



Secondary Education, Two-Year Postsecondary Education, and Agriculture in the K-12 Classroom
(SPECA) Challenge Grants Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Please refer to the [SPECA REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS](#) for complete application instructions.

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What is the focus of the NIFA's Secondary Education, Two-Year Postsecondary Education, and Agriculture in the K-12 Classroom (SPECA) Challenge Grants Program?

- SPECA funding supports the enhancement of K-14 instruction to meet the current and future training needs in the food, agricultural, natural resources and human (FANH) sciences
- These grants also support projects designed to increase the number and diversity of students who will pursue and complete a 2- or 4-year degree in FANH science fields.
- Funding may also support synergistic linkages among secondary, two-year postsecondary, and higher education programs in the FANH

sciences in order to advance excellence in education and encourage more young Americans to pursue and complete a baccalaureate or higher degree in the FANH sciences.

Who is eligible to apply?

- Public secondary schools—applicant must be school, not district.
- Junior and community colleges
- Institutions of higher education.
- Nonprofit organizations

What is the funding rate of submitted applications?

- The funding rate for FY 2018 was 12%

What are the types of projects funded?

- Curriculum Development;
- Instructional Delivery Systems;
- Experiential (hands-on) Learning for Students;
- Faculty preparation and enhancement for teaching;
- Facilitating Interaction with Other Academic Institutions;
- Planning for Future Project Applications.

How much money is available and for how long?

- There are four types of projects and four funding levels. They are as follows:
 - Regular Grants (single projects) \$50,000 total, not per year for 24-36 months. Note: although the project director is not required to share funds in this option, projects should support more than just one class or instructor. A single project should have a broad student impact to be competitive.
 - Collaborative Grant Type 1 (CG1) (Applicant + One or more Partners) \$150,000, total, not per year for 24-36 months.
 - Collaborative Grant Type 2 (CG2) (Applicant + Two or more Partners)
\$300,000 total, not per year for 24-36 months.
CG2 applications must document how the project will address four key sets of impacts:
 - Address National Challenge
 - Expand recruitment into FANH science
 - Improve retention of FANH science students

- Inform FANH science teaching community of best practices

Can funds be used to support summer programs?

- Yes

Can funds be used to support international projects?

- Yes

Is there a limit to the number of applications an institution may submit?

- Only one application may be submitted by each institution
- A single institution may only have one active SPECA award at a time

Do I have to be a U.S. citizens, nationals, or permanent residents to submit an application as a project director?

- Yes

Do I have to be a U.S. citizens, nationals, or permanent residents to be a co-PD?

- No

Is there a matching requirement?

- NO

Are indirect costs allowed?

- Yes. Indirect costs are allowed up to 30%
- If the majority of project activities are taking place off-site, off-campus indirect cost rates should be charged.
- For more information see: <http://nifa.usda.gov/indirect-costs>

Are there any unallowable costs or restrictions?

- Grant funds may not be used for student tuition or scholarships.
- Promotional items (e.g., T-shirts and other give-a-ways) and food functions (e.g., cookouts or other social meal gatherings) are considered 'entertainment' expenses, and are also not allowed

How do applicants begin the application process?

- STEP 1: Read the SPECA Request for Applications (RFA) on NIFA's website. (www.nifa.usda.gov and search for SPECA) You can also access the RFA page here: <http://tinyurl.com/js6n29g>
- STEP 2: Ensure your school is registered with Grants.gov. All of NIFA's competitive grants receive their proposals through [Grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). You will need to register for Grants.gov and SAM. Registration may take up to a month so you will need to finish this process as soon as possible. This site can guide you through the Grants.gov registration process: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.htm>
- STEP 3: Follow the RFA instructions carefully. We are not able to accept applications that do not meet the guidelines included in the RFA.
- STEP 4: Be sure to file the application in Grants.gov before the deadline. We do not accept late applications.

If I receive an award, what can I expect?

- A minimum of six months will be needed to process awards after the application deadline
- You will also have to provide annual reporting—both financial and project reports annually throughout the life of the grant

Are there special details to be aware of when drafting a proposal?

- Applications will not go through in Grants.gov unless all pages are in PDF format
- Applicants should use the program code SPECA, a change from previous years
- Page limits are strictly enforced.
 - 20 pages double spaced, plus up to five additional pages for tables and figures
 - Tables and figures can be included in the body of the narrative

How will my application be reviewed?

- An explanation of NIFA's Peer Review Process is available online here: <https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/nifa-peer-review-process-competitive-grant-applications>

What if I still have questions?

- Contact us at K-14@nifa.usda.gov