USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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

NIFA

Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) RFPA Announcement and Technical Assistance Webinar

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Division of Plant Systems Production

TB, JS, MO

Meeting Logistics

- This webinar will be recorded. Please be sure your microphone is muted.
- ***Zoom Tech Support*** = 1-888-799-0125, Option 2
- Throughout the presentation, you may type questions in the chat box or you may use the Q&A feature.
- Slides and the recording from this conference will be posted to https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/programs/specialty-crop-research-initiative-scri

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https://www.usda.gov/non-discrimination-statement

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Topics We Will Cover

- NIFA Overview
- Program Overview
- Request for Pre-Application (RFPA) Details
- Proposal Evaluation Process
- Additional Information/Resources

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NIFA Overview

NIFA Overview

- **National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)** is the extramural science-funding agency within USDA's Research, Education and Economics mission area.
- NIFA is the **federal partner** in the land-grant university system.
- NIFA **invests in and supports** initiatives that ensure the long-term viability of agriculture.
- NIFA provides **funding and strategic leadership** for programs that ensure groundbreaking discoveries in agriculture-related sciences and technologies reach the people who can put them into practice.

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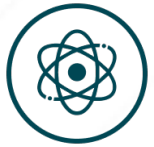
Topics Covered by NIFA Programs



Advanced Technologies
Bioenergy; Biotechnology; Nanotechnology

Animals
Animal Breeding; Animal Health; Animal Production; Aquaculture

Business and Economy
Markets and Trade; Natural Resource Economics; Small Business

Natural Resources
Forests; Grassland and Rangeland; Soil, Water, and Air

Education
Minority Serving Institutions; Teaching and Learning; Workforce Development

Environment
Climate Change; Ecosystems; Invasive Pests and Diseases

Farming and Ranching
Agriculture Safety & Technology; Farmer Education; Organic & Family Farms

Human Sciences
Community Vitality; Family Well-Being; Youth

Food Science
Food Quality; Food Safety

Food and Nutrition Security
Nutrition; Obesity; Wellness

International
Global Engagement; Global Food Security

Plants
Crop Production; Pest Management; Plant Breeding; Plant Health

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Program Overview

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Purpose and Priorities

RFPA Page 7-8

1. Research in plant breeding, genetics, genomics, and other methods to improve crop characteristics. Projects that seek to create improved cultivars through the use of biotechnology must demonstrate an understanding of the regulatory requirements involved in their release and must also present a plan for addressing the regulatory issues;
2. Efforts to identify and address threats from pests and diseases, including threats to specialty crop pollinators;
3. Efforts to improve production efficiency, handling and processing, productivity, and profitability over the long term (including specialty crop policy and marketing);
4. New innovations and technology, including improved mechanization and technologies that delay or inhibit ripening;
5. Methods to prevent, detect, monitor, control, and respond to potential food safety hazards in the production efficiency, handling and processing of specialty crops, including fresh produce.

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What is a specialty crop?

RFPA Appendix III
P 22

- Fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruit, Horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture.
- USDA has developed a more detailed description of specialty crops that is used by all USDA agencies.
- https://www.nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resources/definition_of_specialty_crops.pdf

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Eligibility

RFPA Page 13

- Federal agencies
- national laboratories
- colleges and universities
- research institutions and organizations
- private organizations or corporations
- State Agricultural Experiment Stations
- individuals
- groups consisting of two or more of these entities

