



# REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

## Equipment Grants Program

**FUNDING YEAR:** Fiscal Year (FY) 2024

**LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE:** Not Required

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:** May 3, 2024

**ANTICIPATED PROGRAM FUNDING:** \$4,800,000

**FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER:** USDA-NIFA-OP-010493

**ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER:** 10.519

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

**Assistance Listing Number (ALN):** The Equipment Grants Program (EGP) is listed in the Assistance Listings under number 10.519.

**Table 1:** Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
<b>Application:</b>	5:00 P.M. Eastern Time, May 3, 2024 [ <i>Ref to <a href="#">Part I § C</a> of this RFA</i> ]
<b>Number of Proposal Limit</b>	Two proposals total per eligible institution
<b>Award Limitations</b>	a) No more than one award will be made per lead institution b) To receive an award, the lead institution may not have received more than two EGP awards in the previous two EGP funding cycles
<b>Letter of Intent:</b>	Not Required
<b>Applicants Comments:</b>	Within six months from the issuance of this notice ( <i>NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month</i> )

**Dates for Applications:** This RFA solicits applications for the funding cycle of FY 2024. Applications for FY 2024 funding cycle must be received by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on the deadline date indicated above. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

**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](mailto:Policy@usda.gov). Please use the following subject line: Response to the EGP RFA.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This RFA is being released prior to the passage of a full appropriations act for FY 2024. Enactment of a continuing resolution, appropriations act, or other authorizing legislation may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. The amount available for support of this program in FY 2024 is approximately \$4,800,000.

The Equipment Grants Program (EGP) serves to increase access to shared-use special purpose equipment/instruments for fundamental and applied research for use in the food and agricultural sciences programs at institutions of higher education, including State Cooperative Extension Systems. The program seeks to strengthen the quality and expand the scope of fundamental and applied research at eligible institutions, by providing them with opportunities to acquire one shared-use piece of equipment/instrument that supports their research, research training, and extension goals and may be too costly and/or not appropriate for support through other NIFA grant programs. EGP grants are not intended to replace requests for equipment in individual project applications. The program emphasizes shared-use instrumentation that will enhance the capabilities of researchers, educators, and extension specialists both within and outside the proposing organization.

Proposals to the EGP must involve acquisition of a single, well-integrated piece of equipment/instrument. Well-integrated means that the ensemble of equipment that defines the instrument enables specific fundamental or applied research experiments in the food and agricultural sciences, including data science and data systems; separating or removing an element or component of such an integrated instrument would preclude that research from occurring or succeeding. An instrument acquired with support from EGP is expected to be fully operational by the conclusion of the first year of the project.

The EGP does not support the acquisition of suites of equipment (i.e., common, general purpose ancillary equipment) to outfit research laboratories/facilities or to conduct independent experiments simultaneously. Similarly, the EGP does not fund common, general purpose ancillary equipment that would normally be found in a laboratory and/or is relatively easily procured by the organization or through other NIFA grant programs. Rather, it is intended to help fund items of equipment that will upgrade infrastructure. Moreover, EGP does not fund research projects, including research that uses the equipment acquired with support from the program, nor building or modifying facilities to house the equipment.

In FY 2024, EGP will support the installation of equipment (but not the costs associated with building or modifying facilities to house the equipment), equipment warranty for the duration of the award, and one-time equipment use training.

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## **PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION**

### **A. Legislative Authority**

The Equipment Grants Program is authorized under [7 U.S.C. 3310a](#), which allows the Secretary to make competitive grants for the acquisition of special purpose scientific research equipment for use in the food and agricultural sciences programs of eligible institutions.

“Special purpose equipment” is defined in [2 CFR 200.1](#) as equipment which is used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities. See also [2 CFR 200.1](#) Equipment and General purpose equipment.

