

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

2023 Scientific Exchange Program – African Animal Feed and Fertilizer Innovation

Application Submission Deadline: May 31, 2023

Summary

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, Fellowship Programs, announces this funding opportunity to support the Scientific Exchanges Program by issuing new awards. This opportunity is available to U.S. State Cooperative Institutions or other colleges and universities in the United States and is intended to enhance the Fellows' capacity for understanding applications of agricultural research.

A. Program Description

The Scientific Exchange Program (SEP) leverages the latest developments in cross-cutting agricultural priorities, research, and technologies to educate a new generation of agricultural scientist to promote trade, trade policy, trade capacity building, and food security. The collaborative nature of the SEP leadership training and research programs improves agricultural productivity, systems, and processes in partnering emerging market economies through the transfer of new science and agricultural technologies. USDA may also use the program as a market development tool to assist in opening markets and decreasing or eliminating trade barriers in low to middle income countries, which ultimately increases and creates new trade opportunities for U.S. agricultural exports.

SEP focuses on a cohort of fellows who spend up to 12 weeks at the U.S. academic institution (host institution) and work directly with U.S. scientists in their fields. SEP fellow(s) hold a minimum of a Master's-level degree, in the early or middle stage of their career, and represent a university, government agency, or research entity in their home country. Mentors coordinate the training program in the United States. Upon the Fellow's return home, the mentor travels to the Fellows country to follow-up. SEP is administered by USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, Global Programs, Fellowship Programs.

Objectives for Track 1

For fiscal year 2023, USDA is seeking applications that focus on research related to increase access to high quality animal feed and innovative techniques leading to improved efficiency of fertilizers among African smallholder farmers. The animal feed sector in Africa remains underdeveloped. High quality, available animal feed plays a vital role in improving animal health and welfare, which directly impacts the production of safe products of animal origin and overall food security.

Additionally, in a rapidly changing agricultural environment, farmers need to make strategic decisions about their animal feed and improve upon fertilizer production methods to jump start the next generation of fertilizers. Considering this, USDA/FAS is seeking applications that

illustrate how the adoption of improved animal feeding coupled with innovative and efficient fertilizer, nutrient management, and cropping practices will assist in reducing food insecurity.

USDA/FAS is seeking applications that focus on training and empowering fellows from low to middle income economies in Africa (as defined by [The World Bank](#)). USDA/FAS envisions multiple fellows on each award to participate as a cohesive geographical cohort who will spend up to 12 weeks at the U.S. academic institution (host institution), rather than at individual times, and applicants should prepare their approach accordingly. The cohort may comprise of fellows with a policy governance, and research and technical expertise background. Additionally, the award will provide a platform for fellows of the same cohort to share ideas and foster collaboration to lead to better regional and intraregional coordination on animal feed and fertilizer innovation.

USDA/FAS is seeking applications that also advances diversity, leadership and science communication objectives to empower fellows to advocate for sound policy to peers, decision-makers, and the public. The focus, topic, size and nature of each exchange project will be identified by USDA/FAS, in consultation with the staff at U.S. embassies and consulates overseas, and the award recipient during the course of the award period. Under the Scientific Exchanges Program, USDA/FAS staff are responsible for identifying countries and topics eligible for exchange project. This includes arranging for fellows to obtain a J-1 visa, related entries in SEVIS, and monitoring impacts of policy to the program implementations.

The SEP Program may also include collaboration with and input from relevant stakeholders, such as U.S. regulatory agencies, the Office of the United States Trade Representative and relevant U.S. Embassies. Ideally, fellows and host institutions will share the knowledge gained through these endeavors in their classroom and extension work with their faculty, students, extension officers, constituents, policy makers, and other stakeholders in the international agricultural marketplace; and that they will continue to maintain professional contacts with the Fellows after their departure from the United States.

Objectives for Track 2

For FY 2023, USDA is seeking applications submissions for supporting fellows and relevant mentors to attend the 2023 World Food Prize. The World Food Prize recognizes contributions in any field involved in improving the world food supply, including food and agriculture science and technology, manufacturing, marketing, nutrition, economics, poverty alleviation, political leadership, and the social sciences.

The World Food Prize emphasizes the importance of a nutritious and sustainable food supply for all people. Held each October in conjunction with the presentation of the World Food Prize, the "Borlaug Dialogue," is a three-day symposium that brings together international experts, policy leaders, business executives and farmers to address cutting-edge issues in global food security and nutrition. The event, which takes place in Des Moines, Iowa, USA, and regularly attracts participants from more than 50 countries, has been referred to as "the premier conference in the world on global agriculture."

