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NIFA

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS
New Technologies for Ag Extension

MODIFICATIONS: 9/01/2023 – This RFA has been modified from the original announcement. Edits are indicated using track changes and red font so the public/potential applicants can identify the changes within the solicitation.

Edits appear on pages: 1, 2, and 10

FUNDING YEAR:	Fiscal Year 2023
APPLICATION DEADLINE:	September ~~29~~12, 2023
ANTICIPATED PROGRAM FUNDING:	$3,395,849
FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER:	USDA-NIFA-OP-010186
ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER:	10.500

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

Assistance Listing Number (ALN): The New Technologies for Ag Extension (NTAE) Program is listed in the Assistance Listings under number 10.500.

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
Application:	5:00 P.M. Eastern Time, September ~~29~~**12**, 2023 [*Ref to Part I, C of this RFA*]
Letter of Intent:	Not Required
Applicants Comments:	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 (email is for comments only). Please use the following subject line: Response to the NTAE RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This notice identifies the objectives for New Technologies for Ag Extension (NTAE) projects, deadlines, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions. NIFA requests applications for NTAE Competitive Grants Program RFA for fiscal year (FY) 2023 that strengthen national digitally based information and education to the public, and foster connectivity among the Land-grant University (LGU) system. NTAE engages land-grant institutions and the Cooperative Extension Service (CES) to provide objective, scientific information to the public that answer questions and guide decisions. By increasing digital access to high-quality, non-duplicative, research-based information, this program will serve the needs of the public seeking real-time information from the research and technical assistance offerings of the LGU and CES systems. In FY 2023, NIFA plans to support strategic direction in providing leadership for innovation and technology that advances education through the promotion of CES growth and competencies. The anticipated amount available for a grant agreement in FY 2023 is approximately $3,395,849.

This notice identifies the objectives for NTAE projects, deadline dates, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a NTAE grant.

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PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

Funding for the NTAE Program is authorized under section 3(d) of the Smith-Lever Act of May 8, 1914, as amended (7 U.S.C. 341, et seq.). Section 7403 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act (FCEA) of 2008 amends section 3(d) of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 (7 U.S.C. 343(d)) in regards to eligibility.

To learn more about the programming and current activities funded under NTAE, please see: https://extension.org/national-programs-services/ntae/. Interested applicants are encouraged to review the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy "Strategic Directions for ECOP and the Cooperative Extension System" (https://www.aplu.org/wp-content/uploads/ECOP-and-CES-Strategic-Direction.pdf).

B. Purpose and Priorities

The purpose of the NTAE Program, listed under the Assistance Listing number 10.500, is to increase the capacity of the Cooperative Extension System (CES) to adopt new and innovative technology applications for delivering science-based educational resources from land-grant and other partner institutions about matters of high importance to the general public. Applications are being solicited for the NTAE Program to deliver state of the art technology and software applications, high quality leadership training an exceptional CES workforce, legally binding contractual and financial instruments, comprehensive evaluation, communications, and marketing activities that promote governance, collaboration and organization, a toolkit of evidence-based delivery models, and an entrepreneurial resource base. Proposals will address barriers to accessing digital information and provide strategies to increase accessibility and reach of information and resources to the general public. NTAE will also specifically focus on the use of digital tools and national programming strategies to increase collaboration in priority research areas across the LGU and CES system.

The NTAE Program 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)
1. Strategic Goal 1: Combat Climate Change to Support America's Working Lands, Natural Resources, and Communities
2. Strategic Goal 2: Ensure America's agricultural system is equitable, resilient, and purposeful.
3. Strategic Goal 3: Foster an Equitable and Competitive Marketplace for All Agricultural Producers
4. Strategic Goal 4: Make Safe, Nutritious Food Available to All Americans
5. Strategic Goal 5: Expand opportunities for economic development and provide quality of life in rural and tribal communities.

In FY 2023, NIFA plans to support NTAE to enable a technology-conscious nation to make use of the valuable information and education that the CES has to offer. NTAE funds complement, enhance, and accelerate the implementation of digital learning, builds upon previously developed infrastructure, such as "eXtension" and includes hardware, software, staffing, training, business agreements, and communication and evaluation activities. The successful applicant will demonstrate the ability to build upon past work while igniting innovation and increasing impact.

