

New Technologies for Ag Extension

FY 2011 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: June 17, 2011

 **U.S. Department of Agriculture**
National Institute on Food and Agriculture

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

NEW TECHNOLOGIES FOR AG EXTENSION

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.500.

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on June 17, 2011 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. 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: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is requesting comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and will be used 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)). This section requires the Secretary to solicit and consider input on a current RFA from persons who conduct or use agricultural research, education, and extension for use in formulating future RFAs for competitive programs. Written stakeholder comments on this RFA should be submitted in accordance with the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this notice.

Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by mail to: Policy and Oversight Division; Office of Grants and Financial Management; National Institute on Food and Agriculture Service; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: RFP-OGFM@nifa.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the New Technologies for Ag Extension RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA announces the availability of funding and requests applications for the New Technologies for Ag Extension (NTAE) Program for fiscal year (FY) 2011 to assist 1862 land-grant institutions, 1890 land-grant institutions, including Tuskegee University and West Virginia State University, and the Cooperative Extension System (CES) in furthering “eXtension”, a national web-based information and education delivery system. Both the land-grant institutions and the CES work to provide objective, scientific information to the public to answer questions and guide decisions. By creating web-based access to high-quality, non-duplicative, research-based information, eXtension can help them better serve the needs of their anywhere-anytime generation of users and reach new audiences. In FY 2011, NIFA plans to support partial deployment of eXtension and enable a technology-conscious nation to make use of the valuable information and education that the CES has to offer. The amount available for support of this program in FY 2011 is approximately \$1,650,000.

This notice identifies the objectives for the NTAE project, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a NTAE grant. NIFA additionally requests stakeholder input from any interested party for use in the development of the next RFA for this program.

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

Funding for NTAE is authorized under section 3(d) of the Smith-Lever Act of May 8, 1914, as amended (7 U.S.C. 341, *et seq.*). Section 7403 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act (FCEA) of 2008 amends section 3(d) of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 (7 U.S.C. 343(d)) in regards to eligibility. The eligibility to compete for NTAE funding includes 1890 Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, including Tuskegee University and West Virginia State University. Eligibility is also provided to the University of the District of Columbia.

To learn more about the history of eXtension, its current activities, and future goals, see the eXtension Business Case and the 2008-2011 eXtension Long-Range Implementation Plan (both documents are available to the public at <http://about.extension.org/wiki/Planning>). The eXtension Progress Reviews can be found at <http://create.extension.org/2011%20NEDA%20Meeting%20Reports>. The draft 2011-2014 Cooperative Extension & eXtension Strategic Management Roadmap is available upon request from the NIFA Agency Contact listed in Part VII.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The purpose of the New Technologies for Ag Extension Program (NTAE) is to increase the capacity of each State to contribute expertise and content to the development of eXtension, a national web-based information and education delivery system that provides direct access to science-based educational resources from land-grant and other partner institutions about subjects of high importance to the general public. This initiative is intended to dramatically change how the CES does business with its customers. Applications are being solicited for the NTAE to deliver: state of the art technology and software applications, high quality leaders and staff, training for an exceptional CES workforce, legally binding contractual and financial instruments, and comprehensive evaluation, communications and marketing activities.

C. Program Area Description

In FY 2011, NIFA plans to support partial deployment of eXtension and enable a technology-conscious nation to make use of the valuable information and education that the CES has to offer. NTAE funds complement, enhance, and accelerate the implementation of eXtension by building, and maintaining the eXtension infrastructure, including the hardware, software, staffing, training, business agreements, and evaluation activities. The successful applicant will work within the context of the eXtension Business Case, the 2008-2011 eXtension Long-Range Implementation Plan, and the 2011-2014 Cooperative Extension & eXtension Strategic Management Roadmap.

