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The logo for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), featuring the letters "NIFA" in a large, white, serif font. The letters are set against a background of a stylized, orange and yellow landscape with rolling hills and a sun.

# **REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS**

## **Assistive Technology Program for Farmers with Disabilities (AgrAbility)**

FUNDING YEAR: Fiscal Year 2023

APPLICATION DEADLINE: January 19, 2023

ANTICIPATED FUNDING: \$4,385,000

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: USDA-NIFA-SLBCD-009542

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 10.500

LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE: Not Required

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

**Assistance Listing Number (ALN):** The AgrAbility RFA is listed in the Assistance Listings under 10.500.

**Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines**

Task Description	Deadline
Application:	5:00 P.M. Eastern, January 19, 2023
Letter of Intent:	Not Required
Applicant Comments:	Within six months from the issuance of this notice <i>(NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month)</i>

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

**Stakeholder Input.** The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (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](mailto:policy@usda.gov) (email is for comments only). **Please use the following subject line:** Response to the AgrAbility RFA

**Centers of Excellence.** The Farm Bill requires that NIFA recognize Centers of Excellence (COE) in research, extension, and education (REE) in the food and agricultural sciences. Applicants are encouraged to visit the NIFA’s [Centers of Excellence](#) webpage for information on COE designation process, including COE criteria, and a list of programs offering COE opportunities.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NIFA requests applications for the Assistive Technology Program for Farmers with Disabilities (AgrAbility) program for Fiscal Year 2023 (FY2023). The AgrAbility program works to increase the likelihood that farmers, farm workers and farm family members with disabilities, including veterans with disabilities, and their families who engage in farming, farm-related occupations, or are pursuing new farming opportunities, will experience success in agricultural production.

This RFA is being released prior to the passage of a full appropriations act for FY2023. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. The amount available for grants in FY2023 is approximately \$4,385,000. NIFA anticipates that \$540,689 will be available for support of new State and Regional AgrAbility Projects (SRAPs). The remainder of funds will be used to support eighteen active SRAP continuation awards and the National AgrAbility Program (NAP).

This RFA is soliciting applications for new State/Regional AgrAbility projects. Applications for SRAP continuation awards are not included in this solicitation and are completed separately.

For purposes of this funding opportunity, “farm” and “farming” are inclusive terms covering all aspects of the agricultural enterprise including land-based agriculture, animal production, aquaculture, fishing, forestry, horticulture, controlled environments, and urban production. AgrAbility customers are people engaged in farming, farm-related occupations, and their families.

This notice identifies the objectives for AgrAbility projects, deadlines, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions.

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

### **A. Legislative Authority**

The Assistive Technology Program for Farmers with Disabilities (AgrAbility) is authorized at [7 U.S.C. 5933](#) as amended.

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

The AgrAbility program works to increase the likelihood that individuals with disabilities, veterans, and their families engaged in the agriculture enterprise will become more successful (AgrAbility customers). The program supports cooperative projects in which the State Cooperative Extension, based at either 1862 or 1890 Land-Grant universities, subcontract to private non-profit direct service disability organizations to provide on-the-farm agricultural education and assistance directed at accommodating disability in farm operations for individuals with disabilities who are engaged in farming and farm-related occupations and their families.

Grants may be used to initiate, expand, or sustain programs that:

- (A) provide direct education and assistance to accommodate individuals with disabilities engaged in farming and farm-related occupations
- (B) provide on-the-farm technical advice concerning the design, fabrication, and use of agricultural and related equipment, machinery, and tools, and assist in the modification of farm worksites, operations, and living arrangements to accommodate individuals with disabilities engaged in farming, farm living and farm-related tasks
- (C) involve community and health care professionals, including Extension Service agents, in the early identification of farm and rural families that need services related to the disability of an individual
- (D) provide specialized education programs to enhance the professional competencies of rural agricultural professionals, rehabilitation and health care providers, vocational counselors, and other providers of service to individuals with disabilities and their families engaged in farming or farm-related occupations
- (E) mobilize volunteer resources and networks, including peer counseling among farmers with disabilities, to accommodate individuals with disabilities with their farming and farm-related activities.

