Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI)

MODIFICATION: Edit on page 1.

FUNDING YEAR:	**Fiscal Year 2021 and ~~2021~~ 2022**
APPLICATION DEADLINE:	**FY 2021 January 14, 2021** **FY 2022 January 13, 2022**
LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE:	**Not Applicable**
ANTICIPATED FUNDING AVAILABLE:	**Approximately FY 2021 $25 million** **Approximately FY 2022 $30 million**
ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER:	**10.307**

ELIGIBILITY: See Part III, A of RFA

United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION INITIATIVE

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Assistance Listings under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance number **10.307**.

DUE DATE: This RFA solicits applications for two funding cycles (FY 2021 or FY 2022). Applications for FY 2021 funding cycle must be received by 5 p.m. Eastern Time on January 14, 2021.

Applications received after these deadlines will normally not be considered for funding (see Part IV, C of this RFA). Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six (6) months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will only be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: We at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) seek your comments about this RFA. We will consider your comments when we develop the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and we'll use them to 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)). Submit your written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this notice via email to Policy@usda.gov. (This email address is only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and *not* for requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative RFA.

Visit the Centers of Excellence-Factsheet to access a factsheet on the Center of Excellence (COE) designation process, including COE criteria, and a list of programs offering COE opportunities. You may also review a recording of COE outreach and COE implementation webinars on the site. We will update COE webpages as appropriate.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) for fiscal year (FY) 2021 or 2022 to solve critical organic agriculture issues, priorities, or problems through the integration of research, education, and extension. Applicants considering applying to the second year should check the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative web page to access the Request for Applications and check for updates. OREI funds research, education, and extension programs that enhance the ability of producers and processors who have already adopted organic standards to grow and market high quality organic agricultural products. The approximate amounts available annually for OREI in FY 2021 and FY 2022 are $25 million and $30 million, respectively. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or a full appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.

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

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

Section 7210 of the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 amended section 1672B of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade (FACT) Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 5925b). The FACT Act, as amended, authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture, in consultation with the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board (NAREEEAB), to make competitive grants to support research, education, and extension activities regarding organically grown and processed agricultural commodities for eight legislatively-defined goals (see Part I, B. of this RFA).

B. Purpose and Priorities

The OREI seeks to solve critical organic agricultural issues, priorities, or problems through the integration of research, education and extension activities. The purpose of this program is to fund high priority integrated projects that will enhance the ability of producers and processors who have already adopted organic standards to grow and market high quality organic agricultural products. Priority concerns include biological, physical, and social sciences, including economics.

Consistent with 7 U.S.C. 5925b, OREI has eight goals:

1. Facilitating the development and improvement of organic agriculture production, breeding, and processing methods;
2. Evaluating the potential economic benefits of organic agricultural production and methods to producers, processors, and rural communities;
3. Exploring international trade opportunities for organically grown and processed agricultural commodities;
4. Determining desirable traits for organic commodities;
5. Identifying marketing and policy constraints on the expansion of organic agriculture;
6. Conducting advanced on-farm research and development that emphasizes observation of, experimentation with, and innovation for working organic farms, including research relating to production, marketing, food safety, socioeconomic conditions, and farm business management;
7. Examining optimal conservation, soil health, and environmental outcomes relating to organically produced agricultural products; and
8. Developing new and improved seed varieties that are particularly suited for organic agriculture.

Priorities for FY 2021 and FY 2022: Proposals are encouraged in the following areas based on legislated goals and stakeholder input (not listed in order of importance)

1. Conduct advanced on-farm crop, livestock, or integrated livestock-crop research and development that emphasize observation of, experimentation with, and innovation for organic farms, including production, marketing, and socioeconomic considerations. These issues could include both identification of factors reducing yields, efficiency, productivity, and economic returns on organic farms and the economic and socioeconomic contributions of organic farming to producers, processors and local communities. This priority includes studies that help producers monitor and improve soil health and fertility as well as studies focusing on soil, plant and/or livestock associated microbiome with practical applications to organic production systems. The development of tools and testing methodologies that can help protect the organic integrity is encouraged under this priority.
2. Develop and demonstrate educational tools for Cooperative Extension personnel and other professionals who advise producers on organic practices. Applications bringing end-users together with OREI-funded research, education, and extension teams are encouraged. Coordination of the development of online content with eXtension and the eOrganic Community of Practice is encouraged but is not a requirement for a successful application.
3. For both plant and animal-based organic products: evaluate, develop, and improve allowable post-harvest handling, processing, and food safety practices to reduce toxins and microbial contamination, while increasing shelf-life, quality, and other economically important characteristics.
4. Strengthen organic crop propagation systems, including seed and transplant production and protection, and plant breeding for organic production conditions, with an emphasis on publicly available releases. Goals of organic breeding and propagation systems proposals can include, but are not limited to: disease, weed, and pest resistance; stress tolerance including resilience to drought, flood, and disrupted seasonal patterns resulting from climate change; nutrient use efficiency; performance in soil-improving and climate-friendly systems such as organic no-till; quality and yield improvement; and genetic mechanisms to prevent inadvertent introduction of GMO traits through cross-pollination. This priority includes cover crop breeding for enhanced performance in organic systems. Projects dealing solely with cultivar evaluation do not fit under this priority.
5. Explore technologies that meet the requirements of the National Organic Program (NOP)[1] and protect soil, water, and other natural resources. This includes developing, improving, and evaluating systems-based integrated management programs to address diseases, nematodes, weeds and insect pests-related problems for organically grown crops. Systems-based evaluations can include the safety and efficacy of allowable pest management materials and practices. Proposals addressing organic management of diseases, nematodes, weeds, and insect pests in

[1] The NOP NOSB maintains a list of research priorities that is updated annually:
https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/MSResearchPriorities2019.pdf
https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/MSResearchPrioritiesProposal.pdf

the Southern Region are especially encouraged. Where possible, the projects should engage emerging technologies such as automation, remote sensing, artificial intelligence, and digital scouting to enhance plant protection and weed control as well as improve productivity.

