



# **REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS**

## **Special Research Grants for Aquaculture Research Program**

FUNDING YEAR: Fiscal Year (FY) 2024

LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE: Not Required

APPLICATION DEADLINE: April 15, 2024

ANTICIPATED PROGRAM FUNDING: \$1,936,000

AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL AWARD  
RANGE: \$50,000 - \$300,000

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: USDA-NIFA-SRGP-010575

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 10.200

**INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**  
National Institute of Food and Agriculture  
United States Department of Agriculture

**Assistance Listing Number (ALN):** The Special Research Grants for Aquaculture Research program is listed in the Assistance Listings under number 10.200.

**Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines**

Task Description	Deadline
<b>Application:</b>	5:00 P.M. Eastern Time, April 15, 2024
<b>Letter of Intent:</b>	Not Required
<b>Applicants Comments:</b>	Within six months from the issuance of this notice <i>(NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month)</i>

**Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA).** The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) recognizes research, education, and extension efforts will have the greatest impacts when programs are grounded in DEIA. NIFA is committed to enhancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility of programs and encourages individuals, institutions, and organizations from underserved communities to apply to funding opportunities as lead, co-lead, or subaward recipient(s), and to engage as leaders in the peer panel review process to support the development of strong networks and collaborations. NIFA encourages applications that engage diverse communities and have broad impacts through research, education, extension, and integrated activities to address current and future challenges.

**Stakeholder Input.** NIFA seeks comments on all Request for Applications (RFA) so it can deliver programs efficiently, effectively, with integrity, and with a focus on customer service. NIFA considers comments to the extent possible when developing RFAs, and uses comments to help meet the requirements of Section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 ([7 U.S.C. 7613\(c\)\(2\)](#)). Applicants may submit written comments to [Policy@usda.gov](mailto:Policy@usda.gov). Please use the following subject line: Response to the Special Research Grants for Aquaculture Research program RFA.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This RFA is being released prior to the passage of a full appropriations act for FY 2024. Enactment of a continuing resolution, appropriations act, or other authorizing legislation may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.

NIFA requests applications for the Special Research Grants for Aquaculture Research competitive grants program for fiscal year (FY) 2024. The amount available for grants in FY2024 is approximately \$1.936 million. If this program receives appropriated funds in FY2025, meritorious projects identified in the FY2024 competition that were not able to receive support in FY2024 may be supported using FY2025 funds. In this case, a separate RFA may not be issued for the FY2025 funds.

This program funds applied aquaculture research projects to address issues related to:  
1) Genetics of commercial aquaculture species; 2) Critical disease issues impacting commercial aquaculture species; 3) Design of environmentally and economically sustainable commercial aquaculture production systems; 4) Development of climate resilient technologies, production systems, and/or management strategies for commercial aquaculture species; or 5) Economic research for increasing commercial aquaculture profitability.

This notice identifies the objectives for Special Research Grants for Aquaculture Research Program projects, deadlines, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions.

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## **PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION**

### **A. Legislative Authority**

The authority for the Special Research Grants for Aquaculture Research competitive grants program is contained in the Competitive, Special, and Facilities Research Grant Act, Pub. L. No. 89-106, as amended ([7 USC 3157 \(c\)\(1\)\(A\)](#)).

### **B. Purpose and Priorities**

The purpose of the Special Research Grants for Aquaculture Research program (Assistance Listing Number 10.200) is to support the development of an environmentally and economically sustainable aquaculture industry in the United States by generating new, science-based information and technology to address industry constraints. Applied research is needed to develop practical solutions that will facilitate growth and remove limitations to expansion of the United States aquaculture industry. Results of projects supported by this program are intended to help improve the profitability of the United States aquaculture industry, reduce the 17-billion-dollar United States seafood trade deficit, increase domestic food security, expand markets for United States-produced products, and provide more jobs for rural and coastal America.

Applications must:

1. Directly address major constraints to the United States aquaculture industry; and
2. Focus on one or more of the following Program Area Priorities:
  - a. Genetics of commercial aquaculture species;
  - b. Critical disease issues impacting commercial aquaculture species;
  - c. Design of environmentally and economically sustainable commercial aquaculture production systems;
  - d. Development of climate resilient technologies, production systems, and/or management strategies for commercial aquaculture species; or
  - e. Economic research for increasing commercial aquaculture profitability.

