

RANGELAND RESEARCH PROGRAM

2012 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: July 30, 2012



U.S. Department of Agriculture

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

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

Rangeland Research Program

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

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

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on **July 30, 2012 (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 of Food and Agriculture; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: Policy@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 Rangeland Research Program RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA announces the availability of grant funds and requests applications for the **Rangeland Research Program (RRP)** for fiscal year (FY) 2012 to support rangeland research. The anticipated amount available for support of this program in FY 2012 is approximately \$897,000.

This notice identifies the objectives for RRP projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a RRP 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

Section 1480 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended [7 USC 3333(a)(1)] which authorizes the Secretary, acting through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), to establish a competitive grants program for rangeland research.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The goal of the RRP is to contribute to the improvement of U.S. rangeland resources and the ecosystem services they provide by supporting the development of new and emerging rangeland science methodologies which specifically address the interrelationships between multiple disciplines.

Priorities for the RRP build on existing knowledge from the *Conservation Benefits of Rangeland Practices: Assessment, Recommendations, and Knowledge Gaps*

(<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/technical/nra/ceap/?&cid=stelprdb1045811>). The RRP is responsive to recommendations from the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board (NAREEEAB), and stakeholder listening and input sessions held at the annual meetings of the Society for Range Management, Northeast Pasture Consortium, and Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative.

The RRP directly aligns with the Research, Education, and Economics Action Plan (http://www.ree.usda.gov/ree/news/USDA_REE_Action_Plan_02-2012_2.pdf) and specifically addresses Goal 3 – Sustainable Use of Natural Resources by 1. Funding research that will develop outcomes for decision-makers that lead to sustainable rangeland watershed health and function in response to management and natural disturbances (Subgoal A); and 2. Develop knowledge to understand the adaptation requirements of forage-based livestock systems to a wide array of rangeland management challenges including drought, animal health, market forces and other forms of risk (Subgoal B).

The primary purpose of RRP is to provide U.S. agricultural producers, rural landowners, and land managers with integrated science strategies at relevant spatial and temporal scales to make informed land management decisions with an emphasis on enhancing the restoration and sustainable integrity of U.S. rangelands.

Applications are being solicited for the FY 2012 Rangeland Research Program in the following focused **Emphasis Areas (address only ONE)**:

(1) **Rangeland Restoration** – emphasis on evaluating the optimal combination of management methodologies and technologies that result in the *establishment*, after drastic disturbance, of functional plant communities providing the products and services desired from rangeland ecosystems. The focus should be placed on research integrated with outreach to restore degraded rangeland, enhance overall soil quality, increase biomass productivity, retain and enlarge wildlife

habitat, reduce fire risks, limit the spread of invasive species, and improve water and air quality at the watershed or landscape scale.

(2) **Management of Rotational Grazing** – identification and evaluation of specific management elements that influence the effectiveness of rotational grazing on rangeland at appropriate management scales. Management decisions can be informed by a better understanding of the spatial variability of rangeland pastures, variable climate, animal behavior, grazing activity, and use of information technology and spatial monitoring in livestock systems, among other contributions to improve pasture utilization.

C. Program Area Description

Agricultural producers, rural landowners, and land managers must employ science-based strategies with the primary goal of enhancing the sustainable integrity of rangelands. Managing complex rangelands subject to today's demands for products and services requires integrated strategies from several scientific disciplines. Highly focused, traditional approaches have been proven insufficient to generate workable solutions to current environmental issues. Rangeland research that informs appropriate, science-based decisions on rangelands requires collaboration that inspires innovation. Rangeland research should employ a methodology that integrates approaches to discover, understand, and address phenomena that are too broad to be explained by standard disciplinary science.

Through these projects, NIFA intends to: (a) increase public understanding and involvement in community decision-making for rangeland resources; and (b) facilitate development and application of recommendations and tools to improve public policy. The RRP will support projects that facilitate the appropriate application of tools and techniques to strengthen awareness of the impacts of current and proposed land use activities on rangeland resources. NIFA expects project outcomes and impacts to describe changes in knowledge, action, and conditions for targeted audiences. The RRP encourages multidisciplinary teams that represent different types of eligible institutions. Successful applicants will document success with multidisciplinary research projects and with collaborative rangeland research efforts.

