



National Institute of Food and Agriculture

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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

NIFA

Writing a Strong USDA BFRDP Application

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Agenda

- Introduction to USDA BFRDP
- Preparing Your BFRDP Application
 - Before You Start
 - Building a Strong Application
 - Pre-Award Requirements from Grants Management
 - Understanding the Evaluation Criteria
 - Other Key Information
 - Things to Remember: Overcoming Common Flaws Resources
- Resources
- Q&A



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

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Introduction to the USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program

Denis Ebodaghe, BFRDP National Program Leader



USDA BFRDP Goals

- The primary goals of the BFRDP, under assistance listing number 10.311, are to help beginning farmers and ranchers in the United States and its territories:

Enter and/or improve successes in farming, ranching and management of nonindustrial private forest lands

Obtain support for projects providing education, mentoring and technical assistance

Gain the knowledge, skills and tools needed to make informed decisions for their operations and enhance their sustainability



USDA BFRDP Legislative Priorities



Basic livestock, forest management, & crop farming practices



Innovative farm, ranch, & private, nonindustrial forest land transfer and success strategies



Entrepreneurship and business training



Technical assistance to help beginning farmers or rancher acquire land from retiring farmers and ranchers



Financial & risk management training, including acquisition & management of agricultural credit



Natural resource management and planning



Diversification and marketing strategies



Curriculum development



USDA BFRDP Program Priorities, Continued



Mentoring,
apprenticeships, and
internships



Resources and referral



Farm financial
benchmarking



Farm safety and
awareness



Food safety and
recordkeeping

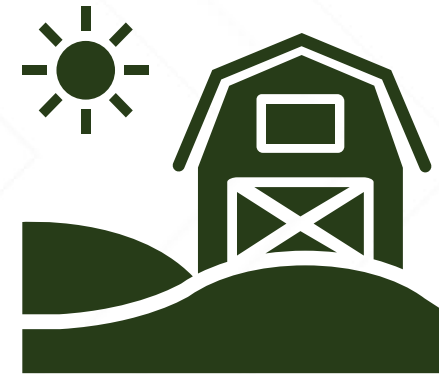


Agricultural rehabilitation
& vocational training for
veteran farmers & ranchers



USDA BFRDP Program Priorities, Continued

- Other similar subject areas of use to beginning farmers or ranchers such as projects that address:
 - Climate change with climate smart agriculture, food and forestry solutions
 - Improved nutritional security
 - Economic revitalization, particularly in socially disadvantaged communities





USDA BFRDP Eligibility

- Applications may only be submitted by a collaborative state, tribal, local or regionally based network or partnership of qualified public and/or private entities, including:
 - State Cooperative Extension Services
 - Federal, State, municipal or tribal agencies
 - Community-based organizations (CBOs)
 - Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
 - Junior and four-year colleges or universities or foundations maintained by a college or university
 - Private for-profit organizations



USDA BFRDP Eligibility, Exclusions

- Application submission of a project effort that is a duplicate of a current BFR project will not be accepted for review.
- Applications submitted by individuals, or by organizations that do not involve other entities in a network or partnership will not be accepted for review.
- To meet geographical diversity, multiple awards will not be made to the same organization, institution, or Project Director in the same calendar year.



Which Program is Right for Me?

Grant Type	Budget request total, not per year	Project Type	Project Duration
Large Standard	Up to \$750,000	Training and Technical Assistance	36 months
Medium Standard	Up to \$525,000	Training and Technical Assistance	36 months
Small Standard	Up to \$300,000	Training and Technical Assistance	36 months
Simplified Standard	Up to \$49,999	Training and Technical Assistance	12 months
Education Team	Up to \$750,000	Training	36 months



Large, Medium, & Small Standard Grants

- Support new and established local and regional training, education, outreach and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers and ranchers (BFRs).
 1. Identify the audience of BFRs they aim to serve, describe their characteristics and needs.
 2. Demonstrate knowledge and experience in education and assistance methods that are appropriate and effective in engaging the audience and meeting their needs.
 3. Propose an ambitious yet achievable plan of work to accomplish meaningful and measurable success in enhancing the number, success, and sustainability of BFRs.



