

Supplemental and Alternative Crops (SAC) Competitive Grants Program

FY 2021 Request for Applications (RFA)

APPLICATION DEADLINE: March 30, 2021

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

SUPPLEMENTAL AND ALTERNATIVE CROPS COMPETITIVE (SAC) GRANTS PROGRAM

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Assistance Listings under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number 10.200.

DATES: Applications must be received by **5 p.m. Eastern Time on March 30, 2021**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding (see Part IV, C of this RFA). Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: We at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) seek your comments about this RFA. We will consider your comments when we develop the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and we'll use them to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). Submit your written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this notice via email to Policy@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 Supplemental and Alternative Crops Competitive Grants Program RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the Supplemental and Alternative Crops Competitive Grants Program (SAC) for fiscal year (FY) 2021. The SAC supports projects that lead to expanded adaptation and increased acreage in the U.S. of canola grown for oil and industrial hemp grown for value added products. This is an integrated research and extension program that will produce results to increase the cost effectiveness and competitiveness of these two crops grown as components of production systems across the country. The SAC supports the breeding, testing, and development of superior performing canola and industrial hemp varieties and production practices that result in improved cost efficiencies, reduced grower risks, and wider use in production systems. Research results and technology developed are expected to be rapidly transferred to producers and other users through effective extension outreach and other engagement efforts. The anticipated grant amount available is approximately \$930,000.

These funds will provide support for canola: up to three region-based integrated canola grants of up to approximately \$225,000 per year with a project period of up to four years. SAC is budgeted to fund one canola research project in a state not part of the three regions, up to approximately \$100,000 per year with a project period of up to four years. However, if one of the regional projects is not fundable, SAC would fund additional state projects up to approximately \$100,000 per year with a project period of up to four years. SAC will also support one industrial hemp project to collect hemp germplasm for storage in the USDA hemp germplasm repository up to

approximately \$125,000 per year with a project period of up to four years. Enactment and implementation of appropriations or authorizing legislation may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.

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

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

In accordance with 7 U.S.C. 3319d(c), the Secretary of Agriculture, (acting through the Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)), is authorized to make competitive grants to colleges and universities, other Federal agencies, and private sector entities to conduct fundamental and applied research related to the development of new commercial products derived from natural plant material for industrial, medical, and agricultural applications.

The program under this statutory authority may include, but shall not be limited to: conducting comprehensive resource and infrastructure assessments; developing and introducing supplemental and alternative income-producing crops; develop and expand domestic and export markets for such crops; providing technical assistance to farm owners and operators, marketing cooperatives, and others; and conducting fundamental and applied research related to the development of new commercial products derived from natural plant material [including hemp (as defined in section 1639o of this title)] for industrial, medical, and agricultural applications.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The Supplemental and Alternative Crops grant program (SAC), Assistance Listing 10.200, supports projects that lead to expanded adaptation and increased acreage in the U.S. of canola grown for oil and industrial hemp grown for value added products. Such crops are important to United States (U.S.) agriculture in that these can provide new and profitable cropping options in response to low commodity prices and changes in consumer demand for new agricultural-based products. The U.S. does not produce enough canola oil to meet its annual domestic consumption needs. Modern canola has major uses in healthy human foods and animal feeds, as a natural pest control when used as a cover crop, and as a feedstock in industrial chemical manufacture and biofuel production.

The purpose of this integrated research and extension program is to adapt these multiple-purpose crops to diverse growing regions in the U.S., so that domestic canola oil and industrial hemp production can be significantly increased and be profitable nationwide. Such efforts require strategically designed, region-based research approaches and effective communication of useful information and transfer of technologies to users as rapidly as possible.

Handling of baseline data and data collection will be addressed in the Data Management Plan (DMP) in accordance with the Part IV(B) of this RFA.

SAC aligns with the USDA Strategic Plan (<https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/about-usda/strategic-goals>) and specifically addresses the following goals:

- Strategic Goal 1: Ensure USDA programs are delivered efficiently, effectively, and with integrity and a focus on customer service;
- Strategic Goal 2: Maximize the ability of American agricultural producers to prosper by feeding and clothing the world;
- Strategic Goal 4: Facilitate rural prosperity and economic development; and

- Strategic Goal 7: Provide all Americans access to a safe, nutritious and secure food supply.

