



# REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

## Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grants Program

FUNDING YEAR: Fiscal Year 2023

APPLICATION DEADLINE: April 13, 2023

ANTICIPATED FUNDING: \$459,000

AVERAGE AWARD RANGE: Standard Grant: \$150,000  
Planning Grant: \$15,000

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: USDA-NIFA-SLBCD-009723

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 10.511

LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE: Not Required

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

**Assistance Listing:** The Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grant Program (SLSNCGP) is listed in the Assistance Listings under number 10.511.

**Table 1:** Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
<b>Application:</b>	April 13, 2023, 5:00 P.M. Eastern
<b>Letter of Intent:</b>	Not Required
<b>Applicants Comments:</b>	Within six months from the issuance of this notice <i>(NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month)</i>

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

**Stakeholder Input.** NIFA seeks comments on all request for applications (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 uses comments to help meet the requirements of [Section 103\(c\)\(2\) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 \(7 U.S.C. 7613\(c\)\(2\)\)](#). Applicants may submit written comments to [Policy@usda.gov](mailto:Policy@usda.gov) (email is for comments only). Please use the following subject line: Response to the Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grant Program (SLSNCGP) RFA.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

NIFA requests applications for the Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grants Program (SLSNCGP) RFA for fiscal year (FY) 2023 to implement applied programs that serve public needs in preparation for, during, and after a disaster or disaster threat. This program supports innovative, education-based approaches to address disaster preparedness and specific responses related to disasters or disaster threats caused by natural, human-made, or technological hazards, or by other factors that contribute to the exposure or vulnerability of a community. The anticipated amount available for grants in FY 2023 SLSNCGP is \$459,000.

This notice identifies the objectives for Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grants Program (SLSNCGP) 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**

Section [3\(b\)\(1\) of the Smith-Lever Act, Pub. L. No. 63-95 \(7 U.S.C. 343\)](#) allows the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), to conduct competitive grant programs for State Extension Services at 1862 Land-Grant Institutions to support innovative, education-based approaches to provide cooperative agricultural extension work.

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

The purpose of the Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grants Program (SLSNCGP), Assistance Listing 10.511, is to support innovative, education-based approaches to address disaster preparedness and specific responses related to disasters or disaster threats caused by natural, human-made, or technological hazards, or by other factors that contribute to the exposure or vulnerability of a community. The goals and objectives of SLSNCGP include supporting quality of life in communities across the United States by addressing disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation in food and agricultural systems. The SLSNCGP also seeks to continue to provide information and resources to USDA stakeholders and collaborators to improve decision-making before, during, and after disasters.

Grant funds will support innovative extension education initiatives that address risks, hazards, and threats that may lead to disasters. The SLSNCGP enables the Cooperative Extension System (CES) to assist in preparing for, providing an educational response to, recovering from, and mitigating disasters and disaster threats. Types of hazards and disaster-related projects that were funded in previous years included uncertainties caused by losses of economic infrastructure, extreme weather or other disasters, security breaches, human disease, volunteerism, local coordination, or high consequence animal diseases and plant pests. The SLSNCGP promotes awareness and capacity building of urban and rural communities' response to disasters by strengthening individual, family, farm, and small business disaster preparedness, particularly for those who have been historically underserved, through education and collaborations with other agencies/volunteer organizations.

The Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grant Program (SLSNCGP) is aligned with the USDA Strategic Plan FY 2022-2026 found at <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-fy-2022-2026-strategic-plan.pdf>

**Goal 1:** Combat Climate Change to Support America's Working Lands, Natural Resources, and Communities

**Goal 2:** Ensure America's Agricultural System is Equitable, Resilient, and Prosperous

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

NIFA intends to fund SLSNCGP projects to implement applied extension programs that serve public needs in preparation for, during, and after disaster or disaster threats. Regional, multi-state, or national efforts are prioritized. Highly replicable single-state projects may be considered if they have a strong plan for scalability and transferring successful methods to other states.

The SLSNCGP will also fund the development of educational programs and demonstration activities focusing on disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. The most competitive proposals will provide educational and communication leadership across an optimized mix of these and other resources.