The AgrAbility program supports rural communities in the United States by:

1. supporting cooperative programs between State Cooperative Extension Service agencies and private nonprofit disability organizations to provide on-the-farm agricultural education and assistance directed at accommodating disability in farm operations
2. enabling national private nonprofit disability organizations to provide technical assistance, training, information dissemination and other activities to support community-based direct service programs of on-site rural rehabilitation and assistive technology for individuals (including veterans) with disabilities, and their families, who are engaged in farming or farm-related occupations or, in the case of veterans with disabilities, who are pursuing new farming opportunities.

The AgrAbility program is aligned with the following FY2022–FY2026 [USDA Strategic Goals](#) :

1. **Strategic Goal 2:** Ensure America’s Agricultural System is Equitable, Resilient, and Prosperous
2. **Strategic Goal 3:** Foster an Equitable and Competitive Marketplace for All Agricultural Producers
3. **Strategic Goal 5:** Expand Opportunities for Economic Development and Improve Quality of Life in Rural and Tribal Communities

### **C. Program Area Description**

NIFA is soliciting applications under the following AgrAbility program areas:

#### State and Regional AgrAbility Projects (SRAPs)

Addressing the specialized needs of AgrAbility customers, the program builds service capacity on national, regional, state, and local levels through education and networking. The program provides direct assistance to individuals with disabilities who engage in farming and farm-related occupations. The form of assistance for the AgrAbility customer is dependent on the immediate needs that may be inadequately addressed by health, farm, and government service providers. AgrAbility projects use marketing activities to direct the public to initiatives in AgrAbility-related education, networking, and assistance.

The AgrAbility program funds projects that deliver education, networking, direct assistance, and marketing activities with following elements:

#### **1. Education**

- a. Within the context of production agriculture, learning objectives focus on enhancing competencies necessary to accommodate disabilities and avoid secondary injuries in persons with disabilities.
- b. Audience includes farmers, rural agricultural professionals, rehabilitation and health care providers, vocational counselors, and other providers of service to individuals with disabilities and their families who engage in farming or farm-related occupations. This element applies also to veterans with disabilities and their families who engage in farming, farm-related occupations, or are pursuing new farming opportunities.
- c. Delivery formats include authoring or adapting printable resources, presentations delivered in person or remotely, and recorded presentations that may encourage audience interaction, and internet presence. Materials must meet or exceed the requirements of [Section 508](#) of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 794d), as amended.
- d. Projects must have means to appraise efficacy of AgrAbility educational efforts.

#### **2. Networking**

- a. Objectives encourage the sharing of information among, and the provision of services, value, or funds from, individuals or organizations not employed by AgrAbility.
- b. Partners include customers, peer support, volunteer groups, university student groups, stakeholders, non-profits, public institutions, and private funding organizations.
- c. Delivery formats include the donation of goods and services of direct benefit

- to AgrAbility customers.
- d. Projects must have means to appraise economic value of services rendered to AgrAbility and its customers.
- 3. Direct Assistance**
- a. Objectives focus on the early identification of farm and rural families who need services related to the disability of an individual and to provide individualized consultative services that increase the likelihood that AgrAbility customers and their farm operations are successful.
  - b. Audience includes AgrAbility customers, farm workers, veterans with disabilities, and their families who engage in farming, farm-related occupations, or are pursuing new farming opportunities.
  - c. Delivery formats include technology selection advice, accessibility and ergonomic recommendations, life activities, guidance on planning and operations, and advocacy to obtain service and financial aid. Assistance may occur in person or remotely.
  - d. Projects must have means to appraise success following intervention.
- 4. Marketing**
- a. Initiate public and targeted marketing plans to communicate to key audiences the services of the SRAP including information on educational opportunities, direct assistance, and promoting networking.
  - b. Audience includes the general public.
  - c. Delivery formats include public appearances with displays and the production or distribution of program awareness materials; press releases; public service announcements; print advertisements; webinars, web pages with awareness content; newsletters; or electronic notices. Materials must meet or exceed the requirements of [Section 508](#) of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. 794d), as amended.
  - d. Projects must show the linkage of marketing activities with registration, requests for information and consultation, or network growth.

All delivery formats, training and educational materials and products should be marketed as being part of the AgrAbility program and use the AgrAbility logo (Figure 1). Other branding on any materials produced through this grant requires consent of the NIFA program contact.

