



United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food
and Agriculture

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The logo for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), featuring the letters "NIFA" in a large, white, sans-serif font. The letters are set against a background of stylized, overlapping shapes in shades of orange and yellow, suggesting a landscape or sun.

REQUEST FOR APPLICATION

Equipment Grant Program (EGP)

FUNDING YEAR:	Fiscal Year 2020
APPLICATION DEADLINE:	June 23, 2020
LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE:	Not Required
AVAILABLE FUNDING:	\$4,700,000
CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER:	10.519

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

National Institute of Food and Agriculture, United States (U.S.) Department of Agriculture
(USDA)

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance. The EGP is listed in the Assistance Listings under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number 10.519.

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
Application:	5:00 P.M. Eastern, June 23, 2020 [<i>Ref to Part I § C of this RFA</i>]
Letter of Intent:	Not Required
Applicants Comments:	Within six months from the issuance of this notice (<i>NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month</i>)

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Equipment Grant Program (EGP) serves to increase access to shared-use special purpose equipment/instruments for fundamental and applied research for use in the food and agricultural sciences programs at institutions of higher education, including State Cooperative Extension Systems. The program seeks to strengthen the quality and expand the scope of fundamental and applied research at eligible institutions, by providing them with opportunities to acquire one major piece of equipment/instruments that support their research, training, and extension goals and may be too costly and/or not appropriate for support through other NIFA grant programs. EGP grants are not intended to replace requests for equipment in individual project applications. The program emphasizes shared-use instrumentation that will enhance the capabilities of researchers, educators, and extension agents both within and outside the proposing organization.

Proposals to the EGP must involve acquisition of only a single, well-integrated piece of equipment/instrument. Well-integrated means that the ensemble of equipment that defines the instrument enables specific fundamental or applied research experiments in the food and agricultural sciences, including data science and data systems, programs to be undertaken; separating or removing an element or component of such an integrated instrument would preclude that research from occurring or succeeding. An instrument acquired with support from the EGP program is expected to be fully operational by the end of the award period.

The EGP does not support the acquisition of suites of equipment to outfit research laboratories /facilities or to conduct independent experiments simultaneously. Similarly, the EGP does not fund common, general purpose ancillary equipment that would normally be found in a laboratory and/or is relatively easily procured by the organization or through other NIFA grant programs. Rather, it is intended to help fund items of equipment that will upgrade infrastructure. Moreover, EGP does not fund research projects, including research that uses the equipment acquired with support from the program nor does it support the operation and maintenance of facilities.

The amount available for support of this program in FY **2020** is approximately **\$4,700,000**.

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PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The Equipment Grants Program is authorized under 7 USC 3310a (Pub. L. 115–334, title VII, §7126, Dec. 20, 2018, 132 Stat. 4794), which allows the Secretary to make competitive grants for the acquisition of special purpose scientific research equipment for use in the food and agricultural sciences programs of eligible institutions.

“Special purpose equipment” is defined in 2 CFR 200.89 as equipment which is used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities. See also §§ 200.33 Equipment and 200.48 General purpose equipment.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The Equipment Grant Program (EGP) serves to increase access to shared special purpose equipment/instruments for scientific research for use in the food and agricultural sciences programs in our Nation's institutions of higher education, including State Cooperative Extension Systems. The program seeks to improve the quality and expand the scope of fundamental and applied research at eligible institutions, by providing organizations with opportunities to acquire equipment/instruments that supports the research, research training, and extension goals of the organization. The program emphasizes shared-use instrumentation that will enhance the capabilities of researchers and extension agents both within and outside the proposing organization.

EGP is designed to strengthen the research, education, and/or extension capacity of institutions by funding the purchase of one major piece of equipment that may be too costly and/or not appropriate for support through other NIFA grant programs. An instrument acquired with support from the EGP program is expected to be fully operational by the end of the award period. The program does not fund research projects, including research that uses the equipment acquired with support from the program. The program does not support the operation and maintenance of facilities.

