

Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP)

MODIFICATION: This RFA is an updated version of the FY 2019-FY 2020 solicitation. It includes only the references to FY 2020 funding; FY 2019 references have been eliminated; Application Deadline changed to April 2, 2020.

Page 3-Webinar information updated for FY 2020

All references to Curriculum and Training grant type were eliminated as they are not offered in FY2020.

All FY 2019 references and due dates were eliminated.

Fiscal Year 2020 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: April 2, 2020

ELIGIBILITY: See Part III, A of RFA



United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food and
Agriculture

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

BEGINNING FARMER AND RANCHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (BFRDP)

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Assistance Listings under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number **10.311**

DATES: This RFA solicits applications for FY 2020. Applications for the FY 2020 funding cycle must be received by 5 p.m. Eastern Time on April 2, 2020. Applications received after the 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 six (6) months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: We at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) seek your comments about this RFA. We will consider your comments when we develop the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and we will 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 your written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this notice via email to Policy@usda.gov. (This email address is only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and *not* for requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program's RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) for (FY) 2020 funding to support the delivery of education, mentoring, and technical assistance programs to help beginning farmers and ranchers in the United States (U.S.) and its territories with entering, establishing, building and managing successful farm and ranch enterprises. Applicants considering applying should check the BFRDP Funding Opportunity Web Page at: <https://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/beginning-farmer-and-rancher-development-program-bfrdp>. The anticipated amount available for Standard and Educational Team (ET) grants in FY 2020 is approximately \$14 million. The Curriculum and Training Clearinghouse will be competed once every three years.

This notice identifies the objectives for BFRDP projects, deadline dates, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions

needed to apply for a BFRDP grant in FY 2020 and reflects the requirements in the 2018 Agriculture Improvement Act.

Prospective BFRDP Applicant Webinar Information

Topic: FY-2020 Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program's Applicant Webinar
Time: January 29, 2020; 1:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Gov Meeting

<https://www.zoomgov.com/j/1609989800>

Meeting ID: 160 998 9800

One tap mobile

+16692545252,1609989800# US (San Jose)

+16468287666,1609989800# US (New York)

Dial by your location

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

Section 12301 of Title XII in the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Pub. L. 115-334) repeals Section 7405 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (7 U.S.C. 3319(f)), and amends 7 U.S.C. 2279 to require the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a competitive grants program to support new and established local and regional training, education, outreach and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers or ranchers in the United States (U.S.). Section 12301(d)(14) of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Pub. L. 115-334) requires the Secretary of Agriculture to establish beginning farmer and rancher education teams to develop curricula and conduct educational programs and workshops for beginning farmers or ranchers in diverse geographical areas of the United States, or provide training and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers or ranchers or for trainers and service providers that work with beginning farmers or ranchers.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The primary goal of BFRDP is to help beginning farmers and ranchers in the U.S. and its territories enter and/or improve their successes in farming, ranching, and management of nonindustrial private forest lands, through support for projects that provide education, mentoring, and technical assistance to give beginning farmers and ranchers the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to make informed decisions for their operations, and enhance their sustainability. The term “farmer” is used in the broadest sense and may be interpreted to include agricultural farmers, ranchers, and non-industrial private forest owners and managers. Applications from partnerships and collaborations that are led by or include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and school-based agricultural educational organizations (SAEOs) with expertise in new agricultural producer training and outreach will be given priority in funding. Legislative Priorities as defined by the 2018 Farm Bill are as follows:

- a) Basic livestock, forest management, and crop farming practices;
- b) Innovative farm, ranch, and private, nonindustrial forest land transfer and succession strategies;
- c) Entrepreneurship and business training;
- d) Technical assistance to help beginning farmers or ranchers acquire land from retiring farmers and ranchers;
- e) Financial and risk management training, including the acquisition and management of agricultural credit);
- f) Natural resource management and planning;
- g) Diversification and marketing strategies;
- h) Curriculum development;
- i) Mentoring, apprenticeships, and internships;
- j) Resources and referral;
- k) Farm financial benchmarking;
- l) Agricultural rehabilitation and vocational training for veteran farmers and ranchers;
- m) Farm safety and awareness;
- n) Food safety and recordkeeping, and
- o) Other similar subject areas of use to beginning farmers or ranchers

Target Audience - The target audience for BFRDP is farmers and ranchers who have not operated a farm or ranch or have operated a farm or ranch for no more than ten (10) years. In addition, a portion of BFRDP funding is a targeted set aside for projects that address the needs of two (2) subsets of beginning farmers and ranchers:

- A. At least five percent (5%) of the program funds available for standard BFRDP projects will be allocated to address the needs of limited resource beginning farmers and ranchers; socially disadvantaged beginning farmers or ranchers; and/or farm workers (including immigrants) desiring to become beginning farmers or ranchers.
- B. At least five percent (5%) of the program funds available for standard BFRDP projects will be allocated to address the needs of beginning farmers and ranchers who are military veterans. A recipient of such a grant may coordinate with a recipient of a grant from the AgrAbility program <http://www.agrability.org/> in addressing the needs of veteran farmers and ranchers with disabilities.

Please note: Not all applications need to address the needs of these two (2) subsets of the beginning farmers and ranchers.

Priority may be given to applications that address any of the two (2) subsets, if necessary to achieve the targets, by awarding funding to the highest-ranked proposals that meet the set-aside.

- A. For applications to be considered under any of the two (2) subsets, they must: Identify the target audience of any of the groups identified above and state what percentage of the project budget will be allocated to serving these group(s);
- B. Explain how the beginning farmers and ranchers in the identified target audience will be recruited and provided with appropriate training, education, outreach and mentoring;
- C. Provide evidence of the ability to serve the needs of the identified audience, e.g., involvement of partner(s) with expertise and a strong track record of having previously done so.

The BFRDP program directly aligns with the FY 2018 – 2022 [USDA Strategic Plan](#), specifically Goal 2: Maximize the Ability of American Agricultural Producers to Prosper by Feeding and Clothing the World. **Objective 2.1:** Provide an effective Financial Safety Net for Farmers and Ranchers to Sustain Economically Viable Agricultural Production and Support Rural Jobs and Economic Growth. **Objective 2.2:** Increase Agricultural Opportunities and Support Economic Growth by Creating New Markets and Supporting a Competitive Agricultural System.

Priority Topics for FY 2020:

To achieve program goals, BFRDP projects will be expected to conduct training and assistance for beginning farmers and ranchers on one (1) or more of the topics listed in Part I. A. items A-O. Applicants should carefully consider the topics that will be addressed by the proposed project, i.e., clearly identify the topics in the project narrative, and why those topics are the most appropriate for the project's audience. Evidence of farmer input on topic selection is very important. Applicants should make use of existing curriculum (whether USDA funded or not), including entries in the BFRDP curriculum and training clearinghouse: FarmAnswers.org (<https://farmanswers.org/>). New curriculum should be proposed only if the need can be clearly justified. Applications that seek to develop coursework for credit for four-year degrees at colleges and universities are not appropriate for this program and will not be accepted for

review. *Applications that seek to educate students for careers in agriculture other than as farmers or ranchers will not be accepted for review.*

NIFA is soliciting applications for the **BFRDP** under the following areas:

- (1) Standard Grants;
- (2) Educational Teams (ETs);

C. Program Area Description

Standard Grants

Program Code: BFRDA

Program Code Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Standard

Maximum Award: \$200,000 per year for up to three (3) years for large standard grants; \$100,000 per year for up to three (3) years for small standard grants; and less than \$50,000 for a simplified standard grant application process for one (1) year.