Successful RRP applications will:

- Clearly document the experience level of key personnel working within a collaborative, integrated rangeland research framework;
- Involve novel or non-traditional partners (e.g., non-governmental organizations, public or private foundations, social scientists or psychologists) to move programs toward improved rangeland management and promote behavior change in stakeholders;
- Demonstrate capacity to conduct efficient and successful integrated rangeland research projects;
- Develop multidisciplinary research projects which result in an enhanced land and resource management knowledge base; and
- Conceptualize and implement research projects that support the purpose and goals of RRP:
 - Identify key knowledge gaps within the emphasis areas listed in Part I (B);
 - Provide solutions to eliminate these knowledge gaps; and

- Demonstrate the ability to provide information to better inform policy makers in developing the most equitable multi-state and/or regional strategies for rangeland enhancement for the long-term knowledge base.

Emphasis Area 1 - Rangeland Restoration:

Degraded rangeland ecosystems typically have reduced control over essential hydrologic and nutrient cycling processes once the biotic component is damaged. These rangelands contain low levels of soil carbon and experience reduced biomass production to increase carbon storage. Degradation can be the result of inappropriate management, especially during extended periods of drought. Degraded symptoms include sparse vegetation cover, dominance of undesirable species, low soil quality, or, in the extreme, accelerated soil surface erosion. Often degraded rangelands require amelioration of these physico-chemical limitations by improving soil surface protection, improving infiltration capacity, reducing erosion, and increasing the water and nutrient holding capacity. The recovery and maintenance of these processes are key to sustaining rangeland ecosystems. Maintaining the proper functioning of these processes will require vegetation development, including establishment and persistence, focused on the eventual accomplishment of management objectives.

In many arid and semi-arid rangelands, costs of restoration could far exceed the potential returns from livestock production, enhanced wildlife habitat or other ecosystem services. However, recent issues about catastrophic fire and reduction of fire return intervals have once again focused attention on appropriate rangeland restoration. Restoration difficulties include: 1) some restoration technologies are unreliable in environments where precipitation is unpredictable; 2) more mesic rangelands often are occupied by invasive species, which may be native or exotic; and 3) technologies for managing invasive species to increase biodiversity, increase carbon storage, reduce erosion, and lengthen fire return intervals on rangelands are expensive and require significant investment as well as careful post-treatment management.

Applicants for **Emphasis Area 1** MUST address the following:

Identification of the key **hydrologic, geomorphic, and ecological conditions needed to restore** the structure and function of rangeland ecosystems impacted by disturbance (fire, invasive weeds, inappropriate grazing).

AND

How do **social, cultural, economic, and/or institutional factors hinder or promote implementation** of existing hydrologic, geomorphic, and ecological knowledge? For example, how institutional factors like the requirement to reseed non-natives following fire during the hottest part of the summer, or a requirement to reseed with species that are directly competitive to natives; significantly alters the restoration success.

Emphasis Area 2 – Management of Rotational Grazing:

Recently, Briske et al. (2008) [Briske, D.D., J. D. Derner, J. R. Brown, S. D. Fuhlendorf, W. R. Teague, K. M. Havstad, R. L. Gillen, A. J. Ash, and W. D. Willms. 2008. *Rotational Grazing on Rangelands: Reconciliation of Perception and Experimental Evidence*. *Rangeland Ecol. Manage.* 61:3–17] synthesized experimental evidence documenting that rotational grazing is not superior to continuous grazing on rangelands. At the same time, rotational grazing continues to be promoted and implemented. Briske et al. (2008) offered three broad arguments for the continued perception of success with rotational grazing: 1) context—that grazing research has not adequately assessed the effects of grazing at large scales; 2) conservation goals—that there has not yet been a comprehensive accounting of the conservation effects associated with the large-scale adoption of grazing systems. The majority of grazing experiments have not collected the appropriate variables, appropriate scale, to evaluate environmental quality and conservation issues; and 3) involvement of human dimensions—that the interface between human dimensions and grazing systems (e.g., managerial emphasis) represents a major source of inconsistent interpretations regarding the potential benefits of grazing systems. Variables in a traditional management scheme include number of animals (stocking rate, stocking density), kind (species) and class (category) of animal, and spatial and temporal forage demand, supply and quality. Conceptual frameworks recently were developed to expand beyond the traditional grazing methodologies requiring innovative research that includes the application of adaptive management considerations, and fully integrating multi-scale measurements (e.g., applying emerging precision agriculture technologies) to develop model-supported and feedback-driven grazing prescriptions, and animal systems that control both diet and large-scale selection of pasture locations.

