



United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food
and Agriculture

www.nifa.usda.gov
@USDA_NIFA

The logo for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), featuring the letters "NIFA" in a large, white, sans-serif font. The letters are set against a background of a stylized landscape with rolling hills in shades of orange and yellow, and a dark silhouette of a tree or structure on the right side.

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grants Program

FUNDING YEAR: Fiscal Year (FY) 2024

APPLICATION DEADLINE: March 7, 2024

ANTICIPATED FUNDING: \$459,000

INDIVIDUAL AWARD RANGE: Standard Grant: \$20,000 - \$115,000
Planning Grant: \$10,000 - \$20,000

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: USDA-NIFA-SLBCD-010337

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 10.511

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

Assistance Listing Number (ALN): The Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grant Program (SLSNCGP) is listed in the Assistance Listings under number 10.511.

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
Application:	March 7, 2024, 5:00 P.M. Eastern Time
Letter of Intent:	Not Applicable
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 (email is for comments only). Please use the following subject line: Response to the SLSNCGP RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NIFA requests applications for the Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grants Program (SLSNCGP) RFA for fiscal year (FY) 2024 to enable the Cooperative Extension System (CES) to assist in preparing for, providing an educational response to, recovering from, and mitigating disasters and disaster threats. This program supports innovative, education-based approaches to address disaster preparedness and specific responses related to disasters or disaster threats caused by natural, human-made, or technological hazards, or by other factors that contribute to the exposure or vulnerability of a community.

The SLSNCGP requests proposals for two types of projects: 1) Extension Standard Projects, and 2) Extension Planning Projects. The anticipated total amount of funds available for SLSNCGP grants in FY 2024 is \$459,000.

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.

This notice identifies the objectives for SLSNCGP projects, deadlines, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions.

Updates for FY 2024

1. Award ranges and maximum award amounts are revised to maximize the number of awarded projects.
2. The Key Areas are changed to Topical Areas which better reflect the program areas on which the Cooperative Extension System develops and delivers educational resources and programs to target audiences and stakeholders through science-based education.
3. The Strategies are revised to create a stronger linkage to plans of action and implementation methods used by the Cooperative Extension System to reach and engage target audiences and stakeholders through science-based education.
4. With the enhancements related to Topical Areas and Strategies, only new applications will be accepted in FY24. Resubmissions will not be accepted.
5. The Project Narrative (PN) requirements and Evaluation Criteria are streamlined.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3

TABLE OF CONTENTS 4

TABLE OF TABLES..... 5

PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION 6

A. Legislative Authority6

B. Purpose and Priorities6

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION 10

A. Available Funding10

B. Application Restrictions10

C. Project and Grant Types10

D. Ethical Conduct of Funded Projects10

PART III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION..... 12

A. Eligibility Requirements.....12

B. Cost Sharing or Matching.....12

PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION 13

A. Method of Application13

B. Content and Form of the Application13

C. Funding Restrictions.....18

PART V. APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS 18

A. NIFA’s Evaluation Process18

B. Evaluation Criteria.....19

C. Organizational Management Information.....20

D. Application Disposition.....20

E. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality21

PART VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION 22

A. General22

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.....22

C. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements22

PART VII. OTHER INFORMATION 23

A. Use of Funds and Changes in Budget.....23

B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards.....23

C. Regulatory Information23

D. Limited English Proficiency.....24

APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACT..... 25

APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS..... 26

APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS 27

TABLE OF TABLES

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines.....	2
Table 2: Program Key Information.....	7
Table 3. Steps to Obtain Application Materials.....	13
Table 4: Help and Resources	13
Table 5: Key Application Instructions.....	14

PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

Section [3\(b\)\(1\) of the Smith-Lever Act, Pub. L. No. 63-95 \(7 U.S.C. 343\)](#) allows the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), to conduct competitive grant programs for State Extension Services at 1862 Land-Grant Institutions to support innovative, education-based approaches to provide cooperative agricultural extension work.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The purpose of the Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grants Program (SLSNCGP), Assistance Listing 10.511, is to support innovative, education-based approaches to address disaster preparedness and specific responses related to disasters or disaster threats caused by natural, human-made, or technological hazards, or by other factors that contribute to the exposure or vulnerability of a community. The goals and objectives of SLSNCGP include supporting quality of life in communities across the U.S. by addressing disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation in food and agricultural systems. The SLSNCGP also seeks to continue to provide information and resources to USDA target audiences, stakeholders, and collaborators to improve decision-making before, during, and after disasters.

