REQUEST FOR APPLICATION
HIGHER EDUCATION MULTICULTURAL SCHOLARS PROGRAM (MSP)

FUNDING YEAR:	Fiscal Years 2020 and 2021
APPLICATION DEADLINE:	June 29, 2020; May 17, 2021
LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE:	Not Applicable
FUNDING AVAILABLE:	$945,000
CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER:	10.220

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

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance. The Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program is listed in the Assistance Listings under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number 10.220.

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
Application:	5:00 P.M. Eastern, June 29, 2020 [*Ref to Part I § C of this RFA*], 2020 5:00 P.M. Eastern, May 17, 2021 [*Ref to Part I § C of this RFA*], 2021
Letter of Intent:	Not Required
Applicants Comments:	Within six months from the issuance of this notice (*NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month*)

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NIFA requests applications for the Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program (MSP) for two funding cycles, Fiscal Years (FY) 2020 and 2021. The anticipated amount available for grants in FY 2020 is approximately $945,000. The purpose of MSP is to conduct scholarship programs leading to either baccalaureate degrees within the Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Human (FANH) Sciences or Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) degrees.

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

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PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

Legislative authority for this program is contained in section 1417 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA) (99 Stat. 1548; 7 U.S.C. 3152). USDA/NIFA administers this federal assistance grant program to recruit and support undergraduate students in order to educate them in national need areas of the Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Human (FANH) Sciences, or in rural economic, community, and business development. USDA initiated the Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program in FY 1994. This program, functioning collaboratively with eligible higher education institutions, is developing intellectual capital to secure the preeminence of U.S. food and agricultural systems.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is designated as the lead federal agency that supports higher education in FANH sciences. In this context, NIFA has specific responsibility to initiate and support projects to strengthen higher education teaching programs.

The purpose of the Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program (MSP) is to provide scholarships to support recruiting, engaging, retaining, mentoring, and training committed multicultural scholars, resulting in either baccalaureate degrees within the FANH disciplines or Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.) degrees. The scholarships are intended to encourage outstanding students from groups that are historically underrepresented and underserved to pursue and complete baccalaureate degrees in FANH Sciences, or achieve a D.V.M., that would lead to a diverse and highly skilled work force.

Underrepresented/underserved groups are those whose representation among FANH professionals is disproportionately less than their proportion in the general population as indicated in standard statistical references, or as documented on a case-by-case basis by national survey data (e.g. the U.S. Department of Education's Digest of Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Agricultural Education Information Systems, etc.).

By developing the next generation of a highly-skilled workforce for FANH sciences, MSP is directly aligned with the 2018-2022 USDA Strategic Plan, Strategic Goal #4 -- Facilitate Rural Prosperity and Economic Development; Objective 4.1: Expand rural business opportunity and rural quality of life with access to capital; improved infrastructure, broadband access and connectivity; and support for workforce availability.

The need for this program is supported by the 2015-2020 Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in Food, Renewable Energy, and the Environment Report. The report indicates shortages of graduates in the FANH disciplines, and a corresponding need to fill an estimated 57,900 annual openings for individuals with baccalaureate or higher degrees in food, renewable energy, and environmental specialties between 2015 and 2020.

Through scholarships, MSP aims to increase the participation of any group historically underrepresented in USDA mission areas and prepare them for the professional and scientific workforce in the FANH sciences. NIFA is soliciting applications for student education that will:

1. Prepare graduates to meet the demand for highly qualified personnel entering the workforce related to the FANH sciences;

2. Support more undergraduates in transitioning to graduate education in USDA mission sciences;
3. Contribute to the reduction of the disparity among underrepresented and underserved populations entering graduate schools to better reflect the demographics of the U.S. and enable higher education to remain globally competitive;
4. Promote student success within FANH disciplines at the undergraduate/D.V.M. level; and
5. Focus on social support structure, and professional mentoring to ensure entry into FANH science areas and completion of graduate education or high level of competitiveness for the workforce.

In addition to coursework and related experiences that prepare students for graduation, grantee institutions will be expected to identify and develop opportunities through partnerships with food and agricultural research programs at other academic institutions, and cooperate with public and private entities, to ensure MSP scholars are exposed to a wide spectrum of careers in the FANH sciences.

Global Engagement. NIFA supports global engagement that advances U.S. agricultural goals. NIFA recognizes that collaboration with international partners may be necessary to attain the agency's goals for U.S. agriculture, promote global competence of our nation's future agricultural workforce, and promote safe and nutritious food security in a growing world. Therefore, although application to this RFA is limited to eligible U.S. institutions, applicants may collaborate with international partners, to include subcontracts to international partners or other institutions. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefits to the U.S. (AFRI program see International Partnerships).

