

NIFA Grants Management

Frequently Asked Questions

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SF 424 QUESTIONS

There was an error on the original SF 424 submitted. What do I need to submit to correct the mistake?

An explanation on organizational letterhead explaining the error (i.e., incorrect DUNs or EIN, use of human subjects or vertebrate animals, environmental impact, etc.). The document must be signed and dated by the Authorized Representative (AR). If you need assistance, email the administrative contact on the Notice of Award or the awards management division general inquiry email address at awards@usda.gov.

PROJECT CHANGES

The Authorized Representative is no longer with the organization. What do I need to submit to change the AOR?

A letter designating the new official on organizational letterhead is required. The letter must contain the name, title, address, phone number, and email address of the new official and be submitted to awards@usda.gov. You may additionally cc: the Administrative Point of Contact on block 14 of your Award Face Sheet.

The Project Director (PD) is taking a leave of absence or leaving my institution. How do I change the PD or co-PD on an existing grant award?

Depending on the situation, follow the appropriate set of instructions. Documents must be submitted to Awards@usda.gov. You may additionally cc' the Administrative Point of Contact on block 14 of your Notice of Award.

- *Temporary absence:* If the project director's absence is less than three consecutive months, the authorized representative must notify the Awards Management Division in writing (on official letterhead) of arrangements for the continuing conduct of the project. The correspondence should identify who will be in charge during the PD's absence and include a copy of the temporary leader's curriculum vita along with his/her written concurrence.
- *Long term effort reduction or replacement:* If the PD or Co-PD will have a 25% or more reduction in time devoted to the project or is no longer affiliated with the institution, the authorized representative must request, in writing (on official letterhead), NIFA's approval of the replacement PD / Co-PD. The request should include the following: 1) A copy of the replacement PD / Co-PD curriculum vita; 2) a letter of commitment with a signature from the replacement PD / Co-PD; and 3) a [Current and Pending Support Form](#) for the replacement PD / Co-PD. If the replacement PD is already a co-PD in the award, only the letter and updated current and pending support form are necessary.

What if I need to make changes in the Scope or Objectives of the Project?

Projects are selected and approved based on the proposal as submitted. Any changes to the objective or scope of work require NIFA's National Program Leader (NPL) and Awards Management Division (AMD) approval.

Please submit, on official letterhead, a request detailing the revised scope or objective, a justification/explanation of why the changes are necessary, and any budget changes associated with the revision (before and after comparison are helpful). The letter must be signed by the Project Director (PD) and AOR. Keep in mind the NIFA' Program objectives as your revision should stay within the Program's objectives.

Under what circumstances can a grant be transferred from one institution to another?

A grant may transfer from one institution to another when a Project Director (PD) under the existing grant moves to a different institution and the originally awarded institution agrees/is willing to relinquish all remaining funds under the award. The new institution identified as the potential recipient of the remaining funds must meet the eligibility requirements under the applicable program.

How can a grant be transferred from one institution to another?

Project Directors must contact the NIFA program staff associated with the existing award (Program Point of Contact identified in Block 4 of Form NIFA-2009, Award Face Sheet) to facilitate the transfer of a grant from one institution to another institution.

To transfer the existing grant, the following documents must be submitted to the NIFA program staff the existing awardee organization.

- A letter, on official letterhead, signed by the authorized organizational representative (AOR) addressed to the NIFA program staff, identifying that the awardee institution is relinquishing the remaining funds on the grant. The letter must contain the award number and remaining funds to be relinquished.
- A final SF-425, Federal Financial Report. The amount noted on Field 10.p (Field 10.i if using the short form) of the final SF-425 must reflect the total amount of funds remaining on the grant and must be identical to the balance in the ASAP account. This would be the amount available to transfer to a new institution.
- The Final Technical Report must be submitted via REEport.