Both small and large standard BFRDP projects support new and established local and regional training, education, outreach and technical assistance initiatives for beginning farmers and ranchers, on the priority topics listed in Part I. A. items A-O. They differ in their scale. Most of the funding in the BFRDP will be directed to Standard Grants. The primary goal of Standard Grants is to increase the number of beginning farmers and ranchers and enhance their successes and sustainability by providing them and their families with the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to make informed decisions. Standard Grant applications are expected to identify the audience of beginning farmers and ranchers they aim to serve; describe their characteristics and needs; demonstrate knowledge and experience in educational and assistance methods that are appropriate and effective in engaging the audience and meeting their needs; and propose an ambitious yet achievable plan of work that will accomplish meaningful and measurable success in enhancing the number and success of beginning farmers and ranchers. Most successful standard grant applicants provide training and assistance with business and financial management, as well as production and marketing topics aligned with the priority list in (Part 1.A. Items A - O).

Small and large standard grants will be reviewed by the same panel, and funding requests can go up to a three years project duration; applications will be discussed as two (2) different groups and ranked separately within each group to provide an equitable evaluation.

Small grants are a standard grant of up to \$100,000 for three (3) year project duration. We will also offer simplified standard grants of less than \$50,000 for applicants with limited capacities to enhance their portfolios in their abilities to create and sustain beginning farmers and ranchers. Evaluation criteria for reviewing the simplified grants will be different from those utilized for reviewing small and large standard grants. Both small and large standard grant proposals will be evaluated using the same evaluation criteria (see Part V.B), including priority for partnerships and collaborations that are led by or include nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), or school-based agricultural educational organizations (SAEOs) with expertise in beginning agricultural producer training and outreach. The expectations for smaller projects, however, will be commensurate with their size (e.g., smaller audiences, more limited geographic reach, less complex collaborative arrangements) and provide

an opportunity for smaller or less experienced organizations to propose projects that have smaller budgets and less complex administration.

Under the new authority at 7 U.S.C. 2279(e), NIFA is offering simplified standard grants. Simplified standard grants can be utilized to develop action plans to address societal challenges; strengthen program ideas to develop a full proposal; curriculum development; develop apprenticeship programs and hands-on materials; as well as develop an advisory committee to strengthen future program activities.

Educational Team (ET)

Program Code: BFRDB

Program Code Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Educational

Maximum Award: \$200,000 per year for up to three (3) years

The purpose of an Educational Team (ET) grant is to enhance beginning farmer efforts based on a particular topic, region, or audience. Such applications should complement previously-funded ETs, which have addressed environmental management and leadership, regional networks, farmer-to-farmer curricula, financial management, and individual development accounts; as well as currently active ETs, which are addressing immigrant farming incubators, land access, women farmers, apprenticeships, alternative energy, and the Farm Beginnings curriculum. ETs should involve Educational Teams of experts with diverse backgrounds (e.g., NGO, CBO, SAEO, farmers, university, and government) to do the following:

1. Identify, collect, and assess existing curricula and programs;
2. Identify gaps and develop and deliver curricula and train-the-trainer programs to fill the identified gaps; and
3. Collaborate with the BFRDP Curriculum and Training Clearinghouse (<http://farmanswers.org>) and BFR education providers to enhance successful use of the ET curricula and programs.

Applicants interested in applying for an ET grant are strongly encouraged to confer with the Programmatic Contacts listed in Part VII to discuss the suitability of the topic prior to submitting an application.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The anticipated amount available for BFRDP grants in FY 2020 is approximately \$14 million for each fiscal year. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. The Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP), operated by the Department of Treasury's Bureau of the Fiscal Service, is the designated payment system for awards resulting from this RFA. For more information see [Automated Standard Application for Payments](#).

B. Types of Applications

All applications for FY 2020 should state September 15 project starting dates on all applications. In FY 2020, applications may be submitted to the BFRDP Program as one (1) of the following types of requests:

New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the BFRDP Program or an application from a previously funded BFRDP project that has completed its project work and is applying for a continuation or starting a completely new project. We will review all new applications competitively using the screening for administrative requirements, review panel evaluation of proposals using evaluation criteria, and selection process described in Part V—Application Review Requirements. Applications from previously funded and terminated BFRDP projects seeking grant funds to start new BFRDP projects are also considered new applications. The new applications from a Project Director (PD) who has received a prior BFRDP award must contain the same information as required for new applications; they also must contain an additional one-page “Accomplishment-Based” narrative (see Project Narrative, Part IV). All previously funded and terminated BFRDP project applications must be received by the relevant due date, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in the area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications, plus based on performance during the previous BFRDP grant(s) and adequacy of plans for continuous improvement. Evaluation of performance during the previous BFRDP grant(s) will include the outcomes achieved and (where appropriate) contributions to the BFRDP Clearinghouse and Project Directors' Annual Meeting.

In order to meet legislative requirement of geographical distribution to achieve regional balance, Project Directors (PDs) of active BFRDP awards are strongly discouraged from applying, unless that active award is in its final year.

Resubmitted application. This is an application that had previously been submitted to BFRDP Program but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (see Response to Previous Review, Part IV). Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications. Addressing previous comments is important, but since each year is a new competition, resubmitting applicants should strengthen their proposals in every way possible.

C. Project Types

Applications will be accepted for 2 project types:

1. Standard BFRDP Projects; and
2. Educational Team (ET) Projects.

Standard BFRDP Projects

The long-term goals of the Standard BFRDP projects are to enhance the sustainability of beginning farmers and ranchers through education, training, mentoring and outreach programs that enhance self-employment in farming, ranching and forestry opportunities. The maximum award for a standard grant is \$200,000 per year for up to three (3) years. All work must be completed within three (3) years. The Statutory time limitation for this project is three (3) years from the project start date on the Award Face Sheet/Notice of Award. Extensions of time beyond the three (3) years will not be permitted. The program will also accept applications for smaller grants of no more than \$100,000 for the three (3) years of project duration and simplified standard grants of less than \$50,000 for one (1) year of project duration. Due to statutory requirements, extensions of time beyond the three (3) years will not be permitted.

Simplified Standard Grants

Simplified Standard Grants are intended to assist organizations: (1) to sustain and enhance important collaborations and innovative activities relevant to beginning farmer and rancher programs; and (2) to initiate and develop beginning farmer and rancher project ideas to lead to future program success or success in obtaining other grants for beginning farmer and rancher education.

Letters of reference or any additional application materials not submitted with application package by the application deadline are considered late and will not be accepted for application consideration.

Educational Team (ET) Projects:

The long-term goals of the Educational Team (ET) projects are to identify gaps in beginning farmer and rancher training by evaluating all existing programs, and to develop and conduct train-the-trainer projects to address these gaps.

The maximum award for an ET is \$200,000 per year for up to three (3) years. ETs are awarded for up to three (3) years. Due to statutory requirements, extensions of time beyond the three (3) years will not be permitted.

Applications that include requests for annual project budgets in excess of the maximum annual project budgets established above, or that propose project periods outside the acceptable project ranges above, will be excluded from NIFA review.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may only be submitted by a collaborative state, tribal, local, or regionally-based network or partnership of qualified public and/or private entities. These collaborations may include the following entities: State Cooperative Extension Services; Federal, State, municipal or tribal agencies; community-based organizations (CBOs); nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); junior and four-year colleges or universities or foundations maintained by a college or university; and private for-profit organizations. Inclusion of beginning and/or non-beginning farmers and ranchers as part of the collaborative group is strongly encouraged.