6. Develop or improve systems-based animal production, animal health, and pest management practices to improve animal productivity, health, and welfare while retaining or enhancing economic viability, including, but not limited to grazing and pasture-based systems (including rotational grazing), integrated livestock-crop systems, and the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) confinement standards. Capitalize on emerging opportunities such as automation, artificial intelligence, deep learning, and precision management in animal production, welfare and health; managing risk as appropriate, to continue to advance animal research programs and sustain effective technology transfer.

7. Breed, evaluate, and select animal breeds and genotypes adapted to organic systems. This would include but is not restricted to: identification of and selection for pest, parasite, and disease resistance; health and performance under organic pasture and feed regimens (especially soil-enhancing and climate friendly systems such as management of intensive rotational grazing and multispecies grazing); resilience to heat, fluctuating forage quality, and other stresses related to climate change; and performance in small, mixed, or other innovative farming operations.
8. Develop undergraduate and/or graduate curriculum for organic agriculture. Education activities under this priority may include instructional delivery programs and experiential learning including student-farmer engagement for students enrolled in associate, baccalaureate, masters, and Ph.D. degree programs.
9. Identify marketing, policy, and other socioeconomic barriers to the expansion of organic agriculture in the United States and develop strategies to address them. Lobbying and advocacy activities are not appropriate under this priority.

The OREI is particularly interested in research, education, and extension projects that will assist farmer and rancher whole farm planning by delivering practical, research-based information. Applicants should describe how the results of their research, education, and extension programs will improve the ability of growers to develop the Organic System Plan required for organic certification.

Organic systems fieldwork must be done on certified organic land and/or facilities. In special cases, studies can be conducted on land/facilities in transition to organic certification as is appropriate to project goals and objectives. For this program, a land/facility is not considered organic unless it has received USDA certification. It is expected that land/facilities in transition to organic certification will be certified by the end of the project. Refer to the USDA National Organic Program for organic production standards.

Trials investigating animal health issues should be conducted in a certified organic setting if animal management could play a pivotal role in the response of the animal to the proposed

intervention. For example, animals that have been raised under organic standards should be used to compare pasture-raised animals to those from a confined animal feeding operation. Otherwise, a certified organic setting is not required for clinical trials involving animal health.

Proposals with significant overlap in objectives and scope cannot be submitted simultaneously to both OREI and ORG (Organic Transitions) programs. The second submission will be rejected. Additional information on the scope of OREI and ORG may be found at Organic Agriculture Program under "Program Specific Resources."

OREI strongly encourages applicants to develop partnerships that include collaboration with: small- or mid-sized accredited colleges and universities; 1890 Land-Grant Institutions, 1994 Land-Grant Institutions, Hispanic-serving institutions, and/or other institutions that serve high- risk, under-served, or hard-to-reach audiences as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that are engaged in organic agriculture research, education, and outreach. International partnerships, linkages, and exchanges that contribute to solving or solve critical organic agriculture issues, priorities, or problems in the United States are also encouraged.

NIFA strongly encourages applicants to consult with organic producers and/or processors before developing project applications. Producers and/or processors should play an important and active role in developing project goals and objectives; implementing the plan; and evaluating and disseminating project results and outcomes. Projects must involve work that is viewed by stakeholders as both necessary and important. There is an expectation that a local and/or regional advisory panel will inform the project throughout its life, including ongoing identification and prioritization of research, education, and extension objectives. An outcome-oriented plan for disseminating information derived from project work must be an integral part of the project and described. This information delivery plan should consider several delivery systems and methods. The metrics for evaluating research, education, and extension outcomes should be clearly described and appropriate to project goals.

The following websites may be useful in developing OREI applications:

1. https://www.ams.usda.gov/about-ams/programs-offices/national-organic-program and NOBSP priorities for 2020 (www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/MSResearchPrioritiesProposal.pdf) and 2019 (www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/MSResearchPriorities2019.pdf)

2. https://nifa.usda.gov/program/organic-agriculture-program

3. https://impact.extension.org/

4. https://eorganic.info/

5. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/index.php

6. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Surveys/Guide_to_NASS_Surveys/Organic_Production/index.php

The OREI encourages use of multiple extension delivery methods, including face-to-face meetings and tours, farmer-to-farmer mentoring, print publications and social media, as appropriate to project goals. In creating Web-based electronic content, project directors (PDs) are encouraged, but not required, to coordinate their efforts with eXtension, the national land grant university and extension Web initiative, or the eOrganic Community of Practice (CoP). Extensive opportunities for collaboration, networking, integration of research, education, extension, and stakeholder engagement are offered within eXtension and the eOrganic CoP. For detailed guidance on how to partner with eOrganic, see the eOrganic link above.

The OREI program directly aligns with the FY 2018 - 2022 USDA Strategic Plan and specifically addresses the following Strategic Goals:

Goal 2 - Maximize the Ability of American Agricultural Producers to Prosper by Feeding and Clothing the World - Objective 2.2: Increase Agricultural Opportunities and Support Economic Growth by Creating New Markets and Supporting a Competitive Agricultural System;

Goal 5 - Strengthen the Stewardship of Private Lands through Technology and Research - Objective 5.1: Enhance Conservation Planning With Science-Based Tools and Information; and

Goal 7 - Provide All Americans Access to a Safe, Nutritious, and Secure Food Supply - Objective 7.1: Prevent Foodborne Illness and Protect Public Health.