### **B. Purpose and Priorities**

The Equipment Grants Program (EGP), Assistance Listing 10.519, serves to increase access to shared special purpose equipment/instruments for scientific research for use in the food and agricultural sciences programs in our Nation's institutions of higher education, including State Cooperative Extension Services. The program seeks to improve the quality and expand the scope of fundamental and applied research at eligible institutions, by providing organizations with opportunities to acquire equipment/instruments that supports the research, research training, and extension goals of the organization. The program emphasizes shared-use instrumentation that will enhance the capabilities of researchers and extension agents both within and outside the proposing organization.

EGP is designed to strengthen the fundamental and/ or applied research capacity (extension) of institutions by funding the purchase of one shared-use piece of equipment that may be too costly and/or not appropriate for support through other NIFA grant programs. An instrument acquired with support from EGP is expected to be fully operational by the conclusion of the first year of the project. Proposals to the EGP are for the acquisition of a single, well-integrated piece of equipment/instrument. Well-integrated research instrument means that the ensemble of equipment that defines the instrument enables specific fundamental or applied research experiments in the food and agricultural sciences, including data science and data systems. It also means that separating or removing an element or component of such an integrated instrument would preclude any experiments from occurring or succeeding. Requests for computer equipment are allowed only if the equipment is part of a well-integrated instrument.

In FY 2024, EGP will support the installation of equipment (but not the costs associated with building or modifying facilities to house the equipment), an extended equipment warranty for the duration of the award (48 months), and one-time equipment use training. Training and extended warranty costs must not exceed \$7,000 for each category. While extended warranty costs are allowed, continuing maintenance contracts are not.

The program does not fund research projects' costs, including personnel costs, associated with the use of the equipment acquired with support from this program. The program does not support building or modifying facilities to house the equipment, or the purchase of supplies/consumables to operate the equipment. The EGP does not support the acquisition of a suite of equipment to outfit research laboratories/facilities or to conduct independent experiments simultaneously. Similarly, the EGP does not fund common, general purpose ancillary equipment that would normally be found in a laboratory and/or is relatively easily procured by the organization or

through other NIFA funding programs. EGP grants are not intended to replace requests for equipment in individual project applications.

The EGP emphasizes shared-use instrumentation that will enhance the capabilities of researchers and extension agents both within and outside the proposing organization.

The EGP is aligned with the following [USDA Strategic Goals FY 2022-2026](#):

1. Strategic Goal 1: Combat Climate Change to Support America’s Working Lands, Natural Resources and Communities
2. Strategic Goal 2: Ensure America’s Agricultural System is Equitable, Resilient, and Prosperous
3. Strategic Goal 3: Foster an Equitable and Competitive Marketplace for All Agricultural Producers
4. Strategic Goal 4: Provide All Americans Safe, Nutritious Food

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

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

Additional requirements on expected performance goals, indicators and targets may be required as a condition of award.

### **C. Program Area Description**

The Equipment Grants Program (EGP) serves to increase access to shared special purpose equipment for scientific research for use in the food and agricultural sciences programs in our Nation’s colleges and universities ([7 U.S.C. 3103](#)), including State Cooperative Extension Systems. The program seeks to improve the quality and expand the scope of fundamental and applied research in food and agricultural sciences, including data science and data systems, by providing institutions with opportunities to acquire instrumentation that increases the research capacity of the institution, contributes to their research training or extension goals, and advances food and agricultural sciences.

The EGP emphasizes shared-use instrumentation that will enhance the capabilities of researchers both within and outside the proposing institutions. The EGP is intended to assist with acquisition that may be too costly and/or not appropriate for support through other NIFA grant programs (such as the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, Hatch, Evans-Allen, or 1890 Facilities Grant Program). An instrument acquired with support from EGP is expected to be fully operational by the conclusion of the first year of the project. EGP projects are 48-months in duration in order to document the impact of the acquired equipment on the institution’s research capacity. Equipment in a soil, plant or animal health diagnostic laboratory will be appropriate if the data produced is used for research, research training or extension.

The acquired equipment may be a well-integrated ensemble that requires more than one component to enable a specific fundamental or applied research experiment in the food and agricultural sciences programs to be undertaken. Separating or removing one element or component of such an instrument would preclude that research from occurring or succeeding.

