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The logo for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), featuring the letters "NIFA" in a white serif font against a dark background with a stylized sun or field graphic.

# **REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS**

## ***Agriculture in the K-12 Classroom***

FUNDING YEAR: Fiscal Year (FY) 2023

APPLICATION DEADLINE: July 6, 2023

ANTICIPATED PROGRAM FUNDING: \$960,000

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: USDA-NIFA-OP-009883

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 10.500

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

**Assistance Listing Number (ALN):** The Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) RFA is listed in the Assistance Listings under number 10.500.

**Table 1:** Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
<b>Application:</b>	5:00 P.M. Eastern, July 6, 2023 [Ref to <a href="#">Part I, C</a> of this RFA]
<b>Letter of Intent:</b>	Not Required
<b>Applicants Comments:</b>	Within six months from the issuance of this notice (NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month)

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

**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 AITC RFA.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NIFA requests applications for the Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) program for fiscal year (FY) 2023 to increase agricultural literacy through K-12 education. The anticipated amount available for FY 2023 is approximately \$960,000 and will support funding for the initial year. Continuation funding of similar funding levels may be awarded for an additional three years provided performance has been satisfactory, appropriations are available for this purpose, and continued support is in the best interests of the Federal government and the public. Applications should be submitted for the full four years. USDA is not committed to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

The disciplines of agriculture and education have been related for much of our nation's history. When most Americans lived on farms or in small towns, students often did farm chores before and after school. Old schoolbooks have numerous agricultural references. As the farming population began to decline, agricultural emphasis decreased in educational materials as well.

A core group of educators and agriculturalists pushed for more youth education about agriculture. They recognized the interlocking role of farming and food and fiber production with environmental quality, which included wildlife habitat, clean water, and the preservation of forests.

NIFA's AITC serves nearly five million students and 60,000 teachers in developing awareness and skills as they relate to food, agriculture, and disciplines supportive of the agricultural enterprise. AITC supports this awareness through workshops, conferences, field trips, farm tours, and other educational activities and includes working with state AITC organizations and activities engaged in a variety of issues relating to agricultural literacy.

This notice identifies the objectives for AITC 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 1405 of the [National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977](#) (NARETPA), as amended, ([7 U.S.C. 3121](#)) designates the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as the lead Federal agency for agriculture research, extension and teaching in the food and agricultural sciences. Authority for this program is contained in section 1417(j) of NARETPA ([7 U.S.C. 3152\(j\)](#)).

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

The purpose of AITC is to award up to one cooperative agreement to:

1. Ensure that future generations are agriculturally literate;
2. Encourage K-12 educators to integrate information about the food and agricultural system across curricula to assist students in understanding the pivotal role of agriculture in the U.S. and world economies, to introduce students to environmental and social issues impacting food, agricultural, natural resources, and human (FANH) sciences and to expose them to higher education and career opportunities in the FANH sciences; and
3. Support a network of partners to carry out the program at the State and local levels, by fostering the development of active and effective AITC programs in each of the fifty States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, the Virgin Islands of the United States, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau.

Accordingly, AITC funded project activities support the creation, adaptation, and adoption of learning materials and teaching strategies to enhance agricultural literacy and student training for future careers in the FANH sciences.

The AITC program is aligned with the following: Strategic Goal 2: Ensure America's Agricultural System is Equitable, Resilient, and Prosperous of the USDA Strategic Plan FY 2022-2026 found at (<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-fy-2022-2026-strategic-plan.pdf>)

***Leadership Skills Development.*** The development of leadership skills, knowledge, and qualities are necessary to prepare students for agricultural and related careers in the private sector, government, and academia. AITC education applications must demonstrably incorporate a leadership development component to equip students with technical and leadership abilities upon graduation. Specific activities may include:

1. Developing practical applications to increase understanding of leadership roles, including critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills; ethics and professionalism; and working in teams.
2. Connecting the academic classroom experience with daily leadership roles and organizational activities.
3. Providing opportunities for mentoring and shadowing; and
4. Organizing leadership academies, workshops, trainings, etc.