Applications submitted by individuals, or by organizations that do not involve other entities in a network or partnership, are not eligible for consideration under any category applicable to the BFRDP and will be excluded from review.

Multiple awards will not be made to the same organization or Project Director in the same calendar year. For FY 2020, organizations that have received awards in FY 2018 or FY 2019, are ineligible to apply. ET awards are exempt from this restriction. An organization with a current ET award may receive a standard grant, and an organization with a current standard grant may receive one (1), but no more than one, concurrent ET grant.

Failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award. 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

For FY 2020, for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Grant program, grantees must provide a match from non-Federal sources in the form of cash or in-kind contributions in an amount equal to 25 percent of the funds provided by the grant or cooperative agreement, however, NIFA may waive the matching funds requirement for a grant if NIFA determines that such a waiver or modification is necessary to effectively reach an underserved area or population. (See Part IV, B., **R&R Budget Federal and Non-Federal**, for details on requesting a match waiver.)

The matching funds must be from non-Federal sources except when authorized by statute. An award will not be issued unless all matching funds over the life of the grant are secured with match support documentation, which will be requested of applicants at the time they are recommended for an award. There can be no contingencies on the matching amount.

The Budget Justification must list matching sources along with the identification of the entity(ies) providing the match as well as the total dollar amount being pledged. NIFA is no

longer requiring written verification of commitments of matching support (a pledge agreement). However, you are still subject to documentation, valuing and reporting requirements, etc. as specified in 2 CFR Part 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (the Uniform Guidance),” 7 CFR 3430, “Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-Formula Federal Assistance Programs – General Award Administrative Provisions,” and program-specific regulations, as applicable. In instances where match is required, any resulting award will require the signature of an Authorized Representative (AR). Only when NIFA receives the award signed by the AR will award funds be released and available for drawdown.

The applicant must establish the value of matching contributions in accordance with applicable cost principles. Refer to 2 CFR Part 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards,” for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

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. **This is a complex application, and if you wait until the last few days before the due date to enter your application, you risk missing the deadline.** We encourage inexperienced applicants to submit their applications several days or a week before the deadline, and then submit a subsequent application with improvements if there is time before the deadline. For information about the pre-award phase of the grant life cycle see <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/learn-grants/grants-101/pre-award-phase.html>.

New Users of Grants.gov

Prior to preparing an application, we recommend that the Project Director/Principal Investigator (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 two (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 <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html>), for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov.** Part II, 1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide contains detailed information regarding the registration process. Refer to item 2, below, to locate the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.”

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 <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-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 <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/download-application-package.html> and enter the funding opportunity number where appropriate.

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-BFR-006970

Click “Search” on the display page, click the corresponding link to continue.

A Grant Application Package is tied to a particular funding opportunity. You may move forms amongst different Grant Application Packages but you may ONLY submit an

application to the particular funding opportunity to which the Grant Application Package is associated.

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: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support.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 (see <https://grants-portal.psc.gov/Welcome.aspx?pt=Grants>):
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).
Have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov:

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

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** you need to prepare an application in response to this RFA. **If there is discrepancy between the two (2) 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. Grants.gov does not check for NIFA required attachments or whether attachments are in PDF format; see Part III, Section 6.1 of the guide for how to check the manifest of submitted files. **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).**

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@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. See Part V, Section 2.18 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for the required certifications and assurances (e.g., Prohibition Against Entities Requiring Certain Internal Confidentiality Agreements).

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

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 3 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

3. R&R Other Project Information Form

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 4 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract. The summary must also include the relevance of the project to the goals of BFRDP. See Part V. 4.7 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template. The following items should be included in the summary:

1. Project Title;
2. List of Project Directors (PDs) and Co-PDs and their institutions/organizations;
3. Concise (250 words or less) description of the project;
4. List of other collaborating institutions/organizations/farmer and rancher groups;
5. Percent of total federal funds requested that are allocated to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and school-based agricultural educational organizations (SAEOs);
6. For applications to be considered under either of the target audience set-asides:
 - a. Percent of budget allocated to serving military veterans; and/or
 - b. Percent of budget allocated to serving socially disadvantaged, limited-resource, or farmworker audiences; and
7. List of any previous or current BFRDP projects that PD have been a part of leading (list project director and award number (20XX-XXXXX-XXXXX); see Part VIII.F for a link to the full list of abstracts of previously funded projects)

Since there are relevant questions needing response when you complete the project summary, you are strongly encouraged to use the BFRDP Project Summary Format (template) provided at <https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/bfrdp-project-summary-format-0>

You are strongly encouraged to include key words most relevant to your topic area in the project summary so as to better make a distinct connection with the topic being addressed in your application. Spaces occupied by these key words will not count against the 250-word limit in your project summary. Your application will not be reviewed if you include a project summary that is not relevant to your objectives outlined in your project narrative.

Field 8. Project Narrative

A. For Small and Large Standard Grants, and Educational Team Grant Applications

NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 18 pages of written text, regardless of whether it is single- or double-spaced, using font no smaller than 12 point and with at least 1-inch margins. This total includes figures and tables. We have established this maximum (18 pages) to ensure fair and equitable competition. Organizing your proposal, clearly labeling each section and sequencing them as indicated below, will help reviewers find the information to evaluate your proposal. **It is encouraged that you include a one-page table of contents in the project narrative, which will not count towards the narrative's 18-page limitation.** The Project Narrative must include all of the following clearly-defined sections:

Introduction. The introduction should include a clear statement of the long-term goal(s) of the proposed project. Justify the need for the program by identifying the target audience and explaining their needs (size, region, value of sales, structure of the industry (the number of small, medium and large farms), critical barriers, etc.); and by briefly summarizing all the other similar beginning farmer and rancher education and training programs that are available for the identified target audience, including all programs at FarmAnswers.org. If necessary, provide a map of the region. Show evidence that beginning farmers and ranchers were involved in conceptualizing the project and designing the activities. If the project type is Educational Team, present the rationale for the geographic, topic or other appropriate focus of the Team and the Team's composition. All works cited must be referenced (see 7(i) Bibliography & References Cited in this section). Applicants are encouraged to use approximately two (2) of the 18 pages for this section. (Related evaluation criteria (see Part V.B): Relevancy.)