Proposals to the EGP are for the acquisition of only a single, well-integrated piece of equipment/instrument. Well-integrated research instrument means that the ensemble of equipment that defines the instrument enables a specific fundamental or applied research experiment in the food and agricultural sciences, including data science and data systems, programs to be undertaken; separating or removing an element or component of such an integrated instrument would preclude any experiments from occurring or succeeding. The EGP does not support the acquisition a suite of equipment to outfit research laboratories/facilities or to conduct independent experiments simultaneously. Similarly, the EGP does not fund common, general purpose ancillary equipment that would normally be found in a laboratory and/or is relatively easily procured by the organization or through other NIFA funding programs.

EGP grants are not intended to replace requests for equipment in individual project applications. Rather, they are intended to help fund items of equipment that will upgrade infrastructure. Requests for computer equipment are allowed only if the equipment is part of a well-integrated instrument.

The EGP is aligned with the following [USDA Strategic Goals](#):

1. Strategic Goal 1: Ensure USDA Programs Are Delivered Efficiently, Effectively, With Integrity and a Focus on Customer Service;
2. Strategic Goal 2: Maximize the Ability of American Agricultural Producers To Prosper by Feeding and Clothing the World;
3. Strategic Goal 3: Promote American Agriculture Products and Exports
4. Strategic Goal 4: Facilitate Rural Prosperity and Economic Development;
5. Strategic Goal 5: Strengthen the Stewardship of Private Lands Through Technology and Research;
6. Strategic Goal 6: Ensure Productive and Sustainable Use of Our National Forest System Lands; and
7. Strategic Goal 7: Provide all Americans Access to a Safe, Nutritious, and Secure Food Supply.

C. Program Area Description

The Equipment Grant Program (EGP) serves to increase access to shared special purpose equipment for scientific research for use in the food and agricultural sciences programs in our Nation's institutions of higher education, including State Cooperative Extension Systems. The program seeks to improve the quality and expand the scope of fundamental and applied research in food and agricultural sciences, including data science and data systems, by providing institutions with opportunities to acquire instrumentation that supports the research, research training and extension goals of the institution.

The EGP emphasizes shared-use instrumentation that will enhance the capabilities of researchers both within and outside the proposing institutions. The EGP is intended to assist with acquisition that may be too costly and/or not appropriate for support through other NIFA grant programs (such as the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, Hatch, Evans-Allen, or 1890 Facilities Grant Program). An instrument acquired using EGP funding is expected to be fully operational by the end of the award period.

The acquired equipment may be a well-integrated ensemble which means that the equipment that defines the instrument enables a specific fundamental or applied research experiment in the food and agricultural sciences programs to be undertaken; separating or removing an element or component of such an instrument would preclude that research from occurring or succeeding.

Operations and Maintenance of the acquired equipment. Major research equipment can be expensive to operate and maintain over the useful lifetime. Proposals should demonstrate institutions' commitment to undertake the responsibility of maintaining and operating the instrument for the benefit of a community of users engaged in research, training, and/or extension.

EGP does not:

1. fund research projects or personnel salaries or wages, including research or personnel that use equipment acquired with support from the program.

2. fund education projects, including education projects that use acquired equipment. However, descriptions of planned uses of acquired equipment in training of students and other practical applications for consumers may be included, if desired, to illustrate the potential impacts of such equipment acquisition.
3. fund common, general purpose ancillary equipment that would normally be found in a laboratory and/or is relatively easily procured by other funding sources (for the purposes of this program, General Purpose Equipment is defined in 2 CFR 200.48).
4. support the operation, insurance, or maintenance of facilities, equipment, or research laboratories, or renovation of facilities that house the acquired equipment.
5. support the acquisition of a suite of instruments to outfit research laboratories/facilities or to conduct independent experiments simultaneously.

For additional resources on EGP, including frequently asked questions, visit the [EGP webpage](#).

