

Military Families Learning Network

FY 2014 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: August 8, 2014



U.S. Department of Agriculture

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Military Families Learning Network (MFLN)

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under **10.500**.

DATES: Applications must be received by **5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on August 8, 2014**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding (see Part IV, C. of this RFA). Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within 6 months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) seeks your comments about this RFA. We will consider the comments when we develop the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and we'll use them to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). Submit written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice to: Policy and Oversight Division; Office of Grants and Financial Management; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: Policy@nifa.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the **Military Families Learning Network** RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the Military Families Learning Network Competitive Grant Program for fiscal year (FY) 14 to develop an efficient and effective platform to 1) accomplish workforce development including professional development and 2) build capacity at the local level to meet the needs of military families and the individuals who serve them. The amount available for support of this program in FY 2014 is approximately **\$2,187,842**.

This notice identifies the objectives for **MFLN** projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a **MFLN** grant.

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

In accordance with the Economy Act of 1932, as amended, (31 U.S.C. 1535), The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy (OUSD {MC&FP}), in order to utilize the unique resources of USDA and its land-grant institution partners, has provided NIFA with funds to support the MFLN.

Pursuant to 7 U.S.C. Sec. 3318(c), the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the Director of NIFA, may enter into contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements, for periods not to exceed five years, with State agricultural experiment stations, State cooperative extension services, all colleges and universities, other research or educational institution or organization, Federal and private agencies and organizations, individuals, and any other contractor or recipient, either foreign or domestic, to further research, extension, or teaching programs in the food and agricultural sciences of the Department of Agriculture.

This project supports the mission of the DoD-USDA Military Extension Partnership Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2010, which states, “This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) sustains the interagency momentum developed through collaborations with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), land-grant universities, and the Cooperative Extension Service in providing joint programs in support of military children, youth, and families, and is responsive to General Accounting Office (GAO) recommendations by creating the Partnership for Military Families, to address future cross-cutting issues and challenges in supporting military families, particularly those who are geographically dispersed.”

B. Purpose and Priorities

NIFA is seeking applications from institutions that can demonstrate their ability to provide overall management and direction for an innovative and impactful approach providing dynamic and targeted professional development opportunities to military helping professionals.

Project objectives include:

- Increased capacity of military family support professionals, Cooperative Extension Service professionals, and non-federal family support professionals to serve military personnel and military connected personnel and their families through the development, coordination, marketing and delivery of relevant professional development trainings, presentations, and webinars.
- Strong, targeted awareness of Military Families Learning Network offerings through the implementation of a robust social media strategy designed to expand the growth of the network, participation and exchange of educational resources, and programming.

- An active community of practice of military family support professionals through a shared online space for discussion of Military Families Learning Network offerings and events as well as the exchange of resources and ideas, development and enhancement of evidence-based educational materials, and identification of promising and best practices.
- Development and increased capacity of professional concentration areas that are relevant and responsive to the military helping profession and managed to ensure consistent branding and high quality presentation.
- A structured virtual event for professionals connected to selected concentration areas that promote sharing and exposure to new research and emerging best practices and responds to the need for efficiency and effectiveness in program and service delivery.
- A dynamic, effective platform for the Military Families Learning Network demonstrated through the evaluation of content to ensure best practices and research-based standards are being met.

The successful applicant will produce the following:

- A clear, logical action plan;
- A high-quality virtual learning platform to increase the capacity of military helping professionals serving service members and families;
- Outline of strategic collaborations and support from appropriate partners and stakeholders; and
- A plan for overall leadership, support for concentration areas, and a virtual learning event.

C. Program Area Description

USDA NIFA and the OSD {MC&FP} seek to implement a high-quality learning platform that engages military family support professionals by connecting them to research and educational programming in order to identify and make use of research-and evidence-based information, educational and curriculum materials, and programming activities and efforts of the highest quality.

To equip family support professionals that serve military families with the highest quality education, supports, and resources, the Military Families Learning Network will build new and/or enhance existing engaged communities that connect military family service professionals with unbiased, research and evidence-based programming using online and digital technologies and innovations.

Current Status of Professional Development among Military Helping Professionals

Department of Defense Instruction 1342.22, Military Family Readiness, Enclosure 3, Paragraph 5 states that family readiness service providers shall receive training. Professional development across the Department of Defense (DoD) plays an integral role in the delivery of quality programming to Service members and their families. The DoD utilizes a large network of family support professionals (made up of DoD, contract, and non-government personnel) to deliver a multitude of support programs through the Family Readiness System. These support programs include, but are not limited to, financial readiness, marriage support, parenting, care giving, and more. Not only is the nature of support diverse, this system spans the entire world, delivering support program wherever Service members and their families are stationed.