**Operations and maintenance of the acquired equipment.** Shared-use research equipment can be expensive to operate and maintain over its useful lifetime. Proposals should demonstrate the institution's commitment to maintaining and operating the instrument for the benefit of a community of users engaged in research and training or extension in the Management Plan.

**EGP provides funding for purchase of equipment used in research or produces data used in research, but:**

1. **does not** fund research, education, or extension project costs or personnel salaries or wages, including research or personnel that use equipment acquired with support from the program.
2. **does not** fund common, general purpose ancillary equipment that would normally be found in a laboratory or is relatively easily procured by other funding sources (for the purposes of this program, General Purpose Equipment is defined in 2 CFR 200.48).
3. **does not** support the operation, consumable supplies, or maintenance of facilities, equipment, or research laboratories, or building, modifying or renovating facilities that house the acquired equipment.
4. **does not** support the acquisition of a suite of instruments to outfit research laboratories/facilities.

For additional resources on EGP, including frequently asked questions, visit the [EGP Webpage](#).

For a program informational webinar please visit the [NIFA calendar](#) for dates, event registration, and link. If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate in any of the informational webinars listed, please contact the event host listed no later than 10 days prior to the event.



**Table 2:** Program Key Information

Title	Description
<b>Program Code:</b>	EGP
<b>Program Code Name:</b>	Equipment Grants Program
<b>ALN:</b>	10.519
<b>Project Type:</b>	Equipment projects only
<b>Grant Type:</b>	Standard Grants
<b>Application Deadline:</b>	May 3, 2024, at 5:00 P.M. Eastern
<b>Number of Proposal Limit:</b>	Two proposals total, regardless of type, per eligible institution
<b>Award Limitations</b>	a) No more than one award will be made per lead institution b) To receive an award, the lead institution may not have received more than two EGP awards in the previous two EGP funding cycles.
<b>Grant Duration:</b>	48 Months
<b>Anticipated # of Awards:</b>	10
<b>Minimum Award Amount:</b>	\$25,000
<b>Maximum Award Amount:</b>	\$500,000

For FY 2024, an eligible institution may not submit more than two applications, regardless of type, to this program as a lead institution and no more than one award will be made per lead institution. Prospective applicants/project directors are advised to contact their institutional office of research regarding processes used to select proposals for submission.

To receive an award in FY 2024, the lead institution may not have received more than two (2) USDA-NIFA EGP awards as lead institution in the previous two (2) EGP funding cycles. A list of previous awards is available on the NIFA – EGP program’s funding opportunity page under relevant links. The list of previous awards is also available under the following links: [FY22 EGP Awards](#) and [FY23 EGP Awards](#).

## PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

### A. Available Funding

This RFA is being released prior to the passage of a full appropriations act for FY 2024. Enactment of a continuing resolution, appropriations act, or other authorizing legislation may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. The amount available for the Equipment Grants Program in FY 2024 is approximately \$4,800,000. These funds are available for equipment grants. 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. For FY 2024, applications are limited to the following type:

**New application:** This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to NIFA. New applications will be evaluated using the criteria described in [Part V](#) of this RFA and are subject to the due dates herein (see [Appendix III](#) for definition).

**Resubmitted application:** Resubmitted applications must include the response to the previous review panel summary and are subject to the same criteria and due dates herein. Resubmitted applicants must enter the NIFA-assigned proposal number of the previously submitted application in the *Federal Field (Field 4)* on the application form (see [Appendix III](#) for definition).

### C. Project and Grant Types

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

1. Project Types: In FY 2024, the EGP will accept Equipment Projects only. These projects are for the acquisition of research equipment and does not fund research project costs, including personnel costs, associated with the use of the equipment acquired with support from this program. Other project types submitted to this program will not be considered for review. EGP projects support the purchase of equipment that will be used for fundamental or applied research and enhance the capacity (updates or expands existing equipment) or increases the capacity (acquires new equipment) at a research institution.
2. Grant Types: The EGP will only support Standard Grants where:
  - a. Standard Grant: funding request from \$25,000 up to \$500,000 total budget for the acquisition of a single, well-integrated piece of equipment/instrument and a project duration of 48 months. An instrument acquired with support from EGP is expected to be fully operational by the conclusion of the first year of the project period; the remainder of the project period will document impacts and outcomes of the investment.

