



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Centers of Excellence at 1890 Institutions

FUNDING YEAR: Fiscal Year 2022
APPLICATION DEADLINE: November 17, 2021
LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE: Not Required
FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: USDA-NIFA-1890COE-008561
ANTICIPATED FUNDING AVAILABLE: \$10,000,000
Approximately \$4,000,000 for New Awards
ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 10.523

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT
National Institute of Food and Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance. The Centers of Excellence at 1890 Institutions (1890 COE) is listed in the Assistance Listings under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number 10.523.

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
Application:	5:00 P.M. Eastern, November 17, 2021
Letter of Intent:	Not applicable
Applicants Comments:	Within six months from the issuance of this notice <i>(NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month)</i>

Stakeholder Input. The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) seeks comments on all request for applications (RFAs) so it can deliver programs efficiently, effectively, with integrity, and with a focus on customer service. NIFA considers comments, to the extent possible when developing RFAs and use comments to help meet the requirements of [Section 103\(c\)\(2\) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 \(7 U.S.C. 7613\(c\)\(2\)\)](#). Policy@usda.gov (email is for comments only). Please use the following subject line: Response to the Centers of Excellence at 1890 Institutions RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This notice identifies the objectives for 1890 COE projects, deadlines, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions.

The intent of the 1890 COE is to address critical needs in protecting and managing domestic natural resources for current and future production of food and agricultural products; develop/apply emerging technologies to increase agricultural productivity; enhance small farm economic viability; improve rural communities by developing genetic and sensor technologies for food and agriculture; provide technology training to farmers; and enhance academic and career development activities for students pursuing careers in the food and agricultural sciences.

The total amount available for grants in FY 2022 is \$10,000,000, with \$6,000,000 to be awarded as continuations to four existing Centers, and \$4,000,000 to be competitively awarded through this RFA to two new Centers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT..... 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 4

PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION 7

A. Legislative Authority7

B. Purpose and Priorities7

A. Available Funding10

B. Type of Application.....10

C. Ethical Conduct of Funded Projects10

PART III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION..... 11

A. Eligibility Requirements.....11

B. Cost Sharing or Matching.....11

PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION 12

A. Method of Application12

B. Content and Form of the Application12

C. Funding Restrictions.....16

PART V. APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS 17

A. NIFA’s Evaluation Process17

B. Evaluation Criteria.....17

C. Organizational Management Information.....18

D. Application Disposition.....18

PART VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION 19

A. General19

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.....20

C. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements20

PART VII. OTHER INFORMATION 22

A. Use of Funds and Changes in Budget.....22

B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards.....22

C. Regulatory Information22

APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACTS 23

APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS..... 24

APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS 25

TABLE OF TABLES

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines.....	3
Table 2: Key Application Instructions.....	8
Table 3: Steps to Obtain Application Materials.....	11
Table 4: Help and Resources	11
Table 5: Key Application Instructions.....	12

PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

Section 7213 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334) added [7 U.S.C. 5926\(d\)](#), Centers of Excellence at 1890 Institutions (1890 COE). Using this authority, grants will be awarded to the 1890 Land-grant Institutions (those receiving funds under the Second Morrill Act ([7 U.S.C. 321](#))), including Tuskegee University, to support the Centers of Excellence.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The 1890 COE program directly aligns with the following [USDA Strategic Goals](#):

1. Strategic Goal 2: Maximize the Ability of American Agricultural Producers to Prosper by Feeding and Clothing the World;
2. Strategic Goal 4: Facilitate Rural Prosperity and Economic Development;
3. Strategic Goal 5: Strengthen the Stewardship of Private Lands Through Technology and Research;
4. Strategic Goal 6: Ensure Productive and Sustainable Use of our National Forest System Lands; and
5. Strategic Goal 7: Provide all Americans Access to a Safe, Nutritious, and Secure Food Supply.

The purpose of the 1890 COE program is to provide support for Centers of Excellence at 1890 institutions. Per the legislative authority, the Secretary shall recognize not less than three centers of excellence, each led by an 1890 Institution. Specifically, the legislation lists six areas of focus, as follows:

1. Student Success and Workforce Development;
2. Nutrition, Health, Wellness, and Quality of Life;
3. Farming Systems, Rural Prosperity, and Economic Sustainability;
4. Global Food Security and Defense;
5. Natural Resources, Energy, and Environment; and
6. Emerging Technologies.