The OREI program directly aligns with the FY 2022-2025 USDA Research, Education, and Economics (REE) mission area Science Blueprint and specifically addresses the following Priority Themes: Theme 1 - Sustainable Agriculture Intensification, Theme 2 - Agricultural Climate Adaptation, and Theme 3 - Food and Nutrition Translation. It also uses some of the research priorities, such as systems management, in the USDA's Agriculture Innovation Agenda. By emphasizing the use of automation, artificial intelligence and other data-driven approaches, this RFA also addresses OSTP's priority to advance Industries of the Future. OREI fulfills 5(a) of the United State Trade Representative's joint plan with the U.S. Department of Commerce and USDA entitled ***Plan to Support American Producers of Seasonal and Perishable Fruits and Vegetables***, as published in the September 2020 Report on Seasonal and Perishable Products in U.S. Commerce, as OREI expands research opportunities for seasonal and perishable products, as well as supports projects intended to increase the competitiveness of seasonal produce through new innovations and technology.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The approximate amounts available annually for OREI in FY 2021 and FY 2022 are $25 and $30 million, respectively. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or a full appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

The Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP), operated by the Department of Treasury's Bureau of the Fiscal Service, is the designated payment system for awards resulting from this RFA. For more information see Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP).

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2021, you may submit applications to the OREI Program as one of the following two types of requests:

New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the OREI Program. We will review all new applications competitively using the screening for administrative requirements, review panel evaluation of proposals using evaluation criteria and selection process described in Part V—Application Review Requirements. NIFA may choose to issue a new award on a continuation basis. A continuation award is 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.

Resubmitted application. This is an application that had previously been submitted to the NIFA but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (see Response to Previous Review, Part IV). We must receive resubmitted applications by the relevant due dates. We will evaluate resubmitted applications in competition with other pending applications in the appropriate area to which they are assigned and review them according to the same evaluation criteria (Part V, B) as new applications. If you are submitting a resubmission application enter the NIFA-assigned proposal number of the previously submitted application in the Federal field (Field 4 on the form).

C. Project Types

1. **Integrated Project Proposals**: Integrated project applications must include research and at least one additional element of the other two functions of the agricultural knowledge system (education and extension). Awards will be made as grants. To accommodate projects differing in scope, three types of integrated project proposals are offered. However, projects with

similar content and same investigators may not be submitted to more than one project category.

a. **Tier 1 Proposals**. Proposals addressing program priorities with a maximum award amount of approximately $3,000,000. These are large coordinated projects addressing critical issues that cut across multiple regions. An advisory panel is required for Tier 1 proposals.
b. **Tier 2 Proposals**. Proposals addressing program priorities with a maximum award amount of approximately $1,500,000. These are multidisciplinary projects addressing issues that may be either national or regional.
c. **Tier 3 Proposals**. Proposals addressing specific critical constraints with a maximum award amount of approximately $750,000, reflecting the possibly narrower scope of these projects or locality-specific nature.

Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 project proposals: (1) will be reviewed together with no set aside amount for any of the proposal types but taking into account the cost efficiency and relative scope of each project type to avoid bias toward large projects, and (2) must include a data management plan that clearly describes how the data will be disseminated and accessible to the public. The main intent of large awards is to foster collaboration between states and avoid duplication of efforts. Therefore, Tier 1 proposals with a budget of up to $3M are expected to tackle major issues identified by stakeholders and bring the community of needed participants together to address the problems. We expect these proposals to be multi-institution and multi-state.

2. **Curriculum Development Proposals:** Curriculum development proposals provide assistance in the development of undergraduate and/or graduate curriculum in organic agriculture. Education activities under this priority may include instructional delivery programs and experiential learning including student-farmer engagement for students enrolled in associate, baccalaureate, masters, and Ph.D. degree programs. Routine use of students as personnel on research projects is not considered education for the purposes of this priority and students should be actively engaged in the scholarship of the research/extension projects. Programs designed to educate growers are considered extension rather than educational activities for the purpose of this RFA. Projects must be innovative and promote and strengthen academic instruction or activities that lead to completion of a student's formal degree or certificate program. Projects should have broad-based applicability beyond a single course or an individual instructor. Projects are encouraged to include partnerships among several academic units or institutions to more efficiently deliver coordinated, academic instruction that reduces instructional duplication and costs. This priority is not intended to duplicate activities targeting farmers and non-academic institutions. Those activities are considered extension and outreach and may continue to be included in integrated project proposals. Curriculum development projects cannot exceed $750,000 total budget per award for a period of up to four years.

    a. **Conference Proposals:** Conference proposals support workshops or symposia bringing together scientists and others, including end-users, to identify research, education, or extension needs; update information; or advance understanding of organic issues and problems using a systems-based approach. These should occur

within 12 months of the award start date. Conferences providing current information to farmers and ranchers should be held to the extent possible in conjunction with meetings regularly attended by organic producers and processors. Conference grants should go beyond just meeting activities and should lead to clear outputs and outcomes. Documentation of outputs and outcomes may include, but is not limited to proceedings, white papers, opinion papers, fact sheets, bulletins, or priority setting. This information should be publicly available. Conference awards cannot exceed $50,000. In addition to the conference proposals described above, we encourage applications for conferences focusing on Breakthroughs in Organic Agriculture (BOA). The goal of BOA conferences is to develop a roadmap for major breakthroughs in organic agriculture by year 2030. Applicants are encouraged to partner with scientists and experts from unconventional fields to explore potentials to develop **breakthrough** technologies. The title of the BOA project must begin with "BOA: "followed by the full title…."