USDA/FAS is seeking applications interested in collaborating with FAS Global Programs, Fellowship Programs staff members to manage travel arrangements and workshops adjacent to the annual World Food Prize Borlaug Dialogue for approximately 30 fellows and their mentors. Additionally, USDA/FAS envisions the workshops adjacent to the annual World Food Prize Borlaug Dialogue to include an all-day workshop for fellows and mentors from approximately 9am – 5pm and a formal breakfast workshop from approximately 7:30am – 10am for fellows and their mentors, featuring a USDA principal. The fellows may comprise of professionals with a policy governance, and research and technical expertise background focused on various topics related to climate smart agriculture. Additionally, attendance at the conference will provide a platform for fellows to share ideas and foster collaboration on research agendas that can have a direct impact on leadership, international trade, food security and economic growth in emerging economies.

Opportunity Number USDA-FAS-10620-0762-10-23-0001

Authorizing Legislation

National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, PL 95-113, as amended, 7 USC §§ 3291 and 3319a

B. Federal Award Information

Total Available Federal Funding:	Up to \$1,900,000 total, subject to the availability of funds Track 1 – up to total \$260,000 per award Track 2 – up to total \$200,000 per award
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Anticipated Number of Awards:	Up to 6 awards for Track 1, and one award for Track 2
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Cost Share/Match Requirement:	None/Not Required
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Projected Period of Performance Start:	October 1, 2023
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Projected Period of Performance End:	September 30, 2025
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Extensions to this program may be permitted, subject to approval.

Type of Assistance Instrument:

USDA/FAS anticipates that a Cost-Reimbursable Agreement will be funded pursuant to this funding opportunity.

This type of agreement allows for a collaborative relationship between USDA/FAS, the selected recipient, and other collaborating partners. The particular scope and depth of this collaboration may vary throughout performance, depending on the needs of the activity and the desires of the participants.

Additional Awards

USDA/FAS reserves the right to make additional awards under this solicitation, consistent with Agency policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available after the original selections are made. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than 6 months after the

original selection decisions.

C. Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants:

State cooperative institutions or other colleges and universities in the United States, as defined at 7 USC 3103

All applicants must have an active registration in the U.S. Government System for Award Management (www.sam.gov) before the application submission deadline of the announcement; applicants with inactive, expired, pending, or excluded listings will be deemed ineligible. Exceptions, waivers, or extensions will not be considered. Please contact the program officer(s) listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact, if you have questions about this requirement.

Cost Share/Match Requirement: None/Not Required

Ineligible activities: If an application is submitted that includes any ineligible tasks or activities, that portion of the application will be ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the application, render the entire application ineligible for funding.

D. Application and Submission Information

This announcement contains all information necessary to apply to this funding opportunity.

Submission Dates and Times

Application Submission Deadline: May 31, 2023 at 11:59pm EDT (UTC -04:00)
Applications received after this time will not be accepted. Applicants are advised to make their submissions 1-2 days before this deadline in case of computer problems.

Anticipated Funding Selection Date: July 26, 2023

Anticipated Award Date: August 28, 2023

Content and Form of Application Submission

A complete application package for Tracks 1 and 2 must include:

- Standard Form SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance, showing the Unique Entity Identifier, and signed by the applicant.
- Standard Form SF-424A, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs, showing the budget categorization. Applicants are advised to consult 2 CFR 200 Subpart E for guidance on proper categorization of cost items. An improper categorization will not itself be grounds for a determination of ineligibility but may delay approval and/or adversely impact the application's scoring.
- A detailed budget and narrative, in which cost items are quantified and described in sufficient detail to enable USDA/FAS to independently determine that the proposed costs

are reasonable and allowable for the project and consistent with applicable regulations.

Application formatting guidelines:

- Organized, written in English, free of excessive grammatical and spelling errors
- Source information cited appropriately
- Submitted in PDF format
- Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the application.
- Standard Form SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, if applicable to the applicant
- Track 1 Applications must include a detailed project narrative and/or plan of operation: the project narrative must include the following elements to explain the overall program plan and the applicant's technical experience and expertise:
 - Indicate the name of the institution who is applying to host an SEP cohort;
 - Provide an application responsive to the program and demonstrate originality and relevance to [USDA/FAS's mission](#);
 - Provide a tentative plan (est. cost per fellow is \$ 50-60K) based on the training interests listed in the statement of work, including topics to be covered and timelines for the fellowship, possible field visits and other activities with tentative dates;
 - Provide a description of how the award will be administered, including the logistical elements, such as but not limited to, procuring travel arrangements, negotiating catering contracts, procuring event tickets, and reserving conference rooms, hotel and/or other accommodations, and if applicable securing insurance coverage;
 - Include a narrative description of the proposed activities, and how it will be conducted, the role of the university faculty and support staff, and what is the desired result;
 - Briefly describe the expertise and international experience of the recipient in the field of interest and various countries;
 - Demonstrate understanding of cultural context and needs of the fellows;
 - Identify the expected skills or knowledge to be gained at the end of the program;
 - Demonstrate flexibility in the training plan to account for potential program changes and explain the institution's ability to respond to unforeseen circumstances;
 - Include a quality assurance plan and risk mitigation explaining how unforeseen problems that can arise will be addressed;
 - Provide a risk mitigation plan that incorporates security considerations provided by the Department of State website: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel.html>. As part of the Risk Mitigation for Track 1, also include information on the J-1 Visa compliant medical insurance coverage to be obtained for all Fellows and ensure it is comparable to NRIOL.net's J-1 Visa Health Insurance Coverage (<https://www.nriol.net/j1-visa-health-insurance/>);
 - The layout includes a description of what is being proposed, how it will be conducted, and what is the desired result;
 - Demonstrate how Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility will be achieved in the different aspects of program administration and program design, content and implementation;