Equipment Grants applications will be considered in two categories: \$25,000-\$250,000 budget applications, and \$250,001 up to \$500,000 budget applications. All Equipment Grants Program

applications will be reviewed using the same evaluation criteria, with separate funding considerations given to \$25,000-\$250,000 budget applications and \$250,001 up to \$500,000 budget applications.

EGP does not fund common, general purpose ancillary equipment that would normally be found in a laboratory and/or is relatively easily procured by the organization or through other NIFA funding programs.

The acquired equipment may be a well-integrated ensemble that requires more than one component to enable a specific fundamental or applied research experiment in the food and agricultural sciences programs to be undertaken. Separating or removing one element or component of such an instrument would preclude that research from occurring or succeeding.

In FY 2024, EGP will support the installation of equipment (but not the costs associated with building or modifying facilities to house the equipment), equipment warranty for the duration of the award (48 months), and one-time equipment use training. Training and warranty costs must not exceed \$7,000 for each category. While warranty costs are allowed, continuing maintenance contracts are not.

An instrument acquired with support from EGP is expected to be fully operational by the conclusion of the first year of the project. All EGP projects are 48-months in duration in order to document the impact of the acquired equipment on the institution's research capacity.

EGP grants are not intended to replace requests for equipment in individual project applications of other NIFA programs. 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 to enhance an activity integral to the proposed project.

**Application Submission and Award Limitations:** For FY 2024, an eligible institution may not submit more than two applications to this program as a lead institution and no more than one award will be made per lead institution. Prospective applicants/project directors are advised to contact their institutional office of research regarding processes used to select proposals for submission.

To receive an award in FY 2024, the lead institution may not have received more than two (2) USDA-NIFA EGP awards as lead institution in the previous two (2) EGP funding cycles. A list of previous awards is available the program's funding opportunity page under relevant links. The list of previous awards is also available under the following links: [FY22 EGP Awards](#) and [FY23 EGP Awards](#)

#### **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

Eligibility is limited to the following institutions, as defined in [7 U.S.C. § 3103](#):

1. College or University
  - a. In general. The terms "college" and "university" mean an educational institution in any State, the District of Columbia, and any insular area which, (i) admits as regular students only persons having a certificate of graduation from a school providing secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such a certificate, (ii) is legally authorized within such State to provide a program of education beyond secondary education, (iii) provides an educational program for which a bachelor's degree or any other higher degree is awarded, (iv) is a public or other nonprofit institution, and (v) is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association.
  - b. Inclusions. The terms "college" and "university" include a research foundation maintained by a college or university described in subparagraph (A).
2. State Cooperative Institution including:
  - a. 1862 and 1890 land-grant institutions;
  - b. State-certified Schools of Forestry as stipulated in accordance with [16 U.S.C. 582a](#) et seq. (the McIntire-Stennis Act of 1962);
  - c. State Agricultural Experiment Stations located in the 50 States, the District of Columbia and the Insular Areas in accordance with [7 U.S.C. 361a et seq.](#) (the Hatch Act of 1887);
  - d. "Cooperative extension services" meaning the organizations established at the land-grant colleges and universities under the Smith-Lever Act of May 8, 1914 (38 Stat. 372–374, as amended; [7 U.S.C. 341–349](#)), and section 209(b) of the Act of October 26, 1974 (88 Stat. 1428, as amended; D.C. Code, sec. 31–1719(b));
  - e. Accredited schools or colleges of veterinary medicine or State agricultural experiment stations that conduct animal health and disease research in accordance with section 1433(c) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977;
  - f. Hispanic-serving institutions as defined in section [1101\(a\) of Title 20](#); and
  - g. Eligible institutions in insular areas including, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; Guam; American Samoa; the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; the Federated States of Micronesia; the Republic of the Marshall Islands; the Republic of Palau; and the Virgin Islands of the United States.

