

Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grants Program

2012 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: June 1, 2012



U.S. Department of Agriculture

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

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

SMITH-LEVER SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAM

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 1, 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 Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grants Program RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grants Program (SLSNCGP) for fiscal year (FY) 2012 to decrease the impact of disasters through cooperative extension programming. The amount available for support of this program in FY 2012 is approximately \$462,000.

This notice identifies the objectives for SLSNCGP projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a SLSNCGP 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 7129 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (FCEA), re-authorized Section 3(b) & (c) of the Smith–Lever Act, allowing the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), to conduct competitive grant programs to State Extension Services at 1862 Land-Grant Institutions to support innovative, education-based approaches to addressing emergency preparedness and specific responses related to natural and man-made disasters.

In accordance with the statutory authority, subject to the availability of funds, the Secretary of Agriculture may make competitive grants, for a period not to exceed five (5) years.

B. Purpose and Priorities

There has been an increase in public awareness regarding the number and severity of disaster type critical incidents involving earthquakes, tsunamis, tornadoes, wildfire, drought, contagious disease, and terrorist events. The National Academy of Sciences Committee on Environment and Natural Resources and the Subcommittee on Disaster Reduction of the National Science and Technology Council have acknowledged the many effective roles that the Cooperative Extension System (CES) has played in disaster preparedness, response and remediation.

Within the states and territories, the CES has repeatedly served as the trusted community organization that has helped to enable families, communities, and businesses to successfully prepare for, respond to and cope with disaster losses and critical incidents. Once a disaster has occurred, the local extension outreach includes: 1) Communicating practical science-based risk information, 2) Developing relevant educational experiences and programs, 3) Working with individuals and communities to open new communication channels, and 4) Mitigating losses and facilitating recovery. Never was this more evident than after hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma in 2005 and during the 2008 Midwestern Summer flooding. During and after these incidents, local Extension agents served as a critical communication node throughout affected urban and rural areas, particularly when traditional communication systems were temporarily overwhelmed or destroyed.

Applications are being solicited for the SLSNCGP under the following areas:

Education and Technical assistance through inter-disciplinary and multi-state disaster training programs and demonstration projects for problem solving, especially those which build upon already existing strengths, contribute to or expand the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) and/or eXtension educational materials related to disaster preparation, mitigation, response and recovery;

Collaboration with Federal, state and local agencies and other disaster relief organizations to support education and service activities that enhance recovery of impacted rural communities, schools, businesses and agricultural-based activities;

Long range family, community and regional planning projects that will enhance implementation of programs that serve public needs in preparation for, during and after emergency situations within impacted States and across impacted regions;

Communication delivery of key information that meets end-users' needs in a timely fashion with consideration of potentially limited communication channels due to disaster situations; and

Dissemination of credible, science-based information that is reliable and easily accessible even if electronic access is compromised. When appropriate, NIFA encourages collaboration with the 1890 and 1994 Land Grant Universities.

C. Program Area Description

Fundable projects should support extension activities through one or more of the following strategies:

1. Enhance regional/national networks that add value to official information by delivering it:
 - In an audience and situation appropriate format
 - In a timely fashion
 - Coupled with appropriate and existing research based information
2. Provide regional/national education and communications leadership to develop or add value to current educational materials regarding disaster issues, utilizing the proper distribution mix of the [Extension Disaster Education Network](#) (EDEN) website, [eXtension](#), related social media, and/or other outlets.
3. Improve regional/national stakeholder partnerships (which might include the public, governments at all levels, non-profit and/or volunteer organizations, academia, and/or industry) across traditional boundaries to decrease the impact of disasters through extension education.
4. As a result of a major declared disaster that occurred no more than 12 months prior to the application due date of this RFA; deliver extension education to affected citizens and communities, in one or more states, to decrease the impact of that disaster.

NIFA intends to fund Special Needs projects to implement applied scientific programs that serve public needs in preparation for, during and after local or regional emergency situations. Though national, regional, and multi-state efforts are a priority for categories 1-3, highly replicable single-state projects may be considered if they have a strong plan for transferring successful methods to other states. Extension Special Needs will also fund the development of educational programs and demonstration activities focusing on disaster preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery. Successful projects in the past have helped extension educators, who normally do not have a disaster extension focus, to have a greater impact in this area when called upon.

