FUNDS AVAILABLE:	$960,000
ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER:	10.522

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

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance. The Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program (FASLP) is listed in the Assistance Listings under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number 10.522.

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
Application:	5:00 P.M. Eastern, June 4, 2020 & May 3, 2021 [*Ref to Part I § C of this RFA*]
Letter of Intent:	Not Required
Applicants Comments:	Within six months from the issuance of this notice (*NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month*)

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 uses comments to help meet the requirements of Section 103 (2) of Pub. L. 105–185, 112 Stat. 523, the, Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998.

(email is for comments only). Please use the following subject line: Response to the Food and Agriculture Service Learning RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This notice identifies the objectives for Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program (FASLP) projects, deadlines, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions. NIFA requests applications for the Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program (FASLP) for fiscal year (FY) 2020 & 2021 to increase knowledge of agriculture and improve the nutritional health of children. The anticipated amount available to fund grants under this authority is approximately $960,000 in Fiscal Year 2020.

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PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program (FASLP) legislative authority is located in Section 413 of the Agricultural Research, Extension and Education Reform Act (AREERA) of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7633). Public Law 113-79, February 7, 2014, Title IV of AREERA was amended by adding Section 413.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The FASLP purpose is to increase knowledge of agriculture and improve the nutritional health of children. The primary goals of the FASLP are to (7 U.S.C. 7633):

1. Increase capacity for food, garden, and nutrition education within host organizations or entities and school cafeterias and in the classroom;

2. Complement and build on the efforts of the farm to school programs implemented under section 18(g) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1769(g));

3. Complement efforts by the Department and school food authorities to implement the school lunch programs established under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq,) and the school breakfast program established by section 4 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1773);

4. Carry out activities that advance the nutritional health of children and nutrition education in elementary schools and secondary schools (as those terms are defined in section 9101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C 7801); and

5. Foster higher levels of community engagement and support the expansion of national service and volunteer opportunities.

Food and Agriculture Service Learning Programs are intended to increase knowledge of agriculture and improve the nutritional health of children, and to bring together stakeholders from the distinct parts of the food system to increase the capacity for food, garden, and nutrition education within host organizations or entities, such as school cafeterias and classrooms, while fostering higher levels of community engagement between farms and school systems. The initiative is part of a broader effort to not only increase access to school meals for low-income children, but also to dramatically improve their quality.

The development of leadership skills, knowledge, and qualities are necessary to prepare students for agricultural and related careers in the private sector, government, and academia. Teaching applications must demonstrably incorporate a leadership development component to equip students with technical and leadership abilities upon graduation.

Specific activities may include:

1. Developing practical applications to increase understanding of leadership roles, including critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills; ethics and professionalism; and working in teams;
2. Connecting the academic classroom experiences with daily leadership roles and organizational activities;
3. Providing opportunities for mentoring and shadowing; and

4. Organizing leadership academies, workshops, trainings, etc.

The FASLP is aligned with the following USDA Strategic Goals:
1. Strategic Goal 7: Provide all Americans Access to a Safe, Nutritious, and Secure Food Supply.

C.   Program Area Description

Food and Agriculture Service Implementation Project

Food and Agriculture Service Implementation Projects are intended for eligible applicants to scale up or further develop existing farm to school initiatives and other food and agriculture experiential learning initiatives within a distinct area of communities and schools in a State or region. Applicants should also add to existing activities or include new activities such as training and technical assistance, evaluation activities, curriculum development, or incorporate farm to school strategies in trainings and professional opportunities along with working closely with agricultural producers in the local and regional areas.

Preference will be given to applicants who submit Food and Agriculture Service Implementation Projects meeting priorities of 7 U.S.C. 7633(c)(2) that:
1. Hold a proven track record in carrying out the purposes described in Part 1.B of this RFA;
2. Work in underserved rural and urban communities;
3. Teach and engage children in experiential learning about agriculture, gardening, nutrition, cooking, and where food comes from; and
4. Facilitate a connection between elementary schools and secondary schools and agricultural producers in the local and regional area.