Applicants for the EGP 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 that do not satisfy all the screening criteria will be returned without review. Returned applications may not be resubmitted (with or without revision) under this solicitation. The initial screening criteria are the following:

1. Application must be received by the due date and time from an eligible institution.

2. The application must meet the Content and Form of the Application requirements as described in this RFA. This includes page length requirements, all required forms, and all files in Portable Document Format (PDF).
3. The proposed budget request must fall within the funding amounts identified in the RFA.
4. The application does not exceed the limit of no more than two applications submitted to this program from an eligible lead institution or that the lead institution exceeds the limit of receiving more than two EGP awards in the previous two EGP funding cycles.

***Duplicate or Multiple Submissions*** – submissions of duplicate or predominantly overlapping applications is not allowed. An eligible applicant may submit multiple applications on behalf of multiple individuals as long as they are not essentially duplications of the same project or portions of the same project to multiple programs. NIFA will disqualify both applications if an applicant submits duplicate or multiple submissions. For additional information or clarification please contact the NIFA POC listed in this RFA.

**Application Submission and Award Limitations:** For FY 2024, an eligible institution may only submit two applications to this program as a lead institution and only one award will be made per lead institution. Prospective applicants/project directors are advised to contact their institutional office of research regarding processes used to select proposals for submission.

To receive an award in FY 2024, the lead institution can only have two (2) USDA-NIFA EGP awards as lead institution in the previous two (2) EGP funding cycles. A list of previous awards is available on the program’s funding opportunity page under relevant links.

For those new to Federal financial assistance, NIFA’s [Grants Overview](#) provides highly recommended information about grants and other resources to help understand the Federal awards process.

#### **B. Cost Sharing or Matching**

***No Match Required.*** The EGP has no matching requirement. NIFA will not factor matching resources into the review process as an evaluation criterion.

## PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

### A. Method of Application

Applicants must apply to this RFA electronically; no other method or response is accepted. The electronic application for this RFA and additional resources are available on [Grants.gov](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 3.** Steps to Obtain Application Materials

Steps	Action
<b>Step One: Register</b>	<i>New Users</i> to <a href="https://www.grants.gov">Grants.gov</a> must register early with <a href="https://www.grants.gov">Grants.gov</a> prior to submitting an application ( <a href="#">Register Here</a> ).
<b>Step Two: Download Adobe</b>	Download and Install <a href="#">Adobe Reader</a> (see <a href="#">Adobe Software Compatibility</a> for basic system requirements)
<b>Step Three: Find Application</b>	Using this funding opportunity number <b>USDA-NIFA-OP-010493</b> , search for application here: <a href="#">Opportunity Package</a> .
<b>Step Four: Assess Readiness</b>	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
<a href="#">Grants.gov Online Support</a> Telephone support: 800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035 Email support: <a href="mailto:support@grants.gov">support@grants.gov</a> Self-service customer-based support: <a href="#">Grants.gov iPortal</a> Key Information: Customer service business Hours 24/7, except <a href="#">federal holidays</a> .	Email: <a href="mailto:grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov">grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov</a>  Key Information: Business hours: Monday thru Friday, 7a.m. – 5p.m. ET, except <a href="#">federal holidays</a>

### 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 <a href="https://www.grants.gov">Grants.gov</a> 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 <b>30</b> days of the application deadline.	N/A

**SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet.** See **Part V** of [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 program area goals of the EGP. See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide for instructions and suggested templates.
2. **Field 8.** Project Narrative (PN). The PN must not exceed the total page limit of 10 pages including written text, figures, and tables. The font size should be no smaller than 12 points Times New Roman with 1-inch margins. Written text must be 1.5-spaced, and Tables may be single-spaced. Page limits outlined here ensure fair and equitable competition. Appendices to the PN are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. Do not add appendices to circumvent the page limit. The project narrative must include subsections (a)-(d) and address the merits and potential impacts (e.g., local, regional, or national) of the proposed effort. Applications exceeding the page limitation will be returned without review.