NIFA welcomes proposals that add new or build upon existing web-based educational materials available through the [Extension Disaster Education Network \(EDEN\) Resource Dashboard](#). In such instances, applicants may contact the [EDEN Executive Officers](#) during proposal formulation to solicit guidance on how best to coordinate with EDEN and to secure a commitment letter, as appropriate.

Handling of baseline data and data collection will be addressed in the Data Management Plan (DMP) in accordance with the [Part IV, B](#) of this RFA. If an applicant needs help in preparing a data management plan or has questions about what constitutes a data management plan for this role (including questions about data privacy, etc.), please contact the NIFA program contacts listed in [Appendix I](#) of this RFA.

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

NIFA is soliciting applications for SLSNCGP national, regional, multi-state, or state projects under the following **key areas**:

1. **Education and technical assistance** through disaster/threat training programs and demonstration projects for problem solving, especially those which build upon already existing strengths and those that contribute to or expand the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) and/or extension educational materials related to disaster preparation, mitigation, response, and recovery.
2. **Inter-disciplinary education, training, and technical assistance programs and demonstration projects** that promote dialogue to address complex issues, societal vulnerabilities, historically underserved audiences, and cultural understanding.
3. **Long-range family, farm, and community planning projects** that enhance implementation of programs that serve public needs in preparation for, during, and after disasters within impacted states and across impacted regions.
4. **Food security and health equity projects** that address access to nutritious, safe food and to healthy communities of opportunities in preparation for, during, and after disasters. Applicants may align projects with the [Cooperative Extension National Framework for Health and Wellness](#) which is a tool to help Extension systematically address the programmatic area of health and wellness at the individual, community, environmental, and policy levels.

5. **Communication delivery of key information** that meets end-users’ needs in a timely fashion with consideration of potentially limited communication channels due to disaster/threat situations.

To be considered for funding, projects must support extension activities through at least one of the following **strategies**:

1. **Enhance networks:** Enhance national, regional, multi-state or state networks that support official information by ensuring the content is in a format appropriate to the situation and intended audience; delivered in a timely fashion; is science-based.
2. **Provide communications leadership:** Provide national, regional, multi-state, or state education and communications leadership to develop or add value to current educational materials regarding disaster/threat issues, using outreach methods through EDEN, Cooperative Extension, related social media, and/or other outlets. This strategy could include materials targeted to historically underserved audiences (i.e., people who speak English as a second language, people with low literacy, limited resource farmers or ranchers, and older adults who lack technology access or literacy).
3. **Develop and/or strengthen partnerships:** Improve national, regional, state, or multi-state stakeholder partnerships (which might include the public, governments at all levels, non-profit and/or volunteer organizations, academia, and/or industry) to prepare for and respond to disasters/threats through extension education.
4. **Deliver extension education:** Deliver extension education to affected people and communities, in one or more states, to address effects of a major declared disaster, widespread disaster conditions, public health emergencies, or social unrest that occurred no more than 12 months prior to the application due date of this RFA.

Additional requirements on expected performance goals, indicators, and targets may be required as a condition of award.

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

**Table 2:** Program Key Information

<b>Title</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Program Code:</b>	MB
<b>Program Code Name:</b>	ESNP
<b>ALN Number</b>	10.511
<b>Project Type:</b>	Extension Standard and Extension Planning
<b>Grant Type:</b>	Standard and Planning
<b>Application Deadline</b>	April 13, 2022
<b>Grant Duration:</b>	Standard Grant: 24-36 Months Planning Grant: 12 months
<b>Anticipated # of Awards:</b>	N/A
<b>Maximum Award Amount:</b>	Standard Grant: \$150,000 Planning Grant: \$15,000



## PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

### A. Available Funding

The anticipated amount available for Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grant Program (SLSNCGP) in FY 2023 is \$459,000.

