

Notice of Funding Opportunity

Rural Cooperative Development Grants

FUNDING YEAR: Fiscal Year (FY) 2026

APPLICATION DEADLINE: July 24, 2026

ANTICIPATED PROGRAM FUNDING: \$5,000,000

AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL AWARD RANGE: \$200,000 - \$1,000,000

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: USDA-NIFA-OP-012058

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 10.771

ANNOUNCEMENT

National Institute of Food and Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture

Assistance Listing Number (ALN): The Rural Cooperative Development Grants (RCDG) is listed in the Assistance Listings under number 10.771.

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
Application:	5:00 P.M. Eastern Time, July 24, 2026 [Ref to Part I, C of this NOFO]
Applicants Comments:	Within six months from the issuance of this notice (NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month)

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), to the extent permitted by law, will no longer make grants or otherwise fund programs or activities that improperly discriminate on the basis of race or sex, including discrimination in the name of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policies. Instead, USDA will prioritize merit and efficiency. USDA recognizes programs and initiatives will have the greatest impact when these programs and initiatives put American farmers, ranchers, and foresters first by:

- solving the most pressing challenges they face;
- protecting America’s food, fuel, and fiber supply to enhance national security;
- supporting production of healthy and safe food for consumers;
- expanding and developing domestic markets;
- training the next generation of agriculturalists; and
- fueling innovation to keep American farmers at the forefront of productivity.

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is committed to advancing these principles and encourages applicants to actively engage farmers, ranchers, and foresters when applying for funding opportunities to ensure relevancy and adherence to them. NIFA also encourages agricultural leaders to engage in the peer review panel process to ensure American producers are better served through research, education, and extension activities.

Projects submitted under this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) should align with [USDA Secretary’s Memorandum 1078-020](#) Directive on Departmental Research and Development Priorities:

1. Increasing Profitability of Farmers and Ranchers
2. Expanding Markets and Creating New Uses of U.S. Agricultural Products
3. Protecting the Integrity of American Agriculture from Invasive Species
4. Promoting Soil Health to Regenerate Long-Term Productivity of Land
5. Improving Human Health through Precision Nutrition and Food Quality

Stakeholder Input. NIFA seeks comments on all NOFO so it can deliver programs efficiently, effectively, with integrity, and with a focus on customer service. NIFA considers comments to

the extent possible when developing NOFOs and uses comments to help meet the requirements of Section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 ([7 U.S.C. 7613\(c\)\(2\)](#)). Applicants may submit written comments to Policy@usda.gov. Please use the following subject line: Response to the RCDG NOFO.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This notice identifies the objectives for RCDG program projects, deadlines, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions. NIFA requests applications for grants under the RCDG program for FY 2026 to improve the economic condition of rural areas by helping nonprofit organizations who in turn provide technical assistance to start, expand, or improve cooperatives and mutually owned businesses in rural areas. This notice is being issued to allow applicants sufficient time to leverage financing and prepare and submit their applications.

Estimated funding amounts are not guaranteed and are subject to the availability of appropriated funds.

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PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The RCDG program is authorized under Section 310B(e) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act ([7 U.S.C. 1932\(e\)](#)), as amended by the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 ([Public Law 115-334](#), Title VI, Secs. 6412 and 6701(d)(1)) and implemented by [7 CFR part 4284, subpart F](#).

B. Purpose and Priorities

The purpose of the RCDG program, under assistance listing number 10.771, is to enable nonprofit institutions to establish and operate centers for rural cooperative development (Center). The primary objective of the program is to improve the economic condition of rural areas by helping nonprofit organizations that in turn provide technical assistance to start, expand, or improve cooperatives and mutually owned businesses in rural areas.

The goals of a Center funded under this subsection shall be to facilitate the creation of jobs in rural areas through the development of new rural cooperatives, value added processing, and rural businesses.

