

Sun Grant Program

MODIFICATION # 1:
Page 10 (5/30/19)

Fiscal Year 2019 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: June 27, 2019

ELIGIBILITY: See Part III, A of RFA



United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food and
Agriculture

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

SUN GRANT PROGRAM

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Assistance Listings under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number **10.320**.

DATES: The application deadline for this program is **5 p.m. Eastern, June 27, 2019**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding (see Part IV, C of this RFA). Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: We at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) seek your comments about this RFA. We will consider your comments when we develop the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and we'll use them to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). Submit your written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this notice via email to Policy@nifa.usda.gov. (This email address is only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and **not** for requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Sun Grant Program RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the Sun Grant Program (SGP) for fiscal year (FY) 2019 to enhance national energy security through the development, distribution, and implementation of biobased energy technologies; to promote diversification in, and the environmental sustainability of, agricultural production in the United States through biobased energy and product technologies; to promote economic diversification in rural areas of the United States through biobased energy and product technologies; and to enhance the efficiency of bioenergy and biomass research and development programs through improved coordination and collaboration among the Department of Agriculture; other appropriate Federal agencies (as determined by the Secretary); and Land Grant Institutions. The anticipated amount available for the Sun Grant program in FY 2019 is approximately \$2.7 million.

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

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The authority for this program is contained in section 7526 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 8114), as amended and reauthorized by section 7513 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (S.3042).

B. Purpose and Priorities

The purpose of this program is to provide a consortium of universities made up of a university from each of the sun grant regions and sub-center region (see Part III A of this RFA for a description of regions) with a grant to support a consortium of North-Central, Southeastern, South-Central, Western, and Northeastern Sun Grant Centers and a Western Insular Pacific Sub-center. Each of the five Sun Grant centers or the sub-center will use 75 percent of grant funds to provide competitive grants within each region that are multi-institutional and integrated, multistate research, extension, and education programs on technology development and technology implementation and address bioenergy, biomass, or bio-products research priorities.

The consortium must describe the efforts of Centers they fund, and their Regional Competitive Grants programs will target specific elements of the priorities set forth in the legislation, implementing national priorities in the context of regional scale biogeographic and climatic conditions. Each application submitted in response to this solicitation must demonstrate how core competencies among scientific disciplines will be maximized to include research, education and outreach on regional production of biobased energy feedstocks, and the elements that determine the sustainability of a range of possible feedstocks will be investigated.

SGP encourages (but does not require) projects that develop content and programs suitable for delivery through the Cooperative Extension System's eXtension Initiative. You may use funds to contribute to existing Communities of Practice (CoP) focused on biomass, bioenergy, or biobased product technologies. Projects must align with the eXtension vision, mission, and values. You must have a letter of acknowledgement from eXtension; you may also need a letter of support from one or more of the Communities of Practice. For detailed guidance on how to partner with eXtension, go to [NIFA and other Grant Proposal Support Requests- eXtension Information](#).

NIFA supports global engagement that advances U.S. agricultural goals. To attain the agency's goals for U.S. agriculture, global competence of our nation's agricultural workforce, and safe and nutritious food security in a growing world, NIFA recognizes that collaboration with international partners can contribute to advances in U.S. agriculture. In an increasingly interconnected world, these U.S. advances may have global importance. Thus, applications in response to this RFA may include collaborations with international partners, but may only be submitted by eligible U.S. institutions. Such applications may include subcontracts to international partners or other institutions and must clearly demonstrate benefits to the U.S. The SGP is aligned with the USDA Strategic Plan (<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-strategic-plan-2018-2022.pdf>), and specifically addresses Goal 2, Maximize the Ability of American Agricultural Producers to Prosper by Feeding and Clothing the World, Objective 2.2, Increase Agricultural Opportunities and Support Economic Growth by Creating New Markets and Supporting a Competitive Agricultural System.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The anticipated amount available for SGP grant in FY 2019 is approximately \$2.7 million.

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. USDA intends to competitively review and select a single consortium of universities made up of a university from each of the sun grant regions and sub-center region (see Part III, V for regions) to implement the Sun Grant Program through FY 2023. The project period will be for 5 years.