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. Application for FY 2023 is limited to the following application types:

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

### C. Project and Grant Types

The following describes the types of *projects* or *grants* that are eligible for funding:

1. **Project Types.** NIFA is soliciting applications for SLSNCGP national, regional, multi-state, or state projects under the following areas:
  - a. Extension Standard
  - b. Extension Planning

Additional requirements on expected performance goals, indicators, and targets may be required as a condition of award.

2. **Grant Types.** Applicants must select the appropriate grant type from below:
  - a. **Standard Grant**

Standard awards of federal funds for this grant will not exceed \$150,000. The amount requested will vary depending on the geographic scope of the project (national, regional, multi-state, or state) and the urgency of the need(s) being addressed. Project periods range from 24 to 36 months.
  - b. **Planning Grant**

The budget for the planning grant, which has a maximum of 12 months duration, may include an appropriate amount for transportation and subsistence costs for participants and other related costs. Planning awards of federal funds for this grant will not exceed \$15,000 and are not renewable. Include an itemized breakdown of all support requested in the Budget Justification (Field K. of the R&R Budget Fed/NonFed).

**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

Applicants for the for the SLSNCGP (Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grant Program) must meet all the requirements discussed 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. 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.

Applications may only be submitted by 1862 land-grant institutions in the 50 states and the U.S. territories, American Samoa, Guam, Micronesia, Northern Marianas, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply, provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. The 1862 land-grant institutions may partner with each other as well as with other land-grant institutions (e.g., 1890s and 1994s), non-land-grant institutions, and non-governmental organizations within their state or their region on joint proposals.

Failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will 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 highly recommended information about grants and other resources to help understand the Federal awards process.

### B. Cost Sharing or Matching

***Match Required*** – Applicants **MUST** provide matching contributions on a dollar-for-dollar basis for all Federal funds awarded under the SLSNCGP. Pursuant to rules and policies governing Section 3(b) & (c) of the Smith–Lever Act as amended, “no allotment shall be made to a State under subsection (b) or (c), and no payments from the allotment shall be made to a State, in excess of the amount that the State makes available out of non-federal funds for cooperative extension work.”

To comply with the matching requirements of the SLSNCGP, applicants are required to provide 100% matching funds from non-federal sources for all proposed federal funds sought in the application. In-kind and third-party contributions are not allowed for this program; thus, all matching funds must come from the applicant institution (sub-awards/partner match would be considered third party).

No match is required for 1994 land-grant institutions and Hispanic Serving Institutions. Only 50% matching funds are required for Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands; NIFA may consider waiver of match for these territories. Additionally, consistent with [48 U.S.C. 1469a\(d\)](#)

and 1469a note, notwithstanding any other provision of law, in the case of American Samoa, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands, NIFA will waive any requirement for local matching funds under \$200,000 (including in-kind contributions).

## PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

### A. Method of Application

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

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

Steps	Action
<b>Step One: Register</b>	<i>New Users</i> to <a href="https://www.grants.gov">Grants.gov</a> must register early with <a href="https://www.grants.gov">Grants.gov</a> prior to submitting an application ( <a href="#">Register Here</a> ).
<b>Step Two: Download Adobe</b>	Download and Install <a href="#">Adobe Reader</a> (see <a href="#">Adobe Software Compatibility</a> for basic system requirements).
<b>Step Three: Find Application</b>	Using this funding opportunity number <b>USDA-NIFA-SLBCD-009723</b> search for application here: <a href="#">Opportunity Package</a> .
<b>Step Four: Assess Readiness</b>	Contact an AR prior to starting an application to assess the organization’s readiness to submit an electronic application.

**Table 4:** Help and Resources

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

### B. Content and Form of the Application

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

applications that meet the requirements of this RFA. Applicants must refer to the proposal number when corresponding with NIFA. **Table 5** outlines other key instructions for applicants.

**Table 5: Key Application Instructions**

Instruction	References (All references are to the Application Guide)
Attachments must be in a portable document format (PDF) format.	Part IV
Check the manifest of submitted files to verify attachments are in the correct format.	Part IV
Conduct an administrative review of the application before submission.	Part IV
Follow the submission instructions.	Part IV
Provide an accurate email address, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R.	Part V
Contact the <a href="https://www.grants.gov">Grants.gov</a> helpdesk for technical support and keep a record of the correspondence.	N/A
Contact NIFA if applicant does not receive correspondence from NIFA regarding an application within 30 days of the application deadline.	N/A

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

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

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

1. **Field 7. Project Summary (PS)/Abstract.** The PS must show how the project goals align with the project goals of the Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grant Program (SLSNCGP). See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) for instructions and suggested templates.