Due to the diverse nature of delivery of programs, individuals receiving training, and the varying locales (among other challenges), the DoD relies heavily on the virtual delivery of training. This is especially relevant where the network of military helping professionals easily exceeds 500,000 personnel. Providing high quality virtual training can result in tremendous cost-savings when compared to in-person professional development that requires travel and any associated longer periods away from one's duty station. Further, targeting training to Concentration Areas is an efficient and effective way to accomplish workforce development, professional development within that workforce, and the building of capacity at the local level to meet the needs of military families in the respective areas of support.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The amount available for NIFA support of this program in **FY 2014** is approximately **\$2,187,842**. The successful applicant will be invited to enter into a cooperative agreement with NIFA. Elsewhere in this RFA the term grant includes cooperative agreement.

Awards issued as a result of this RFA will have designated the Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP), operated by the Department of Treasury's Financial Management Service, as the payment system for funds. For more information see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/method_of_payment.html.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2014, applications may be submitted as — “NEW” applications only. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

(1) New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the MFLN Program. We will review all new applications competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

C. Project Types

For FY 2014, approximately **\$2,187,842** will be available to fund one proposal for one year. The period of performance is one year.

D. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research

The responsible and ethical conduct of research (RCR) is critical for excellence, as well as public trust, in science and engineering. Consequently, we consider education in RCR essential to the preparation of future scientists. In accordance with sections 2, 3, and 8 of 7 CFR Part 3022, institutions that conduct USDA-funded extramural research must foster an atmosphere conducive to research integrity, bear primary responsibility for prevention and detection of research misconduct, and maintain and effectively communicate and train their staff regarding policies and procedures. In the event an application to NIFA results in an award, the Authorized Representative (AR) assures, through acceptance of the award that the institution will comply with the above requirements. Per award terms and conditions, grant recipients shall, upon request, make available to NIFA the policies, procedures, and documentation to support the conduct of the training.

Note that the training referred to herein shall be either on-campus or off-campus training. The general content of the ethics training will, at a minimum, emphasize three key areas of research ethics: authorship and plagiarism, data and research integration, and reporting misconduct. Each

institution will be responsible for developing its own training system, as schools will need flexibility to develop training tailored to their specific student needs. Grantees should consider the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program for RCR (<https://www.citiprogram.org/rcrpage.asp>). Typically this RCR education addresses the topics of: Data Acquisition and Management - collection, accuracy, security, access; Authorship and Publication; Peer Review; Mentor/Trainee Responsibilities; Collaboration; Conflict of Interest; Research Misconduct; Human Subject Research; and Use of Animals in Research.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may be submitted by State agricultural experiment stations, State cooperative extension services, all colleges and universities, other research or educational institution or organization, and any other contractor or recipient, either foreign or domestic, to further research, extension, or teaching programs in the food and agricultural sciences of the Department of Agriculture.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

NIFA does not require matching support for this program and matching resources will not be factored into the review process as evaluation criteria.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA. We urge you to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process see <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/grant-application-process.html>.

New Users of Grants.gov

Prior to preparing an application, we recommend that the PD/PI first contact an Authorized Representative (AR, also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grants.gov. If not (e.g., the institution/organization is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov), then the one-time registration process must be completed **PRIOR** to submitting an application. It can take as long as 2 weeks to complete the registration process so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations, the AR should go to **“Register” in the top right corner of the Grants.gov web page (or go to <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html>) for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov.** Item 2. below mentions the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.” Part II.1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide contains additional explanatory language regarding the registration process.

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

To receive application materials:

1. You must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov to access, complete, and submit applications. For basic system requirements and download instructions, see <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/software/adobe-reader-compatibility.html>. Grants.gov has a test package that will help you determine whether your current version of Adobe Reader is compatible.
2. To obtain the application package from Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>. Under Step 1 click on “Download a Grant Application Package,” and enter the funding opportunity number **USDA-NIFA-EXCA-004573** in the appropriate box and click “Download Package.” From the search results, click “Download” to access the application package.

