National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Notice of Funding Opportunity
Agriculture Risk Management Education Partnerships Competitive Grants Program

FUNDING YEAR:	Fiscal Year (FY) 2026
APPLICATION DEADLINE:	September 21, 2026
ANTICIPATED PROGRAM FUNDING:	$9,052,800
FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER:	USDA-NIFA-ARPA-012381
ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER:	10.520

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

Assistance Listing Number (ALN): The Agriculture Risk Management Education Partnerships Competitive Grants Program (ARME) is listed in the Assistance Listings under number 10.520.

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
Application:	5:00 P.M. Eastern Time, September 21, 2026
Applicants Comments:	Within six months from the issuance of this notice (*NIFA may not consider* comments *received after the sixth month*)

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 NOFO all 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 ARME NOFO.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NIFA requests applications for the ARME for FY 2026. The anticipated amount available for funded projects in FY 2026 is $9,052,800.

The primary goals of the ARME program are to 1) provide U.S. agricultural producers as appropriate, with the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to make informed risk management decisions that enhance profitability of their operations; and 2) deliver risk management education to farmers, ranchers, and producers.

The ARME program will fund four regional centers (Northeast Region, North Central Region, Southern Region, and Western Region) and one electronic support center (Electronic Support Center).

This notice identifies the purpose and priorities for the ARME program, deadline date, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions needed to apply to the ARME program.

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PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

Section 133 of the Agriculture Risk Protection Act of 2000 (7 U.S.C. 1524 (a)) authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture, acting through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), to establish a competitive grants program, ARME. Section 11125 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, Public Law 115-334, reauthorized ARME and merged it with the Risk Management Agency's (RMA) Crop Insurance Education in Targeted States Program. The 2018 Farm Bill provisions designated a total of $10 million in mandatory funds, each fiscal year, to the merged program, with $5 million of that total dedicated to educating "producers that are underserved by the Federal crop insurance program" in relation to the RMA Crop Insurance program.

B. Purpose and Priorities

Providing America's farmers, ranchers, and producers with effective, market-based risk management tools and solutions is a cornerstone of USDA's intention to ensure a financially sustainable and competitive agricultural system. For an individual farm manager, risk management involves choosing tools and strategies designed to reduce the financial effects of the uncertainties of commodity prices, financial access, government policies, crop yields, market economies, weather, human factors, and other conditions that can cause fluctuations in farm income and subsequent profits.

The purpose of ARME, Assistance Listing 10.520, is to educate agricultural producers about the full range of risk management activities. These activities include futures, options, agricultural trade options, crop insurance, cash forward contracting, debt reduction, production diversification, marketing plans and tactics, farm resources risk reduction, and other appropriate risk management strategies. The program authority specifies that special emphasis shall be placed on farm viability and risk management strategies (including farm financial benchmarking, business planning and technical assistance, market assessment, transfer and succession planning, and crop insurance participation), education, and outreach specifically focused at farmers and ranchers in Section 133 of the Agriculture Risk Protection Act of 2000 (7 U.S.C. 1524 (a))

The ARME program brings the existing knowledge base to bear on risk management issues faced by agricultural producers and expands the program throughout the United States on a regional, multi-regional, and national basis.

The primary goals of the ARME program are to 1) provide U.S. agricultural producers as appropriate, with the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to make informed risk management decisions that enhance profitability of their operations; and 2) deliver risk management education to farmers, ranchers, and producers.

The ARME program will fund four regional centers (Northeast Region, North Central Region, Southern Region, and Western Region) and one electronic support center (Electronic Support Center). Applicants must provide adequate justification that their organization has the required capacity to organize, coordinate, and lead centers in carrying out the activities required to address this program's priorities across the entire region, including any U.S. Territories.

Regional Risk Management Education Centers

Table 2: Regional Risk Management Education Centers Key Information

Title	Description
Program Code:	OC
Program Code Name:	ARPA
ALN:	10.520
Project Type:	Extension Projects
Grant Type:	Standard Grants
Application Deadline	September 21, 2026
Grant Duration:	36 Months
Anticipated # of Awards:	4
Maximum Award Amount:	$2,121,750

The Regional Risk Management Education Centers are expected to specifically focus on risk management activities with at least 50 percent of the total award designated for competitive subaward funding to target results- or outcome-based risk management education and training programs to farmers, ranchers, and producers. Regional and multi-regional programs must be flexible while addressing needs as determined by the people served, focus groups, and other parties knowledgeable and interested in agricultural risk management.