**Figure 1: AgrAbility Logo**



**Table 2: State and Regional AgrAbility Projects Key Information**

Title	Description
Program Code:	LQ
Program Code Name:	AgrAbility
CFDA Number	10.500
Project Type:	Extension Projects
Grant Type:	Standard Grants
Application Deadline	January 19, 2023
Grant Duration:	48 Months
Anticipated # of Awards:	3
Maximum Award Amount:	Estimated at \$183,230 per year

**State and Regional AgrAbility Projects (SRAPs)**

SRAPs operate within a geographic area defined by states or regions. SRAPs within the same State may function independently of each other. States with insufficient potential clientele to merit individual AgrAbility projects or seeking to partner with 1862, 1890, and/or 1994 Land-Grant Universities, or Minority-Serving and/or Hispanic-Serving institutions outside their state, may submit regional, multi-state proposals.

The lead (i.e., primary) institution on a SRAP grant must partner and subcontract to a private non-profit direct service disability organization.

Applicants proposing to serve remote and/or diverse customer populations may wish to form partnerships that include one or more Land-Grant Institutions, Non-Land-Grant Institutions, Hispanic-serving Institutions, public institutions, or private non-profit organizations necessary to effectively serve the entire population eligible to receive AgrAbility services.

SRAP applicants may propose projects with budgets not to exceed \$183,230 per year for a project duration of four years (total funding: \$732,920). The project period should begin approximately July 30, 2023. It is anticipated that FY2023 appropriations will fund the awarded project's first-year budget.

Funding levels will be adjusted based on technical review of the projects and budget constraints. Multi-year continuation funding will depend on the availability of funds and the demonstration of satisfactory annual progress.

In addition to delivering education, networking, direct assistance, and marketing activities, SRAP commitments must include:

1. Attending at least one AgrAbility National Training Workshop with at least one representative from the lead university and at least one representative from the non-profit partner
2. Participating in efforts to collect project outcome and impact data across AgrAbility projects by the NAP
3. Submitting annual and final reports to NIFA.

SRAP applicants may request, within their proposed budgets and budget justification, funds to pay for these commitments.

### **National AgrAbility Project**

All SRAPs receive technical assistance and networking support from the National AgrAbility Project (NAP). SRAPs also submit cumulative client demographics data and monthly activity reports to NAP. NIFA views the relationship between the SRAPs and the NAP as critical to the success of the AgrAbility program overall. Because SRAPs synergistically interact with NAP, failure to comply with NAP's operating, documentation, and reporting requirements will result in NAP suspending service and NIFA suspending funding to the non-compliant SRAP. Prior to applying for AgrAbility funding from NIFA, applicants must contact NAP for information concerning standard operating procedures, best field practices, and access to the NAP's library of AgrAbility-related materials. Since FY 2008, NAP has been led by Purdue University (renewed in 2021). Applicants may contact NAP at:

National AgrAbility Project; c/o Purdue University; Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering; 225 S. University St.; West Lafayette, IN 47907-2093 Voice/TT (800) 825-4264; Fax: (765) 496-1356; Web: [www.agrability.org](http://www.agrability.org).

The lead applicant on a proposal must collaborate on the project with, and subcontract part of work to, a private non-profit organization providing direct service to individuals with disabilities. The program encourages collaboration within or across state lines on joint, single grant applications by Land-Grant Institutions (1862, 1890, and 1994), non-land-grant institutions, and small or medium sized colleges and universities. All applications must show that all participants on a joint SRAP proposal have a substantial and equitable involvement throughout the life of the project.

Projects are encouraged to explore coordination with existing assistive technology institutions and programs in their state and region in order to leverage, expand, and enhance access to existing, available state-wide assistive technology resources for AgrAbility customers and clients.

## **PART II. AWARD INFORMATION**

### **A. Available Funding**

This RFA is being released prior to the passage of a full appropriations act for FY2023. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. The amount available for grants in FY2023 is approximately \$4.38 million. NIFA anticipates that \$540,689 will be available to support new SRAPs.

The remainder of FY2023 funds will be used to support continuation awards for eighteen SRAPs and the NAP. Applications for the SRAP/NAP continuing awards will be solicited via a separate request.

USDA is not committed to fund any applications 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 in response to this RFA.

