Urban, Indoor and Emerging Agriculture

RFA Information Webinar
June 6, 2022
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NIFA Overview

• The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is the extramural science-funding agency within USDA’s Research, Education and Economics mission area

• NIFA invests in and supports initiatives that ensure the long-term viability of agriculture

• NIFA provides funding and strategic leadership for programs that ensure groundbreaking discoveries in agriculture-related sciences and technologies reach the people who can put them into practice
Urban, Indoor and Emerging Agriculture

• The Urban, Indoor and other Emerging Agricultural Production Research, Education and Extension Initiative (UIE) is a NIFA competitive grant program implemented in 2022 to support research, education and Extension activities that facilitate development of urban, indoor and other emerging agricultural production systems.

• The UIE emphasizes activities on several segments of the value chain, including production, harvesting, transportation aggregation, packaging, distribution, and marketing needs.

• RFA Link: www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/funding-opportunities/urban-indoor-emerging-agriculture
Urban, Indoor and Emerging Ag Topic Areas

The eight topic areas outlined in the 2018 Farm Bill include:

1. Assessing and developing strategies to remediate contaminated sites
2. Determining and developing the best production management and integrated pest management practices
3. Identifying and promoting the horticultural, social and economic factors that contribute to successful urban, indoor and other emerging agricultural production systems
4. Analyzing the means by which new agricultural sites are determined, including an evaluation of soil quality, condition of a building or local community needs
5. Exploring new technologies that minimize energy and improve lighting systems, water management and other inputs for increased food production
6. Examining building material efficiencies and structural upgrades to optimize the growth of ag products
7. Developing new crop varieties and agricultural products to connect to new markets
8. Examining the impacts of crop exposure to urban elements on environmental quality and food safety
The 2018 Farm Bill lists the following systems as relevant to UIE:

A. community gardens and farms located in urban areas, suburbs and urban clusters;
B. rooftop farms, outdoor vertical production and green walls;
C. indoor farms, greenhouses and high-tech vertical technology farms;
D. hydroponic, aeroponic and aquaponic farm facilities; and
E. other innovations in agricultural production, as determined by the Secretary.
• Due to limited funding, the 2022 program will focus on the most urgent priorities

• These priorities were identified through:
  - Public input solicited in Federal Register Notice 2020-08402
  - Stakeholder listening sessions
  - Consultation with the Federal Advisory Committee (FAC) for Urban Agriculture
2022 Priorities

This year’s priorities facilitate the most urgent and critical needs in agricultural production and markets:

• Identifying and promoting the horticultural, social and economic factors that contribute to successful urban, indoor and other emerging agricultural production systems

• Analyzing the means by which new agricultural sites are determined, including an evaluation of soil quality, condition of a building or local community needs

• Developing new crop varieties and agricultural products to connect to new markets
Urban, Indoor and Emerging Ag Applications

Applications must:

• Explain the magnitude of the most urgent and critical needs or problems for urban, indoor or emerging agriculture and how they will be addressed in the grant

• Focus on opportunities to develop and strengthen:
  - Income or employment
  - Enhanced quality of life and food access for urban and Native American communities
  - Estimated or actual economic return for UIE food production systems
  - Private industry investment
  - Site selection and reduce barriers to land access
Urban, Indoor and Emerging Ag Applications

Applications must:

• Describe approach for blending research and Extension to address principal objectives

• Provide evidence that the project is aligned with stakeholder-provided priorities

• Present expected solutions or improvements and how these will be assessed

• Address the potential costs of a proposed solution and describe how it can be scaled

• Explain how the project will strengthen urban, indoor or emerging ag systems and how results will be adopted or applied at a local, regional or national level
Eligibility

Applications may be submitted by:
• State agricultural experiment stations
• Colleges and universities
• University research foundations
• Other research institutions and organizations
• Federal agencies
• National laboratories
• Private organizations, foundations or corporations
• Individuals
• Any group consisting of two or more of these
Project and Grant Types

Project Type: Integrated

Grant Types: Standard, Collaborative, Conference
Project Type Description

- **Integrated Projects** include at least two of the following:
  - **Research**
    - A scientific investigation which results in the generation of knowledge
    - RESEARCH IS REQUIRED
  - **Education**
    - Formal classroom instruction, laboratory instruction and practicum experience
  - **Extension**
    - Educational activities with identified learning objectives that deliver science-based knowledge to people outside of the traditional classroom, enabling them to make practical decisions.

- Any one component cannot exceed 67% and has to be a minimum 33% of the project activity.
Grant Type Description

• Standard
  - Standard Grants support targeted original scientific projects.