SAC aligns with the [USDA Science Blueprint](#)

- Theme 1: Sustainable Agricultural Intensification
- Theme 2. Agricultural Climate Adaption
- Theme 3. Food and Nutritional Translation

SAC aligns with [USDA's Agriculture Innovation Agenda](#):

- develop an innovation strategy that aligns and synchronizes public- and private-sector research.
- align the work of our customer-facing agencies and integrate innovative technologies and practices into USDA programs.
- conduct a review of USDA productivity and conservation data.
- set benchmarks to improve accountability.

Additional requirements on expected performance goals, indicators and targets may be required as a condition of award.

C. Program Area Description

SAC is an integrated research and extension program to improve the productivity and profitability of canola grown for oil and industrial hemp grown for value-added products through their expanded use as components in sustainable production systems across the United States.

The SAC program encourages applicants to establish and work through region-based, multi-state research networks to address priority national or regional science needs of the canola and industrial hemp industries. The SAC program seeks to accelerate the development and use of superior varieties and practices adapted to regional conditions that produce benefits to growers and allied industries. By bringing together expertise across multiple university, federal agency, and industry organizations and states, the SAC program seeks to enhance the effectiveness of limited state, federal, and industry resources to produce greater impacts. Research results, information, and technology developed are expected to be rapidly transferred to producers and other users through effective extension outreach and other engagement efforts.

NIFA is soliciting applications for the FY 2021 SAC under the following two areas:

A. Canola:

1. Testing germplasm and breeding to develop superior performing canola varieties that increase productivity, profitability, and adaptation to an expanded range of U.S. growing environments; and/or
2. Conducting fundamental and applied research and extension activities to develop innovative planting, cultivating, harvesting methods for use in production systems that include superior performing canola varieties to improve input cost efficiencies and reduce producer and other supply chain participant risks.

B. Industrial Hemp:

1. Germplasm collection for inclusion in the USDA Hemp Germplasm Repository located at Cornell AgriTech in Geneva, New York.

Proposals must include stakeholder input in priority setting, project development, and implementation, and pursue regional coordination of canola- or industrial hemp-related research and extension activities. Applicants are required to provide evidence as appropriate of interdisciplinary, multi-regional cooperation, and use the expertise and resources of land grant and other colleges and universities, Federal agencies, and private industry.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The anticipated amount available for SAC grants in FY 2021 is approximately \$930,000. The applicant's proposed project budget cannot exceed a maximum of \$225,000 per year for Canola Regional Integrated Research and Extension Projects (RIREP) for each region, and \$100,000 per year for Canola Projects in Other States (POS projects), including indirect costs. The applicant's proposed project budget for the industrial hemp project cannot exceed a maximum of \$125,000 per year, including indirect costs. The project period for Canola REIREP or POS projects and the industrial hemp project can be up to four years. Enactment and implementation of appropriations or authorizing legislation 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 [\(ASAP\)](#).

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2021, you may only submit an application to the SAC Program as one of the following types of requests:

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

Resubmitted application. This is an application that was previously submitted to the NIFA but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (see Response to Previous Review, Part IV). We must receive resubmitted applications by the relevant due dates. We will evaluate resubmitted applications in competition with other pending applications in the appropriate area to which they are assigned and review them according to the same evaluation criteria (Part V, B) as new applications. If you are submitting a resubmission application, enter the NIFA-assigned proposal number of the previously submitted application in the Federal field (Field 4 on the form).

C. Project and Grant Types

1. Project Types

Only projects that integrate research and extension will be considered. (7 USC 3318(c)), project periods may be extended but may not exceed five years total. Applicants are required to provide evidence of multi-regional cooperation and, where appropriate, use other relevant and complementary expertise and resources of land grant and other colleges

and universities, other Federal agencies, and private industry.

For Canola, NIFA will recognize two types of projects this year:

Regional Integrated Research and Extension Projects (RIREP):

Established canola industry associations are found in the following three geographic regions, and therefore projects applying for these regions should lead to results that can increase acres planted and improve profitability for canola oil growers. No more than one project in each of the following regions will be funded.