Upon receipt and review of the documentation, NIFA program staff will provide a request for application (RFA) to the Project Director and institution identified as the potential recipient of the remaining funds. The RFA will include instructions such as how to access the application package (including necessary forms and the "NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide"); complete the appropriate forms; and where and how to submit the forms.

How do I request a budget change?

For those grants awarded under [General Terms and Conditions-A](#) or Federal Demonstration Partnership, approval from NIFA is not required unless funds for an item have been withheld on the award budget or you intend to subcontract (a) more than 50 percent of the total award to another party(ies), or (b) you intend to subcontract with a federal agency, or (c) is within a prior-approval category. Please refer to the Terms and Conditions of the specific award to be changed. All grants awarded under the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) must have prior written approval from the national program leader. To request approval, prepare a letter, on official letterhead, outlining a brief description and justification of the requested changes to the budget. Include the signatures of the authorized representative and the project director and a revised budget and budget narrative.

Can I access grant funds after the award has been recommended, but before we receive the award documents?

NIFA awards under the NIFA General Terms and Conditions for Grants and Cooperative Agreements may contain a 90-day pre-award clause that allows the grantee to incur expenses as the agency completes the award process. To use this clause, please submit a letter, on official letterhead, with a justification of why the pre-award expenditures are necessary and a general breakdown of how the funds were used along with a dollar amount. The letter must be signed by the PD and the AOR.

Note: There is a certain risk to the grantee institution when incurring pre-award costs. NIFA is not responsible for reimbursing an institution for costs incurred prior to receipt of a signed award document should a grant not be issued for any reason.

How do I request a no-cost extension (NCE) of time?

If this is a first-time request for an extension lasting up to 12-months, the grant has not expired, all reporting is up to date (Progress Reports on REEport, Financial Reports on REEport, SF-425 annual verification, Assurance Statements, and/ or other reports as required in your Terms and Conditions), and you are under [General Terms and Conditions A](#) or Federal Demonstration Partnership, your authorized organizational representative (AOR) may approve a one-time no-cost extension of time. The AOR must provide written notification, on official letterhead, of this action to NIFA Awards Management Division (AMD).

Note: This extension must be done within the statutory time limit of the award. Please consult your award's Terms and Conditions as well as contact AMD or Program staff if you are unsure about the limitation for your award.

How do I request a second no-cost extension (NCE) of time?

If you require more than one no-cost extension of time or an extension of more than 12 months, the extension(s) must be approved by NIFA. An authorized organizational representative (AOR) of your institution must prepare and submit a written request, on official letterhead, to NIFA.

Note: This extension must be done within the statutory time limit of the award. Please consult your award's Terms and Conditions as well as contact the Awards Management Division (AMD) or Program staff if you are unsure about the limitation for your award.

The preferred method of NCE submission is as a portable document format (PDF) PDF attachment to an email sent to awards@usda.gov. The request must be received by AMD at least 30 days prior to the expiration date of the award and must contain:

- The length of additional time required to complete project objectives and a justification for the extension
- Verification that REEport progress reporting is up-to-date
- Verification that annual SF-425 financial reporting is up-to-date
- Verification that all Assurance Statements (IRB or IACUC) are up to date
- Other reports as required in your Terms and Conditions
- An estimate of funds expected to remain unobligated on the scheduled expiration date
- A projected timetable to complete the remaining portion(s) of the project
- A status of cost-sharing to date, if cost-sharing is applicable
- Signature of the authorized representative

Note: It is important to pay attention to the expiration date of your award and to expend your funds in a timely manner. Any funds expended on a project after the expiration date should not be charged to the award. Do not put your institution at risk of losing funds or having to pay back unallowable costs.

Requests for extensions on awards past the expiration date normally will not be considered unless a justification of exceptional extenuating circumstances for the late submission is provided.

Will I be notified that my no-cost extension has been approved?

You will be notified in writing if NIFA approves your request. However, award recipients under [General Terms and Conditions A](#) or Federal Demonstration Partnership Terms and Conditions will not be notified regarding a first-time request for a no-cost extension of time of up to 12 months because the institution has the authority to approve such an extension of time.