The FY 2011 applicant is expected to continue to build upon the competitive advantages of CES such as being customer-focused, a trusted brand, and community-based by: 1) Expanding the Cooperative Extension Service Network by increasing the number of Communities of Practice (COP) and personnel involved, and by deepening the content of existing CoPs, 2) Facilitating the development of effective, compelling content and learning environments by engaging the learner in

content development, 3) Increasing visibility by increasing discoverability and search engine rankings, 4) Increasing local use and value for Extension faculty and county educators to share programmatic loads and repackage eXtension content to support local programming, and 5) Reaching more customers by providing greater access and availability of content using such mechanisms as social networks.

Specifically, the applicant is expected to meet each of the following NTAE objectives within the context of the stated goals above:

1. Identify, acquire, and maintain state-of-the-art technology and software applications that support the primary business processes of eXtension;

The successful applicant should: (a) enhance and upgrade eXtension's existing functionalities; (b) provide customer support, including help-desk staffing, web hosting, training, and software licenses for eXtension; and (c) provide infrastructure support for technical and architectural standards.

The eXtension collaborative workspace such as the "wiki" will be continuously upgraded and refined as more user friendly for experts to work virtually and effectively as they repackage, repurpose, and create educational content and pedagogy. Funds will be used to develop, test, and execute new software applications associated with the Content Management System (CMS), Learning Management System (LMS) and new middleware designed to track the activity of users on the eXtension site so the content teams can modify offerings to better meet the needs of the target audiences and public users. Funds will be used to support infrastructure such as help desks, technical and architecture standards, and host configuration. This infrastructure will enhance collaboration by allowing for on-line submissions of FAQs and proposals, digital asset management, forums/blogs, wiki environments, interface the RDF Site Summary (RSS) feeds, online chat, streaming video, access to learning modules, usability testing, performance benchmarking, and general analytics.

2. Recruit, hire, and retain innovative and high-quality leaders to create and manage eXtension for the collective vision, mission, values, and principles (available at <http://meta.extension.org/wiki/Mission>);

NIFA anticipates supporting core staff, as well as support staff (e.g., in the areas of network engineering, software applications, instructional content, and administration).

Funds will be used to form and support the "NIFA National eXtension Fellowship Program" for faculty interested in using sabbatical or other leave to contribute to the Initiative. The work of the Fellows' might support applied and developmental research in electronic delivery of educational programs, studying the effects of eXtension on the transformation of the CES, or assisting in evaluating the efficacy of blending electronic and traditional ways of working on the quality of life for citizens. The successful applicant will use these funds to form, manage, and administer advisory and working groups in such area as technology, content management, editorial functions, diversity, institutional teams, evaluation, end users, internal and external partners.

3. Train an exceptional CES workforce that can meet the challenges of the 21st century by integrating the web-based resources of eXtension into their current mode of operations;

The current CES staff will become proficient in using eXtension by blending the electronic availability of education and expertise with their more traditional ways of working. Funds will be used to develop a national workforce development plan in this regard, and for implementing training on a national scale for all Extension workers utilizing eXtension. Funds will be used to design and test such blended models for rapid-response to high profile issues.

4. Develop and refine an array of current, effective, and legally binding contractual and financial instruments to support the business aspects of eXtension;

The successful applicant will develop, refine, and institutionalize effective eXtension business models, including policies and practices in the areas of intellectual property, contracts, institutional branding, regional content, copyrights, licensing, sponsorship, fees, revenue sharing, and international agreements.

5. Develop and implement a comprehensive evaluation, and communications and marketing effort for eXtension.

Funds will support the general evaluation aimed at assessing the products and services of eXtension against the criteria of: 1) competitiveness in the information and education marketplace; and 2) the design of new and exceptional curricula for traditional and expanded audiences, as planned. Evaluations will include the design of appropriate performance metrics with expected outcomes and impacts, and will align with the NIFA budget performance integration process. Funds will be used to design and implement a more comprehensive communications and marketing plan for eXtension as a whole and to support the individual Communities of Practice for analyzing potential markets, initial characterization of audience need for product and services, and for effectively marketing products and services to targeted users as Communities of Interest.