In FY 2022, NIFA will fund the following four existing 1890 Centers of Excellence as continuations:

1. Student Success and Workforce Development;
2. Nutrition, Health, Wellness, and Quality of Life;
3. Farming Systems, Rural Prosperity, and Economic Sustainability; and
4. Global Food Security and Defense.

This RFA solicits proposals to fund two additional centers in the following focus areas (one focus area per Center of Excellence):

1. Natural Resources, Energy, and Environment; and
2. Emerging Technologies.

Center of Excellence for Natural Resources, Energy, and Environment

The Center of Excellence for Natural Resources, Energy, and Environment will fund teaching, research, extension, and integrated projects that focus on protecting natural resources, developing

strategies for climate-smart agriculture and forestry, and advancing energy independence in the United States. The Center may support projects that include (but are not limited to): developing new varieties of plants and animals that can adapt to climate change or mitigate climate change; identifying new management strategies for agriculture and forestry to adapt to climate change; increasing the sustainable use of natural resources; and improving energy and natural resource conservation and other topics.

The Center of Excellence for Emerging Technologies

The Center of Excellence for Emerging Technologies will fund teaching, research, extension, and integrated projects that may focus on the development of emerging technologies to increase agricultural productivity on small and underserved farms, enhance small farm economic viability, improve rural communities by developing genetic, data-driven, and precision engineering technologies for small farmers, and providing technology training to farmers and agricultural workforce. The Center may support projects that include (but are not limited to): advancement of precision agriculture (e.g., sensors, devices, machines, drones, robots); advancement of broadband connectivity for rural populations; innovative approaches to distance education (e.g., massive open online courses); instructional strategies for educating underserved populations about emerging technologies; and utilization of technology to ensure reliable monitoring and management of natural resources (e.g., air, soil and water quality) and other topics.

1890 Center of Excellence

As used here, an “1890 COE” refers to an administrative unit, not a brick and mortar facility. The 1890 COE facilitates administration, coordination, and management of multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional research, teaching, extension and integrated projects. The 1890 COE serves as the focal point to assess regional and national needs and establish priorities for cooperatively funded projects.

The 1890 COE provides leadership and administrative support for planning, development, implementation, and performance tracking of the research, teaching and extension projects that target the critical needs addressed by the respective Centers. The 1890 COE ensures the relevancy, quality, and performance of funded projects. Each 1890 COE can sub-contract with a non-1890 university or a non-governmental organization to support the administrative and coordination responsibilities of the Centers.

Each 1890 COE will consist of a host 1890 institution that will maintain fiduciary responsibility for the awarded funds. NIFA encourages a consortium of 1890 institutions to provide programmatic and administrative direction for each 1890 COE. The Centers must have developed a process for soliciting input and partnerships from relevant entities (e.g., industry, government, community-based organizations, etc.).

The host institution(s) for each 1890 COE must demonstrate: 1) commitment and competencies related to the mission of the respective Center; 2) ability to provide broad programmatic leadership for research, teaching, and extension activities administered by the Center; 3) competency in grant and subcontract management; and 4) ability and willingness to provide administrative support for the Center.

The 1890 COE will solicit proposals from the 1890 institutions through a fair and transparent competitive process. All projects funded by the Centers must address the identified objectives and priorities noted in the COE solicitation. The solicitation will encourage multidisciplinary and multi-institutional projects.

Each 1890 COE must submit an annual accomplishment report and a final project report into the NIFA REEport system within 90 days from the end of the reporting period as per the Terms and Conditions. Annual and final project reports must include: 1) an outline of project information including specific projects and project objectives and goals for awards funded by the Centers; 2) a concise description of individual project progress; and 3) how the work aligns with the 1890 COE goals, and USDA and NIFA strategic goals.

Extension Foundation. The 1890 COE program encourages (but does not require) projects that develop content suitable for delivery through the [Extension Foundation](#).

