



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

FY 2024 Alfalfa Seed and Alfalfa Forage System Program (AFRP) RFA Announcement and Technical Assistance Webinar

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Meeting Logistics

- This webinar will be recorded. Please be sure your microphone is muted.
- ***Zoom Tech Support*** = 1.888.799.0125, Option 2
- Throughout the presentation, you may type questions in the Question box.
- Slides and the recording from this webinar will be posted to <https://nifa.usda.gov/alfalfa-seed-alfalfa-forage-systems-program-technical-assistance-webinar>



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

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Topics We Will Cover

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



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NIFA Overview

NIFA Overview

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

Topics Covered by NIFA Programs



Advanced Technologies

Bioenergy; Biotechnology;
Nanotechnology



Animals

Animal Breeding; Animal Health;
Animal Production; Aquaculture



Business and Economy

Markets and Trade; Natural Resource
Economics; Small Business



Natural Resources

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



Education

Minority Serving Institutions; Teaching
and Learning; Workforce Development



Environment

Climate Change; Ecosystems; Invasive
Pests and Diseases



Farming and Ranching

Agriculture Safety & Technology; Farmer
Education; Organic & Family Farms



Human Sciences

Community Vitality; Family Well-Being;
Youth



Food Science

Food Quality; Food Safety



Food and Nutrition Security

Nutrition; Obesity; Wellness



International

Global Engagement; Global
Food Security



Plants

Crop Production; Pest
Management; Plant
Breeding; Plant Health



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Program Overview

Purpose and Priorities

- Alfalfa is essential to sustainable agricultural production systems and is an economic engine for rural communities.
- Value for soil conservation, nitrogen fixation, energy savings, crop rotation benefits, and wildlife habitat is high.
- To provide these societal benefits, the production of alfalfa must be profitable to farmers through market outlets so they will be willing to maintain or expand the use and acreage of alfalfa.

Purpose and Priorities:

2022-2026 NIFA Strategic Plan

The AFRP is aligned with the following USDA strategic goals:

Strategic Goal 2: Ensure America's Agricultural System is Equitable, Resilient, and Prosperous

Strategic Goal 3: Foster an Equitable and Competitive Marketplace for All Agricultural Producers

Strategic Goal 4: Provide All Americans Safe, Nutritious Food

Strategic Goal 5: Expand Opportunities for Economic Development and Improve Quality of Life in Rural and Tribal Communities

Purpose and Priorities

NIFA is soliciting applications for FY 2024 under the following areas:

1. Increasing alfalfa forage and seed yields and forage quality through improved management practices, plant breeding, and other strategies to reduce biotic and abiotic stresses and costs of production.
2. Improving alfalfa forage and seed harvest and storage systems, including automation that reduces labor costs, to optimize economic returns to alfalfa producers as well as end-users including milk producers.
3. Developing methods to estimate alfalfa forage yield and quality to support marketing as a livestock feed and instruments to reduce producer risks.

Purpose and Priorities

NIFA is soliciting applications for FY 2024 under the following areas (cont'd):

4. Exploring new uses for alfalfa such as in fish feeds, nutritive supplements, alternative protein sources for human consumption, high-value chemical manufacturing, or other novel uses.
5. Developing improved insect, disease and weed management strategies, including spotted aphid in alfalfa seed production and potential herbicide carry-over issues.
6. Documenting the contribution of alfalfa production systems to climate-smart agriculture, including the sequestration of carbon.

Regional and National Coordination:

- NIFA requires regional coordination and encourages national coordination of AFRP projects.
- For projects with the goal of regional coordination, at least **two states from the same region** must have significant involvement in the project.
- For projects with the goal of national coordination, **states from at least two regions** must have significant involvement in the project and **at least two states** from each participating region must be involved.
- Regional balance and the involvement of new investigators may be taken into consideration during the development of funding recommendations.