Applicants for **Emphasis Area 2** MUST address the following:

Identification of the key management-related elements (e.g., whether spatial data can predict rangeland livestock behavior) that could improve pasture utilization and the productivity of livestock systems on a sustainable basis beyond traditional grazing methods.

All Project Directors (PDs) funded in the Rangeland Research Program are expected to participate in the annual PD’s meeting held at the Society for Range Management (SRM) annual meetings. Reasonable travel expenses may be requested as part of the project budget.

Award recipients are expected to provide copies of published and unpublished annual reports to the NIFA National Program Leader for Rangeland and Grassland Ecosystems (see Part VII Agency Contacts). Support provided by NIFA funding should be recognized in these publications.

RRP encourages projects that develop content and programs suitable for delivery through the Cooperative Extension System’s eXtension Initiative. Funds may be used to contribute to existing Communities of Practice (CoP) or to form a new CoP focused on Rangeland Stewardship and Health. Projects must align with the extension vision, mission, and values. A letter of acknowledgement from extension is required, and a letter of support may be required from one or more of the Communities of Practice. For detailed guidance on how to partner with extension, go to <http://create.extension.org/node/2057>.

Contribution to Rangeland Ecological Site Descriptions (ESDs) and State and Transition (S&T) Models:

In order to help focus their research, applicants who are likely to generate new knowledge that is relevant to the dynamics or management of grassland and/or scrubland are strongly encouraged to consult appropriate ESDs and the associated S&T conceptual models. These models are increasingly used by Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), the Department of Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U. S. Forest Service (USFS) to guide the application of management practices. The appropriate ESDs can be identified using soil surveys together with on-site soil verification at your proposed study sites, or by contacting the NRCS State Rangeland Management Specialist. Further information is available at the following website: <http://usda-ars.nmsu.edu/esd/esdIntro.html>. As appropriate, successful applicants are strongly encouraged to recommend changes to ESDs based on the results of their research to the NRCS team responsible for reviewing potential changes. Where S&T models do not exist, opportunities may exist to contribute to their development.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The RRP awards research grants. However, there is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. Approximately \$897,000 is available to fund applications in FY 2012.

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 FY 2012, applications may be submitted to the **Rangeland Research Program** as one of the following types of requests:

(1) **New application**. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the RRP Program. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

(2) **Resubmitted application**. This is an application that had previously been submitted to the RRP Program but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (see Response to Previous Review, Part IV). Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

C. Project Types

For FY 2012, a proposal may request no less than \$350,000 and no more than \$500,000 for the total budget including all indirect costs. Project periods may range from 1 to 3 years. The statutory time limitation for awards issued under this authority is five years. No award may exceed this statutory time limitation. NIFA anticipates up to 2 awards may be made.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Pursuant to Section 1480 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended [7 USC 3333(a)(1)] applications may be submitted by land-grant colleges and universities, State agricultural experiment stations, and colleges, universities, and Federal laboratories having a demonstrable capacity in rangeland research, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. An applicant's failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of an application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

Pursuant to Section 1480 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 as amended [7 USC 3333(b)(1)], applicants are required to provide 50 percent matching funds from non-federal sources for all proposed Federal funds sought in the application. Non-federal matching contributions, such as cash and third party in kind, are accepted under this program as qualified by 7 USC 3015 and 7 USC 3019. Foregone indirect costs cannot be used as part of the required match.