### **B. Application Restrictions**

Applications for FY2023 is limited to the following application types:

1. *New application*: New applications will be evaluated using the criteria described in [Part V](#) of this RFA (see [Appendix III](#) for definition).
2. *Resubmitted application*: Resubmitted applications must include the response to the previous review panel summary and are subject to the same criteria as a new application. Resubmitted applicants must enter the NIFA-assigned proposal number of the previously submitted application in the *Federal Field (Field 4)* on the application form (see [Appendix III](#) for definition).
3. *Renewal application*. Renewal applications are not being accepted for this program. SRAPs with expiring awards should submit their application as a new application.

### **C. Project and Grant Types**

The AgrAbility program supports two Extension project types: State and Regional AgrAbility Projects (SRAPs) and the National AgrAbility Project (NAP). NIFA is soliciting applications for new SRAP projects for FY2023.

### **Grant Types**

Applicants for SRAPs must select Standard Grants only.

### **D. Ethical Conduct of Funded Projects**

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

## **PART III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

### **A. Eligibility Requirements**

Applications must be submitted by the [Cooperative Extension](#) at 1862 and 1890 Land-Grant Colleges and Universities including the University of the District of Columbia, Tuskegee University, West Virginia State University, and Central State University.

Applicants must partner with private non-profit organizations providing direct service to individuals with disabilities. Applications must include commitment letters from the non-profit partner organization.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply (such as 1994 Land-Grant Colleges, Hispanic-Serving Institutions) provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. Also, the 1862 and 1890 Land-Grant Institutions may partner with each other and/or other Land-Grant Institutions (e.g., 1994 Land-Grants) and Non-Land-Grant Institutions within their state or region on joint proposals. Applications proposing such partnerships must include commitment letters from all partnering organizations.

Applicants for the AgrAbility program must meet all the requirements in this RFA. Failure to meet the eligibility criteria by the application deadline may result in exclusion from consideration or preclude NIFA from making an award.

***Duplicate or Multiple Submissions.*** Duplicate or multiple submissions are not allowed. NIFA will disqualify both applications if an applicant submits duplicate or multiple submissions.

For those new to Federal financial assistance, NIFA's [Grants Overview](#) provides information about grants and other resources to help understand the Federal awards process.

### **B. Cost Sharing or Matching**

***No Match Required*** - The AgrAbility program has **NO** matching requirement.

### **C. Centers of Excellence**

Pursuant to [Section 7214 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 \(Pub. L. 113-79\)](#), NIFA will recognize and prioritize Center of Excellence (COE) applicants that carry out research, extension, and education activities in the food and agricultural sciences. A COE is composed of one or more of the following entities that provide financial or in-kind support to the COE.

1. State agricultural experiment stations
2. Colleges and universities
3. University research foundations
4. Other research institutions and organizations
5. Federal agencies and National Laboratories
6. Private organizations, foundations, or corporations
7. Non-profit organizations
8. Individuals; or
9. Any group consisting of two or more of the entities described in (1) through (8).

## PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

### A. Method of Application

Applicants must apply to this RFA electronically through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov); no other method or response is accepted. The electronic application for this RFA and additional resources are available on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and [Grants 101](#). **Table 3** provides instructions on how to obtain an electronic application. The [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) contains detailed information regarding the [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) registration process.

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

Steps	Action
Step One: Register	<i>New Users</i> to <a href="https://www.grants.gov">Grants.gov</a> must register early with <a href="https://www.grants.gov">Grants.gov</a> prior to submitting an application ( <a href="#">Register Here</a> ).
Step Two: Download Adobe	Download and Install <a href="#">Adobe Reader</a> (see <a href="#">Adobe Software Compatibility</a> for basic system requirements)
Step Three: Find Application	Using this Funding Opportunity Number, <b>USDA-NIFA-SLBCD-009542</b> , search for Grant Opportunities at <a href="https://www.grants.gov">Grants.gov</a>
Step Four: Assess Readiness	Contact your Authorized Representative prior to starting an application to assess the organization’s readiness to submit an electronic application.

