

## Research and Extension Experiences for Undergraduates (REEU)

### FY19 RFA Webinar

Wednesday May 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019 2pm EDT

#### Recording

The recording available via [Webex](#) using the password: AqEMyma6

#### Transcript

Hello everyone my name is Ariela Zycherman. Today will go through the RFA and I will try to answer any questions you might have about the RFA and applying to the program. So we will get started.

Again, my name is Ariela Zycherman and the National Program Leader for the REEU program. If you have just joined us by phone I tried to have everybody muted upon entry, but please mute yourself, if I cannot mute you. That would be appreciated. Carlos Ortiz is the program specialist for REEU but unfortunately he's not on the phone today. But, is also available for any questions you might have after the webinar.

We will start with a quick overview of the program. The Request for Applications was released April 16. It is available online. You can find it on grants.gov or you can find it on our program page which is the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative- Education Workforce Development page. The applications are due June 27<sup>th</sup> 2019. There are two dates for REEU and the program. The second date is for 2020. Just be sure you are aware that the FY 19 applications are due June 27<sup>th</sup> 2019 at 5 PM Eastern. We are pretty strict about deadlines. If it comes in at 5:01pm it will be declined. So just be very conscious of those times. Our budget this year is about \$12 million and our funding rate was about 22% last year. I expect it will be similar. But this is just so that you know the basic facts. You can make your own assumptions or deliberations.

REEU is part of the larger Education and Workforce Development RFA. There are three RFAs associated with AFRI: the Education and Workforce development RFA, the Sustainable Agricultural Systems RFA and the Foundational and Applied Sciences RFA, all of which are published right now. But we are just going to focus on the Education and Workforce Development RFA and the REEU program within it. REEU is couched between the Professional Development for Agricultural Literacy Program and Agricultural Workforce Training Grants, which is a new program, and the predoctoral and postdoctoral fellowships. We are the only program focused on undergraduate students. We define undergraduate students as students that are enrolled in a college or university going toward their BA or BS or toward an associate degree. That's how we think of undergraduates.

REEU's purpose is to address projected shortfalls of qualified graduates in the food, agricultural and renewable resource sectors of the economy, related employment sectors and farming enterprises, or in graduate programs. In short, we are training students to make up the workforce either by going to graduate schools or going directly into the workforce.

Projects support institutions to provide fellowship opportunities for undergraduate students so they obtain hands-on experience in research extension and so they develop skills to join the workforce or to

go to graduate school; So that they receive a strong mentoring experience required for success in the food and agricultural, natural resources, and human sciences; So that they can participate in research and extension projects that deliver information to other people; So that they learn communication, leadership, and other critical thinking skills; And so that they are really competent professional people who can go out into the workforce or really, into the world, and make a difference. What is really important to note, is that these are fellowship opportunities for really substantial research and extension experiences that go beyond traditional coursework. This program does not support tuition or credit and it really is not about small or short experiences, but rather an extensive experience where students can really engage in a lot of different opportunities so they become well-rounded, so they can get their hands dirty, so they are out of the classroom and they are learning by doing. Those are things you should think about when you come up with your project design.

Examples of experiential learning include, but are definitely not limited to research and extension apprenticeships and internships or similar participatory learning within the Farm Bill Areas; Practicums and agricultural labs or farms or cooperative extension programs; And externships in the private or public sector and study abroad focused on global food security issue or global competencies. We are excited if you can come up with something beyond that list, if you can do something new and unique and special for those students that they can't normally have access to. These are just some of the more traditional ways that we see this program rolling out.

Students might also build skills for graduate studies; explore opportunities in academia, business, government, or other career paths; and forge mentorships with professional and business leaders and faculty. These three bullets are actually pretty important. In addition to the externship or internship, programs should think about ways that students are getting ready, not just experiencing the skills, but are getting ready to apply to graduate school. What are some career options they might think about in graduate school or what are some unique jobs included in agriculture that they had not thought about. Or they should be able to work with a mentor who helps them process information and become professionals that can think critically, be calm in a workforce, and work well in teams. These are part of the experience that really just go beyond a general internship.

Projects have to meet at least one Farm Bill priority. They can meet two, they can meet three. We aren't going to determine which of the Farm Bill priority you are meeting- you have to tell us. These are the six Farm Bill priorities: plant health, production and plant product; animal health, production and animal products; food safety, nutrition and health; bioenergy, natural resources and environment; agricultural systems and technology; and agricultural economics and rural communities. If you are familiar with these, they are also how you look at foundational and applied sciences. It is part of a larger push for how we are going to approach food and agricultural sciences in the future and it is why we train our students in these buckets.