- Incorporate elements of leadership, diversity, and science communication to empower fellows to advocate for sound policy to peers, decision-makers, and the public.
- Track 2 Applications must include a detailed project narrative and/or plan of operation: the project narrative must include the following elements to explain the overall program plan and the applicant's technical experience and expertise:
 - Indicate the name of the institution who is applying to support Fellows and relevant mentors to attend the 2023 World Food Prize;
 - Provide an application responsive to the program and demonstrate originality and relevance to [USDA/FAS's mission](#);
 - Provide a tentative plan (for approximately 66 people) based on the training/workshop interests listed in the statement of work, including topics to be covered, workshops and other activities with tentative dates;
 - Provide a description of how the award will be administered, including the logistical elements such as but not limited to procuring travel arrangements, negotiating catering contracts, procuring event tickets, and reserving conference rooms, hotel and/or other accommodations (for approximately 66 people), and if applicable securing insurance coverage;
 - Include a narrative description of the proposed activities, and how it will be conducted, the role of the university faculty and support staff, and what is the desired result;
 - Briefly describe the expertise and international experience of the recipient in the field of interest and various countries;
 - Demonstrate understanding of cultural context and needs of the fellows;
 - Identify the expected skills or knowledge to be gained at the end of the program;
 - Demonstrate flexibility in the training plan to account for potential program changes and explain the institution's ability to respond to unforeseen circumstances;
 - Include a quality assurance plan and risk mitigation explaining how unforeseen problems that can arise will be addressed;
 - The layout includes a description of what is being proposed, how it will be conducted, and what is the desired result.
 - Demonstrate how Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility will be achieved in the different aspects of program administration and program design, content and implementation;
 - Incorporate elements of leadership, diversity, and science communication to empower fellows to advocate for sound policy to peers, decision-makers, and the public.

Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Each applicant is required to:

- (i) Have an active registration in SAM before submitting its application;
- (ii) Have assented to the federal assistance certifications in the SAM platform;
- (iii) Provide a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) in its application; and

- (iv) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency.

SAM.gov Registration Instructions

Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active SAM.gov registration. If you have never done business with the Federal Government, you will need to register your organization in SAM.gov. If you do not have a SAM.gov account, then you will create an account using login.gov¹ to complete your SAM.gov registration. SAM.gov registration is FREE. The process for entity registrations includes obtaining Unique Entity ID (UEI), a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned an entity by SAM.gov, and requires assertions, representations and certifications, and other information about your organization. Please review the [Entity Registration Checklist](#) for details on this process.

Entities outside the United States (defined at 2 CFR 200.1 as “[foreign organizations](#)” and “[foreign public entities](#)”) must obtain a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) Code prior to SAM.gov registration. An NCAGE is required for all foreign entities prior to registering in SAM.gov. You can complete the registration once you enter the NCAGE. You can submit your request for an NCAGE Code by going to the NATO Support Activity (NSPA) NCAGE Request Tool at [CAGE/NCAGE Code Request](#) which contains detailed instructions.

If you have done business with the Federal Government previously, you can check your entity status using your government issued UEI to determine if your registration is active. SAM.gov requires you renew your registration every 365 days to keep it active.

Please note that SAM.gov registration is different than obtaining a UEI only. Obtaining an UEI only validates your organization’s legal business name and address. Please review the [Frequently Asked Question](#) on the difference for additional details.

Organizations should ensure that their SAM.gov registration includes a current e-Business (EBiz) point of contact name and email address. The EBiz point of contact is critical for Grants.gov Registration and system functionality.

Contact the [Federal Service Desk](#) for help with your SAM.gov account, to resolve technical issues or chat with a help desk agent: (866) 606-8220. The Federal Service desk hours of operation are Monday – Friday 8am – 8pm ET.