**Table 4:** Help and Resources

Grants.gov Support	NIFA Support
<a href="#">Grants.gov Online Support</a> Telephone support: 1-800-518-4726 (US) or 1-606-545-5035  Email support: <a href="mailto:support@grants.gov">support@grants.gov</a> Self-service customer based support: <a href="#">Grants.gov iPortal</a>  Customer service business hours 24/7, except <a href="#">federal holidays</a> .	Email: <a href="mailto:grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov">grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov</a>  Please use “AgrAbility - USDA-NIFA-SLBCD-009542” as the subject line.  Business hours: Monday thru Friday, 7a.m. – 5p.m. ET, except <a href="#">federal holidays</a> .

### B. Content and Form of the Application

The [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) is part of the corresponding application package for this RFA. The RFA overrides the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) if there is a discrepancy between the two documents. NIFA will accept subsequent submissions to an application until the application deadline. Applications that do not meet the requirements or are incomplete will not be reviewed. NIFA will assign a proposal number to all applications that meet the requirements of this RFA. Applicants must refer to the proposal number when corresponding with NIFA. **Table 5** outlines other key instructions for applicants.

**Table 5:** Key Application Instructions

Instruction
All documents and attachments must be in a portable document format (PDF) format.
Check the application and submitted files to verify that the application is complete, and the attachments are in the correct format.
Conduct an administrative review of the application before submission.
Follow the RFA guidance and submission instructions.
Provide accurate email addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R.
Contact the <a href="https://www.grants.gov">Grants.gov</a> helpdesk for technical support, and keep a record of the correspondence.
Contact NIFA if applicant does not received correspondence from NIFA regarding an application within <b>30</b> days of the application deadline.

See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) for the required certifications and assurances.

***SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet***

***SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)***

***R&R Other Project Information Form.***

Field 7. Project Summary (PS). PS is limited to one, single spaced page and must provide the following information, in the order listed below:

1. Project Title
2. List of Project Directors (PDs) and Co-PDs with their affiliations
3. List of collaborating institutions, organizations, or farmer groups
4. Concise description of the project including alignment to AgrAbility goals
5. Funding amount requested per year (2023, 2024, 2025, and 2026) and in total (4 years)
6. List of any previous or current AgrAbility projects that PD or co-PD(s) have led in the past (list Project Director and award number; 20XX-41590-XXXXX)
7. Proposal type (New or Resubmission).

**Field 8.** Project Narrative (PN) for State and Regional AgrAbility Projects.

Please include a one-page Table of Contents in the project narrative which will not count towards the narrative page limitation.

Applicants resubmitting an application must include a response to reviewer comments not to exceed one page at the front of the PN. This does not count towards the page limit for the PN.

The PN must not exceed **20 1.5 line spaced** pages of written text and up to **4** additional pages for figures and tables (24 pages total). The font size for narrative text and figures/tables should be no smaller than 11 point Times New Roman. The page limits ensure fair and equitable competition. Appendices to the PN are allowed if they are directly relevant to the proposed project; for example, letters of commitment or support may be collected in an Appendix. Do not add appendices to circumvent the page limit. In formatting the PN, indicate the Section letter and number in your response, e.g., type “A.1”, “A.2”, etc., before your response to each question.

Please do not combine two or more questions or refer to another section of the Project Narrative in your response, such as indicating that the response for B.2 is in C.7. The PN must include all the following:

### **Section A: Introduction - Statement of Need and Significance of the Proposed SRAP**

Describe the nature and magnitude of the issue your SRAP is seeking to address. Provide the most recent relevant data for the State/Region in which your proposed SRAP will be implemented, including data on the incidence of injuries and health issues among the farming population. Provide references for data. Explain and substantiate any assumptions made.

1. Briefly describe ongoing or recently completed programs available to farmers with disabilities in the state(s) in which your proposed SRAP will operate.
2. Describe how your proposed SRAP fits within the context of those other State-level activities. Will your SRAP be duplicating/adding to/enhancing any existing/completed efforts with farmers? What is the expected public value/state or regional significance of what you are proposing to do?
3. Prior AgrAbility Accomplishments: If the Project Director (PD) and/or Co-PDs are involved/have been involved in leading SRAPs currently/previously funded by NIFA's AgrAbility program, add to the Introduction section a subheading "Prior AgrAbility Accomplishments" and in no more than two (2) pages provide the following:
  - a) A brief description of the project(s), focusing on project accomplishments in the areas of direct assistance, education, marketing, and networking.
  - b) Provide a brief description of what was learned from the past project(s), what can be improved upon, and how those lessons and improvements are being incorporated into the current application to make the project more effective and successful at meeting program goals.
  - c) Description of efforts to contribute to NAP-led national evaluation of SRAPs' outcomes and impacts (specifically client demographics data and Quality of Life Survey). If the SRAP was not able to make such contributions to date, briefly describe challenges faced and how those challenges will be addressed should your proposal be recommended for funding in FY2023.
  - d) If your SRAP had a gap in funding from NIFA, explain how and at what level the SRAP was sustained since it last received funding from NIFA.