Grant funds will support innovative extension education initiatives that address risks, hazards, and threats that may lead to disasters. The SLSNCGP enables the Cooperative Extension System (CES) to assist in preparing for, providing an educational response to, recovering from, and mitigating disasters and disaster threats. Disaster-related projects that were funded in previous years include uncertainties caused by losses of economic infrastructure, extreme weather or other disasters, security breaches, human disease, volunteerism, local coordination, or high consequence animal diseases and plant pests. The SLSNCGP promotes awareness and capacity building of urban and rural communities' response to disasters by strengthening individual, family, farm, and small business disaster preparedness, particularly for those who have been historically underserved, through education and collaborations with other agencies or volunteer organizations.

The SLSNCGP aligns with:

The [USDA Strategic Plan FY 2022-2026](#) goals:

- Goal 1: Combat Climate Change to Support America's Working Lands, Natural Resources, and Communities
- Goal 2: Ensure America's Agricultural System is Equitable, Resilient, and Prosperous
- Goal 5: Expand Opportunities for Economic Development and Improve Quality of Life in Rural and Tribal Communities

The [USDA Science and Research Strategy, 2023–2026](#) priorities:

1. Accelerating Innovative Technologies & Practices
2. Driving Climate-Smart Solutions
3. Bolstering Nutrition Security & Health
4. Cultivating Resilient Ecosystems
5. Translating Research Into Action

NIFA intends to fund SLSNCGP projects to implement applied extension programs that serve public needs through a disaster context. The SLSNCGP will fund the development of educational programs, resource deliverables, and demonstration activities that focus on disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. Projects illustrating strong plans for replicability, scalability, and transferring successful methods to other states and/or regions for a broader reach and greater potential for end user adoption are strongly encouraged.

NIFA welcomes proposals that add new or build upon existing web-based educational materials available through the [Extension Disaster Education Network \(EDEN\) Resource Dashboard](#). In such instances, applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the [EDEN Executive Officers](#) during proposal formulation to solicit guidance on how best to coordinate with EDEN and to secure a commitment letter, as appropriate.

Handling of baseline data and data collection is to be addressed in the Data Management Plan (DMP) in accordance with the [Part IV, B](#) of this RFA. If an applicant needs help in preparing a data management plan or has 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.

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. (AFRI programs see [International Partnerships](#)).

In FY 2024, the SLSNCGP requests proposals for two types of projects: 1) Extension Standard Projects, and 2) Extension Planning Projects.

Table 2: Program Key Information

Title	Description
Program Code:	MB
Program Code Name:	ESNP
ALN Number	10.511
Project Type:	Extension
Grant Type:	Standard and Planning
Application Deadline	March 7, 2024
Grant Duration:	Standard Grant: 12-36 Months Planning Grant: 12 months
Maximum Award Amount:	Standard Grant: \$115,000 Planning Grant: \$20,000
Matching Requirement:	1:1 Match is required; refer to Part III, B for more information

NIFA is soliciting applications for SLSNCGP projects that focus on disasters and address at least one of the below listed Topical Areas and use at least one of the listed Strategies.

Topical Areas: Topical Areas cover the subject areas on which the Cooperative Extension System develops and delivers educational resources and programs to target audiences and stakeholders through science-based education. SLSNCGP projects must address at least one of these Topical Areas:

1. **Agriculture:** Includes but is not limited to row crop and forage health and production; livestock health and production; aquaculture; fruit and vegetable production; food loss and waste; farm and agribusiness management; economics; urban agriculture; farm safety; and agricultural biosecurity.
2. **Natural Resources:** Includes but is not limited to water; forestry; wood sciences; range; waste management; energy, wildlife; recreation; and environmental education.
3. **Community and Economic Development:** Includes but is not limited to small business; workforce development; community planning; placemaking; revitalization; tourism; visioning and strategic planning; leadership development; housing; homeowner education; civic engagement; volunteerism; broadband; and rural life.
4. **Family and Consumer Sciences:** Includes but is not limited to nutrition; food safety; food loss and waste; nutrition security; health management and wellness; health equity; well-being; personal and family finance; child development; early childhood education; individual and family relationships; textiles; and hospitality.
5. **4-H and Youth Development:** Includes but is not limited to youth development; career exploration; civic engagement; STEM education; and volunteerism.

