

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY
FY2023 Cochran Fellowship Program

Application Submission Deadline: July 31, 2023

Summary

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), Fellowship Programs, announces this funding opportunity to support the Cochran Fellowship Program (CFP) by issuing new awards. This opportunity is available to Minority Serving Institutions (refer to Section C). This program is intended to support improved understanding of the principles of urban agriculture among program participants.

A. Program Description

BACKGROUND

Since 1984, the U.S. Congress has made funds available to the Cochran Fellowship Program for training agriculturalists from middle-income countries, emerging markets, and emerging democracies. Training opportunities are for senior and mid-level specialists and administrators working in agricultural trade and policy, agribusiness development, management, animal, plant, and food sciences, extension services, agricultural marketing, and many other areas. Individuals selected for Cochran trainings come from both the public and private sectors. All training occurs in the United States. Training programs are designed and organized in conjunction with U.S. universities, USDA and other government agencies, agribusinesses, and consultants. The Cochran Fellowship Program is part of the United States Department of Agriculture's Foreign Agricultural Service. Since its start in 1984, the Cochran Fellowship Program has provided U.S.-based training for over 19,250 international participants from 127 countries worldwide.

SCOPE

The Cochran Fellowship Program intends to support the design and delivery of a training program of 1-2 consecutive weeks duration, to take place in either calendar year 2023 or 2024 depending on availability of all parties, for 12 Fellows from multiple countries. More than one such program may be supported.

The training program should educate the Fellows on how to implement practices that support urban agriculture. It has been forecasted that half of the world's population will live in urban areas by the second half of the 21st century; therefore, it will be necessary to grow more food in non-traditional agricultural areas where the population resides. As urban agriculture is an important part of food security and sovereignty for many populations, sharing techniques with those who rely on this form of agriculture is vital to ensuring these needs are met.

The objective of this program is to educate Fellows on best practices within urban agriculture, including community building to increase global food security. The goal of this program is to increase these countries' capacity for agricultural research, extension, and participation in international trade.

The applicant shall propose the place(s) of performance in their Technical Proposal.

OBJECTIVES

The recipient will ensure that the Fellows improve their knowledge in the following areas:

- Community building, engagement, education, and extension service creation emphasizing marginalized and underserved communities.
- Innovative growing techniques, such as vertical, hydroponic, aeroponic, raised beds, rooftop, permaculture, agroforests, indoor growing, green walls, and intensive growing.
- Community garden creation, regulations, and bylaws.
- Accessible gardens for all people; wheelchairs, children, and elderly populations.
- Nutrition of urban gardens; how to ensure production is balanced and how to teach nutrition to a diverse audience.
- Soil testing, building productive growth mediums, and composting.
- Marketing of produce including food processing when appropriate.
- Farmers market creation, regulations, and bylaws.
- School gardens, working with children, science and technology-based lens of agriculture.
- Small animal production in urban settings, including waste management.
- Water management; irrigation, rain collection, water quality management, and testing.
- Pest management; identification and irradiation.
- Apiculture; for improved production, honey, and sustainability.
- Climate resilient practices to increase production and to create oases within urban settings.

Funding Opportunity Number

USDA-FAS-10962-0700-10.-23-0006 _____

Assistance Listing Number

10.962 Cochran Fellowship Program

Authorizing Legislation

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

B. Federal Award Information

Total Available Federal Funding: Up to \$300,000 total, up to \$150,000 per award

Anticipated Number of Awards: up to 2

Cost Share/Match Requirement: None/Not Required

Projected Period of Performance Start: September 1, 2023

Projected Period of Performance End: August 31, 2024

Extensions to this program are permitted, subject to approval.

Type of Assistance Instrument:

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

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

Additional Awards

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

C. Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants:

State cooperative institutions or other colleges and universities in the United States, as defined at 7 USC 3103, which qualify as any one of the following:

- Historically Black Colleges and Universities, as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1061(2)). A list of these schools can be found at [Historically Black Colleges and Universities](#)
- Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059c(b)(3) and (d)(1)). A list of these schools can be found at [American Indian Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities](#)
- Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1101a(a)(5)). A list of these schools can be found at [Hispanic-Serving Institutions](#)
- Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions; (AANAPISIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. § 1059g(b)(2)). A list of these schools can be found at [Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions](#); and
- Predominately Black Institutions (PBIs), as defined by the Higher Education Act of 2008, 20 U.S.C. 1059e(b)(6). A list of these schools can be found at [Predominately Black Institutions](#).

All applicants must have an active registration in the U.S. Government System for Award Management (www.sam.gov) before the application submission deadline of the announcement; applicants with inactive, expired, pending, or excluded listings will be deemed ineligible. Exceptions, waivers, or extensions will not be considered. Please contact the program officer(s)

listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact, if you have questions about this requirement.