REEU is also the only Education and Workforce Development Program that supports the FACT initiative (Food and Agriculture Cyber Informatics). You really see the FACT initiative in the foundational and applied sciences but you see it here also. Basically, and in a nutshell, it is our big data initiative. It promotes data competency and is including, but not limited to, high dimensional and multi-scale data, machine learning and AI, or predictive modeling, or anything you can think about that might be related to data or data infrastructure or data privacy. It supports interdisciplinary efforts that integrate computer science or engineering with any other science- the basic plant and animal sciences, business,

economic, social sciences, arts communities- and thinking about how we can train our students to be at the forefront of combining these knowledge systems. This can be as clear as just training agricultural students in data or it can be the joint training of students who come from engineering and you want to expose them to ag and how these students might work well with students from ag that have never really thought about computer science. They have that sharing of information and sharing of experiences. We have money earmarked for FACT so I would encourage you if you have some sort of component in your project think about applying for a FACT REEU. If you do apply for it, please put it in the title. It helps us identify reviewers and it helps us track those projects. A common question that I get about FACT is, "What if it is a component of the proposal but not the whole project?" I would say if the intention of the project is to teach some sort of FACT skill then that is a FACT program. If you have a set of eight internships and only one of them is FACT related than it is not a FACT program. When you are deciding if you have a FACT program think about the intention. What are the learning objectives and what are the goals of your project- and if they are related to FACT then it would be a FACT project.

We encourage proposals that involve industry participation and target FANH (Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources and Human Sciences) sciences in an industry where there is documented shortage of talent or lack of adequate skills preparation for the needs of that industry. There was a Purdue study a few years ago that show that there are going to be some great vacancies in the food and ag industry space so it would be nice to see projects that say, "hey, we know that there's going to be some questions about XY and Z and that there definitely are not enough students trained in XY and Z. So our project will be able to train 40 students over a course of five years to do that thing and they will be prepared to go into the industry." That knowledge of what needs to be prepared, comes from industry, or relationships from other organizations beyond the University, that might be future employers of those same students.

We encourage projects that result in the implementation of self-sustaining models for increased and enhanced experiential learning opportunities for students at the host university and students at other universities. We would like to see proposals that involve new collaborations or enhance existing partnerships with community colleges and minority-serving institutions and other the institutions where there are limited research and extension opportunities in the relevant STEM fields. That is to say, we do not require that you engage with students beyond your university. But if you are at a small university that maybe does not have all of the laboratory space or the field space or the cooperative extension space that another school nearby might have, but you have students that are interested, I would encourage you to think about partnerships. Or, if you are at a school that does have those resources and there are some schools around you or you want to open up the program nationwide, we think it would really change the national training of undergraduate students to get them ready for the workforce and could make a big difference in the long run by sharing these resources. So we encourage moving beyond just limiting the student body to the University. But we don't have a requirement for it.

New in FY19 we have the Education Coordinated Network for Research and Extension Experiences for Undergraduates. This will be only be offered in FY 19. We hope it will be a single five year grant. We are going to offer one award. This came out of some stakeholder feedback at a project Director's meeting last year. We have envisioned a place where the REEU-ECN will offer a clearing house for documents and maintain a virtual space for Project Directors and Key Personnel, would also offer a list serve, and it would organize the PD meeting. It would also develop and maintain a portable public facing website to include information on all funded REEU programs and links to the website. We would hope that this is a place where students, if they were looking for a program, but do not come from a university that offers

a program, can look on this website and say “This is what I am interested in, and this is what the opportunities are that I'm actually eligible for.” So if you are thinking of applying for the REEU-ECN, just put that in the title and that would help us identify which ones will go in that pile. We are only going to award a single grant but we have high hopes that it will really going to shape how REEU functions in the future and what the impact could be on the nation.

So moving on to program guidance. All of this information is in the RFA, so if you miss anything to worry about it, it is all there. And you can always call me if you have questions. So we will cover the RFA, types of submissions, eligibility, writing a good proposal, budgeting, funding restrictions, and then actually physically, or virtually in this case, submitting a proposal.

The RFA is the most important part. An RFA is where you have the information on what is to be included, what the scope of the program is, what the budget looks like. The RFA can be found, like I said before, on Grants.gov or the project resource page, or you can Google it and I'm sure it will come up. So again REEU is part of the Education and Workforce Development RFA. A couple years ago it was called Education and Learning Initiatives (ELI) but we have changed the name last year, this is the new name.