- 1) **Objectives and Outcomes.** Concisely present the goals, associated objectives and expected outputs and outcomes of the project in relation to the audience and needs identified in the introduction. Provide numbers of beginning farmers and ranchers that will be served. Estimate how many of them will attain specific, anticipated knowledge gains or actions (e.g., starting farming; improving production practices; entering new markets) and project the expected resulting impacts of those gains and actions on the success of their operations. Discuss whether and how this program can be adapted to other regions, communities and/or agricultural systems. Applicants are encouraged to use approximately two (2) of the 18 pages for this section. (Related evaluation criteria: Technical merit.)
- 2) **Approach.** The activities proposed to achieve each objective must be clearly stated and

the approaches being applied clearly described. Applicants are encouraged to use approximately six (6) of the 18 pages for this section. Specifically, this section must include:

- a) A description of the activities proposed for each objective.
 - b) A timeline of the proposed project. The timeline should include activities and major outputs and associated outcomes for each year of the project.
 - c) Discuss how and where the activities will be provided and the appropriateness of the approach for the target audience.
 - d) For Standard BFRDP Projects: how will the beginning farmers and ranchers be recruited for this training?
 - e) For Education Team Projects: how will beginning farmer and rancher curricula and programs be identified and evaluated? How will you help guide curriculum and program development and delivery in future years?
 - f) How will the project, and its partnerships and collaborations, be sustained beyond the life of the grant (e.g., plans for eventual self-support or institutionalization or other sources of support)? If there are no plans to sustain the effort, explain why not, and how the impact of the project will be lasting.
 - g) The inclusion of a logic model or other tool as you deem appropriate to guide program planning, implementation and evaluation. One page of your project narrative must be utilized for any grant type being applied for. Use graphical depiction to show the relationships between the various elements leading to the outcomes.
 - h) Any novel ideas or contributions of the proposed project.
 - i) Pitfalls that may be encountered and limitations to proposed procedures, and how you will address them. For Standard BFRDP Projects, identify possible challenges to your proposed strategy for participant recruitment and how you plan to address those challenges. (Related evaluation criteria: Technical merit; Achievability.)
- 3) **Personnel and Resources.** Describe in detail the Key Personnel's experience in serving the identified or other audiences of beginning farmers and ranchers and ability to provide effective education, training, outreach and mentoring programs for the identified audience. For any audience, but particularly for socially disadvantaged audiences and/or veterans, it is very important to have partner(s) who have knowledge and experience working with such audiences, and that such partner(s) be involved in the leadership of the project (see "Management and Collaboration Plan" below). Describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed project, and their impacts. This information may include: the years and locations of prior activities; number of training assistance or education activities previously carried out; number of participants and graduates from the program; success rate in completing the program; percentage of graduates who are still in farming; and/or percentages of those who improved their operations. Applicants are encouraged to use approximately two (2) of the 18 pages (of the Project Narrative) for this section. (Related evaluation criteria: Expertise and track record; Adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel.)

4) **Plan for Outcome Based Reporting.** Clearly identify a minimum of two (2) expected project specific outcomes within the life of the project and explain the plan to document and evaluate these outcomes. Third-party evaluators are strongly recommended, but not required. Participatory evaluation, and formative as well as summative evaluation, are encouraged. All projects must describe methods and resources for documenting and evaluating their outcomes and impacts. Because of the diversity in the types of BFRDP projects funded, it is not possible to require all applicants to report on identical measurable outcomes. However, all Standard BFRDP applicants should consider using as their outcomes:

- 1) The expected number of new farm startups that would result from their project, and
- 2) The expected number of new farmers (i.e., those who are already farming but in their first ten (10) years of operation) who will make beneficial changes (and describe those changes) as a result of the project.

Additionally, more specific outcomes, may include the number of new farmers who will learn and/or act on their learning (e.g. develop a business plan, and adopt a new production or marketing practice). Reporting of evaluation measures is managed through the Results Verification System at <https://sites.google.com/a/umn.edu/rvs-bfrdp-help/> For greater detail on appropriate evaluation measurement for a BFRDP grant, please see the Outcomes Guide: https://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource/Outcomes%20Based%20Reporting%20Guide%20for%20BFRDP_2.pdf. All Educational Team applicants must consider using the anticipated number of users of information products created as a result of their Educational Team activities as one (1) of their metrics. Include a table summarizing the two (2) to five (5) primary outcome targets and related measurements:

Table 2: Reporting Measures

Outcome	Target Number	How Measured
Number of new farm start-ups		
Number of new farmers who will...[describe action and/or condition change]		
Number of new farmers who will...[describe another action and/or condition change]		
(if ET) Number of users of [describe info/product(s)]		
(if ET) Number of trainers trained or # of organizations assisted who will then [describe actions taken]		

Applicants for Standard grants that include instruction in farm financial management are also strongly encouraged to employ the applicable evaluation instruments available in the Farm Business Health Assessment tool. Applicants are encouraged to use approximately two (2) of the 18 pages for the outcome-based reporting section. (Related evaluation criteria: Adequacy of plans for the participatory evaluation process.)

5) **Management and Collaboration Plan.** It is critical to have a clearly articulated management

plan that describes the roles and functions of all partners, collaborators and the organizations, as related to the proposed project. Strong partnerships among complementary organizations (e.g. NGOs, CBOs, SAEOs and universities) with shared leadership are essential to most successful BFRDP projects, see “Definitions” (Part VIII.E) for definitions of Partner and Collaborator. Include time allocated by each partner for attainment of objectives; key roles of each partner and collaborator; and plan for administration of the proposed project and its maintenance and partnerships. Describe the plans for coordination, communication, data-sharing and reporting among members of the project team and stakeholder groups. Describe the commitment of the organization and partners to this project; and how the collaboration and its impact will be sustained beyond the period of the award. An applicant’s failure to provide the requested information in the Management and Collaboration Plan may preclude NIFA from making an award. Applicants are encouraged to use approximately two (2) of the 18 pages for this section. In addition, letters of commitment signed by the AR of the partnering organization demonstrating that the partners involved have agreed to abide by the **Management Plan** should be provided (see “Other Attachments” below). (Related evaluation criteria: Partnerships and collaboration; Achievability.)

- 6) The following situations **represent exceptions** and require **Additional Narrative Pages**. In addition to the 18-page limit for the above sections of Narrative, proposals must use additional pages to provide the sections specified below if the proposals fall into the following categories:
- i. **Response to Previous Review.** Required for “Resubmitted Applications” as described under Part II, B of this RFA, “Types of Applications”. PDs must respond to the previous review panel summary. **The Response to Previous Review is limited to one (1) page. Use the subheading “Response to Previous Review”.** (Related evaluation criteria: Technical merit – Additional evaluation criteria.)
 - ii. **Prior BFRDP Accomplishments.** If the Project Director (PD) has been involved in leading prior BFRDP project(s), list those projects in the Project Summary (see 3.A above) and add to the narrative a brief description of what was learned from the past project(s), what can be improved upon, and how those lessons and improvements are being incorporated into the current application to make the ongoing project more effective and successful at meeting program goals. This information should be added at the end of the project narrative, **in no more than one (1) page. Use the subheading “Prior BFRDP Accomplishments”.** (Related evaluation criteria: Technical merit – Additional evaluation criteria.)

Table 3 summarizes the sections of the Project Narrative for Standard Grant and Educational Grant-Other applications suggest an approximate number of pages to allocate to each section and shows the evaluation criteria most relevant to each section.

Table 3: Project Narrative Components

Narrative Section	Suggested Number of Pages	Related Evaluation Criteria (see Part V, B. of this RFA)
Introduction	2 of 16	Relevancy
Objectives and Outcomes	2 of 16	Technical merit
Approach	6 of 16	Technical merit; Achievability
Personnel and Resources	2 of 16	Expertise and track record of the applicants; Adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel, facilities and
Plan for Outcome Based Reporting	2 of 16	Adequacy of plans for the participatory evaluation process, outcome-based reporting, and the communication of findings and results beyond the immediate
Management and Collaboration Plan	2 of 16	Partnerships and collaboration; Achievability
Response to Previous Review (if resubmission)	Limit of 1 additional page	Responsiveness to previous comments and recommendations by reviewers
Prior BFRDP Accomplishments (if applicable)	Limit of 1 additional page	Performance during the previous BFRDP grant(s); Adequacy of plans for continuous improvement

Field 12. Add Other Attachments

7) Commitment Letters. PDF attachment(s). No page limit.