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.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2019, you may only submit a new application to the Sun Grant Program.

New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the SGP 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.

C. Project Types

Project Types –

In FY 2019, NIFA is funding a single consortium grant for the SGP. The consortium will subsequently fund the following two project types (7 CFR 3430.1004).

- a. Regional competitive research, extension, and education grant programs (estimated 75 percent of funds)**
 1. NIFA anticipates selecting one Consortium that will select and fund five (5) Regional Centers and one Sub-center which will contribute to research, education and outreach addressing the regional production of biobased energy feedstocks, and the elements that determine the sustainability of possible feedstocks. The Consortium will select and provide guidance and oversight of the 5 Sun Grant regional Centers' and the Sub-center's competitive research, extension, and educational grant programs (75 percent of Federal Grant Funds and 4 percent for administrative costs). These Centers will provide competitive grants to individual eligible institutions that are located in the region covered by the Sun Grant Center or Sub-center. The following are requirements, where the Consortium will:
 - a. Provide guidance and oversight to the regional centers and one Sub-center in the development of regional Request for Applications (RFAs) with guidance from regional advisory panels, which include representation from academia, the national laboratories,

federal and state agencies, the private sector, and public interest groups - all with appropriate expertise and experience in the areas of biomass and bioenergy. Each region will announce RFAs and solicit proposals. These proposals must be peer reviewed, by panels made up of appropriate academics with possible representation from appropriate federal and state laboratories, the national laboratories, and possibly private and public interest groups, as appropriate.

- b. Provide USDA the regional RFAs that will be used to solicit proposals.
- c. Oversee and ensure adequate administrative requirements for competitive grants for each region. Funded projects need not be initiated on the award effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds awarded must be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are awarded in accordance with the approved application and budget, applicable regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, and 2 CFR 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. Indirect Costs are unallowable for funds allocated to each of the five Centers for regional competitive research, extension, and educational grant programs (7 U.S.C. 8114). The following competitive procedures must be clearly demonstrated in each application submitted by the Centers to NIFA
 - i. The Sun Grant Centers and sub-center must seek, accept, competitively review, and award proposals for sub-grants. PLEASE NOTE: A sub-grant awarded by a Center or sub-center will have a period of performance from FY 2019 to FY 2023.
 - ii. Peer and Merit Review by Sun Grant Centers and Sub-center
 1. Guiding principles to be taken into consideration when preparing the peer and Merit Review plan: The guiding principle for application review and evaluation is to ensure that each proposal is treated in a consistent and fair manner. After the evaluation process by the review panel, the program officer must ensure that applicants receive appropriate feedback and comments on their proposals, and process the awards in as timely a manner as possible.
 2. Preliminary application review. Prior to technical examination, a preliminary review will be made of all applications for responsiveness to the administrative requirements set forth in the Center's RFA. Applications that do not meet the administrative requirements for the program may be eliminated from program competition. However, the Sun Grant Center or Sub-center retains the right to conduct discussions with applicants to resolve technical and/or budget issues, as deemed necessary. Applications must also be reviewed for eligibility. Eligible applicants for competitively awarded projects within the respective regions of the individual Sun Grant Centers and sub-center are: State agricultural experiment stations; colleges and universities; university research foundations; other research institutions and organizations; Federal agencies; national laboratories; private organizations or corporations; individuals; or any group consisting of two or more of the entities described in this paragraph. 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 time of application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award. For those new to Federal financial assistance, a [grants overview page](#) is available on the NIFA

website. This page includes information about free Grants 101 Training and other resources that are highly recommended for those seeking an understanding of Federal awards.