Intergovernmental Review

Not applicable.

Funding Restrictions

Generally, funds may not be used in any manner that is prohibited by applicable regulations, including 2 CFR Part 200 and 2 CFR Part 400. Awards issued pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity may only be used for the purpose set forth in the award, consistent with the statutory

¹ Login.gov a secure sign in service used by the public to sign into Federal Agency systems including SAM.gov and Grants.gov. For help with login.gov accounts you should visit [http://login.gov/help](https://login.gov/help).

authority for the award. Capital expenses, such as the purchase of equipment, not entirely attributable to this award, must be pro-rated.

For example, agreement funds and other support may not be used for matching contributions for other federal grants or cooperative agreements, lobbying, or intervention in federal regulatory or adjudicatory proceedings. Federal employees are prohibited from acting as an agent of the applicant in any capacity (paid or unpaid) on any proposal submitted under this program. Also, federal funds may not be used to sue the Federal Government or any other government entity.

Compensation for personal services: Employees, consultants, or other personnel, including those of subrecipients, and regardless of the method of engagement, may not exceed the pro-rata equivalent of GS-15 on the General Schedule (for 2023, \$152,771 per year, \$585.33 per day, or \$73.17 per hour). Non-monetizable fringe benefits, such as health insurance coverage, are not included to this ceiling.

Indirect Costs: In general, costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective but not readily assignable to specific awards, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved, are considered indirect costs. These may include facilities not specific to individual projects, enterprise-wide services such as IT, and enterprise management. For cost-reimbursable agreements, indirect costs may not exceed 10% of direct costs, as stipulated at 7 USC 3319a.

Other Submission Information

Applications should be submitted through the ezFedGrants system at <https://grants.fms.usda.gov/>

Applicants who require assistance with any USDA-managed computer system should reach out to the program officer(s) listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact, at least 5 business days in advance of the application submission deadline. Applicants should provide as much detail as possible to facilitate resolution of the issue.

E. Application Review Information

Review and Selection Process

In all cases, the agency will conduct an initial responsiveness review of all applications submitted to determine:

- 1) the application was submitted on time as specified in this announcement (See Section D. Application and Submission Information);
- 2) the applicant is eligible (see Section C. Eligibility Information);
- 3) all the required forms and documents are submitted no later than the Application Submission Deadline specified in Section D. Application and Submission Information, Content and Form of Application Submission.

If an applicant is determined to be ineligible or an application is determined to be incomplete, the agency will notify the applicant prior to commencing with evaluation of applications, usually within 5 business days of the Application Submission Deadline. An applicant that feels such a determination is made in error may request reconsideration, highlighting evidence supporting

their claim, by email to the program officer(s) listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact, within 3 business days of notification.

The agency will convene a review panel, which may include both federal and non-federal reviewers, to review the eligible applications against the evaluation criteria described below. The reviewers will ensure that the applicant is capable of delivering the programs/activities as described in the announcement based on the applicant's project narrative and assign a score and provide summary comments based on the evaluation criteria identified below. The review panel will make a recommendation list to the selecting official, who is not a member of the panel.

The selecting official may select applications out of rank order in consideration of strategic program priorities, such as geographical distribution, incorporation of minority-serving institutions, or congressional directive. Selection determinations are final and cannot be appealed.

Prior to selection, the agency may contact the highest-ranking applicants to seek clarification and to negotiate technical and programmatic aspects of the application. If an application includes a subaward, FAS may request to speak with all parties included in the application to ensure sufficient planning and coordination has taken place prior to making an award.

Evaluation Criteria

Applicants will be evaluated according to the factors set forth below. Applicants must directly and explicitly address the evaluation factors in their application. Applicants for both track 1 and 2 will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate that they have the capabilities, staff, resources, and equipment to successfully perform the project as described in the following factors. Scoring will also be based on the level of detail and how clearly the applicant's capacities to address these factors are outlined in their application.

Factor 1: Overall Program Plan and Technical Experience (50 Points)

The applicant will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate that the overall program design is strategically aligned and relevant to the stated objectives including:

- Technical Experience and Program Design Applicability & Alignment (25 Points)
 - Applicant's explanation of their international expertise related to achieving the objectives of the proposed project and ability to address any cultural considerations of the Fellow, including its ability to tailor program implementation to the needs of the Fellows;
 - Applicant's explanation of the proposed plan and approach to achieve the goals of the project effectively and efficiently, including a description of what is being proposed, how it will be conducted, and what is the desired result;
 - Applicant's demonstration of the expected skills or knowledge to be acquired by the fellows by the end of the trainings and/or workshops;
 - Applicant's demonstration of originality and relevance to [USDA/FAS's mission](#).
- Program Implementation Plans and Strategies Included (25 Points)

- Applicant's demonstration of a plan for achieving the objectives of the proposed project, including having the necessary partnerships, contacts or established network;
- Applicant's demonstration of their ability to manage logistics, including but not limited to procuring travel arrangements, negotiating catering contracts, procuring event tickets, and reserving conference rooms, hotel and/or other accommodations, and if applicable securing insurance coverage;
- Applicant's contingency plan to replace key personnel as necessary;
- Applicant's explanation in their quality assurance plan and risk mitigation strategies showcasing flexibility and ability to respond in the event of unforeseen circumstances, and if applicable securing insurance coverage for fellows.

