

Notice of Funding Opportunity Tribal Colleges Education Equity Grants Program

FUNDING YEAR: Fiscal Year (FY) 2026

APPLICATION DEADLINE: October 7, 2026

ANTICIPATED PROGRAM FUNDING: \$8,000,000

AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL AWARD \$228,571

RANGE:

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: USDA-NIFA-TCEG-011837

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 10.221

ANNOUNCEMENT

National Institute of Food and Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture

Assistance Listing Number (ALN): The Tribal Colleges Education Equity Grants (TCEG) Program is listed in the Assistance Listings under number 10.221.

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
Application:	5:00 P.M. Eastern Time, October 7, 2026
Applicants Comments:	Within six months from the issuance of this notice (<i>NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month</i>)

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), to the extent permitted by law, will no longer make grants or otherwise fund programs or activities that improperly discriminate on the basis of race or sex, including discrimination in the name of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policies. Instead, USDA will prioritize merit and efficiency. USDA recognizes programs and initiatives will have the greatest impact when these programs and initiatives put American farmers, ranchers, and foresters first by:

- solving the most pressing challenges they face;
- protecting America's food, fuel, and fiber supply to enhance national security;
- supporting production of healthy and safe food for consumers;
- expanding and developing domestic markets;
- training the next generation of agriculturalists; and
- fueling innovation to keep American farmers at the forefront of productivity.

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is committed to advancing these principles and encourages applicants to actively engage farmers, ranchers, and foresters when applying for funding opportunities to ensure relevancy and adherence to them. NIFA also encourages agricultural leaders to engage in the peer review panel process to ensure American producers are better served through research, education, and extension activities.

Projects submitted under this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) should align with [USDA Secretary's Memorandum 1078-020](#) Directive on Departmental Research and Development Priorities:

1. Increasing Profitability of Farmers and Ranchers
2. Expanding Markets and Creating New Uses of U.S. Agricultural Products
3. Protecting the Integrity of American Agriculture from Invasive Species
4. Promoting Soil Health to Regenerate Long-Term Productivity of Land
5. Improving Human Health through Precision Nutrition and Food Quality

Stakeholder Input. NIFA seeks comments on all NOFOs 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 NOFOs 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. Please use the following subject line: Response to the TCEG NOFO.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NIFA requests applications for the TCEG program for FY 2026 to promote post-secondary education at the 1994 Land-grant Institutions (1994s) and increase educational opportunities for American Indians. The amount available for this grant program in FY 2026 is approximately \$8 million. This is a four-year continuation grant.

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

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PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

Authority for this program is contained in the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 ([7 U.S.C. 301note](#)) as amended by the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 ([7 U.S.C. 7601](#)). Under this authority, appropriated funds are to be awarded to the 1994s for Education capacity building, and funds are to be distributed equally among institutions that meet eligibility requirements.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The TCEG program (assistance listing 10.221) is designed to help build Tribal education capacity in the food and agricultural sciences for Native Alaskan/American Indian students. This NOFO will begin a new four-year continuation funding cycle. The six legislatively mandated priorities are:

- Curricula design and materials development.
- Faculty development and teacher preparation.
- Student experiential learning
- Equipment and instrumentation for teaching science, technology, engineering, arts and math.
- Student recruitment and retention.
- Instruction delivery systems and strategic partnerships.

The TCEG program focuses on development of students and faculty to create a dynamic and engaging learning environment. This program prepares students for roles in Tribal leadership and prepares students for agricultural and related careers in the private sector, for work with Tribal and non-Tribal government, and in academia. TCEG teaching applications must demonstrably incorporate a Tribal leadership development component to equip students with technical and leadership abilities upon graduation.

Specific activities may include but are not limited to:

- Developing practical applications to increase understanding of leadership roles for Tribes, including critical thinking, generosity and cooperation, independence and freedom, connectedness, responsibility, communication, and reflection.
- Connecting the academic classroom experience to daily leadership roles and organizational activities.
- Providing opportunities for mentoring and shadowing.
- Organizing leadership academies, workshops, trainings, etc.