Leadership Skills Development. The development of leadership skills, knowledge, and qualities are necessary to prepare students for agricultural and related careers in the private sector, government, and academia. MSP teaching applications must demonstrably incorporate a leadership development component to equip students with technical and leadership abilities upon graduation. Specific activities may include:

1. Developing practical applications to increase understanding of leadership roles, including critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills; ethics and professionalism; and working in teams;
2. Connecting the academic classroom experience with daily leadership roles and organizational activities;
3. Providing opportunities for mentoring and shadowing; and
4. Organizing leadership academies, workshops, trainings, etc.

Incorporation of Social Sciences and Enhancing Impacts. MSP supports social and behavioral science disciplines as well as projects that integrate social and biological sciences to provide education and experiential learning opportunities for students in applied research, and related community development programs. Incorporation of social and behavioral sciences is important for addressing many of the challenges facing agriculture and rural communities, such as increasing global demand for food production in the face of limited natural resources; improving health and reducing obesity by engaging in heathy diets; and alleviating poverty by fostering economic opportunity.

The MSP is aligned with the following USDA Strategic Goals:

1. Strategic Goal 4: Facilitate Rural Prosperity and Economic Development;

Table 2: Program Key Information

Title	Description
Program Code:	KF
Program Code Name:	Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program (MSP)
CFDA Number	10.220
Project Type:	Education/Teaching
Grant Type:	Standard
Application Deadline	June 29, 2020 May 17, 2021
Grant Duration:	60 Months
Anticipated # of Awards:	5 per annum
Maximum Award Amount:	$200,000

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The anticipated amount available for MSP in FY2020 is approximately $945,000.. The assistance instrument will be in the form of grants. USDA is not committed to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. The Automated Standard Application for Payments, operated by the Department of Treasury, Bureau of Fiscal Service, is the designated payment system for awards resulting from this RFA.

B. Types of Application

NIFA will evaluate applications using the criteria described in Part V of this RFA. Applications are limited to the following applications types:

1. *New application*: New applications will be evaluated using the criteria described in Part V of this RFA and are subject to the due dates herein (see Appendix III for definition).
2. *Resubmitted application*: Resubmitted applications must include a response to the previous review panel summary, and are subject to the same criteria and due dates herein. Resubmitted applicants must enter the NIFA-assigned proposal number of the previously submitted application in the *Federal Field (Field 4)* on the application form (see Appendix III for definition).

C. Project and Grant Types

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

1. **Project Types**. Applicants may only submit proposals for Single-function Education Projects. Single-function Education Projects develop human capital relevant to overall program goals for U.S. agriculture.
   a. ***Single Function Education:*** Projects must focus on developing skills necessary for entry- and mid-level technical employment or for entering graduate programs in FANH sciences. Single-function Education Projects must show direct alignment with one of the following:
      i. Increasing the number of graduates with the necessary technical skills for entry-level positions in FANH sciences;
      ii. Improving the technical competencies needed for the workforce to ensure that U.S. agriculture remains globally competitive; or
      iii. Enhancing the diversity of the workforce in food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences.

2. **Grant Types**. Eligible applicants may request MSP funds, or MSP and Special Experiential Learning (SEL) funds. Applicants CANNOT request SEL funds only.

   There is no limit to the number of applications an eligible institution may submit; however, an institution may only receive support up to a maximum of $200,000 in awards for each of the FY 2020 and FY 2021 award cycles.

   a. ***Multicultural Scholarship Program Grants (MSP)*** – MSP supports Scholars through scholarships. Applicants are strongly encouraged to respond to this request with training that will use USDA investment to:

i. Create innovative frameworks, grounded in curricula, for undergraduate and/ or D.V.M. training with collaborative knowledge and technology transfer components that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries in agriculture;
ii. Establish baccalaureate and/or D.V.M. degree programs in which Scholars can pursue related summer research opportunities (especially at other colleges/universities**,** industry or federal agencies, non-profit enterprises), or other learning opportunities in relevant topics;
iii. Offer professional mentoring in undergraduate degree programs in the food and agricultural sciences and/or D.V.M.;
iv. Increase the numbers of students from underrepresented/underserved groups who attain baccalaureate and/or D.V.M. degree level programs with scientific and professional competencies to meet the technologically advanced needs of the 21st century food and agricultural systems workforce;
v. Provide leadership skills opportunities for all projects (required, see above);
vi. Develop performance measures for evaluating the overall effectiveness of the undergraduate and/or D.V.M. training that the Scholars will receive. This includes assessing expertise, with clear demonstration of pipelining to workforce or further educational training in the identified core competencies.

Institutions can support MSP Scholars in the following manner: freshmen (or first-year D.V.M.) can receive support for 4 years, sophomores can receive support for 3 years, and juniors can receive support for 2 years. Institutions may apply for funds to support any combination of two-, three-, and/or four-year scholarships.