There are two types of applications. There are new applications which are typically applications that have not been previously submitted to NIFA and there are resubmission which were submitted previously to NIFA but were not funded. In the resubmission you get to put in a one-page response to previous reviewers, so it's a little bit of an advantage, that you get to explain how you improved your project and a new submission is a new submission. You might notice that there are no more renewals. We tried renewals out for the first time last year as the program is still pretty new and we had the first cohort that was moving toward the end of the life of their grants. But renewals turned out to be administratively challenging. We decided with the help of leadership in the Awards Division that we are asking people to submit new applications and to include a progress report, which shows how the previous evaluation, what you learned or did not learn, changed how you are running your program now. There have also been budgetary changes and expansions of the timeframe of the program so you will have to adjust to the new requirements of the program so that is why a new application is how we are moving forward with that. But if you have an expiring award or you will have an award that already expired and you are thinking about what to do next- this is how to move forward with that. Details on the progress report are in part IV.C. I will talk about it a little later, but that's an external document with all of the narrative instructions, all the instructions for response to previous reviewers, and instructions on the progress report, and anything that you need to know to have a complete application.

So who can apply for an REEU? If you are applying for a single function grant which means just research, just education, or just extension - it can be a state agricultural experimentation station, colleges and universities- including those offering associate's degree, university research foundations, other research institutions and organizations, federal agencies and national labs, private organizations and corporations, individual citizens, or any group of two or more of those. There is really a very wide group of people that can apply for a regular REEU that is single function.

If it is integrated it is much more restrictive. An integrated project is at least two component. Research extension, research education, education extension. And that is restricted to colleges and universities, 1994 Land-Grant institutions, and Hispanic-serving Universities.

There is a third group of applications which fits into the first two categories but it is a different pool of money. We are earmarked to give a certain percentage of our total budget to FASE or strengthening grants for research, education, extension, or integrated. If you are eligible for a FASE grant it means you are a small or midsized institution or minority-serving institution that previously has had limited success in receiving federal funds. That means you cannot be one of the top universities that receive federal funds even if you are minority-serving degree granting institution. It has to be small or midsized or minority serving that has not had much success with federal funding. They can also be state agricultural experiment stations or degree institutions eligible for the USDA established EPSCOR. Those are state that have not received a lot of federal funds. You can find out more about this on the AFRI grant page and that will really go through it- I think there is a flowchart that says how to determine if you are FASE eligible or not. If you are FASE eligible you just have to check a box and if you end up in a place just below the funding line you might be eligible to get a FASE award. It is really a very nice opportunity.

If you are preparing your proposal, substance is key. The way you figure out what your substance should be is by looking at all aspects of the narrative instruction. There's a link on page 26 of the RFA, its part IV.C. That has the information on what you need to include – All the questions you need to answer and the content that has to be included. It should really should help you develop your project in terms of the evaluation and activities and anything else that needs to be done for the project. I would not stop at the narrative instructions. I would also look at the evaluation criteria because that's how the panelists will look at those narratives and say “hmm, have they met all of the goals of the program?” so the evaluation criteria specific for this program is following the link on page 30 part V. B. and if you scroll to the end of the document you get to the EWD the criteria which is different than other AFRI criteria.

Just to give you a hint of what it looks like we look at three major buckets. We look at the scientific merit of the project; the qualifications of the personnel, adequacy of facility, and project management; and we look at the project relevance. So again, finding out where there are those gaps and really what is up and coming and being able to talk about it in a real way.

Follow the formatting requirements. There are many many details that can either get you rejected upon submission or will get your reviewers all riled up and will give you a bad review if you are not paying attention to what the requirements are, specifically in terms of formatting. So make sure that your line spacing and font size is correct. This is in the summary and narrative instructions - again Part IV. C. On the slide, this should be page 26. Sorry I didn't change it. Make sure you put the program code in correctly – A7401. What happens when you don't put the program code incorrectly is, it does not get routed to the program. We do not know to look for the proposal if it's not in the right mailbox. We would not even know that it's there, if you don't tell us. But if you do accidentally put it in the wrong box, if you put in the wrong code, it might get rerouted to us if somebody has a closing date that is similar to ours. Or if you don't hear from us in 15-30 days saying, “Hey, you have been accepted into the program for review,” let us know and we can look for it. Eliminate math errors in budgets and spelling and grammar mistakes in the narratives. And include all necessary attachments.

