

Letter of Intent (LOI) Instructions

If a Program Area Priority requires a Letter of Intent, applicants must submit a “Letter of Intent to Submit an Application” by the Letter of Intent due date specified in the RFA for the AFRI Program Area Priority of interest. The LOI is a prerequisite for the submission of an application for the Program Area Priorities that require LOI. Although a LOI does not enter into the review of a subsequent application, the information that it contains allows program staff to estimate the potential review workload and plan the review.

Please use the following guidelines for LOI submission:

1. The LOI must adhere to the following formatting guidelines:
 - a. Font size must be at least 12 point; do not use a condensed or narrow font (e.g., Arial Narrow)
 - b. Margins must be at least one inch on all sides
 - c. Single line spacing (i.e., no more than six lines per vertical inch)
 - d. Page size must be letter (i.e., 8.5 inches × 11 inches)
2. The LOI is limited to three pages for CAP grants (including Sustainable Agricultural Systems program (SAS)) and two pages for all other grant types.
 - a. On Page 1 (Cover page), provide ONLY the following information. LOIs providing additional information not specifically indicated in section 3.a. and 3.b below on Page 1 exceed the page limitation and will not be accepted:
 - i. The name, professional title, department, institution, and e-mail address of the lead project director (PD) and name, professional title, department, and institution of all collaborating investigators
 - ii. The Program Area or the Program Area Priority that is most closely addressed in the application
 - b. On Page 2 (Pages 2-3 for CAP grants), include:
 - i. A descriptive title
 - ii. Rationale
 - iii. Overall hypothesis or goal
 - iv. Specific objectives
 - v. Approach
 - vi. Potential impact and expected outcomes
3. Additional instructions for specific types of LOIs
 - a. For Conference Grant LOIs, LOIs should also include:
 - i. The date(s) of the conference on Page 1
 - b. For the Climate Hub Partnership program (A1721), LOIs must include:
 - i. which climate hub region(s) are collaborating on the project on Page 1
 - c. For the Sustainable Agricultural Systems program (CAP Grants only), LOI must be submitted by an institution eligible for Integrated Projects (see Part III, A,1 of the RFA). LOIs must include:
 - i. The specific program goal(s) (i.e., Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry, Bioeconomy, and/or Nutrition Security) being addressed by the project within the “specific objectives” section of the LOI;

- ii. A description of the objectives and deliverables addressed by the project, including short, medium, and long-term objectives within the “specific objectives” section of the LOI;
 - iii. A description of the scope of systems and justification of components under investigation within the “approach” section of the LOI;
 - iv. A description of how the project will be integrated (i.e., integrate research, education, and extension) within the “approach” section of the LOI;
 - v. Clear descriptions and justification of the methods for the transdisciplinary approach to be used to achieve the desired goal(s) also within the “approach” section of the LOI; and
 - vi. A description of the short, medium, and long-term benefits to the food, forest, or agricultural system within the “potential impact and expected outcomes” of the LOI.
4. NIFA will only accept LOI in the portable document format (PDF). Attach the PDF LOI to an e-mail addressed to the appropriate Program Area e-mail address for Submission of Letter of Intent or Program Area Priority Contacts (if there is no specific LOI e-mail listed) indicated in the RFA. For the SAS program email LOIs to afri-sas@usda.gov. In the e-mail subject line, write: Letter of Intent [Program Area Code]-[PD’s Last Name] (e.g., Letter of Intent A1701-Smith).
5. A LOI is required for all grant types, if requested by the Program Area Priority.
6. With the exception of Conference Grant LOIs, submission of more than one LOI to a program is discouraged.
7. LOIs will be reviewed by scientific program staff in order to plan for appropriate expertise for the peer review panel and ensure that the proposed project fits appropriately within the Program Area Priority.
8. All LOIs submitted to this program will be subjected to an initial administrative evaluation for key program requirements including submission deadline, file format, page limit, and eligibility. LOIs that fail to adhere to the format guidelines listed above or are submitted from ineligible institutions will be declined and not considered further for review. The project team submitting an LOI that is not accepted will not be eligible for submission of a full proposal.
9. Applicants, who pass the initial administrative evaluation, will receive an email either encouraging or discouraging them from submitting a full application. You will not receive reviewer comments or suggestions on your LOI. Notifications of LOI determinations will generally be sent 3 to 4 weeks after the LOI submission deadline listed for the respective program in the RFA.