- a. **Description of the Research Equipment and Needs.** Proposal should include a technical description of the requested equipment, including manufacturer and model number where appropriate. This section should clearly explain why the requested equipment model is needed. The existence and availability of comparable instrumentation at institutions in close geographical proximity, or otherwise accessible through collaborations or cyberinfrastructure should be outlined in the proposal. For any proposal that purports to represent an integrated instrument, explain how the acquisition meets the EGP guidance for a well-integrated single piece of equipment in which separating or removing an element or component of such an integrated instrument would preclude the intended experiments from occurring or succeeding. The budget narrative must be sufficiently detailed to assess how the equipment or well-integrated instrument is comprised. A quote or estimated cost from the equipment provider is highly recommended.

Note: NIFA will not fund equipment purchase that is duplicative or overlaps substantially with efforts already funded (or to be funded) by other federal agencies or with other federal funds.

- b. **Research Activities to be Enabled.** To support the shared-use Equipment Program goal, in narrative or tabular form, briefly describe the 1) research areas that will use the equipment; 2) degree to which the planned uses of the proposed equipment will advance fundamental and/or applied research activities at the organization; and 3) potential contributions to the food and agricultural sciences. Researchers using this equipment need not be supported by NIFA or the Federal government, but reviewers should understand how users of the instrument will support and disseminate their fundamental and/or applied research activities advancing food and agriculture.
- c. **Project Timeline and Instrument Location.** Describe the administrative timeline of how the equipment will be acquired and installed, and how the project will be governed, as well as a strategy to enhance coordination, collaboration, communication, and data sharing and reporting among members of the project team and stakeholder groups. The plan must also address how the project will be sustained for the life of the instrument beyond termination of an award.

Indicate in a single separate line the physical location of the proposed instrument as well as how the chosen location supports shared-use access to the instrument.

Note: Instruments to be deployed in the field may require additional information to assess compliance with any applicable laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and Endangered Species Act.

- d. **Cooperation and institutional involvement.** Describe the degree to which the equipment will strengthen the institution's fundamental or applied research as well as enhance access to institutions or individuals traditionally underrepresented in the proposed area of research. Elements include the institution's commitment to the project, the adequacy of institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment,

and/or materials) available to carry out the project and plans for equipment maintenance and use for the life of the instrument beyond the period of USDA support. Letters of support documenting institutional resources are strongly encouraged. Sufficient details should be given to enable reviewers to evaluate whether there is appropriate technical expertise and infrastructure to allow effective usage of the instrument, and whether effective multi-user accessibility will be available.

Proposals must meet administrative and technical requirements to be accepted for the EGP competition. Some key reasons for Return without Review: Proposals that are missing key documents, documents not in PDF, or applicant's organization are not eligible. (See Part III. Eligibility Information: Eligibility Requirements).

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

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

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

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

1. Indirect costs (IDC) – See Part [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 DMP is required for this program. Applicants should clearly articulate how the project director (PD) and co-PDs plan to manage and disseminate the data generated by the project. The DMP will be considered during the merit review process (see [Part V, B](#) of this RFA, [NIFA's Data Management Plan](#)). If you need help in preparing a data management plan or have questions about what constitutes a data management plan for this role (including questions about data privacy, etc.), please contact the NIFA program contacts listed at the end of this RFA.

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

### C. Funding Restrictions

**No Indirect Cost (IDC)**. IDC is not authorized for the EGP program. Also, applicants should note ([7 U.S.C. 3310a\(c\)](#)) that the cost of acquisition or depreciation of equipment purchased with a grant under this section shall not be-

- (1) charged as an indirect cost against another Federal grant; or
- (2) included as part of the indirect cost pool for purposes of calculating the indirect cost rate of an eligible institution.