Global Engagement. NIFA supports global engagement that advances U.S. agricultural goals. NIFA recognizes that collaboration with international partners may be necessary to attain the agency's goals for U.S. agriculture, promote global competence of our nation's future agricultural workforce, and promote safe and nutritious food security in a growing world. Therefore, although application to this RFA is limited to eligible U.S. institutions, applicants may collaborate with international partners to include subcontracts to international partners or other institutions. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefits to the United States. (The following AFRI program guidance is also relevant for the 1890 COE program - see [International Partnerships](#)).

Leadership Skills Development. The development of leadership skills, knowledge, and qualities are necessary to prepare students for agricultural and related careers in the private sector, government, and academia. The 1890 COE teaching/education applications must demonstrably incorporate a leadership development component to equip students with technical and leadership abilities upon graduation. Specific activities may include:

1. Developing practical applications to increase understanding of leadership roles, including critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills; ethics and professionalism; and working in teams;
2. Connecting the academic classroom experience with daily leadership roles and organizational activities;
3. Providing opportunities for mentoring and shadowing; and
4. Organizing leadership academies, workshops, and trainings.

Table 2: Program Key Information

Title	Description
Program Code:	COE
Program Code Name:	1890COE
CFDA Number	10.523
Project Type:	Integrated
Grant Type:	Standard
Application Deadline:	November 17, 2021
Letter of Intent Deadline:	Not applicable
Grant Duration:	36 Months
Anticipated # of Awards:	2
Maximum Award Amount:	\$2,000,000 per Center

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The total amount available for grants in FY 2022 is \$10,000,000, with \$6,000,000 to be awarded as continuations to four existing Centers, and \$4,000,000 to be competitively awarded through this RFA to two new Centers.

USDA is not committed to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. The [Automated Standard Application for Payments](#), operated by the Department of Treasury, Bureau of Fiscal Service, is the designated payment system for awards resulting from this RFA.

B. Type of Application

NIFA will evaluate applications using the criteria described in [Part V](#) of this RFA. Application for FY 2022 is limited to the following application types:

1. **New application: Only new applications** will be accepted and evaluated using the criteria described in [Part V](#) of this RFA and are subject to the due dates herein.

C. Ethical Conduct of Funded Projects

In accordance with sections [2, 3, and 8 of 2 CFR Part 422](#), 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. Award recipients must, upon request, make available to NIFA the policies, procedures, and documentation to support the conduct of the training. See [Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research](#) for further information.

PART III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligibility Requirements

Full applications may only be submitted by an individual or consortium of the nineteen 1890 land-grant institutions, including Tuskegee University (as identified in the Second Morrill Act; [7 U.S.C 321 et seq.](#) ([7 U.S.C. 321](#))). Grant recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply for the purpose of supporting the overall coordination and administration of the 1890 COE. Failure to meet the eligibility criteria by the application deadline may result in exclusion from consideration or, preclude NIFA from making an award. For those new to Federal financial assistance, it is highly recommended to review the [NIFA's Grants Overview](#) information about grants and other resources to help understand the Federal awards process.

Duplicate or Multiple Submissions – duplicate or multiple submissions are not allowed. When the same application is submitted twice or more, NIFA will accept the last submission as the final.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

No Match Required - The 1890 COE program has **NO** matching requirement. NIFA will not factor matching resources into the review process as an evaluation criterion.

PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

A. Method of Application

Applicants must apply to this RFA electronically; no other method or response is accepted. The electronic application for this RFA and additional resources are available on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and [Grants 101](#). **Table 3** provides instructions on how to obtain an electronic application. **Part II § 1** of the [NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide](#) (Application Guide) contains detailed information regarding the [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) registration process.

Table 3. Steps to Obtain Application Materials

Steps	Action
Step One: Register	<i>New Users</i> to Grants.gov must register early with Grants.gov prior to submitting an application (Register Here).
Step Two: Download Adobe	Download and Install Adobe Reader (see Adobe Software Compatibility for basic system requirements)
Step Three: Find Application	Using this funding opportunity number USDA-NIFA-1890COE-008561 search for the application here: Opportunity Package .
Step Four: Assess Readiness	Contact an AR prior to starting an application to assess the organization’s readiness to submit an electronic application.