North Central: Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Eastern Montana

Great Plains: Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Wyoming

Pacific Northwest: Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Western Montana

Other information:

- Each regional project should have at least two states participating from within the same region and
- Up to 25% of the funding can go to states outside of a designated region

We encourage applicants to form partnerships throughout your region since there is only one project awarded to each region. Applicants are encouraged to engage local, state, and national canola grower organizations. These organizations can assist potential applicants in connecting with other scientists and industry representatives with similar interests.

Projects in Other States (POS):

There is strong potential for canola production to expand into states other than those where canola has traditionally been grown. Projects in these states should lead to results that will help expand the range of profitable canola production.

For Industrial Hemp, NIFA will recognize one type of project this year:

Germplasm collection for inclusion in the USDA Hemp Germplasm Repository.

2. Grant Types

NIFA intends to provide funding for the FY2021 SAC program as new awards with commitment for continuation awards for up to four years. With continuation awards, NIFA agrees to a specified level of support for a specified period of time with the intention to provide additional future support provided performance has been satisfactory, funds are available and continued support is in the interest of the public and the Federal government. Project budgets for the full term should be submitted. Funding will be dispersed in annual increments.

D. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research

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 shall, upon request, make available to NIFA the policies, procedures, and documentation to support the conduct of the training. See <https://nifa.usda.gov/responsible-and-ethical-conduct-research> for more information.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Only colleges and universities (as defined in section 1404 of NARETPA, 7 U.S.C. 3103), other Federal agencies, and private sector entities are eligible to submit applications. Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. Failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

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

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Notice of Intent to Submit an Application

Prospective applicants are asked to email a Notice of Intent to Submit an Application by 5:00 p.m. on **Monday, January 25, 2021**. This notification is not required and does not enter into the review of a subsequent application. The information it contains will be used by program staff to plan the review process. It will not be used for screening for project appropriateness or applicant eligibility, nor will feedback be offered.

This email should include the following information:

- Descriptive (draft) title of proposed research
- Name of the Project Director and Applicant Institution name
- Names of other potential co-Project Directors and their affiliations, if applicable
- Priority area(s) addressed.
- Subject line of email should read: SAC – Intent to Submit. (Do NOT put project title in subject line.)
- E-mail should be sent to SM.NIFA.SCRI@USDA.GOV.

B. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA. We urge you to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For information about the pre-award phase of the grant lifecycle, see <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/learn-grants/grants-101/pre-award-phase.html>.

New Users of Grants.gov

Prior to preparing an application, we recommend that the Project Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) first contact an Authorized Representative (AR, also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative, or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grants.gov.

If it is determined that the organization is not prepared to submit electronic application, a one-time registration process is required **PRIOR** to submitting an application. This will apply, if the institution/organization is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov. It can take as long as two weeks to complete the registration process, so it is critical to begin as soon as possible.

If registration is required, the AR should go to “**Register,**” in the top right corner of the Grants.gov web page (or go to <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html>), for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov. Part II, 1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide contains detailed information regarding the registration process. Refer to item 2, below, to locate the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.”

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

To receive application materials:

- You must download and install a version of [Adobe Reader](#) compatible with Grants.gov to access, complete, and submit applications. For basic system requirements and download instructions, see <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html>. Grants.gov has a test package that will help you determine whether your current version of Adobe Reader is compatible.
- To obtain the application package from Grants.gov, go to <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/download-application-package.html> and enter the funding opportunity number where appropriate

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-OP-008079

Click “Search.” On the displayed page, click the corresponding link to continue. A Grant Application Package is tied to a particular funding opportunity. You may move forms amongst different Grant Application Packages, but you may ONLY apply to the particular funding opportunity to which the Grant Application Package is associated.

Contained within the application package is the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.” This guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

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

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

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

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

C. Content and Form of Application Submission

Electronic applications are to be prepared following Parts V and VI of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A of this part). The following is additional information you need to prepare an application in response to this RFA.

If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., PDF) in **Part III, Section 3** of the guide. 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 application 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 policy@usda.gov
- Business hours: Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. EST, excluding [federal holidays](#).

