

THIS DOCUMENT IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative - Education and Workforce Development (AFRI-EWD)

The Professional Development for Secondary School Teachers and Education Professional (PD-STEP) Applicant Digest

Executive Summary: This digest is to assist PD-STEP applicants – in conjunction with the RFA guidelines – to understand and follow proposal requirements that relate directly to the PD-STEP program.

The summary will also address basics of applying for federal funding for those who are new to that process.

PD-STEP is a grant program of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). NIFA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The contents of this document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

Contents

ABOUT THE APPLICATION PROCESS	3
PD-STEP is Federal Funding	3
Applications Must Come From Grants.Gov	4
Applications Must Arrive Before the Deadline	5
Use Workspace!	5
Use PDFs!	6
Use the Tracker!	6
ABOUT THE PD-STEP PROGRAM	7
What Is PD-STEP?	7
Key Facts about PD-STEP in 2018	7
Does Your Institution Qualify?	7
Integrated versus Single-Purpose Projects	7
Single-Purpose Eligibility	7
Integrated Project Eligibility	8
Projects Supported By PD-STEP	9
Farm Bill Priorities	9
What Every Application Must Include:	10
Section 1: A Partial list of Documents and Forms	10
Section 2: Summaries, Narratives and Budget Justifications	11
Matching Funds	14
Indirect Costs	15
How Will Applications Be Evaluated	15
Your Obligations If You Are Selected for Funding	15

ABOUT THE APPLICATION PROCESS

PD-STEP is Federal Funding

If you have never before applied for federal funding you need to set up the accounts that will allow you to submit your funding requests. This process can take up to 2-months, so please start early.

Federal grant applications go through the [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) system. Grants.gov has a website about registration and setting up accounts. <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>

To apply for PD-STEP you will need:

- 1) The Data Universal Numbering System, abbreviated as DUNS Number
 - Call 1-866-705-5711
 - Access the Dun & Bradstreet website <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>
- 2) Registration with System Award Management (SAM)
 - <https://www.sam.gov>
 - You will need an Employer Identification Number (EIN)
 - Call Grants.gov with for more EIN support 1-800-518-4726
 - This step can take up to two weeks
- 3) A Grants.gov User Name and Password
 - You will need to have your DUNS number first
 - Passwords expire every 60s days
 - Unused accounts expire after one year
- 4) EBiz Point of Contact to Authorize Grants.gov Role
 - This is done on the Grants.gov website
- 5) Track Role Request Status
 - This is done on the Grants.gov website

NOTE: Your institution may have already done this work, so you may already have a Grants.gov account. Be sure to check first with your business office or sponsored programs manager to see if you need to set up an account. If you will be working with a grant manager be sure to provide your materials to this person in a timely manner.

Also, federal funding requires you to provide certain assurances. You may have to provide documentation on:

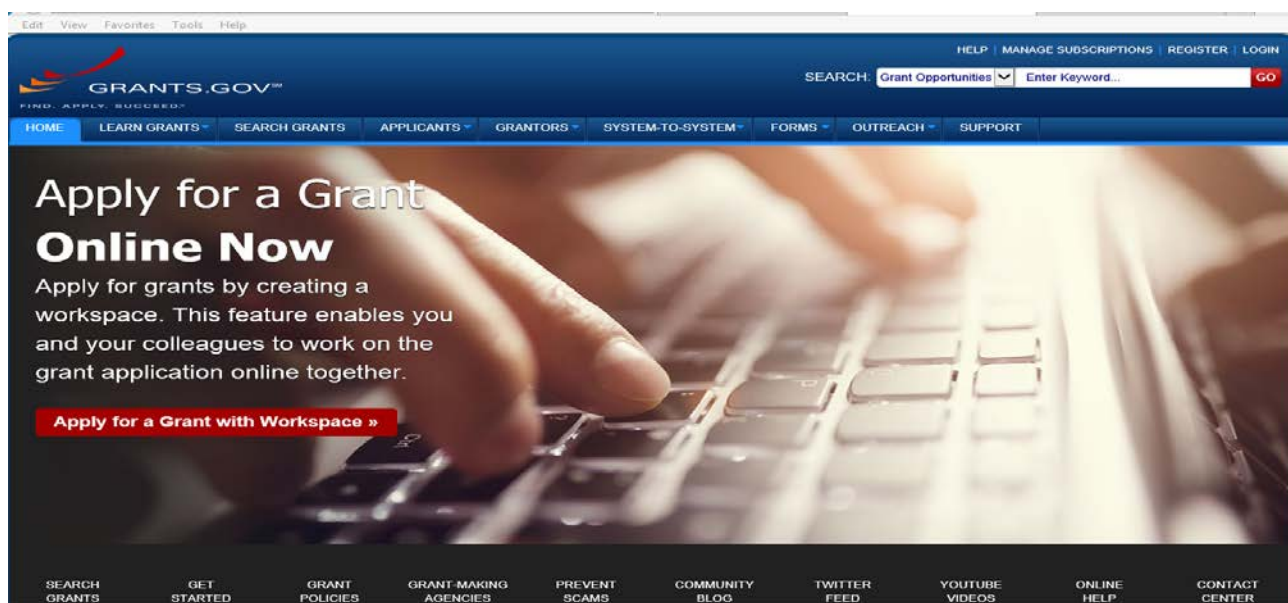
- Your institution's felony tax status
- Your institution's lobbying activities
- Proof that protocols in place to ensure research is conducted in an ethical manner

THIS DOCUMENT IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

- Proof that that humans who participate in your research are protected. (An IRB)
- Certification that your institution treats research animals humanely (An IACUC)
- Documentation that your institution has addressed any environmental impacts
- A list of people who you should not review your application because of conflict of interest
- Documentation on how much money you will be paid from the grant and how much time you will spend on the project if it is funded. This is a current and pending support form.

Applications Must Come From Grants.Gov

In a competitive grant program such as PD-STEP you can't email your application or send it as a hard copy through the mail. The only way NIFA can receive your application and send it to panel is through Grants.gov. <https://www.grants.gov/>



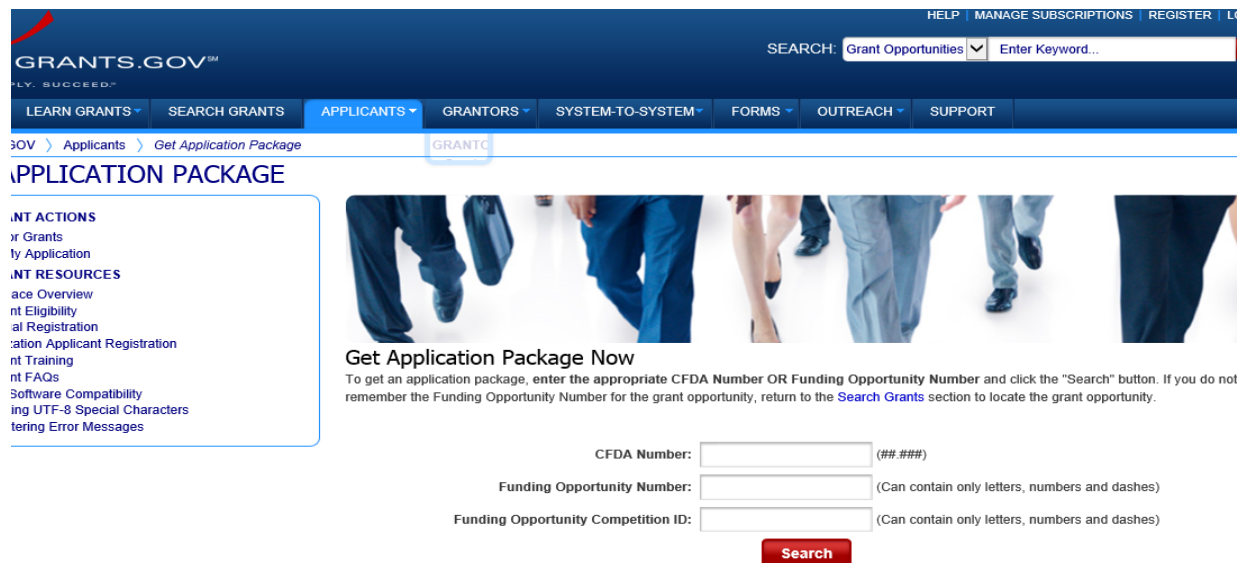
Your application is made up of forms that Grants.Gov provides, plus your narrative (project description), budget (outline of how funds will be used) and other documents. The forms, your summary, narrative and budget description are all essential if the application is to go to panel for review. The forms Grants.gov provides you are called the **Application Package**. While all application packages are the same you need the one set aside for the AFRI-EWD RFA to make sure your proposal reaches the right people at NIFA and goes to the right panel.