Table 4: Help and Resources

Grants.gov Support	NIFA Support
Grants.gov Online Support Telephone support: 800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035 Email support: support@grants.gov Self-service customer-based support: Grants.gov iPortal Key Information: Customer service business Hours 24/7, except federal holidays .	Email: grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov Key Information: Business hours: Monday thru Friday, 7a.m. – 5p.m. ET, except federal holidays

B. Content and Form of the Application

The [Application Guide](#) is part of the corresponding application package for this RFA. The RFA overrides the [Application Guide](#) if there is a discrepancy between the two documents. NIFA will accept subsequent submissions to an application until the application deadline. However, applicants that do not meet the application requirements, to include partial applications, risk being excluded from NIFA’s review. NIFA will assign a proposal number to all applications that

meet the requirements of this RFA. Applicants must refer to the proposal number when corresponding with NIFA. **Table 5** outlines other key instructions for applicants.

Table 5: Key Application Instructions

Instruction	References (All references are to the <u>Application Guide</u>)
Attachments must be in a portable document format (PDF) format.	Part III § 3
Check the manifest of submitted files to verify attachments are in the correct format.	Part III § 6.1
Conduct an administrative review of the application before submission.	Part VII and
Follow the submission instructions.	Part IV § 1.5
Provide an accurate email address, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R.	Part IV § 1.5
Contact the Grants.gov helpdesk for technical support and keep a record of the correspondence.	N/A
Contact NIFA if applicant does not receive correspondence from NIFA regarding an application within 30 days of the application deadline.	N/A

SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet. See **Part V § 2** and **Part V § 2.17** of the [Application Guide](#) for the required certifications and assurances.

SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s). See **Part V § 3** of the [Application Guide](#).

R&R Other Project Information Form. See **Part V § 4** of the [Application Guide](#).

1. Field 7. Project Summary (PS)/Abstract. The PS must show how the project goals align with the project goals of the 1890 COE program. See **Part V § 4.7** of the [Application Guide](#) for instructions and suggested templates.
2. Field 8. Project Narrative (PN). The PN must not exceed **20 1.5 spaced** pages of written text and up to **5 1.5 spaced** additional pages for figures and tables (the font size for tables should be no smaller than 11 points, Times New Roman). The page limits outlined here ensure fair and equitable competition. The PN must include all the following:
 - a. **Rationale and significance**
 - i. *Problem and Opportunity* - Clearly state the research, teaching, or extension problem or opportunity to be addressed by the 1890 COE.
 - ii. *Justification* - Summarize the body of knowledge justifying the need for the proposed 1890 COE. Discuss the target audiences that the Center will engage, and the potential beneficiaries. Discuss how the projects funded through the Center will be of value at the regional, national, or international level(s).

- iii. *Objectives and approach*- Cite and discuss the specific objectives to be accomplished. Identify the individual(s) and Institution(s) including partners and sub-awardees responsible for each objective and describe procedures for accomplishing the objectives of the Center. Discuss the extent to which students from the 1890 institutions will be involved in the teaching/education, research, extension, or integrated projects. Include a timetable for conducting the project and identify limitations that may impact the timetable. Provide strategies to avoid or compensate for the limitations.
- iv. *Products and Results* - Explain, including metrics, the expected products, and results, outputs, and their potential impact on strengthening food and agricultural sciences education, research and extension in the United States.

b. Management Plan

Describe the management plan that will be implemented to ensure that effective and efficient operation of the 1890 COE. This section must address the following:

- i. The institutional support and capabilities of the host 1890 institution;
- ii. The role of member institutions in the consortium (if applicable);
- iii. Plan for soliciting stakeholder (i.e., industry, government, community-based organizations, etc.) input regarding funding priorities;
- iv. Plan for collecting and submitting needed data to NIFA to compile annual report to Congress, see Part VI C of this RFA; and
- v. The role of any known non-1890 subcontractor(s) that will support the overall administration and coordination of the 1890 COE.

c. Sub-award Program and the 1890 COE Competitive Process

Provide a description of the sub-award program and the competitive process that will ensure effective management of federal resources. Include the following:

- i. A description of the sub-award program competitive process that will be used to solicit and select applicants for each funding opportunity to ensure a fair and open decision-making process;
- ii. Details on the proposal review process, the process for selecting panelists, and the criteria that will be used to rank the applications during the selection process; and
- iii. Rationale (if applicable) regarding the applicant's intent on requesting applications for sub-awards that deviate from the primary criteria for projects funded through this 1890 COE.