Cost Share/Match Requirement: None/Not Required

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

D. Application and Submission Information

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

Submission Dates and Times

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

Anticipated Funding Selection Date: August 25, 2023

Anticipated Award Date: September 1, 2023

Content and Form of Application Submission

A complete application package must include:

- Standard Form SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance, showing the Unique Entity Identifier, and signed by the applicant.
- Standard Form SF-424A, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs, showing the budget categorization. Applicants are advised to consult 2 CFR 200 Subpart E for guidance on proper categorization of cost items. An improper categorization will not itself be grounds for a determination of ineligibility but may delay approval and/or adversely impact the application's scoring.
- A detailed budget and narrative, in which cost items are quantified and described in sufficient detail to enable USDA/FAS to independently determine that the proposed costs are reasonable and allowable for the project and consistent with applicable regulations.
- A detailed project narrative or plan of operation
 - Indicate the name of the institution applying to host the fellows;
 - Provide an approach to achieve the objectives listed, including topics to be covered, possible field visits and other activities;
 - A description of how the award, including the logistical elements, will be administered and the role of the university faculty and support staff;
 - A summary of relevant institutional capabilities for hosting international fellows in the applicable topic;
 - A brief description of the expertise and international experience of the recipient in the group's field of interest and various countries;
 - An overview of the trainer's qualifications in international training and/or adult education, understanding of the cultural context and needs of the trainees, and

knowledge of relevant agricultural, market, and/or trade conditions within the Fellows' country(ies) or a similar location. Including steps that will be taken for cultural relevancy for Fellows of varying backgrounds and religions, for instance dietary restrictions.

- If necessary, other appropriate collaborating scientists should be identified to meet any of the objectives which the primary trainer cannot address.
- The skills or knowledge expected to be acquired by the fellows at the end of the program;
- Means of flexibility to account for potential program changes and the ability to respond to unforeseen circumstances; this should include information on how unforeseen problems that can arise will be addressed.
- A quality assurance plan.
- Application following designated format:
 - Clearly outline all aspects of the program plan – what is planned, how this will be conducted, and the anticipated results;
 - Be written in English and free of excessive grammatical and spelling errors;
 - Be written using Times New Roman, 12-point font; tables and graphs may have a smaller font as appropriate, all other text font and size should be consistent throughout the application;
 - Be typed on standard 8.5" x 11" sized pages with 1-inch margins;
 - Be paginated with each page consecutively numbered;
 - Cite source information and/or provide an explanation of the analysis undertaken;
 - Be submitted in PDF.
- Standard Form SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, if applicable to the applicant

While these guidelines establish the minimum type size requirements, applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the application.

Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Each applicant is required to:

- (i) Have an active registration in SAM before submitting its application;
- (ii) Have assented to the federal assistance certifications in the SAM platform;
- (iii) Provide a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) in its application; and
- (iv) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency.

SAM.gov registration requires several weeks to process and cannot be expedited; prospective applicants should therefore ensure that registrations are submitted timely.

SAM.gov Registration Instructions

Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active SAM.gov registration. If you have never done business with the Federal Government, you will need to register your

organization in SAM.gov. If you do not have a SAM.gov account, then you will create an account using login.gov¹ to complete your SAM.gov registration. SAM.gov registration is FREE. The process for entity registrations includes obtaining Unique Entity ID (UEI), a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned an entity by SAM.gov, and requires assertions, representations and certifications, and other information about your organization. Please review the [Entity Registration Checklist](#) for details on this process.

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

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

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

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

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

Intergovernmental Review

Not applicable.

Funding Restrictions

Generally, funds may not be used in any manner that is prohibited by applicable regulations, including 2 CFR Part 200 and 2 CFR Part 400. Awards issued pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity may only be used for the purpose set forth in the award, consistent with the statutory authority for the award. Capital expenses, such as the purchase of equipment, not entirely attributable to this award, must be pro-rated.

For example, agreement funds and other support may not be used for matching contributions for other federal grants or cooperative agreements, lobbying, or intervention in federal regulatory or adjudicatory proceedings. Federal employees are prohibited from acting as an agent of the

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

applicant in any capacity (paid or unpaid) on any proposal submitted under this program. Also, federal funds may not be used to sue the Federal Government or any other government entity.

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

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

Other Submission Information

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

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

E. Application Review Information

Review and Selection Process

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

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

If an applicant is determined to be ineligible or an application is determined to be incomplete, the agency will notify the applicant prior to commencing with evaluation of applications, usually within 5 business days of the Application Submission Deadline. An applicant that feels such a determination is made in error may request reconsideration, highlighting evidence supporting their claim, by email to the program officer(s) listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact, within 3 business days of notification.