The Special Research Grants for Aquaculture Research program is aligned with the following: [USDA Strategic Plan FY 2022-2026](#) goals:

1. **Strategic Goal 1:** Combat Climate Change to Support America's Working Lands, Natural Resources, and Communities
2. **Strategic Goal 2:** Ensure America's Agricultural System is Equitable, Resilient, and Prosperous
3. **Strategic Goal 3:** Foster and Equitable and Competitive Marketplace for All Agricultural Producers
4. **Strategic Goal 4:** Provide All Americans Safe, Nutritious Food
5. **Strategic Goal 5:** Expand Opportunities for Economic Development and Improve Quality of Life in Rural and Tribal Communities

[USDA Science and Research Strategy, 2023–2026](#) priorities:

1. **Priority 1:** Accelerating Innovative Technologies and Practices
2. **Priority 2:** Driving Climate-Smart Solutions
3. **Priority 3:** Bolstering Nutrition Security and Health
4. **Priority 4:** Cultivating Resilient Ecosystems

Other Key Information:

1. This program is limited to applied research.
2. Applications must include United States aquaculture industry involvement. This can include, but is not limited to, a United States aquaculture producer as a co-project director or partner or assembling an industry advisory committee (e.g., a farmer's advisory committee for the project that can include producer-based organizations, feed manufacturers, animal health industry, etc.).
3. Applications that engage and incorporate historically underserved groups including tribal organizations and/or tribal producers are especially encouraged.
4. Applicants must provide a budgeted plan to release results to the public in a timely manner. This plan must clearly state how the research results or technology developed will be transferred to end-users outside of direct, scientific peers.
5. Applicants must clearly describe how their specific research project will increase United States aquaculture production or profitability in the short or medium-term (1-5 years after the grant ends).
6. For the critical disease Program Area Priority, proposals that focus on pathogens that pose a risk to humans or human food safety (vs. those that affect the health of an aquaculture species) are outside the scope of this program and will not be accepted or considered for review.
7. Applicants must include statistical power analyses, when appropriate, and describe the experimental design, experimental unit, replication, and sample size for each experimental group.
8. The inclusion of students actively engaged in research projects providing hands-on, experiential learning and training opportunities is strongly encouraged. Actively engaged students should be encouraged to contribute to presentations, articles, posters, and other expressions of scholarship.

**Global Engagement.** NIFA supports global engagement that advances U.S. agricultural goals. NIFA recognizes that collaboration with international partners may be necessary to attain the agency's goals for U.S. agriculture, promote global competence of our nation's future agricultural workforce, and promote safe and nutritious food security in a growing world. Therefore, although application to this RFA is limited to eligible U.S. institutions, applicants may collaborate with international partners, to include subcontracts to international partners or other institutions. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefits to the U.S.

For a program informational webinar please visit the [NIFA calendar](#) for dates, event registration, and link. If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate in any of the informational webinars listed, please contact the event host listed no later than 10 days prior to the event.

**Table 2:** Program Key Information

	Title	Description
<b>Program Code:</b>	AQUA	
<b>Program Code Name:</b>	Special Research Grants for Aquaculture Research Program	
<b>ALN:</b>	10.200	
<b>Project Type:</b>	Competitive	
<b>Grant Type:</b>	Standard Research	
<b>Application Deadline</b>	April 15, 2024	
<b>Grant Duration:</b>	24	
<b>Anticipated # of Awards:</b>	7	
<b>Maximum Award Amount:</b>	\$300,000	



## PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

### A. Available Funding

This RFA is being released prior to the passage of a full appropriations act for FY 2024. Enactment of a continuing resolution, appropriations act, **or other authorizing legislation** may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. The anticipated amount available for the Special Research Grants Program for Aquaculture Research in FY2024 is \$1.936 million.

If this program receives appropriated funds in FY2025, meritorious projects identified in the FY2024 competition that were not able to receive support in FY2024 may be supported using FY2025 funds. In this case, a separate RFA may not be issued for the FY2025 funds.

For FY 2024, this program will accept applications for standard research projects with a budget of up to \$300,000 (total project, not per year) and a maximum duration of 2 years. The start date of a 2-year project funded with funds appropriated in FY 2024 appropriations, must be **before** October 1, 2024. (i.e., These projects must be initiated in the federal fiscal year in which the funds were appropriated). Recipients may be eligible for a no-cost extension for a third year, but no carryover or extension is permitted for any project beyond 3 years from the project start date (any unexpended funds must be returned to the U.S. Treasury).