Of interest are the projects involving innovative agricultural technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), data science, robotics and other cutting edge digital tools. Incorporation of opportunities for training undergraduate students in these areas to equip them with the foundational knowledge and skills necessary to adapt to and thrive in an increasingly digital society and expose them to educational and career pathways in AI for food and agricultural sciences is encouraged.

Tribal Leadership Skills Development. The development of Tribal leadership skills to prepare students for agricultural and related careers in the private sector, Tribal and non-Tribal government, academia, and emotional awareness and health. TCEG teaching applications must incorporate a Tribal leadership development component to equip students with technical and leadership abilities upon graduation. Specific outcomes may include but are not limited to:

- Students who are well grounded in the agriculture of their community.
- Students who can build on knowledge and skills from which to achieve personal and academic success throughout life.
- Students who can actively participate in various environments.
- Students who can engage effectively in learning activities on ways of knowing and learning.
- Students who can demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of the relationships and processes of interaction of all elements in the world around them.

Table 2: Program Key Information

Title	Description
Program Code:	KX
Program Code Name:	TCEG
ALN:	10.221
Project Type:	Education Projects
Grant Type:	Standard Grants
Application Deadline	October 7, 2026
Grant Duration:	48 Months
Anticipated # of Awards:	35
Minimum Award Amount:	\$228,571
Maximum Award Amount:	\$228,571

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The amount available for the TCEG program in FY 2026 is approximately \$8 million. The Standard Grant type will be administered as a four-year continuation award. USDA is not committed to fund any 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 NOFO.

B. Application Restrictions

NIFA will evaluate applications using the criteria described in [Part V](#) of this NOFO.

Application for FY2026 is limited to the following application types:

1. *New application*: New applications will be evaluated using the criteria described in [Part V](#) of this NOFO 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. Applicants must propose **Education Projects**.

An Education Project develops human capital to help meet current and future national food, agricultural, natural resources, and human sciences workplace needs. Examples of relevant activities under this project type include (but are not limited to) the following: formal classroom instruction, laboratory instruction, and practicum experience in the food and agricultural sciences and other related matters, such as faculty development, student recruitment and services, curriculum development, instructional materials and equipment, and innovative teaching methodologies.

Applications for Education Projects must address one or more of the following need areas:

- a. Relevant curricula design and materials development
- b. Responsive faculty development and teacher preparation
- c. Student experiential learning
- d. Equipment and instrumentation for teaching Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math
- e. Student recruitment and retention
- f. Instruction delivery systems and strategic partnerships

Education may include any of the following activities:

- Institutional capacity building through faculty development and instructional delivery programs for K-12 and higher education instructors. Educational activities may include curriculum and instructional materials development; externship opportunities that allow teachers to learn about industry environments and expectations for entry level workers; and opportunities to learn modern pedagogy and innovative teaching methodologies.

- Facilitating interaction with other academic institutions to maximize the use of resources supporting outstanding education in the food, agriculture and natural resource sciences, such as linkages between baccalaureate degree granting institutions, secondary, and/or two-year postsecondary institutions to make instruction targeted at undergraduate students available to secondary students as advanced placement credit or as transfer credit from associate degree programs into baccalaureate level programs.
- Experiential learning for students enrolled in Associate, Baccalaureate, Masters, and Ph.D. degree programs.
- Research/Extension internships for undergraduate students new to food, agriculture, natural resources and/or human sciences. Students new to food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences may include freshman enrolled in food and agricultural sciences; and sophomores or juniors enrolled in nonagricultural majors.
- Graduate and postdoctoral students actively engaged in the scholarship of the research/extension projects, including in activities such as internships, externships, and clinics.
- Recruitment and retention of college students, including targeted recruitment, mentoring and experiential learning opportunities.

Educational activities must show direct alignment with one of the following:

- Increasing the number of graduates with the necessary technical skills for entry-level positions in food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences.
- Improving the technical competencies needed for the workforce to ensure that U.S. agriculture remains competitive in agriculture.
- Enhancing the workforce in food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences.