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The anticipated amount available for the Equipment Grants Program in FY2020 is approximately \$4,700,000. These funds are available for equipment grants. USDA is not committed to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. The Automated Standard Application for Payments, operated by the Department of Treasury, Bureau of Fiscal Service, is the designated payment system for awards resulting from this RFA.

B. Types of Applications

NIFA will evaluate applications using the criteria described in Part V of this RFA. For FY2020, applications are limited to the following type:

New application: This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to NIFA. New applications will be reviewed to ensure they meet administrative requirements and evaluated using the criteria described in Part V of this RFA and are subject to the due dates herein (see Appendix III for definition).

C. Project and Grant Types

The following describes the types of *projects* or *grants* that are eligible for funding:

1. Project Types: in FY2020, the EGP will accept Equipment Projects only. These projects are for the acquisition of research equipment and not for the support of a line of research, including research that uses equipment acquired with support from the program. Other project types submitted to this program will not be considered for review. EGP Research projects support the purchase of equipment that will be used for fundamental or applied research.
 - a. *Fundamental research* is research that increases knowledge or understanding of the fundamental aspects of phenomena and has the potential for broad application and has positive influence on the food and agriculture sciences.
 - b. *Applied research* is research that includes expansion of the finding of fundamental research to uncover practical ways in which new food and agriculture science knowledge can be advanced to benefit individuals and society.

Priority for funding will be given to applications clearly addressing EGP goals and REE Blueprint. (www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-science-blueprint.pdf)

2. Grant Types: The EGP program will only support Standard Grants with a maximum funding request of \$500,000 and up to three years in duration. Proposals to the EGP, must be for acquisition of a single, well-integrated piece of equipment/instrument. Well-integrated means that the ensemble of equipment that defines the instrument enables a specific fundamental or applied research experiment in the food and agricultural sciences, including data science and data systems, programs to be undertaken; separating or removing an element or component of such an integrated instrument would preclude that research from occurring or succeeding.

EGP grants are not intended to replace requests for equipment in individual project applications of other NIFA programs. Rather, they are intended to help fund items of equipment that will upgrade infrastructure. Requests for computer equipment are allowed only if the equipment is to be used to enhance an activity integral to the proposed project.

Application Submission and Award Limitations: For FY 2020, an eligible institution may not submit more than three applications to this program as a lead institution; This is done in order to support a balanced award portfolio at diverse institutions, and broadly inclusive food and agriculture science across the Nation. Potential PDs are advised to contact their institutional office of research regarding processes used to select proposals for submission.

D. Ethical Conduct of Funded Projects

In accordance with sections [2, 3, and 8 of 2 CFR Part 422](#), institutions that conduct USDA-funded extramural research must foster an atmosphere conducive to research integrity, bear primary responsibility for prevention and detection of research misconduct, and maintain and effectively communicate and train their staff regarding policies and procedures. In the event an application to NIFA results in an award, the Authorized Representative (AR) assures, through acceptance of the award that the institution will comply with the above requirements. Award recipients must, upon request, make available to NIFA the policies, procedures, and documentation to support the conduct of the training. See [Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research](#) for further information.

PART III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligibility Requirements

Eligibility is limited to: a) a college or university or b) a State Cooperative Institution, as defined in 7 U.S.C. § 3103, including:

1. 1862 and 1890 land-grant institutions;
2. State-certified Schools of Forestry as stipulated in accordance with 16 U.S.C.582a et seq. (the McIntire-Stennis Act of 1962);
3. State Agricultural Experiment Stations located in the 50 States, the District of Columbia and the Insular Areas in accordance with 7 U.S. C. 361a et seq. (the Hatch Act of 1887);
4. "Cooperative extension services" meaning the organizations established at the land-grant colleges and universities under the Smith-Lever Act of May 8, 1914 (38 Stat. 372–374, as amended; 7 U.S.C. 341–349), and section 209(b) of the Act of October 26, 1974 (88 Stat. 1428, as amended; D.C. Code, sec. 31–1719(b));
5. Accredited schools or colleges of veterinary medicine or State agricultural experiment stations that conduct animal health and disease research in accordance with section 1433(c) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977;
6. Hispanic-serving institutions as defined in section 1101a of title 20; and
7. Eligible institutions in insular areas including, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; Guam; American Samoa; the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; the Federated States of Micronesia; the Republic of the Marshall Islands; the Republic of Palau; and the Virgin Islands of the United States.