Factor 2: Professional detailed budget and budget narrative (30 Pts)

The applicant will be evaluated on the reasonableness, cost-effectiveness, and adequacy of the proposed budget to accomplish the project, along with the extent to which the budget documents are detailed, organized, in-scope, and appropriate, including:

- **Appropriate and Detailed Content Included (15 Pts)**
 - Applicant's demonstration that the proposed budget is appropriate for the number of participating Fellows and the length of the program;
 - Applicant's use of a detailed budget table that utilizes cost item categories and includes appropriate cost savings where available.
- **Budget Narrative and Budget Table Included (15 Pts)**
 - Applicant's use of a clear budget narrative accompanying the budget table to address each line item therein;
 - Applicant's demonstration of successful rounding and calculating with final budget narrative numbers exactly matching the budget line items, rounded to the penny.

Factor 3: Support of Leadership and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) (15 Pts)

The applicant will be evaluated on the extent to which they demonstrate elements of leadership training and/or workshops, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the application package.

- **Leadership:** the applicant's resources or the ability to incorporate elements of leadership and science communication element to empower Fellows to advocate for sound policy to peers, decision-makers, and the public. (10 Pts)
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA):** the applicant's resources or the ability to incorporate to demonstrate how DEIA will be achieved in the different aspects of program administration and program design, content and implementation, including individual participant selection and placement. (5 Pts)

Factor 4: Professional formatting, spelling, and grammar (5 Pts)

The applicant will be evaluated on the extent to which the application package and budget documents are detailed, organized, in-scope, and appropriate including:

- Professional Formatting, Spelling, and Grammar Utilized (5 Pts)
 - Applicant's demonstration of professional organization and formatting throughout the project narrative and supporting documents with limited spelling and grammatical errors.

Integrity in Performance

Prior to making a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency is required by [31 USC 3321](#) and [41 USC 2313](#) to review information available through any OMB-designated repositories of government-wide eligibility qualification or financial integrity information. Therefore application evaluation criteria may include the following risk based considerations of the applicant: (1) financial stability; (2) quality of management systems and ability to meet management standards; (3) history of performance in managing federal award; (4) reports and findings from audits; and (5) ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements.

Prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, currently \$250,000, the federal agency is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov (currently FAPIIS).

- An applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM.gov and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov.
- The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR [§ 200.206](#)

F. Federal Award Administration Information

Federal Award Notices

Successful applicants will be notified of the status of their application/award by email. This notification is not authorization to proceed, and such notification should be construed as provisional.

Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All successful applicants for all grant and cooperative agreements are required to comply with the applicable General Administrative Terms and Conditions, which can be found at https://www.fas.usda.gov/grants/general_terms_and_conditions/default.asp. The applicant is presumed to have read, understood, and accepted these terms when accepting a USDA/FAS award. Applicants with questions about the applicable terms should contact the program officer(s) listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact.

The applicable Terms and Conditions will be for the last year specified at that URL.

Before accepting an award, the applicant should carefully read the award package for instructions on administering the award and the terms and conditions associated with responsibilities under Federal Awards. Recipients must accept all conditions in this NOFO as well as any Special Terms and Conditions in the Notice of Award to receive an award under this program.