Note that routine use of graduate and postdoctoral students as personnel on research projects is not considered education for the purposes of this program. Only students actively engaged in the scholarship of the research/extension projects are considered as education. Actively engaged students could contribute to presentations, articles, posters, and other expressions of scholarship that reflect their own work on the project.

The activities for Education Projects must show direct alignment with increasing technical competency in priority area(s) listed in the [Purpose and Priorities section of this NOFO](#) to ensure that the United States remains competitive in agriculture.

2. Grant Types: Awards will be administered as a **Standard Grant**.

Standard Grants will support Education Projects. An eligible, individual institution, independent branch campus, or branch institution of a state system may submit a grant application for project activities to be undertaken principally on behalf of its own students or faculty, and to be managed primarily by its own personnel. The applicant executes the project without the requirement of sharing grant funds with other project partners.

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

Applicants for the Tribal Colleges Education Equity Grant Program must meet all the requirements discussed in this NOFO. 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 [About Grants](#) provides highly recommended information about grants and other resources to help understand the Federal awards process.

Applications may only be submitted by Tribal Colleges or Universities designated as a 1994 Land-grant Institutions (1994 institution) under the Equity Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 ([7 U.S.C. 301note](#)). 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. The eligible 1994 institutions are listed below.

Table 3: Eligible 1994 Institutions

<u>Aaniiih Nakoda College</u>	<u>Navajo Technical University</u>
<u>Bay Mills Community College</u>	<u>Nebraska Indian Community College</u>
<u>Blackfeet Community College</u>	<u>Northwest Indian College</u>
<u>Cankdeska Cikana Community College</u>	<u>Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College</u>
<u>Chief Dull Knife College</u>	<u>Oglala Lakota College</u>
<u>College of the Menominee Nation</u>	<u>Red Lake Nation College</u>
<u>College of the Muscogee Nation</u>	<u>Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College</u>
<u>Dine' College</u>	<u>Salish Kootenai College</u>
<u>Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College</u>	<u>Sinte Gleska University</u>
<u>Fort Peck Community College</u>	<u>Sisseton Wahpeton College</u>
<u>Haskell Indian Nations University</u>	<u>Sitting Bull College</u>
<u>Ilisagvik College</u>	<u>Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute</u>
<u>Institute of American Indian Arts</u>	<u>Stone Child College</u>
<u>Keweenaw Bay Ojibwa Community College</u>	<u>Tohono O'odham Community College</u>
<u>Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Community College</u>	<u>Turtle Mountain Community College</u>
<u>Leech Lake Tribal College</u>	<u>United Tribes Technical College</u>
<u>Little Big Horn College</u>	<u>White Earth Tribal and Community College</u>
<u>Little Priest Tribal College</u>	

USDA **will not accept** competitive applications for grants and cooperative agreements submitted for dangerous gain-of-function research, as defined in [Section 8 of E.O. 14292](#).

B. Cost Sharing or Matching:

No Match Required – the TCEG Program has no matching requirement. NIFA will not factor matching resources into the review process as an evaluation criterion. While not required, cost share is encouraged.

PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

A. Method of Application

Applicants must apply to this NOFO electronically; no other method or response is accepted. The electronic application for this NOFO 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 III** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide contains detailed information regarding the [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) registration process. The NIFA Grants Application Guide is contained in the specific funding opportunity package or a sample of the guide can be found [here](#). When applying for a NIFA award, it is important to reference the version of the guide that is included in the specific funding opportunity application package.

Table 4: 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.
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-TCEG-011837 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 5: 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 Customer service business Hours 24/7, except Federal holidays .	Email: grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov Business hours: Monday thru Friday, 7a.m. – 5p.m. ET, except Federal holidays .

B. Content and Form of the Application

The NIFA Grants Application Guide is part of the corresponding application package for this NOFO. The NOFO overrides the NIFA Grants Application Guide if there is a discrepancy between the two documents. 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 NOFO. Applicants must refer to the proposal number when corresponding with NIFA. **Table 6** outlines other key instructions for applicants.