Applicants for the EGP must meet all the requirements discussed in this RFA. Failure to meet the eligibility criteria by the application deadline may result in exclusion from consideration or, preclude NIFA from making an award. For those new to Federal financial assistance, NIFA's [Grants Overview](#) provides highly recommended information about grants and other resources to help understand the Federal awards process.

Duplicate or Multiple Submissions – duplicate or multiple submissions is not allowed. NIFA will disqualify both applications if an applicant submits duplicate or multiple submissions. For those new to Federal financial assistance, NIFA's [Grants Overview](#) provides highly recommended information about grants and other resources to help understand the Federal awards process.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

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

PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

A. Method of Application

Applicants must apply to this RFA electronically; no other method or response is accepted. The electronic application for this RFA and additional resources are available on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and [Grants 101](#). **Table 4** provides instructions on how to obtain an electronic application. **Part II § 1** of the [NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide](#) (Application Guide) contains detailed information regarding the [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) registration process.

Table 2. Steps to Obtain Application Materials

Steps	Action
Step One: Register	<i>New Users</i> to Grants.gov must register early with Grants.gov prior to submitting an application (Register Here).
Step Two: Download Adobe	Download and Install Adobe Reader (see Adobe Software Compatibility for basic system requirements)
Step Three: Find Application	Using this funding opportunity number USDA-NIFA-OP-007473, search for application here: Opportunity Package .
Step Four: Assess Readiness	Contact an AR prior to starting an application to assess the organization’s readiness to submit an electronic application.

Table 3: Help and Resources

Grants.gov Support	NIFA Support
Grants.gov Online Support Telephone support: 800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035 Email support: support@grants.gov Self-service customer based support: Grants.gov iPortal <i>Key Information: Customer service business Hours 24/7, except federal holidays.</i>	Email: electronic@usda.gov Phone: 202-401-5048 <i>Key Information: Business hours: Monday thru Friday, 7a.m. – 5p.m. ET, except federal holidays</i>

B. Content and Form of the Application

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

meet the requirements of this RFA. Applicants must refer to the proposal number when corresponding with NIFA. **Table 4** outlines other key instructions for applicants.

Table 4: Key Application Instructions

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

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

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

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

1. Field 7. Project Summary (PS)/Abstract. The PS must show how the project goals align with the program area goals of the EGP. See **Part V § 4.7** of the [Application Guide](#) for instructions and suggested templates.
2. Field 8. Project Narrative (PN). The PN must not exceed the total page limit of 15 pages. The total page limit will include both the 1.5 spaced pages of written text, figures, and tables. The font size should be no smaller than 11 points, Times New Roman. Tables may be single-spaced. Page limits outlined here ensure fair and equitable competition. Appendices to the PN are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. Do not add appendices to circumvent the page limit. The project narrative must include subsections (a)-(g) and address the merits and impacts of the proposed effort: Applications exceeding the page limitation will be returned without review.

- a. **Instrument Location and Type** Indicate in a single separate line the physical location of the proposed instrument as well as a timeline for its acquisition, delivery, installation, and availability for use.

Note: Instruments to be deployed in the field may require additional information to assess compliance with any applicable laws such as the National Environmental Policy Act, National Historic Preservation Act, and Endangered Species Act.

