

AFRI Sustainable Agricultural Systems RFA Frequently Asked Questions

These are some Frequently Asked Questions about the [AFRI Sustainable Agricultural Systems program](#).

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- Can you give more specifics on the external evaluator required for our SAS project?
- What is the deadline for applications?
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General Questions

Who should I contact if I have a question about my application?

General questions should be sent to afri-sas@usda.gov. All associated National Program Leaders (NPLs) listed in the RFA have access to the SAS email and can reply to questions. If you would like to discuss whether your potential project fits the program, please send a short summary of the project to the SAS email (above) to set up a time to discuss it. Additionally, applicants can contact the specific NPLs listed in the RFA.

What are integrated projects?

Under the AFRI SAS RFA, submitted projects for the Sustainable Agricultural Systems A9201 program area priority must be “fully” integrated and address all three NIFA activity functions (research, education, and extension). The functions should be interdependent and necessary for the success of the project, and no more than two-thirds of the project’s budget may focus on a single component. For additional information on submission of integrated project types, please see pages 3-5 of “AFRI Project Types” in the attachments list located on the [AFRI RFA Resources page](#).

What are the eligibility requirements for projects submitted to the AFRI SAS program?

The Sustainable Agricultural Systems program area priorities are requesting only integrated project applications. Eligible applicants for integrated projects include colleges and universities, 1994 land-grant institutions (tribal colleges), and Hispanic-serving agricultural colleges and universities that meet some additional requirements.

Eligible institutions do not include foreign and international organizations. See Part III, C of the RFA for more details on eligibility for integrated projects.

What is a FASE grant and what are the eligibility requirements for FASE grants?

Food and Agricultural Science Enhancement (FASE) grants help institutions develop competitive projects and attract new scientists and educators to careers in high priority areas of national need in agriculture, food, and environmental sciences. FASE Grants have additional eligibility requirements; please see Part II, D of the RFA for details. For more information, visit the [FASE Grants website](#).

Can I submit a proposal for a conference or workshop to the AFRI SAS program?

No, the AFRI SAS program is not accepting applications for conference grants or workshops.

Where can I find definitions of terms used in the AFRI SAS RFA?

Commonly used terms and acronyms are defined at the end of the RFA. For additional definitions, refer to the [SAS Glossary](#).

What resources are available on the systems approach request for AFRI SAS projects?

Applicants are encouraged to consult the definitions and examples of the food and agricultural systems in:

- National Academy of Sciences report on “[A Framework for Assessing Effects of the Food System](#)” and
- the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [agricultural system definition](#).

I submitted my proposal previously to AFRI SAS but was not funded. Can I resubmit to this SAS program?

Resubmitted applications are allowed for all SAS program area priorities. Please see the instructions in Part II, B of the RFA which specify additional information needed in resubmitted applications. The SAS goals change from year to year, so you should ensure that your application appropriately addresses a goal(s) as outlined in Part I, C and D. Please read the RFA and associated instructions thoroughly.

Can projects with smaller budgets apply to the AFRI SAS program?

There is no minimum budget specified for projects, only a maximum budget as indicated in the RFA. To ensure that you submit a competitive project, we urge all potential applicants to carefully read the complete RFA.

Please keep in mind that AFRI SAS program area priority “is soliciting creative and visionary project applications developed by transdisciplinary teams that integrate research, education, and extension activities and effectively use a systems approach to promote convergence of science and technology” to address one or more of the long-term goals listed in the RFA. The requested budgets should be sufficient to support such projects.

Are there examples of previously funded projects for the AFRI SAS Program?

The AFRI SAS Program has funded several projects, you can read more about the selected projects through [this link of previously funded projects](#).

What is the budget for the FY 2024 AFRI SAS RFA?

The amount available for new grants in this FY 2024 SAS RFA is approximately \$80 million, for awards of up to \$10 million each for A9201.

When will the next AFRI SAS RFA be posted?

The [FY 2024 AFRI SAS RFA](#) has been posted. If you’re interested in signing up for notifications from Grants.gov for all AFRI RFA postings including modifications to RFAs, there are [instructions on how to do so on our website](#).

Will you be holding an informational webinar on the FY 2024 AFRI SAS RFA?

The FY 2024 webinar was held on April 1, 2024.

Application Questions

Where are application requirements detailed?

Application and submission information including page limits and narrative font sizes for AFRI Sustainable Agricultural Systems RFA applications are available at [AFRI RFA Resources page](#) (“2024 Sustainable Agricultural Systems RFA Additional Information for Part IV, C” in the attachments list), which is linked to from Part IV, C of the RFA.

What is the allowed length/duration of the awards?

The duration of the award should be no more than five years for AFRI SAS and should be commensurate with the work proposed. The award duration may be less than five years.

Are indirect costs allowed?

AFRI limits indirect costs to 30% of the total Federal funds provided (or 42.857% of total direct costs) under each award. Indirect costs of subawards should be included when calculating indirect cost percentage of the application. When preparing budgets, you should limit your request for the recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of your institution’s official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 30 percent of total Federal funds awarded. See Part V section 7.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further indirect cost information.

Is a data management plan required?

Yes. For the guidelines on preparation and inclusion of a data management plan (DMP) in your application, see [Data Management Plan for NIFA-Funded Research, Education and Extension Projects](#) on the NIFA website. Also included on the web page are FAQs and information about accessing examples of DMPs. In addition, general guidelines for Data Management Planning for USDA agencies are available at the [National Agricultural Library website](#).

Is a logic model required in my application and where can I find a template?

Yes. A logic model is a required document for integrated project applications. For additional information on logic models, please see the [Logic Model Planning Process page](#).

Can you give more specifics on the external evaluator required for our SAS project?

The external evaluator required for the Sustainable Agricultural Systems program area priorities refers to an evaluator who is external to the membership of the team listed on the proposal. Someone who is listed as a co-PD or investigator on the grant is not appropriate to serve as the external evaluator of the project. The external evaluator should have no role in the project, other than as the external evaluator. The external evaluator can be employed by a university participating on the proposal.

What is the deadline for applications?

The deadline for application submissions through the Grants.gov system to the AFRI Sustainable Agricultural Systems RFA is June 4, 2024 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time).

Late applications also will not be reviewed.

Do you have any general advice for applicants?

- Read the RFA carefully to make sure your application covers the required information and fits the program.
- Applications in **A9201** must be for “fully” **integrated projects**, addressing **research, education, and extension**, submitted as either **standard or strengthening Coordinated Agricultural Project (CAP) grants**. Applications for any other grant type in the Sustainable Agricultural Systems (A9201) program area priority will be returned without review.
- The Assistance Listing Number is **10.310** and the Assistance Listing title is Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). The Funding Opportunity Number (FON) is **USDA-NIFA-AFRI- -010653**. Sustainable Agricultural Systems Program Code Name uses Program Code **A9201**.
- **All documents in an application submission need to be saved as PDF**. We do not accept Word documents as part of applications. Submission of incorrect file formats will result in your proposal being returned without review.
- Detailed AFRI evaluation criteria are found on the [AFRI RFA Resources page](#) (“AFRI Review Criteria” in the attachments list) which is linked from Part V, B of the RFA. In addition to the requirements in the program description, the review criteria may clarify what the peer review panel will be looking for in all SAS program area priority applications, specifically the Integrated Projects section.
- We advise that applications be submitted early in case of issues with Grants.gov, which can take some time to resolve.