3. Reviews are undertaken to ensure that projects supported by the Sun Grant Program are awarded on the basis of merit, quality, and relevance to advancing the purposes of and are consistent with the goals and requirements of the funding program. Applications submitted must undergo a programmatic evaluation to determine the worthiness of support under the Sun Grant program.
4. Election of reviewers. The scientific peer review is performed by peer reviewers. Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields taking into account the following factors:
 - a. Level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, and extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities.
 - b. Need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, and extension fields.
 - c. Need to include as reviewers 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.
 - d. Need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, State and Federal agencies, private profit and nonprofit organizations) from within the region, and/or with the appropriate level of documented expertise.
 - e. Need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution.
 - f. Need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.
- iii. **Confidentiality.** The identities of reviewers will remain confidential to the maximum extent possible. Therefore, the names of reviewers will not be released to applicants. If it is possible to reveal the names of reviewers in such a way that they cannot be identified with the review of any particular application, this will be done at the end of the fiscal year or as requested. Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. Reviewers are expected to be compliant with NIFA Confidentiality Policy.
- iv. **Conflicts of interest.** During the evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution will be determined using the Higher Education Directory. Reviewers are expected to be in compliance with NIFA Conflict of Interest Policy.
- v. Evaluation criteria.
 1. **General.** To ensure any project receiving funds is consistent with the broad goals of the funding program, the Consortium will be responsible for ensuring

that each Center will establish a pre-determined set of review criteria, as published in the RFAs, by which each proposal submitted will be evaluated on. It is the responsibility of the project director (PD) or principle investigator (PI) to develop, adopt, adapt, or otherwise establish the criteria by which proposals are to be evaluated. It may be appropriate for each Regional Center to involve other scientists or stakeholders in the development of criteria, or to extract criteria from legislative authority or appropriations language. The review criteria must be described in the RFA and may not include criteria concerning any cost sharing or matching.

2. **Guidance for reviewers.** In order that all potential applicants for a program have similar opportunities to compete for funds, all reviewers will receive from the Regional Center a description of the review criteria. Reviewers are instructed to use those same evaluation criteria, and only those criteria, to judge the merit of the proposals they review.
- vi. Procedures to minimize or eliminate duplication of effort. The Sun Grant Center or sub-center should implement appropriate business processes to minimize or eliminate the awarding of sub-grants that unnecessarily duplicates activities already being sponsored under other awards, including awards made by other Federal agencies.
- vii. Matching. For sub-awards made by the Sun Grant Centers or sub-center through the competitive grants process, not less than 20 percent of the cost of an activity must be matched with funds, including in-kind contributions, from a non-Federal source. However, this matching requirement does not apply to fundamental research conducted by sub-awardees. Fundamental research means research that increases knowledge or understanding of the fundamental aspects of phenomena and has the potential for broad application; and has an effect on agriculture, food, nutrition, or the environment.

As a part of each application for a sub-award, the Sun Grant Centers or sub-center must require a budget narrative that documents matching funds. The budget narrative must include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Written verification means:

1. For any third party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each donation, signed by the authorized representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) The name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) the dollar amount of the cash donation (the budget narrative must describe how the cash donation will be used on the project); and (5) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period; and
2. For any third party in-kind contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each contribution, signed by the authorized representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) The name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the third party in kind contribution and a

description of how the fair market value was determined; and (5) a statement that the donor will make the contribution during the grant period.

3. The sources and amount of all matching support from outside the applicant institution should be summarized on a separate page and placed in the proposal as part of the Budget Narrative. All pledge agreements must be placed in the proposal immediately following the summary of matching support.
 4. The value of applicant contributions to the project must be established in accordance with 2 CFR 200. **All contributions, including cash and third party in-kind, must meet the criteria included in 2 CFR 200.306.**
- b. **Research, extension, and educational activities conducted at the Centers and Sub-center (remaining funds estimated 21 percent):** Activities conducted at the five Sun Grant Centers and sub-center will support multi-institutional and integrated, multistate research, extension, and education programs on technology development and technology implementation.
- c. **Administrative Expenses:** A sun grant center or sub-center may use up to 4 percent of the funds on administrative expenses for implementation of competitive grant programs.

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 further information.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants must represent a consortium of 1862, 1890 and 1994 land-grant universities made up of one university from each of the sun grant regions and sub-region as described in **Table 1**.