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).

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.

R&R Other Project Information Form

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

a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract.

The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of SAC. See Part V. 4.7 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

b. Field 8. Project Narrative.

NOTE: The Research Project Narrative is only required for the two types of canola research grants and shall not exceed 18 pages of written text and up to three additional pages for figures and tables related to the project. We have established this maximum 21 pages to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all the following:

- i. Introduction. First, identify which program area you are applying for and the approximate percentage of your project in each area. Define the states working on the project and the region you will be applying to. Clearly state the high priority need of the canola or industrial hemp industry, who will benefit and how they will benefit, and the specific goals of the proposed research. Summarize the body of knowledge or other past activities related to your proposed research, citing the work of key project personnel or others that is relevant

to the project. Preliminary data or information pertinent to the proposed research should be included in this section. Describe the qualifications of key personnel, adequacy of facilities, and the project management capability of the applicant institution.

- ii. Rationale and Significance. Concisely present the rationale behind the proposed research as it relates to the goals of this RFA as well as the specific research area you will be addressing.

This section will:

- Address the priority-setting process and method of engaging stakeholder involvement in problem identification, planning, implementation of the research, evaluation, and utilization of results.
- Describe any coordination of the research in national or regional efforts, and how this research complements other work conducted by land grant and other universities, Federal agencies, and industry.
- Discuss novel ideas or contributions that the proposed project offers.

- iii. Objectives: Include a list of project objectives for the goal(s).

- iv. Approach. Describe how you will address each stated objective. Include in your approach:

- Methods to be used in carrying out the research and extension components.
- Means by which results will be analyzed, assessed, and interpreted.
- A detailed description of how you will communicate your findings and transfer technologies to intended users (Information Dissemination Plan).
- A clear description of each team members' role and responsibility to the project.
- For the entire project, a timeline that outlines all-important phases as a year-by-year function of time, including periods beyond the grant funding period.
- Expected outcomes and benefits. Projects must include a clear description of the expected accomplishments and how research's progress and benefits (outputs and outcomes) will be tracked and measured. This section can include:
 - Anticipated specific uses for your results or products.
 - Specific changes in knowledge about canola or industrial hemp crops and their performance that will directly result from your research.
 - Performance measures such as number of new canola acres planted, increased seed sales, relative changes in land use, enhanced sustainability of production systems, or change in market share.
 - Estimated increases in profit or risk reductions from growing canola, or other quantitative measures of impact.
 - The potential long-term benefits of utilizing the new technology based on current knowledge and practice, and the estimated impact on the canola industry and American agriculture.

- v. Response to Previous Review: This requirement only applies to Resubmitted Applications as described in Part II, B (Resubmission project type). The Project Narrative is to include two components: 1) a one-page maximum response to the previous review (containing the previous proposal number in the first line) titled "Response to Previous Review" as the first page of the Narrative and 2) the 18 page Project Narrative, as required (see Part IV, C. 3. b., above). The additional one-page "Response to Previous Review" does not count against the 18-page limit of the Project Narrative. This is required for all applications previously submitted to this program.

NOTE: Appendices to the research Project Narrative are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. Do not add appendices to circumvent the page limit.

c. Field 12. Add Other Attachments

See Part V. Section 4.12 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide (Field 12 on the form) for instructions for this field.

d. Data Management Plan. A Data Management Plan (DMP) is required and is to clearly articulate how the project director (PD) and co-PDs plan to manage and disseminate the data generated by the project. The DMP will be considered during the merit review process (see Part V, B.). See **Part III Section 3.1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for NIFA attachment specifications.**

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

In addition, applications must provide a description and budgeted plan for releasing germplasm, cultivars, or other genetic resources that is compliant with the [Research Terms and Conditions](https://nifa.usda.gov/terms-and-conditions) that govern NIFA-funded projects in the areas of plant breeding, genetics, and genomics. The terms and conditions can be found at: <https://nifa.usda.gov/terms-and-conditions>. The following sections are particularly relevant: Genetic Resources from Outside of the U.S (page 5); Patents and Inventions including Plant Variety Protection (page 9); and Release of Animal or Plant Genome Sequence Data and Distribution of Animal or Plant Genomic Resources, and the Release or Distribution of Plant Germplasm (pages 13-15).

