January 24, 2024: Specified Project Narrative page limits for Standard grants for Foundational & Applied Science and Education & Workforce Development programs. New stipulations added to Strengthening Seed Grants. Added in FY24 EPSCoR states.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

This document describes general characteristics of all grant types available across the AFRI program, as well as applicant eligibility for those grant and project types. Applicants should also review the AFRI Part IV C, on the <u>AFRI Request for Application Resources</u> page, for the AFRI RFA for the Foundational & Applied Science (FAS), Education & Workforce Development (EWD), and Sustainable Agricultural System (SAS) RFAs for further formatting guidance.

C. Project Types and Grant Types

2. Grant Types

Applicants must select the appropriate AFRI grant type specified within the relevant Program Area Descriptions in **Part I, C** of the RFA. Only grant types specifically solicited under each program area or program area priority described in **Part I, C** of the RFA will be considered for review.

There are five main categories of grant types available across the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). They are described below. Not all grant types are solicited within each Request for Applications (RFA) or by each Program Area Priority within each RFA. Applicants should refer to the specific Program Area Priority description of interest for the grant types solicited by that Program Area Priority.

1. **Standard Grants**
   Standard Grants support targeted original scientific Research, Education, Extension, or Integrated Projects.

   Tthe Foundational & Applied Science RFA project narrative page limit is 18 pages unless specified otherwise in the RFA or the AFRI RFA Additional Information for Part IV C (e.g., Rapid Response to Extreme Weather Events Across Food and Agricultural Systems A1712)

   The Education and Workforce Development RFA project narrative page limit is 10 for all programs, besides the Predoctoral Fellowship program which has a 6 page limit.

2. **Coordinated Agricultural Project**

   Coordinated Agricultural Project (CAP) is a type of Research, Education, Extension, or Integrated Project that supports large-scale, multi-million dollar projects to promote collaboration, open communication, and the exchange of information; reduce duplication of effort; and coordinate activities among individuals, institutions, States, and regions. Integrated CAP Grants address problems through multi-function projects that incorporate at least two of the three components of the agricultural knowledge system (*i.e.*, research, extension, and education), although some program areas may require that CAP grant applications include all three components of the agricultural knowledge system. In a CAP, participants serve as a team that conducts targeted research, education, and/or extension in response to emerging or priority area(s) of national need. Applications articulate how a CAP will complement and/or link with existing programs or projects at the national level. A CAP contains the needed science-based expertise in research, education, and/or extension, as well as expertise from principal stakeholders and partners, to accomplish project goals and objectives. Applications should outline the potential of the project, the structure, coordination, and plan of implementation, and propose several research, education, and/or extension areas that will be evaluated during the study period. All Research, Education, Extension, and Integrated Project requirements described under Project Types (See [AFRI Requests for Applications](#)) apply to CAP Grants.

   Project Narrative page limit for all CAP grant applications is 18 pages.

3. **Conference Grants**

   Conference Grants support scientific meetings that bring together scientists to identify research, education, and/or extension needs, update information, or advance an area of science. These activities are recognized as integral parts of scientific efforts. Support for a limited number of meetings covering subject matter encompassed by this solicitation will be considered for partial or, if modest, total support. Individual conference grants may not exceed $50,000 in total costs and are not renewable. Indirect costs are not permitted on Conference Grant awards. For all requests of $25,000 or more, applicants should consult with the program contact listed in the request for applications (RFA) regarding suitability of the application for submission to the relevant program area priority.

   If Conference Grants are among the grant types solicited by a Program Area Priority, then the Conference Grant application may encompass any project type (i.e., research, education, extension or integrated), regardless of the project type solicited by that specific Program Area Priority. The conference must, however, cover the subject matter encompassed by the specific Program Area Priority of interest, as indicated above.

   A Letter of Intent is required for all Conference Grants and must be submitted a minimum of 195 days before the conference begins. Applications must be submitted after LOI decision response and a minimum of 150 days before the conference begins.

Project Narrative page limit for all Conference Grant applications is 18 pages.

4. **Food and Agricultural Science Enhancement Grants**
   Food and Agricultural Science Enhancement (FASE) Grants strengthen science capabilities in research, education, and/or extension programs. FASE Grants are designed to help institutions develop competitive projects, and to attract new scientists and educators into careers in high-priority areas of national need in agriculture, food, and environmental sciences. FASE Grants provide support for Pre- and Postdoctoral Fellowships, New Investigators, and Strengthening Grants. Specific eligibility requirements for these grants are described below.

   a. **Pre- and Postdoctoral Fellowships Grants**
      Pre- and Postdoctoral Fellowships Grants provide fellowships to predoctoral, and postdoctoral students in the agricultural sciences. The program goals are to prepare the next generation of scientists through doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships.