Food and agriculture service learning activities supported by Food and Agriculture Service Implementation grants may include, but are not limited to:
1. Expanding farm to school programs beyond lunch to bring local or regional products into the School Breakfast program;
2. Operating service projects (e.g. AmeriCorps, VISTA, Food Corps, local service corps programs, etc.) that support farm to school initiatives in schools;
3. Readying producers to participate in the school food market by providing training on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and other food safety-related topics;
4. Providing technical support in the form of face-to-face trainings, consultations, webinars, etc.;
5. Developing promotional campaigns in support of farm to school initiatives;
6. Expanding strategic planning efforts to expand or coordinate efforts across multiple districts;
7. Conducting farm to school evaluation efforts;
8. Establishing new or strengthening existing community partnerships (e.g. working with personnel to identify appropriate suppliers, etc.);
9. Encouraging increased consumption of fruits and vegetables through promotional activities, taste tests, and other activities;
10. Expanding experiential or agriculture-based learning opportunities, such as the creation of school gardens, support to ag/food clubs, or increased exposure to on-farm activities; and,

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11. Developing and evaluating integrated curriculum to reinforce food and nutrition-based learning throughout the school environment.

Activities in State agency proposals may include, but are not limited to: hiring of staff to support statewide farm to school initiatives; creation of statewide marketing campaigns or harvest of the month initiatives.

All projects must involve underserved rural and urban communities and facilitate a connection between elementary schools and secondary schools with agricultural producers in the local and regional area.

Applicants are encouraged to seek and create partnerships with public or private, nonprofit or for-profit entities, including links with academic institutions (including minority-serving colleges and universities), and/or other appropriate professionals, community-based organizations, school districts, and local and state government entities. When planning collaborations, see Part III.. Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the successful completion of the project. See Part IV, C., Funding Restrictions.

Table 2: FASLP Key Information

Title	Description
Program Code:	FASIP
Program Code Name:	Food and Agriculture Service Implementation Project (FASIP)
CFDA Number	10.522
Project Type:	Food and Agriculture Service Implementation Project
Grant Type:	Standard
Application Deadline	June 04, 2020
	May 3, 2021
Grant Duration:	Up to 2 years
Anticipated # of Awards:	Approximately 4 for FY 2020
Maximum Award Amount:	$225,000

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

A.   Available Funding

The anticipated amount available for FASLP in FY2020 is approximately $960,000. 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 FY2020 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).

C.   Project and Grant Types

The following describes the types of *projects* that are eligible for funding:

1. Project Types. Applicants must propose a Food and Agriculture Service Implementation Project (FASIP). Applicants should request a budget commensurate with the proposed project. No single FASIP award may exceed $225,000 (including indirect costs – see Part IV of this RFA) for project periods for up to 2 years. Applications that exceed budgetary guidelines will not be reviewed. A no-cost extension may be requested. An implementation project may be supported by only one grant under this program. All FASIP awards will be made based on the relevance and merit of the proposed project with budgets considered only after the relevance and merit of the project have been determined. USDA reserves the right to negotiate final budgets with successful applicants.

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

Application to the FASLP is limited to the following groups: state agricultural experiment stations; colleges and universities; university research foundations; other research institutions and organizations; Federal agencies; national laboratories; private organizations, foundations, or corporations; individuals; or any group consisting of two or more entities described herein.

The eligibility requirements are limited to the applicant. Project partners and collaborators need not meet the eligibility requirements. 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 are 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 FASLP has ***NO*** matching requirement. NIFA will not factor matching resources into the review process as an evaluation criterion.

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 and Grants 101. **Table 3** 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 registration process.

Table 3: Steps to Obtain Application Materials

Steps	Action
Step One: Register	*New Users* 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-FASLP-007292**, 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 4: 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 *Key Information: Customer service business Hours 24/7, except federal holidays*.	electronic@usda.gov *Key Information*: Business hours: Monday thru Friday, 7a.m. – 5p.m. ET, except federal holidays

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 5** outlines other key instructions for applicants.