R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V.5 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This section of the guide includes instructions about senior/key person profile requirements, and details about the biographical sketch and the current and pending support, including a link to a suggested template for the current and pending support.

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

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V7 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Indirect Costs

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

Supplemental Information Form

Detailed information related to the questions on this form are available in Part VI, 1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

- a. **Field 2. Program to which you are applying.** Enter the program code name (i.e., enter “Canola Research”) and the program code (i.e., enter “HW”). Note that accurate entry of the program code is very important for proper and timely processing of an application.
- b. **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.** See Part VI, 1.8 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants

This is a required form for corporate applicants. See Part VI, 2 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for a description of the term, “corporation,” and detailed information related to the questions on this form.

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.

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 March 30, 2021**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. **If you have trouble submitting an application to Grants.gov, you should FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Part IV. A for Grants.gov contact information.**

We send email correspondence to the AR regarding the status of submitted applications. We strongly encourage you to provide accurate email addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received correspondence **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 10 days of the established deadline, contact the Agency Contact identified in Part VII of the RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, you should cite this number on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

Section 1462(a) and (c) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA), as amended by Section 7124 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, limits indirect costs for the overall award to 30 percent of Total Federal Funds Awarded (TFFA) under a research, education, or extension grant. The maximum indirect cost rate allowed under the award is determined by calculating the amount of indirect costs 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 indirect cost rate under the award, including the indirect costs charged by the sub-awardee(s), if any, is the lesser of the two rates.

If the results of number one, is the lesser of the two rates, the grant recipient is allowed to charge the negotiated indirect cost rate on the prime award and the sub-award(s), if any. Any sub-awards would be subject to the sub-awardee's negotiated indirect cost rate. The sub-awardee may charge its negotiated indirect cost rate on its portion of the award, provided the sum of the indirect cost 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 indirect cost rate allowed for the overall award, including any sub-award(s), is limited to 30 percent of the TFFA. That is, the indirect costs of the prime awardee plus the sum of the indirect costs 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 indirect costs 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 indirect cost is considered unallowable. See sections 408 and 410 of 2 CFR 200.

You may not use grant funds awarded under this authority to renovate or refurbish research, education, or extension space; purchase or install fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitate, acquire, or construction of buildings or facilities.

E. 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. 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 grant 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

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

After the independent reviews are completed, a peer review panel meeting will be convened. The peer review panel meeting includes a discussion with other reviewers serving on the peer review panel. The panel uses the summarized reviews to facilitate these discussions. Through these discussions, peer review panelists come to consensus on the final ranking of proposals. See a complete description of NIFA's peer review process here:

https://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource/NIFA-Peer-Review-Process-for-Competitive-Grant-Applications_0.pdf.

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

1. Design (60 points). Each of the following components will be considered:
 - The application's methodologies and analytical approaches are appropriate to project objectives, have high scientific merit, and effectively integrate the research and extension activities. (25 pts)
 - The application demonstrates a "whole systems approach"; that is a compelling understanding of the problem(s) it will address, the regional production system as a whole, and how the proposed solution(s) will contribute to both. (10 pts)
 - Project is well planned and potentially attainable within project time, scope, and budget. (10 pts)
 - Awareness of previous or alternative approaches are identified and explained when necessary. Even if a single component is the focus of the project, the proposal must provide a thorough analysis of the broader systems context for why that component is critical. (5 pts)
 - Project feasibility or likelihood it will help maintain and expand the use of canola grown in the U.S. and advance the science. (10pts)
 - Innovative projects are encouraged.

2. Outreach plan (20 points). Application includes a detailed extension engagement and outreach plan and schedule for how: 1) team interacts with interested communities (e.g., farmers) to understand need, and 2) new genetic materials, information, knowledge, or other technology will be delivered to those served by the project. A description of how extension outreach impacts will be measured and reported is also included.