If fundable projects identified in this competition are supported with FY 2025 appropriations, applicants will be notified, and additional documentation may be requested. The start date of the projects funded with funds appropriated in FY 2025 will be adjusted to a date in FY 2025.

The [Automated Standard Application for Payments](#), operated by the Department of Treasury, Bureau of Fiscal Service, is the designated payment system for awards resulting from this RFA.

### B. Application Restrictions

NIFA will evaluate applications using the criteria described in [Part V](#) of this RFA. Application for FY2024 is limited to the following application types:

1. *New application*: New applications will be evaluated using the criteria described in [Part V](#) of this RFA and are subject to the due dates herein (see [Appendix III](#) for definition).
2. *Resubmitted application*: Resubmitted applications must include the respond to the previous review panel summary and are subject to the same criteria and due dates herein. Resubmitted applicants must enter the NIFA-assigned proposal number of the previously submitted application in the *Federal Field (Field 4)* on the application form (see [Appendix III](#) for definition).

### C. Project and Grant Types

All projects **MUST** focus on applied aquaculture research. All proposed projects **MUST** directly address major constraints to the United States aquaculture industry and focus on one or more of the Program Area Priorities (listed above in section I.B.). Duplicate submissions are not permitted.

**Standard Project Proposals:** The intent is to fund applied research that addresses program priorities with a maximum award of \$300,000 and maximum duration of 2 years.

**D. Ethical Conduct of Funded Projects**

In accordance with sections [2, 3, and 8 of 2 CFR Part 422](#), institutions that conduct USDA-funded extramural research must foster an atmosphere conducive to research integrity, bear primary responsibility for prevention and detection of research misconduct, and maintain and effectively communicate and train their staff regarding policies and procedures. In the event an application to NIFA results in an award, the Authorized Representative (AR) assures, through acceptance of the award that the institution will comply with the above requirements. Award recipients must, upon request, make available to NIFA the policies, procedures, and documentation to support the conduct of the training. See [Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research](#) for further information.

## PART III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

### A. Eligibility Requirements

Eligible applicants include:

- a) State Agricultural Experiment Stations;
- b) colleges and universities (including junior colleges offering associate degrees or higher);
- c) university research foundations;
- d) other research institutions and organizations;
- e) Federal agencies;
- f) national laboratories;
- g) private organizations or corporations;
- h) individuals who are U.S. citizens, nationals, or permanent residents; and
- i) any group consisting of two or more entities identified in a) through h).

Eligible institutions do not include foreign and international organizations.

***Duplicate Submissions*** – duplicate submissions are not allowed. NIFA will disqualify both applications if an applicant submits duplicate submissions. For those new to Federal financial assistance, NIFA's [Grants Overview](#) provides highly recommended information about grants and other resources to help understand the Federal awards process.

### B. Cost Sharing or Matching

**No Match Required** - The Special Research Grants Program for Aquaculture Research has no matching requirement. NIFA will not factor matching resources into the review process as an evaluation criterion.

## PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

### A. Method of Application

Applicants must apply to this RFA electronically; no other method or response is accepted. The electronic application for this RFA and additional resources are available on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and [Grants 101](#). **Table 3** provides instructions on how to obtain an electronic application. **Part III** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) contains detailed information regarding the [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) registration process. [The NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) is contained in the specific funding opportunity package or a sample of the guide can be found [here](#). When applying for a NIFA award, it is important to reference the version of the guide that is included in the specific funding opportunity application package.

**Table 3.** Steps to Obtain Application Materials

Steps	Action
<b>Step One: Register</b>	<i>New Users</i> to <a href="https://www.grants.gov">Grants.gov</a> must register early with <a href="https://www.grants.gov">Grants.gov</a> prior to submitting an application ( <a href="#">Register Here</a> ).
<b>Step Two: Download Adobe</b>	Download and Install <a href="#">Adobe Reader</a> (see <a href="#">Adobe Software Compatibility</a> for basic system requirements).
<b>Step Three: Find Application</b>	Using this funding opportunity number <b>USDA-NIFA-SRGP-010575</b> , search for application here: <a href="#">Opportunity Package</a> .
<b>Step Four: Assess Readiness</b>	Contact an AR prior to starting an application to assess the organization’s readiness to submit an electronic application.