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Project and Grant Types

RFPA Page 10-12

Project Types

Planning

Standard Research and Extension

Coordinated Agriculture Projects

Application

New

Resubmission

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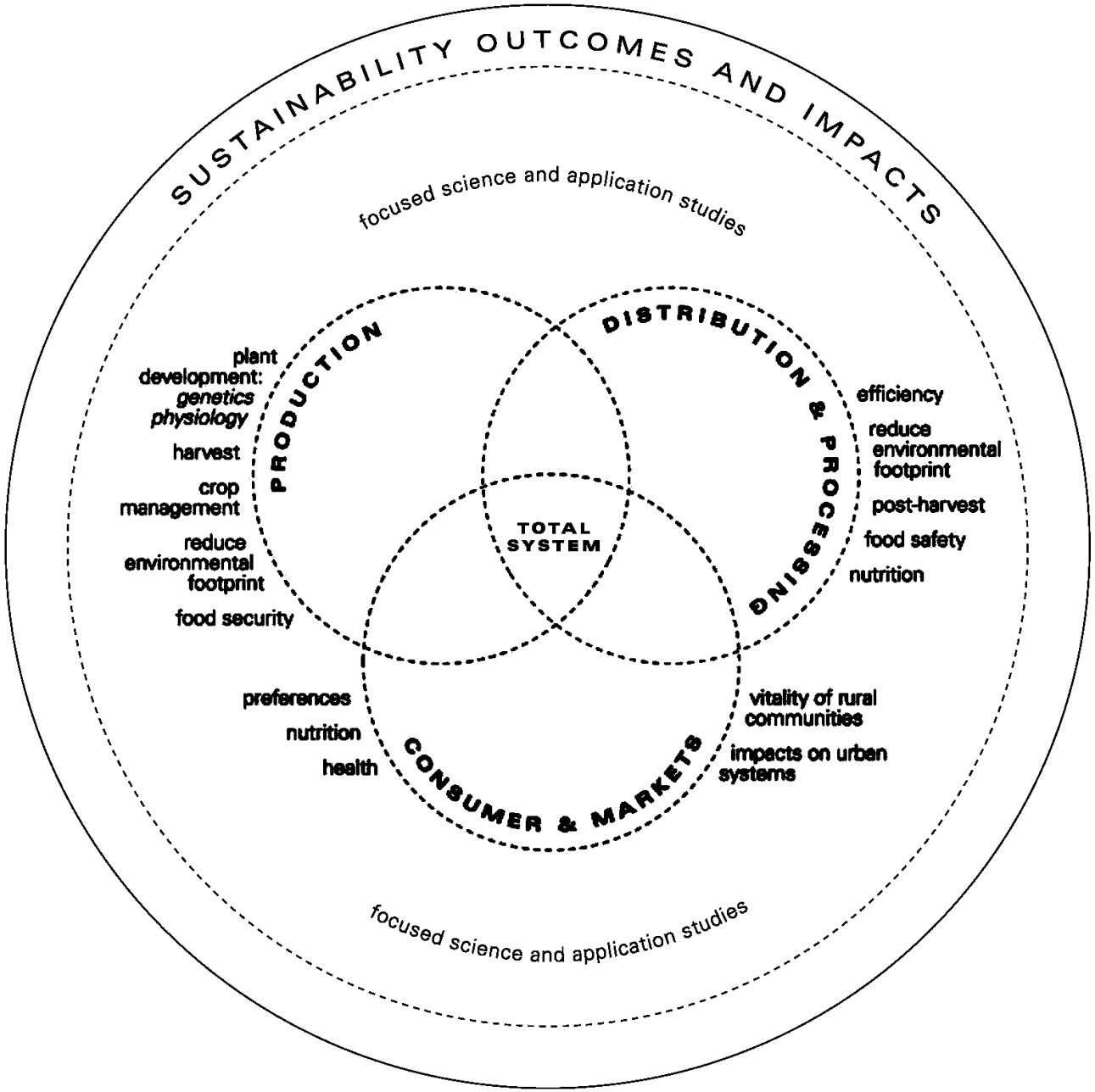
RFPA Page 7



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Standard Research and Extension Project

RFPA Page 10

1. Standard Research and Extension Projects (SREPs)

a. Project Period – Up to five years.

b. Budget – Normally, Federal funds will not exceed $1,000,000 per year. Requests less than $250,000 per project are discouraged.

