

**Foundational and Applied Science Request for Applications
Data Science for Food and Agricultural Systems Initiative
Frequently Asked Questions**

These are some Frequently Asked Questions about the **Data Science for Food and Agricultural Systems (DSFAS)** within the [AFRI Foundational and Applied Science program](#).

For general Agriculture and Food Research Initiative information, please see the [AFRI FAQ](#).

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GENERAL QUESTIONS

What is the Data Science for Food and Agricultural Systems (DSFAS)?

The **Data Science for Food and Agricultural Systems (DSFAS)** is a revision of the prior FACT program for FY21/22 and solicits applications that focus on data science to enable systems and communities to effectively utilize data, improve resource management, and integrate new technologies and approaches to further U.S. food and agriculture enterprises.

Projects funded through DSFAS will work to examine the value of data for small and large farmers, agricultural and food industries, and gain an understanding of how data can impact the agricultural supply chain, reduce food waste and loss, improve consumer health, environmental and natural resource management, affect the structure of U.S. food and agriculture sectors, and increase U.S. competitiveness.

What are DSFAS Priorities?

The DSFAS priority focuses on intersections between data science/artificial intelligence (AI) and agricultural areas in order to enable systems and communities to effectively utilize data, improve resource management, and integrate new technologies and approaches to further U.S. food and agriculture enterprises. The program encourages university-based research as well as public and private partnerships. Applications for research and integrated research projects must address one of the six AFRI priority areas:

1. Plant health and production and plant products;
2. Animal health and production and animal products;
3. Food safety, nutrition, and health;
4. Bioenergy, natural resources, and environment;
5. Agriculture systems and technology; and
6. Agriculture economics and rural communities

We especially encourage proposals in the areas of climate-smart agriculture and forestry, nutrition security, economic revitalization, and justice; projects that focus on intersections between one or more of these areas are also strongly encouraged. The data science/AI aspects of proposals should clearly relate to advancements in the U.S. AI priorities and strategic pillars. The most competitive proposals will be equally well grounded in agricultural sciences and in data science/AI; in addition, competitive proposals will clearly communicate the relevance and novelty of the proposed research in both areas.

Who should I contact if I have a general question about DSFAS?

General questions can be sent to NIFA-DSFAS@usda.gov. All associated National Program Leaders (NPLs) listed in the Request for Applications (RFA) have access to the DSFAS email box and can reply to questions.

What grant types are available through DSFAS?

The AFRI Foundational and Applied Science RFA DSFAS program area priority requests Standard, Conference, and Food and Agricultural Science Enhancement (FASE) Grants only.

What project types are available through DSFAS?

The AFRI Foundational and Applied Science RFA DSFAS program area priority requests Research Projects and Integrated Projects only. Specifically, DSFAS applications must fall under one of the following types:

- Regular DSFAS applications
- DSFAS Coordinated Innovation Networks (CIN)
- DSFAS Coordinated Innovation Networks Climate/Food Supply Modeling (CIN-CM/FM)

What are integrated projects?

Under the AFRI Foundational and Applied Science RFA, integrated projects must address at least two of the three functions of the agriculture knowledge system (research, education, and extension). The functions should be interdependent and necessary for the success of the project, and no more than two-thirds of the project's budget may focus on a single component. Additional information on integrated project types is available on the [AFRI RFA Resources page](#) ("AFRI Project Types" in the attachments list, see pages 3-5).

What is a FASE grant and what are the eligibility requirements for FASE grants?

Food and Agricultural Science Enhancement (FASE) grants help institutions develop competitive projects and attract new scientists and educators to careers in high-priority areas of national need in agriculture, food, and environmental sciences. FASE Grants have additional eligibility requirements; please see Part II, D of the RFA for details. For more information, visit the [FASE Grants website](#).

What is a Coordinated Innovation Network (CIN)?

The AFRI Foundational and Applied Science DSFAS program area priority (A1541) requests applications for *Coordinated Innovation Networks (CIN)*. Coordinated innovation networks projects should foster communities that address bottlenecks in critical areas by bringing together experts from different disciplines and domains to identify innovative and synergistic solutions. They should promote collaboration among research and education communities, as well as develop and maintain effective networks across multiple disciplines and the public and private sectors. They should bring together research, education, and or extension communities working on multiple aspects of a data-supported problem into one multi-disciplinary network to collectively advance the field.

All CIN projects must address the following:

- a) Synergy: There should be a demonstrable benefit to the existence of a multidisciplinary, multi-sector, or multifunctional CIN that would not otherwise be possible by the participating entities and individuals operating independently.
- b) Contribution: Each participating individual or entity should have a unique, meaningful, and active contribution to the network that is critical to the network's functioning, performance, and success in addressing bottlenecks in critical areas.
- c) Continuity: There should be a sustainability plan for network persistence beyond the duration of initial grant support (e.g., identification of additional funding sources and/or more formal organizational arrangements).
- d) Management: There should be a plan for coordination and oversight including, but not limited

to, communication, leadership, advisory boards, milestones, and evolution over time (e.g., new objectives or new participants).