A streamlining agreement may be requested for competitively selected sub-award projects.

To alleviate the administrative burden and expedite the awards process, NIFA may agree to modify the requirements for the administration of the 1890 COE awards. When the sub-award process has been approved by NIFA (streamlining agreement), the grantee will still be required to submit proposals and budgets for sub-awards to NIFA for programmatic approval by the NIFA 1890 COE program staff.

Under the terms of the streamlining agreement, previously released funds may not be spent on sub-awards until a specific request is made, on official letterhead of the host institution, and signed by the Authorized Representative (AR). The specific request for the proposed projects shall be submitted to the NIFA 1890 COE program staff for programmatic approval as per the streamlining agreement between NIFA and the host institution of the 1890 COE.

d. Reporting and Evaluation Plan

- i. Describe the capacity and plan of the host institution and the 1890 COE leadership for collecting and reporting data as required by NIFA;
- ii. Describe the evaluation plan that will be used to measure the collective impact of the 1890 COE; and
- iii. Describe the strategies for incorporating feedback into the program to improve effectiveness.

3. Field 12, Add Other Attachments. See **Part V § 4.12** of the [Application Guide](#).

- a. **Collaborative Arrangements** – PDF Attachment. Title the attachment as “Collaborative Arrangements” in the document header and save file as “Collaborative Arrangement”. If it is necessary to enter into formal consulting or collaborative arrangements with others, such arrangements should be fully explained and justified. If the consultant(s) or collaborator(s) are known at the time of the application, a vitae or resume should be provided. In addition, evidence (e.g., letter of support signed by the AR of the consultant/collaborating organization) should be provided that the collaborators involved have agreed to render these services. The applicant also will be required to provide additional information on consultants and collaborators in the budget portion of the application.
- b. **Letters of Commitment** should be included for all individuals, 1890 consortia members, and other organizations included in the proposal.

R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded). See **Part V § 5** of the [Application Guide](#) for profile requirements, details about the biographical sketch, and suggested support templates.

R&R Personal Data. This information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award (see **Part V § 6** of the [Application Guide](#)).

R&R Budget. See **Part V § 7** of the [Application Guide](#).

1. Match – Not Required
2. Indirect costs (IDC) – See **Part IV § C** of this RFA for funding restrictions regarding indirect cost, and **Part V 7.9** of the [Application Guide](#) for additional information.

Data Management Plan. A DMP is required for this program. Applicants should clearly articulate how the project director (PD) and co-PDs plan to manage and disseminate the data generated by the project. The DMP will be considered during the merit review process (see **Part V § B** of this RFA, **Part III § 3.1** of the [Application Guide](#) and [NIFA’s Data Management Plan](#)).

Supplemental Information Form. See **Part VI § 1** of the [Application Guide](#).

1. Field 2. Program to which the applicant is applying. Enter the program name (**1890 COE**) and the program code (**COE**). Accurate entry is critical.
2. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List. See **Part VI § 1.8** of the [Application Guide](#).

Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants. This is required for corporate applicants. See **Part VI § 2** of the [Application Guide](#) for a description of the term, “corporation.”

C. Funding Restrictions

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

Indirect Cost (IDC) not to exceed 30 percent of Total Federal Funds Awarded (TFFA) of the recipient. [7 U.S.C. 3310](#) (a) and (c) Section 1462(a) and (c) of the [National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977](#) (NARETPA) limits IDC for the overall award to 30 percent of Total Federal Funds Awarded (TFFA) under a research, education, or extension grant. The maximum IDC rate allowed under the award is determined by calculating the amount of IDC using:

1. the sum of an institution’s negotiated indirect cost rate and the indirect cost rate charged by sub-awardees, if any; or
2. 30 percent of TFFA.

The maximum allowable IDC rate under the award, including the IDC charged by the sub-awardee(s), if any, is the lesser of the two rates.