### **Section B: Proposed Approach**

1. Clearly identify farming population(s) your proposed SRAP will reach out to and serve. In addition to farmers with disabilities in general, indicate if your SRAP will seek to serve specific farmer groups such as aging farmers, beginning farmers with disabilities, veterans with disabilities, women farmers with disabilities, and/or minority or underserved populations. Support for identifying these specific groups must be clearly reflected in the data and estimates provided for the state(s) in which the proposed SRAP will operate.
2. Provide an estimate for how many new and how many returning farmers with disabilities that the project expects to serve directly during each year of the proposed project. Indicate what percentage of your SRAP clients, per year, will be from groups identified in Section B.1.
3. How will farmers with disabilities be identified and how will they be recruited to receive direct assistance from your SRAP?
4. If proposing to work with specific minority or historically underserved farmer groups,

describe prior experience the SRAP team has had in addressing the needs of that target audience. Describe the team's ability and readiness to provide appropriate (i.e., ethnically-, racially-, linguistically- and socio- economically-sensitive) education, training, and outreach. For example, if you will be serving Spanish-speaking farmers or Native American communities, how will you ensure that your outreach and services are culturally appropriate, and linguistically accurate?

5. Provide a clear description of the activities you are proposing to undertake for each of the four (4) program objectives addressed in Part 1, Section C of the RFA (i.e., Direct Assistance, Education, Networking, and Marketing). All activities listed under an objective must be grouped by project year (FY2023, FY2024, FY2025, and FY2026) in the sequence to be performed. The sum of activities under each objective must lead to completion of that objective within the 4-year maximum project duration. In addition, for each activity, indicate the following:
  - a) Which target audience is the intended beneficiary?
  - b) What are expected/desired result(s)/outcome(s) of the activity?
  - c) How will the results, outcomes, deliverables, and impact be monitored, captured, and measured?
  - d) How results will be used and by whom?
  - e) What are the possible limitations to the proposed approach, and what is the contingency plan to mitigate them?
6. Show how your project will appraise the efficacy of educational efforts, successes experienced following intervention, economic value of services to AgrAbility and its customers, and the link between marketing activities and successes with registration, requests for information and consultation, and networking.
7. Show how your activities support the [National AgrAbility Project](#), such as: submission of client demographic data to assess national outreach of the AgrAbility program; monthly contributions to the AgrAbility e-Note Newsletter; participating, if feasible, in the Quality of Life (QoL) Survey; and attending the annual AgrAbility National Training Workshop.

### **Section C: Project Performance Assessment Plan**

Project performance assessment plans allow projects to annually review outcomes to inform, refine and adjust future project plans as needed. Applicants to the AgrAbility program need to submit a plan for monitoring and measuring performance. The plan must include the following elements:

1. Logic Model. A logic model, a theory of change or alternative schematic that illustrates the causal linkages between planned activities and desired outcomes. An example of a logic model template and explanation of its components can be found at: <https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/integrated-programs-logic-model-planning-process>.
2. Timeline. The timeline shows the duration and the sequence of project activities and division of labor. Each objective might have multiple activities. Chart against a quarterly scale, so that the timeline depicts 4 years and 16 quarters.
3. Performance Assessment. Indicate the team member who will provide the project performance assessment oversight. NIFA encourages SRAPs to include an expert or evaluator who can help design the monitoring plan and conduct outcomes reporting. Indicate the amount of funding that will be set aside for monitoring, performance measurement, and outcomes reporting.

4. Data management. Describe planned interface with the non-profit disability organization partner and NAP concerning client demographic data and the Quality of Life Survey. SRAPs must also comply with privacy guidelines, and the [Federal Assistance Policy Guide](#) (2021, Page 81) for NIFA awards mandates that personally identifiable information must be protected.