The agency will convene a review panel, which may include both federal and non-federal reviewers, to review the eligible applications against the evaluation criteria described below. The reviewers will ensure that the applicant is capable of delivering the programs/activities as

described in the announcement based on the applicant's project narrative and assign a score and provide summary comments based on the evaluation criteria identified below. The review panel will make a recommendation list to the selecting official, who is not a member of the panel.

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

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

Evaluation Criteria

Applicants will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate that they have the capabilities, staff, resources, and equipment to successfully perform the project as described in the following factors. Scoring will also be based on the level of detail and how clearly the applicant's capacities to address these factors are outlined in the proposal.

Technical Expertise (30 points)

Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate they have the technical background as well as experience and knowledge of relevant agricultural conditions within the Fellows' country(ies).

Experience (10 points)

Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate experience in implementing international trainings and adult education programming.

Training Plan (30 points)

Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the training program plan fulfill specific training objectives and is relevant to the Fellows' backgrounds as identified in Section A, including appropriate site visits and meetings.

Quality Assurance Plan (10 points)

Applications will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they provide a quality assurance plan to ensure that quality of the training is being maintained throughout the duration of the program and demonstrates the flexibility to sustain training quality when there are unforeseen circumstances or requested changes to the training plan.

Budget (15 points)

Applications will be evaluated on the reasonableness, cost-effectiveness, and adequacy of the proposed budget to accomplish the project. The budget will be evaluated on cost savings, where available, and the inclusion of a budget narrative for each line item.

Overall Quality (5 points)

Applications will be evaluated on comprehensiveness, completeness, and correct spelling and grammar.

Integrity in Performance

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

F. Federal Award Administration Information

Federal Award Notices

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

Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All successful applicants for all grant and cooperative agreements are required to comply with the applicable General Administrative Terms and Conditions, which can be found at https://www.fas.usda.gov/grants/general_terms_and_conditions/default.asp

The applicant is presumed to have read, understood, and accepted these terms when accepting a USDA/FAS award. Applicants with questions about the applicable terms should contact the program officer(s) listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact.

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

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

Applicants must ensure that they have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the subaward and executive total compensation reporting requirements established at [2 CFR 170](#), unless they qualify for an exception from the requirements, should they be selected for funding.

Post-Award Performance Expectations

- Provide digital copies of the training highlights to each Fellow and the Cochran Fellowship Program.
- Ensure that each Fellow completes the Cochran Training Program Evaluation (which will be provided).

- Development of an Action Plan by each Fellow. The Action Plan identifies goals and outlines specific steps or activities which each Fellow will perform upon return to home country. An Action Plan generally includes steps, milestones, measures of progress, responsibilities, assignments, and a timeline. The recipient shall provide a copy of each Fellow's Action Plan to the Cochran Fellowship Program.
- A brief final report (format at the discretion of the applicant).
- A pre-training questionnaire to determine Fellows' baseline knowledge of the learning objectives. (Template and examples shall be provided upon request)
- A post-training questionnaire to determine the knowledge gained in each of the learning objectives. (Template and examples shall be provided upon request)
- Analysis of the pre- and post-training questionnaire.
- Deliverables are due two weeks after the completion of each training.
- All transportation within the United States, from the point of arrival to the point of departure.
 - The recipient is not responsible for international airfare of participants.
 - Please include baggage fees for any domestic flights.
- Lodging accommodation, in single occupancy, for all participants.
- Implementors should offer appropriate cross-cultural activities for the purpose of sharing language, culture, or history in accordance with J-1 Visa requirements.
- Please note all meetings with Federal Government offices or officials must be initiated by the Fellowship Programs team.

Government Furnished Items

USDA FAS will provide Fellows with:

- J-1 compliant Emergency Medical Insurance
- DS-2019/J-1 visa support for Fellows and related SEVIS requirements
- A meals and incidental expenses allowance, via debit card.
 - Recipients should coordinate with FAS in the event of any meals provided

Reporting

Financial Reports, using form SF-425, Federal Financial Report (FFR), must be submitted within 120 days of the end date of the agreement.

Performance Progress Reports must be submitted within 120 days of the end date of the agreement. The recipient may use any appropriate format for performance progress reports, provided the report includes:

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

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

Monitoring

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

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

Closeout

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

G. Federal Awarding Agency Contact

For all inquiries, contact:

Desiree Lawrence

Desiree.Lawrence@usda.gov

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

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

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

H. Other Information**Budget Revisions**

Transfers of funds between direct cost categories in the approved budget when such cumulative transfers among those direct cost categories exceed ten percent of the total budget approved in this Award require written approval from the agency. The total budget amount may not be increased without a bilaterally executed amendment to the award.

Post-award program income

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