



National Institute of Food and Agriculture

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

BIOENERGY, CLIMATE, AND ENVIRONMENT
FOOD PRODUCTION AND SUSTAINABILITY
YOUTH, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY
FOOD SAFETY AND NUTRITION
INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

Grant Support Technical Assistance Workshop

NIFA

Tips for Competitive Grant Applications “Ten Things You Must Do”

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**BIOENERGY, CLIMATE, AND ENVIRONMENT
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INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS**

NIFA

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- USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender.

Background and Introduction

- Our perspective on grant writing:
 - Experience as an applicant, awardee, reviewer, NPL/ Division Director & Science Program Officer
 - Ideas from experienced colleagues
 - Approaches used by highly successful applicants

- Emphasis on information for the novice:
 - A refresher for the more experienced
 - New ideas for old hands



Background and Introduction

- Acronyms & terms used in this presentation:
 - RFA = Request for Applications
 - RFP = Request for Proposals (= RFA)
 - Program Announcement = RFA, RFP, solicitation or call for proposals
 - NIFA = National Institute of Food & Agriculture



ONE

- Find the right program for you and your idea
 - Main purpose of program (funding priorities) – does idea fit in mainstream or on the fringe?
 - Don't waste time applying to the wrong program...
 - Eligibility restrictions?
 - Have questions? – reach out to the Program contact via email





Get to know funded projects: Program page/NIFA Data Gateway

Example Program Page

HOME > ABOUT GRANTS > PROGRAMS

Emergency Citrus Disease Research and Extension Program



Funded Projects

- [Currently funded research and extension projects \(FY 2022\)](#)
- [Previously funded research and extension projects \(2015-2018\)](#)
- [On-going research and extension projects \(2017-2022\)](#)

Program-Specific Resources

- [ECDRE Informational Webinar](#)
- [Coordinated Response to Citrus Greening Disease](#)
- [Citrus Research and Development Foundation](#)
- [California Citrus Research Foundation](#)

Data Gateway Search Page

https://portal.nifa.usda.gov/enterprise-search/project_details

Project Details Search ?

Project Details | Financial Details | Advanced Search | Annual Reports on Planned Programs

Search these terms... ?

A1451

Search in these fields... ?

Show these fields in the results... ?

View results as: Document Tabular (* always hidden in tabular view)

Expected Results: 104 Projects

Search **Reset**



TWO

- Become a “student” of the RFA
 - Understand the main goals of the program
 - Attend technical assistance webinars or watch the recordings
 - Understand the instructions outlined in the RFA on how to assemble the proposal
 - Read the RFA !!!



United States
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NIFA

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS
Agriculture and Food Research Initiative
Competitive Grants Program
Foundational and Applied Science Program

FUNDING YEAR: Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-2024

APPLICATION DEADLINE: Varies by Program Area (see [Part I & C](#))

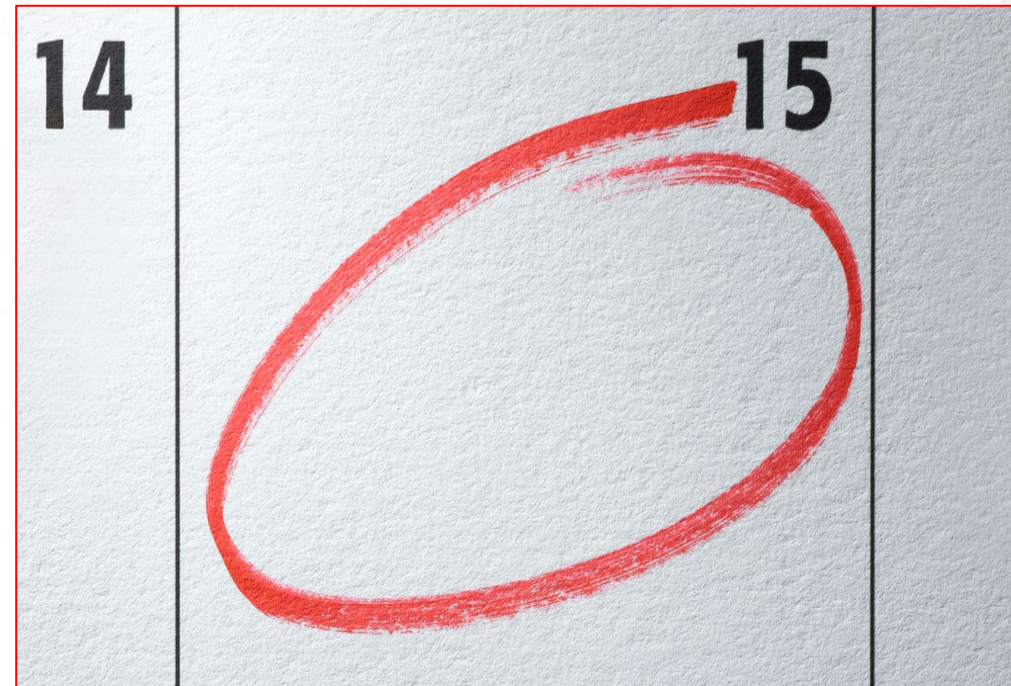
ANTICIPATED FUNDING: FY2023 \$300,000,000
FY2024 \$300,000,000