Table 1. Sun Grant Regions and Sub-regions

North-Central Region	Northeastern Region	Southeastern Region
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illinois • Indiana • Iowa • Minnesota • Montana • Nebraska • North Dakota • South Dakota • Wisconsin and • Wyoming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecticut • Delaware • District of Columbia • Massachusetts • Maryland • Maine • Michigan • New Hampshire • New Jersey • New York • Ohio • Pennsylvania • Rhode Island • Vermont and • West Virginia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alabama • Florida • Georgia • Kentucky • Mississippi • North Carolina • South Carolina • Tennessee • Virginia • The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and • The United States Virgin Islands
South-Central Region	Western Region	Western Insular Pacific sub-center Region
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arkansas • Colorado • Kansas • Louisiana • Missouri • New Mexico • Oklahoma and • Texas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alaska • Arizona • California • Hawaii • Idaho • Nevada • Oregon • Utah and • Washington 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alaska • Hawaii • Guam • American Samoa • The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands • The Federated States of Micronesia • The Republic of the Marshall Islands and • The Republic of Palau

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Pub. L. 115-334) removed the matching requirements for some NIFA competitive grant programs imposed by the Agricultural Act of 2014. While the

Agricultural Act of 2014 matching requirement was removed, the program is still subject to the matching requirements in the Sun Grant authorizing legislation, as described in 7 USC 8114 § I – III. Under this RFA, there is no match required for grants from NIFA to Sun Grant Centers or Sub-centers. However, there is a 20% match required on grants from a Sun Grant Center or Sub-center.

The matching requirements on grants from a sun grant center or sub-center are as follows: **7 USC 8114 § I, In General:** Except as provided in sub-clauses (II) and (III), as a condition of receiving a grant under this paragraph, the sun grant center or sub-center shall require that not less than **20** percent of the cost of an activity described in subparagraph (B) be matched with funds, including in-kind contributions, from a non-Federal source. **7 USC 8114 § II, Exclusion.** Sub-clause (I) shall not apply to fundamental research (as defined in subsection (f) (1) of section 6971 of this title (as added by section 7511(a)(4)) 1. **7 USC 8114 § II, I, Reduction.** The sun grant center or sub-center may reduce or eliminate the requirement for non-Federal funds under sub-clause (I) for applied research (as defined in subsection (f)(1) of section 6971 of this title (as added by section 7511(a)(4)) 1 if the sun grant center or sub-center determines that the reduction is necessary and appropriate pursuant to guidance issued by the Secretary.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Electronic Application Package

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

New Users of Grants.gov

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

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

To receive application materials:

1. You must download and install a version of [Adobe Reader](#) compatible with Grants.gov to access, complete, and submit applications. For basic system requirements and download instructions, see <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.
2. To obtain the application package from Grants.gov, go to <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/search-opportunity-package.html> and enter the funding opportunity number where appropriate

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-SGP-006775

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

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

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

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

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

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

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

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

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

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

1. **SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. See Part V, Section 2.17 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for the required certifications and assurances (e.g., Prohibition Against Entities Requiring Certain Internal Confidentiality Agreements).

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

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

3. **R&R Other Project Information Form**

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

a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract.

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

b. Field 8. Project Narrative.

NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 20 pages of written text and up to 4 additional pages for figures and tables. We have established this maximum (24 pages) to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

- (1) Consortium Selection and Oversight of Centers. Description of the mechanism the Consortium will use to select the Centers and provide guidance and oversight to the science priorities and grant programs.
- (2) Consortium Objectives. Clear, concise, complete, and logically arranged statement(s) of the specific aims of the proposed effort.
- (3) Sun Grant Center Activities. The procedures or methodology to be applied to the proposed effort must be explicitly stated. This section will include but not necessarily be limited to: (i) a description of the proposed implementation of the competitive program for identifying priorities, developing RFAs, making sub-awards, and overseeing compliance with reporting requirements; (ii) administrative techniques to be employed for the competitive sub-award program; (iii) means by which sub-award proposals for the competitive sub-award program will be reviewed and awarded; (iv) a description of the proposed implementation of the research, extension, and education activities to be conducted at the Sun Grant Centers; (v) pitfalls which might be encountered in the competitive sub-award program and the activities to be conducted at the Sun Grant Centers; (vi) limitations to proposed procedures utilized in administering the competitive sub-award program and the activities to be conducted at the Sun Grant Centers; and (vii) kinds of results expected from the competitive sub-award program and the activities to be conducted at the Sun Grant Centers