Letters of commitment from all partners (signed by the AR of the partnering organization) stating that the partners involved have agreed to their stated roles in the project and have agreed to abide by the **Management Plan**. Letters from other organizations or people whose participation is important to the success of the project, committing those collaborators to specific roles, are also encouraged. Title the attachment(s) as ‘Letter of Commitment – Organization Name’ in the document header and save file as ‘Letter of Commitment Organization Name’. Other more general letters of support (i.e., from those who are not committing to a specific role in the project) are not needed and should not be included. See Part VIII.F for an example of a commitment letter.

Do not add any other attachments not specifically requested in this RFA. Specifically, do not attach examples of curricula or other appendices that were allowed in previous years’ BFRDP RFAs. Attaching additional narrative or figures or tables other than those specifically requested in this RFA will result in disqualification from review.

8) Check List – Please reference and include Table 4 with project narrative. This inclusion will not count towards the narrative’s page limitation. Table 4 is a tool to ensure applicants include all required forms and attachments. It is not a substitute for the requirements of this or the instructions herein or in the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Table 4: Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program FY 2020 Checklist

File Name for PDF Attachment (or application form/section)	Contents (see the FY 2020 Request for Applications (RFA), the Application Package, and Instructions (NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide))	Check Off
SF-424 R&R Cover Sheet Project/Perf. Site Location(s) Other Project Information	Forms in the Application Package – see instructions in the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for all three (3) forms	
Project Summary (pdf)	Use the suggested template at: https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/application-support-templates or include all of the same information on one (1) page:	
Table of Contents	Have you included a one-page table of contents	
	Title	
	List of Project Directors/Co-PDs & Institutions	
	Project description - 250 words or less	
	List of other collaborating organizations not on PD/co- PD list	
	Logic Model or other Evaluation Tool in graphic depiction	
	Percent of total federal funds allocated to NGO/CBO/SAEOs	
	Percent of budget allocated to serving military veterans if applicable	
	Percent of budget allocated to serving socially-disadvantaged audiences if applicable	
	List of previous BFRDP projects that PD has led	

Project Narrative (pdf)	No more than 18 pages, include the following Sections:	
	1. Introduction	
	2. Objectives and Outcomes	
	3. Approach	
	4. Personnel and Resources	
	5. Plan for Outcome Based Reporting (w/summary table)	
	6. Management and Collaboration Plan	
	Additional section(s) beyond 18-page limit if applicable:	
	1. Response to Previous Review (if Resubmission) – limit one (1)	
	2. Prior BFRDP Accomplishments – limit one (1) page	
Bibliography (pdf)	Bibliography and References (no page limit)	
Letter of Commitment_ Org Name (pdf attachment(s))	Signed letter(s) that Partners have agreed to their role in the project and to abide by management plan; often multiple attachments, no page limit	
R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (form)	Information and Biographical Sketch form for each person. Current and Pending Support is required with this application)	
R&R Personal Data	Providing this information is required	
R&R Budget Federal and Non- Federal (form)	Complete three (3) R&R budget forms reflecting each year of the project; annual budgets are required at the time of application. Plus a total budget for the entire project duration is required.	
Budget Justification (pdf)	Explain each item; no page limit. The Budget Justification must list matching sources along with the identification of the entity(ies) providing the match as well as the total dollar amount being pledged. NIFA is no longer requiring written verification of commitments of matching support and pledge agreements). If you are requesting a waiver of the match, include your rationale for the waiver of the match in the budget justification.	
R&R Sub-award Budget (form)	Required if any sub-awards	

File Name for PDF Attachment (or application form/section)	Contents (see the FY 2020 Request for Applications (RFA), the Application Package, and Instructions (NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide))	Check Off
Supplemental Information Form (form)	Program Code = BFRDA for Standard Grants Program Code = BFRDB for Educational	
Conflict of Interest (pdf)	Complete a Conflict of Interest form for each key /senior person https://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/templates/conflict_of_interest.doc then combine them into one (1) pdf document to attach	

B. Project Narrative for Simplified Standard Grant Applications (Field 8)

NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 8 pages of written text, regardless of whether it is single- or double-spaced, using font no smaller than 12 point and with at least 1-inch margins. This total includes figures and tables. We have established this maximum (8 pages) to ensure fair and equitable competition. Organizing your proposal, clearly labeling each section and sequencing them as indicated below, will help reviewers find the information to evaluate your proposal. **It is encouraged that you include a one-page table of contents in the project narrative, which will not count towards the narrative's 8-page limitation.** The Project Narrative must include all of the following clearly-defined sections:

- 1) **Introduction.** The introduction must include a clear statement of the long-term goal(s) of the proposed project. Justify the need for the program by identifying the target audience and explaining their needs (size, region, value of sales, structure of the industry (the number of small, medium and large farms), critical barriers, etc.); and by briefly summarizing all the other similar beginning farmer and rancher education and training programs that are available for the identified target audience, including all programs at FarmAnswers.org. If necessary, provide a map of the region.
- 2) **Objectives and Outcomes.** Concisely present the goals, associated objectives and expected outputs and outcomes of the project in relation to the audience and needs identified in the introduction. Provide numbers of beginning farmers and ranchers that will be served. Estimate how many of them will attain specific, anticipated knowledge gains or actions (e.g., starting farming; improving production practices; entering new markets) and project the expected resulting impacts of those gains and actions on the success of their operations
- 3) **Approach.** The activities proposed to achieve each objective must be clearly stated and the approaches being applied clearly described.
 - a) A description of the activities proposed for each objective.

- b) A timeline of the proposed project. The timeline should include activities and major outputs and associated outcomes for each year of the project
 - c) Discuss how and where the activities will be provided and the appropriateness of the approach for the target audience.
 - d) How will the beginning farmers and ranchers be recruited for this training?
 - e) How will the project, and its partnerships and collaborations, be sustained beyond the life of the grant (e.g., plans for eventual self-support or institutionalization or other sources of support)? If there are no plans to sustain the effort, explain why not, and how the impact of the project will be lasting.
 - f) The inclusion of a logic model or other tool as you deem appropriate to guide program planning, implementation and evaluation
 - g) Any novel ideas or contributions of the proposed project.
 - h) Pitfalls that may be encountered and limitations to proposed procedures, and how you will address them.
- 4) **Personnel and Resources.** Describe in detail the Key Personnel’s experience in serving the identified or other audiences of beginning farmers and ranchers and ability to provide effective education, training, outreach and mentoring programs for the identified audience. For any audience, but particularly for socially disadvantaged audiences and/or veterans, it is very important to have partner(s) who have knowledge and experience working with such audiences, and that such partner(s) be involved in the leadership of the project.
- 5) **Commitment Letters. PDF attachment(s). No page limits.**
Letters of commitment from all partners (signed by the AR of the partnering organization) stating that the partners involved have agreed to their stated roles in the project. Letters from other organizations or people whose participation is important to the success of the project, committing those collaborators to specific roles, are also encouraged. Title the attachment(s) as ‘Letter of Commitment – Organization Name’ in the document header and save file as ‘Letter of Commitment Organization Name’. Other more general letters of support (i.e., from those who are not committing to a specific role in the project) are not needed and should not be included.