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:** AITC Program Key Information

	Title	Description
<b>Program Code:</b>	AITC	
<b>Program Code Name:</b>	Agriculture in the Classroom	
<b>ALN:</b>	10.500	
<b>Project Type:</b>	Education	
<b>Grant Type:</b>	Cooperative Agreement	
<b>Application Deadline</b>	July 6, 2023	
<b>Grant Duration:</b>	48 Months	
<b>Anticipated # of Awards:</b>	Up to one	
<b>Maximum Award Amount:</b>	\$960,000	

**C. Program Area Description**

This cooperative agreement will provide support for the following enhancement strategies to increase national agricultural literacy through K-12 education. Applicants must demonstrate how they will implement ALL strategies listed below.

1. Strengthen state AITC programs;
2. Support and conduct USDA AITC recognition programs;
3. Host and maintain an AITC website as well as maintain and strengthen the national agricultural literacy curriculum database;
4. Conduct research and evaluation projects supportive of the program goals;
5. Develop and strengthen curriculum and development of materials to support teacher pre- and in-service trainings;
6. Outreach and collaborate with other organizations and agencies; and
7. Support of the National Center for Agricultural Literacy.

**1. Strengthen State AITC Programs**

**Goals:**

- Improve innovative teaching practices to impact student learning;
- Increase knowledge and competencies in agricultural sciences;
- Increase the number and diversity of K-12 academic programs participating in AITC;
- Foster partnerships and collaborations to strengthen agricultural literacy programs; and
- Increase knowledge, skills, and abilities of state AITC stakeholders to plan, deliver, and evaluate high quality agricultural literacy programs.

**Activities:**

**Annual National AITC Conference**

The awardee will design, plan, conduct and evaluate an annual National AITC Conference attended by K-12 teachers and educators nationwide to discover and learn to use educational resources and agricultural literacy curricula.

### **Regional AITC conferences and other professional development opportunities**

Note: All professional development opportunities must be based on the National Agricultural Literacy Logic Model available here: <https://www.agliteracy.org/research/logic/>

**Regional AITC meetings.** Plan, design and administer the content and sessions of the Regional AITC face-to-face conferences in consultation with the NIFA National Program Leader (NPL) and the AITC stakeholders. Ensure that the number of hours for professional development workshops is the predominate allocation of time for the regional meetings.

**Professional development webinar series.** Deliver professional development on topics most needed by AITC stakeholders.

**Online professional development course(s).** This course(s) would target practicing K-12 classroom teachers nationwide, use the National Agricultural Literacy Logic Model, and be offered for credit or continuing education units (CEU's) that could be used to fulfill requirements for pre- or in-service credit.

**AITC meetings in Washington, DC:** The purposes of these meetings with state AITC stakeholders are to: a) meet with the NIFA NPL and staff to provide program updates and conduct joint program planning, and b) meet with agencies and organizations to foster partnerships and collaborations that will strengthen agricultural literacy programs.

## **2. Support and conduct USDA AITC recognition programs**

**Goal:** Recognize and honor teachers nationwide who excel at teaching agricultural literacy.

**Activity:** The awardee will design, plan, and conduct an annual K-12 teacher recognition program that highlights teachers nationwide who excel at teaching agricultural literacy and disciplines supportive of agriculture in the classroom. The awardee will work with the AITC NPL to provide logistical support to the annual USDA AITC Teaching Awards program.

## **3. Host and maintain an AITC website as well as maintain and strengthen the national agricultural literacy curriculum database**

### **Goals:**

- Provide a “one-stop” web-based resource for teachers, students, and families for up-to-date information on agriculture programs, careers, conferences, state-level activities, lesson plans, and other educational information;
- Foster improved, innovative teaching practices that increase student learning and engagement;
- Increase the number and diversity of academic programs participating in AITC;
- Support professional development activities;
- Facilitate and enhance the dissemination of teaching improvement activities and educational resources throughout the food and agricultural sciences academic system; and



- Maintain an online, searchable, and integrated agricultural curriculum database for K-12 teachers.
- Support and improve the visibility and awareness of the educational resources contained in the database to expand their impact in student development.

