



United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food
and Agriculture

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NIFA

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative

FUNDING YEAR: Fiscal Year (FY) 2024

APPLICATION DEADLINE: FY2024 February 15, 2024
FY2025 February 13, 2025

LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE: Not Required

ANTICIPATED FUNDING: FY 2024 \$44,000,000
FY 2025 \$44,000,000

AVERAGE AWARD RANGE: \$50,000 - \$3,500,000

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: USDA-NIFA-ICGP-010314

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 10.307

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

Assistance Listing Number (ALN): The Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) is listed in the Assistance Listings under number **10.307**.

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
Application:	FY2024 5:00 P.M. Eastern Time, February 15, 2024 FY2025 5:00 P.M. Eastern Time, February 13, 2025
Letter of Intent:	Not Required
Applicants Comments:	Within six months from the issuance of this notice <i>(NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month)</i>

Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (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 (RFA) 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. Please use the following subject line: Response to the OREI RFA.

Centers of Excellence. Applicants are encouraged to visit the NIFA’s [Centers of Excellence \(COE\)](#) web page for information on COE designation process, including COE criteria, and a list of programs offering COE opportunities. A recording of COE outreach and COE implementation webinars are also available.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This RFA is being released prior to the passage of a full appropriations act for FY 2024. Enactment of a continuing resolution, appropriations act, or other authorizing legislation may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. The amount available for OREI in FY 2024 and 2025 is approximately \$44,000,000 each year.

NIFA requests applications for the OREI for FY 2024 and 2025 to solve critical organic agriculture issues, priorities, or problems through the integration of research, education, and extension. Applicants should check the [OREI web page](#) to access the RFA and check for updates. OREI funds research, education, and extension programs that enhance the ability of producers and processors who have already adopted organic standards to grow and market high quality organic agricultural products. Starting in FY 2024, all applications are required to address:

1. the relevance to organic agriculture stakeholder needs and;
2. the USDA organic certification status of the field or facilities to be used for the research.

This notice identifies the objectives for OREI projects, deadlines, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for an OREI grant.

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PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

Section [7210 of the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018](#) amended section 1672B of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade (FACT) Act of 1990 ([7 U.S.C. 5925b](#)). The FACT Act, as amended, authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture, in consultation with the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board (NAREEEAB), to make competitive grants to support research, education, and extension activities regarding organically grown and processed agricultural commodities for eight legislatively defined goals (see [Part I, B.](#)).

B. Purpose and Priorities

The Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI), under assistance listing 10.307, seeks to solve critical organic agricultural issues, priorities, or problems through the integration of research, education, and extension activities. The purpose of this program is to fund high priority integrated projects that will enhance the ability of producers and processors who have already adopted organic standards to grow and market high quality organic agricultural products, mitigate and adapt to climate change, build resilience of the organic farming system, and protect water and other resources. Priority concerns include biological, physical, and social sciences, including economics.

Consistent with [7 U.S.C. 5925b](#), OREI has eight goals:

1. Facilitating the development and improvement of organic agriculture production, breeding, and processing methods;
2. Evaluating the potential economic benefits of organic agricultural production and methods to producers, processors, and rural communities;
3. Exploring international trade opportunities for organically grown and processed agricultural commodities;
4. Determining desirable traits for organic commodities;
5. Identifying marketing and policy constraints on the expansion of organic agriculture;
6. Conducting advanced on-farm research and development that emphasizes observation of, experimentation with, and innovation for working organic farms, including research relating to production, marketing, food safety, socioeconomic conditions, and farm business management;
7. Examining optimal conservation, soil health, and environmental outcomes relating to organically produced agricultural products; and
8. Developing new and improved seed varieties that are particularly suited for organic agriculture.

Priorities for FY 2024:

Proposals are encouraged in the following areas based on legislated goals and stakeholder input (not listed in order of importance)

1. Conduct advanced on-farm crop, livestock, or integrated livestock-crop research and development that emphasize observation of, experimentation with, and innovation for

organic farms, including production, marketing, socioeconomic, and environmental considerations. These issues could include both identification of factors reducing yields, efficiency, productivity, and economic returns on organic farms and the economic and socioeconomic contributions of organic farming to producers, processors, and local communities. This priority includes studies that help producers monitor and improve soil health and fertility, adapt to climate change, as well as studies focusing on soil, plant and/or livestock associated microbiome with practical applications to organic production systems. The development of tools and testing methodologies that can help protect the organic integrity is encouraged under this priority.