You will see that Grants.gov has a lot of information and training available to applicants. It also has search tools to help you locate grants. However, with so much information it's easy to get lost or confused. Applicants have applied to the wrong program by mistake in the past.

If you want to be sure you get to the AFRI-EWD application package the surest way is through the Funding Opportunity Number. Each year AFRI-EWD will get a unique funding opportunity number. When you use it Grants.gov knows exactly which program you mean and for what year you're applying. The funding opportunity number is in the RFA.

THIS DOCUMENT IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

For 2018 AFRI-EWD the Funding Opportunity Number is **USDA-NIFA-AFRI-006555**. You will use that number to get the grant's **application package**. Once you download the application package you will see forms you need to submit your application. You will still have to supply the summary, narrative, budget and other documents. Grants.gov will have places for you to upload the documents you must supply to make up a complete PD-STEP proposal.



Grants.gov logo: "ONLY SUCCEED"

SEARCH: Grant Opportunities [v] Enter Keyword...

LEARN GRANTS SEARCH GRANTS **APPLICANTS** GRANTORS SYSTEM-TO-SYSTEM FORMS OUTREACH SUPPORT

GOV > Applicants > Get Application Package

APPLICATION PACKAGE

IMPORTANT ACTIONS

- For Grants
- by Application

IMPORTANT RESOURCES

- Package Overview
- Grant Eligibility
- Registration
- Registration Applicant Registration
- Grant Training
- FAQs
- Software Compatibility
- Using UTF-8 Special Characters
- Handling Error Messages

Get Application Package Now

To get an application package, enter the appropriate CFDA Number OR Funding Opportunity Number and click the "Search" button. If you do not remember the Funding Opportunity Number for the grant opportunity, return to the [Search Grants](#) section to locate the grant opportunity.

CFDA Number: [] (##-###)

Funding Opportunity Number: [] (Can contain only letters, numbers and dashes)

Funding Opportunity Competition ID: [] (Can contain only letters, numbers and dashes)

Search

Since the AFRI-EWD RFA has three other grants you will need your program code to tell the system EXACTLY which of the four grants you want. For PD-STEP the program code is **A7501**.

You'll use the **Funding Opportunity Number (USDA-NIFA-AFRI-006555)** to find the AFRI-EWD application package in Grants.gov. You'll put the correct **program code (A7501)** in a Grants.gov form that's part of your application page. Putting in the wrong program code or not entering the program code correctly could cause your proposal to be lost in the system so it doesn't get to the review panel. Be careful with program codes.

Applications Must Arrive Before the Deadline

Applications must get to NIFA prior to the deadline. You could hit submit in Grants.gov BEFORE the deadline and still be late because Grants.gov does some preliminary processing prior to moving your proposal on to NIFA's system. That time delay has undone many a good proposal.

Technical issues can also be your application's undoing. Avoid applying the day applications are due because unless grants.gov itself is has a technical problem, there are no exceptions for late applications.

Use Workspace!

Grants.gov has a new tool that allows you greater flexibility as you prepare your application. It also can help you reduce technical glitches when you're submitting your application. Learn more about workspace here: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>

Use PDFs!