Strategies: Strategies represent the plans of action and implementation methods used by the Cooperative Extension System to reach and engage target audiences and stakeholders through science-based education. SLSNCGP projects must address at least one of these Strategies:

1. **Program and Resource Development:** Includes but is not limited to workshops, field days; program series; roundtable sessions; day camps; curricula development; resource guides and factsheet development; and print and/or web-based deliverables.
2. **Exercise and Training:** Includes but is not limited to simulation exercises; tabletop exercises; train-the-trainer programs; technical assistance; and in-person and/or virtual skills-based trainings.
3. **Communications:** Includes but is not limited to new or exploratory ways to reach target audiences and stakeholders; app development; message amplification; social media; and cybersecurity.
4. **Disaster Planning:** Includes but is not limited to needs assessment; all-hazards planning; hazard-specific planning; and evaluation activities.
5. **Professional Development and Capacity Building:** Includes but is not limited to just-in-time and/or continually relevant continuing education for Cooperative Extension System professionals and partners; and activities that support the effectiveness and future of an organization or community like volunteer recruitment, leadership succession, gap analysis, and outcome measurement.

Applicants are encouraged to approach Topical Areas and Strategies in their projects by considering the following elements:

1. Using stakeholder-informed approaches that lead to actionable information and transformational changes.
2. Reaching historically underserved audiences: People who speak English as a second language; people with low literacy; limited resource farmers or ranchers; and older adults who lack technology access or literacy.
3. Promoting dialogue to address complex issues, societal vulnerabilities, historically underserved audiences, and cultural understanding.
4. Incorporating traditional ecological knowledge (including indigenous traditional knowledge) where applicable.
5. Improving partnerships which might include the public, governments at all levels, non-profit and/or volunteer organizations, schools/academia, and/or industry.

All SLSNGCP awards will be made based on the merit of the proposed project and supporting documents. USDA reserves the right to negotiate final budgets with applicants recommended for awards. Additional requirements on expected performance goals, indicators, and targets may be required as a condition of award.

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.

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 anticipated amount available for Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grant Program (SLSNCGP) in FY 2024 is \$459,000. 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 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](#) of this RFA for definition).

C. Project and Grant Types

The following describes the Project Types and Grant Types that are eligible for funding:

1. **Project Types.** NIFA is soliciting applications for SLSNCGP proposals under the **Extension Project type**. Extension Projects conduct programs and activities that deliver science-based knowledge and informal educational programs to people, enabling them to make practical decisions.
2. **Grant Types.** Applicants must select the appropriate grant type from below:

Standard Grant:

- a. Standard awards of Federal funds for this grant will not exceed \$115,000. The amount requested will vary depending on the geographic scope of the project and the urgency of the need(s) being addressed.
- b. Project periods for standard grants range from 12 to 36 months.

Planning Grant:

- a. Planning awards of Federal funds for this grant will not exceed \$20,000 and are not renewable. The budget for the planning grant may include an appropriate amount for transportation and subsistence costs for participants and other related costs.
- b. Project periods for planning grants are 12 months.

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 for the Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grant Program (SLSNCGP) 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 1862 Land-grant Institutions in the 50 states and the U.S. territories, American Samoa, Guam, Micronesia, Northern Marianas, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply, provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. The 1862 Land-grant Institutions may partner with each other as well as with other land-grant institutions (e.g., 1890s and 1994s), non-land-grant institutions, and non-governmental organizations within their state or their region on joint proposals.

Failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award.

Duplicate or Multiple Submissions. Duplicate or multiple submissions are not allowed. NIFA will disqualify both applications if an applicant submits duplicate or multiple submissions.