What is the focus of the DSFAS Coordinated Innovation Networks Climate/Food Supply Modeling (CIN-CM/FM)?

DSFAS-CIN-CM/FM applications focus on climate or food supply chain modeling. For DSFAS-CIN-CM, creative, novel projects that meet the overall goals of advancing both climate modeling and data science/AI areas are encouraged.

DSFAS-CIN-FM solicits proposals to advance food systems simulation modeling, especially examining transitions to robust, resilient, and cooperative food supply networks, and with a focus on underserved communities. Creative, novel projects that advance both food supply modeling and data science/AI are encouraged. It is anticipated that a broad range of institutions will be involved in the network.

What are the eligibility requirements for projects submitted to DSFAS?

Eligible applicants for Research Projects 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.

Eligible applicants for Integrated Projects include: a) Colleges and universities; b) 1994 Land-Grant Institutions; and c) Hispanic-serving agricultural colleges and universities. Those institutions must also meet additional guidelines in the RFA Eligibility Information.

For more information see Part III (Eligibility Information) of the RFA and the [AFRI FAQs](#).

Can I submit a proposal for a conference or workshop to DSFAS?

Yes, DSFAS accepts applications for conference grants and workshops.

What background information is available on DSFAS?

Applicants are encouraged to visit NIFA's web site for information on the [Data Summit and extensive stakeholder input](#) that informed the development of the FACT/DSFAS initiative.

Can the same proposal be submitted to multiple program areas?

In accordance with Part III, Section 5 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, duplicate, essentially duplicate or predominantly overlapping applications submitted to one or more program areas within the AFRI (including FASE Grants) in any one fiscal year will not be reviewed. In addition, applicants may not submit to AFRI an application that is considered duplicate, essentially duplicate, or predominantly overlapping with an application submitted to another NIFA program in the same fiscal year.

LETTER OF INTENT QUESTIONS

Is a Letter of Intent required to submit a full application?

Submission of a Letter of Intent (LOI) prior to the LOI deadline is not required for submission of a full proposal for Standard and FASE grants. Conference and workshop grant applications DO require a LOI.

What information should be included in a Letter of Intent and what are the formatting guidelines?

For detailed guidance on LOI submission, please see the [AFRI RFA Resources page](#) (“AFRI Letter of Intent Instructions” in the attachments list).

What is the deadline for DSFAS Conference Letters of Intent?

The LOI must be submitted a minimum of 195 days before the conference begins. After LOI decision response, applications must be submitted a minimum of 150 days before the conference begins.

Where do I email my conference grant Letter of Intent?

LOIs can be sent to NIFA-DSFAS@usda.gov.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

What is the allowed budget and length/duration of the awards?

Regular DSFAS Grants must not exceed \$650,000 total per project (including indirect costs) for project periods of up to five years.

DSFAS Coordinated Innovation Networks (CIN) research or integrated applications for project periods of three to five years, with proposed budget requests not exceeding \$1,000,000 total per project (including indirect costs).

DSFAS Coordinated Innovation Networks Climate/Food Supply Modeling (CIN-CM/FM) should have budget requests not exceeding \$3,000,000 total per project (including indirect costs).

Any DSFAS project (Regular, CIN, or CIN-CM/FM) with specific types of partnerships (small and mid-sized or minority-serving degree-granting institutions not on the list of most successful institutions; EPSCoR institutions; or international partners) has the opportunity to request up to an additional \$150,000.

Is a data management plan required?

Yes, data management plans are required, and they are important to fully understand the scope of the proposal. Data management plans are explicitly considered in the peer review process. A well designed and scripted management plan is critical for complete review. For guidelines on preparation and inclusion of a DMP in your application, see [Data Management Plan for NIFA-Funded Research, Education and Extension Projects](#).

What is a sustainability plan?

Within the project description, all applications must include a sustainability plan explaining how project products and services will be accessible during and after the funding period. Projects that include development of tools and platforms are strongly encouraged to build upon existing tools and platforms such as R/Python and the national cyberinfrastructure (e.g., XSEDE, Science Gateways). Proposals that include development of tools and platforms should include details of software development practices such as testing and validation plans, and plans for governance, development and support of user and developer communities. Innovative and effective methods for participation of stakeholders in tools and platform development priority-setting and testing are strongly encouraged. Any development of data resources must use FAIR standards; long-term access and curation must be described in the sustainability plan. We also encourage use of the CARE data standards.

Are there any requirements on making data associated with a project funded through this opportunity available to the public?

Information on data sharing, protection, and public access guidelines is provided on [Data Management Plan for NIFA-Funded Research, Education and Extension Projects](#) as well as [NIFA's General Award Terms and Conditions](#).

Is a logic model required in my application and where can I find a template?

A logic model is a required for integrated project applications. For additional information on logic models, please visit the [Logic Model Planning Process page](#).

What is the deadline for DSFAS applications?

Applications to DSFAS (A1541) must be submitted to Grants.gov by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, November 17, 2022. Late applications will not be reviewed.