Grants.gov requires all documents to be in PDF format. You could have a glowing letter of recommendation, a winning narrative or a well-planned budget. If it's not in PDF format it will show in NIFA's system as a black sheet of paper with "document unreadable" on top. Grants.gov may not even accept the application. Letters of recommendation and documents from sub-awardees or collaborators can cause applications to be rejected because no one does a final check for Word documents that need to be converted into PDFs. Don't let it happen to you.

Use the Tracker!

As soon as you submit an application Grants.gov gives your submission an ID number. That doesn't mean it will forward your submission to NIFA. It may reject your submission for errors. Use the "Track My Application" function to find out if something went wrong and you need to re-submit. You just type your ID number into the tracker and it tells you about the proposal's status.

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/track-my-application.html>


TRACK MY APPLICATION

APPLICANT ACTIONS

- » Apply for Grants
- » Track My Application

APPLICANT RESOURCES

- » Workspace Overview
- » Applicant Eligibility
- » Individual Registration
- » Organization Applicant Registration
- » Applicant Training
- » Applicant FAQs
- » Adobe Software Compatibility
- » Submitting UTF-8 Special Characters
- » Encountering Error Messages



Track and check the status of your submitted applications

- The system will only return a status for valid tracking numbers.
- Until the status is available for valid tracking numbers, the following message will be returned by the system: *Tracking number(s) entered currently being processed, please check back later.*
- For invalid tracking numbers entered, the system will return the following message: *The tracking number(s) entered below are not valid. Please make sure you entered the correct tracking number(s).*

To track Grants.gov submissions, enter up to five Grants.gov tracking numbers, one per line and click the "Submit Tracking Number(s)" button:

ABOUT THE PD-STEP PROGRAM

What Is PD-STEP?

PD-STEP is a grant that funds immersive learning in non-formal educational programs for secondary school educators, enabling them to identify and replicate best practices to enhance student outcomes in the food, agricultural, natural resources, and human (FANH) sciences. Educators can be teachers, counselors, principals, school farm managers, librarians and others involved in promoting secondary learning.

The flagship funding portfolio within National Institute of Food and Agriculture is the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). There are several AFRI programs that fund research in the agriculture sciences. PD-STEP is one of four grants within the AFRI's Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Human Sciences Education and Workforce Development (AFRI-EWD), which covers education. The other programs in AFRI-EWD support undergraduate, doctorate and post-doctorate education.

Key Facts about PD-STEP in 2018

Roughly \$1.5 million is available in this program in FY18. Awards go up to \$150,000. Applications for funds beyond that ceiling will be rejected. The next section discusses project options and eligibility guidelines for PD-STEP just introduced in 2018.

Does Your Institution Qualify?

There are two of projects types in PD-STEP for 2018: Integrated and Single-Purpose Projects. Your eligibility is determined by the type of project you intend to fund. To understand eligibility guidelines it helps to first understand these two project types in detail.

Integrated versus Single-Purpose Projects

NIFA organizes the agricultural knowledge systems into three functions:

Research—laboratory or field investigations or other types of scientific data gathering and analysis
Education—the sharing of knowledge and building of skills
Extension—community-focused education

An INTEGRATED project combines TWO or more of the three functions.

A SINGLE-PURPOSE project focuses on ONE of the knowledge systems.

Single-Purpose Eligibility

SINGLE-PURPOSE eligibility is open to a wide range of applicants. You can apply if you are:









A State Agricultural Experiment Station



A college or university, including junior colleges offering associate degrees or higher






A university research foundation

-  Another type of research institutions or organizations
-  A Federal agency
-  A national laboratory
-  A private organization or corporation
-  A U.S. citizen, national, or permanent resident
-  Any group consisting of two or more entities identified above

While eligible institutions do not include foreign and international organizations grant recipients may subcontract to ineligible organizations provided they make the case that such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. Applicants would need to demonstrate the value of this subcontract in their narrative.

