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NIFA

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

From Learning to Leading: Cultivating the Next Generation of Diverse Food and Agriculture Professionals

MODIFICATIONS: 11/07/2022 – This RFA has been modified from the original announcement. Edits are indicated using track changes and red font so the public/potential applicants can identify the changes within the solicitation.

Edits appear on pages: 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 22, and 23

FUNDING YEAR: Fiscal Year 2022

APPLICATION DEADLINE: December 14, 2022

ANTICIPATED FUNDING: $250,000,000

AVERAGE AWARD RANGE: $500,000 - $20,000,000

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: USDA-NIFA-ARPAED-009362

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 10.237

NOTICE OF INTENT DEADLINE: September 16, 2022 (Optional)

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

Assistance Listing Number: The From Learning to Leading: Cultivating the Next Generation of Diverse Food and Agriculture Professionals (NEXTGEN) Program is listed in the Assistance Listings under number 10.237.

Key Information 1: Key Dates and Deadlines
1. Application Deadline: 5:00 P.M. Eastern, December 14, 2022
2. Notice of Intent: 5:00 P.M. Eastern, September 16, 2022 (Optional)
3. Applicants Comments Deadline: Within six months from the issuance of this notice (*NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month*)

Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA). 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. [1]

Stakeholder Input. NIFA seeks comments on all request for applications (RFAs) 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 use 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 (email is for comments only). Please use the following subject line: Response to the From Learning to Leading: Cultivating the Next Generation of Diverse Food and Agriculture Professionals (NEXTGEN) RFA.

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[1] See https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/06/25/executive-order-on-diversity-equity-inclusion-and-accessibility-in-the-federal-workforce/

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This notice identifies the objectives for From Learning to Leading: Cultivating the Next Generation of Diverse Food and Agriculture Professionals Program projects, deadlines, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), through Section 1006 of the American Rescue Plan, as amended by Section. 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (Pub.L 117-169) is authorized to support and supplement agricultural research, education, and extension, as well as scholarships and programs that provide internships and pathways to Federal employment at 1890 institutions (i.e., historically Black land-grant universities), 1994 institutions (i.e., tribal colleges and universities), Alaska Native-serving institutions and Native Hawaiian-serving institutions, Hispanic-serving institutions ~~(specifically, the certified Hispanic-serving agricultural colleges and universities (HSACUs))~~, and insular area institutions of higher education located in the U.S. territories.

The From Learning to Leading: Cultivating the Next Generation of Diverse Food and Agriculture Professionals Program represents one part in a series of efforts led by USDA to achieve equitable participation of farmers, ranchers and forest land owners in USDA programs and services. These efforts include an array of targeted technical assistance and outreach activities; meaningful, sustained engagement with diverse stakeholders to inform USDA policies and programs; and supporting and preparing diverse students for future careers in agriculture with an emphasis on federal sector employment.

The From Learning to Leading: Cultivating the Next Generation of Diverse Food and Agriculture Professionals (NEXTGEN) Program is focused first and foremost on supporting and preparing students for the expansive array of diverse careers in the food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences across research, education, and extension, with an emphasis on federal government sector employment.

The goal of this program is to enable institutions eligible under Section 1006 of the American Rescue Plan, as amended by Section. 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (Pub.L 117-169) to engage, recruit, retain, train, and support students in order to help build and sustain the next generation of the food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences workforce including the future USDA workforce.

This RFA solicits grant applications. This notice identifies the objectives for the From Learning to Leading: Cultivating the Next Generation of Diverse Food and Agriculture Professionals Program including program priorities, deadline dates, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a NEXTGEN Program grant.

USDA anticipates providing up to $250,000,000 for the NEXTGEN Program.

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KEY INFORMATION

PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A.   Legislative Authority

Section 1006 of the American Rescue Plan Act, as amended by Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (Pub.L 117-169) (hereafter referred to as the Act) authorizes the United States of Agriculture (USDA), to provide funding for 1890 institutions, 1994 institutions, Alaska Native-serving institutions and Native Hawaiian-serving institutions, Hispanic-serving institutions ~~(specifically, the certified Hispanic-serving agricultural colleges and universities (HSACUs))~~, and insular area institutions of higher education located in the U.S. territories to support and supplement agricultural research, education, and extension, as well as scholarships and programs that provide internships and pathways to Federal employment.

B.   Purpose and Priorities

The primary goal of the From Learning to Leading: Cultivating the Next Generation of Diverse Food and Agriculture Professionals Program (NEXTGEN) is to enable 1890 institutions, 1994 institutions, Alaska Native-serving institutions and Native Hawaiian-serving institutions, Hispanic-serving institutions ~~(specifically, the certified Hispanic-serving agricultural colleges and universities (HSACUs))~~, and insular area institutions of higher education located in the U.S. territories to build and sustain the next generation of the food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences (FANH) workforce including the future USDA workforce primarily through providing student scholarship support, meaningful paid internships, fellowships, and job opportunity matching, and also facilitating opportunities to learn the processes and pathways leading to training and employment in the federal sector. It is important to note that the definition of food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences (FANH) is comprehensive and reflective of the breadth and depth across these disciplines and career paths. Please see Appendix III for the FANH definition. USDA is authorized to administer the NEXTGEN Program which supports these goals. Projects must be student-centered and directly benefit student learning and success.

By developing the next generation of a highly skilled workforce for food and agricultural sciences, the NEXTGEN Program is aligned with the following USDA Strategic Goals FY 2022-2026:

Strategic Goal 5: Expand Opportunities for Economic Development and Improve Quality of Life in Rural and Tribal Communities;

Strategic Goal 6: Attract, Inspire, and Retain an Engaged and Motivated Workforce that's Proud to Represent USDA.