b. **Planning Proposals**: Planning proposals provide assistance in the development of future OREI proposals requiring multi-regional or regional coordination. Proposals are encouraged from applicants who: (a) demonstrate limited resources for submitting large grant applications, (b) articulate anticipated benefits from the proposed planning activities, or (c) present evidence that the resulting OREI application will have a high probability of success. Applicants are encouraged to budget for planning meetings that bring together scientists, end-users and technology providers. Applicants should detail the types of participants who will be invited in order to document that planning meeting participants represent a broad range of expertise. Planning grants should lead to clear outputs and outcomes. Documentation of outputs and outcomes may include but is not limited to white papers, opinion paper, priority setting, etc. This information should be publicly available. Research, Education and Extension Planning Proposal awards cannot exceed $50,000 and are not renewable. Funding of a planning proposal is not a guarantee that the resulting application will be funded by NIFA. All proposals resulting from Planning Grants will be reviewed by the panel using the same standards as all other proposals. It is expected that planning activities supported by this program will occur within 12 months of award start date. Planning grants, from or including small, mid-sized and minority-serving institutions are particularly encouraged.

Table 1: Project Types, Periods and Maximum Awards

Project Types	Project Periods	Maximum Award
Integrated Project Proposal - Multi-Regional	3 to 4 years	Approx. $3,000,000
Integrated Project Proposal - Regional	3 to 4 years	Approx. $1,500,000
Integrated Project Proposal - Targeted	3 to 4 years	Approx. $750,000
Curriculum Development Proposal	3 to 4 years	Approx. $750,000
Conference Proposal	1 year	$50,000
Planning Proposal	1 year	$50,000

Applicants should decide the project type best suited to the objectives of their proposed project and develop a budget that fits the objectives.

3. **Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research**

   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 shall, upon request, make available to NIFA the policies, procedures, and documentation to support the conduct of the training.

   For more information see Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may only be submitted by the following entities:

1. State agricultural experiment stations;
2. Colleges and universities;
3. University research foundations;
4. Other research institutions and organizations;
5. Federal agencies;
6. National laboratories;
7. Private organizations, foundations, or corporations;
8. Individuals who are United States citizens or nationals; or
9. A group consisting of two or more of the entities described in subparagraphs (1) through (8).

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.

For those new to Federal financial assistance, a grants overview page is available on the NIFA website. This page includes information about free Grants 101 Training and other resources that are highly recommended for those seeking an understanding of Federal awards.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

In accordance with 7 U.S.C. 5925b(c), if an OREI program grant provides a particular benefit to a specific agricultural commodity, the grant recipient is required to match the USDA funds awarded on a dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources with cash and/or in-kind contributions. (See Part IV, B., 6. for details.)

NIFA may waive the matching funds requirement for a grant if NIFA determines that: (1) the results of the project, while of particular benefit to a specific agricultural commodity, are likely to be applicable to agricultural commodities generally; or (2) the project involves a minor commodity, the project deals with scientifically important research, and the grant recipient is unable to satisfy the matching funds requirement.

C. Multiple Submissions

Duplicate, essentially duplicate or predominantly overlapping applications submitted simultaneously to both OREI and ORG in any one fiscal year will not be reviewed. In addition, applicants may not submit to OREI an application that is considered duplicate, essentially duplicate, or predominantly overlapping with an application submitted simultaneously to another NIFA program in the same fiscal year. In case of duplicate submissions, the second submission will be rejected.

D. Centers of Excellence

Pursuant to Section 7214 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Pub. L. 113-79), beginning in Fiscal Year 2015, for applicable competitive research and extension programs, NIFA will recognize and provide priority in the receipt of funding to applications from "centers of excellence" that carry out research, extension, and education activities that relate to the food and agricultural sciences. NIFA held listening sessions in July 2014 and accepted written comments from stakeholders to inform NIFA's implementation of the COE provision. Information from the webinars and a summary of the input are available on NIFA's website at Centers of Excellence.

A COE is composed of one or more of the following entities that provide financial or in-kind support to the COE:

1. State agricultural experiment stations;
2. Colleges and universities;
3. University research foundations;
4. Other research institutions and organizations;
5. Federal agencies;
6. National laboratories;
7. Private organizations, foundations, or corporations;
8. Individuals; or
9. any group consisting of two or more of the entities described in (A) through (H).

Only Integrated Project Proposals applicants may be considered for centers of excellence designation. See Part IV, B. of this RFA for additional requirements that eligible applicants must meet to be considered a center of excellence.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA. We urge you to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For information about the pre-award phase of the grant lifecycle see Pre-Award Phase.

New Users of Grants.gov

Prior to preparing an application, we recommend that the Project Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) first contact an Authorized Representative (AR, also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative, or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grants.gov. If not (e.g., the institution/organization is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov), then the one-time registration process must be completed **PRIOR** to submitting an application. It can take as long as two weeks to complete the registration process, it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations, the AR should go to **"Register," in the top right corner of the Grants.gov web page (or go to** Registering with Grants.gov**), for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov.** Part II,1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide contains detailed information regarding the registration process. Refer to item 2, below, to locate the "NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide."

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

To receive application materials:

1. You must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov to access, complete, and submit applications. For basic system requirements and download instructions, see Adobe Software Compatibility.

2. Grants.gov has a test package that will help you determine whether your current version of Adobe Reader is compatible.

3. To obtain the application package from Grants.gov, go to Search for Opportunity Package and enter the funding opportunity number where appropriate.

   Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-ICGP-007872

   Click "Search." On the displayed page, click the corresponding link to continue. A Grant Application Package is tied to a particular funding opportunity. You may move forms among different Grant Application Packages, but you may ONLY submit an application to the particular funding opportunity to which the Grant Application Package is associated.

   Contained within the application package is the "NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide." This guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information

about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

If you require assistance to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms) **or submitting the application,** refer to resources available on the Grants.gov website Grants.gov Online Support. Grants.gov assistance is also available at:

Grants.gov customer support
800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035
Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on federal holidays.
Email: support@grants.gov
Grants.gov iPortal: Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self-service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7 a.m. - 9 p.m. ET).
Have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov:

1. Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
2. Name of agency you are applying to
3. Specific area of concern

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Electronic applications are to be prepared following Parts V and VI of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A of this part). The following is **additional information** you need to prepare an application in response to this RFA. **If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.**

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., PDF) in Part III, Section 3 of the guide. ANY PROPOSALS THAT ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS (e.g., content format, PDF file format, file name restrictions, and no password protected files) WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Grants.gov does not check for NIFA required attachments or whether attachments are in PDF format; see Part III, Section 6.1 of the guide for how to check the manifest of submitted files. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. We will accept subsequent submissions of an application until close of business on the closing date in the RFA (see Part V, 2.1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further information).

For any questions related to the preparation of an application, review the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide and the applicable RFA. If assistance is still needed for preparing application forms content, contact:

- The programmatic contact listed in Part VII. NIFA Support, Email: policy@usda.gov, Key Information: Business hours: Monday thru Friday, 7a.m. – 5p.m. ET, except federal holidays

1. **SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet**
   Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. See Part V, Section 2.18 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for the required certifications and assurances (e.g., Prohibition Against Entities Requiring Certain Internal Confidentiality Agreements).

2. **SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)**
   Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 3 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

3. **R&R Other Project Information Form**

   Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 4 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

   a. **Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract.**
      The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of OREI See Part V.
      4.7 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

   b. **Field 8. Project Narrative.**
      NOTE: For all three types of Integrated Project Proposals and Curriculum Proposals: The Project Narrative shall not exceed a total of 21 single- or double-spaced pages, including figures and tables. We have established this maximum of 21 pages to ensure fair and equitable competition. Applicants requesting consideration of COE status must include their justification at the end of their Project Narratives and within the page limits provided for the project narratives.

NOTE: For Conference and Planning Proposals: The Project Narrative section may not exceed a total of 7 single- or double-spaced pages, including figures and tables.

All pages, including those with figures and tables, should be numbered sequentially. To ensure fair and equitable reviews, applications exceeding the page limit **may not be reviewed**.

The project narrative should start with the response to the previous panel review, if applicable, followed by the executive summary and table of contents.

The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

i. Response to the previous panel review:
This requirement only applies to Resubmitted Applications or Resubmitted Renewal Applications as described in Part II, B. The Project Narrative attachment is to include two components: 1) a five-page maximum 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 2) the [21] page Project Narrative, as required (see Part IV, C. 3. b., above). The

five-page maximum “Response to Previous Review” does not count against the [21]-page limit of the Project Narrative.

ii. Executive summary and table of contents:
The executive summary and table of contents does not count toward the narrative’s page limitation and must include the following information in a combined executive summary and table of contents. Applications without an executive summary containing the following parts will NOT be considered for funding. Note that this section is in addition to and different from the Project Summary page.

1. Project title.
2. Project type (see Part II C. of this RFA).
3. List the legislatively-defined goals being addressed (see Part I B. of this RFA) and provide an estimate of the percentage of effort/funds dedicated to each (sum of percentages should equal 100 percent). Note that the legislatively-defined goals are not the same as the FY 2018 program priorities.
4. Indicate the approximate distribution of percentage of effort between research, education and extension.
5. Program Staff and their role – include name, title, affiliation, address, and e-mail for PD(s), Co-PD(s) and Key Personnel. Please note all people listed as co-PD or co-PI should be eligible and able to fulfill the role of PD/PI for the project if the need arises. Review of Co-PD roles will be included in project review. Please be clear about Co- PDs vs sub-contractors.
6. A brief summary (2-3 sentences) describing the critical stakeholder needs addressed by the project and the project’s long-term goals (provide cross-references to full descriptions in the narrative).
7. A brief summary (2-3 sentences) of the outreach plan proposed by the project (provide a cross-reference to the full description in the narrative).
8. A brief summary (2-3 sentences) describing potential economic, social, and other benefits (Who benefits and how will it be measured?).
9. A brief summary (2-3 sentences) describing stakeholder engagement throughout the project (provide a cross-reference to the full description in the narrative).

iii. Outcome from previous awards:
If you have previously received funding from OREI or ORG, provide the following:

1. Award number(s)
2. Significant outcome from each award (maximum of 300 words per award)
3. The "Outcome from previous awards" section is an opportunity for applicants to demonstrate their track record or that of your team as a whole. Limit the information to the lead PI (for past awards as lead PI). Both OREI and ORG projects are relevant. This section is not counted against the page limit of the Project Narrative.

iv. Introduction:

1. Provide a clear statement of the long-term goal(s), the critical need(s) of the kind of organic agriculture being addressed and supporting outreach objectives.
2. Describe how stakeholders were engaged to identify project goals and objectives, and as appropriate, how stakeholder involvement will continue during the course of the project.