Table 5: Project Narrative Checklist

Document Type	Criteria	Checkbox
Table of Contents	Have you included a one-page table of contents?	
	Title	
	List of Project Directors/Co-PDs & Institutions	
	Project description - 250 words or less	
	List of other collaborating organizations not on PD/co-PD list	
Document Type	Criteria	Checkbox
	Logic Model or other Evaluation Tool in graphic depiction	
Project Narrative (pdf)	No more than 8 pages, include the following Sections:	
	Introduction	
	Objectives and Outcomes	
	Approach	
	Personnel and Resources	
	Project Evaluation	
	Project Results and Dissemination	
Budget Justification (pdf)	Explain each item; no page limit. The Budget Justification must list matching sources along with the identification of the entity(ices) providing the match as well as the total dollar amount being pledged. NIFA is no longer requiring written verification of commitments of matching support and pledge agreements). If you are requesting a waiver of the match, include your rationale for the waiver of the match in the budget justification.	
R&R Sub-award Budget (form)	Required if any sub-awards	
Supplemental Information Form (form)	Program Code = BFRDA for Simplified Standard Grant	

Conflict of Interest (pdf)	Complete a Conflict of Interest form for each key /senior person https://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/templates/conflict_of_interest.doc then combine them into one (1) pdf document to attach	
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ALL APPLICATIONS:

R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 5 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This section of the guide includes instructions about senior/key person profile requirements, and details about the biographical sketch, and forms for current and pending support.

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. Part V.6 also notes the importance and use of the information.

R&R Budget Federal and Non-Federal

This form (accompanied by the required Budget Narrative attachment) contains the itemized listing and description of your project’s 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. Include budget for each year of project work as well as one (1) composite budget for the entire project duration. Include the travel costs for the Project Director and any other key staff member(s) to attend the annual Project Directors’ meeting beginning in the first year of funding and during each year of the project. There should be reasonable costs in each Educational Team Project budget that reflects the cost of monthly conference calls to facilitate the activities of the Clearinghouse.

Matching. If you conclude that a waiver of the matching requirement specified in Part III, B Cost-Sharing or Matching is necessary for you to effectively reach an underserved area or population using requested grant funds, you must include an explanation for your conclusion in the Budget Justification. We will consider this justification when determining final matching requirements or if required, matching can be waived. NIFA retains the right to make final determinations regarding matching requirements.

For grants that require matching funds as specified under Part III, B, the Budget Justification must list matching sources along with the identification of the entity(ies) providing the match as well as the total dollar amount being pledged. NIFA is no longer requiring written verification of commitments of matching support (a pledge agreement). However, you are still subject to documentation, valuing and reporting requirements, etc. as specified in 2 CFR Part 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (the Uniform Guidance),” 7 CFR 3430, “Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-Formula Federal Assistance Programs – General

Award Administrative Provisions,” and program-specific regulations, as applicable. All matching contributions must be specific for the project objectives as proposed. In instances where match is required, any resulting award will require the signature of an Authorized Representative. Only when NIFA receives the award signed by the AR will award funds be released and available for drawdown.

You must establish the value of applicant contributions in accordance with applicable cost principles. Refer to 2 CFR Part 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (the Uniform Guidance),” for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

Indirect Costs. For further information and instructions regarding indirect costs, refer to Part V, section 7.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. For indirect cost funding restrictions, refer to Part IV, D. of this RFA.

Supplemental Information Form

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available 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 and the program code according to the chart below. Note that accurate entry of the program code is very important for proper and timely processing of an application.

Table 6: Program Code Names

Proposal Type	Program Code Name	Program Code
Standard Grant	Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Standard, includes small and large standard grants as well as simplified standard grants	BFRDA
Educational Team	Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Educational	BFRDB

- 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.

Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants

This is a required form for corporate applicants. See Part VI, 2 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for a description of the term, “corporation,” and detailed information related to the questions on this form.

Submission Dates and Times

We recommend that you conduct an administrative review of the application before submission of it via Grants.gov to ensure that it complies with all preparation instructions. An application checklist is included in Part VII of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide to assist with this review.

While the checklist should be used to check the application for completeness, the application should be checked for the following required item(s). This is not an exhaustive list of required items; it only serves to highlight items that are critical to BFRDP review.

Applications that fail to include these items will not be accepted. The list includes:

- Summary/Abstract;
- Narrative with all required sections: Introduction; Objectives and Outcomes; Approach; Personnel and Resources; Plan for Outcome Based Reporting; and Management and Collaboration Plan;
- Budget for each year of project work, plus a total budget for the entire project duration; and
- Budget Narrative.

In addition, applications will not be accepted for review if they do any of the following:

- Exceed the maximum pages allowed for the Project Narrative, or attach any extra narrative or graphic materials not specifically requested in the RFA
- Exceed the maximum federal budget request for the type of application proposed
- Propose objectives or approach that do not fit the purpose and scope of BFRDP.
- By law, Research proposals will not be accepted for review under BFRDP.

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. Applications for FY 2020 funding cycle must be received by **5 p.m. Eastern Time on April 2, 2020**. Applications received after these deadlines will normally not be considered for funding, except under very rare circumstances (see NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, Part IV 1.9, for details).

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. We strongly encourage you to provide accurate email 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 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, you should cite this number on all future correspondence.

Funding Restrictions

Section 7132 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 amended the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3310(a)), limiting indirect costs for grants to 22 percent (22%) of the total Federal funds provided under each award. However, Section 12302 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 limits indirect costs for this program to 10% of total federal funds awarded.

Therefore, when preparing budgets, applicants for Standard Grants and Educational Teams (ETs), and proposals must limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to 10 percent (10%) of the total funds requested.

Funds under BFRDP grants may not be used for the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of a building or facility.

Other Submission Requirements

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

NIFA evaluates each application in a two-part process. First, we screen each application to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, a scientific peer-review process will be used to technically evaluate applications that meet the administrative requirements using a review panel (see [NIFA Peer Review Process for Competitive Grant Applications](#)).

We select reviewers based upon their training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors:

- 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 education, and extension activities;
- the need to include experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields;
- the need to include 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;
- 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;
- the need to maintain a balanced composition with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and
- the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness of each application to producers and the general public.

After each peer review panel has completed its initial deliberations, the panel will then take into consideration geographical diversity of applicants recommended for award to maintain regional balance. The responsible program staff of BFRDP will recommend that your project be approved for support from currently available funds or be declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review. BFRDP program staff also check for duplication or overlap in the work plans of recommended proposals and with previously-funded projects, to satisfy legislative requirements including geographical diversity (7 U.S.C. § 3319f (6)).

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

A reviewer's written evaluation entails two levels of assessment. First, the reviewer summarizes how well the application addressed each evaluation criterion. After the application has been assessed for strengths and weaknesses of each criterion, the reviewer then evaluates the overall likelihood that the project will have significant outcome and impact. The written reviews are used to begin panel discussions with other reviewers serving on the peer

review panel. Through these discussions, peer review panelists come to consensus on the final ranking of the applications. A complete description of NIFA's peer review process can be found at the NIFA website: <https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/nifa-peer-review-process-competitive-grant-applications>.

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

Three categories of evaluation criteria will be implemented for reviewing BFRDP grant applications this FY 2020 grant cycle. The first category for evaluating small and large standard grants and educational team applications are outlined below.