- b. **Research Activities to be Enabled.** Describe the specific research, research training, or extension activities and projects that will be enabled with the desired equipment, and any sources that may support those activities and projects. The degree to which the planned uses of the proposed equipment will constitute ground-breaking, or transformative research or extension activities at the organization is a significant factor in the review evaluation of EGP proposals. Researchers using this equipment need not be supported by NIFA or the Federal government, but reviewers should understand how users of the instrument will support and disseminate their research or extension activities. In narrative or tabular form, describe the personnel by research or extension area, number, and type (e.g., senior personnel, postdoctoral fellows, graduate students, undergraduate students). Include only those who will most actively use the equipment for research, research training, or extension on a regular basis. Other minor users of the equipment, when applicable, should be described in a more condensed format.

- c. **Description of the Research Equipment and Needs** (up to 3 pages). Proposal should include a technical description of the requested equipment, including manufacturer and model number where appropriate. This section should clearly explain why the requested equipment is needed. The existence and availability of comparable instrumentation (at institutions in close geographical proximity, or otherwise accessible through collaborations or cyberinfrastructure) should be outlined in the proposal. For any proposal that purports to represent an integrated research equipment, explain how the acquisition meets the EGP guidance for a well-integrated single equipment in which separating or removing an element or component of such an integrated instrument would preclude the intended experiments from occurring or succeeding. Budget narrative must be sufficiently detailed to assess how the equipment or well-integrated instrument is comprised.

Note: NIFA will not fund equipment purchase that is duplicative or overlaps substantially with efforts already funded (or to be funded) by other federal agencies or with other federal funds.

- d. **Impact on Research, Training Infrastructure, or Extension to Achieve its Goals.** Describe how the equipment will serve to attract researchers or extension agents and make a substantial improvement in the institution's capabilities to conduct leading-edge research or extension services. If appropriate, describe how the equipment will improve the quality of research training. Proposals should also address whether and, if so, how the equipment will broaden the participation in, agricultural science and

engineering research by women, underrepresented minorities (African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians), and persons with disabilities. Additionally, address the impact of this grant in local, regional, and national needs.

- e. **Cooperation and institutional involvement.** Describe the degree to which the project will strengthen the institution's research, research training, and/or extension capacity. Elements include the institution's commitment to the project, the adequacy of institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials) available to carry out the project, potential for research enhancement, faculty, student, and staff recruitment, and plans for equipment maintenance and use beyond the period of USDA support.
- f. **Project timeline.** Describe the administrative timeline, and how the project will be governed, as well as a strategy to enhance coordination, collaboration, communication, and data sharing and reporting among members of the project team and stakeholder groups. The plan must also address how the project will be sustained beyond termination of an award.

Proposals must meet administrative and technical requirements to be accepted for the EGP competition. Some key reasons for Return without Review: Proposals that are missing key documents, eligibility as define in the (Part III. Eligibility Information: Eligibility Requirements).

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

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

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

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

1. Match – If an applicant concludes that the matching requirements described under [Part III § B](#) of this RFA is not applicable to them; the applicant must include an explanation of their conclusion in the *budget justification*. NIFA 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. Grants that require matching funds as specified under [Part III § B](#) of this RFA must list in their *budget justification* the matching sources, the identification of the entity(ies) providing the match, and the total pledged amount. A written verification of commitments of matching support (a pledge agreement) is not required. However, applicants are subject to the documentation, valuing and reporting requirements, as specified in [2 CFR Part 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards \(the Uniform Guidance\),”](#) and [7 CFR 3430, “Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-Formula Federal Assistance Programs – General Award Administrative Provisions.”](#)

2. Indirect costs (IDC) – See [Part IV § C](#) of this RFA for funding restrictions regarding indirect cost, and [Part V 7.9](#) of the [Application Guide](#) for additional information.