Simplified Standard Grants

- Develop plans to address societal challenges, strengthen program ideas to develop a full proposal, curriculum development, develop apprenticeship programs and hands-on material, and/or develop an advisory committee to strengthen future program activities
- Designed for new trainers who have never received grants, nor gained more than three years of experience in assisting with the development of BFRs.
 1. Sustain and enhance important collaborations and innovative activities relevant to BFR programs
 2. Initiative and develop beginning farmer and rancher project ideas to lead to future program success or success in obtaining other grants for BFR education



Education Team Grants

- Enhance BFR efforts based on a particular topic, region or audience and complement previously funded Education Team grants.
- Support curriculum development and conduct educational programs/workshops for BFRs in diverse geographical areas of the United States or provide training and technical assistance for trainers and service providers that work with BFRs.
- Identify, collect, and assess existing curricula programs
 1. Identify gaps & develop and deliver curricula and train-the-trainer programs to fill those gaps.
 2. Collaborate with the BFRDP Curriculum and Training Clearinghouse.



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Preparing Your BFRDP Application – Before You Start

Iesha McGruder, BFRDP Program Specialist

Before You Start Your Application

1

Review Solicitation

Read the **Request for Applications (RFA)** thoroughly! It has all pertinent information, from the deadlines to evaluation criteria.

2

Determine Grant Type

Select the grant type that aligns best with your project

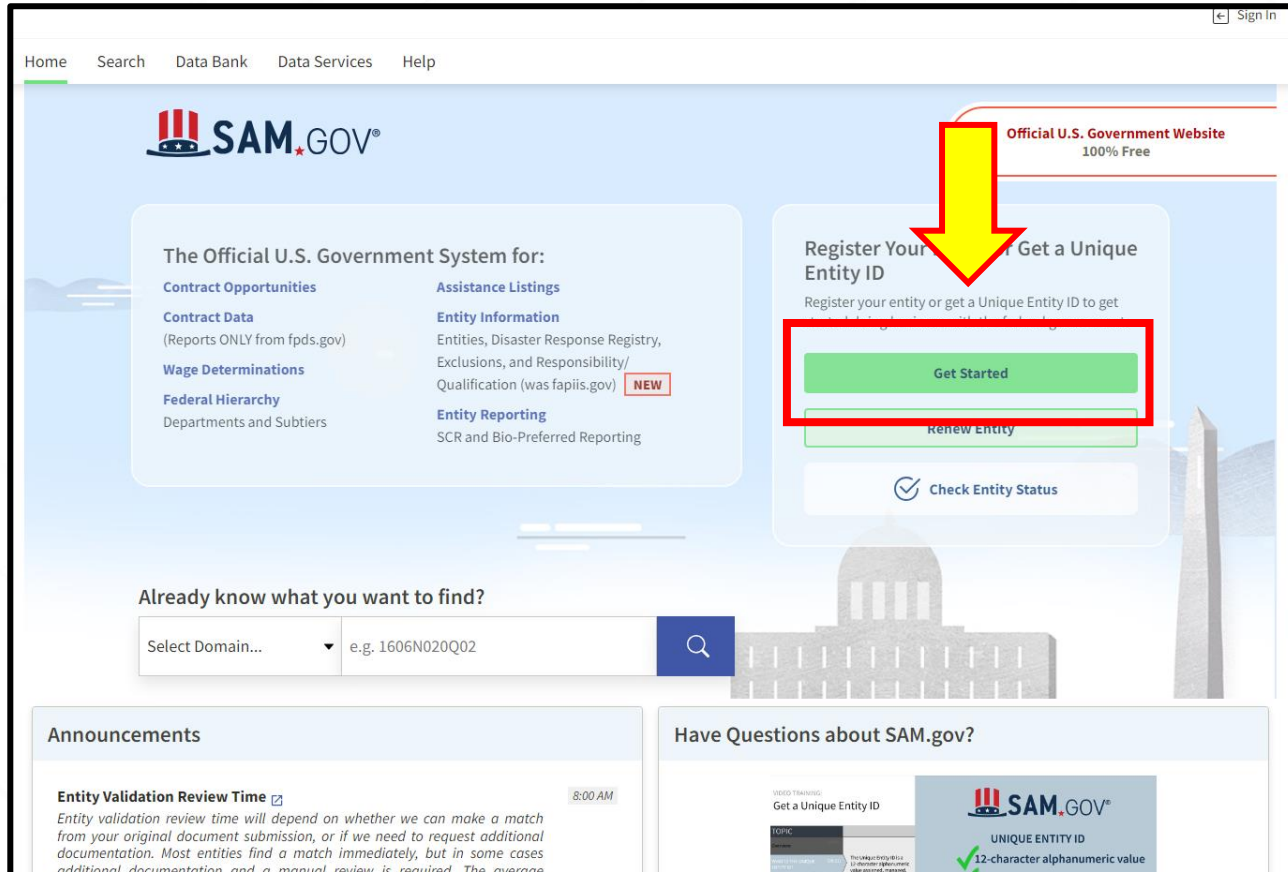
3

Registrations

Prior to submission, it is required that you register/update your organization on SAM.gov and Grants.gov. Do this early to prevent last minute panic!