This work further supports the National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality, USDA's Equity Action Plan and the President's Management Agenda.

Background and Context

Developing and maintaining a resilient, diverse, and capable workforce in food, agriculture and natural resources, and human sciences (FANH) (See Appendix III for definitions) is the most fundamental element for securing a productive and responsive food system along with a healthy population and robust rural economy. However, there are notable challenges with building the future agricultural workforce in the United States, which include limited awareness of the range of agriculture-related career opportunities (See Appendix III for definitions) available across

academia, government, industry, public and private sectors, declining interest in agriculture and in government, an insufficient supply of highly skilled, technologically sophisticated professionals to meet the FANH workforce demands, and, importantly, a gap in diversity in higher education.[2]

Due to the commonly held traditional view of agriculture and government, there is a need to develop messaging that highlights the relevance of agriculture to younger generations, including future scientists and thought leaders, as well as the critical opportunity to participate in public service and build a strong, effective, equitable, and accountable Federal Government. Such messaging should reflect the current and developing technologies and practices used in food and agricultural production and their deep connections to major global challenges, such as climate change, inequality, and a growing global population. Showcasing the vast and rewarding career opportunities currently available in food and agriculture may attract youth and other audiences to train and prepare for employment in the broader agricultural enterprise and related disciplines.[3] [4] [5]

Key components to solving workforce challenges, particularly those related to diversity, include: (1) implementing effective, responsive strategies to increase exposure to career disciplines related to food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences before, during, and after college; and (2) engaging audiences outside the college environment with creative options for training.

In the United States between 2020 and 2025, it is expected that employment opportunities will remain strong for new college graduates with interest and expertise in food, agriculture, renewable natural resources and the environment with an average of approximately 59,400 openings annually.[6] Employer demand for college graduates with degrees and expertise in these disciplines will exceed the number of available graduates.

With respect to the diversity gap in higher education, one workforce analysis found that enrollment in agriculture-related areas at 4-year institutions between 2010 and 2012 included just 7 percent Hispanic students, 5 percent Black students, and 4 percent Asian students.[7] More broadly, across the spectrum of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), from 2017 to 2019, Black professionals made up only 9 percent of STEM workers in the United States, which is lower than their 11 percent share of the overall U.S. workforce. The representation gap was larger for Hispanic professionals, who comprised only 8 percent of people working in STEM, while they made up 17 percent of the total U.S. workforce.[8]

Strategies focused on making education and training affordable and supporting more students through financial aid sources have important roles to play in closing this gap and must be

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[2] See https://nap.nationalacademies.org/read/26065/chapter/1
[3] See https://nap.nationalacademies.org/read/26065/chapter/1
[4] See https://www.businesstoday.com.my/2020/08/27/rebranding-agriculture-to-charm-the-youth/
[5] See https://modernfarmer.com/2016/04/usda-matthew-herrick-interview/
[6] See https://www.purdue.edu/usda/employment/
[7] See https://www.agcareers.com/newsletters/Enrollment & Employment Outlook 2013 Final.pdf
[8] See https://www.sciencenews.org/article/science-technology-math-race-ethnicity-gender-diversity-gap

addressed not only in 2- and 4-year institutions, but also in certification programs offered to the general public.

The role of USDA in providing effective, innovative, science-based public policy leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues is integral to the nation's food system, health, and economy. USDA strives to build and support a workforce that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve to foster trust, improve customer service, and achieve better outcomes. The Department is committed to supporting efforts which will grow and sustain diversity across all organizational units, particularly units which lead USDA's work for farm production and conservation, natural resources and environment, management, as well as research education and economics. USDA requires an engaged, diverse, and talented workforce to continue to address our most pressing societal challenges including climate change, equity, rural prosperity, nutrition insecurity, supply chain resilience natural resource conservation, and agricultural biosecurity. USDA encourages applications which increase student understanding of careers across USDA, provide mentoring and coaching on preparing and pursuing internship and career development opportunities within the Department, and build partnerships between USDA and organizations with a vested interest in building the future workforce in food, agriculture, natural resources, human sciences, and allied disciplines (See Appendix III for definitions).

Program Description
The NEXTGEN Program is focused on supporting and preparing students for careers in the food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences (See Appendix III for definitions) across research, education, and extension. The NEXTGEN program places special emphasis on federal government sector employment in order to close the gaps in diversity and also between supply and demand of professionals in these fields. Through meaningful, experiential learning experiences, scholarships, and student engagement activities, the NEXTGEN Program will support eligible institutions listed in Section 1006(b)(4)(A-E) of the Act to prepare students as well as other communities of learners to join the agricultural workforce as skilled, professional and/or scientific members of the sector. The primary areas of focus include:

1) **Paid experiential learning opportunities** (i.e., internships, fellowships, career development activities, apprenticeships, and experiential learning opportunities, such as mentoring, shadowing, hands-on-learning, interviews, peer-to-peer engagement) in food, agriculture, natural resource, and human sciences across research, education, and extension and at USDA for undergraduate and graduate students and other communities of learners;

2) **Scholarships** to support the recruitment, retention, and graduation of students completing a degree, certification, and/or credential in food, agriculture, natural resource, and human sciences;

3) **Non-formal education activities** that cultivate interest in and exposure to careers across food, agriculture, natural resources, human sciences, and allied disciplines among youth and other communities of learners on non-traditional academic or career paths, such as return-to-work program participants, older adults seeking employment, and formerly incarcerated individuals. Examples of activities include hosting a Jr. Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS}) Chapter, sponsoring

field trips, K-12 school gardens, extension demonstrations, service projects, or positive youth development activities, such as 4-H;

4) **Innovative recruitment, retention, and initiatives** to attract students to majors and career paths in food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences and improve understanding of the processes and pathways leading to training opportunities and employment in the federal sector, particularly at USDA.