Applicants are expected to continue building upon the competitive advantages of CES such as being customer-focused, a trusted and impartial brand, and community-based by: 1) fostering opportunities for innovation by connecting CES personnel with new and innovative technologies that support information accessibility and engagement for diverse learning styles; 2) providing professional development opportunities that promote use of open networked learning and other forms of online-based teaching resources; 3) building capacity within and across the CES to effectively engage strategic partners with real-time science/research-based content; 4) updating existing and developing necessary new policies to support the business aspects of NTAE; and 5) developing and implementing a comprehensive evaluation, communications and marketing effort for NTAE..

Specifically, the applicant is expected to meet each of the following NTAE objectives within the context of the stated goals above:

1. Fostering opportunities for innovation by connecting CES personnel with new and innovative technologies that support information accessibility and engagement for diverse learning styles.
The successful applicant must:
    (a) Address current barriers of accessibility to CES research, education, and technical assistance resources to the general public and among the CES and LGU system.
    (b) Incorporate an accessibility plan describing actions to overcome current barriers to accessibility, and regular evaluation of accessibility challenges and mitigation strategies throughout the NTAE project
    (c) Enhance and upgrade existing functionalities.
    (d) Provide customer support, including help-desk staffing, web hosting, training, and software licenses.
    (e) Provide infrastructure support for technical and architectural standards.

Funds will be used to support the core infrastructure (i.e., data architecture, protocols, processes, content management, and learning management systems). This includes system engineering, content integration and standardization, data management, system security, usability testing, performance benchmarking, search optimization, and monitoring system performance and scalability to meet both current and future demands. Funds will be used to enhance the collaborative work environment and ways to connect people with similar interests across flexible online platforms to support the development of educational content, learning modules, events, news articles, and multimedia information products, (i.e., apps, video, audio, and hybrid technologies). Such tools provide educational opportunities for the public, and may include curation, filtering technologies, and functionality in applications such as "Ask an Expert," "Learn," and People to make content more publicly discoverable and more easily shared. To expand CES content so that it reaches a broader range of learners, funds will be used annually to identify priority program areas based on technology advancements, learner needs, and innovation. Funds will further be used to develop educational programs on how to apply emerging technologies to CES programmatic efforts and monitor and evaluate the Extension System's adoption and use of these new technologies. Explore making content more easily accessible through handheld devices and related applications (apps), while also considering how

dedicated landing pages for populations with limited English proficiency skills might increase access to information translated in their native languages.

2. Provide development opportunities that promote use of open networked learning and other forms digital training resources.

NIFA anticipates supporting strategies to develop an effective CES workforce that engages customers through social networks and in formats of the customer's choosing. Funds will be used to develop a full complement of professional development opportunities designed to prepare CES to work with customers interested in online, as well as traditional learning opportunities. Such professional development opportunities may include mastery of technologies, program and content development, andragogy and pedagogy, effective collaboration and teamwork, and legal and policy considerations of working in online environments. Funds will be used to help develop and measure the effectiveness of hybrid learning opportunities designed to reach a broader audience and engage more leaders and innovators. Examples include research-led teams that contribute to the advancement of USDA Science and Research Strategy Priorities, engaging Project Directors administering other competitive funding awarded by NIFA and other federal agencies, and including an outreach component. Funds will be used to engage the CES on important technology and subject matter topics and enlist federal and state partners, institutional teams, and others to contribute to training programs and new professional development resources using http://campus.extension.org/ or similar platforms.

3. Build capacity within and across the CES to effectively engage strategic partners with real-time science/research-based content.

NTAE will employ innovative and highly skilled leaders in areas such as administration, content and instructional development, development of teams and collaboratives, network and software engineering, communications and marketing, evaluation, professional development, strategic partnerships, and network literacy. Capacity and network building should demonstrate prioritization and alignment with the USDA Strategic Plan, USDA Science and Research Strategy Priorities, and CES strategic direction.