Management Plan. - PDF Attachment. 2-Page Limit. Title the attachment as ‘Management Plan’ and save file as ‘Management Plan’

Given the relatively high maintenance costs of major research instrumentation, investigators seeking support for such instrumentation *must* provide detailed business and management plans. Within two pages, these plans should include:

1. A description of the space or the facility in which the instrument will be placed.
2. A description of how and by whom the requested instrumentation will be operated and maintained over the expected lifetime of the instrument. Inclusion of a letter documenting the performing organization's commitment to ensuring successful operations and maintenance over the expected lifetime of the instrument is required as a supplemental document.
3. The anticipated costs and the technical expertise needed to maintain and operate the instrument. If the expertise is not currently available, describe how it will be obtained.
4. A description of procedures for allocating the instrument time, if appropriate, and plans for attracting and supporting new users. Include information on anticipated usage and downtime.
5. Sufficient details should be given to enable reviewers to evaluate whether the appropriate technical expertise and infrastructure to allow effective usage of the instrument will be available, and whether effective multi-user accessibility will be available.

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

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

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

C. Funding Restrictions

No Indirect Cost (IDC). IDC is *not* authorized for the EGP program. Also, applicants should note that the cost of acquisition or depreciation of equipment purchased with a grant under this section shall not be-

- (1) charged as an indirect cost against another Federal grant; or
- (2) included as part of the indirect cost pool for purposes of calculating the indirect cost rate of an eligible institution.

PART V. APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. NIFA's Evaluation Process

NIFA evaluates each application in a two-part process. First, we screen each application to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements 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](#)).

Scientific Peer Review Process:

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

1. the level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities;
2. the need to include experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields;
3. the need to include other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs;
4. the need to include experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, and private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations;
5. the need to maintain a balanced composition with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and
6. 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 deliberations, the responsible program staff of NIFA will recommend that your project is either approved for support from currently available funds or declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review.

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

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

B. Evaluation Criteria

NIFA will use the following criteria to evaluate this RFA:

1. *Innovativeness and Effectiveness*: This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will have an impact upon, and advance the quality of Research, Training, and Extension Activities by strengthening institutional capacities to meet clearly delineated needs. Elements considered include scientific merit, institutional long-range goals, alignment with USDA's Goals, identification of a problem or opportunity to be

addressed, justification for the equipment need, innovation, multidisciplinary and/or problem-based focus.

2. *Proposed Approach*: This criterion relates to the soundness of the proposed approach including objectives, methodology, plan of operation, timetable, management plan, and expected products and results.
3. *Institutional Capability and Capacity Building*: This criterion relates to the institution's capability acquire, install, and operate the equipment and the degree to which the equipment will strengthen its research, research training, and/or extension capacity. Elements include the institution's commitment to operation and maintenance of the equipment, the adequacy of institutional resources (administrative, facilities, personnel, and/or materials) available to operate the equipment, potential for research enhancement, faculty, student, and staff recruitment, and plans for continued use beyond the period of USDA support. This criterion also includes the degree to which the equipment will broaden the participation in, agricultural science and engineering research by women, underrepresented minorities and the quality and extent of documented graduate and/or undergraduate students' involvement and training in using the equipment.
4. *Key Personnel and Cooperative Linkages*: This criterion relates to the adequacy of the number and qualifications of key persons who will develop and carry out experiments or activities using the equipment. Emphasis is placed on the quality of research, research training, and/or extension activities that the equipment support will provide the applicant institution through its multidisciplinary activities, partnerships or collaborative initiatives, and on the potential cooperative linkages likely to evolve as a result of acquiring this equipment.
5. *Budget and Cost-Effectiveness*: This criterion relates to the extent to which the total budget adequately supports the equipment acquisition and is cost effective. Elements considered include the necessity and reasonableness of acquisition costs; and the degree to which the project maximizes the use of limited resources. Note: NIFA will not fund equipment purchase that is duplicative or overlaps substantially with efforts already funded (or to be funded) by other federal agencies or with other federal funds.