Evaluation Criteria for Small and Large Standard Grants and Educational Team Applications

We will use the evaluation criteria below to review applications submitted in response to this RFA:

- **Partnerships and Collaborations (10 points):** To what extent does the application represent a substantial and effective collaborative network or partnership of public and/or private entities? Does the proposal include the necessary partners to meet the needs of the audience, and does it make appropriate use of the expertise and other strengths of each of the partners? Priority will be given to partnerships and collaborations that are led by or include NGOs, CBOs or SAEOs with expertise in new agricultural producer training and outreach. Projects must employ an equitable and appropriate decision-making and oversight process that includes all partners to be given this priority.
- **Consultation of Beginning Farmers and Ranchers (10 points):** Explain and document the role that beginning farmers and ranchers played in the design, implementation, and decision making related to the proposed initiative to support new and established local and regional training, education, outreach, and technical assistance initiatives to increase opportunities for beginning farmers and ranchers.
- **Relevancy (10 points):** Explanation and documentation that the project is directed towards specific topic areas identified in Part I, B in this RFA. These topics are designed to yield improvements in and sustainability of beginning farmers and ranchers as defined in the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (Pub. L. 115-334). In addition, the relevancy will be evaluated by the description of the necessity of the project based on the needs identified for the target audience, the inclusion of beginning farmers and ranchers in the conceptualization and development of project activities, and the degree to which the project addresses audience(s), needs, and/or geographic area(s) not served by previous and alternative training, outreach, mentoring and education programs.

- **Technical merit (15 points):**
 - (a) Clarity and delineation of objectives, activities and outcomes;
 - (b) Conceptual adequacy of the proposed activities to meet the needs of the targeted audience including suitability and feasibility of the approach (e.g., social, economic and cultural relevance, distance based versus face-to-face);
 - (c) Innovation and originality of objectives and activities;
 - (d) Expected performance targets, outcomes and impacts as indicated in the Plan for Outcome Based Reporting;
 - (e) Adaptability to other locations, communities, and/or agricultural products and technologies;
 - (f) Sustainability of the project partnerships and collaborations beyond the life of the grant, or a compelling explanation of how the project impact will be lasting if the collaboration itself is not sustained; and
 - (g) Reasonableness of the budget for planned activities. (While the size of the budget is not an evaluation criterion, the reviewers will be asked to comment whether it matches logically with the program described in the narrative.)
 - (h) Additional evaluation criteria for New and/or Resubmitted Applications from Project Directors (PDs) of prior BFRDP projects (Standard and ET grants):
 - Performance during the Previous BFRDP grant(s). The applicant should include a description of the achievement of prior project outcomes and prior project contributions of curriculum to the BFRDP Clearinghouse. The applicant should also describe their participation and contributions to the Annual Project Directors' meeting. Prior project outcomes, prior project curricula contributions to the Clearinghouse, and participation in the Project Directors' meeting will be taken into consideration in the evaluation of the proposal.
 - Adequacy of Plans for Continuous Improvement. Includes what was learned from the past project(s), what can be improved upon, and how those lessons and improvements are being incorporated into this application to make the ongoing project more effective and successful at meeting program goals.
 - (i) For Educational Team applicants, this includes: Adequacy of dissemination plans for evaluation reports, including number and description of activities planned for disseminating evaluation reports and new curricula.
- **Achievability (15 points):** Probability of success of the project is appropriate given the level of originality, target audience and budget for each activity. The extent to which the applicant identifies potential pitfalls and how they will be addressed. There should be sufficient time commitment of project directors and co-directors for project activities including management. The plans for management and collaborative arrangements of the proposed project should be adequate, e.g., sufficient time allocated for systematic attainment of objectives; clearly defined project roles and relationships among the key participants and collaborators; plan for decision-making; and plan for administration of the proposed project and its maintenance, partnerships, and collaborative efforts.
- **Expertise and track record of the applicants (15 points):** To what extent does the application demonstrate expertise through successful multi-year experience in education,

outreach, mentoring and/or technical assistance for beginning farmers and ranchers? The successful multi-year experience can be demonstrated by the number of training, assistance, or education activities previously carried out; number of participants or graduates of the program, success rate and their current occupation; the number of years a program or activity has been offered. The extent to which the qualifications of the applicant (individual or team) to conduct the proposed project activities are detailed. The applicant's ability to evaluate project outcomes. The applicant's demonstration of experience and competence in serving the needs of the identified target audience.

- **Adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation (10 points):** Includes the expertise of consultants and collaborators, sufficiency of the educational facilities and equipment for the proposed education and outreach methods.
- **Adequacy of plans for the participatory evaluation process, outcome-based reporting, and the communication of findings and results beyond the immediate target audience (15 points):** Includes number and expertise of evaluation team members who have agreed to serve or who have been identified.

Evaluation Criteria for Simplified Standard Grant Applications

We will use the evaluation criteria below to review applications submitted in response to the simplified standard grant applications:

- **Partnerships and Collaborations (10 points):** To what extent does the application represent a substantial and effective collaborative network or partnership of public and/or private entities?
- **Consultation of Beginning Farmers and Ranchers (10 points):** Explain and document the role that beginning farmers and ranchers played in the design, implementation, and decision making related to the proposed initiative to support new and established local training, education, outreach, and technical assistance initiatives to increase opportunities for beginning farmers and ranchers.
- **Relevancy (15 points)** The relevancy will be evaluated by the description of the necessity of the project based on the needs identified for the target audience, the inclusion of beginning farmers and ranchers in the conceptualization and development of project activities, and the degree to which the project addresses audience(s) needs, and/or geographic area(s) not served by previous and alternative training, outreach, mentoring and education programs.
- **Technical merit (15 points):**
 - (a) Clarity and delineation of objectives, activities and outcomes;
 - (b) Explanation of the method of delivery and applicability to audience: Distance-based versus face-to-face;
 - (c) Expected performance targets, outcomes and impacts.
- **Achievability (15 points):** Probability of success of the project is appropriate given the level of originality, target audience and budget for each activity. The extent to which the applicant identifies potential pitfalls and how they will be addressed. Sufficient time commitment of project directors and co-directors for project activities, including

management.

- **Expertise and track record of the applicants (10 points):** To what extent does the application demonstrate expertise through successful multi-year experience in education, outreach, mentoring and/or technical assistance for beginning farmers and ranchers?
- **Personnel (10 points):** Each application must implement sound and effective project management practices. Applications demonstrating strong leadership and skills in delivering training and outreach to target audience will be given priority. Expertise of consultants and collaborators will be taken into consideration.
- **Project Evaluation (5 points)** Method for project evaluation must be described in addition to detailing the tool to be utilized in evaluation. For example, one page of write up can be devoted to a graphic illustration of tool to be utilized i.e. logic model, SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)
- **Project Results and Dissemination: (10 points)** Plans for reporting, and the communication of findings and results within the target audience and local area. Each application must demonstrate project benefits and results to growing new and beginning farmers and ranchers. Emphasis is on creating and sustaining beginning farmers and ranchers.

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. See https://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/competitive_peer_review.html for further information about conflicts of interest and confidentiality as related to the peer review process.

Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted one-time, with updates on an as-needed basis. This requirement is part of the responsibility determined 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 pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one (1) 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).

Application Disposition

An application may be withdrawn at any time before a final funding decision is made regarding the application. Each application that is not selected for funding, including those that are withdrawn, will be retained by NIFA on behalf of BFRDP for a period of three (3) years.

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, and NIFA General Awards Administration Provisions at 7 CFR part 3430, subparts A through E.

Federal Financial Management Requirements

Grantees are expected to comply with applicable federal financial management requirements included in the award's terms and conditions and 2 CFR part 200. Below is a list of major requirements. Failure to comply could trigger significant audit liability and require global reconstruction of the grantees accounting system.