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: USDA-NIFA-AFRI-009755

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 10.310

THREE

- Develop a timeline for proposal preparation and submission
 - Develop timeline that allows for completion of proposal at least 4 weeks before submission deadline
 - If you rush preparation of the proposal, it will show – reviewers will notice and critique
 - Allow time for intramural administrative requirements – submit on time
 - A deadline is a deadline is a deadline!!!



FOUR

- Understand criteria for evaluating proposals
 - RFA normally contains the criteria that will be used by reviewers to evaluate your proposal
 - Understand these criteria BEFORE you begin preparing your proposal – provides better understanding of where to put greatest efforts during proposal preparation

FSOP Community Outreach Projects Evaluation Criteria

Meet criterion (✓ or N/A)	Criterion used to assess Community Outreach Projects
Objectives	
	Identify and justify specific food safety education and training needs and other resources for various target audiences within local communities
	Support the establishment, development, growth and/or expansion of new or already-existing food safety education and training programs within communities, and ensure that they are consistent with new FSMA guidelines
	Leverage partnerships with non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, extension, food hubs, farm cooperatives and/or others who typically work with owners and operators of small and/or medium-sized farms, beginning farmers, underserved farmers, small processors, and small fresh fruit and vegetable merchant wholesalers
	Identify significant outcomes and impacts of the previously funded, successful Community or Pilot project and include a strong justification and detailed plans for expansion to a larger audience
Methods	
	Modify curricula to address a traditionally underserved niche audience
	Further develop and expand already-existing community-based food safety education and training programs and other resources. Programs may be expanded to reach a greater number of participants, or to reach new audiences not currently targeted by the existing programs
	Develop a communications plan for interacting with respective Regional Centers and for reporting project outcomes to the Regional Centers
	Develop a plan for evaluating the outcomes of the project, collecting outcome data, and reporting project outcomes to the respective Regional Centers
Key Personnel and Project Management	
	Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of key staff in the overall management of the project
	Develop a timeline that includes benchmarks for key events that address the project objectives
	Identify key personnel responsible for collecting project outcome data, reporting project outcomes, and interacting with staff at the respective Regional Centers
	Develop strong partnerships with those in local communities that enable them to address the needs of non-traditional, niche, and hard-to-reach audiences
	Coordinate food safety education and training efforts with local communities involved in the project

	participation in education and training sessions
Key Personnel	
	Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of key staff in the overall management of the project
	Develop a timeline that includes benchmarks for key events that address the project objectives
	Identify key personnel responsible for collecting project outcome data, reporting project outcomes, and interacting with staff at the respective Regional Centers
	Develop strong partnerships with those in local communities that enable them to address the needs of non-traditional, niche, and hard-to-reach audiences
	Coordinate food safety education and training efforts with local communities involved in the project
Budget and Budget Justification	
	Adequately support project activities that are consistent with the proposed objectives
	Incorporate innovative approaches for making use of currently available resources within local communities, while supporting development and implementation of new resources that are critical for meeting the food safety education and training needs of target audiences
	Allocate and justify resources to key personnel responsible for managing and conducting the project activities

The evaluation criteria will be used to evaluate **Collaborative Education and Training Projects** submitted in response to the FY 2023 FSOP RFA and can be found on Pages 19–20 of the RFA. 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](#) for definition).

FIVE

- Understand review process and reviewers
 - Reviewers may be assigned 10 to 12 proposals
 - Following directions in RFA helps reviewers; not following directions makes them hunt for info
 - Preparing proposal logically and clearly helps reviewers find the information more easily

Accessing USDA-NIFA – Gateway to NIFA



SIX

- **Write the proposal logically and clearly**
 - Organize proposal according to outline in RFA or evaluation criteria, whichever is most logical
 - Following the prescribed format helps reviewers find information more easily

SEVEN

- Prepare budget with a strong justification
 - Unreasonable budgets can weaken proposals – creates skeptics within reviewer ranks (credibility)
 - Keep budgets within guidelines in the RFA – they are judged on degree of reasonableness



EIGHT

- Obtain critical input from experienced and successful colleagues. Someone who.....
 - Talks frankly, bluntly and clearly – don't want someone who beats around the bush
 - Wants the critique to strengthen your proposal
 - Has been successful in obtaining grants