Registration 1/2: SAM.GOV



- Set up SAM.gov account
- Entity registration
 - Obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number
 - 12-digit alphanumeric identifier required to do business with the federal government
 - Annual updates are needed

<http://sam.gov/content/entity-registration>



Registration 2/2: GRANTS.GOV

The screenshot shows the Grants.gov website interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the text 'SEARCH: Grant Opportunities' and a 'GO' button. Below the search bar is a navigation menu with tabs: HOME, LEARN GRANTS, SEARCH GRANTS, APPLICANTS (highlighted with a red arrow), GRANTORS, SYSTEM-TO-SYSTEM, FORMS, CONNECT, and SUPPORT. The main content area features a large banner with the text 'FOR APPLICANTS' and a yellow arrow pointing to the 'Get Registered' link. Below the banner are several tiles for different services: 'Check Your Eligibility', 'Get Registered' (highlighted with a red box), 'Apply for Grants', 'Track Your Application', 'Adobe Compatibility', 'Applicant Training', 'Applicant FAQs', and 'Manage Subscriptions'. The footer contains social media links and a 'Frequently Asked Questions' link.

- Click on the Applicants tab
- Click on “Get Registered”
 - Detailed instructions are available on Grants.gov

<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration.html>



Points to Remember for Registration

- SAM.gov entity registration can take time, especially if there are issues with your registration that may affect your ability to apply before the funding opportunity close date.
- If your entity is already registered, [ensure your registration has been renewed or updated per SAM.gov requirements.](#)



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Preparing Your BFRDP Application – Building a Strong Application

Bekah Hanson, BFRDP Program Specialist



Application Fundamentals

- What is BFRDP?
- What is included in a USDA BFRDP award (funds, duration, etc.)?
- When are applications due?
- Who is eligible?
- How can I prepare and submit a funding application?
- What are the key components of an application?
- How will the award be issued and managed?
- Who can I talk to about this solicitation?
- What do these words mean?

You will find answers to all these questions within the **RFA!**



Request for Application (RFA)

- Become a “student” of the [RFA](#)
 - Understand the main goals of the program
 - Attend technical assistance webinars or watch the recordings
 - Understand the instructions outlined in the RFA and how to assemble the proposal
 - Read the RFA!!!
 - RFA is most important; but be sure to read the [NIFA Grant Application Guide](#), too!

The screenshot shows the top of a webpage with the USDA logo on the left and the NIFA logo on the right. Below the logos is the title "REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS" followed by "Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program". A list of key details is provided in a structured format:

FUNDING YEAR:	Fiscal Year 2024
LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE:	Not Applicable
APPLICATION DEADLINE:	April 4, 2024
ANTICIPATED PROGRAM FUNDING:	\$24,000,000
AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL AWARD RANGE:	\$49,999 - \$750,000
FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER:	USDA-NIFA-BFR-010413
ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER:	10.311

Structure of a Competitive RFA

Eight (8) Main Parts

Executive Summary

+

Part I-Funding Opportunity Description

Part II-Award Information

Part III-Eligibility Information

Part IV-Application Submission Information

Part V-Application Review Requirements

Part VI-Award Administration

Part VII-Other Information





Key Elements of BFRDP Application

Required

Summary/Abstract
Project Narrative
Budget
Budget Justification (including
match or match waiver)

Other Necessary Items

Key Personnel bio Sketches
Conflict of Interest (COI)
Current & Pending Support (C&P)
Data Management Plan
Bibliography



What to Include in Project Summary

- Must be 250 words or less
- Think about how to capture the reviewer's attention
 - Include description of the problem or opportunity, project objectives, and a description of the effort
 - Include anticipated project outcomes
 - Succinct summary of your project, with key information highlighted
- Do not include confidential information
- Template available:
<https://www.nifa.usda.gov/application-support-templates>