If the result of number one is the lesser of the two rates, the grant recipient is allowed to charge the negotiated IDC rate on the prime award and the sub-award(s), if any. Any sub-awards would be subject to the sub-awardee’s negotiated IDC rate. The sub-awardee may charge its negotiated IDC rate on its portion of the award, provided the sum of the IDC rate charged under the award by the prime awardee and the sub-awardee(s) does not exceed 30 percent of the TFFA.

If the result of number two is the lesser of the two rates, then the maximum IDC rate allowed for the overall award, including any sub-award(s), is limited to 30 percent of the TFFA. That is, the IDC of the prime awardee plus the sum of the IDC charged by the sub-awardee(s), if any, may not exceed 30 percent of the TFFA.

In the event of an award, the prime awardee is responsible for ensuring the maximum indirect cost allowed for the award is not exceeded when combining IDC for the Federal portion (i.e., prime and sub-awardee(s)) and any applicable cost-sharing (see [7 CFR 3430.52\(b\)](#)). Amounts exceeding the maximum allowable IDC are considered unallowable. See sections 408 and 410 of [2 CFR 200](#).

Successful applicants must not use grant funds awarded under the authority of this RFA to renovate or refurbish research, education, or extension space; purchase or install fixed equipment in such space; or to plan, repair, rehabilitate, acquire, or construct buildings or facilities.

PART V. APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. NIFA's Evaluation Process

NIFA evaluates each application in a two-part process. First, we screen each application to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements set forth in this RFA. All administrative requirements must be met in order for the application to proceed to the next level of review. Second, a scientific peer-review process will be used to technically evaluate applications that have met the administrative requirements using a review panel (see [NIFA Peer Review Process](#)).

Scientific Peer Review Process:

NIFA selects reviewers for the review panel based upon their training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors:

1. 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;
2. the need to include experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields;
3. the need to include other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess the relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and program needs;
4. the need to include 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;
5. the need to maintain a balanced composition with regard to minority and female representation and equitable age distribution; and
6. the need to include reviewers who can judge the practical effective usefulness of each application to producers and the general public.

After each peer review panel has completed its deliberations, the responsible program staff of NIFA will recommend that your project is either approved for support from currently available funds or declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review.

NIFA reserves the right to negotiate with the PD/PI and/or the submitting organization or institution regarding project revisions (e.g., reductions in the scope of work, funding level, period, or method of support) before recommending any project for funding.

After the review process has been completed, NIFA sends copies of reviews, *not* including the reviewers' identity, and a summary (if applicable) of the review panel comments to the PD.

Conflicts of interest. NIFA takes extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may influence the review or evaluation (see [NIFA Peer Review Process for Competitive Grant Applications](#)).

B. Evaluation Criteria

Each application will be evaluated by three peer reviewers. We will use the evaluation criteria below (which are listed in priority order of importance) to review grant applications submitted in response to this RFA:

1. Rationale and significance

- a. Clear justification for the 1890 COE that demonstrates a national or regional need that can be addressed through effective and collaborative research, teaching, and/or extension programs; and
- b. Description of the anticipated outcomes, outputs and impact on strengthening food and agricultural sciences via education, research and extension.

2. Management Plan

- a. Demonstration of the capacity of the host 1890 institution to administer Federally funded programs including the necessary internal financial and administrative control systems;
- b. Clear description of the role and qualifications of members of the 1890 COE host consortium and other collaborators;
- c. Effective plan for identifying and engaging with appropriate stakeholders to guide the priorities and support the initiatives of the 1890 COE.

3. Sub-award program and the Center's competitive process

- a. Clear description of the sub-award and competitive process that ensures fairness and transparency; and
- b. Effective communication and coordination plan to ensure that all 1890 institutions are treated fairly.

4. Reporting Capacity and Evaluation.

- a. Demonstration of current capacity to collect and report data for multiple projects;
- b. Effective and realistic plan for evaluating the success and impact of the 1890 COE; and
- c. Plan for incorporating feedback into the program to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the 1890 COE.

C. Organizational Management Information

Applicants must submit specific management information relating to an applicant prior to an award and update the information as needed. Applicants may only have to update their information if they had previously provided the information under this or another NIFA program. NIFA provides the requisite forms during the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible for award under this program, 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, or a determination that an applicant is not responsible).