Post-Award Performance Expectations for Track 1

- 1) **Duration:** The U.S.-based training should last up to 12-weeks within the full period of performance for the agreement. All Fellows should be present at the same time as a cohort. If the cohort arrives during the Fall semester, please budget and plan for fellows to travel to the World Food Prize.
- 2) **Location:** The applicant is expected to host the Fellows on their campus in the United States. Each Mentor is expected to make a reciprocal visit of up to 2 weeks to their assigned Fellow's home institutions. The program will also include opening and closing meetings in D.C. Projects should not exceed two years.
- 3) **Assignment of a Principal Investigator (Training Coordinator):** The implementing institution should designate a contact person as the Principal Investigator (PI) responsible for coordinating all administrative and programmatic arrangements.
- 4) **Fellow Recruitment and Selections:** After recipient(s) are awarded, a project workplan including tentative timelines is required for review and approval by USDA/FAS and relevant embassies. Fellow recruitment cycle is expected to be open for up to 12 weeks and it is expected to allocate an additional eight weeks or more for the visa process. The award recipient should work closely with USDA/FAS and participating embassies to produce application materials and develop program activities that best address the program goals, recruitment strategies, and timelines. The recipient(s) should be expected to help identify and propose fellows from low to middle income economies (as defined by The World Bank) from Africa to USDA for final concurrence. No fellows should be preselected; however, the implementing institution can encourage contacts to apply for the program once the recruitment announcement is released. USDA/FAS will appoint a review panel, which may include post, policy experts, program staff and the implementing universities, to review the eligible of each potential fellow.
- 5) **Assignment of Mentors:** A key component of the program is matching each Fellow with a Mentor. The implementing institution should select an appropriate Mentor for one-on-one work with each Fellow for the duration of the program.
 - Mentors should not be assigned to multiple Fellows during the same time frame.
 - Each Mentor should establish a professional relationship, providing guidance and training in each Fellow's area of research/study.
 - Each Mentor should work with the Fellow before arrival to discuss an appropriate work plan, site visits, and all other arrangements. A work plan should be agreed upon and finalized no later than 2 weeks after the program start date.

- Each Mentor should provide a draft of their work plan through the PI to USDA/FAS for consultation and approval approximately 2 weeks before the commencement of the program.
- Each Mentor should agree to commit a significant amount of time each week for one-on-one work with the Fellow during the program.
- Mentors should be prepared to be flexible on training objectives and empower the fellow to be a leader by supporting leadership and science communication trainings that contribute to program objectives and may require time outside of the lab/field.
- Each Mentor should continue communicating with the Fellow beyond the end of the U.S.-based portion of the program and through the Mentor's follow-up visit.
- Each Mentor should submit quarterly progress reports that indicate all program activities – should be organized by the PI and sent to USDA/FAS; video and pictures are encouraged as well.
- Ongoing posting of success stories/pictures to the university's social media accounts/platforms should include appropriate USDA social media tags to allow program visibility and successes.
- Each Mentor should assign other faculty members to assist with the Fellow's training and research activities as appropriate.

6) Pre- and Post-Program Visits to Washington, DC

- The implementing institution should organize, coordinate, and pay for the Washington, DC visits for orientation and wrap-up sessions at the USDA headquarters. This can include but is not limited to arranging per diem, lodging, air and ground transportation to/from, as well as in, Washington, DC.
- USDA will organize the internal to USDA headquarters portion of the visit.

7) Mentor Follow-up Visit

- Each Mentor's reciprocal follow-up visit to the Fellow's home country is a required component of the Faculty Exchange Program.
- Each Mentor should work with the Fellow to plan a follow-up visit. The trip should occur within 3-9 months after the U.S.-based portion of the program ends.
- The PI should provide USDA/FAS with an agenda for each Mentor's travel, including goals and objectives. The Mentor's travel information should also be provided to USDA/FAS for emergency contact purposes, and also for country clearance if required by the cognizant FAS Overseas Office.
- Each Mentor should plan to meet with the USDA/FAS Attaché, Councilor, and/or local staff at the U.S. Embassy while they are traveling, if feasible. USDA/FAS can assist with coordination prior to the trip.
- Each Mentor should provide a trip report highlighting conducted activities and results through the PI to USDA/FAS within 30 days after the visit.

8) Travel, Transportation, and Housing

- The implementing institution must make all travel arrangements for Fellows consistent with 2 CFR 200.474. This will include round trip, economy class international airfare from each Fellow's home to the university, and any domestic travel related to the training program.

- The implementing institution should provide housing for the Fellow either within walking distance to the campus/training location or easily accessible by public transportation for the duration of the training program. This housing should consider gender and cultural norms. Housing should include, inter alia, a private bedroom, private or shared bathroom, access to a laundry room and allowance for laundry costs, access to a kitchen (with pots, pans, and utensils), sheets, towels, and cleaning supplies. The implementing institution should not require the Fellow to pay for these expenses and provide either reimbursement or advance payment.
- If public transportation is required to access campus/the training location, the implementing institution should provide the Fellow with a bus pass or proper allowance for transportation expenses.
- The implementing institution is not required to arrange the Fellows' U.S. travel visa. USDA will provide Fellows with a DS-2019 for the Fellow to request and obtain a J-1 visa.

9) Meals and Incidentals (M&IE)

- The implementing institution should provide each Fellow with meal and living allowances for the duration of stay.
- When planning lodging and/or dining options, the implementing institution should check with the Fellows and account for any special dietary restrictions or preferences.
- Daily M&IE allowance should not exceed current GSA per diem rates.
- The implementing institution can determine the frequency of per diem allotments, but the Fellows should receive per diem within the first week of the Fellowship. The PI should inform the Fellows and USDA/FAS immediately if this cannot be accommodated.