## **PART V. APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS**

### **A. NIFA's Evaluation Process**

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

#### **Scientific Peer Review Process:**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **B. Evaluation Criteria**

All Equipment Grants submitted will be reviewed using the same evaluation criteria, with separate funding considerations given to \$25,000-\$250,000 budget applications and \$250,001 up to \$500,000 budget applications.

NIFA will use the following criteria to evaluate proposals submitted to EGP in descending order of consideration:

1. *Innovativeness of Proposed Approach*: This criterion relates to the soundness of the proposed approach including objectives, justification of requested equipment model or well-integrated instrument configuration, plan of operation, timetable, management plan, data management plan, expected products and results. Justification should also address how the new or enhanced research capacity supports the innovation, multidisciplinary and/or problem-based focus of the proposed approach. A multidisciplinary focus infers the requested equipment supports multiple research programs, cross-disciplinary collaboration, broad-use with potential for significant local, regional, or national impact.
2. *Potential Impact on Research Capacity*: This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will have an impact upon and advance the quality of fundamental and/or applied research activities by strengthening institutional capacities to meet clearly delineated needs. Consideration for impact may include existence and/or availability of comparable instrumentation at the applicant's institution and/or institutions in close geographical proximity, or otherwise accessible through collaborations or cyberinfrastructure. Consideration for impact may also include impact on enhanced access to the equipment by institutions or individuals traditionally underrepresented in the proposed areas of research. Elements considered include scientific merit, identification of a problem or opportunity to be addressed, alignment with institutional long-range goals, and alignment with USDA's Strategic Goals.
3. *Institutional Capability*: This criterion relates to the institution's capability to acquire, install, operate the equipment and the degree to which the equipment will strengthen its research capacity and support research training or extension goals. Elements include the institution's commitment to operation and maintenance of the equipment, the adequacy of institutional resources (administrative, facilities, and/or materials) available to maintain the equipment, adequacy of the number and qualifications of key personnel who will operate and carry out experiments or activities using the equipment, as well as plans for continued use beyond the period of USDA support.
4. *Budget and Cost-Effectiveness*: This criterion relates to the extent to which the total budget adequately supports the equipment acquisition and is cost-effective. Elements considered include the necessity and reasonableness of acquisition costs; and the degree to which the project maximizes the use of limited resources. Note: NIFA will not fund equipment purchase that is duplicative or overlaps substantially with efforts already funded (or to be funded) by other federal agencies or with other federal funds.

## **C. Organizational Management Information**

Applicants must submit specific management information prior to an award and update the information as needed. Applicants may only need to provide an update if there was a change in

previously provided information under this or another NIFA program. NIFA provides the requisite forms during the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible for award under this program, there are factors that may exclude an applicant from receiving federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual, or a determination that an applicant is not responsible).

**D. Application Disposition**

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

## **PART VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION**

### **A. General**

Within the limit of funds authorized, the NIFA awarding official will make grants to responsible and eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the NIFA awarding official as the effective date of the grant must be no later than September 30 of the federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. The project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by NIFA under this RFA may be used only for the purpose for which they are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, regulations, terms and conditions of the award, applicable federal cost principles, USDA assistance regulations, and [NIFA General Awards Administration Provisions, 7 CFR part 3430, subparts A through E](#).

*Award Notice.* The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information as described in [2 CFR 200.211](#) (see [NIFA's Terms and Conditions](#)).

### **B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

Several federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications and the projects outlined in this RFA (some are listed here: [Federal Regulations](#)). Unless specifically noted by statute or award-specific requirements, [NIFA Federal Assistance Policy Guide](#) applies to all NIFA awards.