Integrated Project Eligibility

Within the large pool of eligible applicants for Single-Purpose projects there is a subset of institutions that may apply for an INTEGRATED project as well. This is an ADDITIONAL project option for these three institution types. They include:

-  Colleges and universities
-  1994 Land-Grant Institutions
-  Hispanic-serving agricultural colleges and universities as defined in this website:<https://nifa.usda.gov/hispanic-serving-agricultural-colleges-and-universities-hsacu>

For the purposes of this grant, college or university is understood to mean an institution that:

- 1) 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
- 2) Is legally authorized within such state to provide a program of education beyond secondary education
- 3) Provides an educational program for which a bachelor's degree or any other higher degree is awarded
- 4) Is a public or other nonprofit institution
- 5) Is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association. A research foundation maintained by a college or university is eligible to receive an award under this program.

Projects Supported By PD-STEP

Projects should develop self-sustaining models for professional development that better prepare education professionals to provide outstanding teaching, guidance and institutional structures that enhance student outcomes in the food, agriculture, natural resources and human (FANH) sciences.

Projects can also address changing instructional approaches, explore strategies to identify skill gaps or address conceptual areas that are particularly challenging to students. In addition, projects can involve integrating innovations in science and teaching into existing professional development programs through hands-on research/extension experiences with partner institutions and laboratories.

Examples of funded proposals: <https://go.usa.gov/xXnPR>

Farm Bill Priorities

You will need to select one of these topics as a focus for your project:

FARM BILL PRIORITIES



Plant health and production
and plant products



Animal health and production
and animal products



Food safety, nutrition and
health



Bioenergy, natural resources,
and environment



Agriculture systems and
technology



Agriculture economics and rural
communities

What Every Application Must Include:

Section 1: A Partial list of Documents and Forms

FIRST, A WORD OF CAUTION—this document is not a substitute for the RFA. The documents required for a PD-STEP application may vary by project design, applicant institution, sub-awardees and budget items requested. Some documents, however, are required for ALL PD-STEP proposals.

This section is divided into two parts: the **FIRST** is a listing of attachments mentioned in the RFA. You can click on each item to read about it in the RFA.

The **SECOND** section details the summary, narrative and budget summary, focusing on special requirements for PD-STEP applicants.

THE BEST STRATEGY: read the RFA carefully and make a checklist of all the attachments applicable to your particular project. Additional Information (Part IVc) found: [https://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource/AFRI%20EWD%20RFA%20Additional%20Information%20for%20PART%20IV%](https://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource/AFRI%20EWD%20RFA%20Additional%20Information%20for%20PART%20IV%20)

Document	Notes
Bibliography & References Cited	Required if research is cited. See Pg 5 of Add'l Info pdf (Part IVc RFA).
Facilities & Other Resources	See Pg 5 of Add'l Info pdf (Part IVc RFA)
Equipment Justification	For items over \$5,000 See Pg 5 of Add'l Info pdf (Part IVc RFA)
Key Personnel Roles	All key personnel also need a bio or resume See Pgs 5 and 8 of Add'l Info pdf (Part IVc RFA)
Logic Model	Required for all Integrated Project applications. Encouraged for single function. See Pg 5 of Add'l Info pdf (Part IVc RFA)
Management Plan	Required for all Integrated Project applications. Encouraged for single function. See Pg 6 of Add'l Info pdf (Part IVc RFA)
Data Management Plan (DMP)	Required for ANY PD-STEP applications. See Pg 6 of Add'l Info pdf (Part IVc RFA)
Documentation of Collaboration	See Pgs 6-7 of Add'l Info pdf (Part IVc RFA)