10) Emergency Health Insurance

- The implementing institution will purchase emergency health insurance for each Fellow for the duration of stay, as required for all J-1 Visa holders (22 CFR 62.14) (see J-1 Visa website for emergency health insurance requirements). Dates of coverage should include date of departure from their home country to the university until date of arrival back in their home country from the university.
- Fellows must not be required to purchase their own health insurance and then be reimbursed.
- The implementing institution should educate Fellows as to what is covered under the health insurance policy, especially highlighting that pre-existing medical conditions are not covered.
- The implementing institution should alert USDA/FAS staff if any health/medical conditions arise during the Fellowship.

11) Communication

- The implementing institution should initiate contact with Fellows as soon as possible after signing of the agreement and final selection of Fellows.

- The implementing institution should develop the training program in consultation with USDA/FAS, and Mentors should customize each work plan in consultation with the Fellows.
- The implementing institution should keep USDA/FAS informed regarding any logistical or program planning or modification.
- The implementing institution should notify USDA/FAS immediately upon Fellows' physical arrival to and departure from the U.S. to comply with U.S. Department of Homeland Security requirements.
- The implementing institution should notify USDA/FAS when Fellows go on trips that take them away from the university overnight and will provide itineraries and updates.
- The implementing institution should provide USDA/FAS with the Fellows' temporary U.S. address and phone number, and emergency contact numbers for the PI, Mentor, or other appropriate institution personnel. This information is required so that Fellows can be reached in the event of an emergency.
- Under the Scientific Exchanges Program, USDA/FAS staff are responsible for identifying countries and topics eligible for fellowships. This includes arranging for fellows to obtain a J-1 visa and related entries in SEVIS. USDA/FAS staff will assist in connecting mentors to appropriate USDA offices in country when undertaking follow-up visits.
- The implementing institution should keep staff aware of the status of each fellowship, including the mentor's reciprocal visit, and staff can assist (as necessary) institutions to understand the policies, procedures, and regulations of the Scientific Exchanges Program.

12) Fellowship Program

- The implementing institution should provide educational materials and supplies to each Fellow as necessary to allow their full participation in the Fellowship.
- The implementing institution should ensure all fees related to the training program, such as (but not limited to) technology fees, administrative fees, laboratory fees, etc., are fully paid.
- The implementing institution should arrange relevant field visits as applicable to the Fellows' training program.
- The implementing institution should ensure each Fellow submits an interim and final report (2-3 pages each) to USDA/FAS halfway through the Fellowship and then before leaving the United States.
- Implementors should organize and offer appropriate cross-cultural activities for the purpose of sharing language, culture, or history in accordance with J-1 Visa requirements.
- Implementors should organize and offer training on future award/funding opportunities that could be applicable and beneficial, and on proposal/grant writing to prepare Fellows for future funding applications, including how to search for opportunities.
- Implementors should organize and offer leadership training and training on communications – specifically communications with non-scientific communities.

- Plans should contribute to the strategic goals and objectives of individual Fellows, the host institutions and USDA/FAS, as well as provide an opportunity for the application of research agendas that can have a direct impact on international trade, food security and economic growth in emerging economies.

13) Monitoring

- USDA/FAS through its authorized representatives has the right, at all reasonable times, to:
 - Make site visits to review project accomplishments and management control systems;
 - Provide technical assistance as required;
 - Review recipient's files related to the funded program;
 - Review related records and interview the organization's staff and clients regarding the program upon reasonable request;
 - Respond in a timely and accurate manner to USDA/FAS requests for information relating to their program

14) Programmatic Reporting

- Each Fellow should complete their program evaluations (mid- and final).
- Each Fellow should develop an Action Plan to identify and state goals for their return while also outlining specific steps or activities they will do upon return to their home country. An Action Plan generally includes steps, milestones, measures of progress, responsibilities, assignments, and timeline. The recipient should provide a copy of each Fellow's Action Plan to USDA/FAS via the PI.