Table 5: Key Application Instructions

Instruction	References (All references are to the Application Guide)
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.

Contact NIFA if applicant does not received correspondence from NIFA regarding an application within *30* days of the application deadline.

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.
1. Field 7. Project Summary (PS)/Abstract. The PS must show how the project goals align with the project goals of the FASLP. See **Part V § 4.7** of the Application Guide for instructions and suggested templates.
2. Field 8. Project Narrative (PN). The PN must not exceed 10 *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 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. The Community and Schools to Be Involved in the Project and the Needs to Be Addressed; Identify and succinctly describe the critical elements and needs of the local food economy or food system, school system/school district, including demographics, income, and geographic characteristics of the area or community to be served. Beyond a recitation of statistics, applications should describe local capabilities and assets, such as those identified in a community food assessment,

school food environment assessment, and involvement of low-income communities and school districts in the context of project activities and operations.

Most relevant is an explanation of why the applicant and its partners selected the activities proposed in the application. Note the main targets or beneficiaries of the project and the community and school system needs and opportunities being addressed. The needs addressed should directly relate to project goals and objectives described below. It is recommended that this section be no more than one and one-half pages.

b. The Organizations and Communities Involved in the Project; List the organizations and communities to be involved in carrying out the proposed project and the segments of the local food economy or system they link. Include a description of the relevant experience of each community group or organization, including the applicant organization that will be involved, and any related project history. Proposals must demonstrate extensive community linkages, including schools or school corporations, and coalitions. Applicant organizations should demonstrate a history of commitment to and direct involvement in food security projects in low-income communities or in communities with low-income groups, as well as success in outreach to low-income participants. The qualifications of staff involved with the proposed project and/or organizational leadership must reflect the expertise necessary to carry out the proposed project activities or similar types of activities. Experience in and connections with the community will be considered as important as academic or professional credentials in this regard. The applicant organization demonstrates a history of, commitment to, and direct involvement in food and agriculture service learning programs in addition to food security projects in low-income communities and school districts, as well as success in actively engaging low-income participants/students.

In particular, describe how the communities and/or school districts being served – particularly the targeted audience and organizations – were involved in planning the project and will be engaged in its implementation. Please reference planning activities, assessments, meetings, or other activities that demonstrate community input into key decision-making.

No less than three letters from the key organizations involved in the project, acknowledging their support and contributions, must be provided. Additional support letters – such as those from farmers or schools, where appropriate, are encouraged to provide evidence of broad community involvement in both planning and future decision-making. All support letters must be attached in Field 12, Other Attachments (See Part IV § B of this RFA).

c. Project Goals and Intended Outcomes; List the goals and intended outcomes of the project. Outcomes must describe specific changes or results that will occur as a consequence of the project and that will constitute "success" for the initiative. These may include benefits caused by program activities such as changes in participants' skills, behavior, or qualities of life, and positive changes in conditions in the school environment and/or community served or reductions in negative conditions. Outcomes must be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely, describe what will be accomplished, and who and how many people, e.g., students,

participants, will benefit. It is recommended that this section be no more than two pages.

d. Activities to Achieve the Goals; discuss how the goals and intended outcomes will be achieved. Discuss how the proposed project outcomes will be realized by providing a systematic description of how the most important steps or milestones will be accomplished. In addition to these descriptions, it is recommended that a table of up to three pages be provided with implementation details for these activities, including: (a) specific steps and achievements in planning and implementation; (b) timetables for milestones, and, as relevant; (c) expected number of participants involved in each step of the process.

e. Relationship to Program Goals and Objectives; Discuss how the project and its proposed outcomes will address the goals and objectives of the Food and Agriculture Service Implementation Project (FASIP) as described in Part I § B of this RFA. Discuss the specific changes that will result among participants, students, or in the communities served that address these Implementation Project priorities. It is recommended that this section be no more than one page.