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 SLSNCGP. Pursuant to rules and policies governing Section 3(b) & (c) of the Smith–Lever Act as amended, “no allotment shall be made to a State under subsection (b) or (c), and no payments from the allotment shall be made to a State, in excess of the amount that the State makes available out of non-federal funds for cooperative extension work.”

To comply with the matching requirements of the SLSNCGP, applicants are required to provide 100% matching funds from non-federal sources for all proposed Federal funds sought in the application. In-kind and third-party contributions are not allowed for this program; thus, all matching funds must come from the applicant institution (sub-awards/partner match would be considered third party).

No match is required for 1994 Land-grant Institutions and Hispanic Serving Institutions. Only 50% matching funds are required for Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, and NIFA may consider a waiver of match for these territories. Additionally, consistent with [48 U.S.C. 1469a \(d\)](#) and 1469a note, notwithstanding any other provision of law, in the case of American Samoa, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands, NIFA will waive any requirement for local matching funds under \$200,000 (including in-kind contributions).

PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

A. Method of Application

Applicants must apply to this RFA electronically; no other method or response is accepted. The electronic application for this RFA and additional resources are available on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and [Grants 101](#). Table 3 provides instructions on how to obtain an electronic application. Part III of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) contains detailed information regarding the [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) registration process. [The NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) is contained in the specific funding opportunity package or a sample of the guide can be found [here](#). When applying for a NIFA award, it is important to reference the version of the guide that is included in the specific funding opportunity application package. Table 4 provides contact information for applicants who need Grants.gov support or NIFA support.

Table 3. 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-SLBCD-010337 search for application here: Opportunity Package .
Step Four: Assess Readiness	Contact an AR prior to starting an application to assess the organization’s readiness to submit an electronic application.

Table 4: Help and Resources

Grants.gov Support	NIFA Support
Grants.gov Online Support Telephone support: 800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035 Email support: support@grants.gov Self-service customer-based support: Grants.gov iPortal grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov Key Information: Customer service business Hours 24/7, except federal holidays .	Email: grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov Key Information: Business hours: Monday through 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 5** outlines other key instructions for applicants.

Table 5: Key Application Instructions

Instruction	References (All references are to the NIFA Grants Application Guide)
Attachments must be in a portable document format (PDF) format.	Part IV
Check the manifest of submitted files to verify attachments are in the correct format.	Part IV
Conduct an administrative review of the application before submission.	Part IV
Follow the submission instructions.	Part IV
Provide an accurate email address, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R.	Part V
Contact the Grants.gov helpdesk for technical support and keep a record of the correspondence.	N/A
Contact NIFA if applicant does not receive correspondence from NIFA regarding an application within 30 days of the application deadline.	N/A

SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet. See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) for the required certifications and assurances.

SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s). See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

R&R Other Project Information Form. See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

1. **Field 7. Project Summary (PS)/Abstract.** The PS must show how the project goals align with the project goals of the Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grant Program (SLSNCGP). See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) for instructions and suggested templates. Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the provided templates to ensure submission and organization of accurate information in the system.

The Project Summary should provide the following information, in the order listed: 1) Project title; 2) list of Project Directors (PDs) and Co-PDs and their institutions or organizations; 3) a concise (250 words or less) description of the project, 4) total funding amount requested; 5) proposal type (New Submission); and 6) project type (Extension Standard or Extension Planning).

2. **Field 8. Project Narrative (PN).** The PN must not exceed 10 pages; this page limit includes the Logic Model, Project Timeline, and any tables and figures. The page limit ensures fair and equitable competition. The PN must be formatted using 1-inch margins, single line spacing (i.e., no more than six lines per vertical inch), and 12-point, Times New Roman font.

A one-page Table of Contents is permitted and does not count towards the PN's 10-page limit. Appendices to the PN are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. Do not add appendices to circumvent the page limit. In the PN, do not link to external references; proposals must be self-contained.

To ensure fair and equitable competition, applications exceeding the applicable page limitation will be returned without review.

Applicants must organize the PN using the sections listed below. Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the below header titles as prompts for each section.