The NEXTGEN Program encourages implementing innovative and culturally responsive strategies and partnerships to inspire youth, adult learners, and other targeted audiences to pursue career paths in food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences (FANH) (See Appendix III for definition). Based on a wide range of diverse stakeholder engagement and feedback, as well as lessons learned from previous efforts in and out of USDA, expanding partnerships and investments with not-for-profit institutions of higher education and organizations serving and working with underserved communities will result in cooperative and sustained development of the current and future workforce.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to plan targeted outreach to and recruitment of individuals from underserved communities (See Appendix III for definition) to participate in proposed activities and programs within their project approach.

Applicants are also encouraged to collaborate with 1862 Land Grant Universities, certified Non-Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture (NLGCA), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities, community colleges, technical and vocational schools and other accredited academic institutions with food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences including nutrition, rural sociology, public policy or public administration and allied disciplines programs, as appropriate and beneficial to meeting the objectives of proposed projects.

It is recommended that applicants propose efforts designed to build and sustain partnerships with organizations who have a vested public interest in developing a diverse workforce in food and agriculture, broadly speaking. These entities serve as connectors between the eligible institutions, their students, and USDA. Examples of these 'connector organizations' include MANRRS, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), the Association of 1890 Research Directors, the Association of Extension Administrators for the 1890 Land-Grant Universities, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, and the National Young Farmer Coalition. Additional 'connector organizations' may include non-profit organizations, workforce development centers, businesses, local school districts, and professional societies. Applicants may also pursue relationships and partnerships with programs, such as AmeriCorps and other national service programs, the Rural Partners Network, the Congressional Hunger Center and the U.S. Forest Service Youth Conservation Corps, to cultivate interest in pursuing careers in food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences (See Appendix III for definition).

The Next Gen Program seeks to support projects that:
1. provide resources and support to students and other communities of learners through the eligible institutions pursuing academic and career paths in food, agriculture, natural

resources, and human sciences (FANH) leading to increased graduation and credential completion rates and participation rates in internships, fellowships, career development opportunities, and experiential learning opportunities;

2. develop directed and meaningful interactions between research, education, and extension/outreach that will directly impact the recruitment and retention of students in FANH and USDA training and employment opportunities;

3. build awareness of the range of agriculture-related career opportunities in FANH and at USDA, as well as understanding of processes and pathways to Federal employment;

4. develop and facilitate meaningful domestic and/or international experiential learning opportunities which cultivate the acquisition of technical, leadership, and employability skills required to enter the FANH and USDA workforce;

5. create opportunities for skills-based training and certifications for high-demand occupations in FANH for audiences outside of the college environment including apprenticeship programs;

6. extend knowledge on the wide range of career opportunities across the diverse sectors of food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences and at USDA by training advisors on those opportunities and connecting participants to USDA personnel and internship and scholarship opportunities through career development activities;

7. attract and engage K-12 youth and other communities of learners that are underrepresented in FANH through non-formal education opportunities, including positive youth development activities, such as 4-H, AmeriCorps, and the Youth ~~Conversation~~ Conservation Corps;

8. increase awareness and understanding of diverse food and agricultural systems, and the rural economy both from local, regional, and global perspectives including indigenous traditional ecological knowledge;

9. build and sustain partnerships among organizations, that have a vested public interest in developing a diverse workforce in FANH; and/or

10. develop or adapt innovative teaching, training and advising practices, curricula, learning materials, recruitment, mentoring, retention, or branding strategies to attract students from underserved communities to majors and career paths in FANH;

11. increase knowledge and learning about effective student pathways and implementation of internship experiences, processes, and programs to inform USDA's commitment to attracting, hiring, and retaining an engaged, motivated, and diverse workforce.

Key Information 2: Program Key Information
2) Program Key Information
Program Code: NEXTG
Program Code Name: NEXTGEN Program
Financial Assistance Listing: 10.237
Project Type: Education
Grant Type: Standard Grant
Application Deadline: December 14, 2022
Number of Proposal Limit: Three proposals total per eligible institution regardless of funding tier selected.
Duration: 60 Months
Minimum Award Amount: $500,000
Maximum Award Amount:

Tier 1: ~~$20,000,000~~ $5,000,000
Tier 2: $10,000,000
Tier 3: ~~$5,000,000~~ $20,000,000

An eligible institution may not submit more than three applications to this program as a lead institution, regardless of funding tier selected. Prospective applicants/project directors are advised to contact their institutional office of sponsored projects regarding processes used to select proposals for submission.

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

A.   Available Funding
The amount available for NEXTGEN in FY2022 is approximately $250,000,000. USDA is not committed to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. 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.

New application: This is a technical assistance application that has not been previously submitted to NIFA. We will review all new applications to ensure they meet administrative requirements, and all applications will be competitively evaluated using the criteria described in Part V of this RFA and are subject to the due dates herein (see Appendix III for definitions).