2. Develop and demonstrate educational tools for Cooperative Extension personnel and other professionals who advise producers on organic practices. Applications bringing end-users together with OREI-funded research, education, and extension teams are encouraged.
3. For both plant and animal-based organic products: evaluate, develop, and improve allowable post-harvest handling, processing, and food safety practices to reduce toxins and microbial contamination, while increasing shelf-life, quality, and other economically important characteristics.
4. Strengthen organic crop propagation systems, including seed and transplant production and protection, and plant breeding for organic production conditions, with an emphasis on publicly available releases. Goals of organic propagation and breeding-focused proposals can include, but are not limited to: disease, weed, and pest resistance; stress tolerance including resilience to drought, flood, extreme temperatures and other climate change impacts; nutrient use efficiency; performance in soil-improving and climate-smart systems such as organic no-till; quality and yield improvement; and genetic mechanisms to prevent inadvertent introduction of GMO traits through cross-pollination. This priority includes cover crop breeding for enhanced performance in organic systems. Projects dealing solely with cultivar evaluation do not fit under this priority.
5. Explore technologies that meet the requirements of the National Organic Program (NOP)¹ and protect soil, water, and other natural resources. This includes developing, improving, and evaluating systems-based integrated management programs to address diseases, nematodes, weeds, and insect pests-related problems for organically grown crops. Systems-based evaluations can include the safety and efficacy of allowable pest management materials and practices. Proposals addressing organic management of diseases, nematodes, weeds, and insect pests in the Southern Region are especially encouraged. Where possible, the projects should engage emerging technologies such as automation, remote sensing, precision agriculture, artificial intelligence, and digital scouting to enhance plant protection and weed control as well as improve productivity.
6. Develop or improve systems-based animal production, animal health, and pest management practices to improve animal productivity, health, and welfare while retaining

¹ The NOP NOSB maintains a list of research priorities that is updated annually:
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/MSDDResearchPriorities.pdf>

or enhancing economic viability, and mitigating the impacts of climate change. Systems may include but are not limited to grazing and pasture-based systems (including rotational grazing), integrated livestock-crop systems, and the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) confinement standards. Projects should capitalize on emerging opportunities such as automation, artificial intelligence, deep learning, and precision management in animal production, welfare, and health; managing risk as appropriate, to continue to advance animal research programs and sustain effective technology transfer.

7. Breed, evaluate, and select animal breeds and genotypes adapted to organic systems. This would include but is not restricted to: identification of and selection for pest, parasite, and disease resistance; health and performance under organic pasture and feed regimens (especially soil-enhancing and climate friendly systems such as management of intensive rotational grazing and multispecies grazing); resilience to heat, fluctuating forage quality, and other stresses related to climate change; and performance in small, mixed, or other innovative farming operations.
8. Develop undergraduate and/or graduate curriculum for organic agriculture. Education activities under this priority may include instructional delivery programs and experiential learning including student-farmer engagement for students enrolled in associate, baccalaureate, masters, or Ph.D. degree programs.
9. Identify marketing, policy, and other socioeconomic barriers to the expansion of organic agriculture in the United States and develop strategies to address them. Lobbying and advocacy activities are not appropriate under this priority.

Traditional ecological knowledge, if consistent with organic standards and the above goals and priorities, is considered an acceptable topic of research, education, and extension for projects funded by this RFA.

The OREI is particularly interested in research, education, and extension projects that will assist farmer and rancher whole farm planning by delivering practical, research-based information. Applicants should describe how the results of their research, education, and extension programs will improve the ability of growers to develop the Organic System Plan required for organic certification.

Organic systems fieldwork must be done on USDA certified organic land and/or in USDA certified organic facilities. In special cases, studies can be conducted on land/facilities in transition to organic certification as is appropriate to project goals and objectives. For this program, a land/facility is not considered organic unless it has received USDA certification. It is expected that land/facilities in transition to USDA organic certification will be certified by the end of the project. Refer to the [USDA National Organic Program](#) for organic production standards. If the entire project is hosted by operations whose gross income from organic sales totals \$5,000 or less, the certification requirement might be waived. A justification should be included in the section addressing the USDA organic certification. Trials investigating animal health issues should be conducted in a USDA certified organic setting if animal management could play a pivotal role in the response of the animal to the proposed intervention. For example,

animals that have been raised under organic standards should be used to compare pasture-raised animals to those from a confined animal feeding operation. Otherwise, a USDA certified organic setting is not required for clinical trials involving animal health.

Proposals with significant overlap in objectives and scope cannot be submitted simultaneously to both OREI and ORG (Organic Transitions) programs. NIFA will disqualify both applications. Additional information on the scope of OREI and ORG may be found at [Organic Agriculture Program](#) under “Program Specific Resources.”

Studies designed to compare organic production systems with conventional production systems are not appropriate for this RFA. Those applications could be submitted to other NIFA programs like [Agriculture and Food Research Initiative \(AFRI\)](#), [Specialty Crops Research Initiative \(SCRI\)](#), or [Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education \(SARE\)](#).

OREI strongly encourages applicants to develop partnerships that include collaboration with small- or mid-sized accredited colleges and universities; 1890 Land-grant Institutions, 1994 Land-grant Institutions, Hispanic-serving institutions, and/or other institutions that serve high-risk, under-served, or hard-to-reach audiences as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that are engaged in organic agriculture research, education, and outreach. International partnerships, linkages, and exchanges that contribute to solving or solve critical organic agriculture issues, priorities, or problems in the United States are also encouraged. The OREI program encourages applications that may spur innovation in infant nutritional organic and grass-fed dairy products.