• Collaborative
  - Allows programs to partner resources with other funding organizations to address high priority mission areas of mutual interest. The overall project must demonstrate an integrated, collaborative approach; the specific contributions and responsibilities of NIFA and the partner agency teams to the objectives must be set out clearly in the proposal’s project narrative and reflected in the budget justifications.

• Conference
  - Conference grants should focus on bringing together stakeholders to facilitate identifying critical research, education and Extension needs that will support development of urban, indoor and emerging agriculture
  - Conference awards cannot exceed $50,000
Cost Share or Matching

- No Match Required – The UIE program has NO matching requirement. NIFA will not factor matching resources into the review process as an evaluation criterion.
Application Details

• RFA is available online at: www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/funding-opportunities/urban-indoor-emerging-agriculture

• LOI Deadline: 5 p.m. (EDT) July 11, 2022
• Application Deadline: 5 p.m. (EDT) September 22, 2022

• Total funding available in FY 2022: $9,400,000
• Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-OP-009221
• Average Award Range: $50,000 - $1 million
• Anticipated number of awards: 10
• Grant Duration: 36 to 48 months (12 months for conference grants)
LOI Details

• A letter of intent (LOI) is **REQUIRED** for this Program

• Send the LOI as a PDF to the UIE inbox, with copy to Olivia Moreno and Ganesh Bora
  - UIE Inbox: nifa.uie@usda.gov
  - Olivia Moreno: olivia.moreno@usda.gov
  - Ganesh Bora: ganesh.bora@usda.gov

• In the e-mail subject line, write: Letter of Intent UIE- [Project Director’s Last Name]

• Only submit one LOI per PD (with the exception of Conference Grant LOIs)

• Letters of Intent will be reviewed by scientific program staff in order to plan for appropriate expertise for the peer review panel and ensure that the proposed project fits appropriately within the program area priorities
LOI Formatting

• Font size must be at least 12 points
• Margins must be at least one inch in all directions
• Line spacing must not exceed six lines of text per vertical inch
• Page size must be letter (i.e., 8.5 inches × 11 inches)
• Limited to 2 pages:
  - Page 1
    ▪ Name, professional title, department, institution, and e-mail address of the PD and all collaborating investigators
    ▪ The food value chain stage (production thru markets) and the program priority that is most closely addressed in the application
    ▪ If for a conference grant, include the conference dates
  - Page 2
    ▪ Title
    ▪ Rationale
    ▪ Overall hypothesis or goal
    ▪ Specific objectives v. approach
    ▪ Potential impact and expected outcomes
Data Management Plan

• A Data Management Plan (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.

• Please also review: www.nifa.usda.gov/resource/data-management-plan-nifa-funded-research-projects
Application Submission

• NIFA only accepts **electronic** submission of applications


• Application documents **must be in Portable Document Format (PDF)** to be accepted by NIFA, including your narrative and budget justifications
  - Grants.gov may allow other formats, but NIFA does **not**
  - Use commonly used software such as Adobe Acrobat
  - Password protected PDFs not allowed
Evaluation Process

Proposals are assigned for review to at least 3 reviewers with expertise in the proposed topic.

Reviewers will produce individual reviews of each proposal evaluating the strengths and weaknesses.

These written reviews are used to begin panel discussions with other reviewers serving on the peer-review panel.

Through these discussions, peer-review panelists come to consensus on the final rating and ranking of proposals.
Evaluation Criteria

• The Urban, Indoor and Emerging Agriculture evaluation criteria are listed below and in priority order of significance:
  1. Rationale and Significance
  2. Objectives and Approach
  3. Project Assessment
  4. Institutional Capacity, Division of Labor and Management Plan
  5. Budget Justification
Timeline of This Program

2 months
- Request for Application (RFA) Release
- Proposal writing and planning
- **LOI Deadline:** 5 p.m. (EDT) July 11, 2022
- **Application Deadline:** 5 p.m. (EDT) September 22, 2022

2 months
- Proposal under review
- Proposal funding notifications

1-2 months
- Awards are finalized and made

We will keep you updated as much as possible. We appreciate your patience!
Upcoming Events

• Upcoming Request for Applications (RFA) release calendar: www.nifa.usda.gov/upcoming-rfa-calendar
Other Resources

• Funding Opportunities: www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/funding-opportunities

• Competitive Grants Flowchart: www.nifa.usda.gov/competitive-grants

• NIFA Grant Resources: www.nifa.usda.gov/grant-training


• Indirect Costs: www.nifa.usda.gov/indirect-costs

• A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov:
  apply07.grants.gov/apply/opportunities/instructions/PKG00249520-instructions.pdf

• Information on awarded grants: cris.nifa.usda.gov/Welcome.html
Questions?

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