      Project Narrative page limit for Predoctoral Fellowship Grant applications is 6 pages. Postdoctoral Fellowship Grant applications is 10 pages.

   b. **New Investigator Grants**
      An individual who is beginning their career, does not have an extensive scientific publication record, and has less than five years postgraduate career-track experience is encouraged to submit an application for a New Investigator Grant for research, education, and/or extension activities. The new investigator may not have received competitively awarded Federal research funds as Project Director (PD) with the exception of pre- or postdoctoral grants, equipment grants, and AFRI Seed Grants. Federal funding received by the applicant as Co-PD of previously awarded competitive grants does not count against New Investigator eligibility.

      Eligibility requirements for a New Investigator Grant apply only to the PD and not to Co-PDs or collaborators. The application must contain documentation that lists all prior federal support. The work proposed for New Investigator Grants must address a specific Program Area Priority described in Part I, C of the RFA.

      New Investigator Grant applications do not need to adhere to the eligibility requirements described for Strengthening Grants below unless they are applying under both grant types.

      Starting in FY 2021, there are two types of New Investigator Grants available:
      - The first is a Standard Grant (i.e., New Investigator Standard Grant), which is a Standard Grant application in all respects except that the Project Director meets the eligibility criteria described previously for New Investigators. These are reviewed with all other Standard Grant applications submitted to the

respective program area priority, with special consideration given by NIFA program staff to funding of New Investigator Standard Grant applications that fall below the funding line. In these cases, the New Investigator box must be checked under FASE on the AFRI Project Type form.

Project Narrative page limit for New Investigator Standard Grant applications is 18 pages.

- Individuals qualifying as New Investigators are also eligible to apply for a Seed Grant (i.e., New Investigator Seed Grants described subsequently) regardless of institutional affiliation and eligibility for Strengthening Grants described subsequently. An individual applicant may submit only one Seed Grant as PD during the current fiscal year. New Investigators also may only receive one New Investigator Seed Grant as PD during their career. New Investigator Seed Grant applications will be reviewed with other Seed Grant applications submitted to the respective program area priority with special consideration given to funding of New Investigator Seed Grant applications. In these cases, both the New Investigator and Seed Grant boxes should be checked under FASE on the AFRI Project Type form.

Project Narrative page limit for New Investigator Seed Grant applications is 7 pages.

c. **Strengthening Grants**
   These funds are expected to enhance institutional capacity with the goal of leading to future funding in the project area, as well as strengthen the competitiveness of the investigator's research, education, and/or extension activities. Strengthening Grants consist of Seed Grants, Equipment Grants, Sabbatical Grants, Strengthening Standard Grants, Strengthening Coordinated Agricultural Projects (CAP) Grants and Strengthening Conference Grants. The work proposed for Strengthening Grants must address specific Program Area Priorities described under Program Area Descriptions in Part I, C., of the RFA. All applications submitted for Strengthening Grants must fulfill the eligibility requirements described below.

1) <u>Strengthening Grants Eligibility</u>
   Strengthening grants are limited to 1) small and mid-sized or minority-serving degree-granting institutions that previously had limited institutional success for receiving Federal funds or 2) State Agricultural Experiment Stations or degree-granting institutions eligible for USDA Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) funding. The grants submitted by these institutions are eligible for reserved strengthening funds for Research, Education, Extension, and Integrated Project grants. See the [Flow Chart for Strengthening Grant Eligibility](#) to assist with determining eligibility for Strengthening Grants.

Eligibility requirements for Strengthening Grants apply only to the PD's institution and not to the institutions of Co-PDs or collaborators.

2) Strengthening Grants Eligibility Definitions
   a) **EPSCoR States** ([FASE & EPSCoR Program](#))
   Every year, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) determines the states that are eligible for USDA EPSCoR funding. This list includes states having a funding level no higher than the 38th percentile of all States based on a 3-year rolling average of AFRI funding levels, excluding FASE Strengthening funds granted to EPSCoR States and small-midsized and minority-serving degree-granting institutions. Please see the applicable list below for your specific RFA.

   FY 2023:

   For FY 2023 AFRI RFAs, including the AFRI Foundational and Applied Science RFA, AFRI Education and Workforce Development RFA, and AFRI Sustainable Agricultural Systems RFA applications for 2023 deadlines, while significant FY 2022 funds are unobligated, the eligibility determinations are based on the data obtained from grants made through the AFRI program from 2019 through 2021. For FY 2023, the following States meet the requirements for this category:

State Name	Abbreviation
Arkansas	AR
Delaware	DE
Idaho	ID
Kentucky	KY
Louisiana	LA
Maine	ME
Montana	MT
North Dakota	ND
New Hampshire	NH
New Jersey	NJ
New Mexico	NM
Nevada	NV
Oklahoma	OK
Rhode Island	RI
South Carolina	SC
South Dakota	SD
Utah	UT
Vermont	VT
Wyoming	WY