D. Application Disposition

Applicants may withdraw at any time before NIFA makes a final funding decision. NIFA will retain all applications, including withdrawn applications and unfunded applications.

PART VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds authorized, the NIFA awarding official will make grants to responsible and 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 must 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, and [NIFA General Awards Administration Provisions, 7 CFR part 3430](#), subparts A through E.

Release of Funds for 1890 COE

The initial award will obligate the entire amount available for funding in the fiscal year, and approve those costs related to and allowed for the administration of the 1890 COEs and in compliance with approved streamlining agreements. The 1890 COEs will withhold funds for recommended projects/sub-awards pending submission of a NIFA-approved Request for Release of Funds, submitted on institutional letterhead, and signed by the AR of the host institution along with the Plan of Work for which the funds have been requested.

Plan of Work: A Plan of Work outlining information relative to individual projects must be submitted to the NIFA 1890 COE Program staff for approval after the administrative Center has completed their respective competitions and have selected the projects that will be awarded. The Plan of Work must include:

- Project Title;
- Project Duration;
- Funding Requested by Subcontracting Institution;
- Executive Summary;
- Project Work Group;
- Background and Project Justification;
- Related Current and Previous Work; Project Goals and Specific Objectives;
- Alignment with USDA and NIFA strategic goals;
- Work Statement and Procedures;
- Timetable;
- Define research, teaching, and/or extension components, as relevant;
- Budget Pages by Institution and year;
- Budget Narrative by Institution;
- One-page Vitas of Participating Collaborators; and
- Role of Participating Collaborators.

Award Notice. The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information as described in [2 CFR 200.210](#) (see [NIFA's Terms and Conditions](#)).

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications and the projects outlined in this RFA (some are listed here: [Federal Regulations](#)). Unless specifically noted by statute or award-specific requirements, [NIFA Policy Guide](#) applies to all NIFA awards.

C. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

The output and reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions (see [NIFA's Terms and Conditions](#) for information about NIFA award terms). Program specific reporting guidelines will be included in the Award Terms and Conditions. If there are any award-specific award terms, they will be identified in the award.

Due to the nature and administrative differences relative to the 1890 COE Program, in addition to the reporting requirements listed in the Terms and Conditions of the initial administrative award, the following information must be submitted into REEport annually for each sub-award funded by the administrative Center:

1. NIFA Proposal Number;
2. NIFA Award Number;
3. Project Title;
4. Institutions involved;
 - a. PD and co-PD names, title, and institution;
 - b. All other participants involved in the project, funded or unfunded;
5. Purpose and Goals of the Project;
6. Specific Objectives of the Project;
 - a. Update progress and results of each specific objective;
 - b. Rationale for lack of progress on specific objectives;
 - c. Actions to be taken to accomplish specific objectives;
7. Final Sub-award Project Report;
 - a. Outcomes for each Objective

1890 COE Standard Reporting Metrics

NIFA is required to develop an annual report to Congress on the 1890 COE Program. Per the 2018 Farm Bill legislation, the report must detail the resources invested in the Centers and the work being done by each Center. To fulfill this legislative mandate, NIFA has established ten metrics (which are listed below) that each Center should address in their respective report. If any of the metrics are not applicable to your Center, please include an explanation in your annual REEport progress report. NIFA requests that COE submit this information directly to the programmatic contact (see Appendix I) by October 15th of each year during the grant's period of performance. NIFA will send a reminder to the Centers one month in advance of the deadline. We ask that you submit this information directly to NIFA as a separate report; however, this information can also be included in your annual progress report in REEport.

1. Number of students supported by the Center and their demographics.
2. Number of students that participated in experiential learning activities offered by the Center.
3. Number of Center-supported students participating in an internship in the food and agricultural sciences and related fields.