**Activity:** The awardee will manage a national website and an online agricultural curriculum map. The lessons included in the online agricultural curriculum database will be based on national standards, including but not limited to the National Agricultural Literacy Outcomes (NALOs), national (Common Core) standards for science, social studies, and health education, and Next Generation Science standards.

#### **4. Conduct research and evaluation projects supportive of the program goals**

##### **Goals:**

- Conduct evaluation projects to determine AITC program accomplishments and outcomes; and
- Conduct research projects that add to the knowledge base of agricultural literacy.

**Evaluation activities:** Develop and provide Requests for Applications (RFAs) for research and evaluation projects to measure state and national AITC accomplishments (outputs) and outcomes (impacts). Contingent on the amount of funding available, AITC will prioritize projects to be funded and award funds to sub-awardees through a competitive RFA process to conduct the selected projects.

**Research activities:** Research activities will include but not be limited to the following: Innovative research to determine best-practices and strategies for delivering agricultural science and literacy programs; work collaboratively with STEM Education centers and organizations to conduct research related to STEM in FANH science programs; and assess a broad group of stakeholders, including those in the industry, to determine and prioritize needs related to agricultural sciences and literacy.

#### **5. Develop and strengthen curriculum and development of materials to support teacher pre- and in-service trainings**

##### **Goals:**

- Develop relevant instructional materials for teachers and curriculum resources for youth to increase agricultural literacy outcomes in the National Agricultural Literacy Logic Model and meet national content, common core standards, and/or any other standard relevant to the topic being developed; and
- Reduce duplication and maximize resources across state programs.

**Activities:** Develop curriculum resources—that are relevant and usable by a majority of state AITC stakeholders--to supplement and support the National Agricultural Literacy Outcomes

(NALOs), the National Agricultural Literacy Logic Model, and web-based resources. A special focus will be on materials for middle-school and high-school youth but may also contain materials for elementary school. All materials must link to the [online agricultural curriculum database](#).

## **6. Outreach and collaborate with other organizations and agencies**

### **Goals:**

- Elevate educator awareness of AITC Classroom programs and available resources to contextualize core content with agricultural literacy outcomes; and
- Promote partnerships and collaborations to enhance agricultural literacy.

**Activities:** Develop and disseminate national publications and curriculum resources as appropriate. Develop projects with partners, such as 4-H, Future Farmers of America (FFA), Minorities in Agriculture Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS), the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS), and other similar organizations that further the access to resources and enhance agricultural literacy and equity. Activities should seek to support underachieving schools and provide other outreach to increase knowledge gain and behavior change in youth related to FANH science systems.

## **7. Support of the National Center for Agricultural Literacy**

**Goal:** Maintain and strengthen the [National Center for Agricultural Literacy \(NCAL\)](#).

**Activities:** The NCAL coordinates and facilitates a network of scholars, researchers, and practitioners that develop and test agricultural literacy programming and resources. Grant funds will be used to support the NCAL in building capacity of state AITC stakeholders to provide academically rigorous agricultural literacy training. Funds will also be used to support NCAL in creating seamless opportunities to bridge K-12 and post-secondary agricultural literacy programs and training opportunities for teachers and youth.

## **PART II. AWARD INFORMATION**

### **A. Available Funding**

The amount available for AITC in FY 2023 is approximately \$960,000. FY 2023 funding will support the initial year. Similar funding levels may be awarded for the additional three years provided performance has been satisfactory, appropriations are available for this purpose, and continued support is in the best interests of the Federal government and the public. Applications should be submitted for the full four years. 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](#) for definition).
2. *Renewal application*. Renewal applications must contain the same information as required for new applications and must contain a *progress report*. The progress report must include the implementation of the data management plan (DMP) of the previously funded project. Renewal applications are subject to the same criteria and due dates herein. Applicants submitting a renewal application must enter the NIFA-assigned proposal number of the previously approved application in the *Federal Field (Field 4)* on the application form (see [Appendix III](#) for definition).