Post Award Performance Expectations for Track 2

1. Duration and Activities: The selected award recipient is expected to provide logistically support, including but not limited to purchasing and organizing transportation, purchasing flights, negotiating catering contracts, procuring event tickets, and reserving appropriate hotel lodging and conference rooms to support fellows and relevant mentor to attend the 2023 World Food Prize. The selected award recipient will collaborate with FAS Global Programs, Fellowship Programs staff members to organize and execute two workshops adjacent to the annual World Food Prize Borlaug Dialogue including an all-day workshop to stimulate discussion among fellows and mentors regarding collaborative agricultural research, transfer of new science and agricultural technologies as well as host a formal breakfast workshop for Fellows and their Mentors, featuring a USDA principal.
2. Location: The event will take place in Des Moines, Iowa.
3. Assignment of a Principal Investigator (Training Coordinator): The implementing institution should designate a contact person as the Principal Investigator (PI) responsible for coordinating all administrative and programmatic arrangements.
4. Travel, Transportation, and Accommodations

- a. The implementing institution should make all travel arrangements for Fellows and Mentors consistent with 2 CFR 200.474. This should include round trip, economy class domestic airfare to Des Moines, Iowa to attend the World Food Prize.
 - b. The selected award recipient should book and pay for hotel accommodation near annual World Food Prize Borlaug Dialogue.
 - c. The implementing institution should ensure all fees related to the program, such as (but not limited to) transportation, administrative fees, conference fees, etc., are fully paid.
5. Meals and Incidentals (M&IE)
 - a. Daily M&IE allowance may not exceed current GSA per diem rates (if applicable).
6. Communication
 - a. The selected award recipient should keep USDA/FAS informed regarding any logistical or program planning or modification.
 - b. FAS will confirm the date for the breakfast meeting not later than three weeks in advance. This workshop will provide the opportunity for USDA and other presenters to discuss USDA's vision for international agricultural education, research, and extension.
7. Monitoring

USDA/FAS through its authorized representatives has the right, at all reasonable times, to:

 - a. Provide technical assistance as required;
 - b. Review recipient's files related to the funded program;
 - c. Review related records and interview the organization's staff and clients regarding the program upon reasonable request;
 - d. Respond in a timely and accurate manner to USDA/FAS requests for information relating to their program.

Reporting

Financial Reports, using form SF-425, Federal Financial Report (FFR), must be submitted semi-annually, within 30 days of the end of the reporting period. A final financial report must be submitted within 120 days of the end date of the agreement.

Performance Progress Reports must be submitted semi-annually, within 30 days of the end of the reporting period. A final performance progress report must be submitted within 120 days of the end date of the agreement. The recipient may use any appropriate format for performance progress reports, provided the report includes:

- a) a comparison of actual accomplishments for the period;
- b) The reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate; and
- c) Additional pertinent information including, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs.

Recipients are encouraged to include photographs and other supplemental material in performance progress reports. For awards in which the total lifetime value exceeds \$500,000, additional reporting may be required as described in [Appendix XII to 2 CFR 200](#).

Monitoring

USDA/FAS through its authorized representatives, has the right, at all reasonable times, to make site visits to review project accomplishments and management control systems and to provide such technical assistance as may be required. During site visits, USDA/FAS will review recipients' files related to the program.

As part of any monitoring and program evaluation activities, grant recipients must permit USDA/FAS, upon reasonable notice, to review assistance agreement-related records and to interview the organization's staff and clients regarding the program, and to respond in a timely and accurate manner to FAS requests for information relating to the program.

Closeout

Within 120 days after the end of the period of performance, or after an amendment has been issued to close out a grant, whichever comes first, recipients must submit a final FFR and final progress report detailing all accomplishments and a qualitative summary of the impact of those accomplishments throughout the period of performance. After final reports have been reviewed and approved by the agency, and any residual amount due to the recipient or due to be returned to the agency, the award is subject to closeout. Acceptance of final reports by the agency constitutes a closeout of the award with no further notice or obligation to either party. This acceptance will indicate the period of performance has expired, and any remaining funds will be deobligated. Records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the final reports are submitted.

G. Federal Awarding Agency Contact

For all inquiries, contact:

Name: Cara Conley

Email Address: Cara.Conley@usda.gov

Hours of Operation: 8:00AM to 4:30PM ET

Inquiries will be returned within 24 working hours (3 business days). All questions must be received no later than 16 working hours (2 business days) prior to application submission deadline (See Section D). The agency contact listed will confirm receipt of applications upon request.

*Please identify the opportunity to which you are applying in your email correspondence by including the name of the program in the email subject line and any additional details as necessary.

H. Other Information

Budget Revisions

Transfers of funds between direct cost categories in the approved budget when such cumulative transfers among those direct cost categories exceed ten percent of the total budget approved in

this Award require written approval from the agency. The total budget amount may not be increased without a bilaterally executed amendment to the award.

Post-award program income

In the event program income becomes available to the recipient post-award, it is the recipient's responsibility to notify the USDA/FAS Program Manager to explain how that development occurred, as part of their request for guidance and/or approval. If approval is granted, an award modification will be issued with an explanatory note in the remarks section of the face page concerning guidance and/or options pertaining to the recipient's approved recipient's approved request. All instances of program income shall be listed in the progress and financial reports.