NIFA strongly encourages applicants to consult with organic producers and/or processors before developing project applications. Producers and/or processors should play an important and active role in developing project goals and objectives; implementing the plan; and evaluating and disseminating project results and outcomes. Projects must involve work that is viewed by stakeholders as both necessary and important. There is an expectation that a local and/or regional advisory panel will inform the project throughout its life, including ongoing identification and prioritization of research, education, and extension objectives. An outcome-oriented plan for disseminating information derived from project work must be an integral part of the project and described. This information delivery plan should consider several delivery systems and methods. The metrics for evaluating research, education, and extension outcomes should be clearly described and appropriate to project goals.

When working with growers and/or processors, sufficient funds should be requested and reserved during the course of the project. These funds could include but are not limited to participation at project meetings, hosting of project activities, compensation for certified land or facility use, and compensation for crop destruction or sampling.

The following websites may be useful in developing OREI applications:

1. [National Organic Program | Agricultural Marketing Service \(usda.gov\)](#)
2. <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/MSDDResearchPriorities.pdf>

3. <https://nifa.usda.gov/program/organic-agriculture-program>
4. <https://eorganic.info/>
5. <https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/index.php>
6. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Surveys/Guide_to_NASS_Surveys/Organic_Production/index.php

The OREI encourages use of multiple extension delivery methods, including virtual, face-to-face meetings and tours, farmer-to-farmer mentoring, print publications and social media, as appropriate to project goals.

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.

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. OREI curriculum development applications should demonstrably incorporate a leadership development component to equip students with technical and leadership abilities upon graduation.

The OREI program is aligned with the following [USDA Strategic Plan FY 2022-2026](#) goals:

1. **Goal 1: Combat Climate Change to Support America's Working Lands, Natural Resources and Communities** - *Objectives 1.1 and 1.4*
2. **Goal 2: Ensure America's Agricultural System is Equitable, Resilient, and Prosperous** - *Objectives 2.1 and 2.3*
3. **Goal 3: Foster an Equitable and Competitive Marketplace for All Agricultural Producers** - *Objective 3.2*
4. **Goal 5: Expand Opportunities for Economic Development and Improve Quality of Life in Rural and Tribal Communities** – *Objective 5.3*

The OREI Program is aligned with the following [USDA Science and Research Strategy, 2023–2026](#) priorities:

1. **Priority 1: Accelerating Innovative Technologies and Practices** - Objectives 1.4 and 1.5
2. **Priority 2: Driving Climate-Smart Solutions** - Objectives 2.2 and 2.3
3. **Priority 4: Cultivating Resilient Ecosystems** - Objectives 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5
4. **Priority 5: Translating Research Into Action** - Objectives 5.2 and 5.4

Table 2: Program Key Information

Title	Description
Program Code:	113.A
Program Code Name:	Organic Agriculture Research & Extension Initiative
Assistance Listing Number	10.307
Project Type:	Integrated and Curriculum Projects
Grant Type:	Standard, Conference, Planning
Application Deadline	FY2024 5:00 P.M. Eastern, February 15, 2024 FY2025 5:00 P.M. Eastern, February 13, 2025
Grant Duration:	12-48 Months
Anticipated # of Awards:	30

Table 3: Project Types, Periods and Maximum Awards

Project Types	Project Periods (Maximum Award)
Tier 1 Integrated Proposal	3 to 4 years (Approx. \$3,500,000)
Tier 2 Integrated Proposal	3 to 4 years (Approx. \$2,000,000)
Tier 3 Integrated Proposal	3 to 4 years (Approx. \$1,000,000)
Curriculum Development Proposal	3 to 4 years (Approx. \$750,000)
Conference Proposal	1 year (Approx. \$75,000)
Planning Proposal	1 year (Approx. \$50,000)

Applicants should decide the project type best suited to the objectives of their proposed project and develop a budget that fits the objectives.

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

This RFA is being released prior to the passage of a full appropriations act for FY 2024. Enactment of a continuing resolution, appropriations act, or other authorizing legislation may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. The amount available for the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) in FY 2024 and 2025 is approximately \$44,000,000 each year. 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 2024 and 2025 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. *Resubmitted application*: Resubmitted applications must include a 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).

C. Project and Grant Types

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

1. **Integrated Project Proposals**: Integrated project proposals must include research and at least one additional element of the other two functions of the agricultural knowledge system (education and extension). Awards will be made as grants. To accommodate projects differing in scope, three types of integrated project proposals are offered. However, projects with similar content and same investigators may not be submitted to more than one project category.
 - a. **Tier 1 Proposals**. Proposals addressing program priorities with a maximum award amount of approximately \$3,500,000. These are large, coordinated projects addressing critical issues that cut across multiple regions. An advisory panel is strongly recommended for Tier 1 proposals.
 - b. **Tier 2 Proposals**. Proposals addressing program priorities with a maximum award amount of approximately \$2,000,000. These are multidisciplinary projects addressing issues that may be either national or regional.
 - c. **Tier 3 Proposals**. Proposals addressing specific critical constraints with a maximum award amount of approximately \$1,000,000, reflecting the possibly narrower scope of these projects or locality-specific nature.

Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 proposals: (1) will be reviewed together with no amount set aside for any of the proposal types but taking into account the cost efficiency and relative scope of each project type to avoid bias toward large projects, and (2) must include a data

management plan that clearly describes how the data will be disseminated and accessible to the public. For both Tier 1 and Tier 2 proposals, **a project management plan and a logic model** are strongly recommended but will not count against the 21-page limit of the Project Narrative . The main intent of large awards is to foster collaboration between states and avoid duplication of efforts. Therefore, Tier 1 proposals with a budget of up to approximately \$3,500,000 are expected to tackle major issues identified by stakeholders and bring the community of needed participants together to address the problems. We expect these proposals to be multi-institution and multi-state.

2. **Curriculum Development Proposals:** Curriculum development proposals provide assistance in the development of undergraduate and/or graduate curriculum in organic agriculture. Education activities under this priority may include instructional delivery programs and experiential learning including student-farmer engagement for students enrolled in associate, baccalaureate, masters, or Ph.D. degree programs. Routine use of students as personnel on research projects is not considered education for the purposes of this priority and students should be actively engaged in the scholarship of the research/extension projects. Programs designed to educate growers are considered extension rather than educational activities for the purpose of this RFA. Projects must be innovative and promote and strengthen academic instruction or activities that lead to completion of a student's formal degree or certificate program. Projects should have broad-based applicability beyond a single course or an individual instructor. Projects are encouraged to include partnerships among several academic units or institutions to more efficiently deliver coordinated, academic instruction that reduces instructional duplication and costs. This priority is not intended to duplicate activities targeting farmers and non-academic institutions. Those activities are considered extension and outreach and may continue to be included in integrated project proposals. Curriculum development proposals cannot exceed \$750,000 total budget per award for a period of up to four years.
3. **Conference Proposals:** Conference proposals support workshops or symposia bringing together scientists and others, including end-users, to identify research, education, or extension needs; update information; or advance understanding of organic issues and problems using a systems-based approach. These should occur within 12 months of the award start date. Conferences providing current information to farmers and ranchers should be held to the extent possible in conjunction with meetings regularly attended by organic producers and processors. Conference proposals should go beyond just meeting activities and should lead to clear outputs and outcomes. Documentation of outputs and outcomes may include, but is not limited to proceedings, white papers, opinion papers, fact sheets, bulletins, or priority setting. This information should be publicly available. Conference proposal awards cannot exceed \$75,000.
4. **Planning Proposals:** Planning proposals provide assistance in the development of future OREI proposals requiring multi-regional or regional coordination. Proposals are encouraged from applicants who: (a) demonstrate limited resources for submitting large grant applications, (b) articulate anticipated benefits from the proposed planning activities, or (c) present evidence that the resulting OREI application will have a high probability of success. Applicants are encouraged to budget for planning meetings that

bring together scientists, end-users, and technology providers. Applicants should detail the types of participants who will be invited in order to document that planning meeting participants represent a broad range of expertise. Planning proposals should lead to clear outputs and outcomes. Documentation of outputs and outcomes may include but is not limited to white papers, opinion paper, priority setting, etc. This information should be publicly available. Planning proposal awards cannot exceed \$50,000 and are not renewable. Funding of a planning proposal is not a guarantee that the resulting application will be funded by NIFA. Planning proposals will be reviewed by the panel using the same standards as all other proposals. It is expected that planning proposal activities supported by this program will occur within 12 months of award start date. Planning proposals, from or including small, mid-sized and minority-serving institutions are particularly welcomed. Planning proposals are not intended to generate preliminary data.

D. Ethical Conduct of Funded Projects

In accordance with sections [2, 3, and 8 of 2 CFR Part 422](#), institutions that conduct USDA-funded extramural research must foster an atmosphere conducive to research integrity, bear primary responsibility for prevention and detection of research misconduct, and maintain and effectively communicate and train their staff regarding policies and procedures. In the event an application to NIFA results in an award, the Authorized Representative (AR) assures, through acceptance of the award that the institution will comply with the above requirements. Award recipients must, upon request, make available to NIFA the policies, procedures, and documentation to support the conduct of the training. See [Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research](#) for further information.

PART III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligibility Requirements

Applicants for the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) must meet all the requirements discussed in this RFA. Failure to meet the eligibility criteria by the application deadline may result in exclusion from consideration or, preclude NIFA from making an award. For those new to Federal financial assistance, NIFA's [Grants Overview](#) provides highly recommended information about grants and other resources to help understand the Federal awards process.

Applications may only be submitted by the following entities:

1. State agricultural experiment stations;
2. Colleges and universities;
3. University research foundations;
4. Other research institutions and organizations;
5. Federal agencies;
6. National laboratories;
7. Private organizations, foundations, or corporations;
8. Individuals who are United States citizens or nationals; or
9. A group consisting of two or more of the entities described in subparagraphs (1) through (8).