The Project Summary should provide the following information, in the order listed:

- a. Project title;
- b. List of Project Directors (PDs) and Co-PDs and their institutions/organizations;
- c. A concise (250 words or less) description of the project;
- d. Funding amount requested, per year and in total;
- e. Proposal type: New Submission or Resubmission;
- f. Project type: Extension Standard or Extension Planning.

2. **Field 8. Project Narrative (PN).** The PN must not exceed 17 pages; this page limit includes the project's timeline, logic model, and any tables and figures. The page limit ensures fair and equitable competition. The PN must be formatted as follows:
  - a. 1-inch margins,
  - b. Times New Roman, 12-point font, and
  - c. 1.5 spaced text.

A one-page Table of Contents is permitted and does not count towards the PN's 17-page page limit. Appendices to the PN are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. Do not add appendices to circumvent the page limit.

**For the PN section** of the application, **applicants must use section headings listed below by indicating section letter and title.** Applicants must keep the contents of sections separate; do not combine sections of the PN. For example, do not indicate that the response for Section B is in Section D. The PN must include the following sections and address the prompts provided:

**A. Introduction**

1. Describe the current problem or situation to be addressed and explain why it is important. Estimate the magnitude of the problem or situation and its relevance to stakeholders. If applicable, describe the geographic area to be served.
2. Describe the potential benefit of the proposed project to the population group or the community served.

**B. Rationale and Significance**

1. Clearly identify which (one or more) of the key areas the project will address. Key areas are listed in [Part I, B](#) of this RFA.
2. Clearly identify which (one or more) of the strategies the project will address. Strategies are listed in [Part I, B](#) of this RFA.
3. Describe how the project will complement or enhance resources currently available to extension professionals and/or the public.
4. Explain any actions that have already been taken to address the problem or situation and describe any gaps that remain. Provide a summary of previous work, if applicable.

**C. Goals and Objectives**

1. Describe the long-term goal(s) of the proposed project.
2. Define objectives for the proposed project. The objectives must relate to the SLSNCGP priorities. Explain the target audience and/or end users of project deliverables, and present clear, concise, complete, and logically arranged objectives that are in alignment with project goals. Each objective must have an action plan that describes a reasonable scope of activities that can be accomplished within the resource and time constraints of the cooperative agreement.
3. If proposing a planning project, briefly articulate the project steps beyond the planning period and indicate how the SLSNCGP will enable the project to become competitive for future funding.

**D. Approach or Methodology**

1. Describe activities and techniques that will be used to implement the project, including their feasibility, rationale for use, and how they support the stated objectives.
2. Define how the project deliverables and outcomes will be communicated to the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN), Cooperative Extension broadly, USDA NIFA, and/or stakeholders.
3. Acknowledge the limitations and anticipated challenges related to carrying out the project and describe the ways in which those limitations and challenges will be addressed.
4. Describe global engagement activities, if applicable.

**E. Project Performance Assessment**

1. Describe the expected outcomes of the project. Define outcomes from the outlined activities. Be as specific as possible in describing the linkages among activities, outputs, and different types of outcomes (e.g., changes in participant knowledge, awareness, competency, behavior, or changes in condition).
2. Indicate how outcomes will be measured and explain how the project activities will be evaluated.
3. Indicate who on the project team will provide the project performance assessment oversight. Applicants are strongly encouraged to include people with expertise in and skills related to project performance measurement or evaluation and who can help develop the monitoring plan, and, if feasible, participate in carrying out the plan.