Table continues on page 11

Document	Notes
Minority-Serving Institution Documentation	If applying as a FASE Institution
Conflict of Interest	A listing of people who should not serve as reviewers for your proposal due to a conflict of interest See Pg 11 of Add'l Info pdf (Part IVc RFA).
Current and Pending Form	Time you will spend on this grant and other grants you manage. See Pg 11 of Add'l Info pdf (Part IVc RFA).
Felony Convictions or Tax Delinquent Status Documentation	See Pg 11 of Add'l Info pdf (Part IVc RFA).
Non-Land Grant Certification—this is a special designation for institutions that provide agricultural education, but are not land-grant institutions.	https://nifa.usda.gov/webform/request-non-land-grant-college-agriculture-designation
Lobbying Disclosure	This form is available on NIFA's website: https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/application-support-templates
Indirect Cost Agreement	Required if you plan to include indirect costs in your budget See Pg 10 of Add'l Info pdf (Part IVc RFA).
Collaboration Agreement	This form is available on NIFA's website: https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/application-support-templates
Letters of Recommendation	Demonstrate support for your project among educators, community members or other stakeholders. MAKE SURE THEY ARE IN PDF FORMAT. Otherwise, the panelists will not see them.

Section 2: Summaries, Narratives and Budget Justifications

FIRST, A GRANT WRITING TIP—Write your budget first. Your application will not be considered for funding if you go over the \$150,000 limit. Many people start by writing their narratives, then find out they can't do everything they planned because the maximum grant amount isn't enough to cover all their ideas.











Complete your budget then use it as an outline to prepare your narrative. After you've done your narrative make a 250-word brief of it—and your summary paragraph is done—all you have to do is fill in summary details.

This guide will follow the order of the RFA, so we'll cover the summary and narrative first. Just remember, it pays to do your prepare your grant budget first, then a narrative and summary last.

Summaries and Narratives are required documents. Be sure to follow the RFA guidelines for PD-STEP when preparing them. <https://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource/PD-STEP-Additional-Instructions.pdf>

[The Summary—in PDF Attachment](#)

The summary gives the program leader and the panel the basic overview of your project. It also helps us organize the review process and assign your proposal in an efficient manner. It is the first chance you have to sell your idea to a panelist. Remember to make it a PDF document when you attach it to your application. A PD-STEP summary must include:

-  Your project's title
-  Which AFRI Farm Bill Priority you want to focus on
-  Your project's duration (one, two or three years)
-  Principal investigator
-  Submitting Organization
-  Other Organizations Involved
-  Locations for project
-  Facilitator to participant ratio
-  Number of participants per year
-  Whether there will be an international component

Then you will also include your 250 word summary of what the project activities will be and their potential value to the professional development of K-14 educators. The idea is to get reviewers excited about your project and ready to read the narrative.

[The Narrative—in PDF Attachment](#)

After the summary the narrative is where you drive home your case for funding. Be sure to check RFA guidance. Watch your formatting. The Project Narrative section may not exceed a total of 10 pages of written text with 12-point font and line spacing not exceeding six lines of text per vertical inch, including all tables and figures. Applicants must ensure that the page limit is not exceeded after converting to PDF

format. Be careful. Document stretch when turning into PDS. Remember this link will explain each part of the narrative in detail, so use it to guide your writing.

<https://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource/PD-STEP-Additional-Instructions.pdf>

A PD-STEP narrative must include:



An Overview



A View of the Research, Education and/or Extension Environment



Your Approach



Plans for Evaluation and Reporting



A Response to a Previous Review (If a re-submission)



An Expected Output Table



Save and upload the file into your application as “ProjectNarrative”

Note: The Expected Output table is at the bottom of the PD-STEP additional instruction page:

<https://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource/PD-STEP-Additional-Instructions.pdf>

[The Budget Narrative—In PDF Attachment](#)

Grants.gov will require you to fill out a spreadsheet that automatically calculates your budget. You will itemize project costs for every year of your grant. Applicants often miss the “next year” button on the spreadsheet. You’ll itemize spending for each year of your grant, covering the expenses you will incur for that year of the project. Look for the next year button on the top right hand of the Grants.gov budget spread sheet. It shows when you are near the end of the first year’s budget.

RESEARCH & RELATED BUDGET - SECTION F-K, BUDGET PERIOD 1 Next Period

* ORGANIZATIONAL DUNS:

* Budget Type: ☒ Project ☐ Subaward/Consortium

Enter name of Organization:

Then you’ll write a budget narrative to provide justification for each item. Your narrative should cover all the items and all years and should explain how each expense contributes to project goals.