Two-year colleges that are legally authorized to offer a two-year or equivalent program of college-level studies, which are creditable toward a baccalaureate degree, may be engaged in a MSP grant in cases where an articulation agreement, bridging agreement, or other type of collaborative arrangement exists between a baccalaureate-level institution(s) and the two-year college. MSP Scholars from 2-year colleges are expected to transfer and complete their baccalaureate degrees in the partner 4-year institution(s). **In such instances, the baccalaureate-level institution must be the applicant** and is responsible for disbursing grant funds to any MSP Scholars at collaborating two-year institutions. Information on student eligibility to receive scholarships is found in Part III.A.

b. ***MSP Grants with Special Experiential Learning (SEL) - Optional***: SEL funded activities provide opportunities for eligible **NEW** (i.e. to be recruited) MSP Scholars to participate in: (a) research projects focused on relevant topics at institutions or organizations other than their own; (b) apprenticeships, internships, or similar participatory learning experiences including, but not limited to, practicums for DVM students, internships abroad, or externships in the private or public sector; (c) study abroad programs relevant to their majors; and (d) other relevant activities.

SEL funds may be used only to pay living expenses, travel expenses, additional tuition (e.g. practicum credits for courses that would not have been taken if not for this experiential learning activity), and/or a cash stipend for SEL-supported Scholars during SEL-approved experiential learning activities. SEL funds cannot be used to

increase annual stipend amounts for MSP Scholars participating in activities that have already been approved and funded by the MSP Programs. MSP grantees are able to apply and hold one SEL grant in the lifetime of their MSP grant.

Table 3: Program Area, Project Duration, and Total Maximum Award

Program Area	Project Duration	Total Maximum Award
1. MSP	5 yrs.	Up to $180,000
2. SEL	1 yr.	Up to $20,000
3. Combined MSP and SEL	5 yrs.	Up to $200,000

Each application may request any combination of Multicultural Scholarships and Special Experiential Learning funds, not to exceed $200,000. NIFA reserves the right to fund fewer Scholars than requested in an application, and to partially fund SEL requests.

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

Only the following are eligible to apply: Land-Grant Institutions, Colleges and universities having significant minority enrollments, other colleges and universities, and Institutes or research foundations maintained by an eligible college or university. Institutions that have not previously applied are especially encouraged to do so. Applicants must be institutions that confer a bachelor's or D.V.M. degree in at least one of the disciplines in the FANH sciences. Awards are made to eligible colleges and universities. *Individuals are not eligible to apply for these grants.*

Project Directors who have received MSP awards in the last five years may also apply. However, the respective **proposal must differ substantively in scope and objectives from previously funded MSP projects in the last five years by the same Project Director.**

Due to statutory restrictions, *extensions beyond the five-year period are not allowed*. Any eligible institution may, however, apply for a new award with a different scope of work in any fiscal year(s) in which appropriated funds are available for this program. 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.

Student Eligibility as Scholars

Awards to Scholars are made by eligible institutions (grantees) receiving funds under this program. Scholars must:

1. Be citizens, national, or permanent residents of the United States as determined in accordance with Federal law;
2. Have been accepted for enrollment, or be enrolled, at an institution that was awarded a project grant under this program, or at a two-year institution which has entered into an articulation agreement, bridging agreement, or other type of collaborative arrangement with a baccalaureate-level institution that has been awarded a project grant under this program;
3. Be enrolled as a full-time student, as defined by the institution, in a program of study in the FANH sciences leading to an undergraduate degree or D.V.M. during each semester or quarter that he/she receives MSP support. However, the requirements for formal registration during part of this tenure may be waived if permitted by the policy of the grantee, provided that the MSP Scholar is making satisfactory progress toward degree

completion and remains engaged in appropriate full-time scholarship activities such as study abroad experiences or internships;
4. Maintain good academic standing and satisfactory degree progress as determined by their institution;
5. Not have been enrolled previously in an academic program in the FANH sciences at the same degree level; and
6. Have a strong interest, as judged by the institution, in pursuing a career as a food or agricultural scientist or professional.

Within the framework of these guidelines, all decisions with respect to the appointment of MSP Scholars will be made by grantees. *Scholars must be identified, and scholarships must be awarded within twelve (12) months of the effective start date of a grant.* Grantee must notify and obtain approval from the NIFA Program Office if scholarship funds cannot be allocated within this twelve-month period. Failure to obtain this approval will result in the loss of funding for scholarships that were not awarded.

An MSP Scholar who finds it necessary to interrupt his/her program of study because of health, personal, or other reasonable non-academic and non-disciplinary cause(s) must be allowed to resume funded study at any time within 12 months of the interruption, provided there is adequate time remaining before the award expires. An MSP Scholar who finds it necessary to interrupt his/her program of study more than one time cannot exceed 12 total months of cumulative leave without forfeiting MSP eligibility.