Preference will be given to applications that provide for the establishment of Centers that:

1. demonstrate a proven track record in carrying out activities to promote and assist the development of cooperatively and mutually owned businesses;
2. demonstrate previous expertise in providing technical assistance in rural areas to promote and assist the development of cooperatively and mutually owned businesses;
3. demonstrate the ability to assist in the retention of businesses, facilitate the establishment of cooperatives and new cooperative approaches, and generate employment opportunities that will improve the economic conditions of rural areas;
4. demonstrate the ability to assist businesses in training, hiring, and retaining a skilled workforce, leveraging the full range of educational and community partners towards this goal in accordance with [E.O. 14278](#), *Preparing Americans for High-Paying Skilled Trade Jobs of the Future* and [America's Talent Strategy](#);
5. commit to providing technical assistance and other services to economically distressed areas in rural areas that are underserved by USDA programs of the United States;
6. demonstrate a commitment to-
 - a. networking with and sharing the results of the efforts of the center with other cooperative development centers and other organizations involved in rural economic development efforts; and
 - b. developing multiorganization and multistate approaches to addressing the economic development and cooperative needs of rural areas; and
7. commit to providing a 25 percent matching contribution with private funds and in-kind contributions, except that the Secretary shall not require non-Federal financial support in an amount that is greater than 5 percent in the case of a 1994 institution (as defined in section 532 of the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994 ([7 U.S.C. 301 note](#); Public Law 103-382)).

Table 2: Program Key Information

	Title	Description
Program Code:		Rural Cooperative Development Grants
Program Code Name:		RCDG
ALN:		10.771
Grant Type:		Standard
Application Deadline		July 24, 2026
Grant Duration:		12-36 Months
Anticipated # of Awards:		12
Minimum Award Amount:		\$200,000
Maximum Award Amount:		\$1,000,000

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The amount available for the RCDG program in FY 2026 is approximately \$5,000,000. Estimated funding amounts are not guaranteed and are subject to the availability of appropriated funds. USDA is not committed to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

The [Automated Standard Application for Payments](#), operated by the Department of Treasury, Bureau of Fiscal Service, is the designated payment system for awards resulting from this NOFO.

B. Application Restrictions

NIFA will evaluate applications using the criteria described in [Part V](#) of this NOFO. Application for FY2026 is limited to the following application types:

1. *New application*: New applications will be evaluated using the criteria described in [Part V](#) of this NOFO and are subject to the due dates herein (see [Appendix III](#) for definition).

C. Ethical Conduct of Funded Projects

In accordance with sections [2, 3, and 8 of 2 CFR Part 422](#), institutions that conduct USDA-funded extramural research must foster an atmosphere conducive to research integrity, bear primary responsibility for prevention and detection of research misconduct, and maintain and effectively communicate and train their staff regarding policies and procedures. In the event an application to NIFA results in an award, the Authorized Representative (AR) assures, through acceptance of the award, that the institution will comply with the above requirements. Award recipients must, upon request, make available to NIFA the policies, procedures, and documentation to support the conduct of the training. See [Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research](#) for further information.

PART III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligibility Requirements

Applicants for the RCDG program must meet all the requirements discussed in this NOFO. Failure to meet the eligibility criteria by the application deadline may result in exclusion from consideration or, preclude NIFA from making an award. For those new to Federal financial assistance, NIFA's [About Grants](#) provides highly recommended information about grants and other resources to help understand the Federal awards process.

Applications will only be accepted from nonprofit institutions. A “nonprofit institution” is defined as any organization or institution, including an accredited institution of higher education, no part of the net earnings of which inures, or may lawfully inure, to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual. Applicants must meet the eligibility requirements in [7 CFR 4284.520\(a\)](#). Applicants are ineligible for assistance through this program if one or more of the items defined in [7 CFR 4284.520\(b\)](#) occurs.

As defined in [7 CFR 4284.522\(a\)](#), eligible projects must meet all the following requirements. Failure to meet one or more of these requirements means that the application will not be considered for funding.

1. Rurality – All Project activities must serve individuals, Cooperatives and Mutually Owned Businesses, small businesses, or other similar entities in Rural Areas.
2. Project Focus – The Project must focus on establishing or operating a Center with the goals of creating jobs in Rural Areas through the development of new Rural Cooperatives, Value-Added processing, and Rural businesses.
3. Amount Requested – The amount requested must not exceed the maximum amounts specified in Table 2 of this notice.
4. Matching Funds – Matching Funds must be provided as detailed (including example calculations) in [Part III, B](#).

USDA **will not accept** applications for grants and cooperative agreements submitted for dangerous gain-of-function research, as defined in [Section 8 of E.O. 14292](#).