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

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

1. **Project Types**. Education and Outreach Project. For this program, a project must include education and outreach components within the project. Functions should be focused on the problem or issue and should be interwoven throughout the life of the project to complement and reinforce one another. The education and outreach functions should be interdependent and necessary for the success of the project.
2. **Grant Types**. NIFA will issue a new AITC award (cooperative agreement) on an additional three-year continuation basis. A continuation award is 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.

### **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 may only be submitted by the following eligible applicants: (a) State agricultural experiment stations; (b) colleges and universities; (c) university research foundations; (d) other research institutions and organizations; (e) Federal agencies; (f) national laboratories; (g) private organizations or corporations; and, (h) individuals or any group consisting of two or more of the entities described in subparagraphs (A) through (H).

Applicants for the AITC 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 cooperative agreements and other resources to help understand the Federal awards process.

**Duplicate or Multiple Submission** – submissions of duplicate (other than revisions) or predominantly overlapping applications is not allowed. In FY 2023, an eligible applicant may submit up to one application on behalf of multiple institutions' staff as long as they are not essentially duplications of the same project or portions of the same project to multiple programs. NIFA will disqualify both applications if an applicant submits duplicate submissions. For additional information or clarification please contact the NIFA POC listed in this RFA. For those new to Federal financial assistance, NIFA's [Grants Overview](#) provides highly recommended information about grants/cooperative agreements and other resources to help understand the Federal awards process.

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

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

## PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

### A. 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: USDA-NIFA-OP-009883 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> 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 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. 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 <u>NIFA Grants Application Guide</u> )
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 AITC program. See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) for instructions and suggested templates.
2. **Field 8.** Project Narrative (PN). The PN must not exceed 20 pages with 1.5 line spacing (up to 31 lines per page) of written text including figures and tables. The font size should be no smaller than 12 points, Times New Roman, and the page margins no smaller than 1 inch. The page limits outlined here ensure fair and equitable competition. Appendices to the PN are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. Do not add appendices to circumvent the page limit. The PN must include all the following:
  - a. Implementation of seven (7) agricultural literacy enhancement strategies (listed in Part I.C):

1. Method for implementing agricultural literacy enhancement: Describe how the seven (7) agricultural literacy enhancement strategies will be implemented and the anticipated, overall impact your approach will have on improving agricultural literacy nationally through K-12 education. (Your impact shall be a change you can measure at the project's conclusion.)
2. Justification of proposed approach: Summarize the body of knowledge justifying your proposed approach. Describe any ongoing or recently completed, significant activities related to the proposed project.
3. Innovation: Describe the proposal's creative approach to enhancing national agricultural literacy. Using either actual experiences or literature background information, justify why this approach was chosen.
4. Institutional Long-range Goals: Demonstrate how the institution / organization attributes a high priority to the project; discuss how the project will: (1) contribute to the achievement of the institution / organizations' long-term (five- to ten-year) goals; (2) help satisfy the institution's high-priority objectives; and (3) be linked to/supported by the institution's strategic plan.

b. Program Management and Cooperative Linkages:

1. Plan of Operation and Methodology: Describe plans for management of the project to ensure its proper and efficient administration. Describe the way in which resources and personnel will be used to conduct the project.
2. Timetable: Identify all important project milestones (performance targets that indicate when project goals will be met) and dates as they relate to project start-up, execution, evaluation, dissemination, and closeout.
3. Products, Results, and Measurable Outcomes: Outline the expected products / results and their outcome (impact) on strengthening agricultural literacy through K-12 education. Make sure to differentiate among the three (3) terms:
  - a. "Products" may be actual items or services acquired with funds, e.g., "...developed three (3), new Web-based courses";
  - b. "Results" are accomplishments related to the products, e.g., "...additional course materials now available online to reinforce student learning during non-classroom hours"; and
  - c. "Impacts" are the benefits to your audience. Impacts are the consequences of your project and the most critical elements in your Evaluation Plan. They are a measure of the results by comparison to what might have happened in the absence of the funded project, e.g., "...an observed, overall increase in student learning based upon 8% higher average test scores of those students who both attended class and used the supplemental, Web-based course materials".
4. Evaluation Plans: State the methodologies to be used in assessing the accomplishment of stated products, results and measurable impacts from the project. Discuss the strategies and metrics for evaluating progress



toward meeting the AITC program priorities listed in Part I.A. Describe any data to be collected and analyzed. Demonstrate how the project will improve education. This section shall clearly indicate how you plan to measure impacts.