NOTE: Any sub-awardee will also have to provide a budget spreadsheet and narrative, too.

You can use this table below as an estimate of what kind of items you might need to include in a budget justification. This table loosely reflects the items you will need to report in your Grants.gov budget, too.

Section A, Senior/Key Person	This is where you justify any salary and benefits the project director and co-director receive. Explain why there are important to

	the project and how much time they will spend on project tasks.
Section B, Other Personnel	This is where you will describe any interns, graduate assistants or clerical supports. Explain why these expenses will enhance student development and learning or facilitate project goals.
Section C, Equipment	If your equipment costs more than \$5,000 you will need to provide a separate justification for this expense.
Section D, Travel	
1. Domestic	Be sure to explain why the travel is needed to support project goals—explain this for both domestic and foreign trips
2. Foreign	
Section E, Participant/Trainee Support Costs	
1. Tuition/Fees/Health/Insurance	Here is where you will describe what you will offer teachers or other educators to facilitate participation in your project.
2. Stipends	
3. Travel	
4. Subsistence	Be sure to explain why this will be important to the project's success.
5. Other	
6. Number of Participants/Trainees	
Section F, Other Direct Costs	Be sure to say why these are critical to the project and how they will contribute to your activities.
1. Materials and Supplies	
2. Publication Costs	
3. Consultant Services	
4. ADP/Computer Services	
5. Sub-awards/Consortium/Contractual Costs	These will need additional documentation: A statement of work, rate of pay and a resume of the contractor providing the services
6. Equipment or Facility Rental/User Fees	
7. Alterations and Renovations	
8. Other 1	
9. Other 2	
10. Other 3	
Section H, Indirect Costs	You will also need to provide your indirect cost agreement.

Matching Funds

Matching is only required if a funded project is commodity-specific and not of national scope. If this is the case, the grant recipient is required to match the USDA funds awarded on a dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources with cash and/or in-kind contributions. For more information see:

<http://nifa.usda.gov/resource/new-matching-requirements-competitive-grant-awards>

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are expenses not directly related to your project. They can be things like pens, paper, or other incidental items that are part of the project's overhead. For PD-STEP if an institution/organization's official negotiated indirect cost rate exceeds the maximum allowed rate then the indirect costs are limited to 30% of the total Federal funds. For more information see:

<http://nifa.usda.gov/indirect-costs>

How Will Applications Be Evaluated

Detailed evaluation criteria for each project types, grant types, exploratory projects and center of excellence are outlined at <https://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource/AFRI-Review-Criteria.pdf>.

PD-STEP applications will also be evaluated according to the following additional guidelines found at the bottom of page 9 of the RFA.



The following elements must be described

- Institutional long-range goals
- Identification of a problem or opportunity addressed
- Justification for the project
- Innovation
- Potential to advance educational equity
- Multidisciplinary and/or problem-based focus
- Potential for adoption by other institutions/organizations.



Roles of key personnel and mentors are clearly defined



Partnerships are established with letters of support.



Methods for documenting and evaluating success are suitable



Project will have continuity beyond the life of the grant.

Your Obligations If You Are Selected for Funding

If you are selected for funding you will have three key jobs to start your project and ensure that funding is available as you begin to set up your professional development opportunity.



NIFA grants are funded through ASAP

ASAP is a funding transfer system run the U.S. Treasury. You will need to set up your ASAP account as soon as you are told to do so. You will also need to co-

ordinate with NIFA staff as they link up your account. You can learn more about ASAP here: https://fiscal.treasury.gov/fsservices/gov/pmt/asap/asap_home.htm



NIFA expects annual progress reports for the life of your project

You will get instructions for setting up an account to submit annual progress updates on projects.



NIFA expects two annual financial reports

One allows NIFA to ensure that you are spending down your money and the project is going smoothly. The other records general funding data.