Table 6: Key Application Instructions

Instruction	References (All references are to the NIFA Grants Application Guide)
Attachments must be in a portable document format (PDF) format.	Part IV
Check the manifest of submitted files to verify attachments are in the correct format.	Part IV
Conduct an administrative review of the application before submission.	Part IV
Follow the submission instructions.	Part IV
Provide an accurate email address, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R.	Part V
Contact the Grants.gov helpdesk for technical support and keep a record of the correspondence.	N/A
Contact NIFA if applicant does not receive correspondence from NIFA regarding an application within 90 days of the application deadline.	N/A

SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet. See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide for the required certifications and assurances.

SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s). See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide.

R&R Other Project Information Form. See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide.

- Field 7. Project Summary (PS)/Abstract.** The PS must show how the project goals align with the project goals of the Tribal Colleges Education Equity Grant Program. See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide for instructions and suggested templates.
 - Specifications are as follows:
 - The summary is not to exceed 250 words.
 - Include the title of the project.
 - Include the names and affiliated organizations of all PDs and Co-PDs.
- Field 8. Project Narrative (PN).** The PN must not exceed 12 *1.5 spaced* pages of written text (Times New Roman) and up to 3 *1.5 spaced* additional pages for figures and tables (the font size for tables should be no smaller than 11 points, Times New Roman). The page limits outlined here ensure fair 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 PN must include all the following:
 - Introduction** to the Tribal College.
 - Rationale and significance** of what you are proposing and how it will help Tribes, Tribal Colleges, and Tribal Students. Please include alignment of the project with institutional long-range goals, justification for the project, innovation, advancing

Tribal educational, multidisciplinary and/or problem-based focus, potential for adoption by other institutions, if the project will enhance the understanding of agricultural, whether the students are able to build on the knowledge and skills of the local community as a foundation from which to achieve personal and academic success throughout life, are students able to engage effectively in learning activities that are based on ways of knowing and learning, and does the proposed project build awareness and appreciation of the relationships and processes of interaction of all elements in the world around them. Provide a summary of previous years accomplishments and activities at your institution.

- **Objectives** that align with the legislatively mandated priorities of the program.
 - Relevant curricula design and materials development
 - Responsive faculty development and teacher preparation
 - Student experiential learning
 - Equipment and instrumentation for teaching Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math
 - Student recruitment and retention
 - Instructional delivery systems and strategic partnerships
- **Project timeline** over the four-year project plan and detail professional development activities for faculty and students, presentations of papers and posters, dissemination of findings at grant workshops, gatherings or in publications.
- **Evaluation Plan:** When and how the project will be evaluated. Will there be an internal or external reviewer, and how will they evaluate the learning practices?
- **Capacity Building:** Describe the Institutional and involvement in the project. Describe the community members' assistance with learning activities. Describe in what capacity the institution assesses activities from a class, programmatic and institutional level to ensure elevated leadership.
- **Dissemination** of lessons learned. Student participation in the annual First Americans Land-Grant Consortium (FALCON) conference and Faculty participation in the Project Directors (PD) meeting at FALCON annually is encouraged.

Field 12. Add Other Attachments. See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide.

- **Data management plan (DMP);** (Required) A DMP is required for this program. Applicants should clearly articulate how the project director (PD) and co-PDs plan to manage and disseminate the data generated by the project. The DMP will be considered during the merit review process (see Part V, B of this NOFO, [NIFA's Data Management Plan](#)). Attach the DMP in "Other Attachments" section of the application.

R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded). See **Part V** of the **NIFA Grants 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** of the **NIFA Grants Application Guide**).

R&R Budget. See **Part V** of the **NIFA Grants Application Guide**.

1. Indirect Costs (IDC) – See [Part IV, C](#) of this NOFO for funding restrictions regarding IDC, and **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide for additional information.

Supplemental Information Form. See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide.

1. **Field 2. Program to which the applicant is applying.** Enter the program name “*Tribal Colleges Education Equity Grant Program*” and the program code “*KX*”. Accurate entry is critical.
2. **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.** See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide.