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

Duplicate or Multiple Submissions – Duplicate, essentially duplicate, or predominantly overlapping applications submitted simultaneously to both OREI and another NIFA program, such as ORG, in the same fiscal year will not be reviewed. NIFA will disqualify both applications in the event of this particular occurrence. For those new to Federal financial assistance, NIFA's [Grants Overview](#) provides highly recommended information about grants and other resources to help understand the Federal awards process.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

Match Required – Applicants **MUST** provide matching contributions on a dollar-for-dollar basis for all Federal funds awarded under the *OREI*. NIFA may waive the matching funds requirement for a grant if one of the following applies:

1. The results of the project, while of particular benefit to a specific agricultural commodity, are likely to be applicable to agricultural commodities generally; or
2. The project involves a minor commodity, the project deals with scientifically important research, and the grant recipient is unable to satisfy the matching funds requirement.

C. Centers of Excellence

Pursuant to [Section 7214 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 \(Pub. L. 113-79\)](#), NIFA will recognize and prioritize COE applicants that carry out research, extension, and education activities that relate to the food and agricultural sciences. A COE is composed of one or more of the following entities that provide financial or in-kind support to the COE.

1. State agricultural experiment stations.

2. Colleges and universities.
3. University research foundations.
4. Other research institutions and organizations.
5. Federal agencies.
6. National laboratories.
7. Private organizations, foundations, or corporations.
8. Individuals; or
9. Any group consisting of two or more of the entities described in (1) through (8).

A full explanation, including the process for requesting Center of Excellence designation can be found here: [Centers of Excellence \(COE\)](#) or in [Part IV, B](#) of this RFA.

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 4** 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 4: Steps to Obtain Application Materials

Steps	Action
Step One: Register	<i>New Users</i> 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-ICGP-010314 , 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 5: 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 grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov 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 6** outlines other key instructions for applicants.

Table 6: 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 *OREI*. 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 21 pages of written text including figures and tables for Integrated Project and Curriculum Development proposals. The PN must not exceed 7 pages of written text including figures and tables for Conference and Planning proposals. Applications exceeding these page limits will not be accepted for review. Use font no smaller than 12-point, regardless of line spacing for written text (the font size for tables and figures should be no smaller than 11 points, Times New Roman). 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. Response to previous review (if applicable):

This requirement only applies to Resubmitted Applications as described in [Part II, B](#). A three-page maximum response to the previous review (containing the previous proposal number in the first line) titled “Response to Previous Review” as the first page. The three-page maximum “Response to Previous Review” does not count against the 21-page limit of the PN.

b. Executive summary and table of contents:

The executive summary and table of contents does not count against the 21-page limit of the PN and must include the following information in a combined executive summary and table of contents. Applications without an executive summary containing the following parts will NOT be considered for funding. Note that this section is in addition to and different from the Project Summary page.

1. Project title.
2. Project type (see [Part II, C](#) of this RFA).
3. List the legislatively defined goals being addressed (see [Part I, B](#) of this RFA) and provide an estimate of the percentage of effort/funds dedicated to each (sum of percentages should equal 100 percent). Note that the legislatively defined goals are not the same as the FY 2024 and 2025 program priorities.
4. Indicate the approximate distribution of percentage of effort between research, education, and extension.
5. Program Staff and their role – include name, title, affiliation, address, and e-mail for Project Director (PD), Co-PD(s), and Key Personnel. Please note all people listed as Co-PD or Co-PI should be eligible and able to fulfill the role of PD/PI for the project if the need arises. Review of Co-PD roles will be included in project review. Please be clear about Co-PDs vs sub-contractors.
6. A brief summary (2-5 sentences) describing the critical **organic agriculture** stakeholder needs addressed by the project and the project’s long-term goals (provide cross-references to full descriptions in the narrative).
7. A brief summary (2-5 sentences) of the outreach plan proposed by the project (provide a cross-reference to the full description in the narrative).
8. A brief summary (2-5 sentences) describing potential economic, social, and other benefits (Who benefits and how will it be measured?).
9. A brief summary (2-5 sentences) describing stakeholder engagement throughout the project (provide a cross-reference to the full description in the narrative).
10. A brief statement (2-5 sentences) addressing the USDA organic certification. This RFA requires organic systems fieldwork to be done on USDA certified organic land and/or in USDA organic certified facilities. Explain how this proposal meets the requirement.

c. Outcome from previous awards:

If you have previously received funding from OREI or ORG as **Lead PD**, provide the following:

1. Award number(s)
2. Significant outcome from each award (maximum of 300 words per award)

3. The "Outcome from previous awards" section is an opportunity for applicants to demonstrate their track record or that of your team as a whole. Limit the information to the **Lead PD** (for past awards as **Lead PD**). Both OREI and ORG projects are relevant. This section does not count against the 21-page limit of the PN and will not penalize those who have not received prior awards.

d. Introduction:

1. Provide a clear statement of the long-term goal(s), the critical need(s) of the kind of organic agriculture being addressed and supporting outreach objectives.
2. Describe how stakeholders were engaged to identify project goals and objectives, and as appropriate, how stakeholder involvement will continue during the course of the project.
3. Summarize the body of knowledge or other past activities that substantiate the need for the proposed project and provide relevant citations.
4. Describe significant ongoing or recently completed activities related to the proposed project including the work of key project personnel. Documentation is particularly important of prior research, education, and extension activities in organic agriculture. Applications should also demonstrate how duplication of effort with similar activities by other investigators will be avoided.
5. Preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed work should be included in this section. All works cited should be referenced and attached at Field 9 on the Form, Bibliography & References Cited. Refer to Part V of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) Bibliography & References Cited is also a required section.