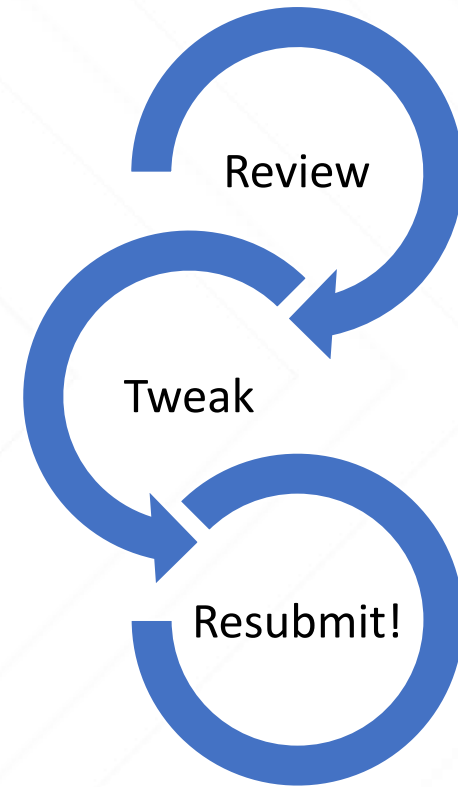


What to Include in Project Narrative

- Must keep it at 20 pages (for Small, Medium, and Large Standard & Educational Team), or 10 pages (for Simplified Standard)
- Key questions to answer:
 - How does your project align with USDA BFRD program priorities?
 - Who is the target audience, problem/opportunity, and why is it important?
 - What are the goals, associated objectives and expected outputs and outcomes of the project in relation to the target audience needs?
 - What are the proposed activities to achieve each objective? Provide a logic model.
 - What is the plan for outcome-based reporting, participatory evaluation, and measurable outcomes? Provide a [Data Management Plan](#).

Resubmission

- Trying to submit to BFRDP again?
 - Resubmissions should provide response to reviewer feedback from previous application.
 - Take the reviewer comments and improve your application.
 - Do NOT exceed the ONE-page limit for your resubmission response.
 - This does not count towards the Project Narrative page limit.





Tips for Project Narrative

- Provide comprehensive information
- Write the proposal logically and clearly
 - Organize proposal according to the outline in the RFA or evaluation criteria, whichever is most logical
 - Following the prescribed format helps reviewers find information more easily
- Use tables and figures to help illustrate important points
- Second set of eyes helps! Ask someone else to review your Project Narrative before submitting.



What to Include in Budget

Prepare budget with a strong justification

- Keep in mind the budget and performance period limits
 - Budget: \$49,000-\$750,000 per award, depending on grant type
 - Period of performance: 1 year (Simplified Standard) or 3 years (Small, Medium, Large Standard & Education Team)
- Salaries require name and title of each person and how the requested salary was determined
- Include fringe benefits, equipment, materials & supplies, consultants, etc.
- Include up to \$3,000 per award year for annual PD meeting travel



Match Requirement

- BFRDP awardees must provide 25% match from non-Federal sources in the form of cash or in-kind contributions
 - NIFA may waive the matching funds requirement for a grant if it is determined that a waiver or modification is necessary to effectively reach an underserved area or population
 - If you plan to serve an underserved area or population, please enter the statement at the **top of your budget justification form**: **“This applicant plans to serve an underserved area or population and would like to request the 25% match waiver.”**



What to Include in Additional Forms

- Letters of support
- Key personnel bio sketches
- Budget justification
- Subcontract information, if needed
- Conflict of Interest List
- Current & Pending Support

Fill out forms completely and correctly!



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Preparing your BFRDP Application – Pre-Award Requirements from Grants Management

Steven Evans, Grants Management Specialist



Overview

- **Pre-Award Requirements**
 - Organizational Information
 - Matching
 - Budget
 - Indirect Costs



Pre-Award Requirements

- **Organizational and Financial Information:**
 - Updated or new information will be requested NIFA-666.
 - Previous two years of audited financial reports or certified year-end balance sheets and income statements.
 - Details of your internal controls and cost accounting system.



Pre-Award Requirements

- **Organizational and Financial Information, Continued:**
 - Details of your time/effort reporting system.
 - Policy on how salary compensation rates are determined (based on what data?).
 - Statement of purposes and powers (by-laws, etc.).



Pre-Award Requirements

- **Current and Pending Effort and Budget Effort:**
 - C&P has the efforts of the PD and Co-PD (this award must be included in the C&P under pending) .
 - Budget effort is how much the PD and Co-PD get paid from federal funds.
 - The Effort for the C&P must be greater than the budget effort (you cannot receive more federal funds than your effort dedicated to this award).