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 Grants.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/assets/Grants.govRegistrationBrochure.pdf>. Item 2. below mentions the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.” Part II.1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide contains additional explanatory language regarding the registration process.

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-003868** 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
1-800-518-4726 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: Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7:00 A.M. - 9:00 P.M. ET). Get help now!

Please have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov, to help expedite your inquiry:

- Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
- Name of Agency You Are Applying To
- Specific Area of Concern

See http://grants.gov/applicants/app_help_reso.jsp or <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 THAT ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS (i.e., content format, pdf file format, file name restrictions, and no password protected files) WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. With documented prior approval, subsequent submissions of an application 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/help/download_software.jsp#pdf_conversion_programs.

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. SF 424 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 the RRP. 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.

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 5 additional pages for figures and tables. This maximum (25 pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

- i) Introduction. A clear statement of the long-term goal(s) and supporting objectives or research questions of the proposed project should be included. Summarize the body of knowledge or other past activities that substantiate the need for the proposed project. Describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed project including the work of key project personnel. Preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed research should be included in this section. In addition, this section should include in-depth information on the following:
 - a. Estimates of the magnitude of the issues and their relevance to stakeholders and to ongoing State-Federal rangeland research programs;
 - b. Role of the stakeholders in problem identification, planning, and implementation and evaluation;
 - c. Reasons for having the work performed at the proposing institution.
- ii) Objectives. Include clear, concise, and logically arranged statements of specific aims of the proposed effort.

iii) Rationale and Significance. Describe the rationale behind the proposed research. Document priority-setting processes and stakeholder involvement. Describe how the applications' goals and priorities relate to potential long-range restoration, improvement, and sustainability of U.S. rangelands. Novel ideas or contributions that the proposed project offers should also be discussed in this section.

iv) Methods and Approach. The activities proposed or problems being addressed must be clearly stated and the approaches being applied clearly described. Specifically, this section must include:

- A description of the activities proposed and the sequence in which the activities are to be performed;
- Methods to be used in carrying out the proposed project, including the feasibility of the methods and rationale for their use in the project;
- Expected outcomes;
- Means by which results will be analyzed, assessed, or interpreted;
- Uses for results or products;
- Pitfalls that might be encountered; and
- Mechanisms for reporting research accomplishments and technological interface for disseminating information.

v) Project Timetable. The proposal should outline all important phases as a function of time, year by year, for the entire project, including periods beyond the grant funding period.

vi) Response to Previous Review. This requirement applies to ALL "Resubmitted Applications" as described under Part II, B., "Types of Applications." PDs must respond to the previous review panel summary on no more than one page, titled "RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS REVIEW." The addition of response to previous review is not counted against the text and/or figures and tables page limitations.

c. Field 11. Other Attachments

i) Cooperators and Institutional Units Involved. RRP encourages cooperative, multi-institutional and multidisciplinary applications. Where applicable, identify each institutional unit contributing to the project and designate the lead institution or institutional unit. Clearly define the programmatic roles, responsibilities and budget for each institutional partner.

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. Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide includes information about the individuals for which a Senior/Key Person Profile must be completed, 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.

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.

Matching. RRP grants require matching funds as specified under Part III, B. The budget narrative should include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Written verification means:

(a) 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

(b) 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 ONLY if provided after submission of the application), 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.

The sources and amount of all matching support from outside the applicant institution should be summarized on a separate page and placed as part of the Budget Narrative. All pledge agreements must be placed in the proposal immediately following the summary of matching support.

The value of applicant contributions to the project shall be established in accordance with applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circular A-21 (2 CFR Part 220), Cost Principles for Educational Institutions, for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs. **All contributions, including cash and third party in-kind, must meet the criteria included in section 23 of 7 CFR 3019, “Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-profit Organizations.”**

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 to which you are applying. Enter the program code name (“**Rangeland Research Program**”) and the program code (“**VK**”).

b. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List. See Part VI, 1.6 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

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 **July 30, 2012 (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

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.