An MSP Scholar at a two-year institution, who participates in the MSP through an articulation agreement, bridging agreement, or other type of collaborative arrangement with a four-year grantee institution, is subject to the same provisions as an MSP Scholar at the four-year grantee institution.

A replacement MSP Scholar is a student who is recruited into the program to take the place of an MSP Scholar who left the program prior to completion. The tenure of such a replacement MSP Scholar is limited to whatever time is remaining on the grant before it expires; however, an institution may not appoint a replacement MSP Scholar unless there is time for the student to complete at least one semester/quarter of study before the expiration date of the grant. Replacement MSP Scholars must meet all the eligibility criteria and other requirements established for MSP Scholar selection and are subject to the same provisions as other MSP Scholars during their tenure in the program.

Duplicate or Multiple Submissions –NIFA will disqualify both applications if an applicant submits duplicate or multiple submissions. For those new to Federal financial assistance, NIFA's Grants Overview provides highly recommended information about grants and other resources to help understand the Federal awards process.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

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

PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

A. Method of Application

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

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 (Register Here).
Step Two: Download Adobe	Download and Install Adobe Reader (see Adobe Software Compatibility for basic system requirements)
Step Three: Find Application	Using this funding opportunity number: USDA-NIFA-HEMS-007333 search for application here: Opportunity Package. Applicants considering applying to the second year should check the NIFA RFA webpage and www.grants.gov after September 30, 2020 for the FY 2021 Funding Opportunity Number and Application Kit, as well as for any programmatic changes.
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 *Key Information: Customer service business Hours 24/7, except federal holidays.*	Email: electronic@nifa.usda.gov *Key Information*: Business hours: Monday thru Friday, 7a.m. – 5p.m. ET, except federal holidays

B. Content and Form of the Application

The Application Guide is part of the corresponding application package for this RFA. The RFA overrides the Application Guide if there is a discrepancy between the two documents. NIFA will accept subsequent submissions to an application until the application deadline. However, applicants that do not meet the application requirements, to include partial applications, risk being excluded from NIFA's review. NIFA will assign a proposal number to all applications that meet the requirements of this RFA. Applicants must refer to the proposal number when corresponding with NIFA. **Table 6** outlines other key instructions for applicants.

Table 5: Key Application Instructions

Instruction	References (All references are to the Application Guide)
Attachments must be in a portable document format (PDF) format.	**Part III § 3**
Check the manifest of submitted files to verify attachments are in the correct format.	**Part III § 6.1**
Conduct an administrative review of the application before submission.	**Part VII and**
Follow the submission instructions.	**Part IV § 1.5**
Provide an accurate email address, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R.	**Part IV § 1.5**
Contact the Grants.gov helpdesk for technical support, and keep a record of the correspondence.	N/A
Contact NIFA if applicant does not received correspondence from NIFA regarding an application within ***45*** days of the application deadline.	N/A

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

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

R&R Other Project Information Form. See **Part V § 4** of the Application Guide.

1. Field 7. Project Summary (PS)/Abstract. The PS must show how the project goals align with the project goals of the MSP, the program area (see **Table 3**) and one to three relevant disciplines codes from **Table 6.** See **Part V § 4.7** of the Application Guide for instructions and suggested templates.

Table *7* MSP Discipline Codes

Discipline Code	Description
G	General Food, agricultural and human sciences (includes multidisciplinary projects)
M	Agribusiness (includes Management, Marketing, and Agricultural Economics)
E	Agricultural/Biological Engineering
S	Agricultural Social Sciences (includes Agricultural Education, Agricultural Communications, and Rural Sociology)
A	Animal Sciences
Q	Aquaculture
C	Conservation and Renewable Natural Resources (includes Forestry)
J	Entomology – Animal
T	Entomology – Plant
L	Environmental Sciences/Management
F	Food Science/Technology and Manufacturing
N	Human Nutrition
H	Human Sciences/Family and Consumer Sciences (excludes Human Nutrition)
I	International Education/Research (enhancement of U.S. programs)
P	Plant Sciences and Horticulture
B	Related Biological Sciences (includes General/Basic Biotechnology, Biochemistry, and Microbiology)
D	Soil Sciences
V	Veterinary Medicine/Science
W	Water Science
O	Other (Describe only if not listed above)

2. Field 8. Project Narrative (PN). The PN shall not exceed 20 pages of written text, inclusive of figures and tables. We have established this maximum (20 total pages) to ensure fair and equitable competition. Appendices to the PN are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. Do not add appendices to circumvent the page limit. Formatting shall be one-inch margins, no smaller than 12-point font (Times New Roman or similar), and DOUBLE-SPACED. Project narratives that are formatted incorrectly and/or exceed this page limit requirement may not be accepted for review