Pre-Award Requirements

- **Matching Requirements:**

- Matching funds is the non-federal share of costs provided by the grantee or project partners to accomplish the purpose of the award.
- The BFRDP has a 25% match requirement.
- This requirement can be waived with ADEQUATE justification for applicants serving underserved areas or populations.
- Matching may be cash or in-kind
- Matching may be provided by the applicant organization or third-party.



Matching

The BFRD Program Requires a 25% match with cash or In-Kind matching only.

- **Types of Matching**

- Cash Matching: The recipient's outlay of cash on-hand.
- In-Kind Contributions: The value of non-cash contributions of property or services.
- Third-Party Matching: Any contribution to the project by an outside organization.



What is Allowable as Matching?

- Any costs which would normally be allowable under the Cost Principles for Federal funds would be allowable as matching.
 - See Paragraphs 200.420 through 200.475 of the [Uniform Guidance 2 CFR 200](#) for selected items of cost.
- Costs must be specifically identifiable and directly benefiting the project.



Matching Commitment Documentation

- A list documenting the donor organization's name, dollar amount and type of match (in-kind or cash).
 - Matching commitment letters are not required to be submitted with the proposal, but must be kept at the organization for auditing purposes, and may be requested at the time of the award.
- Budget and budget justification should provide details on how matching will be spent.



Preparing a Budget, Budget Categories

- **Salaries/wages for project personnel**
 - Provide the hourly rate of pay, time commitment and the task to be completed.
 - Salary rates should be the normal rate of pay for that employee or job category.
 - Salary rates deemed excessive may need to be justified.



Budget Categories

- **Subcontracts**

- When the total amount of all subcontracts do not exceed 50% of the total budget:
 - Submit a [letter of commitment](#) from each subcontractor organization, signed by the organization's Authorizing Representative and a statement of work.
- Subcontracting over 50% of the award to a Federal agency:
 - Signed [letter of commitment](#), statement of work, budget & budget narrative



Budget Categories

- **Consultants:**

- A consultant is a person or organization providing expert advice.
- The maximum allowable rate of pay for a consultant is \$97.93/hour, exclusive of other costs.
 - Higher hourly rates must be justified and additional information provided.
 - Invoices from other work performed, consultant's CV or resume, etc. may be requested as justification for allowing higher rates.
- Provide hourly rate of pay and number of hours to be worked.



Budget Categories

- **Equipment Purchases:**
 - Provide details of the type of equipment, how it will be used, the amount of time it will be used on the project and the purchase price.
 - A quote listing the cost of the equipment must be provided.
 - Costs for equipment not being used solely for this project should be pro-rated to use.



Budget Categories

- **Meeting Space Rental:**
 - The cost of renting a meeting room at a community center, hotel, or other facility.
 - Provide information on the location of the facility and the cost.
 - If the facility does not normally charge for usage, the costs of space rental for that location would be unallowable.



Budget Categories

- **Land Rent – Rental of land for garden plots or other project activities:**
 - Value for use of land should not exceed the fair rental value of comparable land as established by an independent appraisal of similar land in the area.
 - Amount is not based on the for-sale appraisal value.
 - Documentation on how land usage was valued is required.



Budget Categories

- **Indirect Costs (IDC):**
 - Indirect costs are those expenses not directly attributed to the project. They are expenses shared across the organization.
 - Examples are utilities, sanitation and janitorial services, accounting and payroll, equipment maintenance.



Indirect Costs

- Program legislation caps indirect costs at 10% of Total Federal Funds or your organizations Federally approved negotiated rate
 - Use the rate which results in the lowest dollar amount of IDC.
 - Recipient organization must have an approved negotiated rate (NICRA) to qualify for indirect costs.
 - No Rate? You May:
 - Request the 10% DeMinimus Rate, or
 - Request a NIFA negotiated rate
 - NIFA must be your cognizant agency to negotiate.



Indirect Costs-De Minimis

- DeMinimus Indirect Cost Rate of 10% - based on Modified Total Direct Cost
 - May be used with NIFA approval
 - Refer to Paragraph 200.414(f) of the [Uniform Administrative Requirements of 2 CFR 200](#).
- For information on the Indirect Cost process, refer to:
http://nifa.usda.gov/business/indirect_cost_process.html



Contact Information

For questions regarding award administration only, please email questions to:

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816-550-4336

Steven.Evans@usda.gov

William Mallet

978-808-4650

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Preparing Your BFRDP Application – Understanding the Evaluation Criteria