- a. **Introduction:** Describe the current problem or situation to be addressed and explain why it is important. Estimate the magnitude of the problem or situation and its relevance to stakeholders. If applicable, describe the geographic area to be served. Describe the potential benefit of the proposed project to the population group or the community served.
- b. **Rationale and Significance:** Clearly identify which (one or more) of the Topical Areas the project will address. Topical Areas are listed in [Part I, B](#) of this RFA. Clearly identify which (one or more) of the Strategies the project will address. Strategies are listed in [Part I, B](#) of this RFA. Describe how the project will complement or enhance resources currently available to extension professionals and/or the public. Explain any actions that have already been taken to address the problem or situation and describe any gaps that remain. Provide a summary of previous work, if applicable.
- c. **Project Goals, Objectives, and Intended Outcomes:** Describe the goals, objectives, and intended outcomes of the project. Outcomes must describe specific changes or results that will occur because of the project and that will constitute "success" for the initiative. These may include benefits caused by program activities such as changes in participants' skills, behavior, or qualities of life, and positive changes in conditions in the community served or reductions in negative conditions. Outcomes must be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely, and must describe what will be accomplished, and who and how many people (e.g., residents, participants) will benefit.

Applicants may *refer* to their Logic Model, an application requirement, in this section of the PN. The Logic Model must be included as Section G per the PN requirements.

If proposing a planning project, applicants must briefly articulate the project steps beyond the planning period and indicate how a planning award will enable the project to become competitive for future funding.

- d. **Activities to Achieve the Project Goals:** Describe activities that will be used to implement the project, including their feasibility, rationale for use, and how they support the stated goals and objectives. Define how the project outputs and outcomes will be communicated to the Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN), the Cooperative Extension System broadly, USDA NIFA, and/or stakeholders. Acknowledge the limitations and anticipated challenges related to carrying out the project and describe the ways in which those limitations and challenges will be addressed. Describe global engagement activities, if applicable.

Applicants may *refer* to their Project Timeline, an application requirement, in this section of the PN. The Project Timeline must be included as Section H per the PN requirements.

- e. **Evaluation:** Describe how outcomes will be measured and explain how the project activities will be evaluated. Indicate who on the project team will provide the project performance assessment oversight. Applicants are strongly encouraged to include people with expertise in, and skills related to, project performance measurement or evaluation and who can help develop the monitoring plan, and, if feasible, participate in carrying out the plan.
- f. **Roles and Responsibilities:** Describe roles and responsibilities for key staff, including percent of time each will dedicate to the project. Describe the fiscal and administrative oversight for the project. Applicants who intend for partners to implement portions of their proposed projects must describe each partner's roles and responsibilities. If applicable, describe relevant work that demonstrate each partner's ability to successfully execute the proposed project. Partners may jointly or individually provide leadership for different objectives or activities. If applicable, describe the roles of partners' key staff on the proposed project and percent of time each will dedicate to the project.
- g. **Logic Model:** A logic model must be included and is included in the 10-page PN page limit. The logic model is a conceptual tool for planning and evaluation. It displays the sequence of actions that describe what project inputs, outputs, and outcomes. There are many variations on the specific composition of a logic model. NIFA has developed a resource called the [Logic Model Planning Process](#).
- h. **Project Timeline:** A project timeline must be included and is included in the PN page limit. . Illustrate the progress and successful implementation of the project over the award period. Relate the project timeline to the project objectives.

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

- a. **Commitment Letters:** There is no page limit for Commitment Letters. Letters of commitment from partners must be signed by the Authorized Representative (AR) of the partnering organization and indicate that the partners involved have agreed to their stated roles in the project as well as have agreed to abide by the approaches outlined in the PN. Letters from other organizations or people whose participation is important to the success of the project, committing those collaborators and partners to specific roles, are also encouraged. Title the attachment(s) as ‘Letter of Commitment: Organization Name’ in the document header and save file as ‘LetterofCommitment_OrganizationName’. Other more general letters of support (i.e., from those who are not committing to a specific role in the project) are not needed and should not be included.
- b. **Bibliography:** There is no page limit for the Bibliography. Title the attachment as ‘Bibliography References Cited’ in the document header and save the file as ‘BibliographyReferencesCited’. All work cited in the proposal should be referenced in this section of the application. All references must be complete and include titles and all co-authors, conform to an acceptable journal format, and be listed in alphabetical order using the last name of the first author or listed by number in the order of citation.