FINANCIAL REPORTING

What are the financial reporting requirements for NIFA grants?

All grantees are required to complete a Financial Report on REEport by February 1st of every year as well as file an [SF-425](#) (Federal Financial Report), on an annual basis with the Awards Management Division (AMD). The due date for the SF425 report is no later than 90 days after the award anniversary date. Also, grantees are required to submit a Final SF-425, Federal Financial Report, within 90 days of the grant termination date. The report must be submitted to the Awards Management Division (AMD). The preferred method of submission is as a portable document format (PDF) attachment to an email sent to awards@usda.gov

All questions relating to financial reports should be submitted to:

Awards Management Division
Office of Grants and Financial Management, NIFA
U.S. Department of Agriculture
6501 Beacon Rd.
Kansas City, MO 64133
Email: awards@usda.gov

What happens if I need an extension of time to complete the SF-425 (Federal Financial Report), but I don't need a no-cost extension of time to complete the project?

At least 30 days prior to the reporting due date, you need to submit a request, on official letter head and signed by the AOR, to the Awards Management Division (AMD). The request should include the grant number(s), the newly requested due date, and adequate justification. Requests may be submitted as a pdf attachment to awards@usda.gov.

What happens if I need an extension of time to complete the annual SF-425 (Financial Status Reports) for *capacity formula grant programs*?

At least 30 days prior to the reporting due date, you need to submit a request, on official letterhead and signed by the AOR, to Awards Management Division (AMD), awards@usda.gov. The request should include the grant number(s), new requested due date, and an adequate justification.

PAYMENTS

What Is ASAP?

Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP) is an electronic payment and information system developed by the Bureau of the Fiscal Service, part of the Department of Treasury. ASAP allows grantee organizations receiving federal funds to draw from accounts pre-authorized by federal agencies.

How Does ASAP Work?

In short, ASAP operates as follows: federal agencies and organizations receiving federal funds enroll to use ASAP. Federal agencies establish and maintain accounts in ASAP to control the flow of funds to organizations. Federal agencies enter spending authorizations into their ASAP accounts according with their program needs and schedules. Payment Requestors at organizations initiate payment requests through ASAP to meet cash needs. This is done primarily through on-line connections that organizations have with ASAP.

I am a new grantee for NIFA grant funds. How will I receive my funds?

Funds will be processed through the ASAP system. The organization must be enrolled and linked to NIFA's ALC 12402200 number to receive funds.

How do I set up an account at ASAP?

The Financial Management Division (FMD) at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) will initiate enrollment for your account in ASAP.

I see the grant account, but I am unable to draw down funds?

The account may be suspended or the percent of the funds that can be drawn down for that quarter has been met. Please wait until the next quarter. Has the performance period expired? You may verify this by reviewing Block 3 of your award sheet. If the period is expired, you will need to email: ASAPCustomerService@usda.gov.

I do not see the account listed for my NIFA award?

If you have completed the enrollment process and you do not see your account listed, please contact the NIFA's ASAP Customer Service at ASAPCustomerService@usda.gov and provide your award number or proposal number related to your grant.

When can I anticipate my funds being released?

If enrollment has been completed, funds will be released between 15 to 30 days of the award provided that no funds are withheld.

I just completed enrollment, when will my funds be available?

Upon your account becoming active, please allow the Department of the Treasury 7-10 **business** days to verify banking information. Once verified, funds will be released between 15 to 30 days.

I requested an extension of the period of performance, it was granted but I am unable to access my funds?

Please contact the NIFA's ASAP customer service at ASAPCustomerService@usda.gov and notify us of this error.

I received a letter from AMD releasing my funds, but I do not see the increase?

Funds are released between 15 to 30 days of the release letter received in the Financial Management Division (FMD) from the Awards Management Division (AMD).

Why does NIFA temporarily suspend ASAP access to grantee organizations for the last four working days of each month?