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 and tuition remission are not allowable** and no funds will be approved for this purpose.

Pursuant to section 1472(c) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 USC 3318(c)), **the agency may not grant any extension of time beyond five years, regardless of circumstances.**

E. Other Submission Requirements

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

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

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

Each application will be evaluated in a 2-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

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.

B. Evaluation Criteria

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

General criteria to be used to award applications: Total Value 50%

1. Relevancy of the application to the goals and purpose of RRP: Value 25%

- Demonstrated ability to develop new scientific methodologies and innovations that transcend standard disciplinary science;
- Relevancy to integrated rangeland science discipline and to specific goals, purpose, and priorities of RRP;
- Quality of stakeholder process(es) by which priorities were identified;
- Evidence of stakeholder involvement in development of proposed research;
- Level of involvement of stakeholders and social science aspects in the conduct of research; and
- Demonstrated capability to implement a technology transfer component.

2. Coordination component of the application: Value 25%

- Documented experience in nationally coordinated rangeland research projects involving a national priority setting process; and
- Well defined proposal timelines and budget to complete project with effective results.

Specific criteria to be used to award applications: Total Value 50%

1. Scientific Merit of the Application for Research: Value 25%

- Novelty, innovation, uniqueness, and originality;
- Clarity and delineation of objectives;
- Adequacy of the description of the undertaking and suitability and feasibility of methodology;
- Demonstration of feasibility through preliminary and current data; and
- Probability of success of project.

2. Qualifications of Project Personnel, Adequacy of Facilities, and Project Management Capability: Value 25%

- Qualifications of applicant (PD and team) to conduct the proposed project, including performance record and potential for future accomplishments;
- Collaboration component involving partnerships among Federal agencies, research participants and stakeholders; and
- Documented experience with collaborative, comprehensive rangeland research.

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., 1801 Robert Fulton Drive, Suite 340, Reston, Virginia 20191. Phone: (888) 349-7715. 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 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 awarding official of NIFA 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. It should be noted that 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 shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's assistance regulations (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 PD's 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:

2 CFR Part 220 – Cost Principles for Educational Institutions (OMB Circular A-21).

2 CFR Part 225 – Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments (OMB Circular A-87).

2 CFR Part 230 – Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-122).

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, A-87, and A-122, now codified at 2 CFR Parts 220, 225 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 3016 – USDA Implementation of Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments.

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—USDA Implementation of Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants).

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

7 CFR Part 3407—USDA 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 and 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. Details of annual and final technical reporting requirements also are included in the award terms and conditions.

Additional annual reports may be requested to provide timely information for the Secretary of Agriculture and Congress. The NPL will request additional reports as needed.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT



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or **Mr. Greg Sixt**, Program Specialist, Division of Environmental Systems, Institute of Bioenergy, Climate, and Environment; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2210; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2210; Telephone: (202) 401-3353; Fax: (202) 401-1706; E-mail: gsixt@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. 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 any applicable statutory limit or expiring appropriation limitation. 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: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, 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 applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.

In addition, the following definitions specifically apply to this RFA:

Adoption-outreach is the expansion of knowledge and behavior through a complex set of stages that might include moving from no knowledge of the issues or denial, through issue acceptance without commitment, critical reflection with careful planning, visible altering of behavior, and sustained behavior change.

Limited resource farmers and ranchers have direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous 2 years; and who has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous 2 years. An entity or joint operation can be a Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher if all individual members independently qualify.

Range embraces rangelands and also many forest lands which support an understory or periodic cover of herbaceous or shrubby vegetation amenable to certain range management principles or practices.

Rangeland is land on which the native vegetation is predominantly grasses, grass-like plants, forbs or shrubs suitable for grazing or browsing, recreational uses coupled with the delivery of appropriate ecosystem services. Rangelands include natural grassland, savannas, most deserts, tundra, alpine plant communities, coastal marshes, wet meadows and introduced plant communities managed like rangeland.