Duplicate or Multiple Submissions – An Applicant may submit only one application in response to a solicitation. All applications submitted, regardless of the Applicant entity name, that include the same Executive Director, employees, Board, advisory boards or committees of an existing Center or a majority thereof will be determined ineligible for funding. NIFA will accept the most recent application if an applicant submits duplicate or multiple submissions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

Match Required – Applicants **MUST** provide a cost-sharing contribution to the Project that is 25 percent (or 5 percent if a 1994 Institution) of the total award cost and follow the requirements in [7 CFR 4284.522\(a\)\(4\)](#). Matching Funds may be provided in cash by the Applicant or cash or in-kind by a third party.

Matching Funds:

1. Must be spent on eligible expenses (as described in [7 CFR 4284.525\(a\)](#)).

2. Must be from non-Federal sources unless authorized to be used as Matching Funds by the legislation authorizing the Federal source of funding.
3. Must be spent in advance or as a pro-rata portion of grant funds being spent.

In-kind Contributions:

1. Cannot include over-valued, in-kind contributions.
2. The Applicant must be able to document and verify the number of hours worked and the value associated with any in-kind contribution being used to meet a Matching Funds requirement.
3. In-kind contributions provided by individuals, businesses, or Cooperatives which are being assisted by the Center cannot be provided for the direct benefit of their own projects as this is considered to be a conflict of interest.

PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

1. Method of Application

Applicants must apply to this NOFO electronically; no other method or response is accepted. The electronic application for this NOFO and additional resources are available on [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and [Grants 101](#). **Table 3** provides instructions on how to obtain an electronic application. **Part III** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide contains detailed information regarding the [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) registration process. The NIFA Grants Application Guide is contained in the specific funding opportunity package or a sample of the guide can be found [here](#). When applying for a NIFA award, it is important to reference the version of the guide that is included in the specific funding opportunity application package.

Table 3. Steps to Obtain Application Materials

Steps	Action
Step One: Register	<i>New Users</i> to Grants.gov must register early with Grants.gov prior to submitting an application.
Step Two: Download Adobe	Download and Install Adobe Reader (see Adobe Software Compatibility for basic system requirements).
Step Three: Find Application	Using this funding opportunity number USDA-NIFA-OP-012058 , search for application here: Opportunity Package .
Step Four: Assess Readiness	Contact an AR prior to starting an application to assess the organization’s readiness to submit an electronic application.

Table 4: Help and Resources

Grants.gov Support	NIFA Support
Grants.gov Online Support Telephone support: 800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035 Email support: support@grants.gov Self-service customer-based support: Grants.gov iPortal Customer service business Hours 24/7, except Federal holidays .	Email: grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov Business hours: Monday thru Friday, 7a.m. – 5p.m. ET, except Federal holidays .

2. Content and Form of the Application

The NIFA Grants Application Guide is part of the corresponding application package for this NOFO. The NOFO overrides the NIFA Grants Application Guide if there is a discrepancy between the two documents. Applicants that do not meet the application requirements, to include partial applications, risk being excluded from NIFA’s review. NIFA will assign a proposal number to all applications that meet the requirements of this NOFO. Applicants must refer to the proposal number when corresponding with NIFA. **Table 5** outlines other key instructions for applicants.

Table 5: Key Application Instructions

Instruction	References (All references are to the NIFA Grants Application Guide)
Attachments must be in a portable document format (PDF) format.	Part IV
Check the manifest of submitted files to verify attachments are in the correct format.	Part IV
Conduct an administrative review of the application before submission.	Part IV
Follow the submission instructions.	Part IV
Provide an accurate email address, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R.	Part V
Contact the Grants.gov helpdesk for technical support and keep a record of the correspondence.	N/A
Contact NIFA if applicant does not receive correspondence from NIFA regarding an application within 30 days of the application deadline.	N/A

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

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

R&R Other Project Information Form. See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide.

1. **Field 7. Project Summary (PS)/Abstract.** The PS must show how the project goals align with the project goals of the RCDG program. See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide for instructions and suggested templates.
2. **Field 8. Project Narrative (PN).** The PN must include the required elements detailed at [7 CFR 4284.531\(b\)](#). The PN must not exceed fifteen (15) *1.5 spaced* pages of written text and up to five (5) *1.5 spaced* additional pages for figures and tables (the font size for tables should be no smaller than 11 points, Times New Roman). The page limits outlined here ensure fair competition. Appendices to the PN are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. Do not add appendices to circumvent the page limit
3. **Field 12. Add Other Attachments.** See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide.

Data management plan (DMP): A DMP is required for this program. Applicants should clearly articulate how the project director (PD) and co-PDs plan to manage and disseminate the data generated by the project. The DMP will be considered during the merit review process (see [Part V, B](#) of this NOFO, [NIFA's Data Management Plan](#)).

