



United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food
and Agriculture

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REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Minor Crop Pest Management Program

Interregional Research Project # 4 (IR-4)

MODIFICATIONS: Page 1, 2, and 7

FUNDING YEAR:	Fiscal Year 2021
APPLICATION DEADLINE:	February 25 , 2021
LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE:	Not Required
AWARD AMOUNT:	Approximately \$15,000,000
CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER:	10.200

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

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance. The Minor Crop Pest Management Program – Interregional Research Project #4 is listed in the Assistance Listings under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number 10.200.

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
Application:	5:00 P.M. Eastern, February 25 , 2021 [<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 requests 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 uses 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 Minor Crop Pest Management Program – Interregional Research Project #4 (IR-4) RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This notice identifies the objectives for Minor Crop Pest Management Program – Interregional Research Project #4 (IR-4) program projects, deadlines, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions.

NIFA requests applications for IR-4 for fiscal year (FY) 2021 to provide safe, effective, and economical pest management solutions for minor agricultural use and use on specialty crops (see Part VIII § E for definitions). NIFA anticipates funding approximately one project.

In FY 2021 the award period for the IR-4 award will be four years, with funding provided in one-year increments. Funding in subsequent years will be dependent upon the annual appropriation and satisfactory progress. The anticipated amount available for grants in FY 2021 is approximately \$15 million.

This RFA is being released prior to passage of an appropriations act for FY2021. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.

This notice identifies the objectives for IR-4 projects, the deadline dates, funding information, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for an IR-4 grant.

This RFA is being released prior to passage of an appropriations act for FY2021. Enactment of a continuing resolution or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

The Minor Crop Pest Management Program - Interregional Research Project #4 (IR-4) is authorized under the Competitive, Special, and Facilities Research Grant Act, ([7 U.S.C. 3157\(e\)](#)).

The IR-4 Program provides expert assistance for the development and registration of crop protection products needed for minor agricultural use and use on specialty crops. For the past 57 years, the program has facilitated cooperation between producers, grower organizations, state Cooperative Extension Services, land-grant universities, and federal agencies to ensure the availability of safe, effective and economical pest management tools for specialty crops, minor crops, and minor uses.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The purpose of the IR-4 program under Assistance Listing 10.200, is to enable the availability of safe, effective and economical pest management products for growers of specialty crops and for minor agricultural uses. The crop protection industry cannot justify the costs associated with the research, development and registration of crop protection products for these uses due to small market size and limited sales potential. The IR-4 program provides the assistance needed to ensure that new and more effective crop protection products are tested and registered for these uses. This requires effective collaborations between federal science agencies, federal regulatory agencies, crop producers, the crop protection industry, and land-grant colleges and universities.

Per statute, the overarching goals and objectives of the IR-4 program are to assist in the collection of residue and efficacy data in support of the registration or reregistration of pesticides for minor agricultural use and for use on specialty crops (as defined in section 3 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. 1621 note)), under the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (7 U.S.C. 136 et seq.); and tolerances for residues of minor use chemicals in or on raw agricultural commodities under sections 346a and 348 of title 21.

The IR-4 program provides support for efforts to develop reduced-risk products, bio-pesticides, and other chemicals with characteristics that are deemed lower risk to humans, non-target organisms, and the environment. In addition, the program concentrates on internal processes that reduce the time needed to complete successful regulatory packages.

Projects shall demonstrate the capacity and commitment required to achieve the following regionally-oriented goals:

- 1) Expedite the registration of newer, reduced-risk pest management products for minor agricultural uses and specialty crops.
- 2) Conduct efficacy research to identify new, more effective minor agricultural use and specialty crop pest management products.

Projects must also demonstrate a commitment to addressing the societal challenge of keeping American agriculture competitive and reducing world hunger by improving the availability and accessibility of safe and nutritious food. NIFA is committed to supporting new science to boost U.S. agricultural production, improve global capacity to meet growing food demand, and fight hunger by addressing food security for vulnerable populations. Handling of baseline data and data collection will be addressed in the Data Management Plan (DMP) in accordance with the Part IV(B) of this RFA.