C. Organizational Management Information

Applicants must submit specific management information relating to an applicant prior to an award and update the information as needed. Applicants may only have to update their information if they had previously provided the information under this or another NIFA program. NIFA provides the requisite forms during the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible for award under this program, there are factors that may exclude an applicant from receiving federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual, or a determination that an applicant is not responsible).

D. Application Disposition

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

PART VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

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

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

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

PART VII. OTHER INFORMATION

A. Use of Funds and Changes in Budget

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

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

1. Change in the scope or the objective of the project or program without prior written approval (even if there is no associated budget revision requiring);
2. Change in a key person specified in the application or the federal award;
3. Disengagement from the project for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in time devoted to the project;
4. Inclusion of costs that require prior approval in accordance with [2 CFR 200 Subpart E \(Cost Principles\)](#), or [45 CFR Part 75 Appendix IX, \(Principles for Determining Costs Applicable to Research and Development under Awards and Contracts with Hospitals\)](#), or 48 CFR, unless waived by the federal awarding agency,
5. [Part 31, Contract Cost Principles and Procedures](#);
6. Transfer of funds budgeted for participant support costs to other categories of expense ([§200.75 Participant support costs](#));
7. Sub-awarding, transferring or contracting out of any work under a federal award, including fixed amount sub-awards (see [§200.332, Fixed Amount Sub-awards](#)), unless described in the application and funded in the approved federal awards. This provision does not apply to the acquisition of supplies, material, equipment, or general support services;
8. Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-federal entity; and
9. The need for additional federal funds to complete the project.

B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

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

C. Regulatory Information

This program is not subject to the provisions of [Executive Order 12372](#), which requires intergovernmental consultation with state and local officials. Under the provisions of the [Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 \(44 U.S.C. Chapter 35\)](#), the collection of information requirements contained in this notice have been approved under [OMB Document No. 0524-0039](#).

APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACT

Programmatic Contact

Name	Email	Telephone
Mallory Koenings, PhD, RDN	mallory.koenings@usda.gov	(816) 926-2620
Carlos Ortiz, PhD	carlos.ortiz@usda.gov	(816) 926-2700

NIFA's Mailing Address:

National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
2312 East Bannister Road
Mail Stop 10000 (ten thousand)
Kansas City, MO 64131

APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Name	Acronyms
Authorized Representative	AR
Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education reform Act of 1998	AREERA
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance	CFDA
Center of Excellence	COE
National Institute of Food and Agriculture	NIFA
Request for Application	RFA
Research, Education, and Economics	REE
United States Department of Agriculture	USDA

APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS

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

Terms	Definitions
Continuation Award	An award instrument by which NIFA agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined period of time with a statement of intention to provide additional support at a future date, provided that performance has been satisfactory, appropriations are available for this purpose, and continued support would be in the best interest of the federal government and the public.
Matching	The process through which a grant recipient match awarded USDA funds with cash and in-kind contributions on a dollar-for-dollar basis. The matching funds must derive from non-Federal sources.
New Application	An application not previously submitted to a program.
Renewal Application	A project application that seeks additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in an original or amended award.
Resubmitted Application	A project application that was previously submitted to a program, but the application was not funded.
Resubmitted Renewal Application	A project application that requests additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in the original award. This is an application that had previously been submitted for renewal to but not funded.
General Equipment	2 CFR 200.33 Tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established by the non-Federal entity for financial statement purposes, or \$5,000.
General Purpose Equipment	2 CFR 200.48 Equipment which is not limited to research, medical, scientific or other technical activities. Examples include office equipment and furnishings, modular offices, telephone networks, information technology equipment and systems, air conditioning equipment, reproduction and printing equipment, and motor vehicles.
Special Purpose Equipment	2 CFR 200.89 Equipment which is used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities. Examples of special purpose equipment include microscopes, x-ray machines, surgical instruments, and spectrometers.
Shared-use Equipment	A piece of equipment used by more than one research group, extension unit or multidisciplinary team to conduct fundamental or applied research