**F. Cooperation and Institutional Involvement**

1. Describe roles and responsibilities for key staff, including percent of time each will dedicate to the project.
2. Describe the fiscal and administrative oversight for the project.
3. Applicants who intend for partners to implement portions of their proposed projects must describe each partner's roles and responsibilities. If applicable, describe relevant work that demonstrate each partner's ability to successfully execute the proposed project.
4. Partners may jointly or individually provide leadership for different objectives or activities. If applicable, describe the roles of partners' key staff on the proposed project and percent of time each will dedicate to the project.

**G. Project Timeline**

1. A project timeline must be included. The PN page limit includes the project timeline. Show the progress and successful implementation of the project over the award period. Relate the project timeline to the project objectives.
2. Describe the activities, with milestones, the partner/collaborator roles (if applicable), and verifiable indicators.

**H. Logic Model**

1. A logic model must be included. The PN page limit includes the logic model. A logic model is a conceptual tool for planning and evaluation. It displays the sequence of actions that describe what project inputs, outputs, and outcomes. There are many variations on the specific composition of a logic model. NIFA has developed a resource called the [Logic Model Planning Process](#).



I. **Response to Previous Review** (*if applicable*)

1. This requirement only applies to Resubmitted Applications as described in [Part II, B](#) of this RFA. The one-page “**Response to Previous Review**” **does not count** against the **17-page limit** of the **Project Narrative**. The Project Narrative and Response to Previous Review are required for submission. The Response to Previous Review **must not exceed [1] 1.5 spaced** page.

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

- a. **Commitment Letters.** There is no page limit. Letters of commitment from all partners (signed by the Authorized Representative (AR) of the partnering organization) stating that the partners involved have agreed to their stated roles in the project and have agreed to abide by the approaches outlined in the the PN. Letters from other organizations or people whose participation is important to the success of the project, committing those collaborators and partners to specific roles, are also encouraged. Title the attachment(s) as ‘Letter of Commitment: Organization Name’ in the document header and save file as ‘LetterofCommitment\_OrganizationName’. 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.
- b. **Bibliography.** There is no page limit. Title the attachment as “BibliographyReferencesCited.” All work cited in the proposal should be referenced in this section of the application. All references must be complete and must include titles and all co-authors, conform to an acceptable journal format, and be listed in alphabetical order using the last name of the first author or listed by number in the order of citation.

Do not add any other attachments not specifically requested in this RFA. Specifically, do not attach examples of curricula or other appendices. Attaching additional narrative or figures or tables other than those specifically requested in this RFA will result in disqualification from review.

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

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

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

1. Match – If an applicant concludes that the matching requirements described under [Part III, B](#) of this RFA is not applicable to them; the applicant must include an explanation of their conclusion in the *budget justification*. NIFA will consider this justification when determining final matching requirements or if required matching can be waived. NIFA retains the right to make final determinations regarding matching requirements. Grants that require matching funds as specified under [Part III, B](#) of this RFA must list in their *budget justification* the matching sources, the identification of the entity(ies) providing the match, and the total pledged amount. A written verification of commitments of matching support (a pledge agreement) is not required. However,

applicants are subject to the documentation, valuing and reporting requirements, as specified in [2 CFR Part 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards \(the Uniform Guidance\),”](#) and [7 CFR 3430, “Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-Formula Federal Assistance Programs – General Award Administrative Provisions.”](#)

Matching is required for this program, so the R&R Budget (Federal and Non-Federal) form is mandatory. Grant awards cannot be issued until all required matching has been documented and verified. To comply with the matching requirements, the applicant institution is required to provide 100% matching funds from non-federal sources for all proposed federal funds sought in the application. Third party in-kind contributions are not allowed for this program.

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

**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](#)) and is not to exceed 2 pages.

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

1. Field 2. Program to which the applicant is applying. Enter the program name “Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grant Program/SLSNCGP” and the program code “MB”. Accurate entry is critical.
2. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List. See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

### **C. Funding Restrictions**

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

Pursuant to Section 1473 of the [National Agriculture Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977](#), as amended, [7 U.S.C 3319](#), indirect costs and tuition remission are not allowable costs under [Section 3\(b\) & \(c\) of the Smith–Lever Act](#) projects, and no funds will be approved for this purpose. Further, costs that are a part of an institution's indirect cost pool (e.g., administrative, or clerical salaries) may not be reclassified as direct costs for the purpose of making them allowable.