The regional centers are expected to address the risk management needs of farmers, ranchers, and producers in the following five risk management categories:

- **Production Risk**: Any production-related activity that may result in a range of possible outcomes that affect the quality and quantity of commodities.
- **Market Risk**: Any related activity or event that leads to the variability of prices farmers receive for their products or pay for production inputs.
- **Financial Risk:** Encompasses those risks that threaten financial health of the business, such as the volatility of prices, yields, and income, as well as changing interest rates, credit rules, and the availability of credit.
- **Legal Risk:** Generated by uncertainties surrounding and resulting from government policies and regulations related to tax laws, food safety, labeling and marketing, protected species, water use, animal health, chemical use, animal waste, other environmental laws and regulations, government commodity and income support programs, and the legal liabilities of a variety of legal claims issues faced by farms and ranches.
- **Human Risk:** Human relationships that impact the viability of farm and ranch businesses including communication, labor management and supply, intergenerational transition, estate planning, and heirs' property, as well as human health and relationship issues including accidents, illness, disability, death, and divorce.

The purpose of the regional centers is to conduct regional and multi-regional-based competitive grants programs. The competitive grants (subaward) programs will support organizations and individuals who can carry out innovative and timely agricultural risk management education and outreach activities. Subaward recipients must have the knowledge and experience to understand audience needs and develop appropriate risk management curricula. Subaward recipients must also use meaningful engagement strategies to deliver direct education to farmers, ranchers, and producers or through risk management professionals, institutions, and agencies. Subaward recipients must identify the intended audience(s) and outcomes of their proposed outreach and engagement deliverables and activities and the metrics to measure the associated outcomes. Subaward recipients must be approved by NIFA.

All deliverables developed through this program to date, as well as reports on program outcomes, are archived and publicly available on through the Agricultural Risk & Farm Management Library.

Risk Management Education Electronic Support Center

Table 3: Table 3: Risk Management Education Electronic Support Center Key Information

Title	Description
Program Code:	OC
Program Code Name:	ARPA
ALN:	10.520
Project Type:	Extension
Grant Type:	Standard
Application Deadline	September 21, 2026
Grant Duration:	36 Months
Anticipated # of Awards:	1
Maximum Award Amount:	$565,800

The Electronic Support Center is expected to provide technical assistance and support services to the four regional centers. The Electronic Support Center will manage the online grants application and project portal that the four regional centers will use to administer their competitive grants programs from application through post-award management activities. The online grants application and project portal must include progress report and final report templates for subaward recipients, and it must include areas for collaboration related to national communications planning for, and execution of, the overall ARME program; coordination of annual events that are multi-regional or national in scope; and archival support for all materials and curricula developed through the regional centers' competitive grants programs. All deliverables developed through this program to date, as well as reports on program outcomes, must be archived and publicly available on the electronic center's online "agricultural risk library" repository.

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The amount available for ARME in FY 2026 is approximately $9,052,800. The funding available to each regional center (Northeast, North Central, Southern and Western) is $2,121,750. The funding available to the Electronic Support Center is $565,800.

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 (If this is a two-year NOFO, add another FY) 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 Type**. NIFA is soliciting applications for ARME proposals under the Extension Project type. Extension Projects conduct programs and activities that deliver science-based knowledge and informal educational programs to people, enabling them to make practical decisions.

2. **Grant Type**. NIFA is soliciting applications for ARME proposals under the Standard Grant type. Standard grants support targeted original scientific Research, Education/Teaching, Extension, or Integrated 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 ARME 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 qualified public and private entities (including Land-grant institutions, Cooperative Extension Services, and colleges or universities). This includes all colleges and universities, Federal, State, and local agencies, nonprofit and for-profit private organization or corporations, and other entities. 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 application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award.

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

Duplicate or Multiple Submissions – Duplicate or multiple submissions are not allowed. NIFA will disqualify both applications if an applicant submits duplicate or multiple submissions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

No Match Required – ARME 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 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 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	*New Users* 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-ARPA-012381 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 **30** 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.