Other entities eligible for USDA EPSCoR funds in FY 2023 include the following United States commonwealths, territories, possessions and their successors, and the District of Columbia:

Name	Abbreviation
American Samoa	AS
District of Columbia	DC
Guam	GU
Micronesia	FM
Northern Marianas	MP
Puerto Rico	PR
Virgin Islands (U.S.)	VI

<u>FY 2024:</u>
For FY 2024 AFRI RFAs, including the AFRI Foundational and Applied Science RFA, AFRI Education and Workforce Development RFA, and AFRI Sustainable Agricultural Systems RFA applications for 2024 deadlines, while significant FY 2023 funds are unobligated, the eligibility determinations are based on the data obtained from grants made through the AFRI program from 2020 through 2022. For FY 2024, the following States meet the requirements for this category:

State Name	Abbreviation
Alaska	AK
Connecticut	CT
Delaware	DE
Kentucky	KY
Maine	ME
Montana	MT
North Dakota	ND
New Hampshire	NH
New Jersey	NJ
New Mexico	NM
Nevada	NV
Oklahoma	OK
Rhode Island	RI
South Carolina	SC
South Dakota	SD
Utah	UT
Vermont	VT
West Virginia	WV
Wyoming	WY

Other entities eligible for USDA EPSCoR funds in FY 2024 include the following United States commonwealths, territories, possessions and their successors, and the District of Columbia:

Name	Abbreviation
American Samoa	AS
District of Columbia	DC
Guam	GU
Micronesia	FM
Northern Marianas	MP
Puerto Rico	PR
Virgin Islands (U.S.)	VI

b) **Small and mid-sized institutions** are academic institutions with a current total enrollment of 17,500 or less, including graduate and undergraduate as well as full- and part-time students. An institution in this instance is an organization that possesses a significant degree of autonomy as defined by being independently accredited in the current version of the Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 1801 Robert Fulton Drive, Suite 340, Reston, Virginia 20191 (Phone: (888) 349-7715; www.hepinc.com).

c) **Minority-serving institutions** are academic institutions whose enrollment of a single minority group or a combination of minority groups (as defined in Part VIII, D of the RFA) exceeds 50 percent of the total enrollment, including graduate and undergraduate as well as full- and part-time students.

Applicants applying under this category should indicate the current percentage of applicable minority students enrolled at the institution in a cover letter. An institution in this instance is an organization that possesses a significant degree of autonomy as defined by being independently accredited in the current version of the Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 1801 Robert Fulton Drive, Suite 340, Reston, Virginia 20191 (Phone: (888) 349-7715; www.hepinc.com).

d) **Limited institutional success** is defined as institutions that are not among the most successful universities and colleges for receiving Federal funds for science and engineering research and development. See the AFRI RFA Resources page ("Table 1 Most Successful Institutions" in the attachments list) for an alphabetical list of the most successful institutions.

All institutions grouped under one main campus as listed in Table 1 Most Successful Institutions, unless located in an EPSCoR state, are excluded from

eligibility for all strengthening funds. The institution may petition for an exemption to this rule as described in Part III, B of the RFA.

3) Strengthening Grant Types

An individual applicant may submit only one of the following types of strengthening applications (Sabbatical Grants, Equipment Grants, and Seed Grants) as Project Director (PD) during the current fiscal year. Investigators are encouraged to contact the appropriate Program Area Priority Contact, regarding suitability of project topics to verify that their submission is appropriate to the program area priority. For Equipment Grants, investigators are encouraged to contact the appropriate Program Area Priority Contact regarding appropriateness of requested equipment for topics within program area priority requirements.

a) **Seed Grants**

Seed Grants are to provide funds to enable investigators to collect preliminary data (which may be obtained through establishing new domestic or international collaborations) or perform other preliminary activities in preparation for applying for future grants from AFRI. The grants are not intended to fund stand-alone projects, but rather projects that will lead to further work applicable to one of the AFRI Program Areas. Seed Grant applications proposing an Integrated Project only need to include one of the three functions (research, education, extension) and justify how this Seed Grant will allow the applicant to become competitive for future Integrated Project funding. Seed grants are not renewable. Seed grant awardees may receive no more than two seed grants (for different projects) within any five-year period.

New Investigators are also eligible to apply for a Seed Grant (i.e., New Investigator Seed Grant). Individuals applying for a New Investigator Seed Grant must meet the eligibility criteria for New Investigators described previously, but do not need to meet eligibility for Strengthening Grants. In these cases, both the New Investigator and Seed Grant boxes should be checked under FASE on the AFRI Project Type form. An individual New Investigator applicant **may submit only one Seed Grant as PD during the current fiscal year**. New Investigators also may only receive **one New Investigator Seed Grant during their career**.