c. Purpose – To support targeted problem-solving efforts that would not qualify in scope for support as a Coordinated Agricultural Project (CAP).

d. Statistical Analysis of previous funding (FY 2008-2022). It is anticipated that the total multi-year funding for most funded SREP awards for FY2023 will be close to the historical median:

i. Mean award: $2,461,152

ii. Median award: $2,032,727

iii. Minimum award: $226,905

iv. Maximum award: $6,242,957

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Standard Research and Extension Project

RFPA Page 10

- Pre-applications must bring together both research and extension components of the agricultural knowledge system around a problem area or activity. For each SREP project, there is an expectation that an advisory panel will be formed to inform the project throughout its life, including the identification and prioritization of research and extension objectives. SREPs represent the “focused science and application studies” portion of the figure.

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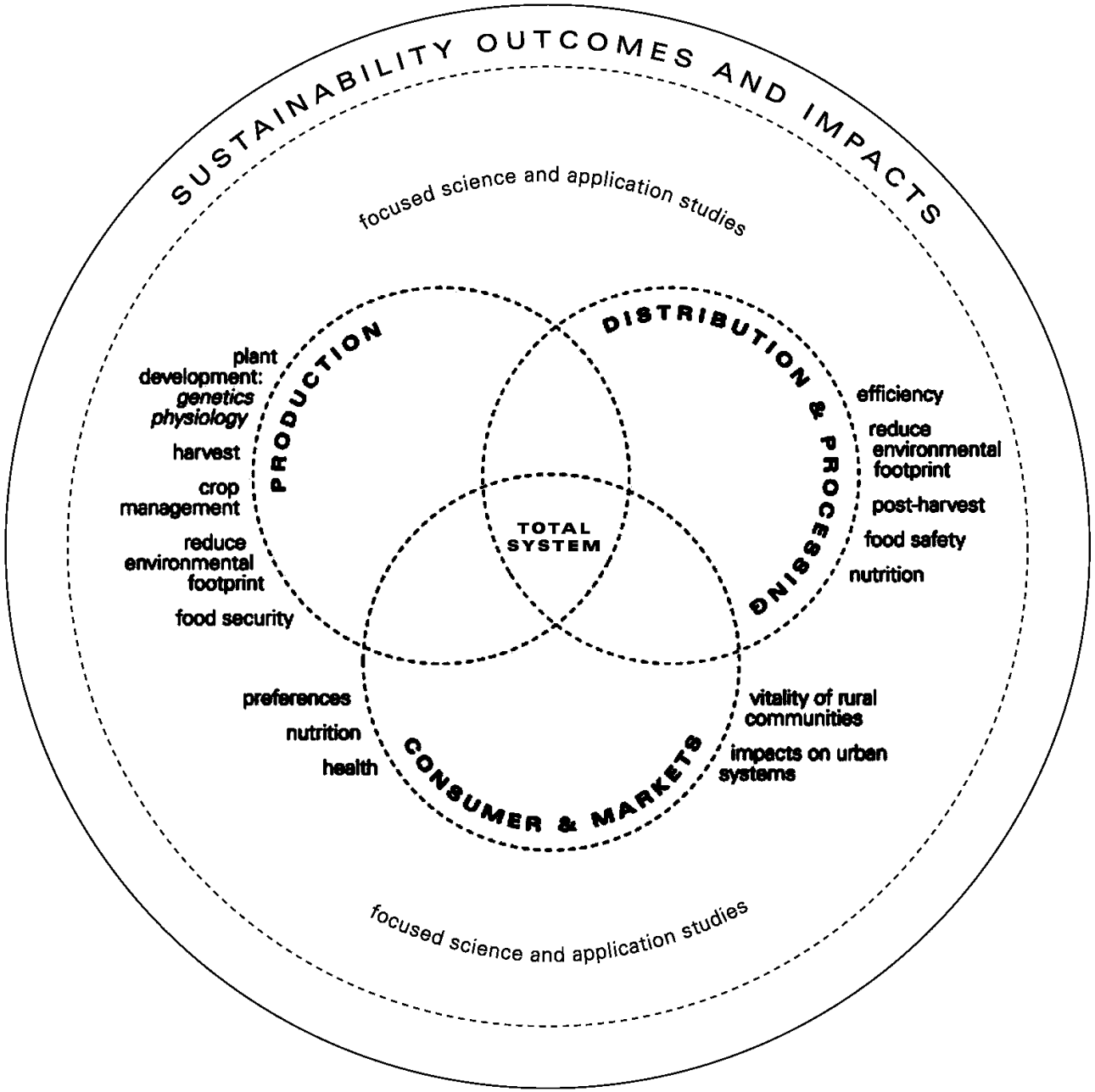
RFPA Page 7