The IR-4 program is aligned with:

- (a) the USDA Strategic Goals and specifically addresses Goal 1: Ensure USDA Programs are Delivered Efficiently, Effectively, with Integrity and a Focus on Customer Service; Goal 2: Maximize the Ability of American Agricultural Producers to Prosper by Feeding and Clothing the World; Goal 4: Facilitate Rural Prosperity and Economic Development; Goal 5: Strengthen the Stewardship of Private Lands Through Technology and Research; and Goal 7: Provide All Americans Access to a Safe, Nutritious, and Secure Food Supply ([USDA Strategic Plan FY 2018-2022](#)).
- (b) The USDA Science Blueprint and specifically addresses Theme 1 – Sustainable Ag Intensification (<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-science-blueprint.pdf>).
- (c) The USDA Agriculture Innovation Agenda and specifically addresses areas I: Create a comprehensive U.S. agriculture innovation strategy to align public and private research efforts and area III: Improve USDA Data Collection and Reporting (<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/agriculture-innovation-agenda-vision-statement.pdf>).

Additional requirements on expected performance goals, indicators and targets may be required as a condition of award.

Table 2: Program Key Information

Title	Description
Program Code:	RR
Program Code Name:	IR-4 Minor Crop Pest Management
CFDA Number	10.200
Grant Type:	Standard
Application Deadline	February 25, 2021
Grant Duration:	Approximately 48 Months
Anticipated # of Awards:	Approximately 1
Maximum Award Amount:	Approximately \$15,000,000

C. Program Area Description

Proposals submitted to the IR-4 program should clearly describe a plan for achieving the following core objectives:

- 1) Obtain and maintain regulatory clearances of effective crop protection agents for high value, specialty food crops and for minor agricultural uses (special circumstance needs) on major food crops with an emphasis on lower risk chemicals, biopesticides, and uses that are compatible with integrated pest management (IPM) programs..
- 2) Support research on crop protection products that will expand their uses on ornamental crops (nursery, floral, turf, and other non-food crop systems) to allow management of invasive/exotic pests (arthropods, nematodes, vertebrates, pathogens, or weeds).

The IR-4 project funded in FY 2021 will be expected to build on the successes and capacity developed by prior projects. Applicants are encouraged to review progress reports and the current strategic plan developed for the IR-4 program (available at www.ir4project.org).

In FY 2021, NIFA will provide funding for an IR-4 project headquarters. It is anticipated that the IR-4 project headquarters will make sub-awards to four geographically-based regional IR-4 Centers, which correspond to NIFA's four administrative regions. Responsibilities of IR-4 headquarters and the four regional centers are described below.

List of States and Territories by Region:

North Central: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

Northeastern: Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and West Virginia.

Southern: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Western: Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Colorado, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Northern Marianas, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

Project Headquarters Responsibilities:

- Coordinate IR-4 activities nationally and internationally with other agencies and organizations including, but not limited to, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Canada's Pest Management Centre of Agriculture, Agri-Food Canada, and the crop protection industry.
- Interact with the crop protection industry in selecting high priority chemistries that the industry will ultimately support through the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) regulatory process.

- Convene state and federal scientists, commodity group representatives, growers, and other experts to evaluate specific crop uses of crop protection products for potential inclusion in the IR-program and give them a priority based on:
 - the availability and efficacy of alternative crop protection products;
 - the potential damage from the target pest;
 - the performance of the proposed product in managing the target pest;
 - the compatibility of the proposed product with IPM programs; and
 - the level of risk use of the product poses to humans, non-target organisms, and the environment.
- Identify headquarters staff with experience in managing pesticide registration protocol and preparing and submitting petitions.
- Conduct training on IR-4 procedures and practices for regional scientific field and laboratory research staff.
- Administer subawards to support the ongoing work of regional centers which will ensure field work is done in appropriate environments, that regional needs are adequately assessed and addressed, and that laboratory capacity and skills are sufficient and comprehensive.
- Prepare annual reports as specified under 7 U.S.C. 3157(e)(5).

Regional Center Responsibilities:

- Participate in national coordination meetings with IR-4 headquarters staff to harmonize and prioritize regional needs and activities into a comprehensive nationally-coordinated program. Program priorities will be established with stakeholder input provided at national meetings attended by program stakeholders, including producers, land-grant institution representatives, and other individuals and organizations interested in the production of minor and specialty crops.
- Establish a process for research coordinators to verify each request for assistance and add that information to a master list.
- Identify field, laboratory, and quality assurance representatives experienced in generating data according to Good Laboratory Practices (GLPs) for pesticide registration.
- Plan and conduct field trials at EPA-approved locations.
- Analyze the residue samples from field trials as well as residue samples from USDA/ARS Specialty Crops Programs per EPA guidelines and GLPs. This responsibility only applies to the three regional IR-4 centers with analytical chemistry programs.

Shared Responsibilities of Headquarters and Regional Centers:

- Identify pest management needs from requests submitted through a nationwide network of liaison representatives.
- Maintain working liaison with the counterpart regional Integrated Pest Management Centers to facilitate joint progress on priority programs.