3. The PN must include all of the following:
   Multicultural Scholars Program (MSP)
   a. *Rationale and Significance*:
      i. Describe the specific relationship of the project's objectives to one or more of the program purposes and priorities (Part I.B.); and
      ii. Provide measurable objective(s) of how the proposed training project addresses workforce demand, broadens awareness about the proposed

area of training, will impact the institution, and will reverse low enrollment, retention rates, and completion of baccalaureate or D.V.M. degrees by multicultural students in the FANH sciences.

b. *Approach***.** Describe the proposed training and how it will support Scholars to achieve competence in FANH sciences and veterinary medicine. Please include:
    i. A recruitment and selection plan that identifies the time frame, demographics of target, and entry requirements;
    ii. Curricula that offer relevant and rigorous (provide number of credits and describe common core and specialization) courses as well as hands-on and on-site instructional approaches;
    iii. Experiential, interdisciplinary or capstone opportunities;
    iv. Mentoring plans for Scholars;
    v. Integration of evidence-based "best practices" and special features into student support services and academic training activities;
    vi. Plans for developing Scholars' critical thinking and problem-solving skills;
    vii. Dissemination of information, service learning, and/or other opportunities that reach broad audiences and broaden the engagement and communication skills of scholars;
    viii. Opportunities for professionalization including participation in workshops and professional meetings;
    ix. A management plan with a timeline for deliverables and rigorous academic and project review.

c. *Quality of Education*. Using the 2014-2015 academic year as the baseline, provide complete and accurate annual data (to the best of the institution's ability) organized by first-generation college, gender and racial/ethnic group (White, Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native) for institution, relevant College/Department; and relevant Program/ Major level in the following categories:
    i. Total enrollment;
    ii. Total baccalaureate or D.V.M. degrees conferred;
    iii. Retention from Year 1 through Year 2;
    iv. Years to degree completion;
    v. Student participation in service learning, internship, experiential research, extension and/or outreach; and
    vi. Participation by faculty, staff, and students in opportunities to develop multicultural competency.

d. *Evaluation and Assessment*. Include a plan, with a timeline, to extensively evaluate the project to help inform future modifications to the student support services and strategies that demonstrate how the program is contributing to MSP goals. Include:
    i. Descriptions of expected outcomes and outcome measures;
    ii. A matrix identifying expected outcomes and measurable performance indicators for activities described in the approach;
    iii. A plan for incorporating outcome measures into program performance; and
    iv. A plan for longitudinal tracking of the Scholars for up to three years after completion or exit of the program; if employed, where? And if

pursuing graduate training, what institution? What level? What area of study?

e. *Institutional Support***.** Describe the institutional climate for the proposed training, specifically addressing:
    v. Recruitment of multicultural students to higher education programs and careers in FANH sciences;
    vi. Support and mentoring of students by faculty, upper-level students and other professionals;
    vii. Academic support services and programming such as tutoring, study-groups, or supplemental instruction;
    viii. Community-building and student development / social support for MSP Scholars within the institution; and
    ix. Ability to support MSP scholars if they should need more time to complete their degree after federal funding is exhausted.
f. *Key Personnel*. Describe the plan for leadership and support of the proposed project. Indicate the responsible parties, their roles and responsibilities, as well as any cooperating institutions and their personnel.

Special Experiential Learning (SEL) All applications which include SEL activities must include the following in the narrative:

a. A description of the SEL, including the objectives of the program, how it will contribute to the Scholars program of study, timeline, specific activities, and location;
b. Measurable objectives and expected student learning and performance outcomes relating to the SEL;
c. Identification of personnel for the SEL activity and the nature of support to be provided to ensure success of the Scholars' learning experience;
d. The rationale for incorporating an SEL into the program.

Response to previous review. This requirement only applies to Resubmitted Applications as described in Part II, B. The Project Narrative attachment is to include two components:

    i. a one-page response to the previous review (containing the previous proposal number in the first line) titled "Response to Previous Review" as the first page of the attachment and,
    ii. The one-page "Response to Previous Review" does not count against the 20-page limit of the Project Narrative.

Progress Report (if applicable) If the project director is submitting a proposal AND has held an MSP award in the last five years, the proposal must include a progress report on that award. The Progress Report (maximum of two pages) does not count against the page limit of the Project Narrative (20 pages). The report should include:

    i. A comparison of actual accomplishments with the objectives established for the previous award;
    ii. The reasons established objectives were not met, if applicable;
    iii. A listing of any graduated MSP Scholars, new curricula, or other outputs;
    iv. The Grant Number (xxxx-38420-xxxxx) for the award; and
    v. An explanation of how the current proposal differs substantively in scope and objectives from previously funded MSP projects in the last five years by the same Project Director.