Extension Special Needs has supported human science program development in disaster preparedness that increases knowledge, understanding and capacity to respond to disasters in urban and rural communities. Applications that bring timely CES engagement to bear on specific human needs related to emergency response and recovery, individual safety, and personal/public health and well-being will be considered. Applications that support education and service activities that provide and support local recovery efforts for impacted rural communities, schools, businesses and agriculture-based activities will also be considered.

Proposals are welcomed that add new or build upon existing web-based educational materials on the [Extension Disaster Education Network](http://www.eden.lsu.edu/) (EDEN) at <http://www.eden.lsu.edu/>. This platform is ideal for staff development. Also, disaster preparedness and mitigation proposals intended for end users that contributes to and expand upon the current offerings of the [Agrosecurity and Floods eXtension Community of Practice](http://www.extension.org/disasters) (see <http://www.extension.org/disasters>) will be considered. It is recommended that applicants contact the EDEN executive committee and/or the appropriate community of practice during proposal formulation to solicit support and guidance. The most competitive proposals will provide educational and communication leadership across an optimized mix of these and other resources.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

Grants will be awarded to successful applicants. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. NIFA anticipates approximately \$462,000 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 SLSNCGP 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 Special Needs 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 Special Needs Program but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary. 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

Special Needs projects have typically ranged from \$30,000 to \$120,000 in award size, however, the amount requested may vary depending on geographic scope of the project (single state, multi-state, regional, or national) and the urgency of the need(s) being addressed by the proposed project. For FY 2012, **applications may be submitted for project periods of up to five (5) years**. The Project Types is Special Needs Program encourages applications that specifically address one or more of the following five (5) key target areas:

1. **Education and Technical assistance**
2. **Collaboration**
3. **Long range family, community and regional planning**
4. **Communication delivery and/or**
5. **Dissemination of credible, science-based information.**

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may be submitted with the approval of Extension Directors of 1862 Land-grant Institutions in the 50 states, American Samoa, Guam, Micronesia, Northern Marianas, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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 rules and policies governing Section 3(b) & (c) of the Smith–Lever Act, as amended through Public Law 107-293, no allotment shall be made to a State under subsection (b) or (c), and no payments from the allotment shall be made to a State, in excess of the amount that the State makes available out of non-Federal funds for cooperative extension work.

1. To comply with the matching requirements of the Special Needs Program, applicants are required to provide 100 percent matching funds from non-federal sources for all proposed federal funds sought in the application. **In-kind and third party contributions are not allowed for the Smith-Lever Special Needs program.** Grant awards cannot be issued until ALL required matching has been documented and verified.
2. Matching Exception.— Insular Areas: In lieu of the matching funds requirement, the insular areas of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands of the United States shall provide matching funds from non-Federal sources in an amount equal to not less than 50 percent of the grants awarded. The Secretary may waive this matching fund requirement for any fiscal year if the Secretary determines that the government of the insular area will be unlikely to meet the matching requirement for the fiscal year. Insular applicants may submit a waiver request as a PDF attachment to the application (see Part IV., B., 3., b., (1) for specific instructions).

For all projects:

Matching: Applications shall include written verification of commitments of matching support from non-federal sources. Written verification means:

The sources and the amount of all matching support from the applicant organization should be summarized on a separate page and placed in the application as a part of the Budget Justification attachment (see Field K on the Form SF 424 (R&R) Budget Fed/NonFed). Include the matching amount, the budget category for the match, and detail how the matching support will be used

(e.g., salary and position supported). Additionally, all pledge agreements must be included as a part of the PDF attachment in Field K as well.

The value of applicant contributions to the project shall be established in accordance with the applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circulars A-21, Cost Principles for Educational Institutions; A-87, Cost Principles for State, Local, and Tribal Governments; 2 CFR Part 215, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-110); for further guidance and other requirements relating to allowable costs.