3. Summarize the body of knowledge or other past activities that substantiate the need for the proposed project and provide relevant citations.
4. Describe significant ongoing or recently completed activities related to the proposed project including the work of key project personnel. Documentation is particularly important of prior research, education, and extension activities in organic agriculture. Applications should also demonstrate how duplication of effort with similar activities by other investigators will be avoided.
5. Preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed work should be included in this section. All works cited should be referenced and attached at Field 9 on the Form, Bibliography & References Cited. Refer to Part V, 4.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. The Bibliography & References Cited is also a required section.

v. Rationale and Significance:

Concisely present the rationale behind the proposed project. The specific relationship of the project's objectives to one or more of the FY 2021 and FY 2022 OREI priorities should be clear. These purposes and priority areas are described under Part I. B. Purpose and Priorities. Discuss novel or innovative aspects of the proposed project.

vi. Approach:

Clearly state the activities proposed or problems being addressed. Describe the approaches to be used. Specifically, this section must include:

1. A description of the activities proposed, key personnel and institutional roles in those activities, and the timeline;
2. Methods to be used in carrying out the proposed project, including the feasibility of the methods and why they were selected;
3. Expected results and outcomes, including how the project will contribute to long-term profitability and sustainability of organic agriculture;
4. Means by which these results and outcomes will be analyzed, assessed, or interpreted;
5. How results or products will be used;
6. Outreach plan (if appropriate): including science-based tools disseminated, participants involved in delivery, and how impacts will be measured, including the learning outcomes;
7. Pitfalls that may be encountered;
8. Limitations to proposed procedures; and
9. A full explanation of any materials, procedures, situations, or activities related to the project that may be hazardous to personnel, along with an outline or precautions to be exercised to avoid or mitigate the effects of such hazards. For work with organisms that might be perceived as potentially invasive species, indicate precautions to prevent spread or specific information on the context in which they are being used.

Centers of Excellence Justification

Only Integrated Project Proposals applicants may be considered for Centers of Excellence (COE) designation.

In addition to meeting the other requirements detailed in Part IV, C., of this RFA, eligible applicants who wish to be considered as COE must provide a brief justification statement, as part

of your Project Narrative and within the page limits provided, which describes how you meet the standards of a COE, based on the following criteria:

a. The ability of the COE to ensure coordination and cost effectiveness by reducing unnecessarily duplicative efforts in the research, teaching, and extension activities outlined in this application;

b. In addition to any applicable matching requirements, the ability of the COE to leverage available resources by using public-private partnerships among agricultural industry groups, institutions of higher education, and the federal government in the proposed research and/or extension activities outlined in this application. Resources leveraged should be commensurate with the size of the award;

c. The planned scope and capability of the COE to implement teaching initiatives that increase awareness and effectively disseminate solutions to target audiences through extension activities of the proposed research and/or extension activity outlined in this application; and

d. The ability or capacity of the COE to increase the economic returns to rural communities by identifying, attracting, and directing funds to high-priority agricultural issues in support of and as a result of the implementation of the proposed research and/or extension activity outlined in this application.

Additionally, where practicable (not required), COE applicants should describe proposed efforts to improve teaching capacity and infrastructure at colleges and universities (including land-grant colleges and universities, cooperating forestry schools, certified Non-Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture (NLGCA) (list of certified NLGCA is available athttps://nifa.usda.gov/resource/nlgca-list), and schools of veterinary medicine).

c. Field 12. Add Other Attachments
See Part V. Section 4.12 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide (Field 12 on the form) for instructions for this field.

Data Management Plan.
A Data Management Plan (DMP) is required to 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.). **See PART III Section 3.1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for NIFA attachment specifications.**

See Data Management Plan for NIFA-Funded Research, Education, and Extension Projects (DMP) for requirements, preparation, and inclusion of a DMP in your application. Also included on the web page are FAQs and information about accessing examples of DMPs.

4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 5 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This section of the guide includes instructions about senior/key

person profile requirements, and details about the biographical sketch and the current and pending support, including a link to a suggested template for the current and pending support.

5. R&R Personal Data

As noted in Part V, 6 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award. Part V.6 also notes the importance and use of the information.

6. R&R Budget

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 7 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Please be as specific as possible in the budget narrative and include actual amount, not percentages. It is also strongly encouraged to provide a breakdown of budget by PD and CO-PD.

Matching

If you conclude that matching funds are not required as specified under Part III, B Cost-Sharing or Matching, you must include a justification in the Budget Narrative. We 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.

For grants that require matching funds as specified under Part III, B, the Budget Justification must list matching sources along with the identification of the entity(ies) providing the match as well as the total dollar amount being pledged. NIFA is no longer requiring written verification of commitments of matching support (a pledge agreement). However, you are still subject to documentation, valuing and reporting requirements, etc. as specified in 2 CFR Part 200, "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (the Uniform Guidance)," 7 CFR 3430, "Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-Formula Federal Assistance Programs – General Award Administrative Provisions," and program-specific regulations, as applicable. In instances where match is required, any resulting award will require the signature of an Authorized Representative. Only when NIFA receives the award signed by the AR will award funds be released and available for drawdown.
You must establish the value of applicant contributions in accordance with applicable cost principles. Refer to 2 CFR Part 200, "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (the Uniform Guidance)," for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

Summarize on a separate page the sources and amount of all matching support from outside the applicant institution and place that information in the proposal as part of the Budget Narrative.

Additional Budget Information

For Conference Proposals: These budgets may include appropriate amounts for transportation and subsistence costs for participants and for other allowable costs. Include an itemized breakdown of all support requested in the Budget Justification (Field K. of the R&R Budget).

For Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3, and Curriculum Proposals: Applicants may request funds to attend at least two Project Director's workshops during the term of their project. Sufficient funds should be requested and reserved during the course of the project for the PD to attend the workshops in Kansas City or the metropolitan Washington, DC area (or any other location). In the early years of a multiyear project, participation could be in the form of a poster presentation and submission of an abstract. In the final year of the project, an oral presentation should be made, along with the submission of a written report. **The request for these travel funds should be clearly indicated in the Budget Justification** (Field K. of the R&R Budget).

Applicants for Conference and Planning Proposals are not required to attend the Project Director's Workshop and do not need to include funds in their budgets for these activities.

Indirect Costs

For further information and instructions regarding indirect costs, refer to Part V, section 7.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. For indirect cost funding restrictions, refer to Part IV, D. of this RFA.

Supplemental Information Form

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part VI, 1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

1) **Field 2. Program to which you are applying.** Enter the program code name (i.e., enter **"Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative")** and the program code (i.e., enter "**113.A").** Note that accurate entry of the program code is very important for proper and timely processing of an application.

2) **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List**. See Part VI, 1.8 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants

This is a required form for corporate applicants. See Part VI, 2 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for a description of the term, "corporation," and detailed information related to the questions on this form.

C. Submission Dates and Times

We recommend that you conduct an administrative review of the application before submission of it via Grants.gov to ensure that it complies with all preparation instructions. An application checklist is included in Part VII of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide to assist with this review.

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.5 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Applications for FY 2021 funding cycle must be received by **5 p.m. Eastern Time** on January 14, 2021.

Applications for FY 2022 funding cycle must be received by **5 p.m. Eastern Time** on January 13, 2022.

If you have trouble submitting an application to Grants.gov, you should FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Part IV. A for Grants.gov contact information.

We send email correspondence to the AR regarding the status of submitted applications. We strongly encourage you to provide accurate email addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received correspondence **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 30 days of the established deadline, contact the Agency Contact identified in Part VII of the RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, you should cite this number on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

NIFA has determined that grant funds awarded under this authority may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

Section 1462(a) and (c) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA) limits indirect costs for the overall award to 30 percent of Total Federal Funds Awarded (TFFA) under a research, education, or extension grant. The maximum indirect cost rate allowed under the award is determined by calculating the amount of indirect costs using:

1. the sum of an institution's negotiated indirect cost rate and the indirect cost rate charged by sub-awardees, if any; or
2. 30 percent of TFFA.

The maximum allowable indirect cost rate under the award, including the indirect costs charged by the sub-awardee(s), if any, is the lesser of the two rates.

If the results of number one, is the lesser of the two rates, the grant recipient is allowed to charge the negotiated indirect cost rate on the prime award and the sub-award(s), if any. Any sub-awards would be subject to the sub-awardee's negotiated indirect cost rate. The sub-awardee may charge its negotiated indirect cost rate on its portion of the award, provided the sum of the indirect cost rate 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 rates, then the maximum indirect cost rate allowed for the overall award, including any sub-award(s), is limited to 30 percent of the TFFA. That is, the indirect costs of the prime awardee plus the sum of the indirect costs 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 indirect costs for the Federal portion (i.e., prime and sub-awardee(s)) and any applicable cost-sharing (see 7 CFR 3430.52(b)). Amounts exceeding the maximum allowable indirect cost is considered unallowable. See sections 408 and 410 of 2 CFR 200

E. Other Submission Requirements

You should follow the submission requirements noted in Part IV, Section 1.5 in the document entitled "NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide."

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

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. NIFA's Evaluation Process

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

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

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., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs;
4. the need to include experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, and private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations;
5. the need to maintain a balanced composition with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and
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 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

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 NIFA Peer Review Process for Competitive Grant Applications.

We will use the evaluation criteria below to review applications submitted in response to this RFA:

1. Proposal Relevance

For Integrated Proposals:

a. Documentation needed. Application includes documentation that the project is directed to current and likely future problems/challenges in organic agriculture. Application adequately addresses at least one of the FY 2021 and 2022 OREI priorities referenced in Part I.B.;

b. Stakeholder involvement. Application includes information on how stakeholders were selected and how their input was solicited and incorporated. There is an expectation that a local and/or regional advisory panel will inform the program throughout its life;

c. Outreach plan. Application includes a detailed outreach plan that includes deliverables and a description of how impacts will be measured. A description of the learning outcome metrics for training and educational activities should be included;

d. Potential for project to contribute to long-term profitability and sustainability of organic production or marketing systems; and

e. Importance of the commodity or production system or importance of constraints (marketing/yield/pest/other) and resulting impacts on the production system. Potential for project to make a difference.

For Conference, Curriculum Development and Planning Proposals:

f. Demonstrated need. Justification of conference, curriculum proposed, or planned activities. Application adequately addresses at least one of the FY 2020 OREI priorities referenced in Part I.B.;

g. Adequacy of background research. Listing of recent meetings, outreach activities or other activities on the same subject;

h. Stakeholder involvement. Application includes names and organizational affiliations of

the chair and other members of the organizing committee or planning team members, including information on how stakeholders were selected, how their input was solicited and incorporated, and a description of their future involvement in the project;

i. Quality of proposed program (or agenda) for the conference activity and planning proposals, including a listing of scheduled participants, their institutional affiliations, and a description of their expertise. For curriculum products, a description of the program including the target audience, expected number of participants, a detailed syllabus, experiential training activities, how the program fits within ongoing activities. For all proposal types, describe how the impact of the programs being proposed will be assessed; and

j. Potential for the project to make a difference.