Budgeting basics for REEU. REEU is for four or five years. Four year projects cannot exceed \$400,000 and five year project cannot exceed \$500,000. Project cost must be budgeted predominantly for student support and that includes stipends, housing, meals, travel cost, housing, and laboratory use fees. The way you should think about this is, how you ensure equity for all students so that a student does not have to decide between having a job for the summer and taking on this sort of experiential learning

activity? How can we even out the playing field for all students, so that when they graduate they have had similar opportunities to move forward with. So if that means you're supporting them with a stipend and they have money for housing instead of working for those things in a regular job that is how you have to support them. Costs outside of this have to be modest and reasonable and can include justified support for the coordination of the program. I cannot tell you how many times I get the question "What is the percentage of support that can go towards the coordination of the program?" or "What is the amount that a stipend should be?" or "How much should be allotted for housing?" I can tell you that my answer will always be the same. We do not determine that for you. You have to justify what is appropriate for your program. I would start to do that by asking "what do my students really need?" "What do I have to do to achieve that equity?" And "what can we actually offer them?" And then say, "Well, what is the real amount of time it will take to coordinate the program?" You are unlikely to get full summer salary for this program but might be able to get a percentage of time for handling the logistics, making sure the students have mentorship support, coordinating the faculty mentors, dealing with getting all of the housing or the lab spaces in order. Those are where you can get support. And you should get it, you should not be working for free. But, you need be honest about the actual amount of time it takes to do that and this won't support anything beyond that. Because, as a reminder, this is a student fellowship, this is about the students being able to participate. Indirect costs are limited to 30%. So those indirect costs are here and they are part of the program so we are encouraging administration to think about how they can use those indirect costs to support the program. And matching is only required if a project is commodity specific and not of national scope

Funding restrictions. The project director has to be from the primary host institution but there can be co-PIs and mentors from other institutions. Tuition for course credit and promotional items are not allowable. Each institution can submit three proposals but we will only give them one award per year for REEU. You can hold the REEU-ECN and REEU, but you can't hold more than one REEU. And AFRI EWD programs, in general, cannot be used for construction or any sort of alteration of existing buildings or facilities.

Budgeting for the REEU-ECN is \$400,000 for five years. The indirect costs are also limited to 30% and the same restrictions about construction, acquisitions, expansion, and remodeling still apply. So for REEU-ECN that would mean that you would have to have the virtual infrastructure to support what we are asking for.

How to apply. You go to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), and you look up the program and that's where you submit to REEU and all of the NIFA programs. If you have never applied to [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) be advised that it takes a lot of prep ahead of time to take care of that. You have to have DUNS and SAMS identification numbers and these can take a long time to be credentialed so make sure that you do that early, I mean now, and try to get that underway. Make sure that your institution is able to submit through [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and they know how to do that. Make sure that everything is submitted in PDF and if you have issues with [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) call them for technical support. Do not wait until the week that applications are due because they get overwhelmed by the need for support.

FAQs for the program are available on our website under program specific resources.

Just in a nutshell, this is the program details again. For REEU there are four project types- research, education, extension and integrated projects. We do support standard and strengthening grants. The application deadline is June 27 at 5 PM Eastern exactly. The program code is A7401. Budgets can't

exceed \$400,000 for four years or \$500,000 for five years. Institutions can submit three applications and there will only be one REEU award per institution.

For the education coordinated networks for research and extension experience for undergraduates the REEU-ECN program again we accept all project types, and standard and strengthening grants. The application deadline is June 27 at 5 PM. The program area code is the same A7401 and the budget can't exceed \$400,000 for five years. We are doing the same for number of submissions per institution so for the REEU-ECN it's three and it's three for REEU. The number of awards is one (for each program). You can hold both at the same time.

So again, my name is Ariela Zycherman. I'm the National Program Leader for REEU and Carlos Ortiz is the program specialist and I will open the webinar to questions. If you can put them in the chat box that would be most helpful. I will read them out and then I will answer them.

This is my contact information and Carlos's contact information. We also respond to the undergraduate mailbox which is the one listed in RFA. Its [undergraduate@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:undergraduate@nifa.usda.gov). You can email us there or and our personal email and we will try to respond.

## Questions

Are there any questions?

>>Is there a letter of intent?<<

No, there is no letter of intent

>>>Did the funding go up this year? Looking at previous years, it seems that grants were slightly below \$300,000. Was it always \$400 k? <<

>> Yes, we upped the funding to \$400,000 and \$500,000 last year, in FY18, and the grants are generally around there. We usually have to make a couple cuts so it keeps them a little bit under 400 or a little under 500. But we did this last year, so it's not new for this year.

If there is nothing else feel free to email us and we will answer as soon as we can. Have a great day. Bye.