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

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

R&R Budget. See **Part V** of the **NIFA Grants Application Guide**.

1. Match – Grants that require matching funds as specified under [Part III, B](#) of this NOFO must list in their *budget justification* the matching sources, the identification of the entity(ies) providing the match, and the total pledged amount. A written verification of commitments of matching support (a pledge agreement) is not required. However, applicants are subject to the documentation, valuing and reporting requirements, as specified in [2 CFR Part 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards \(the Uniform Guidance\),”](#) and [7 CFR 3430, “Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-Formula Federal Assistance Programs – General Award Administrative Provisions.”](#)
2. Indirect Costs (IDC) – See [Part IV, C](#) of this NOFO for funding restrictions regarding IDC, and **Part V** of the **NIFA Grants Application Guide** for additional information.

Supplemental Information Form. See **Part V** of the **NIFA Grants Application Guide**.

1. **Field 2. Program to which the applicant is applying.** Enter the program name “(*Rural Cooperative Development Grants*)” and the program code “(*RCDG*)”. Accurate entry is critical.
 2. **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.** See **Part V** of the **NIFA Grants Application Guide**.
3. **Funding Restrictions**
1. **Fully Negotiated Rate.** Applicants must use the current negotiated Indirect Cost (IDC) rate established by its cognizant Federal agency (the agency that provides the most funds). If awarded, the applicant will be required to produce a negotiated IDC rate agreement from the cognizant agency to recover IDC.

If the applicant does not have a negotiated rate and NIFA is the cognizant agency, the applicant may request an IDC rate. Applicants are not required to complete the IDC package during the application process and need only to calculate a rate to serve as a basis for requesting IDC. If awarded, the applicant will be required to submit a complete IDC proposal package to obtain a negotiated rate.

Organizations that do not have a current negotiated (including provisional) rate, may elect the de minimis rate ([2 CFR 200.414\(f\)](#)). The Uniform Guidance offers the option of electing to charge a de minimis rate of 15 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. As described above and in [2 CFR 200.403](#), costs must be charged consistently as either indirect or direct costs but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If elected, this methodology must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate for a rate, which it may do at any time.

See [NIFA Indirect Costs](#) for information including [additional resources](#) and [NIFA Indirect Cost Guidance Chart](#).

2. NIFA awards may not be used to support the procurement of unmanned aircraft systems to process, store, or transmit Federal information (as defined in [OMB Circular A-130](#)) unless the grant is specifically available for procurement of such equipment and grantees describe in their application how they will comply with the information security requirements outlined in Appendix B of [M-26-02 Ensuring Government Use of Secure Unmanned Aircraft Systems and Supporting United States Producers](#) and develop a risk-based approach to applying those requirements to procurement solicitations to potential vendors under the resulting Federal award. This information, if provided, will be evaluated by NIFA as part of its evaluation process. If such procurement is approved, specific information security requirements may be included in the terms and conditions of the grant to ensure that the grantees will incorporate those requirements in procurement solicitations of unmanned aircraft systems under the Federal award.

PART V. APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. NIFA's Evaluation Process

NIFA evaluates each application in a two-part process. First, we screen each application to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements set forth in this NOFO. All administrative requirements must be met in order for the application to proceed to the next level of review. Second, a scientific peer-review process will be used to technically evaluate applications that have met the administrative requirements using a review panel (see [NIFA Peer Review Process](#)).

Scientific Peer Review Process:

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

1. The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities.
2. The need to include experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields.
3. The need to include other experts (e.g., agricultural producers, range or forest managers/operators, researchers, educators, evaluators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs. The need to include experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, and private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations.
4. The need to maintain a balanced composition with regard to the reviewer's area of expertise, geographic area, and entity type, as appropriate.
5. The need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness of each application to producers and the general public.

After each peer review panel has completed its deliberations, the responsible program staff of NIFA will recommend that your project is either approved for support from currently available funds or declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review.

NIFA reserves the right to negotiate with the PD/PI and/or the submitting organization or institution regarding project revisions (e.g., reductions in the scope of work, funding level, period, or method of support) prior to recommending any project for funding.