4. Field 12, Add Other Attachments. See **Part V § 4.12** of the Application Guide.

a. Appendices to Project Narrative – PDF Attachment. Title the attachment as 'Appendices' in the document header and save file as 'Appendices'. Appendices to the Project Narrative are allowed if they are germane to the proposed project. The addition of appendices should not be used to circumvent the text and/or figures and tables page limitations.

b. Collaborative Arrangements – PDF Attachment. No Page Limit. Title the attachment as 'Collaborative Arrangements' in the document header and save file as 'CollaborativeArrangement'. If it is necessary to enter into 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., letter of support signed by the 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.

c. Leadership Support- PDF Attachment. No Page Limit Provide signed documentation (not to exceed two pages per supporting enterprise) from senior leadership of the College/Department at the institution to demonstrate support for the proposed training project.

d. Expected Outcomes – PDF Attachment. Title the attachment "Expected Outcomes" in the document header and save file as "ExpectedOutcomes." Please use a format, similar to what is provided in Figure 1, to submit expected impacts and attach it as the last page of the application. This data will be requested when a grant is recommended for an award. A fillable version of this document can be found at Recommended Format for Submitting Expected Outcomes.

Figure 1: Primary Project Functions

Primary Project Function: (Choose one)		
EDUCATION: ☐	**EXTENSION:** ☐	**RESEARCH:** ☐
DATA FOR NNF, MSP, AFRI FELLOWS (Undergrad, Predoctoral, Postdoctoral) PROGRAM		
Expected outcomes during entire grant period		**Expected Number**
(1) Number of male students to be directly supported by this grant (i.e., scholarships, fellowships, assistantships, internships included as a cost in your project budget) for undergraduate or post-graduate education		
(2) Number of underrepresented[1] male students to be supported during the grant period (Provide the best estimate based on past experience)		
(3) Number of female students to be directly supported by this grant (i.e., scholarships, fellowships, assistantships, internships included as a cost in your project budget) for undergraduate or post-graduate education		
(4) Number of underrepresented[1] female students to be supported during the grant period (Provide the best estimate based on past experience)		

(5) Number of students supported by this grant (i.e., scholarships, fellowships, assistantships) who are pursuing their degree	
5-A. Two year or other certificates	
5-B. Undergraduate or other 4 year degrees	
5-C. Master's degree	
5-D. Ph.D. degree	
5-E. Postdoctoral training	
(6) Number of students who will be supported by this grant on an internship or other experiential learning opportunity	
6-A. Domestic experiences, with a government or non-governmental organization that is not affiliated with your university	
6-B. International experiences, including study abroad, educational travel longer than a month, etc.	

R&R S [1]underrepresented = those whose representation among food and agricultural professionals is disproportionately less than their proportion in the general population as indicated in standard statistical references, or as documented on a case-by-case basis by national survey data (e.g. the U.S. Department of Education's Digest of Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Agricultural Education Information Systems, etc.).

Note

1. Please provide your best estimate based on past experiences, graduation rates, retention rates, etc.
2. Number of underrepresented students to be supported during the grant period (questions #2 and #4) should be less than or equal to total number of students supported by the grant (questions #1 and #3).
3. Response to question #5 should be the sum of 5-A through 5-E.

Response to question #6 should be the sum of 6-A and 6-B.

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

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

R&R Budget. See **Part V § 7** of the Application Guide.

1. Match – If an applicant concludes that the matching requirements described under Part III § B of this RFA is not applicable to them; the applicant must include an explanation of their conclusion in the *budget justification*. NIFA will consider this justification when determining final matching requirements or if required matching can be waived. NIFA retains the right to make final determinations regarding matching requirements.
   Grants that require matching funds as specified under Part III § B of this RFA must list in their *budget justification* the matching sources, the identification of the entity(ies) providing the match, and the total pledged amount. A written verification of commitments of matching support (a pledge agreement) is not required. However, applicants are subject to the documentation, valuing and reporting requirements, as specified in 2 CFR Part 200, "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (the Uniform Guidance)," and 7 CFR 3430, "Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-Formula Federal Assistance Programs – General Award Administrative Provisions."
2. Indirect costs (IDC) – Not Allowable
3. Funding Requirements

a. Funding requests for this program are restricted to student scholarships, cost of education allowance, and/or Special Experiential Learning funds. See **Table 7** for maximum award amounts. Funding amounts per student must be adhered to.