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Coordinated Agricultural Project

RFPA Page 10-11

Coordinated Agricultural Projects (CAPs)

a. Project Period – Up to five years.

b. Budget – Normally, Federal funds will not exceed $2,000,000 per year.

c. Purpose – To address specific multiple components of a primary system or multiple components of areas where primary systems overlap (see Figure 1).

d. Statistical analysis of previous funding (FY 2008-2022). It is anticipated that the total multi-year funding for most funded CAP awards for FY 2023 will be close to the historical median.

i. Mean award: $5,815,695

ii. Median award: $5,778,830

iii. Minimum award: $1,912,178

iv. Maximum award: $10,898,772CAP description

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Coordinated Agricultural Project

RFPA Page 10-11

- CAPs will be awarded to consortia or groups of qualified applicants to address multiple components of a primary system, an entire primary system or problems that cut across primary systems, with the expectation that the project will make significant contributions to the sustainability of the system or system component. CAP applications are expected to demonstrate coherent and complementary integrated activities with the goal of developing a strategy or solution that could be implemented for specialty crops.

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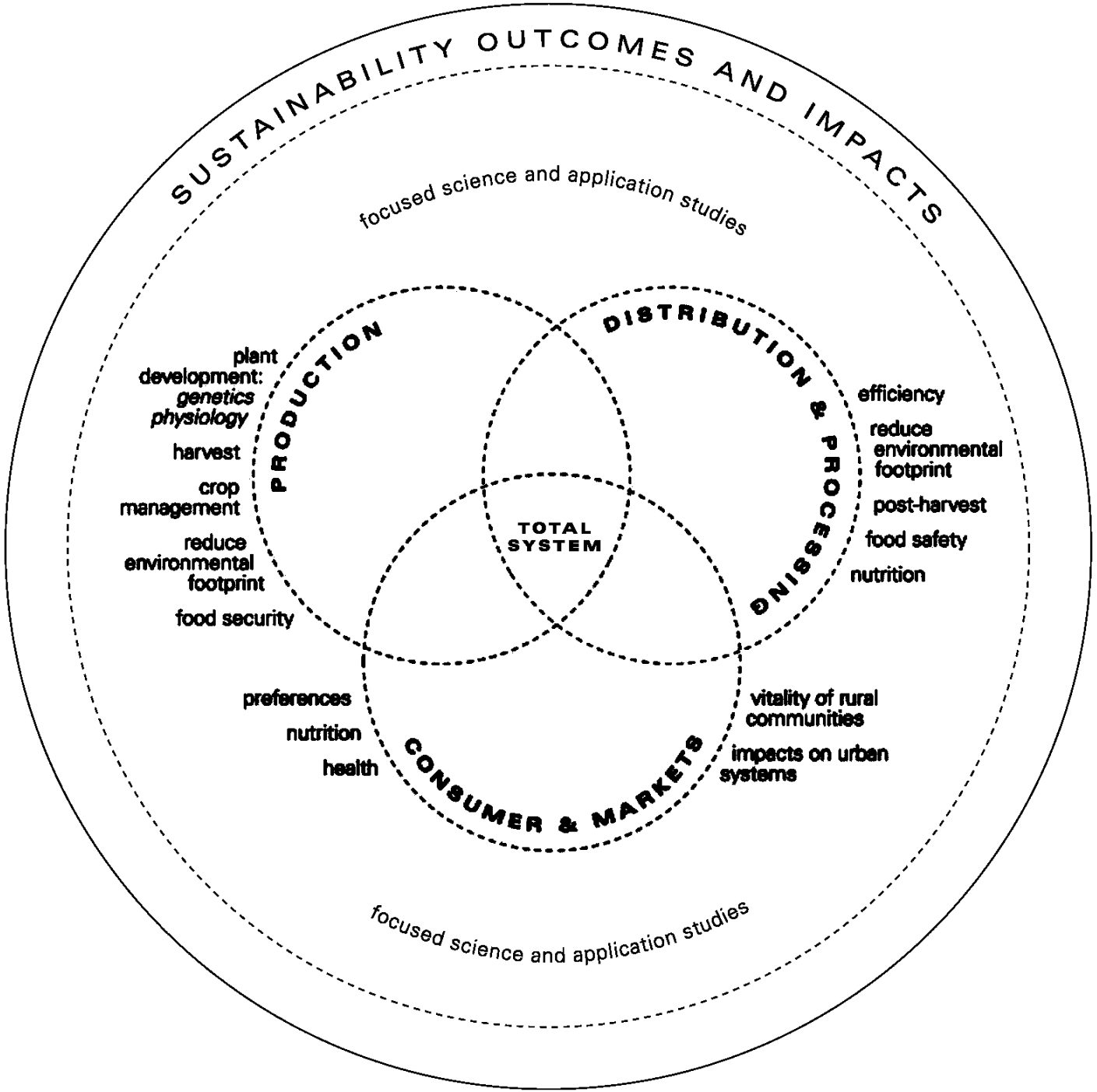
RFPA Page 7