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

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

B. Evaluation Criteria

NIFA will use the following criteria to evaluate applications to this program:

1. Experience (Up to 30 points). The Agency will evaluate the Applicant's demonstrated experience in Technical Assistance including Cooperative Development; and effectiveness in accomplishing effective outcomes through the development of Cooperatively and Mutually Owned Businesses. Points will be awarded based on the following:
 - i) Up to 5 points for track record in providing Technical Assistance to promote and assist the development of Cooperatively and Mutually Owned Businesses.
 - ii) Up to 5 points for ability to facilitate Cooperative Development that results in the establishment of Cooperatively and Mutually Owned Businesses in Rural Areas.
 - iii) Up to 5 points for ability to facilitate the establishment of New Cooperative Approaches in Rural Areas.
 - iv) Up to 5 points for the ability to assist in the retention of businesses in Rural Areas.
 - v) Up to 5 points for ability to create and/or save jobs, including by training a skilled workforce, that improve economic conditions of Rural Areas.
 - vi) Up to 5 points for ability to improve other economic conditions in Rural Areas.

2. Work plan and budget (Up to 45 points). The Agency will evaluate the Applicant's work plan and budget on its ability to provide a clear, logical, realistic and efficient use of grant and Matching Funds; level of commitment to Underserved and Economically Distressed areas; and Networking with States, Centers and other organizations engaged in Economic Development efforts in Rural Areas. Points will be awarded based on the following:
 - i) Work plan and budget detail. Up to 30 points will be awarded as follows:
 - (i) 0 points will be awarded if the application does not address paragraphs (c)(2)(i)(B) through (E) of this section.
 - (ii) Up to 10 points will be awarded if the application provides a detailed narrative description for each of the specific tasks to be completed.
 - (iii) Up to 10 points will be awarded if the application provides a detailed breakdown of all estimated Project Costs, including Operating Costs, for each task with grant and Matching Funds identified separately.
 - (iv) Up to 5 points will be awarded if the application identifies the Key Personnel associated with each task.
 - (v) Up to 5 points will be awarded if the application provides specific timeframes for each task.
 - ii) Underserved and Economically Distressed. Up to 15 points will be awarded to Applicants whose work plans and budgets demonstrate their commitment to Underserved and Economically Distressed area(s) as defined in the annual notification.

Note: Continuing Appropriations, Agriculture, Legislative Branch, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Extensions Act, 2026, continues projects and activities on the same terms and conditions as authorized in the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2025 (Division A of Public Law 119-4), and has designated funding for Projects in Persistent Poverty

Counties. Persistent poverty counties are defined in Section 736 as “any county that has had 20 percent or more of its population living in poverty over the past 30 years, as measured by the 1990 and 2000 decennial censuses, and 2007–2011 American Community Survey 5-year average, or any territory or possession of the United States.” The eligible population in persistent poverty counties includes any county seat of any persistent poverty county that has a population that does not exceed the authorized population limit by more than 10 percent. This provision expanded the current 50,000 population limit to 55,000 for only county seats located in persistent poverty counties.

- (i) 0 points will be awarded if the application does not identify tasks and a budget commitment to Underserved and Economically Distressed area(s).
 - (ii) Up to 5 points will be awarded if the Applicant identifies the Underserved and Economically Distressed area(s) within their service area.
 - (iii) Up to 10 points will be awarded if the Applicant's budget commitment (grant and Matching Funds) to Underserved and Economically Distressed areas is:
 - (A) Less than 5 percent budget commitment = 2 points.
 - (B) 5 percent or greater but less than 10 percent budget commitment = 4 points.
 - (C) 10 percent or greater but less than 25 percent budget commitment = 6 points.
 - (D) 25 percent or greater but less than 50 percent budget commitment = 8 points.
 - (E) 50 percent or more budget commitment = 10 points.
3. Networking. Up to 10 points will be awarded to Applicants who demonstrate a commitment to Networking and plan to develop multi-organizational and multi-State Cooperative Development approaches.
- i) Up to 5 points will be awarded if the Applicant describes how it intends to create and share best practices and transferrable strategies with other Centers or organizations engaged in Economic Development.
 - ii) Up to 5 points will be awarded if the Applicant describes how it will develop joint Technical Assistance, including Cooperative Development, projects and mentor/mentee relationships with other Centers and other organizations engaged in Economic Development. Joint technical assistance may take the form of a sector partnership, which designs and deploys training solutions at a regional or state-wide scale.
4. Qualifications of Key Personnel (Up to 10 points). The Agency will evaluate if the Key Personnel listed in the work plan and budget are qualified for their related task(s). Points will be awarded as follows:
- i) 0 points will be awarded if the Applicant does not identify formal training, skills, and years of experience for any Key Personnel.