C.   Project Types and Grant Types
   1. **Project Types**
      a) Student Scholarship Projects (SSP)
      SSP funded projects support the eligible institutions to develop scholarship programs that will recruit, retain, expand career awareness across the diverse sectors of food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences, including allied disciplines, and increase graduation rates of students and the participation rates in internship programs and experiential learning opportunities by (a) providing student financial support (full tuition, fees, books and other necessary materials or supplies, room and board, and other participant support costs~~, such as transportation, off campus housing allowances, child care, etc.~~) as well as mentoring, career counseling, coaching for internship identification, preparation, and application submission, and other retention support services each year for up to 4 years; or (b) providing special or focused scholarships to increase student recruitment, retention, and graduation in relevant academic majors or in certificate and credential programs. Scholarship programs should include plans to accommodate scholarship recipients who find it necessary to interrupt their program of study because of health, personal, or other reasonable non-academic and non-disciplinary cause(s).

      b) Experiential Learning Projects (ELP)
      ELP funded projects provide support for paid domestic or international experiential learning opportunities for students to promote a better awareness and understanding of the wide array of career opportunities across the agricultural enterprise including those at USDA, while developing their professional skills and training. ELP projects may include but are not limited to: (a) research, education, and extension projects focused on relevant topics at their own institutions OR institutions or organizations other than their own; (b) apprenticeships, internships, fellowships, or similar participatory learning experiences, practicums for Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) students, or externships away from their own institutions; learning experiences integrating USDA, such as coaching for the application process for USDA internship and career opportunities, projects, field trips or visits to USDA

locations, or coordinating educational seminars with USDA personnel; or (c) other relevant experiential learning activities or approaches. "On-the-ground," shadowing, or research projects are encouraged to develop interactions between research, academic, extension/outreach faculty and staff that enable students to understand basic and applied research translation and its impact in the lives of all Americans.

c) Outreach and Engagement Projects (OEP)

OEP funded projects provide support to institutions to: (a) Develop educational content, activities, media and digital campaigns, marketing materials, and opportunity matching services to enhance youth's understanding of the myriad career opportunities which exist across FANH and USDA; (b) involve youth and other communities of learners in the design, execution, and evaluation of meaningful activities that connect to FANH and USDA; (c) engage students as ambassadors for food, agriculture, natural resources, human sciences, and allied disciplines with youth and other community of learners, as well as other relevant activities; (d) build awareness of the range of agriculture-related career opportunities in FANH and at USDA; as well as understanding of processes and pathways to Federal employment.

ELP and SSP must incorporate both career development and leadership development components required for student participants. Career development activities may include mentoring, shadowing, and career exploration and student services, including tutoring, career counseling, academic advising, opportunity matching services and technologies, and other student services that would positively impact retention and graduation rates. Leadership development activities may include developing practical applications to increase understanding of leadership roles, including critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills; ethics and professionalism; interpersonal skills; working in teams; connecting the academic classroom experience with daily leadership roles and organizational activities; providing opportunities for students to participate in mentoring and shadowing; and organizing leadership institutes, workshops, or trainings.

Up to 25 percent of the proposed project budget may be used to develop or adapt innovative teaching practices, learning materials, branding strategies, or opportunity matching services that would be effective to attract students from underserved communities to majors and career paths in food, agriculture, and allied disciplines in FANH and USDA. These activities may include tools to support curriculum development or enhancement, scientific and training instrumentation, career counseling and opportunity matching technologies, or instruction delivery systems which clearly and directly benefit student success and learning.

2. **Grant Types**. Applicants must select from the following grant types:
   a. ~~**Tier 1:** supports multi-State/Tribal/Territory projects that include a partnership between the lead applicant and at least two other eligible institutions across a minimum of two states, territories, and/or tribal nations. Tier 1 projects must integrate the three project types and are expected to develop and/or replicate best practices, including student recruitment and support/retention practices, across partner~~

institutions. All partners must have a significant role in the collaboration and each institution's budget needs to be appropriate to support its activities. These grants will be funded at up to $20 Million for a period of five years.

a. **Tier 1:** supports single-institution projects that integrate at least two of the three project types and will be funded at up to $5 Million for a period of five years. Tier 1 applicants are welcome to partner with other institutions.

b. **Tier 2:** supports multi-institution projects to include a partnership between the lead applicant and at least one other eligible institution within or outside their home State. Tier 2 projects must integrate at least two of the three project types and are expected to develop and/or replicate best practices across partner institutions. All partners must have a significant role in the collaboration and each institution's budget needs to be appropriate to support its activities. These grants will be funded at up to $10 Million for a period of five years.

c. **Tier 3:** supports multi-State/Tribal/Territory projects that include a partnership between the lead applicant and at least two other eligible institutions across a minimum of two states, territories, and/or tribal nations. Tier 3 projects must integrate the three project types and are expected to develop and/or replicate best practices, including student recruitment and support/retention practices, across partner institutions. All partners must have a significant role in the collaboration and each institution's budget needs to be appropriate to support its activities. These grants will be funded at up to $20 Million for a period of five years.

d. **Tier 3:** supports single-institution projects that integrate at least two of the three project types and will be funded at up to $5 Million for a period of five years. Tier 3 applicants are welcome to partner with other institutions.

PART III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A.   Eligibility Requirements

Section 1006 of the American Rescue Plan, as amended by Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (Pub.L 117-169) defines eligible applicants as 1890 land-grant institutions, 1994 land-grant institutions, Alaska Native serving institutions and Native Hawaiian serving institutions, Hispanic-serving institutions [specifically, the certified Hispanic-serving agricultural colleges and universities (HSACUs)], and insular area institutions of higher education located in the U.S. territories.

Applicants for the NEXTGEN Program must meet all the requirements outlined in this RFA. Failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the application deadline will result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award. 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.

Duplicate or Multiple Submissions – submissions of duplicate or predominantly overlapping applications is not allowed. An eligible applicant may submit multiple applications on behalf of multiple project directors as long as they are not essentially duplications of the same project or portions of the same project to multiple programs. NIFA will disqualify both applications if an applicant submits duplicate or multiple submissions. For additional information or clarification please contact the NIFA POC listed in this RFA.

Limits on Submissions - an eligible institution may not submit more than **three** applications to this program as a lead institution, regardless of funding tier selected. Prospective applicants/project directors are advised to contact their institutional office of sponsored projects regarding processes used to select proposals for submission.