f. Evaluation; FASIP proposals should contain a strong evaluation component. Innovative evaluation strategies are especially encouraged. Evaluations must focus on "logic models" (The logic model should be attached to Field 12, see Part IV § B of this RFA) and the measurement of outcomes and impacts in meeting the legislative goals and objectives of the Food and Agriculture Service Learning Project (FASLP). (See Appendix III, Definitions.) Through FASLP project operations and an evaluation of them, USDA seeks to determine best practices, including valuable lessons learned; therefore, proposals are encouraged that include both process evaluations (developing and monitoring indicators of progress towards the objectives) and outcome evaluations (to determine whether the objectives were met). In order to allow for sufficient evaluation of projects as described, it is recommended that applicants set aside between five and ten percent of the total project budget for evaluation purposes. (Note that USDA reserves the option to provide further detail regarding specific metrics and evaluation expectations at the time grants are awarded, or any time thereafter.)

g. Self-Sustainability; Describe which aspects or components of the project will continue beyond the end of the project period. Discuss how a one-time infusion of Federal funds will be sufficient for the proposed Implementation Project to advance local capacity-building and achieve sustainability. Projects should identify actual or potential funding sources for continuation of the project after federal funding has ended.

    Projects should provide evidence, e.g., a market analysis or the outline of a business plan, to demonstrate that it is likely to become self-sustaining. Business plan outlines or any other document of evidence for sustainability may not exceed five pages and must be included as an appendix. Such evidence must be included as an Other Attachment, Field 12 (see Part IV § B of this RFA).

3. Field 12, Add Other Attachments. See **Part V § 4.12** of the Application Guide.
    1. *Key Organization Support.* Attach signed letters from key organizations involved in the project acknowledging their support, contributions and commitment; title the attachment 'Key Organization Support'. Provide evidence of broad

community involvement in both planning and decision-making. This section is limited to two page letters of support for each key organization. (See subsection 1. or 2., as appropriate, of Part IV § B of this RFA).

2. *Appendices to Project Narrative.* Title the attachment as 'Appendices' in the document header and save file as 'Appendices'. Appendices to the Project Narrative are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. The addition of appendices must not exceed seven (7) pages for IP proposals and should not be used to circumvent the text and/or figures and tables page limitations.

3. *Logic Model.* Title the attachment as 'Logic Model' in the document header and save file as 'LogicModel'. Applicants should seek the help of academic or other experts in evaluation design and implementation, as appropriate and available. A logic model or chart may also be used. It is recommended that this section be no more than one page. See Logic Model Planning Process.

4. *Fiscal Agent Letter.* See Part III § A of this RFA. If it is necessary to include a fiscal agent letter, then title the attachment as 'Fiscal Agent' in the document header and save file as 'FiscalAgent'.

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. Field D. Domestic Travel. During the tenure of a grant, PDs must attend a PD meeting each year. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss their projects, opportunities for collaborative efforts, and to enhance dissemination of exemplary end products/results. Reasonable travel expenses to attend this meeting may be included in the application's budget under travel expenses.

2. Match – If an applicant concludes that the matching requirements described under Part IV § B of this RFA is not applicable to them; the applicant must include an explanation of their conclusion in the *budget justification*. NIFA will consider this justification when determining final matching requirements or if required matching can be waived. NIFA retains the right to make final determinations regarding matching requirements.
Grants that require matching funds as specified under Part IV § B of this RFA must list in their *budget justification* the matching sources, the identification of the entity(ies) providing the match, and the total pledged amount. A written verification of commitments of matching support (a pledge agreement) is not required. However, applicants are subject to the documentation, valuing and reporting requirements, as specified in 2 CFR Part 200, "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (the Uniform Guidance)," and 7 CFR 3430, "Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-Formula Federal Assistance Programs – General Award Administrative Provisions."

3. Indirect costs (IDC) – See Part IV § C of this RFA for funding restrictions regarding indirect cost, and **Part V 7.9** of the Application Guide for additional information.