Denis Ebodaghe, BFRDP National Program Leader



BFRDP Evaluation Criteria

Small, Medium, Large Standard & Education Team

1. Partnerships and Collaboration
2. Consultation of Beginning Farmers and Ranchers
3. Relevancy
4. Technical merit
5. Secretary of Agriculture Priority: Climate Change and Climate Smart Ag and Forestry Solutions
6. Secretary of Agriculture Priority: Increasing Equitable Participation in USDA's Programs and Services
7. Achievability
8. Expertise & Track Record of the Applicants
9. Adequacy of Available or Obtainable Support Personnel, Facilities, and Instrumentation
10. Adequacy of Plans for Participatory Evaluation Process, Outcome-Based Reporting, and the Communication of Findings and Results beyond the Immediate Target Audience



BFRDP Evaluation Criteria

Simplified Standard

1. Partnerships and Collaboration
2. Consultation of Beginning Farmers and Ranchers
3. Relevancy
4. Technical Merit
5. Secretary of Agriculture Priority: Climate Change and Climate Smart Ag and Forestry Solutions
6. Secretary of Agriculture Priority: Increasing Equitable Participation in USDA's Programs and Services
7. Achievability
8. Expertise & Track Record of the Applicants
9. Personnel
10. Project Evaluation, Results and Dissemination



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Preparing Your BFRDP Application – Other Key Information

Iesha McGruder, BFRDP Program Specialist



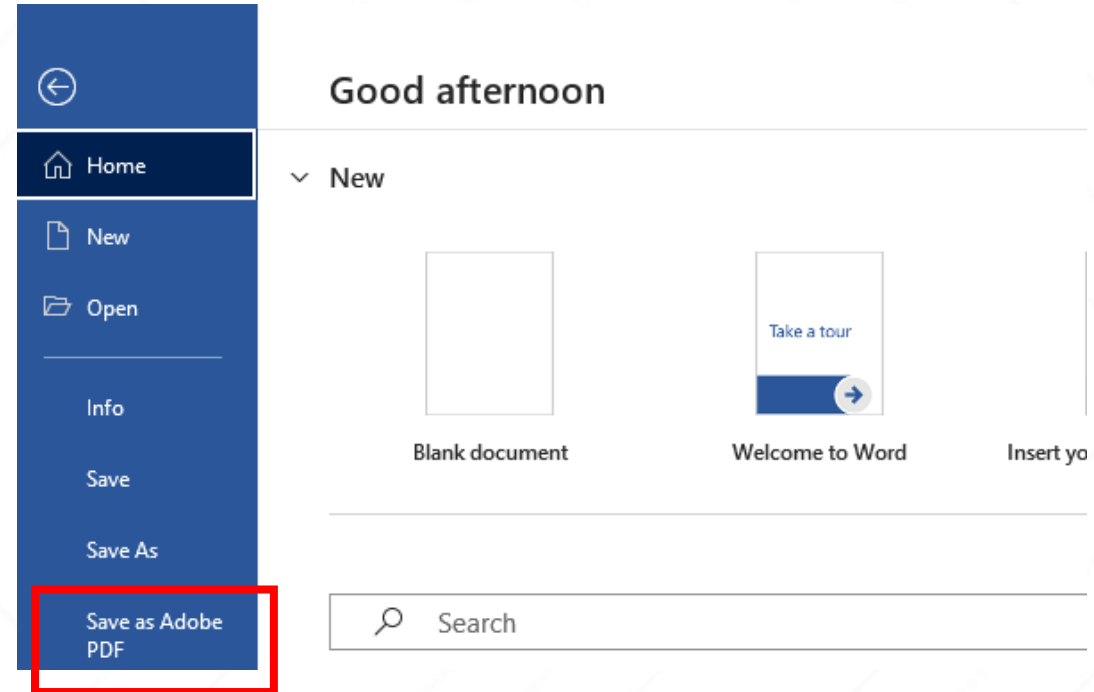
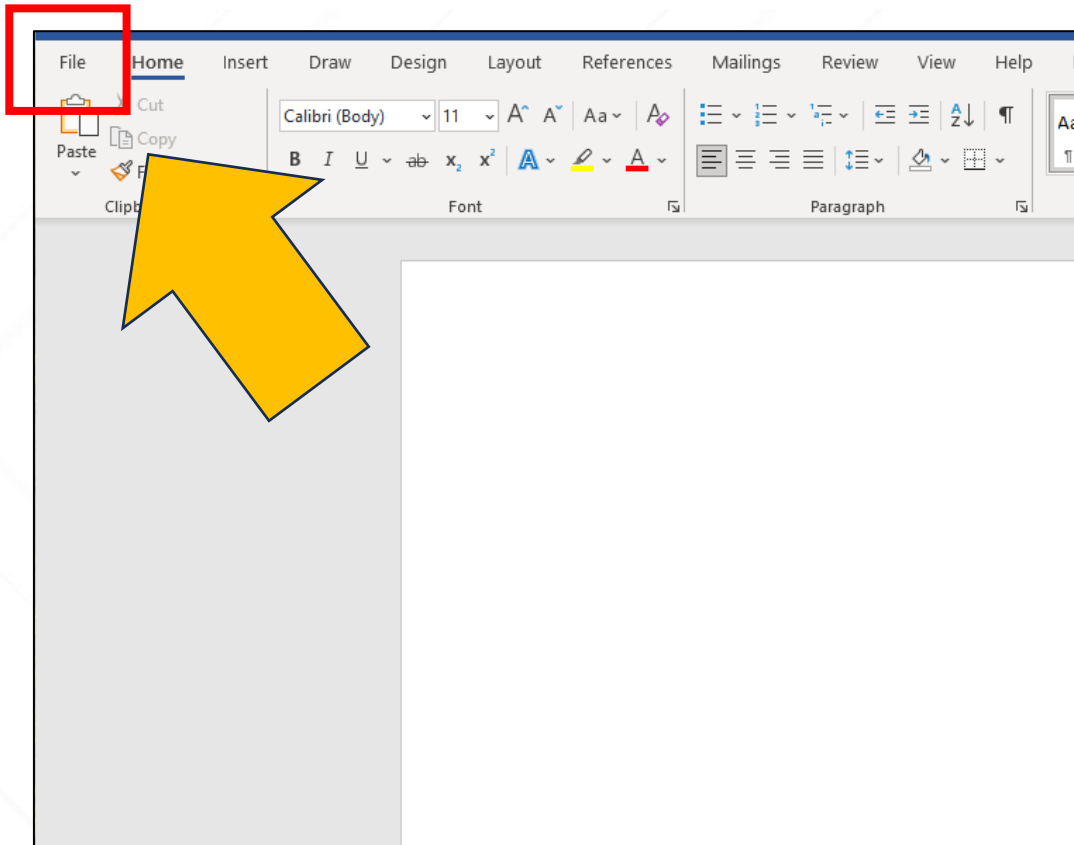
Formatting is IMPORTANT!