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Research and Extension Planning Project

RFPA Page 11 - 12

Research and Extension Planning Projects

a. Project period – One year.

b. Budget – Federal funds up to $50,000 per project.

c. Research and Extension Planning Projects are intended to support two types of activities, either to:

1. provide assistance to applicants in the development of quality future SREP or CAP proposals (grant planning) or

2. provide assistance to consumer, producer, or industry groups for developing strategic research and extension plans—including goals, objectives, priorities, etc. (strategic planning). The expectation is that developed plans could provide the relevance bases for future SCRI grant applications.

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Matching

RFPA Page 13

- SCRI first authorized in 2008 Farm Bill – included requirement that federal funds be matched 1:1 with non-federal funds.
- Matching requirement reinstated in 2018 Farm Bill
- However, for fiscal years 2019 through 2022, NIFA has waived the matching requirement when provided the authority by Congress through language in the appropriations bill.
- NIFA is currently operating under a Continuing Resolution (CR) until Dec 12, 2023, which means we currently have same authorities as 2022.

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Matching

RFPA Page 13

- NO MATCHING... but stay tuned
- Congress could decide to pass a year-long CR, which would mean that NIFA would be authorized to waive the matching requirement.
- If Congress passes a new appropriations bill, the authorization to waive the matching requirement would have to be included.
- If such an authorization is not included, 1:1 matching would be required.
- NIFA Budget Office will notify Program within days of enactment and we will pass that information on to applicants.

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Pre-Application Details and Documents

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Recent Pre-Application Changes

- **FOR ALL Project Types,** applicants are now required to identify up to 3 key words to help program staff ensure that pre-applications are reviewed by an appropriate panel of industry representatives.
  - Key words can be found in Appendix IV on p 24 of RFPA
- **FOR SREPs and CAPs ONLY**
  - Length of Stakeholder Relevance Statement has been reduced to 6 pages
  - Logic Model chart should be put in Appendix A
  - Industry and Stakeholder support letters should be combined in a single PDF and put into Appendix B
  - Use the naming conventions found on p 16 of RFPA
  - Definition of transdisciplinary approaches

JS

Special Considerations for Pre-App

- Planning Projects are not required to have a Logic Model chart
  - Use of an appendix for letters of support will be allowed – follow naming convention in RFPA
- When combining support letters into a single PDF, it is helpful to reviewers to include a list of who provided letters of support.
- Response to previous relevance review is **NOT** required.