Do not add any other attachments not specifically requested in this RFA. For example, do not attach examples of curricula or other appendices. Attaching additional narrative or figures or tables other than those specifically requested in this RFA will result in disqualification from review.

R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded). See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) for profile requirements, details about the biographical sketch, and suggested support templates.

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

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

1. **Match:** Matching is required for this program. The R&R Budget (Federal and Non-Federal) form is mandatory. Grant awards cannot be issued until all required matching has been documented and verified. To comply with the matching requirements, the applicant institution is required to provide 100% matching funds from non-federal sources for all proposed federal funds sought in the application. Third party in-kind contributions are not allowed for this program.

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 the Budget Justification their matching sources, the identification of the entity or entities

providing the match, and the total pledged amount. A written verification of commitments of matching support (a pledge agreement) is not required. However, applicants are subject to the documentation, valuing and reporting requirements, as specified in [2 CFR Part 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards \(the Uniform Guidance\),”](#) and [7 CFR 3430, “Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-Formula Federal Assistance Programs – General Award Administrative Provisions.”](#)

2. **Indirect costs (IDC)** – See [Part IV, C](#) of this RFA for funding restrictions regarding indirect cost, and [Part V](#) of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) for additional information.

Data Management Plan. A Data Management Plan (DMP) is required for this program application. Applicants should clearly articulate how the 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 Data Management Plan](#)) and is not to exceed 2 pages. The DMP is a separate document and does not contribute to the PN page requirement.

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 “Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grant Program/SLSNCGP” and the program code “MB”. Accurate entry is critical.
2. **Field 8.** Conflict of Interest List. See [Part V](#) of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

C. Funding Restrictions

No Indirect Costs (IDC): IDC recovery is not authorized for this RFA.

Pursuant to Section 1473 of the [National Agriculture Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977](#), as amended, [7 U.S.C 3319](#), IDC and tuition remission are not allowable costs under [Section 3\(b\) & \(c\) of the Smith–Lever Act](#) projects, and no funds will be approved for this purpose. Further, costs that are a part of an institution's IDC pool (e.g., administrative, or clerical salaries) may not be reclassified as direct costs for the purpose of making these allowable.

No portion of said moneys shall be applied, directly or indirectly, to the purchase, erection, preservation, or repair of any building or buildings, or the purchase or rental of land, or in college-course teaching, lectures in college, or any other purpose not specified in this Act ([7 U.S.C. 345](#)).

PART V. APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. NIFA’s Evaluation Process

NIFA evaluates each application in a two-part process. First, program staff 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, considering the following factors:

1. The level of relevant experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant activities.
2. The need to include experts from various areas of specialization within relevant fields.
3. The need to include other experts (e.g., educators, youth development specialists, researchers, evaluators) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs.
4. The need to include experts from a variety of relevant organizational types and geographic locations.
5. The need to maintain a balanced composition with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution.
6. The need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness of each application to students and other communities of learners.
7. The need to ensure institutional balance as part of the evaluation and awarding process.

After each peer review panel has completed its deliberations, the responsible NIFA program staff 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 and/or the submitting organization or institution regarding project revisions (e.g., reductions in the scope of work, funding level, period, or method of support) prior to recommending any project for funding.

After the review process has been completed, NIFA sends copies of reviews (not including the identity of reviewers) and a summary (if applicable) of the review panel comments to the PD.

B. Evaluation Criteria

NIFA will use the following criteria, weighted equally, to evaluate this RFA:

1. **Potential for Advancing Disaster Education:** There is a likelihood that the project will support innovative, education-based approaches that can be used by the Cooperative Extension System (CES) to assist in preparing for, providing an educational response to, recovering from, and mitigating disasters and disaster threats. The project addresses at least one Topical Area and one Strategy as listed in [Part I, B](#). The project is timely and relevant. The need for and the scope of the project are justified and clear. The project goals, objectives, and outcomes are reasonable and achievable. The Logic Model adequately describes project.
2. **Project Implementation:** There is a likelihood that the project will be implemented in the timeframe proposed. The activities are aligned with the goals, objectives, and outcomes. The project includes methods to disseminate the outputs that may include but

are not limited to Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN), the Cooperative Extension System broadly, USDA NIFA, and/or stakeholders. Limitations and challenges are addressed. The Project Timeline adequately describes key milestones. The Data Management Plan is descriptive.