B.   Cost Sharing or Matching

No Match Required - The From Learning to Leading: Cultivating the Next Generation of Diverse Food and Agriculture Professionals Program has no matching requirement. NIFA will not factor matching resources into the review process as an evaluation criterion.

PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

A.   Notice of Intent

In order to facilitate the expedited review process of applications, a Notice of Intent (NOI) submission is highly encouraged, but not required, and must be submitted by an eligible institution. NOIs should include: a) the project types being addressed by the project outlined in Part II, Section C of this RFA; b) the specific grant type (i.e., tier 1, tier 2, tier 3) outlined in Part II, Section C of this RFA c) a brief description of the objectives and outcomes addressed by the project, and d) potential partnerships under the project. For detailed guidance on NOI submission, see the NEXTGEN Resource page ("NEXTGEN Notice of Intent Instructions" in the attachments list).

B.   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 and Grants 101. **Steps to Obtain Application Materials** provides instructions on how to obtain an electronic application. **Part III** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide contains detailed information regarding the 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.

Key Information 3: Steps to Obtain Application Materials
3) Steps to Obtain Application Materials
Step One: Register
> *New Users* to Grants.gov must register early with Grants.gov prior to submitting an application (Register Here).

Step Two: Download Adobe
> Download and Install Adobe Reader (see Adobe Software Compatibility for basic system requirements)

Step Three: Find Application
> Using this **Funding Opportunity Number, USDA-NIFA-ARPAED-009362**, search for application here: Opportunity Package.

Step Four: Assess Readiness
> Contact an Authorized Representative prior to starting an application to assess the organization's readiness to submit an electronic application.

Key Information 4: Help and Resources
4) Help and Resources
Grants.gov Online Support
Telephone support: 800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035
Email support: support@grants.gov

Self-service customer-based support: Grants.gov iPortal
Key Information: Customer service business Hours 24/7, except federal holidays.

Email: grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov

Key Information: Business hours: Monday thru Friday, 7a.m. – 5p.m. ET, except federal holidays.

C. Content and Form of the Application

The application guide is part of the corresponding application package for this RFA. The RFA overrides the application guide if there is a discrepancy between the two documents. NIFA will accept subsequent submissions to an application until the application deadline. However, 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. **Key Application Instructions** outlines other key instructions for applicants.

Key Information 5: Key Application Instructions
5) Key Application Instructions
   a. Attachments must be in a portable document format (PDF) format: Part IV
   b. Check the manifest of submitted files to verify attachments are in the correct format: Part IV
   c. Conduct an administrative review of the application before submission: Part IV
   d. Follow the submission instructions: Part IV.
   e. Provide an accurate email address, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R: Part V
   f. Contact the Grants.gov helpdesk for technical support and keep a record of the correspondence.
   g. Contact NIFA if applicant does not received correspondence from NIFA regarding an application within 30 days of the application deadline.

SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet. See **Part V § 2** of the Application Guide for the required certifications and assurances.

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

R&R Other Project Information Form. See **Part V** of the **Application Guide.**
   1. Field 7. Project Summary (PS)/Abstract. The PS must show how the project goals align with the project goals of the From Learning to Leading: Cultivating the Next Generation of Diverse Food and Agriculture Professionals Program. See **Part V** of the **Application Guide** for instructions and suggested templates. The summary must include the following:
       a. Project Title;
       b. Institutional Category;
       c. Project Types supported (SSP, ELP, OEP);
       d. Grant Type (Tier);
       e. Project Director (and any) Co-Project Director(s) (include institutional affiliation for each);
       f. Partner Institutions: list all partners that will share grant funding;

g. Provide a very concise (approx. 250 word) summary of your project to include intended beneficiaries, how the project goals align the program goals, an impact statement in quantitative and qualitative terms.

2. Field 8. Project Narrative (PN). The PN shall not exceed 20 pages of written text, inclusive of figures and tables. We have established this maximum (20 total pages) to ensure fair and equitable competition. Appendices to the PN are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. Do not add appendices to circumvent the page limit. Formatting shall be one-inch margins, no smaller than 12-point font, (Times New Roman or similar), and *1.5 - spaced*. Tables and figures may be single-spaced. Project narratives that are formatted incorrectly and/or exceed this page limit requirement may not be accepted for review. The PN must include all the following:

a. **Potential for Preparing and Supporting Students to Enter the Future Food and Agricultural Workforce:** Please explain how your project will promote advancements in building and sustaining the future workforce in food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences and build awareness of the processes and pathways leading to training opportunities and employment in the federal sector while advancing equity. Include the following:

   i. Introduction and justification: The introduction should include a clear statement of the goal(s) of the proposed project and how the proposed project will clearly identify and explain how the proposed project will address program priorities listed in Part I, Section B. Justify the need for the project components by identifying the target audience(s), level of study and project setting(s), and explaining their needs (critical barriers to recruiting, retaining, and graduating students in FANH and allied disciplines at their institutions, completing certification and/or credential programs, and/or creating awareness and interest in FANH and career pathways at USDA), programmatic gaps in existing programs the proposed project intends to address, and disciplines targeted.

   ii. Institutional Alignment: Discuss how the project will contribute to the achievement of the institution's long-term (five- to ten-year) strategic goals and advance USDA's goals to build and sustain a diverse workforce in food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences (See Appendix III for definition).

   iii. Innovation: Describe the application's creative or novel approaches to engaging, attracting and retaining students in food and agricultural sciences training to build and sustain the future workforce for FANR and allied disciplines and also facilitate improved understanding of processes and pathways leading to training opportunities and employment in the federal sector, particularly at USDA.