## **PART VII. OTHER INFORMATION**

### **A. Use of Funds and Changes in Budget**

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

***Changes in Budget or Project Plans.*** In accordance with [2 CFR 200.308](#), awardees must request prior approval from NIFA for the following program or budget-related reasons (the awardee is subject to the terms and conditions identified in the award):

1. Change in the scope or the objective of the project or program without prior written approval (even if there is no associated budget revision requiring).
2. Change in a key person specified in the application or the federal award.
3. Disengagement from the project for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in time devoted to the project.
4. Inclusion of costs that require prior approval in accordance with [2 CFR 200 Subpart E \(Cost Principles\)](#), or [45 CFR Part 75 Appendix IX, \(Principles for Determining Costs Applicable to Research and Development under Awards and Contracts with Hospitals\)](#), or [48 CFR](#), unless waived by the federal awarding agency, [48 CFR Part 31, Contract Cost Principles and Procedures](#);
5. Transfer of funds budgeted for participant support costs to other categories of expense. ([2 CFR 200.456 Participant support costs](#));
6. Sub-awarding, transferring or contracting out of any work under a federal award, including fixed amount sub-awards (see [2 CFR 200.333, Fixed Amount Sub-awards](#)), unless described in the application and funded in the approved federal awards. This provision does not apply to the acquisition of supplies, material, equipment, or general support services.
7. Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-federal entity; and
8. The need for additional federal funds to complete the project.

### **B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards**

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of NIFA transaction records, which are available to the public. Information that the Secretary of Agriculture determines to be confidential, privileged, or proprietary in nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, applicants should clearly mark any information within the application they wish to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary. NIFA will retain a copy of an application that does not result in an award for three years. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An applicant may withdraw at any time prior to the final action thereon.

### **C. Regulatory Information**

This program is not subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372, which requires intergovernmental consultation with state and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 ([44 U.S.C. Chapter 35](#)), the collection of information requirements contained in this notice have been approved under [OMB Document No. 0524-0039](#).

**D. Limited English Proficiency**

NIFA offers language access services, such as interpretation and translation of vital information, free of charge. If you need interpretation or translation services, please visit [NIFA Language Access Services](#) or contact Lois Tuttle, Equal Opportunity Specialist, at [Lois.Tuttle@usda.gov](mailto:Lois.Tuttle@usda.gov) or (443) 386-9488.



## APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACT

### **Program Contacts**

Christopher Green

[Christopher.Green@usda.gov](mailto:Christopher.Green@usda.gov)

(856) 328-7396

Junia Jean-Gilles Beaubrun, PhD

[Junia.JeanGillesBeau@usda.gov](mailto:Junia.JeanGillesBeau@usda.gov)

(301) 852-1201

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](mailto:grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov)
3. Awards under this RFA, please email [awards@usda.gov](mailto:awards@usda.gov)

### **U.S. Postal Mailing Address:**

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

U.S. Department of Agriculture

P.O. Box 419205, MS 10000

Kansas City, MO 64141-6205

### **Courier/Package Delivery Address:**

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

U.S. Department of Agriculture

2312 East Bannister Road, MS 10000

Kansas City, MO 64141-3061

## **APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

### **Glossary of Terms**

Authorized Representative – AR

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

Assistance Listing Number - ALNData Management Plan – DMP

National Institute of Food and Agriculture – NIFA

Request for Application – RFA

Research, Education, and Economics – REE

United States Department of Agriculture – USDA

## APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS

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

### Definitions

#### Continuation Award:

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

#### General Purpose Equipment:

2 CFR 200.48 Equipment which is not limited to research, medical, scientific or other technical activities. Examples include office equipment and furnishings, modular offices, telephone networks, information technology equipment and systems, air conditioning equipment, reproduction and printing equipment, and motor vehicles.

#### Matching:

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

#### New Application:

An application not previously submitted to a program.

#### Resubmitted Application:

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

#### Shared-use Equipment:

A piece of equipment used by more than one research group, extension unit or multidisciplinary team to conduct fundamental or applied research.

#### Special Purpose Equipment:

2 CFR 200.89 Equipment which is used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities. Examples of special purpose equipment include microscopes, x-ray machines, surgical instruments, and spectrometers.

#### Well-integrated Piece of Equipment/Instrument:

Well-integrated means that the ensemble of equipment that defines the instrument enables specific fundamental or applied research experiments in the food and agricultural sciences, including data science and data systems; separating or removing an element or component of such an integrated instrument would preclude that research from occurring or succeeding.