By staying abreast of the most current trends, digital innovations, and accessibility research, the CES staff will become more proficient in digital outreach, blending the electronic availability of education and expertise with more traditional ways of working. Similarly, increasing awareness of how to effectively develop broad-based, strategic partnership opportunities, including regional approaches, which include federal and state government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector has the potential to increase the reach and adoption of CES evidence-based practices in advancing shared mission interests. Funds will be used to reach the public with targeted content by developing and training extension faculty and staff on the use of new and traditional media for content dissemination. By refining performance metrics that are shared with the CES and developing evaluation strategies and tools for documenting social media reach and engagement with partners, customers and collaborative teams, the successful applicant will demonstrate proficiency in the evaluation of digital products and services to ensure competitiveness in the marketplace.

Funds will also be used to support fellowships for faculty interested in using sabbatical or other leave to contribute to the initiative. The work of the fellows may support applied and

developmental research in electronic delivery of educational programs, studying the effects of NTAE in the transformation of the CES and its partners, or assisting in evaluating the efficacy of blending electronic and traditional ways of working on the quality of life for citizens. The successful applicant will use these funds to form, manage, and administer advisory and working groups in such areas as technology and innovation, content management, editorial functions, diversity and limited English proficiency audiences, institutional teams, evaluation, end users, internal and external partners, and identify near and future trends.

4. Update existing and develop any new policies that may be needed to support the business aspects of NTAE.
The successful applicant will update existing policies and develop any new policies needed to manage, operate, and enhance digital extension in close alignment with the Extension Foundation and/or other sponsoring organization(s). Key policies include, but are not limited to:
      1) Rules of Operation;
      2) Contributor and Business Agreements for both institutions and individuals;
      3) Terms of Use;
      4) Community of Practice Business Agreements;
      5) Policy for Non-Payment of Institutional Investment;
      6) Policy for Institutional Branding and Searching;
      7) Privacy;
      8) Disclaimers;
      9) Community of Practice Policies;
      10) Content Sharing Policy;
      11) Non-discrimination;
      12) Grievance Procedures and Removal of Content;
      13) Data Collection and Services;
      14) Community of Practice Leadership Policy;
      15) Collaboration, Intellectual Property and Publishing Guidelines;
      16) Sponsorship Agreements;
      17) Partnership Policy;
      18) State Affiliate Membership;
      19) Sponsorship Policy & Sponsorship Recognition Levels;
      20) Ask an Expert;
      21) Social Media Guidelines;
      22) Prospective Partnership Agreements;
      23) Partner and Member Institution Grants and Contracts Agreements; and
      24) 501c3 Non-Profit Organization Sponsorship.

5. Develop and implement a comprehensive evaluation, communications, and outreach effort for NTAE.
Funds will support the general evaluation aimed at assessing the products and services of NTAE against the criteria of: 1) competitiveness in the information and education marketplace; 2) the design of new and exceptional curricula for traditional and expanded audiences; and 3) alignment with the USDA Strategic Plan, as appropriate. Evaluations will include the design of appropriate performance metrics with expected outcomes and impacts. Funds will be used to maintain and implement a comprehensive communication and outreach plan for NTAE as a whole and that supports the CES and strategic partners for analyzing potential markets, initial

characterization of audience need for products and services, and for effectively marketing products and services to targeted users.

Applicants should note that NTAE is a Federal-State-Local partnership that includes land-grant institutions, State and county partners, the CES as a whole, and NIFA. The grantee is required to coordinate NTAE activities on behalf of all CES partners in the context of the national, regional, state, and local priorities during the award period.

NTAE applications typically will include funds to support core functions (e.g., community development, content development, travel, technology support, communication, evaluation, etc.) and development of project-specific deliverables.

The application must demonstrate an understanding and application of a whole system(s) approach with the potential for the project to contribute to long-term impacts and outcomes. The successful NTAE applicant will have a project period of up to five years based upon available funding and satisfactory annual project performance and reporting.

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.