b. **Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages: The activities proposed to achieve each objective must be clearly stated and the approaches being applied to achieve each objective must be clearly described. Specifically, this section must include:**

   i. Description of Activities and Approach: Describe the activities, and the appropriateness of the approach for the target audience(s), for accomplishing the objectives of the project and plans for management of the project to ensure its proper and efficient administration. Describe how resources and personnel will be utilized to conduct the project.

ii. Cooperative Linkages/Partnership: If partnerships are proposed, a clear management plan must be provided that describes the roles and functions of all partnerships, collaborators and organizations involved in the proposed project and how they connect to project objectives. Include time allocated by each partner for attainment of objectives, key roles of each partner and collaborator, and the plan for administration of the proposed project. Describe the plans for coordination, communication, data-sharing and reporting among members of the project team and stakeholder groups. Describe the commitment of the project team to this project, and how the partnership and its impact will be sustained beyond the period of the award.

iii. List and describe all intended outcomes along with indicators to be tracked and monitored (e.g., changes in participant knowledge and awareness of careers in agriculture and training and employment opportunities at USDA, technical, leadership and employability skills; recruitment, retention, graduation, and placement rates; partnerships formed).

iv. Timeline: Provide a timeline to demonstrate the duration and the sequence of project objectives, activities and outcomes for each year of the project. Each objective may have multiple activities. Chart against a quarterly scale, so that the timeline depicts five years and 20 quarters.

v. Recruitment and Reach: Describe how will members of the target audience(s) be reached, recruited, and retained in the context of the project activities, including participant eligibility criteria and program participation requirements as applicable. Describe existing recruitment strategies, support services, student financial support, and other student resources currently available and to be developed at the institution or with partners and/or collaborators through this grant. Describe the career development and mentoring plan for students/trainees recruited as part of this grant. If including various tiers of students in the proposal, include separate sections for each educational level targeted, including those completing credentials. Examples of such mentoring include but are not limited to inclusion of peer mentors; mentors from academia, industry or government; or layered mentoring whereby a set of mentees are progressively mentored by others who may be at a higher level in their careers. Describe processes to ensure reasonable accommodations for program participants with disabilities or challenges with accessing program activities. Scholarship programs should include plans to accommodate scholarship recipients who find it necessary to interrupt their program of study because of health, personal, or other reasonable non-academic and non-disciplinary cause(s).

vi. Scalability: Discuss whether and how the approaches and efforts within this project can be adapted or scaled as a model for use across higher education institutions and other relevant organizations.

vii. Sustainability: Describe how may the project, its partnerships and collaborations, be sustained beyond the life of the grant (e.g., student support networks and engagement or other resources developed through this grant).

viii. viii. Potential Challenges: Describe pitfalls that may be encountered and limitations to

proposed activities, and how you will address the identified or anticipated challenges or pitfalls. Identify possible challenges to your proposed strategy for participant recruitment and how you plan to address those challenges.

c. **Key Personnel and Division of Labor:** Proposals must clearly identify the role of all key personnel, responsibilities for each member, and percent of time each will be dedicating to the project, describe the qualifications and experience relevant to the development, implementation, and evaluation of the proposed project. Proposal should describe project personnel expertise working with the target audience(s), particularly with mentoring, supervising and engaging students in experiential learning across research, education, and extension, and working with diverse populations (i.e., ethnically, racially, culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically). The project team should include members able to provide linguistic support as applicable or needed for the target audience(s).

d. **Outcome Evaluation Plan:** Proposals should include a clear internal evaluation plan which describes measures and methods for collecting and analyzing primarily student-focused outcomes and impacts, including metrics/indicators, to determine the extent to which the stated objectives have been achieved. Metrics to be captured include, but are not limited to the number of: scholarships provided, internships and fellowships completed, participants in career development activities, participants exposed, engaged and applying to USDA-specific learning and training opportunities. Please be as specific as possible in describing the linkages among activities, outputs, and different types of outcomes (e.g., changes in participant knowledge and awareness of careers in agriculture and training and employment opportunities at USDA, technical, leadership and employability skills; recruitment, retention, graduation, and placement rates; partnerships formed) and the relevance and potential impact on successfully preparing and supporting students and other communities of learners to enter the future food and agricultural workforce.

Note: Successful applicants will also be required to participate in a USDA-sponsored evaluation of the NEXTGEN Program.

3. Field 12, Add Other Attachments. See Part V of the Application Guide.

Letters of commitment must be provided from all partners (signed by the Authorized Representative of the partnering organization) stating that the partners involved have agreed to their stated roles in the project. In addition, letters of commitment should demonstrate that the partners involved have agreed to abide by the Data Management Plan that must be provided (see "Other Attachments" below). Letters from other organizations or people whose participation is important to the success of the project, committing those collaborators to specific roles, are also encouraged. Title the attachment(s) as 'Letter of Commitment – Organization Name' in the document header and save file as 'Letter of Commitment Organization Name'. The strength, specific roles, and nature of these partnerships, as described in these letters, will be carefully scrutinized by the panel with particular weight given to those that demonstrate equity and long-term sustainability of the partnerships. Other, more general letters of support (i.e., from those

who are not committing to a specific role in the project), are not needed and should not be included.

R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded). See **Part V** of the **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 **Application Guide**).