- Integrate multiple pest disciplines in the management and execution of IR-4 programs.
- Identify a network of qualified field research scientists who can conduct the necessary research trials and develop the data under EPA-mandated Good Laboratory Practices (GLP) guidelines following specific directions in the research protocol.
- Outline plans and identify key personnel for a quality assurance unit for GLP compliance and to format all research data and reports for submission to the EPA.
- Identify expert assistance for the development and registration of biological agents for use in pest management strategies on minor and specialty crops.

NIFA will give priority consideration to IR-4 proposals that:

- 1) Address high priority pest management problems that relate to the societal challenge of food security and foster new collaborations between individuals, programs and institutions.
- 2) Address the needs of underrepresented or hard-to-reach audiences;
- 3) Include collaboration with small- or mid-sized accredited colleges and universities, 1890 land-grant institutions, 1994 land-grant institutions, Hispanic-serving institutions, Hispanic serving Agricultural Colleges and universities, and/or other institutions that serve high-risk, underrepresented, or hard-to-reach audiences that contribute to or support U.S. pest management issues;
- 4) Successfully integrate multiple pest management disciplines in the management and execution of IR-4 programs; and
- 5) Include specific plans for building collaborative partnerships with the regional Integrated Pest Management Centers on programmatic areas of mutual interest.

NIFA's programs are intended to promote advances in U.S. food, agriculture, and forestry, and these industries are increasingly worldwide in scope and reach. If appropriate, applicants to the IR-4 program may include international partnerships or engagement in proposals. In doing so, applicants are to keep in mind that any international efforts included in a proposal (e.g., partnerships, exchanges, training, travel) must support IR-4 program goals.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The anticipated amount available for IR-4 in FY 2021 is approximately \$15 million. NIFA will award one standard grant for a 48-month period; for work to be completed in FYs 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024. This RFA is being released prior to passage of an appropriations act for FY2021. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application. 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. Application Restrictions

NIFA will evaluate applications using the criteria described in [Part V](#) of this RFA. Applications for FY 2021 are limited to *new applications* and are subject to the due dates herein (see [Appendix III](#) for definition).

In FY 2021, NIFA intends to make the IR-4 award as a new continuation grant. With a continuation grant, NIFA agrees to a specified level of support for a specified period with intention to provide additional future support provided performance has been satisfactory, funds are available and continued support is in the interest of the public and the Federal government.

C. Grant Types

The IR-4 program will provide funding for one standard grant. Project proposals should be submitted for a 48-month project period. The IR-4 program will provide funding to facilitate registrations of conventional pesticides and biopesticides on Specialty Food crops (fruits, vegetables, nuts, herbs, spices) and non-food Environmental Horticulture crops. Project proposals should be submitted for a 48-month project period.

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. Eligible Applicants

Applicants for the IR-4 program 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 are not allowed. NIFA will disqualify both applications if an applicant submits duplicate or multiple submissions.

Applications may be submitted by State agricultural experiment stations, colleges and universities, extension services, private industry or other interested parties.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. Failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of 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.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

The IR-4 program has ***NO*** matching requirement. NIFA will not factor matching resources into the review process as an evaluation criterion.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

A. Method of Application

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

Table 3: Steps to Obtain Application Material

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-SRGP-008033 , 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 4: Help and Resources

Grants.gov Support	NIFA Support
Grants.gov Online Support Telephone support: 800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035 Email support: support@grants.gov Self-service customer-based support: Grants.gov iPortal <i>Key Information: Customer service business Hours 24/7, except federal holidays.</i>	Email: policy@usda.gov <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 5** outlines other key instructions for applicants.

Table 5: Key Application Instructions

Instruction	References (All references are to the <u>Application Guide</u>)
Attachments must be in a portable document format (PDF) format.	Part III § 3
Check the manifest of submitted files to verify attachments are in the correct format.	Part III § 6.1
Conduct an administrative review of the application before submission.	Part VII
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.	
Contact NIFA if applicant does not received correspondence from NIFA regarding an application within 30 days of the application deadline.	

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 summary must include:

- physical location(s) of proposed headquarters and regional centers;
- categorized list of partners and collaborators;
- a clear overview of the proposal; and
- the anticipated impacts of the proposed project.

The PS must show how the project goals align with the project goals of the IR-4. See Part V § 4.7 of the [Application Guide](#) for instructions and suggested templates.