C. Funding Restrictions

1. Indirect Cost (IDC) is not to exceed 30 percent of the recipient’s Total Federal Funds Awarded (TFFA). [7 U.S.C. 3310](#) limits the recovery of IDC for the overall award to 30 percent of the TFFA under a research, education, or extension grant. The maximum allowable IDC amount recoverable under the award, including the IDC charged by the sub-awardee(s), if any, is the lesser of the following and is determined by calculating the amount of IDC using:
 - a. the sum of an institution’s negotiated indirect cost rate and the indirect cost rate charged by sub-awardees, if any; or
 - b. 30 percent of TFFA.

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

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

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

If the applicant does not have a negotiated rate and NIFA is the cognizant agency, the applicant may request an IDC rate. Applicants are not required to complete the IDC package during the application process and need only to calculate a rate to serve as a basis for requesting IDC. If awarded, the applicant will be required to submit a complete IDC proposal package to obtain a negotiated rate.

Organizations that do not have a current negotiated (including provisional) rate, may elect the de minimis rate ([2 CFR 200.414\(f\)](#)). The Uniform Guidance offers the option of

electing to charge a de minimis rate of 15 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. As described above and in [2 CFR 200.403](#), costs must be charged consistently as either indirect or direct costs but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If elected, this methodology must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate for a rate, which it may do at any time.

See [NIFA Indirect Costs](#) for information including [additional resources](#) and [NIFA Indirect Cost Guidance Chart](#).

2. NIFA awards may not be used to support the procurement of unmanned aircraft systems to process, store, or transmit Federal information (as defined in [OMB Circular A-130](#)) unless the grant is specifically available for procurement of such equipment and grantees describe in their application how they will comply with the information security requirements outlined in Appendix B of [M-26-02 Ensuring Government Use of Secure Unmanned Aircraft Systems and Supporting United States Producers](#) and develop a risk-based approach to applying those requirements to procurement solicitations to potential vendors under the resulting Federal award. This information, if provided, will be evaluated by NIFA as part of its evaluation process. If such procurement is approved, specific information security requirements may be included in the terms and conditions of the grant to ensure that the grantees will incorporate those requirements in procurement solicitations of unmanned aircraft systems under the Federal award. Additionally, projects must ensure that they are in adherence to [Secretary's Memorandum \(SM\) 1078-014](#) and are not using unallowable 3-D printers which can be found at [National Security and Unallowable Costs](#).

PART V. APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. NIFA's Evaluation Process

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

Scientific Peer Review Process:

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

1. The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities.
2. The need to include experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields.
3. The need to include other experts (e.g., agricultural producers, range or forest managers/operators, researchers, educators, evaluators, 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 the reviewer's area of expertise, geographic area, and entity type, as appropriate.
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 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 equally weighted criteria to evaluate applications to this program:

1. **Potential for Advancing Quality of Tribal Education/Significance of the Problem:** This criterion assesses the project's capacity to strengthen Tribal education in food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences by addressing specific, and justified needs of the community. Evaluators will look for innovation, a multidisciplinary/problem-based focus, and potential for institutional adoption. Projects must demonstrate how they enhance agricultural understanding within the community, utilize local knowledge, and encourage engagement with indigenous ways of knowing, fostering long-term personal and academic success for students. Projects must measure one of the following outcomes:
 - Increasing the number of graduates with the necessary technical skills for entry-level positions in food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences.
 - Improving the technical competencies needed for the workforce to ensure that U.S. agriculture remains competitive.
 - Enhancing the workforce in food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences.
2. **Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages:** This criterion relates to the soundness of the proposed approach including objectives, methodology, plan of operation, timetable, sustainability, expected products and results, evaluation, and dissemination plans. Emphasis is placed on the quality of educational support provided to the applicant institution through its partnerships and collaborative initiatives, and on the potential cooperative linkages likely to evolve as a result of this project.
3. **Institutional Capability and Capacity Building:** This criterion relates to the institution's capability to perform the project and the degree to which the project will strengthen its teaching 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 academic enhancement, and plans for project continuation or expansion beyond the period of USDA support.
4. **Key Personnel:** This criterion relates to the adequacy of the number and qualifications of key persons who will develop and carry out the project, and the qualifications of project personnel who will provide for the assessment of project results and impacts and dissemination of these findings. 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.
5. **Budget and Cost Effectiveness:** This criterion relates to how well the total budget supports the project and is cost effective. Elements considered include the necessity and reasonableness of costs to carry out project activities and achieve project objectives; the appropriateness of budget allocations between the applicant and any collaborating institution(s); the adequacy of time committed to the project by key project personnel; and the degree to which the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes educational value for the dollar, achieves economies of scale, and focuses expertise and activity on high-priority Educational Need Areas.