This recurring monthly temporary suspension allows NIFA staff to perform necessary reconciliation work to ensure our internal records are in sync with the Department of Treasury records.

ASAP ENROLLMENT

How do I become enrolled within ASAP?

Once you are notified that enrollment has been initiated, cut and paste the following link into your browser line. www.fms.treas.gov/asap/fpa_questions_enrollment.html Click on "Enrollment." Follow the instructions.

I have not received my ASAP user ID or password, or I need my password reset; Who should I contact?

The Kansas City Financial Center is the primary contact for all Recipient Organization ASAP.gov system performance or system access concerns. Contact the ASAP.gov Help Desk at (855) 868-0151, option 2, then option 3 for support or asaphelpdesk@fiscal.treasury.gov.

I have an account with ASAP recipient id XXXXXX, but I received an email providing a different recipient id. Why?

Enrollment is based on the DUNS and EIN numbers associated with the SF-424, which was provided during the application process. Funds can only be released to that recipient ID.

What procedures should be followed if changes occur within the organization requiring access changes to ASAP?

The Kansas City Financial Center is the primary contact for all Recipient Organization ASAP.gov concerns. Contact the ASAP.gov Help Desk at (855) 868-0151, option 2, then option 3 for support or asaphelpdesk@fiscal.treasury.gov.

They will advise you on the appropriate form(s) that need to be completed. Recipient Organization Officials can log onto ASAP.gov, click the enrollment button, then make the appropriate selection from the drop-down menu such as adding or removing contact names or modifying contact information.

For more information about ASAP, visit <https://www.fiscal.treasury.gov/asap/>.

UNALLOWABLE COSTS

The following are examples of costs that are unallowable uses of federal funds. **This list is not a full list of unallowable costs.** Refer to the Program’s Request for Applications or the applicable OMB Circulars for additional information. You may also consult an Awards Management Division (AMD) staff member if you have questions on whether a cost could be allowable.

- Costs that exceed the approved award amount.
- Costs incurred after the expiration date of the award.
- Costs which lie outside the scope of the approved project.
- Entertainment costs regardless of the apparent relationship to the project. Includes banquets, award ceremonies, meals for persons not in travel status, tickets to shows or sporting events, and alcoholic beverages.
- Business meals not included as a part of a workshop or conference or when no need for continuity of a meeting exists. Pre-conference breakfasts are also unallowable. This does not include meals for persons in a travel status. Those meals would be covered by the per diem rate.
- Consulting services performed by a federal employee during official duty hours when such consulting services result in extra compensation to the employee.
- Travel for NIFA employees.
- Promotional give-away items. Award funds cannot be used to purchase give-away items such as coffee mugs, tote bags, T-shirts, stress balls, magnets, key-chains, etc.
- Incentives. Federal funds may not be used to offer targeted program participants incentives (i.e., fast-food coupons, gift certificates, pens, tote bags with logos, etc.) to entice participation.
- Capital improvements such as the planning, purchasing, construction, renovation, or repair of a building or facility.
- General Purpose Equipment which does not have a technical or programmatic purpose. It includes furniture, tables, chairs, file cabinets, and copy or fax machines.
- Miscellaneous expenses – any expense that is not directly related to the program is considered unallowable. Costs such as child-care services hired so a person can attend a meeting or kitchen help hired to prepare refreshments for a field day are unallowable because these services are not directly related to the project plan. Promotional or thank you gifts are also unallowable.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Contact	Contact Information
Award’s Program Point of Contact	Block 4 of your Award Face Sheet
Award’s Administrative Point of Contact	Block 14 of your Award Face Sheet
Awards Management Division (AMD)	Email awards@usda.gov
Financial Management Division (FMD)	Email ASAPCustomerService@usda.gov
ASAP.gov system performance or access concerns	ASAP.gov Help Desk at (855) 868-0151, option 2, then option 3 for support or asaphelpdesk@fiscal.treasury.gov