(4) Timeline for issuing RFAs and making sub-awards, reporting requirements for sub-awardees, and describe a process for documenting evidence of jointly developing the proposals submitted to the Sun Grant Program.

(5) Literature Review. A summary of pertinent publications with emphasis on their relationship to the effort being proposed must be provided and should include all important and recent 15 publications from other institutions, as well as those from your institution. The citations themselves must be accurate, complete, and written in an acceptable journal format.

(6) Current Work. Current unpublished institutional activities to date related to the goals of this program must be described.

(7) Experience. A description of the expertise and resources of the Consortium members that will allow them to successfully provide leadership to the implementation of the Sun Grant program.

(8) Comprehensive Project Timetable. The application must outline all important phases of both required project types as a function of time for the entire project period.

c. Field 12. Add Other Attachments

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

Data Management Plan. A Data Management Plan (DMP) is required 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 Section 3.1 of the [Application Guide](#) and [NIFA's Data Management Plan](#) page).

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

4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

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

Biographical Sketch - The following are additional instructions of information to include:

- 1) Author identifier (ORCID, <https://orcid.org>) of the researcher if available.
- 2) Digital Object Identifier (DOI) of all publications where possible.

You may also include a list of data publications or published data products relevant to the proposed project, following recommended data citation format.

5. **R&R Personal Data** – As noted in Part V, 6 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award. Part V.6 also notes the importance and use of the information.

6. **R&R Budget**

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 7 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Matching- Sun Grant Centers and the Sub-center are not required to match Federal Funds. For sub-wards made by the Sun Grant Centers or Sub-center through the competitive grants process, not less than 20 percent of the cost of an activity must be matched with funds, including in-kind contributions, from a non-federal source. However, this matching requirement does not apply to fundamental research conducted by sub-awardees. Fundamental research means research that increases knowledge or understanding of the fundamental aspects of phenomena and has the potential for broad application; and has an effect on agriculture, food, nutrition, or the environment.

Indirect Costs- No indirect costs are allowed. For further information and instructions regarding indirect costs, refer to Part V, section 7.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. For indirect cost funding restrictions, refer to Part IV, D. of this RFA.

7. **Supplemental Information Form**

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

a. **Field 2. Program to which you are applying.** Enter the program code name (i.e., enter “Sun Grant Program”) and the program code (i.e., enter “SGP”). Note that accurate entry of the program code is very important for proper and timely processing of an application.

b. **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.** See Part VI, 1.8 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

8. **Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants**

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

C. Submission Dates and Times

We recommend that you conduct an administrative review of the application before submission of it via Grants.gov to ensure that it complies with all preparation instructions. An application checklist is included in Part VII of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide to assist with this review.

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.5 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by **5 p.m. Eastern Time on June 27, 2019**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

If you have trouble submitting an application to Grants.gov, you should FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Part IV. A for Grants.gov contact information.

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

If the AR has not received correspondence **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 7 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

Under 7 U.S.C. 8114, grant funds may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

In accordance with 7 U.S.C. § 8114(c)(1)(C)(vi), Sun Grant Centers and the Sub-center may not use grant funds for indirect costs of awarding grants under the competitive grant program. However, up to 4 percent of the total funds received by each of the five Centers and the sub-center may be budgeted for administrative costs incurred in awarding competitive grants.

Indirect Costs not to exceed 30% of total federal funds awarded are allowable for the remainder (estimated 21 percent of total available Sun Grant Funding) of the funds awarded to the Center or the Sub-center to be used for multi-institutional and multistate research, extension, and educational programs on technology development; and integrated research, extension, and educational programs on technology implementation. (7 U.S.C. 3310(a) and (c) (Section 1462(a) and (c) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977)) See Part V section 7.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further indirect cost information.