2. Field 8. Project Narrative (PN). The PN shall not exceed **18 1.5 spaced** pages of written text, and up to **50 1.5 spaced** additional pages for figures and tables (the font size for

tables should be no smaller than 11 points, Times New Roman). The page limits (68 total) 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. to ensure fair and equitable competition. The PN must include all of the following:

- a. Identify the mission and goals of the IR-4 project;
- b. Identify the project director (PD) and other key personnel;
- c. Describe the management process the project will use to: a) establish broad-based advisory committees; b) involve stakeholders and partner institutions in its operations through working groups and other mechanisms; c) identify program needs and priorities; and d) develop a strategic plan that will be followed to address national and regional priorities and achieve IR-4 goals and objectives;
- d. Demonstrate the ability to establish and maintain an interactive information network that will provide a mechanism to share current pest management information and successes with pest managers, funding organizations, policy-makers, and other stakeholders;
- e. Describe the process that will be used to ensure effective management of IR-4 resources (including personnel, training and travel budgets, and supplies/equipment needed for field and laboratory research) and provide a plan to assess progress and accomplishments throughout the project; and
- f. Describe a process for managing sub-awards and/or fee for service arrangements made from NIFA funding provided through the IR-4 headquarters. The management process must ensure: a) the needs identification and prioritization process is kept separate from the funding process, b) that eligible applicants are notified of funding opportunities, and c) that funding is distributed in a fair and equitable fashion.

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](#).

Applicants should prepare a budget for each of the four years of the grant plus a cumulative four-year budget. This is done to provide a comprehensive spending plan for the life of the project. All applications must include a budget narrative to justify budget items for all years and all sub-awards must include a budget and budget narrative for each year they are part of the grant.

Indirect Costs for the IR-4 program are limited to 10% of total direct costs. For indirect cost funding restrictions, refer to [Part IV § C](#) of this RFA.

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

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

1. Field 2. Program to which the applicant is applying. Enter the program name “**Minor Crop Pest Management IR-4**” and the program code “**RR**”. 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

Pursuant to the Competitive, Special and Facilities Research Grant Act of August 4, 1965 section 2(g)(1)(B) [[7 U.S.C. 3157e\(g\)](#)], The Secretary of Agriculture shall limit allowable overhead costs, with respect to grants awarded under this section, to those necessary to carry out the purposes of the grants. Therefore, when preparing budgets, applicants must limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to 10 percent of the total funds requested.

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

E. Other Submission Requirements

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

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

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. 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:

- 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;
- 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 the review is completed, the responsible program staff will recommend that your project be approved for support from currently available funds or be declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review.

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.

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.

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

B. Evaluation Criteria

NIFA will use the following criteria to evaluate applications:

1. Relevance of the application to the accomplishment of program goals and objectives, as described in Part I § B and Part I § C. (25 points)
2. Adequacy of the proposal response to items listed in the Project Narrative, including a process for managing sub-awards made from NIFA funding. (25 points)
3. Quality and extent of documented stakeholder involvement in application development. (20 points)
4. Capacity of host institution(s) to provide support for the project, including commitment to the program. (10 points)
5. Experience, accomplishments, and time commitments of key project personnel. (10 points)
6. Appropriateness of requested budget. (10 points)

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 200.211 (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 §200.333, Fixed Amount Sub-awards), unless described in the application and funded in the approved federal awards. This provision does not apply to the acquisition of supplies, material, equipment, or general support services;
8. Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-federal entity; and
9. The need for additional federal funds to complete the project.

B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

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

C. Regulatory Information

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

APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACT

Programmatic Contacts

Name	Email	Telephone
Tom Bewick	tbewick@usda.gov	202-913-3052
Rob Hedberg	robert.hedberg@usda.gov	202-531-0635
Kathryn Kimble-Day	kathryn.day@usda.gov	202-531-0635

For administrative questions related to:

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

NIFA's Mailing Address:

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

Courier/Package Delivery Address:

National Institute of Food and Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
2312 East Bannister Road, MS 10000
Kansas City, MO 64141-3061

APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Name	Acronyms
Agriculture and Food Research Initiative	AFRI
Authorized Representative	AR
Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education reform Act of 1998	AREERA
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance	CFDA
Data Management Plan	DMP
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.
Minor Use	As defined in Pesticide Registration (PR) Notice 97-2 is the use of a pesticide on a commercial agricultural crop or site, or an animal where: 1) the total United States acreage for the crop is less than 300,000 acres, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture; or 2) the use does not provide sufficient economic incentive to support the initial registration or continuing registration of a pesticide for such use.
New Application	An application not previously submitted to a program.
Specialty Crop	Is defined in law as fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and horticulture and nursery crops (including floriculture).