**Table 4:** Help and Resources

Grants.gov Support	NIFA Support
<a href="#">Grants.gov Online Support</a> Telephone support: 800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035 Email support: <a href="mailto:support@grants.gov">support@grants.gov</a> Self-service customer-based support: <a href="#">Grants.gov iPortal</a> Key Information: Customer service business Hours 24/7, except <a href="#">federal holidays</a> .	Email: <a href="mailto:grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov">grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov</a>  Key Information: Business hours: Monday thru Friday, 7a.m. – 5p.m. ET, except <a href="#">federal holidays</a> .

### B. Content and Form of the Application

The [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) is part of the corresponding application package for this RFA. The RFA overrides the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) if there is a discrepancy between the two documents. Applicants that do not meet the application requirements, to include partial applications, risk being excluded from NIFA’s review. NIFA will assign a proposal number to all applications that meet the requirements of this RFA. Applicants must refer to the proposal number when corresponding with NIFA. **Table 5** outlines other key instructions for applicants.

**Table 5: Key Application Instructions**

Instruction	References (All references are to the <a href="#">NIFA Grants Application Guide</a> )
Attachments must be in a portable document format (PDF) format.	Part IV
Check the manifest of submitted files to verify attachments are in the correct format.	Part IV
Conduct an administrative review of the application before submission.	Part IV
Follow the submission instructions.	Part IV
Provide an accurate email address, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R.	Part V
Contact the <a href="#">Grants.gov</a> helpdesk for technical support and keep a record of the correspondence.	N/A
Contact NIFA if applicant does not receive correspondence from NIFA regarding an application within <b>90</b> days of the application deadline.	N/A

**SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet.** See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) for the required certifications and assurances.

**SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s).** See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

**R&R Other Project Information Form.** See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

1. **Field 7. Project Summary (PS)/Abstract.** The PS must show how the project goals align with the project goals of the Special Research Grants for Aquaculture Research program. See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) for instructions and suggested templates.
2. **Field 8. Project Narrative (PN).** The PN must not exceed **15 1.5 spaced** pages of written text including figures and tables (the font size for tables should be no smaller than 11 points, Times New Roman). The page limits outlined here ensure fair and equitable competition. Appendices to the PN (e.g., letters of support) are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project and will not count against the page limit. Do not add appendices to circumvent the page limit. The PN must include all the following:
  - a. Introduction;
    - i. Include a clear statement of the long-term goal(s) of the proposed project.
    - ii. Summarize the body of knowledge that substantiates the need for the proposed project.
    - iii. Include preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed project. All works cited should be referenced.

- b. Rational and significance;
  - i. Present the rationale behind the proposed project and reasons for performing the work at the proposing institution;
  - ii. Describe the specific relationship of the proposed project to the Program Area Priorities, and state which of the five Program Area Priorities the proposal is primarily addressing. Applications that do not address at least one Program Area Priority will not be reviewed;
  - iii. Clearly document the expected improvement in and sustainability of the United States aquaculture industry;
  - iv. Estimate the magnitude of the issues and their relevance to stakeholders and to ongoing state-federal food and agricultural research, education, and extension programs; and
  - v. Document the role of stakeholders and indicate the amount of industry participation in problem identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation as appropriate.
- c. Objectives;
  - i. Include a clear statement of proposed objectives for the completion of the project. Any interdependence of proposed objectives should be addressed during the discussion of potential pitfalls.
- d. Approach;
  - i. The activities proposed or problems being addressed must be clearly stated and the approaches applied must be clearly described. Specifically, this section must include:
    - 1) A description of the activities proposed and the sequence in which the activities are to be performed;
    - 2) A description of the activities proposed and the sequence in which the activities are to be performed;
    - 3) Methods to be used in carrying out the proposed project, including the feasibility of the methods and the role and qualification of project partner(s);
    - 4) Expected outcomes;
    - 5) Means by which results will be analyzed, assessed, or interpreted;
    - 6) How results or products will be used;
    - 7) Plans to communicate results to stakeholders and the public (e.g., extension, technology transfer, education activities, workshops) that articulate how the research results will be transferred to end-users outside of direct scientific peers;
    - 8) How this specific research project will advance aquaculture production in the United States in the short or medium term (1-5 years after the grant ends).
    - 9) How the impacts will be evaluated and reported (a logic model is suggested to accomplish this);
    - 10) If undergraduate, graduate students, and post-doctoral research fellows are included, how they will be actively engaged in the research;
    - 11) Pitfalls that may be encountered;
    - 12) A full explanation of any materials, procedures, situations, or activities related to the project that may be hazardous to personnel, along with an outline or precautions to be exercised to avoid or mitigate the effects of such hazards;