E. Other Submission Requirements

You should follow the submission requirements noted in Part IV, Section 1.5 in the document entitled “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.” For information about the **status of a submitted application**, see Part III, Section 6 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

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

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

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

After each peer review panel has completed its deliberations, the responsible program staff of NIFA will recommend that your project be approved for support from currently available funds or be declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review.

NIFA reserves the right to negotiate with the PD/PI and/or with the submitting organization or institution regarding project revisions (e.g., reductions in the scope of work, funding level, period, or method of support) prior to recommending any project for funding.

We will send copies of reviews, **not** including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments to the PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Evaluation Criteria

A reviewer's written evaluation entails two levels of assessment. First, the reviewer summarizes how well the application addressed each evaluation criterion. After the application has been assessed for strengths and weaknesses of each criterion, the reviewer then evaluates the overall likelihood that the project will have significant outcome and impact. These written reviews are used to begin panel discussions with other reviewers serving on the peer review panel. Through these discussions, peer review panelists come to consensus on the final rating and ranking of proposals. A complete description of NIFA's peer review process can be found at the NIFA

website: <https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/nifa-peer-review-process-competitive-grant-applications>.

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

- Clear explanation of how the long-term goals and objectives of the Sun Grant Program will enhance national energy security and promote economic diversification in agricultural production, particularly in rural areas.
- How well preliminary data/pertinent information included demonstrates an understanding of regional biomass, bioenergy, biobased products and the environmental, economic, and social impacts across the nation.
- Demonstrated experience in managing competitive grant programs for research and education programs that support the development of bioenergy, biomass feedstocks, and biobased products; with sufficient infrastructure in place.
- Quality and diversity of communication methods such as publications, presentations and other media. Inclusion of strategies for how the Consortium will communicate data from research to relevant stakeholders in a timely manner and how the success of those outreach efforts will be evaluated.
- Clear management plan for how the Consortium will improve collaboration amongst Land Grant Institutions, the Department of Agriculture, and other federal agencies to form a national network that will further enhance national energy security through the development, distribution, and implementation of biobased energy and related bioproduct technologies. For example, plans may include but are not limited to organizational structure, communication, intellectual property, and competitive grant processes.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

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

See <https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/nifa-peer-review-process-competitive-grant-applications> for further information about conflicts of interest and confidentiality as related to the peer review process.

D. Organizational Management Information

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

E. Application Disposition

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

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

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

B. Award Notice

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

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

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

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

Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research

Refer to Part II, D for more information.

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

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

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACTS

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Programmatic Contact –

William Goldner
National Program Leader
Division of Bioenergy
Institute of Bioenergy, Climate, and Environment
National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture STOP 3182
800 9th Street SW
Washington DC 20024
Phone: (202) 445-3470
Fax: (202) 401-1706
wgoldner@nifa.usda.gov

Administrative/Business Contact –

Aдриене Woodin
Branch Chief
Awards Management Division
Office of Grants and Financial Management
National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
800 9th Street SW
Washington DC 20024
Phone: (202) 401-4320
Fax: (202) 401-6271
awoodin@nifa.usda.gov

PART VIII— OTHER INFORMATION

A. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

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

2. Changes in Budget or Project Plans

In accordance with [2 CFR 200.308](#), awardees must request prior approval from NIFA for the following program or budget-related reasons:

- (i) Change in the scope or the objective of the project or program (even if there is no associated budget revision requiring prior written approval).
- (ii) Change in a key person specified in the application or the federal award.
- (iii) The disengagement from the project for more than three 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 sub-awards as described in §200.332 Fixed amount sub-awards. This provision does not apply to the acquisition of supplies, material, equipment, or general support services.
- (vii) Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-federal entity.
- (viii) The need arises for additional federal funds to complete the project.

The awardee will be subject to the terms and conditions identified in the award. See <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](#), and [Subpart O- Sun Grant Program](#) for applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.