1. **Field 7**. **Project Summary (PS)/Abstract**. The PS must show how the project goals align with the goals of the Agriculture Risk Management Education Partnerships Competitive Grants Program. In the body of the PS, applicants must provide the following information in the order listed: 1) a concise (250 words or less) description of the project, 2) the type of risk management education center (regional or electronic support) for which they are applying, 3) the geographic area to be served and 4) total funding amount requested. See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide for instructions and suggested templates.

2. **Field 8**. **Project Narrative (PN)**. The PN must not exceed 10 pages; this page limit includes the Project Timeline, and any tables and figures. The page limit ensures consistency across applications. The PN must be formatted using 1-inch margins, single line spacing (i.e., no more than six lines per vertical inch), and 12-point, Times New Roman font.

   A one-page Table of Contents is permitted and does not count towards the page limit. Appendices to the PN are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project.

Do not add appendices to circumvent the page limit. In the PN, do not link to external references; proposals must be self-contained.

Applicants must organize the PN using the sections listed below. Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the header titles below as prompts for each section.

a. **Introduction:** Describe the current situation to be addressed and explain why it is important and align it with the program's purpose and priorities. Estimate the magnitude of the problem or situation and its relevance to stakeholders. Describe the type of risk management education center (regional or electronic support) that is being proposed and the geographic area to be served. Explain the potential benefit of the proposed project to the people it will serve.

b. **Rationale and Significance:** Describe the risks that affect farmers, ranchers, and producers. Explain how the project will address relevant issues faced by the people it will serve.

c. **Project Goals, Objectives, and Intended Outcomes:** Describe the goals, objectives, and intended outcomes of the project. Outcomes must describe specific changes or results that will occur because of the project and that will constitute "success" for the initiative. These may include benefits caused by program activities such as changes in participants' skills, behavior, or qualities of life, and positive changes in conditions or reductions in negative conditions. Outcomes must be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely, and must describe what will be accomplished and who will benefit.

d. **Activities to Achieve the Project Goals:** *Applicants must clearly articulate how the proposed project activities align with the type of risk management education center award (regional or electronic support) that they are seeking.* Describe methods and activities that will be used to implement the project, including their feasibility, rationale for use, and how they support the stated goals and objectives and overall project management. Explain how the project outputs and outcomes will be communicated to key stakeholders including the Cooperative Extension System broadly, USDA NIFA, and/or others. Acknowledge the limitations and anticipated challenges related to carrying out the project and describe the ways in which those limitations and challenges will be addressed.

   Applicants may *refer* to their Project Timeline, an application requirement, in this section of the PN. The Project Timeline must be included as a distinct section per the PN requirements.

e. **Evaluation and Communication Plans:** Describe how outcomes will be measured and explain how the project activities will be evaluated. Indicate who on the project team will provide the project performance assessment oversight. Applicants are strongly encouraged to include people with expertise in, and skills related to, project performance measurement or evaluation, and who can help develop the monitoring plan and, if feasible, participate in carrying out the plan. Describe how progress, results, and other relevant information will be communicated to stakeholders and to the public.

f. **Roles and Responsibilities:** Describe the organization's administrative and management expert capacity to develop and maintain a regional center OR to develop and maintain an electronic support center. Describe roles and responsibilities for key staff, including percent of time each will dedicate to the project. Describe the fiscal and administrative oversight for the project.

g. **Project Timeline:** A project timeline must be included within the PN page limit. Illustrate the progress and successful implementation of the project over the award period. Relate the project timeline to the project objectives. Plan for a tentative project start date of November 1, 2026, and an end date of October 31, 2029, and develop the project timeline accordingly.

3. **Field 9. Bibliography & References Cited.** See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide. Title the attachment as "Bibliography & References Cited" in the document header and save the file as Bibliography.

   There is no page limit for the Bibliography. All work cited in the proposal should be referenced in this section of the application. All references must be complete and include titles and all co-authors, conform to an acceptable journal format, and be listed in alphabetical order using the last name of the first author or listed by number in the order of citation.