Contained within the application package is the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.” This guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

If you require assistance to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms) **or submitting the application**, refer to resources available on

the Grants.gov website (<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-resources.html>). Grants.gov assistance is also available at:

Grants.gov customer support

800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on [federal holidays](#).

Email: support@grants.gov

Grants.gov iPortal: Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self-service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7 a.m. - 9 p.m. ET). Get help now!

Have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov:

- Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
- Name of agency you are applying to
- Specific area of concern

See <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html> for additional resources for applying electronically.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

You should prepare electronic applications following Parts V and VI of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed to prepare an application in response to this RFA. **If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.**

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., PDF) in Part III section 3. of the guide. ANY PROPOSALS THAT ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS (e.g., content format, PDF file format, file name restrictions, and no password protected files) WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. We will accept subsequent submissions of an application until close of business on the closing date in the RFA (see Part V, 2.1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further information).

Grants.gov provides online tools to assist if you do not own PDF-generating software. You will find PDF conversion software at <http://test.grants.gov/web/grants/support/technical-support/software/pdf-conversion-software.html>.

For any questions related to the preparation of an application, review the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide and the applicable RFA. If assistance is still needed for preparing application forms content, contact:

- Email: electronic@nifa.usda.gov
- Phone: 202-401-5048
- Business hours: Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. ET, excluding federal holidays.

1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

2. SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 3. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

3. R&R Other Project Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 4. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract. The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of **the MFLN Competitive Grant Program**, See Part V. 4.7 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

b. Field 8. Project Narrative.

NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed **8** pages of written text regardless of whether it is single- or double-spaced and up to **4** additional pages for figures and tables. We have established this maximum (**12** pages) to ensure fair and equitable competition.

The approach and budget should correspond with the following project components and proposed amounts:

The project will include three complementary components:

Leadership and Core Support: \$754,652

MFLN Leadership must include a Project Leader, Social Media Strategist, Evaluation and Research Leader and Professional Development Coordinator. MFLN Core Support includes administrative staff, communications and marketing, computer engineering and information technology staff, and additional evaluation and professional development support, as well as leadership travel and other support to include materials, supplies, and publications as needed. In collaboration with designated DoD points of contact, MFLN Leadership is responsible for managing the development of operations of eight concentration areas, developing a long range plan and timeline to identify deliverables once scope of work has been determined, and creating a comprehensive schedule for all concentration area deliverables. In addition, MFLN Leadership manages the separate teams to ensure consistent branding and quality presentation. Leadership also administers the overall communications plan, including messaging and outreach for the MFLN. The Core Support team promotes high quality professional development experiences by successfully integrating with DoD training platforms, assisting presenters in overcoming technical challenges during rehearsal, and ensuring seamless operations. Working with DoD POCs, the awardee will continue to search for the best methods to suit the online training needs

of a variety of adult learners. In addition, the awardee will meet regularly with DoD POCs utilizing a combination of electronic and face to face meetings.

Concentration Areas: \$1,158,850

The MFLN will develop new and/or enhance existing Concentration Areas (CA) as follows:

- Personal Finance (\$167,915)
- Family Development (\$167,915)
- Military Caregiving (\$167,915)
- Network Literacy (\$167,915)
- Nutrition and Wellness (\$106,425)
- Support for Special Needs (167,915)
- Community Capacity Building (\$106,425)
- Transition Support for Families (\$106,425)

In collaboration with designated DoD points of contact, personnel associated with each concentration area are tasked with identifying, developing and delivering innovative and effective resources and programming that support the respective professional development needs of Military and Family Support Programs. Overall program development will include Concentration Area staff using tools such as Ask an Expert, blog posts, web conferencing, published content, online courses and learning modules, video content, and a wide variety of social media channels to deliver content. Where appropriate to the staff level, coordination to provide continuing education credits is essential.

Military Families Learning Network Virtual Learning Event: \$274,340

A multi-day Virtual Learning Event (VLE) is a virtual conference for Personal Finance, Military Caregiving, and Family Development Concentration Areas. A multi-day VLE offers an opportunity for DoD staff in areas that include Support for Families with Special Needs, Family Development, and Personal Finance to meet professional development requirements associated with each of the respective concentration areas. All VLEs are recorded and archived for future viewing.

The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

Section 1: Introduction

- A clear statement of the goals and supporting objectives of the proposed activities corresponding to each of the primary components: Leadership and Core Support; Concentration Areas; and Virtual Learning Event, should be included. Summarize the body of knowledge and significant contextual issues which substantiate the need for the proposed activities. Describe ongoing or recently completed research as well as program development and implementation related to the proposed project; and

- Detail the characteristics of the lead institution that make it particularly qualified to conduct the proposed work; describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed project particularly experience with the professional development of military helping professionals and virtual learning platforms, including the work and related work of key project personnel.