- e. Project timeline.
  - f. Cooperation and institutional involvement.
  - g. Data management plan (DMP); A DMP is required for this program. Applicants should clearly articulate how the project director (PD) and co-PDs plan to manage and disseminate the data generated by the project. The DMP will be considered during the merit review process (see Part [V, B](#) of this RFA, NIFA's Data Management Plan).
    - i. Program may prefer the DMP be included as Other Attachment and not part of PN and may be adjusted as appropriate.
  - h. Response to previous review: The response to previous review must not exceed a single 1.5 spaced page. This does not count towards the page limit for the PN.
3. **Field 12, Add Other Attachments.** See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

**R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded).** See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) for profile requirements, details about the biographical sketch, and suggested support templates.

**R&R Personal Data.** This information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award (see **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#)).

**R&R Budget.** See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

- 1. Indirect costs (IDC) – See [Part IV, C](#) of this RFA for funding restrictions regarding indirect cost, and **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) for additional information.

**Logic Model.** A logic model is recommended for this program. Applicants choosing to utilize a logic model to describe their work should reference: [Logic Model Planning Process | National Institute of Food and Agriculture \(usda.gov\)](#) for materials detailing the composition, usefulness, and development of a logic model.

**Supplemental Information Form.** See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

- 1. **Field 2. Program to which the applicant is applying.** Enter the program name (*Special Research Grants program for Aquaculture Research*) and the program code (*AQUA*). Accurate entry is critical.
- 2. **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.** See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

### C. Funding Restrictions

**Indirect Costs (IDC) not to exceed 30 percent of total Federal funds awarded (TFFA).**

Section 1462(a) and (c) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 ([7 U.S.C. 3310 \(a\) and \(c\)](#)) limits IDC for the overall award to 30 percent of TFFA under a research, education, or extension grant. The maximum IDC rate allowed under the award is determined by calculating the amount of IDC using:

- 1. the sum of an institution's negotiated IDC rate and the IDC rate charged by sub-awardees, if any; or
- 2. 30 percent of TFFA.

The maximum allowable IDC rate under the award, including the IDC charged by the sub-awardee(s), if any, is the lesser of the two rates above.

If the result of number one above is the lesser of the two rates, the grant recipient is allowed to charge the negotiated IDC rate on the prime award and the sub-award(s), if any. Any sub-awards would be subject to the sub-awardee's negotiated IDC rate. The sub-awardee may charge its negotiated IDC rate on its portion of the award, provided the sum of the IDC rate charged under the award by the prime awardee and the sub-awardee(s) does not exceed 30 percent of the TFFA.

If number two above is the lesser of the two rates, then the maximum IDC rate allowed for the overall award, including any sub-award(s), is limited to 30 percent of the TFFA. That is, the IDC of the prime awardee plus the sum of the IDC charged by the sub-awardee(s), if any, may not exceed 30 percent of the TFFA.

In the event of an award, the prime awardee is responsible for ensuring the maximum IDC allowed for the award is not exceeded when combining IDC for the Federal portion (i.e., prime and sub-awardee(s)) and any applicable cost-sharing. Amounts exceeding the maximum allowable IDC are considered unallowable. See sections [408](#) and [410](#) of [2 CFR 200](#).

If the applicant does not have a negotiated rate and NIFA is the cognizant agency, the applicant may request an IDC rate. Applicants are not required to complete the IDC package during the application process and need only to calculate a rate to serve as a basis for requesting IDC. If awarded, the applicant will be required to submit a complete IDC proposal package to obtain a negotiated rate.

Organizations that do not have a current negotiated (including provisional) rate, may elect the De Minimis rate ([2 CFR 200.414](#)). The Uniform Guidance offers the option of electing to charge a de Minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total indirect costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. As described above and in [2 CFR 200.403](#), costs must be charged consistently as either indirect or direct costs but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If elected, this methodology must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate for a rate, which it may do at any time.