All forms must be in **PDF** format.

- Margins: 1 inch
- Font: no less than 12 point (Times New Roman)
 - Table and Figure Fonts: no less than 11 point (Times New Roman)
- Line spacing: 1.5
- Format: PDF (no other file format allowed)
- Page limits: 20 pages for Small, Medium, Large Standard and Educational Team Project Narrative; 10 pages for Simplified Standard Project Narrative



How to Create a PDF



1. Go to “File” in the Microsoft Word top menu
2. Click on “Save as Adobe PDF”



Application to Award Timeline

February



Solicitation Released

Check NIFA BFRDP website for the Request for Application (RFA)

April



Proposal Deadline

Submit your application by 5 p.m. Eastern Time

June/July



Reviews & Award Notification

NIFA peer-review process

September



Award Start Date

Begin your BFRDP-funded projects!



BFRDP Review Process



Review

Confidential peer review panel of experts from academia, CBOs, NGOs, federal agencies, and farmers



Decision

Award decisions sent with reviewer comments



Resubmit

Re-apply during the next application cycle. Be sure to include a 1-page response to reviewer comments.



Award

Start conducting your BFRDP work with USDA BFRDP funding!



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Things to Remember: Overcoming Common Flaws

Denis Ebodaghe, BFRDP National Program Leader



Things to Remember: Overcoming Common Flaws

- Proposal Title – make sure within the limit of 144 characters.
- Federal funding amount – entered in Form SF-424 must match the federal funds requested in budget form.
- Amount of federal dollars requested – must be a whole dollar amount (please do not include cents).
- Include a logic model when requested in the application.
- Do NOT include applications that seek to conduct research in BFRDP results (these will be declined for review).