Applicants should note that eXtension is a Federal-State-Local partnership requiring full cooperation among land-grant institutions, State and county partners, the CES as a whole, and NIFA. The grantee is required to coordinate eXtension activities on behalf of all the CES partners.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application. We anticipate making only one award in this program. Approximately \$1,650,000 is available to fund the program in FY 2011. NIFA will continue to be involved with the funded project and with eXtension, in general, through its representation on the eXtension Governing Committee (ex-officio), Advisory Committees, and various task forces, and through its mentorship to the Communities of Practice. Awards issued as a result of this RFA will have designated the Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP), operated by the Department of Treasury's Financial Management Service, as the payment system for funds. For more information see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/method_of_payment.html.

B. Types of Applications

In FY2011, only new applications may be submitted to the NTAE program. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the NTAE Program. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

Each institution may submit a maximum of one NTAE application.

C. Project Type

In FY 2011, applications should be submitted for a 4-year project period as NIFA anticipates making this award as a continuation grant to reduce the administrative burden to the grant applicants. A continuation grant is an award for which an application is approved, but funds are awarded on an annual basis, subject to the availability of annual appropriations and satisfactory progress of the project.

The award made in FY 2011 will provide approximately \$ 1,650,000 in funds for the first year of this 4-year continuation project.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may be submitted by Extension Directors of 1862 land-grant institutions and 1890 land-grant institutions, including Tuskegee University and West Virginia State University. Only these institutions are eligible to submit an application and receive a NTAE award. Award recipients may subcontract to other organizations provided such organizations are necessary to conduct the project.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

NIFA does not require matching or cost sharing support for this program, and matching resources will not be factored into the review process as evaluation criteria.

C. Statutory Limitation

Statutory limitation for this program is five (5) years. No project may exceed five (5) years duration, including any no cost extensions granted.

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. Applicants are advised to submit early to the Grants.gov system.

New Users of Grants.gov

Prior to preparing an application, it is suggested that the 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 Grant.gov. If the organization is not prepared (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 much 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 “**Get Registered**” on the Grants.gov left navigation bar (or go to http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp) for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov. A quick reference guide listing the steps is available as a 4-page PDF document at the following website: <http://www.grants.gov/section910/Grants.govRegistrationBrochure.pdf>.

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

1. In order to access, complete and submit applications, applicants must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov. This software is essential to apply for NIFA Federal assistance awards. For basic system requirements and download instructions, please see http://www.grants.gov/help/download_software.jsp. To verify that you have a compatible version of Adobe Reader, Grants.gov established a test package that will assist you in making that determination. Grants.gov Adobe Versioning Test Package: <http://www.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp>.
2. The application package must be obtained via Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov>, click on “Apply for Grants” in the left-hand column, click on “**Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Instructions,**” enter the funding opportunity number **USDA-NIFA-OP-003442** in the appropriate box and click “Download Package.” From the search results, click “Download” to access the application package.

Contained within the application package is the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.” 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 assistance is needed to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms), **or submitting the application** then refer to resources available

on the Grants.gov Web site first (<http://www.grants.gov/>). Grants.gov assistance is also available as follows:

Grants.gov customer support

Toll Free: 1-800-518-4726

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on [Federal Holidays](#).

Email: support@grants.gov

See <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html> for additional resources for applying electronically.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Electronic applications should be prepared following Parts V and VI of the document entitled “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.” This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed in order 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., portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the Guide. ANY PROPOSALS CONTAINING NON-PDF DOCUMENTS WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. With documented prior approval, resubmitted applications will be accepted until close of business on the closing date in the RFA.

If you do not own PDF-generating software, Grants.gov provides online tools to assist applicants. Users will find a link to “Convert Documents to PDF” on <http://grants.gov/assets/PDFConversion.pdf>.