3. **Evaluation:** There is a likelihood that outcomes will be measured. The project includes evaluation activities that are reasonable and appropriate for the activities. The project identifies which key person(s) on the project team will monitor project performance.
4. **Key Persons and Organizational Support:** The PD, co-PD(s), and key persons are qualified and have the necessary expertise to carry out the project which includes implementing project activities and supporting evaluation. The number of persons involved in the project is adequate. The applicant's institution is committed to the project, and the institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials) available to carry out the project is adequate.
5. **Budget:** The budget for accomplishing project goals, objectives, and outcomes is realistic, achievable, and cost-effective. The project maximizes the use of limited resources and optimizes educational value for the dollar.

C. Organizational Management Information

Applicants must submit specific management information relating to an application prior to an award and update the information as needed. Applicants may only have to update their information if they had previously provided the information under this or another NIFA program. NIFA provides the requisite forms during the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible for award under this program, there are factors that may exclude an applicant from receiving federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual, or a determination that an applicant is not responsible).

D. Application Disposition

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

E. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, NIFA takes extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. See [NIFA Peer Review Process for Competitive Grant Applications](#) for further information about conflicts of interest and confidentiality as related to the peer review process.

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 Policy Guide](#) applies to all NIFA awards.

C. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

Grantees will be expected to provide the following information in REEport, NIFA's reporting system:

1. A brief statement of the issue or problem that the project addresses and why the issue is significant; (non-technical summary);
2. A description of the activity or activities being taken to address the issues, including the number of anticipated and actual beneficiaries (where applicable); and
3. A description of the changes in knowledge, behavior, or condition that occurred, supported by quantitative and qualitative data.

Additionally, grantees will be required to submit regular progress reports and a final technical report to NIFA. The agency depends on the information provided in these reports to assess progress toward NIFA's strategic and programmatic goals; develop and justify budget requests; and communicate the value of the work of NIFA's partners to the U.S. Congress and the American people. As shrinking budgets result in more competition for Federal and State funds, it is imperative that NIFA has rigorous data to demonstrate the relevance of its programs and the effectiveness of our partners who implement NIFA-funded programs.

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. Ashley Mueller
National Program Leader
Ashley.Mueller@usda.gov
402-405-3122

Dr. Deborah Reyome
Program Specialist
Deborah.Reyome@usda.gov

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
United States Department of Agriculture
2312 East Bannister Road, MS 10000
Kansas City, MO 64141-3061

APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Glossary of Terms

Assistance Listing Number - ALN

Authorized Representative – AR

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

Cooperative Extension System – CES

Data Management Plan – DMP

Extension Disaster Education Network – EDEN

National Institute of Food and Agriculture – NIFA

Project Director – PD

Request for Application – RFA

Research, Education, and Economics – REE

Smith-Lever Special Needs Competitive Grant Program – SLSNCGP

United States Department of Agriculture – USDA

APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS

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

Definitions

Continuation Award:

An award instrument by which NIFA agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined period of time with a statement of intention to provide additional support at a future date, provided that performance has been satisfactory, appropriations are available for this purpose, and continued support would be in the best interest of the federal government and the public.

Logic Model:

A systematic and visual way to present and share an understanding of the relationships among resources available to operate a program and includes planned activities and anticipated results; and the presentation of the resources, inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts.

Matching:

The process through which a grant recipient match awarded USDA funds with cash and in-kind contributions on a dollar-for-dollar basis. The matching funds must derive from non-Federal sources.

New Application:

An application not previously submitted to a program.

Renewal Application:

A project application that seeks additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in an original or amended award.

Resubmitted Application:

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

Resubmitted Renewal Application:

A project application that requests additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in the original award. This is an application that had previously been submitted for renewal but not funded.