#### **Section D: Institutional Capacity, Division of Labor and Management Plan**

1. Identify your non-profit direct service disability organization partner. Provide justification for selection of the non-profit disability organization partner. Clearly state the organization's previous and current work that make it a good fit for the proposed project. If the non-profit organization has worked with/served farming communities in the past, in general, and farmers with disabilities, in particular, please indicate so and describe how the organization's past experiences and successes will be used to ensure quality service for your SRAP customers.
2. Briefly describe the ability of your institution and team to meet the gaps and limitations in services by detailing your accomplishments from similar projects and your experience serving the identified farmer audience.
3. Identify other partners on the proposed project and briefly indicate past experiences and impacts that will contribute to the success of your proposed SRAP.
4. Describe the fiscal and administrative oversight to be provided by the applicant and the non-profit disability organization partner.
5. Provide a summary of key staff that will manage the proposed SRAP, their individual roles on the project, and percent of time they will be dedicating to the project. If the percentages are expected to change in Years 2, 3, or 4 of the project, please indicate and provide a brief explanation.
6. Describe how the relationship between the Cooperative Extension System and the non-profit disability organization partner will be managed. If the proposed SRAP represents a collaboration between two or more partners, provide an explanation for managing the relationship.

#### **Section E: Project Sustainability Plan**

1. Identify opportunities (e.g., resources, trainings, collaborations) that may be leveraged or enhanced that will help sustain program operations after NIFA funding has expired. Include the activities in the timeline.
2. Describe the process to track project sustainability.

#### **Section F: [Centers of Excellence](#) Justification (if applicable)**

For consideration as a COE, please provide a brief justification statement, as part of your Project Narrative and within the page limits, which describes how you meet the criteria of a COE:

1. The ability to ensure coordination and cost effectiveness by reducing unnecessarily duplicative efforts in the research, teaching, and extension activities;
2. The ability to leverage available resources by using public-private partnerships among agricultural industry groups, institutions of higher education, or local/state/federal government in the proposed research and/or extension activities;
3. The planned scope and capability to implement teaching initiatives that increase awareness and effectively disseminate solutions to target audiences through extension activities; and

4. The ability or capacity to increase the economic returns to rural communities by identifying, attracting, and directing funds to high-priority agricultural issues in support of and as a result of the implementation of the AgrAbility project.

Additionally, where practicable (not required), COE applicants should describe proposed efforts to improve teaching capacity and infrastructure at colleges and universities including certified [Non-Land-Grant Colleges of Agriculture \(NLGCA\)](#), cooperating forestry schools, and schools of veterinary medicine.

**Field 12**, Add Other Attachments. See the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

***R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)***

***R&R Personal Data.*** This information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award.

***R&R Budget.***

1. Match – No Match Required
2. Indirect costs (IDC) – Not allowed.
3. ***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.

***Supplemental Information Form.***

1. Field 2. Program to which the applicant is applying. Enter the program name AgrAbility and the program code LQ. Accurate entry is critical.
2. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.

### **C. Funding Restrictions**

Successful applicants must not use grant funds awarded under the authority of this RFA to renovate or refurbish research, education, or extension space; purchase or install fixed equipment in such space; or to plan, repair, rehabilitate, acquire, or construct buildings or facilities.

**No Indirect Cost (IDC).** IDC is not authorized for this RFA.

## PART V. APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

### A. NIFA's Evaluation Process

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

#### **Scientific Peer Review Process:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **B. Evaluation Criteria**

Each reviewer provides a written evaluation that entails two levels of assessment. First, the reviewer summarizes how well the application addressed each evaluation criterion. After the application has been assessed for strengths and weaknesses of each criterion, the reviewer then evaluates the overall likelihood that the project will have significant outcomes. The written reviews are used in panel discussions with other reviewers. Reviewers come to consensus on the rating and ranking of proposals. A complete description of NIFA's peer review process can be found at: <https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/nifa-peer-review-process-competitive-grant-applications>.

NIFA will use the evaluation criteria listed below in order of importance to review applications submitted in response to the RFA.

### **1. Statement of Need and Significance of the Proposed SRAP**

This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will have an impact upon and advance the quality of life for farmers with disabilities and how the proposed project is of public value and significance, how it addresses one or more critical state or regional needs for farmers with disabilities.