4. **Field 12. Add Other Attachments**. See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide.
   a. **Data Management Plan (DMP)**. A DMP is required for this program application. Applicants should clearly articulate how the 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 of the NIFA Grants Application Guide and NIFA's Data Management Plan) and is not to exceed two pages. The DMP is a separate document and does not contribute to the PN page requirement.

   b. **Collaborative Arrangements**. If it is necessary to enter formal consulting or collaborative arrangements with others, such arrangements should be fully explained and justified. If the consultant(s) or collaborator(s) are known at the time of the application, a vitae or resume should be provided. In addition, evidence (e.g., a letter of support signed by the Authorized Representative R (AR) of the consultant/collaborating organization) should be provided that the collaborators involved have agreed to render these services. The applicant also will be required to provide additional information on consultants and collaborators in the budget portion of the application. Title the attachment(s) as 'Collaborative Agreement: Organization Name' in the document header and save file as 'CollaborativeArrangement_OrganizationName'.

c. **Commitment Letters**. There is no page limit for Commitment Letters. Letters of commitment from partners must be signed by the Authorized Representative (AR) of the partnering organization and indicate that the partners involved have agreed to their stated roles in the project and have agreed to abide by the approaches outlined in the PN. Letters from other organizations or people whose participation is important to the success of the project, committing those collaborators and partners to specific roles, are also encouraged. Title the attachment(s) as 'Letter of Commitment: Organization Name' in the document header and save file as 'Commitment Letter_OrganizationName'. Do not include general letters of support (i.e., from those who are not committing to a specific role in the project).

d. **Appendices to the PN**. If it is necessary, formal appendices to the PN are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. Do not add appendices to circumvent the page limit. Title the attachment as "Appendices to the Project Narrative" in the document header and save the file as Appendices.

Do not add any other attachments not specifically requested in this NOFO. For example, do not attach examples of curricula or other appendices. Attaching additional narrative, figures, or tables other than those specifically requested in this NOFO will result in disqualification from review.

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.
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 *Agriculture Risk Management Education Partnerships Competitive Grants Program* and the program code *OC*. 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 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 criteria, weighted equally, to evaluate applications to this program that are seeking a **Regional Risk Management Education Center** award:

1. **Potential for Development and Delivery of Relevant Risk Management Education Programs**. The extent to which the need for and the scope of the project are justified, and the current problem or situation to be addressed is clear. The extent to which the project team exhibits knowledge of the Extension Risk Management Education framework (at the local, regional, and national levels); and knowledge of known and emerging needs of farmers, ranchers, and producers related to the five risk management categories. The extent to which the project will engage an advisory council to provide programmatic feedback and to identify and address areas of need among the audience(s). The extent to which the project will support and/or directly reach the audience(s). The extent to which the project is innovative, timely, and relevant. The extent to which preliminary data and/or other past Extension Risk Management Education framework activities are used to substantiate the need for the project. The extent to which the project will build on existing risk management education materials. The extent to which the project goals, objectives, and outcomes are reasonable and achievable.

2. **Project Implementation.** The extent to which the proposed competitive grants (subaward) program will lead to results- or outcome-based risk management education and training programs. The extent to which the project engages an advisory council in the pre-award phase (NOFO development and merit review) of the competitive grants (subaward) program. The extent to which there is a defined process for competitive subawards that includes pre-award, award, and post-award management strategies. The extent to which the project activities are aligned with the goals, objectives, and outcomes. The extent to which outputs and/or deliverables are sound and relevant. The extent to which the project will manage partnerships and collaborative initiatives. The extent to which there is an intent to collaborate between this project and the other projects (regional centers and electronic support center) on project activities and communicating program impacts. The extent to which the project's scope is appropriate to produce expected outcomes and/or changes in knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and/or behaviors in populations. The extent to which the limitations and challenges are addressed. The extent to which the project will be implemented in the timeframe proposed. The Project Timeline adequately addresses key milestones. The Data Management Plan is descriptive.

3. **Evaluation.** The extent to which data will be collected, how data will be analyzed, and how outcomes will be measured. The extent to which the project uses appropriate evaluation methodologies to verify program impacts. The extent to which the project team includes the necessary expertise to monitor project and competitive subaward project performance and to lead project evaluation activities. The extent to which the project incorporates adequate performance monitoring and measurements for competitive subaward projects. The extent to which program impacts data will be shared with other proposed projects (regional centers and electronic support center), the Cooperative Extension System, and USDA NIFA. The extent to which strengths and limitations of the proposed evaluation approach(es) are addressed.