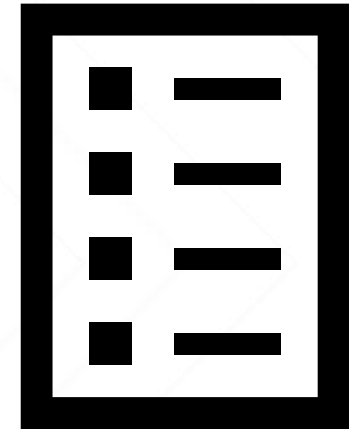
Overcoming Common Flaws, Cont. 1

- Evaluation – third party evaluator is required (for Small, Medium, and Large Standard and Education Team grants).
- Minimum set aside of 5% of funding to veteran farmers and minimum 5% of funding to socially disadvantaged farmers is a mandate requested of the program by legislation. All programs do not need to meet this set aside.
- Legislative Priorities – in writing your application, discuss one or more priorities that are relevant to stakeholders.
- Successful applications contain the following topics – land access, business and financial plans, farm production, and marketing.

Overcoming Common Flaws, Cont. 2

Please do NOT:

- Submit recycled applications
- Use old letters of reference
- Use old literature citations





Common Mistakes

- Not involving partners with the right experience.
- Not consulting with beginning farmers and ranchers in project design, implementation and decision making.
- Not addressing audience needs.
- Not addressing sustainability.
- Not addressing project pitfalls.
- Not contributing to the BFRDP Clearinghouse and annual Project Directors' meeting.



Common Mistakes, Cont.

- Not addressing the following as specified in the evaluation criteria – climate change; enhancing access to USDA’s programs and services.
- Not evaluating project outcomes in measurable terms.
 - i.e., change in enhanced farm income, knowledge, and attitude
 - See [BFRDP Outcomes Based Reporting Guide](#)



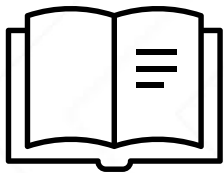
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Application Preparation Resources

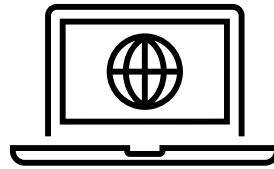
Bekah Hanson, BFRDP Program Specialist



Application Preparation Resources



[NIFA Grant Application Guide](#)



[USDA BFRDP Website](#)

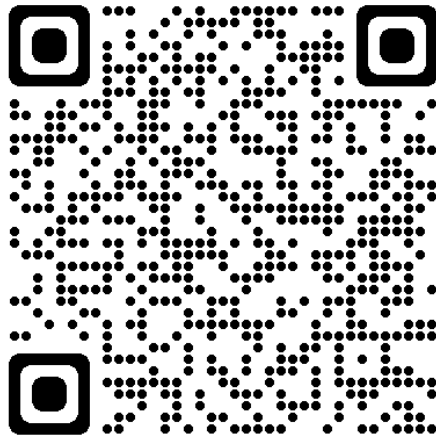


[RFA & Technical Assistance Webinar](#)



Check Previously-Funded Projects

- NIFA BFRDP-funded projects from previous years
 - NIFA Data Gateway:
https://portal.nifa.usda.gov/enterprise-search/project_details/ss/1470



The screenshot shows the NIFA Data Gateway website. At the top, there is a search bar and navigation tabs for TOPICS, GRANTS, DATA, RESOURCES, and ABOUT. The main header features a large image of hands examining a plant stem with overlaid molecular structures. Below the header, the text 'Data Gateway' is prominently displayed. A sidebar on the left lists various reporting systems and dashboards. The main content area provides a description of the Data Gateway's capabilities and includes a 'Launch NIFA Enterprise Search' button.

NIFA REPORTING SYSTEM

- > NIFA Reporting System
 - > NRS FAQs
 - > NRS Resources
- > CRIS - Current Research Information System
- > LMD - Leadership Management Dashboard

REPORT

- > REEIS - Research, Education And Economics Information System

The Data Gateway enables users to find funding data, metrics, and information about research, education, and extension projects that have received grant awards from NIFA. Users can use terms and filters to search for projects, choose the data elements to see in the results, and export the results.

[Learn how to use the Data Gateway](#). Visit our [Project Based Search Highlights](#) and [Congressional District Map Highlights](#) for a quick visual overview of the features available. For a quick overview, [view the Data Gateway Factsheet](#). For details on the Data Gateway tool, [visit the Data Gateway Resource Page](#).

Launch NIFA Enterprise Search



Other Additional Resources

- Meet with USDA BFRDP Staff
 - Attend information sessions
 - One-on-one meetings
 - Contact NPL for project fit
- Local Resources
 - BFRDP Clearinghouse, www.farmanswers.org





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Visit nifa.usda.gov/nifa-update



SIGN UP FOR NIFA UPDATE



Contact Us!

USDA BFRDP Program Website

<https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/programs/beginning-farmer-rancher-development-program-bfrdp>

Program Email

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Q&A