For any questions related to the preparation of an application please review the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide and the applicable request for applications. 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, 7:00 am – 5:00 pm Eastern Time, 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.

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

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 3. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

3. R&R Other Project Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail 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 NTAE.

b. Field 8. Project Narrative.

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed **20** pages of written text regardless of whether it is single or double spaced and up to **10** additional pages for figures and tables. This maximum (**20** pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

(1) **Introduction:** Describe past and current involvement with eXtension.

(2) **Objectives and Procedures:** Discuss planned procedures for achieving each NTAE objective (listed in Part I, B.). For each task, identify key personnel involved, and timelines for achieving milestones. Where appropriate, describe how planned procedures align with the eXtension Business Case and the 2008-2011 eXtension Long-Range Implementation Plan published at <http://about.extension.org/wiki/Planning> and the draft 2011-2014 Cooperative Extension & eXtension Strategic Management Roadmap.

(3) **Collaborators:** List partner institutions and contacts' names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses.

(4) **Evaluation:** Provide a plan for evaluating accomplishments and outcomes that meet each NTAE objective (listed in Part I B.).

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

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

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.

6. R&R Budget

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

The base (yearly) salaries for all key personnel should be included in the space provided on the budget form.

7. Supplemental Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part VI, 1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 2. Program Code. Enter the program code name (i.e., enter “New Technologies for Ag Extension”) and the program code (i.e., enter “AA-R”).

C. Submission Dates and Times

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 COB on **June 17, 2011** (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

Applicants who have problems with the submission of an application to Grants.gov are encouraged to 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.

Correspondence regarding submitted applications will be sent using e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received correspondence **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 30 days of the established deadline, please contact the Program Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable 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, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

Pursuant to Section 1473 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended, 7 U.S.C. 3319, indirect costs are not allowable costs under section 3(d) projects, and no funds will be approved for this purpose. Further, costs that are a part of an institution’s indirect cost pool (e.g., administrative or clerical salaries) may not be reclassified as direct costs for the purpose of making them allowable.

NIFA has determined that grant funds awarded under this authority 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.

The use of grant funds to plan, acquire, or construct a building or facility is not allowed under this program. With prior approval, and in accordance with the cost principles set forth in 2 CFR part 220 (Circular No. A-21), some grant funds may be used for minor alterations, renovations, or

repairs deemed necessary to retrofit existing teaching or research spaces in order to carry out a funded project. However, requests to use grant funds for such purposes must demonstrate that the alterations, renovations, or repairs are essential to achieving the major purpose of the project. Grant funds may not be used for endowment investing.

E. Other Submission Requirements

The applicant should follow the submission requirements noted in the document entitled “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.”

Described below are the requirements for successful submission of an application, all of the following steps must be met for an application to be considered for peer review:

- 1) Meeting the deadline: To electronically send the application to Grants.gov the submit button is hit, which triggers a date and time stamp on the application. The date and time stamp is used to determine whether the application was received by Grants.gov before the deadline, which is prior to close of business (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time) on June 17, 2011. An application submitted or resubmitted after the deadline is late. Consideration of late applications is only given in extenuating circumstances (e.g., natural disasters, confirmed Grants.gov outage) with proper documentation and support of the Agency Contact (see Part VII). The occurrence of one of these situations does not automatically ensure that a late application will be accepted. If an applicant wants a late application considered under an extenuating circumstance, the applicant should contact the Agency Contact accordingly.
- 2) Successful Grants.gov validation: The Grants.gov system performs a limited check of the application, and applicants are notified by Grants.gov of the outcome of the initial review. Applications meeting Grants.gov requirements are made available to the funding agency for further processing. Applications that fail Grants.gov validation may be resubmitted to Grants.gov if the original agency deadline has not passed. (Note that the Grants.gov system may allow applications to be submitted after the deadline has passed, but the application is considered late by NIFA.)
- 3) Successful Agency validation: NIFA staff perform precursory review of the application. The agency validation process includes, for example, meeting eligibility requirements and following agency application guidelines (e.g., formatting, page limitations, limits on budget requests). Applicants are notified by NIFA of the outcome of this review.