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 Food and Agriculture Service Implementation Project (FASIP) and the program code FASIP. 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
Indirect Cost (IDC) not to exceed 30 percent of Total Federal Funds Awarded (TFFA) of the recipient. Section 1462(a) and (c) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA) limits IDC for the overall award to 30 percent of Total Federal Funds Awarded (TFFA) under a research, education, or extension grant. The maximum IDC rate allowed under the award is determined by calculating the amount of IDC using:
1. the sum of an institution's negotiated indirect cost rate and the indirect cost rate charged by sub-awardees, if any; or
2. 30 percent of TFFA.

The maximum allowable IDC rate under the award, including the IDC charged by the sub-awardee(s), if any, is the lesser of the two rates.

If the result of number one is the lesser of the two rates, the grant recipient is allowed to charge the negotiated IDC rate on the prime award and the sub-award(s), if any. Any sub-awards would be subject to the sub-awardee's negotiated IDC rate. The sub-awardee may charge its negotiated IDC rate on its portion of the award, provided the sum of the IDC rate charged under the award by the prime awardee and the sub-awardee(s) does not exceed 30 percent of the TFFA.

If the result of number two is the lesser of the two rates, then the maximum IDC rate allowed for the overall award, including any sub-award(s), is limited to 30 percent of the TFFA. That is, the IDC of the prime awardee plus the sum of the IDC charged by the sub-awardee(s), if any, may not exceed 30 percent of the TFFA.

In the event of an award, the prime awardee is responsible for ensuring the maximum indirect cost allowed for the award is not exceeded when combining IDC for the Federal portion (i.e., prime and sub-awardee(s)) and any applicable cost-sharing (see 7 CFR 3430.52(b)). Amounts exceeding the maximum allowable IDC are considered unallowable. See sections 408 and 410 of 2 CFR 200.

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.

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:

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

After each peer review panel has completed its deliberations, the responsible program staff of NIFA will recommend that your project 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 extreme 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

Applicants must:

- Have experience in the area of (i) community food work, including the provision of food to people in low-income communities, including farm to school programs, and the development

of new markets in low-income communities working closely with agricultural producers; (ii) job training and business development activities, curriculum and development for food-related school activities in low-income communities; or (iii) efforts to reduce food insecurity in the community, including food distribution, improving access to services, or coordinating school services and programs; (iv) applicants must show evidence of existing community support and engagement with school districts and agricultural producers via no less than three letters of support;

- Demonstrate competency to implement a project, conduct an evaluation, provide fiscal accountability, collect data, and prepare reports and other necessary documentation;
- Demonstrate competency in the implementation of a food and agriculture and/or school service learning program;
- https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/nifa-peer-review-process-competitive-grant-applications.
- Demonstrate a willingness to share information with researchers, evaluators, practitioners, and other interested parties, including a plan for dissemination of results; and
- Collaborate with one or more local partner organizations to achieve at least one hunger-free community's goal. See Steps for a Hunger-Free Community.

NIFA will use the following criteria to evaluate this RFA:

1. The appropriateness of the goals, purposes, and outcomes of the project and how these goals will be achieved to invest in building the assets of the community, school districts, and producers and the capacities of the applicant and its partners.

2. How well the proposed project assists applicants, eligible entities, and others in achieving at least one of the primary goals of FASLP, which are to:

   a. Increase capacity for food, garden, and nutrition education within host organizations or entities and school cafeterias and in the classroom;

   b. Complement and build on the efforts of the farm to school programs implemented under section 18(g) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1769(g));

   c. Complement efforts by the Department and school food authorities to implement the school lunch programs established under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq,) and the school breakfast program established by section 4 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1773);

   d. Carry out activities that advance the nutritional health of children and nutrition education in elementary schools and secondary schools (as those terms are defined in section 9101 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C 7801); and

   e. Foster higher levels of community engagement and support the expansion of national service and volunteer opportunities.