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Special Considerations for Pre-App

- Citations, cover letters, detailed budgets and budget narratives are **NOT** required.

- List a maximum of 6 key co-investigators
  - Helps manage the time commitment of industry reviewers,
  - Additional team members can be listed in the full application (no team size limits in the full application).

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Pre-Application Details

- RFPA is available online at Specialty Crop Research Initiative | National Institute of Food and Agriculture (usda.gov)
- **Application Deadline**: 5 p.m. (Eastern Time) December 8, 2023
  - Submitted through Grants.gov
- Total funding available in FY 2024: ~$76 million
- Assistance Listing Number: 10.309
- FON: USDA-NIFA-SCRI-010311
- Program Code: SCRI

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Application Submission

RFPA Page 14 - 15

- NIFA only accepts **electronic** submission of applications.
- NIFA Grants Application Guide available: nifa.usda.gov/resource/nifa-grantsgov-application-guide
- Application documents **must be in Portable Document Format (PDF)** to be accepted by NIFA.
  - Grants.gov may allow other formats, but NIFA does ***not***
  - Do not use third-party PDF builders
  - Do not password protect

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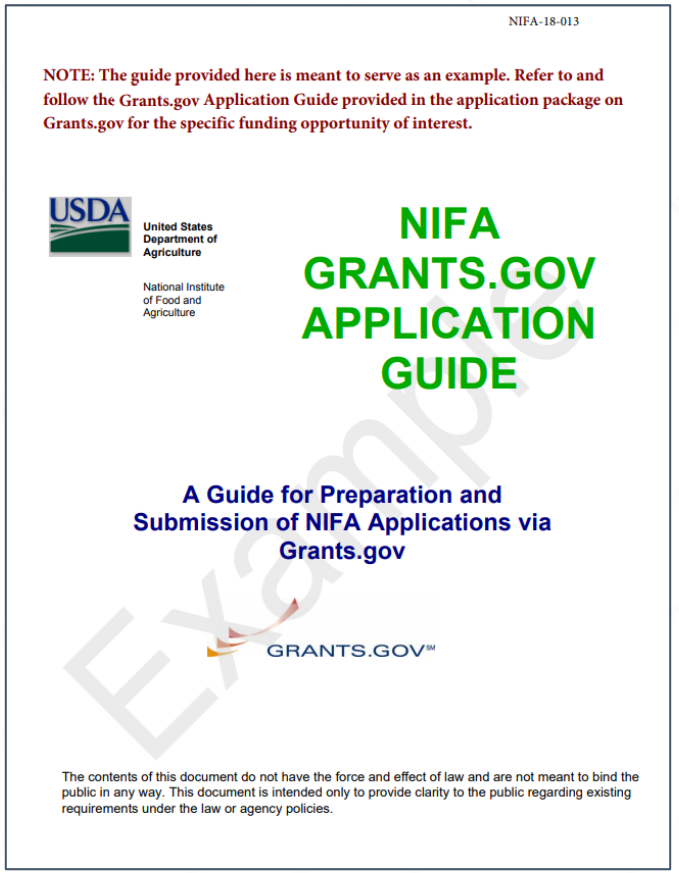

NIFA-18-013

NOTE: The guide provided here is meant to serve as an example. Refer to and follow the Grants.gov Application Guide provided in the application package on Grants.gov for the specific funding opportunity of interest.