5. Dissemination Plans: The application must document how project accomplishments (products, results and impacts, etc.) will be published or otherwise disseminated to the broadest extent throughout the academic and practitioner community. Identify target audiences and explain methods of communication.
  6. Partnerships and Collaborative Efforts: Explain how the project will maximize partnership and collaborative efforts to enhance agricultural literacy through K-12 education. Provide evidence, via letters from the parties involved in the partnership.
- c. Institutional Capability and Capacity Building:
1. Institutional/Organizational Commitment and Capability: Demonstrate that the program administration is committed to this project and has the capability to ensure its completion.
  2. Institutional/Organizational Resources: Document that necessary institutional/organizational resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials), and other appropriate resources, will be made available to the project. Demonstrate how the institutional/organizational resources to be made available to the project, when combined with the support requested from USDA, will be adequate to carry out the activities of the project.
- d. Key Personnel:
- Discuss the adequacy and specific attributes and project responsibilities of each key person associated with the project. Also include the background and qualifications of those personnel who will be responsible for assessing project results and administering the project evaluation and reporting process.
- e. Budget and Cost-effectiveness:
1. Budget: In the budget justification, discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed project activities. Explain how such budget items as professional or technical staff time and salary, travel, equipment, etc., are necessary and reasonable to achieve project objectives. Justify that the total budget is allocated adequately between the applicant and any collaborating institution/organization(s), and will be appropriate to carry out the activities of the project.
  2. Cost-effectiveness: Justify the project's cost-effectiveness. Show how the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes educational value for the dollar, achieves economies of scale, or leverages additional funds.

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

**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 Applicable) – 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.”](#)

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](#)). Data management plan should be loaded on Field 12, Add Other Attachments. See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

**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 Agriculture in the Classroom and the program code ( AITC ) Accurate entry is critical.
2. **Field 8**. Conflict of Interest List. See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

### C. Funding Restrictions

**Legislative mandated Indirect Cost (IDC)**. In the case of cooperative agreements with non-profits and institutions of Higher Education Section. 704 of the FY2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act. P.L. 117-238 applies. “No funds appropriated by this Act may be used to pay negotiated indirect cost rates on cooperative agreements or similar arrangements between the United States Department of Agriculture and nonprofit institutions in excess of 10 percent of the total direct cost of the agreement when the purpose of such cooperative arrangements is to carry out programs of mutual interest between the two parties.”

For other eligible entities 7 U.S.C. 3310(a) and (c) (Section 1462(a) and (c) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, limits indirect costs for overall award, not to exceed 30 percent of Total Federal Funds Awarded (TFFA) to the recipient. Except as otherwise provided in law, indirect costs charged against any agricultural research, education, or extension grant awarded under this Act or any other Act pursuant to authority delegated to the Under Secretary of Agriculture for Research, Education, and Economics shall not exceed 30 percent of the total Federal funds provided under the grant award.

In the case of a grant described in subsection (a), the limitation on indirect costs specified in such subsection shall be applied to both the initial grant award and any subgrant of the Federal funds provided under the initial grant award so that the total of all indirect costs charged against the total of the Federal funds provided under the initial grant award does not exceed such limitation.

In the case of cooperative agreements Section 704 of the FY2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act. P.L. 117-238 would apply. No funds appropriated by this Act may be used to pay negotiated indirect cost rates on cooperative agreements or similar arrangements between the United States Department of Agriculture and nonprofit institutions in excess of 10 percent of the total direct cost of the agreement when the purpose of such cooperative arrangements is to carry out programs of mutual interest between the two parties.