3. The relevance of the experience of the organizations that are involved in the proposed project, including the applicant entity, and the type and extent of support that other organizations will be providing. *Applicants should demonstrate the knowledge of relevant best practices in the field and the use of them in their projects.* The qualifications of staff involved with the proposed project and/or organizational leadership reflects the expertise necessary to carry out the proposed activities or similar types of activities. Experience in and connections with the community and school system, in addition to experience in farming/gardening and connections to producers. Experience in using innovative

marketing activities that mutually benefit agricultural producers and low-income consumers;

4. The viability of plans for realistically achieving self-sufficiency with a one-time infusion of Federal funds. Evidence is provided to demonstrate that the project is likely to become self-sustaining, e.g., a market analysis or the outlines of a business plan;

5. The strength of the proposed project's evaluation component and how it will contribute to the FASLP evaluations on a national basis, including sharing project results in a "exemplary practices" format; and

6. The timeline for accomplishing project goals, objectives and outcomes is realistic and achievable.

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 statue or award-specific requirements, NIFA Policy Guide applies to all NIFA awards.

C.   Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

The output and reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions. If there are any program or award-specific award terms, those, if any, will be identified in the award. All awardees are expected to provide a progress report to NIFA each November, covering the process and outcome evaluation to the National Program Leader for the FASLP. Each awardee conducts an evaluation and the project director is expected to ensure the evaluation data and progress report are sent to NIFA by the November date for the duration of the project.

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

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

Programmatic Contact

Name	Email	Telephone
Dr. Paul Cotton	Paul.Cotton@usda.gov	816-926-1608
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APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Name	Acronyms
Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998	AREERA
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance	CFDA
Data Management Plan	DMP
Food and Agriculture Service Implementation Project	FASIP
Food and Agriculture Service Learning Project	FASLP
Good Agricultural Practices	GAP
National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977	NARETPA
National Institute of Food and Agriculture	NIFA
Project Director	PD
Request for Application	RFA
Research, Education, and Economics	REE
Total Federal Funds Awarded	TFFA
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.

Terms	Definitions
Community Food Assessment	A collaborative and participatory process that systematically examines a broad range of community food issues and assets, so as to inform change actions to make the community more food secure.
Exemplary Practices	High quality community food security work that emphasizes food security, nutritional quality, environmental stewardship, and economic and social equity.
Expert Reviewers	Individuals selected from among those recognized as uniquely qualified by training and experience in their respective fields to give expert advice on the merit of grant applications in such fields who evaluate eligible proposals submitted to this program in their respective area(s) of expertise.
Food Planning Association	A state, regional, or local entity that conducts long-term planning activities related to food, nutrition, or agriculture issues and addresses the needs of low-income people in a manner that is comprehensive and self-sustaining and mutually benefits agricultural producers and consumers.
Food Policy Council	A representative, multi-stakeholder, inter-agency body at the state, regional, or local level that is sanctioned by a government entity to address a broad range of food, nutrition, or agriculture issues in a manner that is comprehensive and self-sustaining and mutually benefits agricultural producers and low-income consumers.
Food Security	Access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for all people at all times.
Hunger-Free Communities Goal	Any of the 14 goals described in House Concurrent Resolution 302, 102nd Congress, agreed to October 5, 1992.
Logic Model	A systematic and visual way to present and share an understanding of the relationships among resources available to operate a program, and includes: planned activities and anticipated results; and the presentation of the resources, inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts.
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.

Terms	Definitions
New Application	An application not previously submitted to a program.
Private non-Profit Entity	Any nongovernmental corporation, trust, association, cooperative or other organization which: (i) is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purposes in the public interest; (ii) is not organized primarily for profit; and (iii) uses its net proceeds to maintain, improve, and/or expand its operations.
Sustainability Produced Foods	Foods that are produced in ways that limit "food miles," and address social and economic justice issues as well as land stewardship. USDA's definition of sustainable development is defined as, "Economic, environmental, and social sustainability of diverse food, fiber, agriculture, forest, and range systems." USDA will balance goals of improved production and profitability, stewardship of the natural resource base and ecological systems, and enhancement of the vitality of rural communities. [Special Reference Briefs Series no. SRB 99-02, Updates SRB 94-05 September 1999, revised August 2007, Alternative Farming Systems Information Center, National Agricultural Library, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture