

Assistive Technology Program for Farmers with Disabilities: National AgrAbility Project

MODIFICATION on 5/7/2012: SEE PAGE 15 & 18 IN RED.

FY 2012 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: May 17, 2012



U.S. Department of Agriculture

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

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

**ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM FOR FARMERS WITH DISABILITIES:
NATIONAL AGRABILITY PROJECT**

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 **May 17, 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 Assistive Technology Program for Farmers with Disabilities: National AgrAbility Project RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA announces the availability of grant funds and requests applications for the Assistive Technology Program for Farmers with Disabilities: National AgrAbility Project (NAP) for fiscal year (FY) 2012 to increase the likelihood that farmers, ranchers, farm workers or farm family members with disabilities and their farms experience success. The amount available for support of this program in FY 2012 is approximately \$482,400. This amount will be available to fund a single new National AgrAbility Project (NAP).

This notice identifies the objectives for the National AgrAbility Project (NAP), the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed

to apply for the National AgrAbility Project (NAP) 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

The AgrAbility program is authorized under the Smith-Lever Act of May 8, 1914, as amended (7 U.S.C. 341 et seq.) and in Section 1680 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 5933), as amended. Section 7403 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act (FCEA) of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) amends section 3(d) of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 [7 U.S.C. 343(d)] regarding eligibility. The AgrAbility program is funded through the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010 (P.L. 111-80). Beginning in FY 1995, the eligibility to compete for AgrAbility funding was broadened to include 1890 Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, including Tuskegee University and West Virginia State University at any appropriated level. Beginning in FY 2009, the eligibility to compete for AgrAbility funding was further broadened to include the University of the District of Columbia.

B. Purpose and Priorities

AgrAbility increases the likelihood that individuals with disabilities and their families engaged in production agriculture (AgrAbility's customers) become more successful. The program supports cooperative programs in which State Cooperative Extension Services (CES) based at either 1862 or 1890 Land-Grant Universities or the University of the District of Columbia subcontract to private, non-profit disability organizations. Measures of success may include improvements in customers' financial stability or access to life activities and in the capacity of the states and regions to deliver services this population requires in a timely and satisfying manner.

To address the specialized needs of AgrAbility's customers, the program builds service capacity on national, regional, state, and local levels through **education** and **networking**. In the absence of capacity, projects provide **assistance** to customers. The primary function of the National AgrAbility Project is to support the state and regional projects in developing their capacity to meet these objectives. Priority is placed on supporting the annual national AgrAbility workshop and evaluating the impacts and outcomes of the State and Regional AgrAbility programs. AgrAbility Projects use marketing activities to direct the public to initiatives in these three priority areas, described below:

1. Education

Education comprises AgrAbility's long-term investment strategy. The program has particular interest in funding educational activities with the following elements to develop human capital:

- (a) Within the context of production agriculture, learning objectives focus on accommodating disabilities and avoiding secondary injuries in persons with disabilities to ensure sustainable agriculture systems;
- (b) Audience includes health, farm, community and government service providers;

- (c) Delivery formats include eXtension, authoring or adapting printable resources, live presentations taught in-person or remotely, and recorded presentations that may encourage audience interaction;
- (d) Opportunities to engage secondary higher education faculty and students through interdisciplinary practices and special projects; and
- (e) Means to appraise instructive efficacy.

2. Networking

Networking depends on education; but networking will eventually make AgrAbility sustainable. The program has particular interest in funding networking activities with the following elements:

- (a) Objectives encourage the sharing of information among, and the provision of services, value, or funds from, individuals or organizations not employed by AgrAbility;
- (b) Partners include customers, peer supporters, volunteer groups, university student groups, stakeholders, public and private funding organizations and veteran's organizations;
- (c) Delivery formats include the donation of goods and services of direct benefit to AgrAbility customers; and
- (d) Means to appraise economic value of services rendered to AgrAbility and its customers.

3. Assistance

Assistance satisfies customers' immediate needs that are inadequately addressed by health, farm, and government service providers. This program has particular interest in funding assistance activities with the following elements:

- (a) Objectives focus on individualized consultative services that increase the likelihood that AgrAbility Project customers and their farm operations experience success while contributing to overall productive and sustainable agricultural systems;
- (b) Audience includes AgrAbility customers and others working at the same farms;
- (c) Delivery formats include product selection advice, accessibility and ergonomic recommendations, life activities and farm operations planning guidance, and advocacy to obtain service and financial aid. Assistance can occur in person or from a distance; and
- (d) Means to appraise successes experienced following intervention.

4. Marketing

Marketing does not address education, networking, or assistance objectives but may make key audiences aware of an AgrAbility Project and its initiatives. Appropriate marketing activities have the following elements:

- (a) Objectives concentrate on program or project awareness to the exclusion of information required to provide education, assistance, or facilitate networking;
- (b) Audience includes everyone;
- (c) Delivery formats include public appearances with displays and the production or distribution of program awareness materials, press releases, public service announcements,

print advertisements, Web pages with awareness content, newsletters, or electronic notices; and

(d) Means to link these activities with registration, information and consultation requests, and networking successes.

C. Program Area Description

Program Code Name: AgrAbility

Program Code: LQ

In 2012, NAP is soliciting new applications with a four year project period and a maximum budget of \$482,400 per year.

The AgrAbility project 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 farming or ranching with a disability. 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>.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The successful proposal will be funded as a cooperative agreement. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. Approximately \$482,400 is available to fund a single new National AgrAbility Project (NAP) 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 National AgrAbility Project as one of the following types of requests:

(1) New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the National AgrAbility Project. 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 National AgrAbility Project in FY 2008 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

AgrAbility supports two project types, NAP and State and Regional AgrAbility Projects (SRAP's). **Under this announcement, NIFA plans to fund a single NAP in FY 2012. NIFA is not soliciting SRAP proposals under this announcement. Both project types are explained below.**

1. The National AgrAbility Project (NAP)

The NAP has a dual mission. The NAP provides limited, on-demand SRAP-type services in geographic areas without SRAPs. But more significant to the success of the program, the NAP helps SRAPs become more successful at meeting their objectives. Priority is placed on supporting the annual national AgrAbility workshop and evaluating the impacts and outcomes of the AgrAbility program. The NAP typically produces or recommends the education materials or forums, networking tactics, assistance protocols, and marketing products SRAPs adopt for their own use. The NAP connects all SRAPs by: moderating information sharing forums; identifying,

promoting, and addressing opportunities and challenges for AgrAbility; recognizing and capitalizing on economies of scale; and evaluating the program's impacts and outcomes annually.

The national training workshop educates project personnel in addition to the standard education audience. The workshop may serve several roles, including new staff orientation, staff development, forums for discussing pressing issues and project progress, successes and failures, and presentation of reports of interest to the entire program.

Given the primary source of funding for the AgrAbility are Federal funds the NAP should contract with hotels for lodging at or below the Federal per diem rate for the national training workshop and any other meetings that require travel. Teleconferencing, virtual meetings and webinars should be used in place of face-to face meetings whenever possible. Under this cooperative agreement NIFA retains the right to disallow use of NIFA funds for any travel that does not meet these requirements.

All delivery formats, training and educational programs should be marketed as the AgrAbility Project and use the AgrAbility logo (see below). Other branding on any materials produced though this grant requires consent of the NIFA program contact.



2. State and Regional AgrAbility Projects (SRAPs)

NIFA will fund only continuation grants for SRAPs in FY 2012 under a separate announcement. SRAPs operate within a geographic area defined on the basis of counties, states, or both. SRAPs may function independently of each other. States with insufficient potential clientele to merit individual AgrAbility projects may submit regional, multi-state proposals. At a minimum, the CES primary applicant must subcontract to one private, non-profit disability organization. Applicants proposing to serve remote or diverse potential customer populations may wish to form partnerships that include one or more land-grant institutions, non-land-grant institutions, Hispanic-serving institutions, or additional, private non-profit disability organizations to effectively serve the entire qualifying population.

SRAPs receive support from, and submit documentation and reports to, the NAP. NIFA views the relationship between the SRAPs and the NAP as critical to the success of AgrAbility. Prior to applying, applicants should contact the current NAP for detailed information concerning standard operating procedures, best field practices, and access to the NAP's library of AgrAbility-related instructional materials.

SRAP commitments include: attending annual, three-day, national training workshops with at least one representative from each of the primary university and non-profit disability organization partners (2 person minimum); participating in NAP-initiated efforts to collect activity data; and submitting annual and final reports to NIFA. Applicants may request funds to pay for these commitments.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may be submitted by Cooperative Extension at 1890 Land-Grant Institutions, including Tuskegee University and West Virginia State University, at 1862 Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, and the University of the District of Columbia. 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

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

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-003740** 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 National AgrAbility Project. 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 thirty (30) pages of written text regardless of whether it is single or double spaced and up to five (5) additional pages for figures and tables. This maximum (thirty-five (35) pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

(1) Project Justification

- a) Justify the need for the project clearly and concisely by describing the SRAP training needs and lack of services in geographic areas not served by SARP's.
- b) Review current related programs concentrating on limitations this application intends to address.
- c) Justify the applicants' ability to provide these services by detailing the applicants' accomplishments from similar projects.
- d) Describe the SRAP's role in defining the application's scope and their future role in project planning.
- e) Detail the justification and/or reason for selection of the non-profit disability partner.

If a project director is submitting a resubmitted application, they must respond to the previous review panel summary.

(2) Work Plan

- a) NAP objectives must support the SRAP' capacity to fulfill priority areas listed in Part I, B; within the context of the NAP vision enumerated in **Part II, C. 1**. Use an outline format for this section with objectives as primary headings.
- b) Priority is placed on supporting the annual national AgrAbility workshop and evaluating the impacts and outcomes of the SRAP's. Objectives should have measurable outcomes, with quantitative and qualitative evaluation plans. Denote activities required to achieve each objective. Group these activities by the targeted accomplishment year.
- c) Organize the objectives and their activities in a logical sequence, the sum of which must comprise an attainable project within the four-year maximum duration. For example, achievement targets for educational activities in support of the SRAP's.
- d) Under each activity, list expected outcomes and describe the proposed means of evaluating the activity's efficacy and any outcomes' value to the SRAP's and other stakeholders. The plan should allow evaluation results to refine and adjust objectives and activities while informing future plans.
- e) Use a logic model or a summary table at the end of this section to show the relationships between objectives (and the activities designed to attain the objectives), indicators of objective achievement and desired outcomes, and the data sources which will inform evaluations. Thus, this table should have a minimum of three rows, at least one for each objective, and three columns.

(3) Division of Labor

CES and non-profit disability organization components may jointly or individually provide leadership for different objectives. Define the responsibilities of the respective organizations under each objective. For each activity, include time frames, personnel, and their roles. Applicants may consult with SRAPs, or consumer advisory type groups in developing their cooperators' role assignments.

(4) Management Plan

- a) Provide an explanation of how the relationship between the institution and the non-profit disability partner will be managed.
- b) Describe the fiscal and administrative oversight provided by the institution and the non-profit disability partner.
- c) Briefly explain the institution's funds management strategy for funded projects. The funds management outlined in the Management Plan for AgrAbility must comply with all administrative and national policy requirements listed in PART VI, C. of this RFA;
- d) Briefly describe the proposed working relationship with NIFA staff, with a focus on communication, planning, and oversight; and
- e) Provide time lines or Gantt charts to demonstrate the duration and the sequence of project activities. Use varied hatching for different cooperators. Chart against a quarterly scale, so that a schedule should depict no more than 16 quarters.

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.

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 “AgrAbility”) and the program code (i.e., enter “LQ”).
- 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 **May 17, 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

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

NIFA has determined that grant funds awarded under this authority may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or Extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

Unallowable costs include, but are not limited to, the following examples:

1. Entertainment Costs not permitted include banquets, award ceremonies, and meals for persons not traveling on behalf of the project except when provided to maintain the continuity of a meeting, tickets to shows or sporting events, and alcoholic beverages.
2. Awards and Certificates of Achievement are disallowed by OMB Circular, A-21—Cost Principles for Educational Institutions.
3. Facility Costs not permitted include 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.
4. Any expense not directly related to the program or project is considered unallowable. Examples include child-care services, kitchen help hired to prepare refreshments, and promotional or appreciation gifts such as clothing, coffee mugs, or bags.

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) Project Justification (10pts)

- a) Justify the need for the project clearly and concisely by describing the SRAP training needs and lack of services in geographic areas not served by SARP's.
- b) Review current related programs concentrating on limitations this application intends to address.
- c) Justify the applicants' ability to provide these services by detailing the applicants' accomplishments from similar projects.
- d) Describe the SRAP's role in defining the application's scope and their future role in project planning.
- e) Detail the justification and/or reason for selection of the non-profit disability partner.

(2) Work Plan (60pts)

- a) NAP objectives must support the SRAP' capacity to fulfill priority areas listed in Part I, B; within the context of the NAP vision enumerated in **Part II, C. 1**. Use an outline format for this section with objectives as primary headings.
- b) Priority is placed on supporting the annual national AgrAbility workshop and evaluating the impacts and outcomes of the SRAP's. Objectives should have measurable outcomes,

with quantitative and qualitative evaluation plans. Denote activities required to achieve each objective. Group these activities by the targeted accomplishment year.

c) Organize the objectives and their activities in a logical sequence, the sum of which must comprise an attainable project within the four-year maximum duration. For example, achievement targets for educational activities in support of the SRAP's.

d) Under each activity, list expected outcomes and describe the proposed means of evaluating the activity's efficacy and any outcomes' value to the SRAP's and other stakeholders. The plan should allow evaluation results to refine and adjust objectives and activities while informing future plans.

e) Use a logic model or a summary table at the end of this section to show the relationships between objectives (and the activities designed to attain the objectives), indicators of objective achievement and desired outcomes, and the data sources which will inform evaluations. Thus, this table should have a minimum of three rows, at least one for each objective, and three columns.

(3) Division of Labor (10pts)

CES and non-profit disability organization components may jointly or individually provide leadership for different objectives. Define the responsibilities of the respective organizations under each objective. For each activity, include time frames, personnel, and their roles. Applicants may consult with SRAPs, or consumer advisory type groups in developing their cooperators' role assignments.

(4) Management Plan (20pts)

a) Provide an explanation of how the relationship between the institution and the non-profit disability partner will be managed.

b) Describe the fiscal and administrative oversight provided by the institution and the non-profit disability partner.

c) Briefly explain the institution's funds management strategy for funded projects. The funds management outlined in the Management Plan for AgrAbility must comply with all administrative and national policy requirements listed in Part VI, C. of this RFA;

d) Briefly describe the proposed working relationship with NIFA staff, with a focus on communication, planning, and oversight; and

e) Provide time lines or Gantt charts to demonstrate the duration and the sequence of project activities. Use varied hatching for different cooperators. Chart against a quarterly scale, so that a schedule should depict no more than 16 quarters.

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.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Dr. Bradley Rein, Division Director for Agricultural Systems; Institute of Food Production and Sustainability; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2240; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2240; telephone: (202) 401-0151; fax: (202) 401-6488; e-mail: brein@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.