Section 2: Statement of Need

- Describe how this overall project will address the issues and the audience to be served; and
- Describe how the proposed Military Families Learning Network project will develop and/or enhance an existing high-quality virtual learning platform to increase the capacity of military helping professionals serving military families.

Section 3: Objectives

Clear, concise, complete, and logically presented statement(s) of specific aims of the proposal.

Section 4: Methods

The procedures or methodology to be applied to the proposed effort should be described. This section should include, but not necessarily be limited to:

- Methods to be employed; including the feasibility and rationale for their use in the project;
- Development and/or implementation challenges that may be encountered;
- Limitations to proposed procedures; and
- Describe stakeholder involvement and collaborations in problem identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Section 5: Evaluation Design and Methodologies

The primary responsibility will be to develop and implement an evaluation plan or build upon an existing evaluation plan to measure how effectively the Military Families Learning Network is serving the informational and educational needs of family service professionals working with military families and communities.

Describe how the evaluation design and methodologies selected, based on project objectives which will be used to measure the extent to which the objectives are met, including those related to educational offerings and resources, the concentration areas, and the social media strategy.

This section should address but not necessarily be limited to:

- Focus of evaluation as to audience;
- Methods within which information will be collected;
- Means by which data will be collected; indicate collection instruments and methods if appropriate (i.e.: questionnaire, interviews, focus groups, site visits, etc.); and
- Identification of ongoing program sustainability or improvement.

At a minimum, the evaluation should answer the following questions:

- How will the attendance and impact (i.e., satisfaction, usefulness, knowledge, skill, and behavior changes) of learning events be tracked and assessed?
- How will document user interactions and other related distribution services with the resource site be evaluated?

Section 6: Communication Plan

Briefly describe how progress and results from this project will be communicated to stakeholders and the public.

Section 7: Project Management

Provide a brief summary of key personnel (i.e. Project Leader/Manager, Social Media Strategist, Research Lead, Professional Development Lead), their project functions, qualifications and expertise along with timelines, accounting procedures, reporting, and collaborative efforts. Describe any experience in coordinating with other DoD – USDA Extension Military Partnership projects such as the Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness, Military REACH, Virtual Lab School, and other projects as appropriate.

4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This section of the Guide includes information about the people who require a Senior/Key Person Profile, and details about the Biographical Sketch and the Current and Pending Support, including a link to a suggested template for the Current and Pending Support.

5. R&R Personal Data – As noted in Part V, 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award.

6. R&R Budget

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Indirect Cost: Fully negotiated rate. The applicant should use the current negotiated indirect cost rate established (i.e., approved) by its cognizant Federal agency. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate, the applicant should request a rate from the Federal agency from which the applicant receives the most funding.

7. Supplemental Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part VI, 1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. **Field 2. Program to which you are applying.** Enter the program code name (i.e., enter “**Military Families Learning Network**”) and the program code (i.e., enter “**MFLN**”).

b. **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.** See Part VI, 1.8 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by **5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on August 8, 2014.** Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

If you have trouble submitting an application to Grants.gov, you should FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Part IV. A. for Grants.gov contact information.

We send email correspondence to the AR regarding the status of submitted applications. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received correspondence **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 30 days of the established deadline, contact the Agency Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

Agency policy limits the maximum potential funding period (including any awards transferred from another institution or organization) to five years in duration. The funding period will commence on the effective date cited in the award instrument. Any such limitation also applies to subcontracts made under awards subject to a funding period limitation.

E. Other Submission Requirements

You should follow the submission requirements noted in Part IV, section 1.9 in the document entitled “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.”

For information about the **status of a submitted application**, see Part III., section 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

We evaluate each application in a 2-part process. First, we screen each application to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, a review panel will technically evaluate applications that meet these requirements.

We select reviewers based upon their training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and federal agencies, and private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

B. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria below will be used to review applications submitted in response to this RFA:

1. Potential for Developing a Military Families Learning Network serving the DoD

This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will succeed in: 1) developing a high-quality virtual learning platform that increases the capacity of military helping professionals serving military families across the Military Services as well as within civilian programs; (2) providing the overall management of this learning platform including collaborations, partnerships, concentration areas and project staff; (3) developing and coordinating valuable program content and resources through content expertise, collaborations, and/or partnerships, particularly with the land-grant university system; and 4) demonstrating successful past experience with related projects, particularly those involving virtual learning platforms serving military family professionals across the DoD.