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

Title	Description
Program Code:	AA-R
Program Code Name:	New Technologies for Ag Extension
ALN:	10.500
Project Type:	Extension
Grant Type:	Standard
Application Deadline	September ~~29~~**12**, 2023
Grant Duration:	12 months, with eligibility for continuation funding
Anticipated # of Awards:	1
Maximum Award Amount:	$3,395,849

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

A.   Available Funding
The amount available for NTAE in FY 2023 is approximately $3,395,849. USDA is not committed to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. The award made in FY 2023 will provide approximately $3,395,849 in funds for the first year of this 4-year continuation project. Continuation funding is subject to satisfactory performance, compliance with governing terms and conditions, and the availability of funding.

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 type:
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).

C.   Project and Grant Types

The following describes the types of *grants* that are eligible for funding:
1. Standard. This is an award instrument by which NIFA agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined project period without the announced intention of providing additional support at a future date.

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 be submitted by Cooperative Extension Directors for 1862 land-grant institutions and Extension Administrators for 1890 land-grant institutions, including Central State University, Tuskegee University, West Virginia State University, and the University of the District of Columbia. Only these institutions are eligible to submit an application and receive an NTAE award. Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. 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.

Applicants for the NTAE Program must also 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.

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
No Match Required - The NTAE 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 and Grants 101. **Table 2** provides instructions on how to obtain an electronic application. **Part III** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide contains detailed information regarding the 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
Step One: Register	*New Users* to Grants.gov must register early with Grants.gov prior to submitting an application (Register Here).
Step Two: Download Adobe	Download and Install Adobe Reader (see Adobe Software Compatibility for basic system requirements).
Step Three: Find Application	Using this funding opportunity number **USDA-NIFA-OP-010186**, search for application here: Opportunity Package.
Step Four: Assess Readiness	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
Grants.gov Online Support Telephone support: 800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035 Email support: support@grants.gov Self-service customer-based support: Grants.gov iPortal Key Information: Customer service business Hours 24/7, except federal holidays.	Email: grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov Key Information: Business hours: Monday thru Friday, 7a.m. – 5p.m. ET, except federal holidays

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 7** outlines other key instructions for applicants.

Table 5: Key Application Instructions

Instruction	References **(All references are to the** NIFA Grants 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 Grants.gov 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 NTAE Program. See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide for instructions and suggested templates.
2. **Field 8.** Project Narrative (PN). The PN shall not exceed 20 pages of written text whether it is single- or double-spaced and up to 10 additional pages for figures and tables. We have established this maximum (30 pages) to ensure fair and equitable competition. The PN must include all the following:
    a. **Introduction:** Describe past and current involvement with former eXtension or NTAE programming, or similar electronic/online capacity.
    b. **Objectives and Procedures:** Discuss planned procedures for achieving each NTAE objective (listed in Part I, B.). For each task, identify key personnel involved, and timelines for achieving milestones. Where appropriate, describe how planned procedures align with the USDA Strategic Plan.
    c. **Collaborators:** List partner institutions and contacts' names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses.
    d. **Evaluation:** Provide a plan for evaluating accomplishments and outcomes that meet each NTAE objective (listed in Part I B.).

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. Indirect costs (IDC) – Not Permitted.

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](#)).

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 (*New Technologies for Ag Extension*) and the program code (*AA-R*). 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 *no*t authorized for this RFA.

PART V. APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A.   NIFA's Evaluation Process

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

Scientific Peer Review Process:

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

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

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

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

After the review process has been completed, NIFA sends copies of reviews, _not_ including the identity of reviewers, and a summary (if applicable) of the review panel comments to the PD.

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

B.   Evaluation Criteria

A reviewer's written evaluation entails two levels of assessment. First, the reviewer summarizes how well the application addressed each evaluation criterion. After the application has been assessed for strengths and weaknesses of each criterion, the reviewer then evaluates the overall likelihood that the project will have significant outcome and impact. These written reviews are used to begin panel discussions with other reviewers serving on the peer review panel. Through these discussions, peer review panelists come to consensus on the final rating and ranking of proposals. A complete description of NIFA's peer review process can be found at the NIFA website: https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/nifa-peer-review-process-competitive-grant-applications.