e. Rationale and Significance:

Concisely present the rationale behind the proposed project. The specific relationship of the project's objectives to one or more of the FY 2024 and 2025 OREI priorities should be clear. These purposes and priority areas are described under [Part I, B](#). Purpose and Priorities. Discuss novel or innovative aspects of the proposed project.

f. Objectives:

List project objectives.

g. Approach:

Clearly state the activities proposed or problems being addressed. Describe the approaches to be used. Specifically, this section must include:

1. A description of the activities proposed, key personnel and institutional roles in those activities, and the timeline;
2. Methods to be used in carrying out the proposed project, including the feasibility of the methods and why they were selected;
3. Expected results and outcomes, including how the project will contribute to long-term profitability and sustainability of organic agriculture;

4. Means by which these results and outcomes will be analyzed, assessed, or interpreted;
5. How results or products will be used;
6. Outreach plan (if appropriate): including science-based tools disseminated, participants involved in delivery, and how impacts will be measured, including the learning outcomes;
7. Issues that may be encountered;
8. Limitations to proposed procedures; and
9. A full explanation of any materials, procedures, situations, or activities related to the project that may be hazardous to personnel, along with an outline or precautions to be exercised to avoid or mitigate the effects of such hazards. For work with organisms that might be perceived as potentially invasive species, indicate precautions to prevent spread or specific information on the context in which they are being used.

h. Project Timeline:

Provide a clear timeline of activities and major milestones, using **September 1st** as the start date for the project.

i. Centers of Excellence Justification:

Only Integrated Project Proposals applicants may be considered for Centers of Excellence (COE) designation.

For consideration as a COE, you must provide a brief justification statement, as part of your Project Narrative and within the page limits provided, which describes how you meet the standards of a COE, based on the following criteria:

1. The ability of the COE to ensure coordination and cost effectiveness by reducing unnecessarily duplicative efforts in the research, teaching, and extension activities outlined in this application;
2. In addition to any applicable matching requirements, the ability of the COE to leverage available resources by using public-private partnerships among agricultural industry groups, institutions of higher education, and the federal government in the proposed research and/or extension activities outlined in this application. Resources leveraged be commensurate with the size of the award;
3. The planned scope and capability of the COE to implement teaching initiatives that increase awareness and effectively disseminate solutions to target audiences through extension activities of the proposed research and/or extension activity outlined in this application; and
4. The ability or capacity of the COE to increase the economic returns to rural communities by identifying, attracting, and directing funds to high-priority agricultural issues in support of and as a result of the implementation of the proposed research and/or extension activity outlined in this application.

Additionally, where practicable (not required), COE applicants should describe proposed efforts to improve teaching capacity and infrastructure at colleges and

universities (including land-grant colleges and universities, cooperating forestry schools, certified Non-Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture (NLGCA).

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.

1. Biographical Sketch - The following are additional instructions of information to include:
 - a. Author identifier ([ORCID](#)) of the researcher if available.
 - b. Digital Object Identifier (DOI) of all publications where possible. You may also include a list of data publications or published data products relevant to the proposed project, following recommended data citation format.

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

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

1. Match – If an applicant concludes that the matching requirements described under [Part III, B](#) of this RFA is not applicable to them; the applicant must include an explanation of their conclusion in the *budget justification*. NIFA will consider this justification when determining final matching requirements or if required matching can be waived. NIFA retains the right to make final determinations regarding matching requirements.

Grants that require matching funds as specified under [Part III, B](#) of this RFA must list in their *budget justification* the matching sources, the identification of the entity(ies) providing the match, and the total pledged amount. A written verification of commitments of matching support (a pledge agreement) is not required. However, applicants are subject to the documentation, valuing and reporting requirements, as specified in [2 CFR Part 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards \(the Uniform Guidance\),”](#) and [7 CFR 3430, “Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-Formula Federal Assistance Programs – General Award Administrative Provisions.”](#)

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.
3. Additional Budget Information
 - a. For all proposal types, use September 1st as the start date for the project.
 - b. For Conference proposals: Budgets may include appropriate amounts for transportation and subsistence costs for invited participants and for other allowable costs. Include an itemized breakdown of all support requested in the Budget Justification (Field K. of the R&R Budget).
 - c. For Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3, and Curriculum proposals: Applicants may request funds to attend at least two PD workshops during the term of their project.

Sufficient funds should be requested and reserved during the course of the project for the PD to attend the workshops in the metropolitan Washington, DC area or Kansas City. In the early years of a multiyear project, participation could be in the form of a poster presentation and submission of an abstract. In the final year of the project, an oral presentation should be made, along with the submission of a written report. The request for these travel funds should be clearly indicated in the Budget Justification (Field K. of the R&R Budget). Applicants for Conference and Planning Proposals are not required to attend the PD Workshop and do not need to include funds in their budgets for these activities.