### **2. Proposed Approach**

This criterion relates to the development and delivery of activities and services to farmers with disabilities, their families, and communities. The PN must address the four program objectives (direct assistance, education, marketing, and networking) and include activities with NAP guidance and participation.

### **3. Project Performance Assessment**

This criterion relates to program performance outcomes, monitoring, and assessment. Elements include the efficacy of the approach including delineation of appropriate objectives, methodology, plan of operation, timetable, logic model or theory of change, expected products and results, performance metrics and targets, and a results dissemination plan.

### **4. Institutional Capacity, Division of Labor and Management Plan**

This criterion relates to the institution's capability to perform the project and to the degree to which key personnel have expertise and management plan in place to successfully carry out the proposed work. Letters of Support or Commitment from key project partners must state the expected roles, deliverables, and readiness to collaborate.

### **5. Budget Justification**

This criterion relates to how well the requested funding supports the project such as the necessity and reasonableness of costs for activities; the appropriateness of budget allocations between the applicant and any collaborating institution(s); 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, achieves economies of scale, and focuses expertise and activity.

## **6. Project Sustainability Plan**

This criterion relates to the institution's readiness to develop, implement, and track progress on their SRAP sustainability plan.

### **C. Centers of Excellence**

In addition to evaluating applicants using the criterion listed in [Part V § B](#) of this RFA, NIFA will use the COE standards described in this RFA to evaluate applicants that rank highly meritorious and requested to be considered as a COE. In instances where applicants are found to be equally meritorious with the application of a non-COE applicant, NIFA will prioritize the COE applicant meeting the COE criteria. NIFA will effectively use the COE prioritization as a "tie breaker." Applicants that rank highly meritorious but who did not request consideration as a COE or who are not deemed to have met the COE standards may still receive funding.

Applicants that meet the COE requirements will have the COE designation in their notice of award. Entities recognized as COE will maintain that distinction for the duration of their period of performance or as identified in the terms and conditions of that award.

### **D. Organizational Management Information**

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

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

**Award Notice.** Successful applicants will be notified by email. The award documents provide pertinent instructions and information for

1. [Project Initiation & Grant Management](#)
2. Federal Award Information [2 CFR 200.211](#)
3. [NIFA's Terms and Conditions](#)

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

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

## **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,
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. 0524-0039](#).

## APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACT

### Contact us:

NIFA has authorized most of its staff to work remotely; therefore, correspondence should occur electronically or by telephone.

### Program Contacts

Dr. Victoria Finkenstadt

[Victoria.Finkenstadt@usda.gov](mailto:Victoria.Finkenstadt@usda.gov)

816-520-8456

Ms. Tiffany Woodson

[Tiffany.Woodson@usda.gov](mailto:Tiffany.Woodson@usda.gov)

202-557-8994

Dr. Crystal Kyle

[Crystal.Kyle@usda.gov](mailto:Crystal.Kyle@usda.gov)

816-908-3177

For administrative questions related to

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

### U.S. Postal Mailing Address:

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

U.S. Department of Agriculture

P.O. Box 419205, MS 10000

Kansas City, MO 64141-6205

### Courier/Package Delivery Address:

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

U.S. Department of Agriculture

2312 East Bannister Road, MS 10000

Kansas City, MO 64141-3061

## APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative - AFRI  
Authorized Representative - AR  
Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 - AREERA  
Code of Federal Regulations - CFR  
Coordinated Agricultural Project - CAP  
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance - CFDA  
Center of Excellence - COE  
Data Management Plan - DMP  
National AgrAbility Project - NAP  
National Institute of Food and Agriculture - NIFA  
Project Director - PD  
Project Narrative - PN  
Project Summary - PS  
Request for Application - RFA  
Research, Education, and Economics - REE  
State and Regional AgrAbility Projects - SRAP  
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.

**Continuation Award:**

An award instrument by which NIFA agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined period of time with a statement of intention to provide additional support at a future date, provided that performance has been satisfactory, appropriations are available for this purpose, and continued support would be in the best interest of the federal government and the public.

**Matching:**

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

**New Application:**

An application not previously submitted to a program.

**Renewal Application:**

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

**Resubmitted Application:**

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

**Resubmitted Renewal Application:**

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