See [NIFA Indirect Costs](#) for information including [additional resources](#) and [NIFA Indirect Cost Guidance Chart](#).



## PART V. APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

### A. NIFA's Evaluation Process

NIFA evaluates each application in a two-part process. First, we screen each application to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements set forth in this RFA. All administrative requirements must be met in order for the application to proceed to the next level of review. Second, a scientific peer-review process will be used to technically evaluate applications that have met the administrative requirements using a review panel (see [NIFA Peer Review Process](#)).

#### Scientific Peer Review Process:

NIFA selects reviewers for the review panel based upon their training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors:

1. 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.
2. The need to include experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields.
3. The need to include other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, researchers, public health practitioners, educators, consumers, and commercial reviews) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs.
4. The need to include experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, and private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations.
5. The need to maintain a balanced composition with regard to race, ethnicity, gender representation, and an equitable age distribution.
6. The need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness of each application to producers and the general public.

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

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

After the review process has been completed, NIFA sends copies of reviews, *not* including the identity of reviewers, and a summary (if applicable) of the review panel comments to the PD.

**Conflicts of interest.** NIFA takes extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may influence the review or evaluation (see [NIFA Peer Review Process for Competitive Grant Applications](#)).

### B. Evaluation Criteria

NIFA will use the following criteria to evaluate this RFA:

1. **Proposal Relevance and Effectiveness**— This ascertains if the proposed work: is applied research directed toward at least one of the five Program Area Priorities

identified in this RFA; directly addresses major constraints that currently limit development and progress of domestic aquaculture; clearly states how the research results or technology will be transferred to end-users outside of direct scientific peers; and how it will accelerate United States aquaculture industry development, by increasing production or profitability, in the short- or medium-term (1-5 years after the grant ends).

2. **Technical/Scientific Merit**— This assesses: whether the approach is technically sound and innovative; whether there are clear project goals and objectives; if preliminary data support the demonstration of feasibility; if the methods are appropriate and the proposal includes all components necessary to achieve goals and objectives; if the proposal includes a concrete, unambiguous, specific desired outcome for domestic aquaculture and has a high probability of achieving that outcome; if the proposal includes a way to objectively determine its success at achieving its outcomes, and if the proposal includes a detailed description of plans for data management and retention.
3. **Overall Qualifications of Applicants**— This ascertains whether the applicant and others on the team possess: the necessary education, experience, and training; a demonstrated record of successful technology transfer to end-users outside of direct scientific peers; and the facilities and resources to accomplish the project. This includes applicant's record of achievement with previous funding, as well as the qualifications of project partners. If the proposal includes the use of outside consultants not yet identified, this criterion includes how clearly the selection factors for the outside consultants are set out, and the expected qualifications of the consultants based on those selection factors.
4. **Data Management Plan**— This assesses the quality and completeness of the data management plan and whether the plan as laid out and the resources available will ensure the proper protection, retention, and accessibility of all data generated with the use of these federal funds.

### **C. Organizational Management Information**

Applicants must submit specific management information prior to an award and update the information as needed. Applicants may only need to provide an update if there was a change in previously provided information under this or another NIFA program. NIFA provides the requisite forms during the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible for award under this program, there are factors that may exclude an applicant from receiving federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual, or a determination that an applicant is not responsible).

### **D. Application Disposition**

Applicants may withdraw at any time before NIFA makes a final funding decision. NIFA will retain all applications, including withdrawn applications and unfunded applications.

## **PART VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION**

### **A. General**

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

*Award Notice.* The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information as described in [2 CFR 200.211](#) (see [NIFA's Terms and Conditions](#)).

### **B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

Several federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications and the projects outlined in this RFA (some are listed here: [Federal Regulations](#)). Unless specifically noted by statute or award-specific requirements, [NIFA Federal Assistance Policy Guide](#) applies to all NIFA awards.

### **C. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements**

Include this subpart if the program has specific award terms. Highlight any special reporting requirements that differ from the norm (e.g., by report type, frequency, form/format, or circumstances for use). The NIFA Director of Information Policy, Planning, and Training must approve all special requirements. When forwarding applications for award, Program must alert NIFA's Award Management Division (AMD) via the "Competitive or non-competitive proposal recommendation sheet" that the special reporting requirements need to be included as part of the provisions of award.