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.

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

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

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

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

## **B. Evaluation Criteria**

NIFA will use the following criteria, weighted equally, to evaluate this RFA:

### **1. Potential for Advancing Education about Disaster/Threat Preparedness and Response; Significance of the Problem**

This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will support innovative, education-based approaches to address disaster preparedness and specific responses related to disasters or disaster threats or by other factors that contribute to the exposure or vulnerability of a community. An element considered is the project's alignment with at least one key area and at least one strategy as listed in Part I, Section B of the RFA that the project will address. Other elements considered include with institutional goals, USDA's strategic goals, identification of a problem or issue to be addressed, body of knowledge and data, justification for the project, innovation, advancing educational equity, multidisciplinary and/or problem-based focus, potential for enhancing Cooperative Extension's reach of providing innovative, education-based approaches to addressing disaster preparedness and specific responses related to disasters and the potential for adoption by others.

### **2. Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages**

This criterion is used to assess the soundness and alignment of the proposed goals and objectives, approach or methodology, project performance assessment, project timeline, logic model, and expected products and outcomes as they relate to the successful development and delivery of the proposed project. Emphasis is placed on expected outcomes or changes in knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and/or behaviors in targeted population and on approaches that can be implemented at regional or national levels and delivered via existing electronic distribution media or through the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) and Cooperative Extension more broadly.

### **3. Institutional Capability and Capacity Building**

This criterion relates to the institution's capability to implement the project and the degree to which the project will strengthen its capacity. Emphasis is placed on how the project will be managed and the project's Data Management Plan. Elements include the institution's commitment to the project, the adequacy of institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials) 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. 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; matching funding, 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 on high-priority educational need areas. While budgets

should account for travel, virtual or hybrid meetings may be considered based on local and national conditions and/or the needs or preferences of the target audience to be reached.

**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 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.

**E. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality**

During the peer evaluation process, we take extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. See [NIFA Peer Review Process for Competitive Grant Applications](#) for further information about conflicts of interest and confidentiality as related to the peer review process.

## **PART VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION**

### **A. General**

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

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

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

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

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

Grantees will be expected to provide the following information in REEport, NIFA's reporting system:

1. A brief statement of the issue or problem that the project addresses and why the issue is significant; (non-technical summary);
2. A description of the activity or activities being taken to address the issues, including the number of anticipated and actual beneficiaries (where applicable); and
3. A description of the changes in knowledge, behavior, or condition that occurred, supported by quantitative and qualitative data.

Additionally, grantees will be required to submit regular progress reports and a final technical report to NIFA. The agency depends on the information provided in these reports to assess progress toward NIFA's strategic and programmatic goals; develop and justify budget requests; and communicate the value of the work of NIFA's partners to the U.S. Congress and the American people. As shrinking budgets result in more competition for Federal and State funds, it is imperative that NIFA has rigorous data to demonstrate the relevance of its programs and the effectiveness of our partners who implement NIFA-funded programs.

## **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](#).

**D. Limited English Proficiency**

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



## APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACT

### **Program Contacts**

Dr. Ashley Mueller  
National Program Leader  
[ashley.mueller@usda.gov](mailto:ashley.mueller@usda.gov)  
402-405-3122

Dr. Deborah Reyome  
Program Specialist  
[deborah.reyome@usda.gov](mailto:deborah.reyome@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](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  
United States Department of Agriculture  
2312 East Bannister Road, MS 10000  
Kansas City, MO 64141-3061

## **APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

### **Glossary of Terms**

Authorized Representative – AR

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

Cooperative Extension System – CES

Data Management Plan – DMP

Extension Disaster Education Network – EDEN

National Institute of Food and Agriculture – NIFA

Request for Application – RFA

Research, Education, and Economics – REE

Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grant Program – SLSNCGP

United States Department of Agriculture – USDA

## APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS

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

### **Definitions**

**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.