Additional Budget Information

For Integrated Research and Extension Planning Projects: The budget for the planning activity may include an appropriate amount for transportation and subsistence costs for participants and for other related costs. Planning awards of federal funds will not exceed \$15,000 and are not renewable. Include an itemized breakdown of all support requested in the Budget Justification (Field K. of the R&R Budget Fed/NonFed).

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/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-SLBCD-003741** 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 and
- 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 SLSNCGP. 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 10 pages of written text regardless of whether it is single or double spaced and up to 4 additional pages for figures and tables. This maximum (14 pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

Introduction: Include information on the following in the order identified:

- Provide background information on and describe the disaster education problem that the project proposes to address;
- Concisely state which of the four program areas the project will address (Enhance regional/national networks; Provide regional/national education and communications leadership, Improve regional/national stakeholder partnerships, Provide single or multi-state educational leadership as a result of a declared disaster); and
- Concisely state the overall goal(s) of the proposed project.

Objectives:

- Present a clear, concise set of project objectives.
- Describe the involvement of stakeholders in developing project objectives and implementing results;
- Describe how this project will build upon or expand related work or programs.

Methods: Describe the procedures for the proposed effort, including:

- i. Techniques and methods to be employed, including their feasibility and rationale for their use in this project, and how they accomplish stated objectives;
- ii. A definition of the target audience and/or end users of project deliverables;
- iii. Timelines for education/extension/planning activities with milestones and verifiable indicators, which demonstrate progress; and
- iv. A narrative describing planned project evaluation, which may refer to a LOGIC model included as an appendix.

c. Field 11. Other Attachments – PDF Attachment

- (1) Waiver Request. In lieu of the matching funds requirement, the insular areas of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands of the United States may attach a waiver request to the application. Waiver requests must clearly demonstrate that the government of the insular area will be unlikely to meet the matching requirement for the fiscal year.
- (2) Appendices to Project Narrative. Appendices to the Project Narrative may be attached if they are directly germane to the proposed project. The addition of appendices should not be used to circumvent the text and/or figures and tables page limitations.

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 (Fed/NonFed)

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 is required for this program; hence, the R&R Budget (Federal and Non-Federal) should be utilized.

If an applicant concludes that matching funds are not required as specified under Part III, B. Cost-sharing or matching, a justification should be included in the budget narrative. NIFA will consider this justification when ascertaining final matching requirements or in determining if required matching can be waived. NIFA retains the right to make final determinations regarding matching requirements.

For those grants requiring 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 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) the dollar amount of the cash donation (the budget narrative must describe how the cash donation will be used on the project); (5) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period; and (6) whether the applicant can designate cash as the applicant deems necessary or the cash contribution has been designated to a particular budget item; 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 in the proposal as part of the Budget Narrative. All pledge agreements must be placed in the proposal immediately following the summary of matching support.

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 (i.e., enter ESNP Special Needs) and the program code (i.e., enter MB).
- 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 June 1, 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. **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

Indirect costs and tuition remission are not allowable and no funds will be approved for these purposes. Costs that are a part of the institution's indirect cost pool may not be reclassified as direct costs for the purpose of making them allowable.

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:

- 1) The proposal is consistent with the Extension Special Need Program's purpose and priorities presented herein and adheres to the submission and format instructions provided in this RFA;
- 2) Demonstrated evidence of urgency/need, size and scope of impact/benefits for existing and future emergency situations, including the human element of citizens and needs within communities;
- 3) Description of educational outreach activities that enhance emergency preparedness, post-disaster relief programs or activities with a focus on rapid recovery and reestablishment through Extension engagement; and
- 4) Demonstrated evidence that the proposed educational components of the project will be relevant educational tools to be implemented by the general public or at the county extension level and for utilization of existing electronic distribution media such as the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) and/or eXtension.

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 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:

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.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact William Hoffman, Ed.D.; Program Director; Program and Analysis Officer; Office of the Director; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; U.S. Department of Agriculture; 305A Whitten Building; 12th Street and Jefferson Drive, SW; Washington, DC 20250; Telephone: 202-401-1112; Fax: 202-720-8987; E-mail: whoffman@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.