4. **Key Persons and Organization Support.** The extent to which the PD, co-PD(s), and key persons are qualified and have the necessary expertise and knowledge of the

Extension Risk Management Education framework (at the local, regional, and national levels) to carry out the project which includes implementing project activities, supporting evaluation, and communicating program impact. The extent to which the number of people involved in the project is appropriate for the project activities. The extent to which the applicant's institution is committed to the project. The extent to which the institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials) available to carry out the project is adequate.

5. **Fiscal Oversight and Budget.** The extent to which the total budget adequately supports the project is appropriate, achievable, and cost-effective. The extent to which the time committed to the project by the key personnel is adequate. The extent to which the project will maximize the use of limited resources. The extent to which competitive subaward monitoring activities are reasonable and achievable. The extent to which the applicant's organization is committed to the project, and the institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials) available to carry out the project are suitable.

NIFA will use the following criteria, weighted equally, to evaluate applications to this program that are seeking a **Risk Management Education Electronic Support Center** award:

1. **Potential for Development and Delivery of Relevant Risk Management Education Programs**. The extent to which the need for and the scope of the project are justified, and the current problem or situation to be addressed is clear. The extent to which the project team exhibits knowledge of the Extension Risk Management Education framework (at the local, regional, and national levels) and the exhibited and emerging needs of farmers, ranchers, and producers. The extent to which the project will support the regional centers in supporting the development and delivery of risk management education. The extent to which the project is innovative, timely, and relevant. The extent to which preliminary data and/or other past Extension Risk Management Education framework activities are used to substantiate the need for the project. The extent to which the project will build on existing risk management education materials, including annual regional, multi-regional, and national events. The extent to which the project goals, objectives, and outcomes are reasonable and achievable.

2. **Project Implementation.** The extent to which the project will manage the online grants application and project portal that will be used by the other projects (regional centers) to administer their competitive grants (subaward) programs, from application through post-award management activities. The extent to which the project will develop and implement necessary enhancements to the online portal that supports progress report and final report templates for competitive subaward recipients. The extent to which the project will lead overall Extension Risk Management Education program impact communication. The extent to which the project will coordinate risk management education events that are multi-regional or national in scope. The extent to which the project will provide archival support for all materials and curricula developed through the regional centers' competitive grants (subaward) programs for an online "agricultural risk library" repository. The extent to which the project activities are aligned with the goals,

objectives, and outcomes. The extent to which the project will manage partnerships and collaborative initiatives. The extent to which there is an intent to collaborate between this project and the other projects (regional centers) on project activities and communicating program impacts. The extent to which the limitations and challenges are addressed. The extent to which the project will be implemented in the timeframe proposed. The Project Timeline adequately addresses key milestones. The Data Management Plan is descriptive.

3. **Evaluation.** The extent to which data will be collected, how data will be analyzed, and how outcomes will be measured. The extent to which the project uses appropriate evaluation methodologies to verify program impacts. The extent to which the project will provide the necessary support and technical assistance to the other projects (regional centers) and their regional competitive subawards, as necessary. The extent to which program impacts data will be shared with other proposed projects (regional centers), the Cooperative Extension System, and NIFA. The extent to which the project team includes the necessary expertise to lead overall Extension Risk Management Education evaluation activities. The extent to which strengths and limitations of the proposed evaluation approach(es) are addressed.

4. **Key Persons and Organization Support.** The extent to which the PD, co-PD(s), and key persons are qualified and have the necessary expertise and knowledge of the Extension Risk Management Education framework (at the local, regional, and national levels) to carry out the project which includes implementing project activities, supporting evaluation, providing technical assistance on project technologies, and communicating program impact. The extent to which the number of people involved in the project is appropriate for the project activities. The extent to which the applicant's institution is committed to the project. The extent to which the institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials) available to carry out the project is adequate.

5. **Fiscal Oversight and Budget.** The extent to which the total budget adequately supports the project is appropriate, achievable, and cost-effective. The extent to which the time committed to the project by the key personnel is adequate. The extent to which the project will maximize the use of limited resources. The extent to which competitive subaward monitoring activities are reasonable and achievable. The extent to which the applicant's organization is committed to the project, and the institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials) available to carry out the project are suitable.

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.

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 statue 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: SM.ARMEManagement@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

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.