Data Management Plan (DMP). A DMP is required for this program and will not count against the 21-page limit of the PN. 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](#)). If you need help in preparing a data management plan or have questions about what constitutes a data management plan for this role (including questions about data privacy, etc.), please contact the NIFA program contacts listed in [Appendix I](#) of this RFA.

Mentoring Plan (MP). A MP is strongly recommended if the proposal requests funding for student or postdoctoral support, including scholarships or fellowships. If various tiers of students or scholars are represented in the proposal, please provide separate MP for each educational or professional level targeted (e.g., high school students, undergraduate students, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows). The MP should not exceed a maximum of two pages for each educational level and for all recipients (including subawards). The MP will not count against the 21-page limit of the PN. The MP should incorporate the following as appropriate: a.) the roles and responsibilities of the Project Director and Co-Project Directors in managing the mentoring process; b.) training for and/or credentials of individuals who will serve as mentors (i.e., mentor training). Mentors may be experienced mentors from academia, industry, or government, or student peers at various levels who are expected to provide guidance, cultural support, and sense of community with the activities and facilitate the amplification of program-specific perspectives and accomplishments of the mentees; c.) a description of mentoring activities that may include, but are not limited to, peer mentoring or layered mentoring, whereby a set of mentees are progressively mentored by others at a higher level in their careers; d.) a description of processes to ensure reasonable accommodations for program participants with disabilities or challenges with accessing program activities.

Please incorporate mentoring activities into the overall project timeline. Scholarship programs should also include plans to accommodate scholarship recipients who find it necessary to interrupt their program of study because of health, personal, or other reasonable non-academic and non-disciplinary cause(s).

Project Management Plan. A project management plan is strongly recommended for Tier 1 and Tier 2 project proposals and will not count against the 21-page limit of the PN. A project Management Plan must include project governance, a stakeholder advisory board, involvement of an external evaluator, and progress reporting. The plan must clearly articulate with an organizational chart how the project will be governed. A well thought out strategy must be put in place to enhance coordination, collaboration, communication, data sharing and reporting among

members of the project team and stakeholder groups. The project management plan must include an advisory group of principal stakeholders, partners, and professionals to assess and evaluate the quality, expected measurable outcomes, and potential impacts for the proposed research, education, and extension. An evaluator external to the project team must be employed, with a specified amount of funding set aside for evaluation support. Success in meeting objectives must be demonstrated through proposed project metrics. Reporting requirements must include a description of key achievements including the publicly available and compatible technologies, information, and data products.

Logic Model. A Logic Model is strongly recommended for Tier 1 and Tier 2 project proposals and does not count against the 21-page limit of the PN. The logic model must include elements detailing the activities, outputs, and outcomes of the proposed project. The logic model planning process is a tool that should be used to develop a project before writing the application. This information may be provided as a narrative or formatted into a logic model chart. For more information and resources, see [Integrated Programs' Logic Model Planning Process](#) located on the NIFA website.

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 OREI and the program code 113.A. Accurate entry is critical.
2. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List. See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

C. Funding Restrictions

Indirect Cost (IDC) not to exceed 30 percent of Total Federal Funds Awarded. Section 1462(a) and (c) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA) ([7 U.S.C. 3310 \(a\) and \(c\)](#)) limits IDC for the overall award to 30 percent of total federal funds awarded (TFFA) under a research, education, or extension grant. The maximum IDC rate allowed under the award is determined by calculating the amount of IDC using:

1. the sum of an institution's negotiated indirect cost rate and the indirect cost rate charged by sub-awardees, if any; or
2. 30 percent of TFFA.

The maximum allowable IDC rate under the award, including the IDC charged by the sub-awardee(s), if any, is the lesser of the two rates.

If the result of number one is the lesser of the two rates, the grant recipient is allowed to charge the negotiated IDC rate on the prime award and the sub-award(s), if any. Any sub-awards would be subject to the sub-awardee's negotiated IDC rate. The sub-awardee may charge its negotiated IDC rate on its portion of the award, provided the sum of the IDC rate charged under the award by the prime awardee and the sub-awardee(s) does not exceed 30 percent of the TFFA.

If the result of number two is the lesser of the two rates, then the maximum IDC rate allowed for the overall award, including any sub-award(s), is limited to 30 percent of the TFFA. That is, the IDC of the prime awardee plus the sum of the IDC charged by the sub-awardee(s), if any, may not exceed 30 percent of the TFFA.

In the event of an award, the prime awardee is responsible for ensuring the maximum indirect cost allowed for the award is not exceeded when combining IDC for the Federal portion (i.e., prime and sub-awardee(s)) and any applicable cost-sharing (see [7 CFR 3430.52\(b\)](#)). Amounts exceeding the maximum allowable IDC are considered unallowable. See sections [408](#) and [410](#) of [2 CFR 200](#).

If the applicant does not have a negotiated rate and NIFA is the cognizant agency, the applicant must calculate an IDC rate in order to request IDC. Applicants are not required to complete the IDC package during the application process. Applicants need only to calculate an IDC rate to serve as a basis for requesting IDC, please see National Institute of Food and Agriculture (usda.gov) for additional resources. If awarded, the applicant will be required to submit a complete IDC proposal package to obtain a negotiated rate.