Separation of Funds. To avoid comingling of funds, grantees must establish a unique account(s) in their accounting system to capture and accumulate funding and related costs of the grant, apart from other federal and non-federal grants, projects and cost centers.

Budget Categories. To reduce the risk of material budget fluctuations changing the grant's scope and of applying indirect cost rates to prohibited cost categories, grantees must establish unique object codes in their accounting system to capture and accumulate costs by budget category (e.g., salaries, fringe benefits, consultants, travel, participant support costs, and subcontracts).

Consistent Treatment of Costs. Grantees must treat costs consistently across all federal and non-federal grants, projects and cost centers. For example, grantees may not direct-charge federal grants for costs typically considered indirect in nature, unless done consistently. Examples of indirect costs include: administrative salaries, rent, accounting fees, and utilities. In most cases, the cost to develop an accounting system adequate to justify direct-charging of the aforementioned items outweighs the benefits. As a result, use of an indirect cost rate is the most effective mechanism to recover these costs and not violate federal financial requirements of consistency, allocability and allowability. Additional guidance on indirect cost calculations can be found at <https://nifa.usda.gov/indirect-costs>.

Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the information described in [2 CFR 200.210](#). See <https://nifa.usda.gov/terms-and-conditions> to view current NIFA award terms and conditions.

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 may include, but are not limited to, the ones listed on the NIFA web page – <https://nifa.usda.gov/federal-regulations>.

NIFA Federal Assistance Policy Guide—a compendium of basic NIFA policies and procedures that apply to all NIFA awards, unless there are statutory, regulatory, or award-specific requirements to the contrary—is available at <https://nifa.usda.gov/policy-guide>.

Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

The output and reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions (see <https://nifa.usda.gov/terms-and-conditions> for information about NIFA award terms). If there are any program or award-specific award terms, those, if any, will be identified in the award. For BFRDP, this will include contributing information to the BFRDP clearinghouse at FarmAnswers.org including project results and entries in the Library.

If a project is funded, beginning in the first year of funding, the Project Director and any other key staff member(s) will be required to attend annual project director meetings. Reasonable travel expenses should be included as part of the project budget.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACTS

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Programmatic Contacts (for questions about scope, program types, narrative contents, and evaluation criteria):

Denis Ebodaghe

Title: National Program Leader

Unit: Division of Agricultural Systems

Location: 6501 Beacon Drive, Kansas City, MO 64133

Phone: (202) 445-5460

Email: denis.ebodaghe@usda.gov

Desiree Rucker-Ross

Title: Program Specialist

Unit: Division of Agricultural Systems

Location: 6501 Beacon Drive, Kansas City, MO 64133

Phone: (202) 445-5386

Email: desiree.rucker@usda.gov

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Use of Funds and 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 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:

- a) Change in the scope or the objective of the project or program (even if there is no associated budget revision requiring prior written approval).
- b) Change in a key person specified in the application or the federal award.
- c) The disengagement from the project for more than three (3) months, or a 25 percent (25%) reduction in time devoted to the project, by the approved project director or principal investigator.
- d) The inclusion, unless waived by the federal awarding agency, of costs that require prior approval in accordance with 2 CFR 200 Subpart E—Cost Principles of this part 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 Part 31, “Contract Cost Principles and Procedures,” as applicable.
- e) The transfer of funds budgeted for participant support costs as defined in §200.75 Participant support costs to other categories of expense.
- f) Unless described in the application and funded in the approved federal awards, the sub-awarding, transferring or contracting out of any work under a federal award, including fixed amount sub-awards as described in §200.332 Fixed amount sub-awards. This provision does not apply to the acquisition of supplies, material, equipment, or general support services.
- g) Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-federal entity.
- h) The need arises for additional federal funds to complete the project.

The awardee will be subject to the terms and conditions identified in the award. See <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> for information about NIFA award terms.

B. 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 of Agriculture 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. We will retain for three (3) years a copy of an application that does not result in an

award. 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.

C. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 2 CFR Part 415, Subpart C, 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.

D. Definitions

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.

Further, the following definitions also apply to this RFA.

1. *Beginning Farmer*: a farmer, rancher, or operator of non-industrial private forestland who is in the first ten (10) years of operation, or a person intending or aspiring to begin such an operation.
2. *Clearinghouse*: an online repository that will make available to beginning farmers or ranchers education curricula and training materials and programs, and which may include online courses for direct use by beginning farmers or ranchers.
3. *Collaborator*: a person or an organization that cooperates with the applicant in the conduct of the project but is not immediately connected to the management of the project.
4. *Community Based Organizations (CBOs)*: private non-profit organizations that are representative of a community or a significant segment of a community and that provide services to that local community.
5. *Education*: an act or process that delivers knowledge and informal educational programs to beginning farmers and ranchers, enabling them to make practical decisions.
6. *Limited resource farmer or rancher*: an operator of a farm or ranch that has both low levels of farm sales and low household income. See the USDA-ERS: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=90984> for more information.
7. *Military Veteran*: a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released from the service under conditions other than dishonorable.
8. *Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)*: legally constituted, non-governmental organizations created by natural or legal persons with no participation or representation of any government and serving one (1) or more communities.
9. *Partnership*: a relationship involving close cooperation between parties having specified and joint rights and responsibilities in the management of the project.

10. Performance target: a specific, verifiable change in people's actions or conditions. It defines how many people will change and what degree of change constitutes success.
11. Producer: an individual, family, or other entity in the U.S. engaged in the business of agriculture, crop, livestock, forestry, and range production, management and marketing.
12. Qualified Public and Private Entities: public or private groups, organizations, or institutions that have established and demonstrated capacities to conduct projects that accomplish the purposes of the program as designated in these guidelines.
13. Regions: are subdivided into four categories and include the states and territories as described below:
 - i. The Northeast Region: Includes the 12 Northeast States and the District of Columbia (Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and West Virginia);
 - ii. The Southern Region: Includes 13 States plus Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands (Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, and Oklahoma);
 - iii. The North Central Region: Includes 12 States (Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri; Kansas, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota) and;
 - iv. The Western Region: Includes 12 States and the American Territories in the Pacific (Hawaii, Alaska, Washington State, Oregon, California, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, and American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and Micronesia).
14. School-based agricultural educational organizations (SAEOs): organizations that deliver career and/or technical education in agriculture to high school students, which may include classroom and/or experiential learning, for example, FFA (formerly known as the Future Farmers of America), National Young Farmer Educational Organization, or other similar organizations.
15. Socially disadvantaged beginning farmer or rancher: a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group (i.e., a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities) (7 U.S.C. 2003(e)).
16. Veteran farmer or rancher: a farmer or rancher who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released from the service under conditions other than dishonorable. (See 7 U.S.C. 2279(e) for further details.)

E. Materials Available on the Internet

The [Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program \(BFRDP\)](#) has additional information, to include the following:

1. BFRDP Grant Applicant Webinar (recordings of past webinars and links to future)
2. BFRDP Educational Team Projects
3. BFRDP Stakeholder Input Received
4. BFRDP Checklist for Applications
5. BFRDP Q&A – 2017 RFA
6. BFRDP Summary of Panel Member Duties
7. Best practices for mentoring farmers and ranchers
8. BFRDP Outcomes Guide
9. Best practices for mentoring disadvantaged farmers and ranchers
10. Abstracts of BFRDP projects from fiscal years 2009-2019