Table 6 MSP Program Funding Restrictions

Program	Funding Amounts
Multicultural Scholarship Program Grants (MSP)	Each applicant may request funding for a maximum of $180,000 for scholarship support and cost-of education allowance for a cohort of students. An institution may request: Up to $6,500 in scholarship support per Scholar per year for up to four years. MSP scholarships should be used by the grantee to pay, in order of precedence: (1) MSP Scholars' tuition and mandatory fees; (2) on-campus room and board; (3) off-campus room and board; (4) books and supplies; (5) other aligned broader context activities; and (6) other student educational expenses. Any remaining scholarship funds shall be paid by the grantee to the Scholar as a stipend according to standard institutional procedures. **NOTE:** In Section E (Participant/Trainee Support Costs), the scholarship amount is placed on Line 2 "Stipends." Up to $2,500 per Scholar per year for up to four years as a cost-of-education institutional allowance (in lieu of indirect costs, which are not allowed). **NOTE:** The cost-of-education allowance should appear on Line 5 "Other." The cost-of-education allowance should be used to: a) Support travel for the Project Directors (along with eligible USDA MSP Scholars) to attend at least one mandatory NIFA-sponsored Project Directors and Beneficiaries Meeting, held during the performance period of the grant. b) Defray program-related expenses including, but not limited to, program evaluation costs, student retention and mentoring programs, Scholar travel to attend professional meetings, publications, or salaries of project personnel, and/or to conduct research, laboratory fees and educational expenses (e.g., books and supplies). An institution may elect to apply the allowance to a Scholar's tuition and fees.
Special Experiential Learning (SEL)	An Institution submitting a new or resubmitted MSP proposal can request the SEL component. This is a one-time award of up

	to $4,000 for each eligible NEW (i.e. to-be-recruited) MSP Scholar that may be used only for approved activities (Part I, C, b, (1)), over the active period of the award. **NOTE:** The SEL, if applicable, should be entered on Line 3 "Travel" of the R&R Budget Form.

Table 7: Activity Amount x # scholars x years - Total

Activity	Amount x # scholars x years	Total
Scholarships	$6,500/scholar/year x 5 scholars x 4 years	$130,000
Cost-of Education	$2,500/scholar/year x 5 scholars x 4 years	$50,000
SEL	$4,000/scholar x 5 scholars	$20,000
	Total:	**$200,000**

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

Supplemental Information Form. See **Part VI § 1** of the Application Guide.

1. Field 2. Program to which the applicant is applying. Enter the program name MSP and the program code KF. Accurate entry is critical.
2. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List. See **Part VI § 1.8** of the Application Guide.

Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants. This is required for corporate applicants. See **Part VI § 2** of the Application Guide for a description of the term, "corporation."

C. Funding Restrictions

No Indirect Cost (IDC). IDC is *no*t authorized for this RFA.

Legislative mandated Indirect Cost (IDC). Pursuant to 7 U.S.C. 3152(b), no indirect costs may be recovered under the MSP Program. Funds are restricted to the clearly designated uses found within this RFA.

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

PART V. APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. NIFA's Evaluation Process

Scientific Peer Review Process:

NIFA evaluates each application in a two-part process. First, we screen each application to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, a scientific peer- review process will be used to technically evaluate applications that meet the administrative requirements using a review panel **(see NIFA Peer Review Process).**.

Scientific Peer Review Process:

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

- the level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities;
- the need to include experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields;
- the need to include other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs;
- the need to include experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, and private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations;
- the need to maintain a balanced composition with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and
- the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness of each application to producers and the general public.

After 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 AFRI project for funding.

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

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

B. Evaluation Criteria

NIFA will use the following criteria to evaluate this RFA:
A reviewer's written evaluation entails two levels of assessment. First, the reviewer summarizes how well the application addressed each evaluation criterion. After the application has been assessed for strengths and weaknesses of each criterion, the reviewer then evaluates the overall likelihood that the project will have significant outcome and impact. These written reviews are used to begin panel discussions with other reviewers serving on the peer review panel. Through these discussions, peer review panelists come to consensus on the final rating and ranking of proposals. A complete description of NIFA's peer review process can be found at the NIFA website: The NIFA Peer Review Process for Competitive Grant Applications. We will use the evaluation criteria below to review applications submitted in response to this RFA. Applications are evaluated primarily for overall quality of education using sound program management and strong personnel and institutional support in order to build a multicultural scholars pipeline to the food and agricultural workforce.