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National Institute of Food and Agriculture

NIFA GRANTS.GOV APPLICATION GUIDE

A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov

GRANTS.GOV℠

The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

Example

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Proposal Evaluation Process

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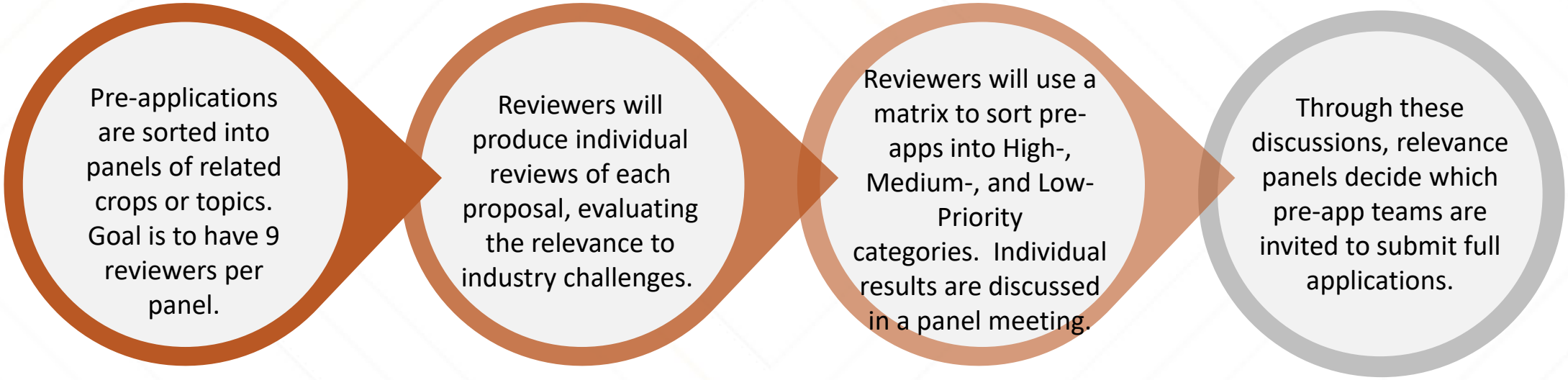
Evaluation Process

RFPA Page 18



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Evaluation Criteria

RFA Page 18 - 19

Criteria for Industry Relevance Review for SREP and CAP Projects

1. Stakeholder support letters clearly demonstrate that project goals and objectives arose from challenges identified by stakeholders and goal and objective development had significant input from industry. (25%)
2. Information developed by the project team will be delivered to stakeholders in ways that allow them to implement new and/or improved practices. (20%)
3. The described research and extension approach is likely to result in successful project completion. (20%)
4. Clear plans are in place for stakeholders to be engaged in project activities throughout the life of the project. (15%)
5. Stakeholders will be involved in establishing evaluation criteria and/or providing feedback on project success. (10%)
6. Engagement with stakeholders is likely to last beyond the length of the project. (5%)
7. Project team has at least some members who have worked with target stakeholders in the past and some who have experience with the described research and Extension approach. (5%)

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Evaluation Criteria

RFA Page 18

Criteria for Industry Relevance Review for Planning Projects

1. The problem being addressed is significant at a national or regional level. (25%)
2. The project will result in a partnership between a specialty crop sector and a scientific community. (25%)
3. The project fully integrates research and extension. (20%)
4. The project will result in a systems approach to insuring the sustainability of the targeted specialty crop sector. (15%)
5. The project team represents a trans-disciplinary approach to problem solving by bringing together biological and physical scientists with economists and social scientists. (15%)

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Timeline of SCRI Pre-application Process

Oct - Dec

- Request for Pre-Application (RFPA) release
- Proposal writing and planning
- **Applications due**

Jan- Feb

- Pre-Applications under industry relevance review

Mar

- Applicants are notified whether they are invited to submit a full application or not

The due date for full applications will likely be mid-Apr for those who are invited.

Further guidance will be provided for full applications following invitations.