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

Each application will be evaluated in a two-part process. First, the application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in Part IV of this RFA. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel of peers. Reviewers may include State Extension Directors and/or Administrators, Deans of Agriculture at land-grant institutions, and NIFA National Program Leaders. To avoid potential conflicts of interest, the Agency will invite reviewers who have been minimally involved with the existing eXtension Governing Committee and current eXtension implementation activities.

Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) 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; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the 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) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application. Based on the peer panel's review, the Agency Contact listed in Part VII makes the final recommendations for award to the Authorized Departmental Officer who issues the notice of award.

B. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria below will be equally weighted in reviewing applications submitted in response to this RFA:

1. Planned procedures align with the eXtension Business Case and the 2008 - 2011 eXtension Long-Range Implementation Plan published at <http://about.extension.org/wiki/Planning> and the draft 2011-2014 Cooperative Extension & eXtension Strategic Management Roadmap that is available upon request from the NIFA Agency Contact listed in Part VII;
2. Objectives, procedures, and budget focus on eXtension infrastructure priorities stipulated in Part I, B. of this RFA;
3. Evidence concerning inclusive partnerships with the institutions and State Extension Services currently participating in eXtension; and
4. Capacity of staff to manage proposed project, including subcontracts, and deliver proposed outcomes according to the timelines provided and within the budget requested.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer 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 shall be determined by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 6400 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 648, Falls Church, Virginia 22042. Phone: (703) 532-2300. Web site: <http://www.hepinc.com>.

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. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one time basis, with updates on an as needed basis, as part of the responsibility determination 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. NIFA will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the preaward process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which 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).

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of NIFA shall make awards to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the awarding official of NIFA as the effective date of the award 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. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the effective date of the award, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds awarded by NIFA under this RFA shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are awarded in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the applicable Department's assistance regulations (e.g., parts 3015 and 3019 of 7 CFR).

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the following:

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the Director has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;
- (2) Title of project;
- (3) Name(s) and institution(s) of PDs chosen to direct and control approved activities;
- (4) Identifying award number assigned by the Department;
- (5) Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring recompetition for funds;
- (6) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Director during the project period;
- (7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;
- (8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;
- (9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> to view NIFA award terms and conditions);
- (10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and

(11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by NIFA to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

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 include, but are not limited to:

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A—USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR Part 331 and 9 CFR Part 121—USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21 and A-122 (2 CFR Parts 220 and 230), and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3017—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement).

7 CFR Part 3018—USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3019—USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations (2 CFR Part 215).

7 CFR Part 3021—Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance).

7 CFR Part 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3407—NIFA procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

7 CFR 3430—Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Grant Programs--General Grant Administrative Provisions.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute) —prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in Federally assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq. —Bayh Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

Grantees are to submit initial project information and annual summary reports to NIFA's electronic, Web-based inventory system that facilitates both grantee submissions of project outcomes and public access to information on Federally-funded projects. The details of these reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Gregory Crosby, National Program Leader, eXtension, USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture; Mail Stop 2210, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-2210; telephone: (202) 401-6050; fax: (202) 401-1706; e-mail: gcrosby@nifa.usda.gov.

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access to Review Information

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, the awardee 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 Project Plans

a. The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.

b. Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.

c. Changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes.

d. Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

e. Changes in Project Period: The project period may be extended by NIFA without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed five years. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the awardee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of award.

f. Changes in Approved Budget: Changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes if the revision will involve

transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

C. 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 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. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of three years. Other copies will be destroyed. 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.

D. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

E. Definitions

Please refer to 7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Grant Programs--General Grant Administrative Provisions, for the applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.