1. **Multicultural Scholars Program Grants.**

a. Quality of education and impact on the FANH sciences

- Clear justification for the project that demonstrates a national, regional and/or local need for diverse graduates in the chosen field of study;
- Technically sound and culturally/socially relevant approach to education and mentorship that will enhance positive learning experiences and develop the leadership and professional skills of the Scholars;
- Strength of curriculum in the FANH sciences to produce a well prepared, modern and diversified workforce;
- Strong mentoring plan, advising, and cohort-based activities;
- Strategies for developing critical thinking, problem solving and other skills necessary for Scholars' entry into the workforce or graduate training;
- Demonstrated awareness of previous and comparable training, outreach, mentoring and education programs that address the needs identified for the target audience;
- Strength of relationship between program goals, activities, and specific needs of multicultural Scholars in their field of study;
- Clarity of student learning outcomes and plan for assessing, guiding and sustaining the Scholars in their training; and
- Expected outcomes of the project in terms of the number of first-generation, underrepresented, and underserved minorities trained and placed in careers or graduate education in areas related to USDA mission areas.

b. Institutional support and management of the project

- Plan for recruitment and retention of students through the period of the grant;
- Time allocated to and timeline for systematic attainment of objectives;
- Effective functioning of key personnel to have a strong workflow scheme that facilitates successful achievement of program and project goals and objectives;
- Integration between administration, faculty and other university services needed to ensure that the project will recruit, retain, train, graduate, and

successfully place the target audience in FANH related graduate education or employment; and
- Support for any remaining MSP Scholars to degree completion, after federal funding has ended.

c. Key personnel and collaborations
- Qualifications of applicant (individual or team) to conduct the proposed project;
- Strong commitment by personnel in guiding Scholars to develop self-efficacy in their program of study;
- Demonstration of a strong track record of facilitating the graduation of multicultural students in area(s) of proposed training; and
- Strength of partnerships and collaborative efforts for enriched learning provided to Scholars.

d. Evaluation, assessment, and dissemination
- Plan and methods for monitoring and evaluating success of project activities and program as a whole;
- Plan for incorporating feedback into the program to improve performance;
- Defined approach for longitudinal tracking of the Scholars after completion of the program and sustainability beyond the life of the grant; and
- Plans to disseminate impacts and achievements to a wider audience (including K-12 students, educators, and policy makers) to expand the pipeline of outstanding students interested in careers in FANH sciences.

2. Special Experiential Learning (SEL) – for proposals including the SEL component (in addition to the above).

a. Potential for advancing the quality of education
- Likelihood that the proposed learning experience will enhance the training of MSP scholars and will result in the development of outstanding graduates;
- Integration of the SEL activities with the broader MSP program; and
- The target area, activities, and duration for the SEL is appropriate for strengthening the MSP Scholar's academic program.

b. Proposed approach
- Clarity of the learning objectives with measurable targets for deliverables;
- Scope and type of activities that provide opportunities for the Scholar to develop 21st century workforce skills;
- Strategies for developing critical thinking, problem solving and other skills necessary for Scholars' entry into the workforce or graduate training; and
- Completeness of arrangements for the SEL, including faculty, staff, institutional and/or facilities commitments.

c. Institutional commitment and resources

- The facilities and equipment, instructional/learning support resources, and other academic attributes are excellent for providing outstanding experiential learning opportunities related to the academic program of the Scholars.

d. Key personnel

- The personnel involved with the SEL have the appropriate credentials and experience to direct the Scholar's professional developmental experience; and
- The contribution the personnel will make to the educational value of the SEL.

e. Program evaluation and dissemination

- Plans and procedures for assessing, monitoring, guiding, and sustaining a scholar's progress in the SEL activities toward securing a positive impact on the academic program of the Scholars; and
- Plans for submitting an SEL Outcomes Report to the USDA that describes accomplishments of the scholar(s) after completing the SEL (this is not an activity report with a daily log of tasks).

C. Organizational Management Information

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

D. Application Disposition

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

PART VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

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

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

Program-specific reporting guidelines can be found at Fellowships and Scholarships.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

PART VII. OTHER INFORMATION

A. Use of Funds and Changes in Budget

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

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

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

B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

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

C. Regulatory Information

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

APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACT

Programmatic Contact

Name	Email	Telephone	Fax
Ray A. Ali, Ed.D.	ray.ali@usda.gov	816-926-1453	

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

APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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

APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS

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

Terms	Definitions
Continuation Award	An award instrument by which NIFA agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined period of time with a statement of intention to provide additional support at a future date, provided that performance has been satisfactory, appropriations are available for this purpose, and continued support would be in the best interest of the federal government and the public.
First-Generation	means an individual neither of whose parents completed a baccalaureate degree, or in the case of any individual who regularly resided with and received support from only one parent, an individual who's only such parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree.
Matching	The process through which a grant recipient match awarded USDA funds with cash and in-kind contributions on a dollar-for-dollar basis. The matching funds must derive from non-Federal sources.
New Application	An application not previously submitted to a program.
Renewal Application	A project application that seeks additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in an original or amended award.
Resubmitted Application	A project application that was previously submitted to a program, but the application was not funded.
Resubmitted Renewal Application	A project application that requests additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in the original award. This is an application that had previously been submitted for renewal to but not funded.