3. A regional, interdisciplinary, and industry-engaged approach (10 points). The application documents the necessary collective expertise in biological sciences, physical sciences, engineering, socio-economic sciences, extension, and program evaluation, as well as participation from principal stakeholders and partners. Qualifications of project personnel are clearly demonstrated. How these experts collaborate to reach project goals, increasing the sustainability, productivity, and profitability of the canola industry, are well described.
4. RFA alignment (5 points). Application clearly states which RFA research area(s) will be addressed, and the specified objectives are relevant to RFA purpose and priorities.
5. Appropriateness of budget (5 points). Budget allocations reflect the personnel and tasks associated with the activities needed to accomplish the objectives. The budget plan describes how this program's funding complements other funding sources including Federal capacity and competitive funds, and state, industry, and other kinds of support.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

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

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted one-time, with updates on an as-needed basis. This requirement is part of the responsibility determined prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another NIFA program. We will provide applicants copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors that may exclude an applicant from receiving federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

E. Application Disposition

An application may be withdrawn at any time before a final funding decision is made regarding the application. Each application that is not selected for funding, including those that are withdrawn, will be retained by SAC for a period of three years.

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the NIFA awarding official shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the NIFA awarding official as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. The project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by NIFA under this RFA may be used only for the purpose for which they are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, regulations, terms and conditions of the award, applicable federal cost principles, USDA assistance regulations, and NIFA General Awards Administration Provisions at 7 CFR part 3430, subparts A through E.

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the information described in [2 CFR 200.211](#).

See <https://nifa.usda.gov/terms-and-conditions> to view current NIFA award terms and conditions.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

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

Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research

Refer to Part II, D for more information.

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

The output and reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions (see <https://nifa.usda.gov/terms-and-conditions> for information about NIFA award terms). If there are any programs or award-specific award terms, they will be identified in the award.

NIFA encourages (but does not require) Integrated Projects to develop content suitable for delivery through eXtension (<https://extension.org/>).

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

For administrative questions related to

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

U.S. Postal Mailing Address:

National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 419205, MS 10000
Kansas City, MO 64141-6205

Courier/Package Delivery Address:

National Institute of Food and Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
2312 East Bannister Road, MS 10000
Kansas City, MO 64141-3061

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Programmatic Contact –

Tom Bewick

National Program Leader

Institute of Food Production and Sustainability

Division of Plant Systems – Production

Phone: (202) 913-3052

Email: tbewick@usda.gov

Alternate Programmatic Contact –

Megan O'Reilly

Program Specialist

Institute of Food Production and Sustainability

Division of Plant Systems - Production

Phone: (202) 445-5410

Email: megan.oreilly2@usda.gov

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, awardees may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

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 months, or a 25 percent reduction in time devoted to the project, by the approved project director or principal investigator.
- (iv) The inclusion, unless waived by the federal awarding agency, of costs that require prior approval in accordance with [2 CFR 200 Subpart E—Cost Principles](#) of this part or [45 CFR Part 75 Appendix IX, “Principles for Determining Costs Applicable to Research and Development under Awards and Contracts with Hospitals,”](#) or [48 CFR Part 31, “Contract Cost Principles and Procedures,”](#) as applicable.
- (v) The transfer of funds budgeted for participant support costs as defined in [§200.75 Participant support costs](#) to other categories of expense.
- (vi) Unless described in the application and funded in the approved federal awards, the sub awarding, transferring or contracting out of any work under a federal award, including fixed amount subawards as described in [§200.333 Fixed amount subawards](#). This provision does not apply to the acquisition of supplies, material, equipment, or general support services.
- (vii) Changes in the approved cost sharing or matching provided by the non-federal entity.
- (viii) The need arises for additional federal funds to complete the project.

The awardee will be subject to the terms and conditions identified in the award. See <https://nifa.usda.gov/terms-and-conditions> for information about NIFA award terms.

B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of NIFA transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary of Agriculture determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. We will retain for three years a copy of an application that does not result in an award. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

C. Regulatory Information

This program is not subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, which requires intergovernmental consultation with state and local officials.

Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

D. Definitions

Refer to [7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Financial Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions](#), for applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program

E. Materials Available on the Internet

SAC program information is available on the internet in two different places. Specific program information on contacts and RFA updates are available on the NIFA Website at <https://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/supplemental-and-alternative-crops-SAC>.