## **PART VII. OTHER INFORMATION**

### **A. Use of Funds and Changes in Budget**

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

***Changes in Budget or Project Plans.*** In accordance with [2 CFR 200.308](#), awardees must request prior approval from NIFA for the following program or budget-related reasons (the awardee is subject to the terms and conditions identified in the award):

1. Change in the scope or the objective of the project or program without prior written approval (even if there is no associated budget revision requiring).
2. Change in a key person specified in the application or the federal award.
3. Disengagement from the project for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in time devoted to the project.
4. Inclusion of costs that require prior approval in accordance with [2 CFR 200 Subpart E \(Cost Principles\)](#), or [45 CFR Part 75 Appendix IX, \(Principles for Determining Costs Applicable to Research and Development under Awards and Contracts with Hospitals\)](#), or [48 CFR](#), unless waived by the federal awarding agency, [48 CFR Part 31, Contract Cost Principles and Procedures](#);
5. Transfer of funds budgeted for participant support costs to other categories of expense ([2 CFR 200.456 Participant support costs](#));
6. Sub-awarding, transferring or contracting out of any work under a federal award, including fixed amount sub-awards (see [2 CFR 200.333, Fixed Amount Sub-awards](#)), unless described in the application and funded in the approved federal awards. This provision does not apply to the acquisition of supplies, material, equipment, or general support services.
7. Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-federal entity; and
8. The need for additional federal funds to complete the project.

### **B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards**

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of NIFA transaction records, which are available to the public. Information that the Secretary of Agriculture determines to be confidential, privileged, or proprietary in nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, applicants should clearly mark any information within the application they wish to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary. NIFA will retain a copy of an application that does not result in an award for three years. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An applicant may withdraw at any time prior to the final action thereon.

### **C. Regulatory Information**

This program is not subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, which requires intergovernmental consultation with state and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 ([44 U.S.C. Chapter 35](#)), the collection of information requirements contained in this notice have been approved under [OMB Document No. 0524-0039](#).

**D. Limited English Proficiency**

NIFA offers language access services, such as interpretation and translation of vital information, free of charge. If you need interpretation or translation services, please visit [NIFA Language Access Services](#) or contact Lois Tuttle, Equal Opportunity Specialist, at [Lois.Tuttle@usda.gov](mailto:Lois.Tuttle@usda.gov) or (443) 386-9488.

## APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACT

### **Program Contacts**

Timothy J. Sullivan

[Timothy.Sullivan@usda.gov](mailto:Timothy.Sullivan@usda.gov)

816-527-5434

For administrative questions related to;

1. Grants.gov, see [Part IV](#) of this RFA
2. Other RFA or application questions, please email [grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov](mailto:grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov)
3. Awards under this RFA, please email [awards@usda.gov](mailto:awards@usda.gov)

### **U.S. Postal Mailing Address:**

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

U.S. Department of Agriculture

P.O. Box 419205, MS 10000

Kansas City, MO 64141-6205

### **Courier/Package Delivery Address:**

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

U.S. Department of Agriculture

2312 East Bannister Road, MS 10000

Kansas City, MO 64141-3061

## APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### **Glossary of Terms**

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative – AFRI

Assistance Listing Number – ALN

Authorized Representative – AR

Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 – AREERA

Coordinated Agricultural Project – CAP

Centers of Excellence – COE

Data Management Plan – DMP

National Institute of Food and Agriculture – NIFA

Request for Application – RFA

Research, Education, and Economics – REE

United States Department of Agriculture – USDA

### APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS

Refer to [7 CFR 3430 Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Federal Assistance Programs – General Award Administrative Provisions](#) for additional definitions.

#### **Definitions**

##### **Matching:**

The process through which a grant recipient match awarded USDA funds with cash and in-kind contributions on a dollar-for-dollar basis. The matching funds must derive from non-Federal sources.

##### **New Application:**

An application not previously submitted to a program.

##### **Renewal Application:**

A project application that seeks additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in an original or amended award.

##### **Resubmitted Application:**

A project application that was previously submitted to a program, but the application was not funded.

##### **Resubmitted Renewal Application:**

A project application that requests additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in the original award. This is an application that had previously been submitted for renewal to but not funded.