2. Proposal Quality for All Project Types:

a. Conceptual adequacy. Application clearly states objectives and how they will be achieved within the timeframe, scope and budget of the proposed project;

b. Approach. The proposed method and approach are appropriate to project objectives;

c. Involvement of appropriate and relevant expertise;

d. Experience of key project personnel;

e. Appropriateness of budget;

f. Feasibility, probability of success; and

g. Adherence to guidelines: For proposals involving eXtension and eOrganic, or other extension outlets this includes adherence to the guidelines on incorporating these into proposals, such as inclusion of supporting letters and budgets.

Center of Excellence Status

All eligible applicants will be competitively peer reviewed (as described in Part V, A and B of this RFA), and ranked in accordance with the evaluation criteria. Those that rank highly meritorious and requested to be considered as a COE will be further evaluated by the peer panel to determine whether they have met the standards to be a COE (Part III, D. and Part IV, B). In instances where they are found to be equally meritorious with the application of a non-COE, based on peer review, selection for funding will be weighed in favor of applicants meeting the COE criteria. NIFA will effectively use the COE prioritization as a "tie breaker." Applicants that rank highly meritorious but who did not request consideration as a COE or who are not deemed to have met the COE standards may still receive funding.

In addition, the applicant's Notice of Award will reflect that, for the particular grant program, the applicant meets all of the requirements of a COE. Entities recognized as COE will maintain that

distinction for the duration of their period of performance or as identified in the terms and conditions of that award.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, we take extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. See NIFA Peer Review Process for Competitive Grant Applications for further information about conflicts of interest and confidentiality as related to the peer review process.

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted one-time, with updates on an as-needed basis. This requirement is part of the responsibility determined prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another NIFA program. We will provide you copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, 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 involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

E. Application Disposition

An application may be withdrawn at any time before a final funding decision is made regarding the application. Each application that is not selected for funding, including those that are withdrawn, will be retained by NIFA for a period of three years.

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the NIFA awarding official shall make grants to those responsible, 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 shall 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 at 7 CFR part 3430, subparts A through E.

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the information described in 2 CFR 200.210.

See NIFA Terms and Conditions to view current NIFA award terms and conditions.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These may include, but are not limited to, the ones listed on the NIFA web page (Federal Regulations).

NIFA Federal Assistance Policy Guide—a compendium of basic NIFA policies and procedures that apply to all NIFA awards, unless there are statutory, regulatory, or award-specific requirements to the contrary—is available at NIFA Policy Guide.

D. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research

Refer to Part II, D for more information.

E. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

The output and reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions (see NIFA Terms and Conditions for information about award terms). If there are any program or award-specific award terms, they will be identified in the award.

PDs are required to attend at least two PD workshops at a location and time to be designated at a later date. Budget amount should be sufficient to attend the 2-day workshops in the Washington,

DC area. In the early years of a multiyear project, participation may be in the form of a poster presentation and submission of an abstract. In the final year of the project, an oral presentation should be made, and a written report submitted. This requirement does not apply to conference or planning projects.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACTS

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Programmatic Contacts:

Dr. Mathieu Ngouajio
National Science Liaison
Plant Systems-Production Division, Institute of Food Production and Sustainability
Telephone: (202) 570-1915
E-mail: mathieu.ngouajio@usda.gov

Dr. Steve Smith
National Program Leader
Animal Systems Division, Institute of Food Production and Sustainability
Telephone: (202) 445-5480
E-mail: steven.i.smith@usda.gov

Dr. Neerja Tyagi
Program Specialist
Plant Systems-Production Division, Institute of Food Production and Sustainability
E-mail: neerja.tyagi1@usda.gov

For administrative questions related to:

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

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

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Use of Funds; Changes

1. **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.

2. **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:

a. Change in the scope or the objective of the project or program (even if there is no associated budget revision requiring prior written approval).
b. Change in a key person specified in the application or the federal award.
c. The disengagement from the project for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in time devoted to the project, by the approved project director or principal investigator.
d. The inclusion, unless waived by the federal awarding agency, of costs that require prior approval in accordance with 2 CFR 200 Subpart E—Cost Principles of this part 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 Part 31, "Contract Cost Principles and Procedures," as applicable.
e. The transfer of funds budgeted for participant support costs as defined in §200.75 Participant support costs to other categories of expense.
f. Unless described in the application and funded in the approved federal awards, the subawarding, transferring or contracting out of any work under a federal award, including fixed amount subawards as described in §200.332 Fixed amount subawards. This provision does not apply to the acquisition of supplies, material, equipment, or general support services.
g. Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-federal entity.
h. The need arises for additional federal funds to complete the project.

The awardee will be subject to the terms and conditions identified in the award. See NIFA Terms and Conditions for information about award terms.

B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of NIFA transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary of Agriculture determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the

application. We will retain for three years a copy of an application that does not result in an award. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn 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. Definitions

Refer to 7 CFR 3430, Competitive And Noncompetitive Non-Formula Federal Assistance Programs—General Award Administrative Provisions, for applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.

In addition, the following definition is applicable to this Farm Bill program:

Partnership requires that all partners have a substantial involvement in the project throughout the life of the project. If a partnership between multiple entities is proposed, the proposal must clearly identify the following:

1. A narrative of each entity's clearly established role in the project;
2. How each entity involved as a partner on the project will contribute to execution of project objectives, determine experimental design, develop the project work plan and timetable, and submit collaborative, timely reports; and
3. A comprehensive project budget that reflects each entity's financial or in-kind contribution to the total project budget costs.

E. Materials Available on the Internet

OREI program information is available on the NIFA web site at Organic Agriculture Program. The Program Fit Evaluator tool can be found on this page, under “Program Specific Resources.”