R&R Budget. See **Part V** of the **Application Guide**.
1. Match – No matching is required.
2. Indirect costs (IDC) – See Part IV § C of this RFA for funding restrictions regarding indirect cost, and **Part V** of the **Application Guide** for additional information.
3. Include the travel costs for the Project Director and any other key staff member(s) to attend at least one national Project Directors' meeting, if offered, in Washington, DC, or other announced location during the lifetime of the grant. While budgets should account for this travel, virtual or hybrid meetings may be considered based on local and national pandemic conditions.
4. The career development opportunities this program funds should be designed in ways that ensure students can focus on their education and career development rather than figuring out how to make ends meet. To that end, stipends to support students' experiential, academic learning activities outside of the traditional classroom are encouraged as long as such activities are clearly related to a student's degree program and are not extracurricular. Stipends may be requested for materials or supplies to adequately facilitate a student's broad exposure to research/field techniques and methodologies, as well as for reasonable travel expenses and per diem including other participant support costs related to student educational experiences (e.g., field trips, data collection, and scientific meetings) directly supporting this funded project.
5. Up to 25 percent of the proposed project budget may be used to develop or adapt innovative teaching practices, learning materials, or branding strategies that would be effective to attract students from underserved communities to majors and career paths in food, agriculture, and allied disciplines. These activities may include tools to support curriculum development or enhancement, scientific and training instrumentation or instruction delivery systems which clearly and directly benefit student success and learning.
6. Proposed budgets may be subject to adjustments by NIFA prior to final awards being made.

Data Management Plan. 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).

Supplemental Information Form. See **Part V** of the **Application Guide**.
1. Field 2. Program to which the applicant is applying. Enter the program name (NEXTGEN) and the program code **-** . Accurate entry is critical.
2. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List. See Part V of the Application Guide.

Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants. This is required for corporate applicants. See **Part VI § 2** of the **Application Guide** for a description of the term, "corporation." Corporate applicants are not eligible to apply.

D.   Funding Restrictions

~~The grantee may use a Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate if one has been established for their organization, may negotiate one, or elect to use the 10% de minimis rate outlined in 2 CFR 200.414. If the de minimis approach is chosen, the 10% rate must be applied consistently across all federal awards until the entity choses to negotiate an indirect cost rate.~~

Indirect Cost (IDC) not to exceed 30 percent of Total Federal Funds Awarded (TFFA) of the recipient. Section 1462(a) and (c) of the **National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA)** limits IDC for the overall award to 30 percent of Total Federal Funds Awarded (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 indirect cost rate and the indirect cost 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.

If the result of number one 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 the result of number two 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 indirect cost 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 (see **7 CFR 3430.52(b)**). Amounts exceeding the maximum allowable IDC are considered unallowable. See sections **408** and **410** of **2 CFR 200**.

The grantee may elect to use the 10% de minimis rate outlined in 2 CFR 200.414. If the de minimis approach is chosen, the 10% rate must be applied consistently across all federal awards until the entity choses to negotiate an indirect cost rate.

For further information, contact Kim Lai at **Kim.Lai@usda.gov**.

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 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**)**.

Peer Review Process:

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

1. the level of relevant experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant activities.
2. the need to include experts from various areas of specialization within relevant fields.
3. the need to include other experts (e.g., educators, youth development specialists, researchers, evaluators) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs.
4. the need to include experts from a variety of relevant organizational types and geographic locations.
5. the need to maintain a balanced composition with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution.
6. the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness of each application to students and other communities of learners.
7. the need to ensure institutional balance as part of the evaluation and awarding process.

After the peer review panel has completed its deliberations, the responsible program staff of NIFA will recommend the 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 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. **Potential for Preparing and Supporting Students to Enter the Future Food and Agricultural Workforce**. This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will have an impact on preparing and supporting a more diverse future food and agricultural workforce through a plan to recruit, retain (including financially supporting),

and graduate skilled students ready to join the agricultural workforce and also enter federal sector employment, particularly at USDA. Elements considered include alignment relevant, long-range institutional goals, alignment with USDA's Goals, identification of a problem or opportunity to be addressed, justification for the project, and innovation.

2. **Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages.** This criterion is used to assess the soundness of and alignment between the proposed objectives, activities, collaborations and partnerships, management plan, outcomes and timeline as they relate to the successful development and delivery of the proposed project. Factors include those identified in the project narrative. Emphasis is placed on the quality of support provided to the participants through their home institution and other partnerships and collaborative initiatives, and on the potential cooperative linkages likely to evolve as a result of this project.

3. **Institutional Capacity.** This criterion relates to the institution's capacity to perform the project and the degree to which the project will strengthen its student recruitment, retention and graduation capacity. Elements include the institution's commitment to the project, the adequacy of institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, materials and processes to ensure reasonable accommodations for program participants with disabilities or challenges with accessing program activities) available to carry out the project and plans for project continuation or expansion beyond the period of USDA support.

4. **Key Personnel**. This criterion relates to the adequacy of the number and qualifications of key persons who will develop and carry out the project, and the qualifications of project personnel who will provide for the assessment of project results and impacts and dissemination of these findings.

5. **Outcome Evaluation Plan**. This criterion is used to assess the proposed evaluation plan and program performance monitoring. Elements include the soundness of the proposed evaluation approach including delineation of appropriate objectives, methodology, plan of operation, timetable, logic model, expected products and results, performance metrics/targets, and dissemination plans. Factors include those identified in the project narrative.

6. **Budget and Cost-Effectiveness**. This criterion relates to the extent to which the total budget adequately supports the project and is cost-effective. Elements considered include the necessity and reasonableness of costs to carry out project activities and achieve project objectives; the appropriateness of budget allocations between the applicant and any collaborating institution(s); the sufficiency of student financial support; the adequacy of time committed to the project by key project personnel; and the degree to which the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes educational value for the dollar, and achieves economies of scale.

C.   Organizational Management Information.

Applicants must submit specific management information relating to an applicant prior to an award and update the information as needed. Applicants may only have to update their information if they had previously provided the 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 fiscally 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 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 awarded 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 applications and the projects outlined in this RFA (some are listed here: Federal Regulations). Unless specifically noted by statue or award-specific requirements, NIFA Policy Guide applies to all NIFA awards.

C. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements
The output and reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions (see Award Terms and Conditions for information about NIFA award terms). If there are any program or award-specific award terms, they will be identified in the award. In addition, the following are required for this program:

For new NIFA awards, grantees are required to submit project initiation information and annual and summary reports into NIFA's electronic, Web-based inventory system (REEport). This will facilitate both grantee submissions of initial award information and subsequent subcontracted project information, project outcomes, and provides transparency via public access to information on Federally funded projects.

Successful applicants will engage with a training and technical assistance provider for services offered which may include assistance in project development, grantsmanship training, project evaluation, and professional development. Activities might include, but are not limited to, project director meetings, conference meeting, telephone appointments, workshop training, peer to peer interaction, one on one training, curricula development, webinars, and/or videoconferencing.

Successful applicants will also be required to participate in USDA-sponsored evaluation activities of the NEXTGEN Program.

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. 48 CFR Part 31, Contract Cost Principles and Procedures;
6. Transfer of funds budgeted for participant support costs to other categories of expense (2 CFR 200.456 Participant support costs);
7. 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.
8. Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-federal entity; and
9. 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-

<u>0039</u>. This program is also not subject to the provisions of Executive Order 13175, which requires consultation with tribal officials.

APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACT

Program Contacts
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Erin Riley
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Ahlishia Shipley
Ahlishia.Shipley@usda.gov

For general questions related to:
1. Purpose and Priorities
2. Eligibility
Email NIFA.Workforce@usda.gov

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
3. Awards under this RFA, please email Awards@usda.gov
4. Indirect Costs Rates, please email Kim Lai at Kim.Lai@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
United States Department of Agriculture
2312 East Bannister Road, MS 10000
Kansas City, MO 64141-3061

APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

American Rescue Plan Act-ARPA or Act
Authorized Representative-AR
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.

Allied disciplines:

    Disciplines related to or complementary to food, agriculture, natural resources and related sciences, including but not limited to biology, chemistry, engineering, accounting, business, journalism, technology, etc.

Collaborator:

    A person or an organization that cooperates with the applicant in the conduct of the project but is not immediately connected to the management of the project.

Food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences:

    In the context of this program, food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences shall refer to basic, applied, and developmental research, extension, education, and labor activities across animal health, production, and well-being; plant health and production; animal and plant germ plasm collection and preservation; aquaculture; food safety; natural resource conservation and improvement; forestry, horticulture, and range management; nutritional sciences and promotion; agricultural production and processing; food science; agriculture and development economics, food sovereignty and food culture; urban agriculture; farm enhancement, including financial management, input efficiency, and profitability; family and consumer sciences; rural development, economic mobility, poverty, sociology, and rural demography; indigenous traditional ecological knowledge; youth development and agricultural education, including 4-H; agricultural marketing, risk management; information management and technology transfer related to agriculture biotechnology; food systems; and allied disciplines as well as general operations and administrative functions in public and private sector employment in food and agriculture, such as law, human resources, information technology, design and delivery, communications, public policy, public administration, finance, and diversity, inclusion, equity and access.

Institution of Higher Education, [20 U.S.C. § 1001(a)](#):

    An educational institution in any State that-For purposes of this chapter, other than subchapter IV, the term "institution of higher education" means an educational institution in any State that-

        (1) admits as regular students only persons having a certificate of graduation from a school providing secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such a certificate, or persons who meet the requirements of section 1091(d) of [title 20];

        (2) is legally authorized within such State to provide a program of education beyond secondary education;

        (3) provides an educational program for which the institution awards a bachelor's degree or provides not less than a 2-year program that is acceptable for full credit toward such a degree, or awards a degree that is acceptable for admission to a graduate or professional degree program, subject to review and approval by the Secretary;

        (4) is a public or other nonprofit institution; and

        (5) is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association, or if not so accredited, is an institution that has been granted preaccreditation status by such an agency or association that has been recognized by the Secretary for the granting of

preaccreditation status, and the Secretary has determined that there is satisfactory assurance that the institution will meet the accreditation standards of such an agency or association within a reasonable time.

Non-Profit Organization:

The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, 2 CFR part 200, defines the term "nonprofit organization" as follows: Nonprofit organization means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative, or other organization, not including institutions of higher education, that:

(a) Is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purposes in the public interest;

(b) Is not organized primarily for profit; and

(c) Uses net proceeds to maintain, improve, or expand the operations of the organization

Outcome:

A specific, verifiable change in people's actions or conditions. It defines how many people will change and what degree of change constitutes success.

Partnership:

A relationship involving close cooperation between parties having specified and joint rights and responsibilities in the management of the project.

Underserved Communities:

The term "underserved communities" refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, who have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life. In the context of the Federal workforce, this term includes individuals who belong to communities of color, such as Black and African American, Hispanic and Latino, Native American, Alaska Native and Indigenous, Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, and North African persons. It also includes individuals who belong to communities that face discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity (including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, gender non-conforming, and non-binary (LGBTQ+) persons); persons who face discrimination based on pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions; parents; and caregivers. It also includes individuals who belong to communities that face discrimination based on their religion or disability; first-generation professionals or first-generation college students; individuals with limited English proficiency; immigrants; individuals who belong to communities that may face employment barriers based on older age or former incarceration; persons who live in rural areas; veterans and military spouses; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty, discrimination, or inequality. Individuals may belong to more than one underserved community and face intersecting barriers.[9]

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[9] See https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/06/25/executive-order-on-diversity-equity-inclusion-and-accessibility-in-the-federal-workforce/