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Additional Information

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Use CRIS to Find Funded Awards

- Link to list of SCRI funded project abstracts

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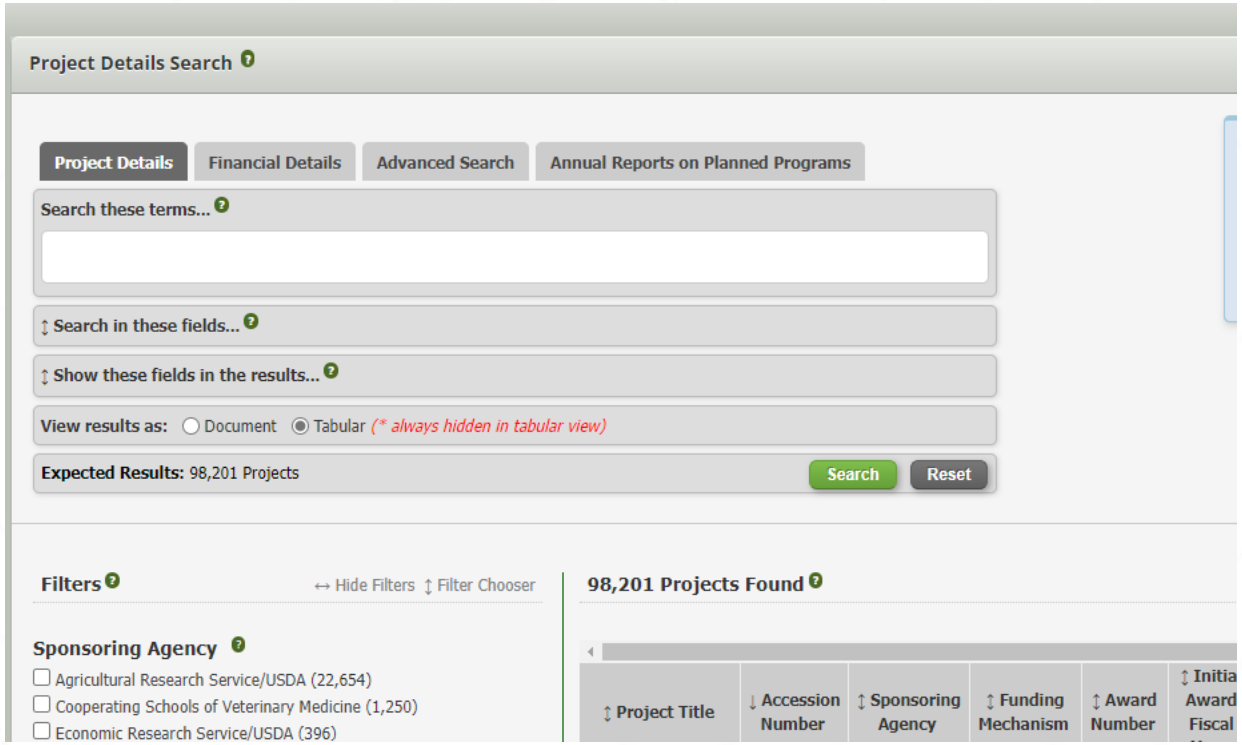
* Data Gateway is also an option

Use Data Gateway to Find Funded Awards

[Link to NIFA Data Gateway page]



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Grant Resources

- Funding Opportunities: nifa.usda.gov/grants/funding-opportunities
- Competitive Grants Flowchart: nifa.usda.gov/competitive-grants
- NIFA Grant Resources: nifa.usda.gov/grant-training
- NIFA Policy Guide: nifa.usda.gov/policy-guide
- Indirect Costs: nifa.usda.gov/indirect-costs
- A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov: apply07.grants.gov/apply/opportunities/instructions/PKG00249520-instructions.pdf
- Information on Awarded Grants: cris.nifa.usda.gov

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Join the list-serve

- Send a note to megan.oreilly2@usda.gov with your name and email to be added to our specialty crop list-serve.

Questions?

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