Regional and National Coordination:

- 1. Eastern Region:** Alabama, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia, and West Virginia.
 - 2. Central Region:** Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wisconsin.
 - 3. Western Region:** Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.
- **Traditional ecological knowledge may or may not be a topic to satisfy the above-mentioned objectives.**

Global Engagement

- NIFA supports global engagement that advances U.S. agricultural goals.
- NIFA recognizes that collaboration with international partners may be necessary to attain the agency's goals for U.S. agriculture, promote global competence of our nation's future agricultural workforce, and promote safe and nutritious food security in a growing world.
- Therefore, although application to this RFA is limited to eligible U.S. institutions, applicants may collaborate with international partners, to include subcontracts to international partners or other institutions.
- Applications must clearly demonstrate benefits to the U.S.

Eligibility

- Colleges and universities (as defined in section 1404 of NARETPA, [7 U.S.C. 3103](#)),
- Other Federal agencies
- Private sector entities
- Individuals U.S. citizens or nationals.
- Groups that include any combination of the above

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

Project and Grant Types

Project Types

Research

Education

Extension

Integrated

Grant Types

Standard

Strengthening

Collaborators

Conferences

Project and Grant Type Description

- Only projects that integrate research and extension will be considered.
- All AFRP grants are Standard.
- Project duration is a maximum of 36 months.

Cost Share or Matching

The matching funds requirements for this program may be found at [7 U.S.C. 5925\(a\)\(2\)](#).

1. Matching funds requirement

- a. In general, Subject to subparagraph (C), an entity receiving a grant under paragraph (1) shall provide non-Federal matching funds (including funds from an agricultural commodity promotion, research, and information program) equal to not less than the amount of the grant.
- b. In-kind support: Non-Federal matching funds described in subparagraph (A) may include in-kind support.

Cost Share or Matching

(c) Waiver: The Secretary may waive the matching funds requirement under subparagraph (a) with respect to a research project if the Secretary determines that-

- i. the results of the project are of a particular benefit to a specific agricultural commodity, but those results are likely to be applicable to agricultural commodities generally; or
- ii. the project involves a minor commodity, deals with scientifically important research, and the recipient is unable to satisfy the matching funds requirement.



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Application Details and Documents

Application Details

- RFA is available online <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/funding-opportunities/alfalfa-seed-alfalfa-forage-system-program>
- **Application Deadline:** 5 p.m. (EST) May 2, 2024
 - Submitted through Grants.gov
- Total funding available in FY2024: \$3,703,893
- Program Code: AFRP
- Maximum funding per award: **\$300,000 per year** for a maximum of **3 years**

Notification of Intent

- Send an email to AFRP@usda.gov
- Deadline April 4
- Include the following information
 - Subject line of email: “AFRP – Intent to Submit”
 - Descriptive (draft) title
 - Name of PD and applicant institution
 - Name of potential co-PDs and affiliations
 - Priority area(s) addressed

Key Documents

Key components of your Application:

- Project Summary/Abstract
- Project Narrative
- Bibliography/Reference List
- Data Management Plan
- Other Documents (See RFA and [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#))

Application Details (contd.)