NIFA will use the evaluation criteria below to review applications submitted in response to this RFA:

1. **Relevancy**: Explanation and documentation that the project is directed toward specific topic areas identified in Part I, B in this RFA. These topics are designed to increase the capacity of the CES to adopt new and innovative technology applications for delivering science-based educational resources from land-grant and other partner institutions about matters of high importance to the general public. In addition, the relevancy will be evaluated by the description of the necessity of the project based on the needs identified for the target audience and the degree to which the project aligns with the USDA Strategic Plan, Extension Committee on Organization and Policy priorities, and current initiatives funded, where appropriate.

2. **Technical merit**:
   a. Clarity and delineation of objectives, activities, and outcomes;
   b. Conceptual adequacy of the proposed activities to meet the needs of the targeted audience;
   c. Innovation and originality of objectives and activities;
   d. Expected performance targets, outcomes, and impacts as indicated in the Plan for Outcome Based Reporting;
   e. Adaptability to other locations, communities, and/or agricultural products and technologies;
   f. Reasonableness of the budget for planned activities. (While the size of the budget is not an evaluation criterion, the reviewers will be asked to comment whether it matches logically with the program described in the narrative).

3. **Achievability:** Probability of success of the project is appropriate given the level of originality, target audience, and budget for each activity. The extent to which the applicant identifies potential pitfalls and how they will be addressed. There should be sufficient time commitment of PD and co-PD for project activities including management. The plans for management and collaborative arrangements of the proposed project should be adequate, e.g., sufficient time allocated for systematic attainment of objectives; clearly defined project roles and relationships among the key participants and collaborators; plan for decision-making; and plan for administration of the proposed project and its maintenance, partnerships, and collaborative efforts.

4. **Expertise and track record of the applicants**: Expertise can be demonstrated through successful multi-year experience in administering efforts that encourage access to high-quality, non-duplicative, research-based information. Examples include: facilitating inclusive partnerships among research institutions and State Extension Services, administering technical assistance or education activities, number of participants or graduates of past programming, number of years a program or activity has been offered, and quantitative and qualitative impacts from past initiatives. Applicant qualifications of individuals or teams can be demonstrated through length of tenure in leadership, impacts and experience and competence in serving the needs of the identified target audience(s). Evidence of the applicant's ability to evaluate or work with third party evaluators to demonstrate progress on project outcomes and impacts will also be considered.

5. **Adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation**: Includes the expertise of consultants and collaborators, sufficiency of the educational facilities and equipment for the proposed education, and outreach methods.

6. **Adequacy of plans for a comprehensive evaluation process, outcome-based reporting, and the communication of findings and results beyond the immediate target audience**: Includes number and expertise of evaluation team members who have agreed to serve or who have been identified. Evaluation criteria cannot be yes/no; instead provide reviewers with the criteria to rate one proposal over another.

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 statue or award-specific requirements, NIFA Federal Assistance Policy Guide applies to all NIFA awards.

PART VII. OTHER INFORMATION

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

Changes in Budget or Project Plans. In accordance with 2 CFR 200.308, awardees must request prior approval from NIFA for the following program or budget-related reasons (the awardee is subject to the terms and conditions identified in the award):
1. Change in the scope or the objective of the project or program without prior written approval (even if there is no associated budget revision requiring).
2. Change in a key person specified in the application or the federal award.
3. Disengagement from the project for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in time devoted to the project.
4. Inclusion of costs that require prior approval in accordance with 2 CFR 200 Subpart E (Cost Principles), or 45 CFR Part 75 Appendix IX, (Principles for Determining Costs Applicable to Research and Development under Awards and Contracts with Hospitals), or 48 CFR, unless waived by the federal awarding agency, 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 or (443) 386-9488.

APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACT

Program Contacts
Sarah Rocker, National Program Leader
Sarah.Rocker@usda.gov
(303) 328-7922

Izabella Jablonska, Program Specialist
Izabella.Jablonska@usda.gov
(312) 465-3517

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
3. Awards under this RFA, please email 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
Cooperative Extension Service – CES
Data Management Plan – DMP
Land-grant University – LGU
New Technologies for Agriculture Extension – NTAE
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.

New Application:
> An application not previously submitted to a program.