Organizations that do not have a current negotiated (including provisional) rate, may elect the De Minimis rate ([2 CFR 200.414](#)). The Uniform Guidance offers the option of electing to charge a de Minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total indirect costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. As described above and in [2 CFR 200.403](#), costs must be charged consistently as either indirect or direct costs but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If elected, this methodology must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate for a rate, which it may do at any time.

Funds made available shall not be used for the construction of a new building or facility or the acquisition, expansion, remodeling, or alteration of an existing building or facility (including site grading and improvement, and architect fees).

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 OREI 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 [NIFA Peer Review Process for Competitive Grant Applications](#).

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

5. Proposal Relevance

For Integrated Project Proposals:

- a. Documentation needed. Application includes documentation that the project is directed to current and likely future problems/challenges in organic agriculture. Application adequately addresses at least one of the FY 2024 and 2025 OREI priorities referenced in [Part I, B](#);
- b. Stakeholder involvement. Application includes information on how stakeholders were selected and how their input was solicited and incorporated. There is an expectation that a local and/or regional advisory panel will inform the program (especially Tier 1 proposals) throughout its life;
- c. Outreach plan. Application includes a detailed outreach plan that includes deliverables and a description of how impacts will be measured. A description of the learning outcome metrics for training and educational activities should be included;
- d. Potential for project to contribute to long-term profitability and sustainability of organic production or marketing systems; and
- e. Importance of the commodity or production system or importance of constraints (marketing/yield/pest/other) and resulting impacts on the production system. Potential for project to make a difference.

For Conference, Curriculum Development and Planning Proposals:

- a. Demonstrated need. Justification of conference, curriculum proposed, or planned activities. Application adequately addresses at least one of the FY 2024 and 2025 OREI priorities referenced in [Part I, B](#);
- b. Adequacy of background research. Listing of recent meetings, outreach activities or other activities on the same subject;
- c. Stakeholder involvement. Application includes names and organizational affiliations of the chair and other members of the organizing committee or

planning team members, including information on how stakeholders were selected, how their input was solicited and incorporated, and a description of their future involvement in the project;

- d. Quality of proposed program (or agenda) for the conference activity and planning proposals, including a listing of scheduled participants, their institutional affiliations, and a description of their expertise. For curriculum products, a description of the program including the target audience, expected number of participants, a detailed syllabus, experiential training activities, how the program fits within ongoing activities. For all proposal types, describe how the impact of the programs being proposed will be assessed;) and
- e. Potential for the project to make an impact on previously outlined program priorities ([Part I, B](#)).

6. Proposal Quality for All Project Types:

- a. Conceptual adequacy. Application clearly states objectives and how they will be achieved within the timeframe, scope, and budget of the proposed project;
- b. Approach. The proposed method and approach are appropriate to project objectives;
- c. Involvement of appropriate and relevant expertise;
- d. Experience of key project personnel;
- e. Appropriateness of budget;
- f. Feasibility, probability of success; and
- g. Adherence to guidelines and appropriate Data Management Plan: For proposals involving [Extension Foundation](#), or other extension outlets this includes adherence to the guidelines on incorporating these into proposals, such as inclusion of supporting letters and budgets.

C. Centers of Excellence

In addition to evaluating applicants using the criterion listed in [Part V, B](#) of this RFA, NIFA will use the COE standards described in this RFA to evaluate applicants that rank highly meritorious and requested to be considered as a COE. In instances where applicants are found to be equally meritorious with the application of a non-COE applicant, NIFA will prioritize the COE applicant meeting the COE criteria. NIFA will effectively use the COE prioritization as a “tie breaker.” Applicants that rank highly meritorious but who did not request consideration as a COE or who are not deemed to have met the COE standards may still receive funding.

Applicants that meet the COE requirements will have the COE designation in their notice of award. Entities recognized as COE will maintain that distinction for the duration of their period of performance or as identified in the terms and conditions of that award.

D. 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).

E. 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.

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

Dr. Mathieu Ngouajio

Mathieu.Ngouajio@usda.gov

202-570-1915

Dr. Steve Smith

Steven.I.Smith@usda.gov

202-445-5480

Catherine Bohnert

Catherine.Bohnert@usda.gov

816-398-3349

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

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative – AFRI
Authorized Representative – AR
Centers of Excellence – COE
Data Management Plan – DMP
Fiscal Year – FY
Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade – FACT
Genetically Modified Organism – GMO
Indirect Cost – IDC
National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board – NAREEEAB
National Institute of Food and Agriculture – NIFA
National Organic Program – NOP
National Organic Standards Board – NOSB
Non-Governmental Organization – NGO
Non-Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture – NLGCA
Office of Management and Budget – OMB
Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative – OREI
Organic Transitions – ORG
Portable Document Format – PDF
Principal Investigator – PI
Project Director – PD
Project Narrative – PN
Project Summary – PS
Request for Applications – RFA
Specialty Crops Research Initiative – SCRI
Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education – SARE
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.

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.

Resubmitted Application:

A project application that was previously submitted to a program, but the application was not funded.