4. Number of Center-supported students graduating with a degree in the food and agricultural sciences or related fields.
5. Number of Center-supported students pursuing post graduate degrees in the food and agricultural Sciences or related fields.
6. Number of new technologies and/or processes introduced to stakeholders that are sponsored by the Center.
7. Number of new or enhanced courses or curricula (i.e. formal learning) for students offered by the Center.
8. Number of new trainings or professional development workshops (i.e. informal learning) offered by the Center.
9. Number of professional presentations emerging from research, education, and extension activities supported by the Center.
10. Number of publications, patents filed/awarded etc. from research, education, and extension activities supported by the Center.

PART VII. OTHER INFORMATION

A. Use of Funds and Changes in Budget

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.

Changes in Budget or Project Plans. In accordance with [2 CFR 200.308](#), awardees must request prior approval from NIFA for the following program or budget-related reasons (the awardee is subject to the terms and conditions identified in the award):

1. Change in the scope or the objective of the project or program without prior written approval (even if there is no associated budget revision requiring);
2. Change in a key person specified in the application or the federal award;
3. Disengagement from the project for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in time devoted to the project;
4. Inclusion of costs that require prior approval in accordance with [2 CFR 200 Subpart E \(Cost Principles\)](#), or [45 CFR Part 75 Appendix IX, \(Principles for Determining Costs Applicable to Research and Development under Awards and Contracts with Hospitals\)](#), or [48 CFR](#), unless waived by the federal awarding agency,
5. [48 CFR Part 31, Contract Cost Principles and Procedures](#);
6. Transfer of funds budgeted for participant support costs to other categories of expense ([2 CFR 200.456 Participant support costs](#));
7. Sub-awarding, transferring or contracting out of any work under a federal award, including fixed amount sub-awards (see [2 CFR 200.333, Fixed Amount Sub-awards](#)), unless described in the application and funded in the approved federal awards. This provision does not apply to the acquisition of supplies, material, equipment, or general support services.
8. Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-federal entity; and
9. The need for additional federal funds to complete the project.

B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of NIFA transaction records, which are available to the public. Information that the Secretary of Agriculture determines to be confidential, privileged, or proprietary in nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, applicants should clearly mark any information within the application they wish to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary. NIFA will retain a copy of an application that does not result in an award for three years. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An applicant may withdraw at any time prior to the final action thereon.

C. Regulatory Information

This program is not subject to the provisions of [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](#).

APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACTS

Program Contacts

Name	Email	Telephone
Manoharan Muthusamy	Manoharan.Muthusamy@usda.gov	816-702-9676
Cassandra Huey	Cassandra.Huey@usda.gov	816-508-8232

Administrative Contacts

Name	Email	Telephone
Awards Management Division (AMD)	SM.AMDAdministrativeContacts-NIFA	

For administrative questions related to

- 1.Grants.gov, see Part IV of this RFA
- 2.Other RFA or application questions, please email grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov
- 3.Awards under this RFA, please email awards@usda.gov

U.S. Postal Mailing Address:

National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 419205, MS 10000
Kansas City, MO 64141-6205

Courier/Package Delivery Address:

National Institute of Food and Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
2312 East Bannister Road, MS 10000

APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Name	Acronyms
Agriculture and Food Research Initiative	AFRI
Authorized Representative	AR
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance	CFDA
1890 Centers of Excellence	1890 COE
Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture and Mathematics	STEAM
Data Management Plan	DMP
National Institute of Food and Agriculture	NIFA
Request for Application	RFA
Letter of Intent	LOI
Research, Education, and Economics	REE
United States Department of Agriculture	USDA

APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS

Refer to [7 CFR 3430](#) Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Federal Assistance Programs – General Award Administrative Provisions for additional definitions.

Terms	Definitions
Continuation Award	An award instrument by which NIFA agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined period of time with a statement of intention to provide additional support at a future date, provided that performance has been satisfactory, appropriations are available for this purpose, and continued support would be in the best interest of the federal government and the public.
Matching	The process through which a grant recipient match awarded USDA funds with cash and in-kind contributions on a dollar-for-dollar basis. The matching funds must derive from non-Federal sources.
New Application	An application not previously submitted to a program.
Renewal Application	A project application that seeks additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in an original or amended award.
Resubmitted Application	A project application that was previously submitted to a program, but the application was not funded.
Resubmitted Renewal Application	A project application that requests additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in the original award. This is an application that had previously been submitted for renewal to but not funded.