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 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**

NIFA will use the following criteria to evaluate this RFA:

1. **Implementation of agricultural literacy enhancement strategies:** This criterion will assess the likelihood that the project will successfully implement the seven (7) agricultural literacy enhancement strategies (listed in Part I.C). The extent to which national agricultural literacy will be advanced and the degree to which the priorities of the AITC program (listed in Part I.B) will be achieved, will be assessed.
2. **Program Management and Cooperative Linkages:** This criterion relates to the soundness of the proposed approach including objectives, methodology, plan of operation, timetable, expected products and results, evaluation, and dissemination plans. The project evaluation plan clearly explains the methodologies to be used in assessing the accomplishment of stated products, results and measurable impacts from the project. The extent to which the approach is based on sound research concepts and educational principles and documented through background literature or actual institutional data, will be evaluated. The extent to which the applicant demonstrates a strong capacity to provide programing in the 53 states/territories with active AITC programs will be evaluated.
3. **Institutional Capability and Capacity Building:** This criterion relates to the institution's capability to perform the project. Elements include the institution's commitment to the project, the adequacy of institutional resources (i.e., administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials) available to carry out the project, and plans for project continuation or expansion. Institutional data (i.e., financial, personnel and physical resources available to support the project) strongly exhibit the institution's ability to support the proposed project.
4. **Key Personnel:** This criterion relates to the adequacy of the number, qualifications and expertise 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 the dissemination of these findings. Specific roles for each key personnel are well defined, demonstrates appropriate project leadership and avoids any duplication of effort. Qualifications and expertise of key persons representing all contributors are well explained and adequate for project execution.
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 evaluated include the extent to which: the costs to carry out project activities and achieve project objectives are necessary and reasonable; budget allocations between the applicant and any collaborating institution(s) are appropriate; time committed to the project by key project personnel are adequate; 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 or research need areas.

## **C. 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).

**D. Application Disposition**

Applicants may withdraw at any time before NIFA makes a final funding decision. NIFA will retain all applications, including withdrawn applications and unfunded applications.

## **PART VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION**

### **A. General**

Within the limit of funds authorized, the NIFA awarding official will make grants to responsible and eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The 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 Federal Assistance Policy Guide](#) applies to all NIFA awards.

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

Include this subpart if the program has specific award terms. Highlight any special reporting requirements that differ from the norm (e.g., by report type, frequency, form/format, or circumstances for use). The NIFA Director of Information Policy, Planning, and Training must approve all special requirements. When forwarding applications for award, Program must alert NIFA's Award Management Division (AMD) via the "Competitive or non-competitive proposal recommendation sheet" that the special reporting requirements need to be included as part of the provisions of award.

## **PART VII. OTHER INFORMATION**

### **A. Use of Funds and Changes in Budget**

***Delegation of fiscal responsibility.*** Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, awardees may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

***Changes in Budget or Project Plans.*** In accordance with [2 CFR 200.308](#), awardees must request prior approval from NIFA for the following program or budget-related reasons (the awardee is subject to the terms and conditions identified in the award):

1. Change in the scope or the objective of the project or program without prior written approval (even if there is no associated budget revision requiring).
2. Change in a key person specified in the application or the federal award.
3. Disengagement from the project for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in time devoted to the project.
4. Inclusion of costs that require prior approval in accordance with [2 CFR 200 Subpart E \(Cost Principles\)](#), or [45 CFR Part 75 Appendix IX, \(Principles for Determining Costs Applicable to Research and Development under Awards and Contracts with Hospitals\)](#), or [48 CFR](#), unless waived by the federal awarding agency, [48 CFR Part 31, Contract Cost Principles and Procedures](#);
5. Transfer of funds budgeted for participant support costs to other categories of expense ([2 CFR 200.456 Participant support costs](#));
6. 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.
7. Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-federal entity; and
8. 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**

Carlos Ortiz, Ph.D.

[carlos.ortiz@usda.gov](mailto:carlos.ortiz@usda.gov)

(202) 445-5594

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**

### **Glossary of Terms**

Assistance Listing Number – ALN

Authorized Representative – AR

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

Data Management Plan – DMP

National Institute of Food and Agriculture – NIFA

Request for Application – RFA

Research, Education, and Economics – REE

United States Department of Agriculture – USDA

## APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS

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

### **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.