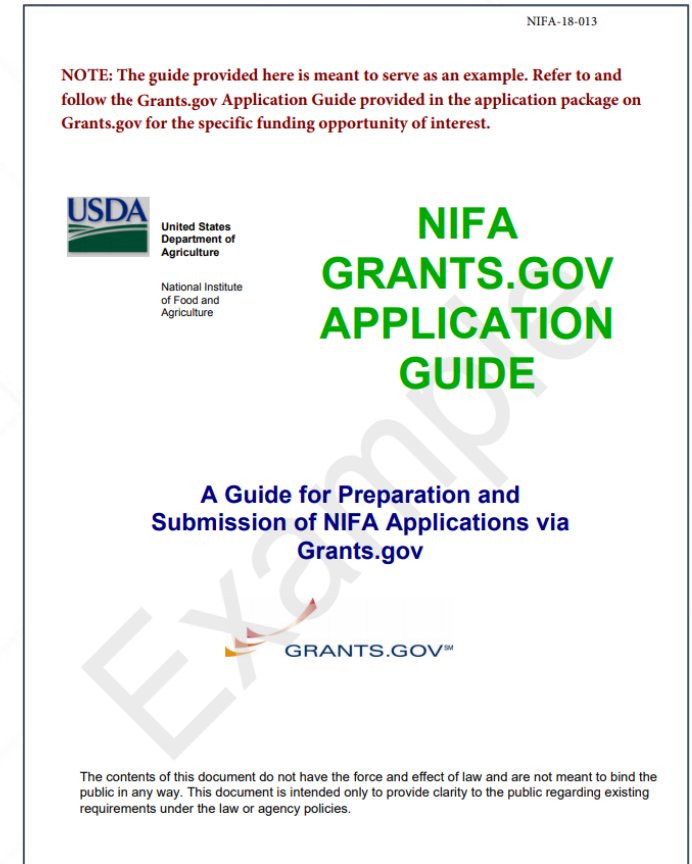
- Project Narrative is **18-22 page limit** and will be strictly enforced.
 - **1.5 spacing**
 - 12-point Times New Roman font
 - Includes text, figures and tables
 - Tables may be single spaced
- Within **18-22** pages describe:
 - List of headings of information required in narrative
 - Impact on research, training infrastructure or Extension to achieve its goals
 - Cooperation and institutional involvement
 - Project timeline

Data Management Plan

- Investigators must provide detailed (up to 5 pages) business and management plans including:
 - Expected data type
 - Data format
 - Data storage and preservation
 - Data sharing, protection and public access
 - Roles and responsibilities
- Please also review: nifa.usda.gov/resource/data-management-plan-nifa-funded-research-projects

Application Submission

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





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Proposal Evaluation Process

Evaluation Criteria

1. Conceptual adequacy (20%)
2. Design (40%)
3. Appropriate use of a regional, interdisciplinary, and industry-engaged approach (10%)
4. Outreach plan (15%)
5. Probability of success (5%)
6. Appropriateness of budget (5%)
7. Suitability and feasibility of the Data Management Plan (5%)

Evaluation Process

Proposals are assigned for review to at least 3 reviewers with expertise in the proposed topic.

Reviewers will produce individual reviews of each proposal, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses.

These written reviews are used to begin panel discussions with other reviewers serving on the peer-review panel.

Through these discussions, peer-review panelists come to consensus on the final rating and ranking of proposals.

Timeline of Competitive Programs

1-2 months

- Request for Application (RFA) release
- Proposal writing and planning
- **Proposals due**

2-3 months

- Proposal under peer review
- Proposal funding notifications

1-2 months

- Awards are finalized and made

On average, a competitive program takes about 3-5 months from the proposal due date to an award being made to an institution.

We will keep you updated as much as possible. We appreciate your patience!



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Additional Information

Use NIFA Enterprise Portal to Find Funded Awards

The screenshot displays the NIFA Enterprise Portal search interface. At the top, the browser address bar shows the URL portal.nifa.usda.gov/enterprise-search/ss/1396. The page header includes the USDA logo on the left and the REEIS logo (MEASURING RESULTS) on the right. Below the header, a navigation bar contains tabs for "Project Details", "Financial Details", "Advanced Search" (which is selected), and "Annual Reports on Planned Programs".

The "Advanced Search Panel" is active, showing a search configuration for "Results should match ALL the Conditions in this Group (AND)". Under this group, there is a condition for "Program Code" which "should contain ANY of these items (OR)". A search term "[AFRP] Alfalfa and Forage Program" is entered in the input field. Below the search panel, there are sections for "Generated Query...", "Show these fields in the results...", and "View results as:" with radio buttons for "Document" and "Tabular" (selected). The "Expected Results" section shows "61 Projects" and includes "Search" and "Reset" buttons.

At the bottom of the search panel, it indicates "61 Projects Found".

<http://portal.nifa.usda.gov/enterprise-search/ss/1396>

Upcoming Events

- NIFA Events Calendar for upcoming deadlines, meetings and webinars: nifa.usda.gov/events
- Upcoming Request for Applications (RFA) release calendar: nifa.usda.gov/upcoming-rfa-calendar

Grant Resources

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



Questions?

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