2. Proposed Approach and Program Coordination

This criterion is used to assess the soundness of the proposed approach including statement of need, scope of the project, objectives, methodology, key personnel, timeline, expected products and results (e.g., educational approaches, including an effective and efficient delivery platform, collaborations and partnerships), and communication plan. Recent experience working with military family service professional audiences in partnership with Land-grant Universities and the Cooperative Extension Service must be demonstrated. Also cite any experience in the

development of concentration areas and virtual learning events in coordination with the Department of Defense.

3. Evaluation

This criterion is used to assess the adequacy of the evaluation design and its capacity to measure the extent to which program objectives are met and build upon any outcomes to date.

4. Budget and Budget Narrative

This criterion is used to assess the extent to which the total budget adequately supports the project and is cost effective based on budget outline provided. Elements considered include: the necessity and reasonableness of costs to carry out project activities and achieve project objective and the adequacy of time committed to the project by key project personnel.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, we take extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, we determine the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 1801 Robert Fulton Drive, Suite 555, Reston, VA, 20191. Phone: (888) 349-7715. Web site: <http://www.hepinc.com>.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, are kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process, to the extent permitted by law; therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one time basis, with updates on an as needed basis. This requirement is part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another NIFA program. We will provide you copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the preaward process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors that may exclude an applicant from receiving federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the NIFA awarding official shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the NIFA awarding official as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. The project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by NIFA under this RFA may be used only for the purpose for which they are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, regulations, terms and conditions of the award, applicable federal cost principles, USDA assistance regulations (parts 3015 and 3019 of 7 CFR), and NIFA General Awards Administration Provisions at 7 CFR part 3430, subparts A through E.

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum:

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the director has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;
- (2) Title of project;
- (3) Name(s) and institution(s) of PDs chosen to direct and control approved activities;
- (4) Identifying award number assigned by NIFA;
- (5) Project period, specifying the amount of time NIFA intends to support the project without requiring recompetition for funds;
- (6) Total amount of financial assistance approved for the award;
- (7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;
- (8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;
- (9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> to view NIFA award terms and conditions);

(10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and

(11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by NIFA to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to:

2 CFR Part 220—Cost Principles for Educational Institutions (OMB Circular A-21).

2 CFR Part 225—Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments (OMB Circular A-87).

2 CFR Part 230—Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-122).

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A—USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR Part 331 and 9 CFR Part 121—USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21, A-87, and A-122, now codified at 2 CFR Parts 220, 225 and 230), and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3016—USDA Implementation of Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments.

7 CFR Part 3017—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement).

7 CFR Part 3018—USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3019—USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations (2 CFR Part 215).

7 CFR Part 3021—USDA Implementation of Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants).

7 CFR Part 3022—Research Institutions Conducting USDA-Funded Extramural Research; Research Misconduct.

7 CFR Part 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3407—USDA procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

7 CFR 3430—Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Financial Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute) —prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in federally-assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq. —Bayh Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in federally-assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

Grantees are to submit initial project information and annual and summary reports to NIFA's electronic, Web-based inventory system that facilitates both grantee submissions of project outcomes and public access to information on Federally-funded projects. The details of these reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions. Details of annual and final technical reporting requirements also are included in the award terms and conditions.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Programmatic Contacts –

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Administrative/Business Contact:

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Branch Chief
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PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access to Review Information

We will send copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, awardees may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

2. Changes in Project Plans

a. The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.

b. The awardee must request, and the ADO must approve in writing, all changes in approved goals or objectives prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests be approved for changes that are outside the scope of the original approved project.

c. The awardee must request, and the ADO must approve in writing, all changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel, prior to effecting such changes.

d. The awardee must request, and the ADO must approve in writing, all transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not federal funds are involved, prior to instituting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

e. The project period may be extended without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed any applicable statutory limit or expiring appropriation limitation. The terms and conditions of award include information about no-cost extensions of the award and when ADO's prior approval is necessary.

f. Changes in Approved Budget: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the

ADO prior to instituting such changes, if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of NIFA transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of three years. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

D. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

E. Definitions

Please refer to [7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Financial Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions](#), for applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.