Seed Grants are limited to a total of $300,000 (including indirect costs) for up to 2-years in duration and are not renewable. All Seed Grant applications submitted to the respective program area priority will be reviewed together, with separate funding considerations given to Strengthening-eligible Seed Grants and New Investigator Seed Grant applications.

Project Narrative page limit for Strengthening Seed Grant applications and New Investigator Seed Grant applications is 7 pages.

b) Equipment Grants

Equipment Grants are designed to strengthen the research, education, and/or extension capacity of institutions by funding the purchase of one major piece of equipment. These grants are not intended to replace requests for equipment in individual project applications. Rather, they are intended to help fund items of equipment that will upgrade infrastructure. Requests for computer equipment are allowed only if the equipment is to be used in an activity integral to the proposed project. Requests for computer equipment will not be permitted if the equipment will primarily serve as a word processor or perform administrative functions.

Each request shall be limited to one major piece of equipment within the cost range of $10,000-$250,000 and are not renewable. The amount of Federal funding requested shall not exceed 50 percent of the cost or $50,000, whichever is less. Unless a waiver is granted by NIFA using the criteria listed in Part III, C., of the RFA, it is the responsibility of the PD to secure required matching funds with non-Federal funds (see Part III, C for more information). No installation, maintenance, warranty, or insurance expenses may be paid from these grants, nor may these costs be part of the matching funds. Indirect costs are not permitted on Equipment Grant awards.

Project Narrative page limit for Equipment Grant applications is 7 pages.

c) Sabbatical Grants

Sabbatical Grants are to provide an opportunity for faculty to enhance their research, education, and/or extension capabilities by funding sabbatical leaves. Collaborative arrangements, domestic or international, are encouraged. Grants will be limited to one year of salary and funds for travel and supplies, where justified, and are not renewable.

NIFA also encourages and will support the concept of "mini-sabbaticals" for faculty and researchers desiring short-term training to learn new techniques that will improve their competitiveness. These short-term training opportunities generally follow all of the sabbatical requirements described beginning in Part IV, C., of the RFA but for a shorter duration. These grants may be used to participate in short courses offered at various research institutions.

Project Narrative page limit for Sabbatical Grant applications is 7 pages.

d) Strengthening Standard Grants

Standard Grant applications that meet the eligibility requirements for Strengthening Grants are eligible for reserved strengthening funds as Strengthening Standard Grants. The eligibility requirements only apply to the lead PD and are not required for Co-PD(s) associated with the project.

Project Narrative page limit for Strengthening Standard Grant applications is 18 pages, see Standard Grants for exceptions.

e) Strengthening Coordinated Agricultural Projects

Coordinated Agricultural Projects (CAP) grant applications that meet the eligibility requirements for Strengthening Grants are eligible for reserved strengthening funds as Strengthening CAP Grants. The eligibility requirements only apply to the lead PD and are not required for Co-PD(s) associated with the project.

Project Narrative page limit for Strengthening CAP Grant applications is 18 pages.

f) Strengthening Conference Grants

Conference Grant applications that meet the eligibility requirements for Strengthening Grants are eligible for reserved strengthening funds as Strengthening Conference Grants. The eligibility requirements only apply to the lead PD and are not required for Co-PD(s) associated with the project.

Project Narrative page limit for Strengthening Conference Grant applications is 18 pages.

5. **Other Grants (Collaborative)**

The Collaborative Project Grant is a type of Research, Education, Extension, or Integrated Project that allows AFRI programs to partner resources with other funding organizations, domestic or international, to address high priority mission areas of mutual interest, without either organization transferring funds to the other. For AFRI programs soliciting Collaborative Project Grants, a single proposal is submitted to the program; it must contain all of the requisite sections for an AFRI application, in addition to information that may be outlined in the specific program description. The overall project must demonstrate an integrated, collaborative approach; the specific contributions and responsibilities of the AFRI and partner agency teams to the objectives must be set out clearly in the proposal's project narrative and reflected in the budget justifications. The advantages of the multi-organizational effort must be clearly described in the Project Narrative, as well as the specific managerial arrangements to assure strong coordination among teams. Work proposed to be supported by AFRI cannot duplicate what would be funded by the partners, and vice-versa. To be

competitive for funding, a Collaborative Project Grant must clearly demonstrate a substantial and meaningful collaboration between the AFRI and non-AFRI funded teams. Work proposed to be funded by each agency (and therefore each agency's budget) must be integral to the success of at least one of the application objectives. If a Collaborative Project Grant is funded, AFRI makes an award to support objectives done by the AFRI PD and/or Co-PD(s). A separate award is made by the partner agency that supports objectives done by its team of PD and/or Co-PD(s). While Collaborative Project Grants are solicited in a limited number of areas, all AFRI applications may continue to include subcontracts to other institutions for work also supported by AFRI.