NINE

- Fill out forms completely and correctly
 - Make sure you've prepared all required documents
 - Include all required information in correct format

SEARCH & RELATED BUDGET - Budget Period **CURRENT & PENDING SUPPORT**

Organization:

Budget Period: 1 Start Date:

Base Salary (\$) **Months** **Req**

Base Salary (\$)	Cal.	Acad.	Sum.	Sala

PROJECT SUMMARY **CONFLICT OF INTEREST LIST**

SUPPORTING AGENCY AND AGENCY ACTIVE AWARD/PENDING PROPOSAL NUMBER **TOTAL \$ AMOUNT** **EFFECTIVE AND EXPIRATION DATES** **% OF TIME COMMITTED**

Project - 144 Character Limit Including Spaces

Name (Last, First, MI) **Institution**

PI 2 Name (Last, First, MI) **Institution**

TEN

- Use tables and figures to help illustrate important points
- Write for both the expert and the novice
 - Not all reviewers will be experts on your proposed topic, but will have related expertise to contribute
 - Write to show the expert that you are an expert and up-to-date on the topic
 - Write so the novice can understand the proposal and to show the importance of the proposed work

Few Final Thoughts

- A proposal is not a mystery novel!!!
- Get to the point.... quickly, clearly, concisely, logically
- First sentence of the proposal should state what the problem is and why it is important



Remember the 4 Cs of Proposal Writing

Compelling

Clear

Concise

Complete

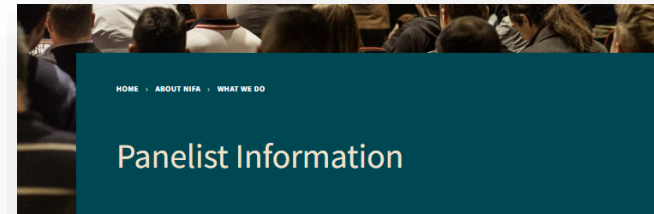


Volunteer to Become a Panelist!

Scan Here



Or visit: <https://nifa.usda.gov/about-nifa/what-we-do/panelist-information>



NIFA and your community request your assistance in identifying panelists and ensuring our peer review panels have the required expertise while remaining inclusive, representative, and diverse.

NIFA convenes peer review panels comprised of research, education, extension, and other subject matter experts to review competitive grant proposals. Panelist duties include reviewing proposals; drafting and submitting individual ratings and written reviews; and attending and participating in a panel meeting. During the panel meeting, panelists discuss and reach a group consensus on proposal rankings. Panels may be conducted via teleconference or in-person meetings.

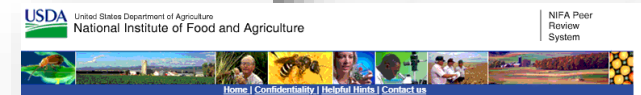
Become a Panelist!
Access NIFA's Peer Review System (PRS)

NIFA uses a Peer Review System (PRS) to collect volunteer information. If you are interested in contact information by visiting [NIFA Peer Review System](#) and clicking on the "Panelist Recruitment" link.

Depending on your previous involvement with NIFA, please follow the steps in the appropriate

Never an Applicant or Panelist	Applicant but Never a Panelist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit PRS Complete "panelist Recruitment" NIFA staff will review your submission and create an account 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Activate Account" via PRS; must same email from application Complete PRS questionnaire

Once registered, please alert via email the program staff listed in the Request for Applications



Welcome to the Peer Review System for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. If you are a returning panelist, you may log in and get started.

Volunteer: If you would like to volunteer to serve as a peer review panelist for our programs, please provide your information using this link for [Panelist Recruitment](#). Panelists are selected based on their expertise, credentials, and NIFA panel needs. For more information, contact the program staff listed in the Request for Applications for the program you are interested in serving on.

Panelist Account Activation: If you do not have a login and have received the welcome to PRS email to serve on a NIFA panel, you may use this link to [Activate your Account](#).

PRS has been modified to work on multiple browsers. Edge, Chrome, Firefox, and Safari have all been verified as compatible with PRS as of June 2021. If you have difficulty accessing PRS on one of these browsers, please contact the program staff member assisting with your panel.

Privacy Information: The information you provide will be used by NIFA in selecting reviewers for grant applications submitted to NIFA programs. In addition, the contact information may be used to update records pertaining to active NIFA grant applications and grants. This information will not be used for any other purpose.



Questions ???

Panelists

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Please put your questions
in the Q and A Box

Questions/comments/feedback: AdminOpsTeam.NIFA@usda.gov
Subject line: Grant Support Technical Assistance Workshop