C. Organizational Management Information

Applicants must submit specific management information prior to an award and update the information as needed. Applicants may only need to provide an update if there was a change in previously provided 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 NOFO. 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 NOFO may be used only for the purpose for which they are granted in accordance with the program-specific laws and regulations, NIFA General Awards Administrative Provisions ([7 CFR part 3430, subparts A through E](#)), USDA Regulations for Grants and Agreements ([2 CFR Chapter IV](#)), Office of Management and Budget Uniform Guidance ([2 CFR part 200](#)), [NIFA-specific terms and conditions](#), [USDA General Terms and Conditions for Federal Awards](#), and approved budget and project plans.

The Notice of 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 NOFO (some are listed here: [Federal Regulations](#)). Unless specifically noted by statute or award-specific requirements, [NIFA Federal Assistance Policy Guide](#) applies to all NIFA awards.

C. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

Output and reporting requirements are included in the [award terms and conditions](#). If there are any program or award-specific award terms, they will be identified in the Award Notice.

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 required);
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 [2 CFR Part 300 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, [48 CFR Part 31, Contract Cost Principles and Procedures](#);
5. Transfer of funds budgeted for participant support costs to other categories of expense ([2 CFR 200.456 Participant support costs](#));
6. Sub-awarding, transferring or contracting out of any work under a Federal award, including fixed amount sub-awards (see [2 CFR 200.333, Fixed Amount Sub-awards](#)), unless described in the application and funded in the approved Federal awards. This provision does not apply to the acquisition of supplies, material, equipment, or general support services;
7. Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-Federal entity;
8. The need for additional Federal funds to complete the project;
9. Salary rates of pay exceeding an Executive Level IV salary range (see “Rates of Pay for the Executive Schedule” under the “Executive & Senior Level Employee Pay Tables” header at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/>) require prior NIFA approval. This rate does not include any fringe benefits, general and administrative (G&A), overhead, or other expenses. Requests for approval must include the salary rate of pay and a justification for the rate and be sent to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) to awards@usda.gov;
10. No more than 50 percent of the total dollars of this award may be subcontracted to another party(ies) without prior written approval of the ADO, except subcontracts to Federal agencies;
11. Transferring funds between the construction and non-construction work under a Federal award; and
12. A no-cost extension (meaning, an extension of time that does not require the obligation of additional Federal funds) of the period of performance, other than any one-time extension authorized by the Federal agency in accordance with paragraph 2 CFR 200.308(g)(2). All requests for no-cost extensions should be submitted at least 10 calendar days before the conclusion of the period of performance. The Federal agency may approve multiple no-cost extensions under a Federal award if not prohibited by Federal statute or regulation.

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](#).

D. Language Access Services

NIFA offers language access services, such as interpretation and translation of vital information, free of charge. If you need interpretation or translation services, please visit [NIFA Language Access Services](#).

APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACT

For Programmatic questions please email.

NIFATribalprograms@usda.gov

For administrative questions related to;

1. Grants.gov, see [Part IV](#) of this NOFO
2. Other NOFO or application questions, please email grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov
3. Awards under this NOFO, please email awards@usda.gov

U.S. Postal Mailing Address:

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

Courier/Package Delivery Address:

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

APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Glossary of Terms

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative – AFRI

Assistance Listing Number – ALN

Authorized Departmental Officer – ADO

Authorized Representative – AR

Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 – AREERA

Coordinated Agricultural Project – CAP

Centers of Excellence – COE

Data Management Plan – DMP

National Institute of Food and Agriculture – NIFA

Notice of Funding Opportunity – NOFO

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.

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.