- ii) 1 to 5 points will be awarded if the Applicant details the formal training, skills, and years of experience of some, but not all of the Key Personnel.
 - iii) 6 to 10 points will be awarded if the Applicant details the formal training, skills, and years of experience of all Key Personnel.
5. Matching Funds commitment (5 points). Applicants must meet the Matching Funds requirement to be considered for points. Applicants who meet the 25 percent (5 percent for 1994 Institutions) Matching Funds requirement will receive 5 points.
6. Regional and National Scope (Up to 25 points). Consistent with [7 CFR 4284.530](#), USDA is establishing additional merit evaluation criteria to meet the Department's key priorities, goals, and objectives. The Agency will award 1 to 25 points if the Applicant demonstrates multi-organizational, multi-State, and/or national Cooperative Development approaches, with additional points awarded for the larger the scope of the approach. Points will be awarded as follows:
- i) 0 points will be awarded if the Application does not address the regional and/or national scope of the project.
 - ii) 1 to 5 points will be awarded if the Applicant details programming in a single state with two or more partners.
 - iii) 6 to 15 points will be awarded if the Applicant details programming in multiple states within one region with multiple partners.
 - iv) 16 to 25 points will be awarded if the Applicant details programming in multiple regions with multiple partners.

C. Organizational Management Information

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

D. Application Disposition

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

PART VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds authorized, the NIFA awarding official will make grants to responsible and eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this NOFO. The date specified by the NIFA awarding official as the effective date of the grant must be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. The project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period.

All funds granted by NIFA under this NOFO may be used only for the purpose for which they are granted in accordance with the program-specific laws and regulations, NIFA General Awards Administrative Provisions ([7 CFR part 3430, subparts A through E](#)), USDA Regulations for Grants and Agreements ([2 CFR Chapter IV](#)), Office of Management and Budget Uniform Guidance ([2 CFR part 200](#)), [NIFA-specific terms and conditions](#), [USDA General Terms and Conditions for Federal Awards](#), and approved budget and project plans.

The Notice of Award document will provide pertinent instructions and information as described in [2 CFR 200.211](#) (see [NIFA's Terms and Conditions](#)).

Allowable Uses of Grant and Matching Funds. Grant and matching funds must be used for the activities and expenses described in [7 CFR 4284.525\(a\)](#). No funds may be used for the activities and expenses described in [7 CFR 4284.525\(b\)](#).

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications and the projects outlined in this NOFO. For example, this program is subject to Section 310B(e) of the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act ([7 U.S.C. 1932\(e\)](#)), as amended by the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 ([Public Law 115-334](#), Title VI, Secs. 6412 and 6701(d)(1)), and implemented by [7 CFR part 4284, subpart F](#). Other statutes and regulations are listed here: [Federal Regulations](#). Unless specifically noted by statute or award-specific requirements, [NIFA Federal Assistance Policy Guide](#) applies to all NIFA awards.

C. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

Output and reporting requirements are included in the [award terms and conditions](#). If there are any program or award-specific award terms, they will be identified in the Award Notice.

As detailed in [7 CFR 4284.560](#), after grant approval and through grant completion, recipients are required to submit financial reports and performance reports on a semi-annual basis. A final financial report and performance report must also be submitted within 120 days after the expiration or termination of the grant. Failure to submit either a financial report or a performance report within the specified timeframes may result in NIFA withholding grant funds.

Awards will be monitored by NIFA personnel in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies (see [7 CFR 4284.508](#) for more information). NIFA will designate a contact person for each award. NIFA may terminate or suspend the award for lack of adequate or timely progress, reporting, documentation, or for failure to comply with Agency requirements.

PART VII. OTHER INFORMATION

A. Use of Funds and Changes in Budget

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

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

1. Change in the scope or the objective of the project or program without prior written approval (even if there is no associated budget revision required);
2. Change in a key person specified in the application or the Federal award;
3. Disengagement from the project for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in time devoted to the project;
4. Inclusion of costs that require prior approval in accordance with [2 CFR 200 Subpart E \(Cost Principles\)](#), or [2 CFR Part 300 Appendix IX, \(Principles for Determining Costs Applicable to Research and Development under Awards and Contracts with Hospitals\)](#), or [48 CFR](#), unless waived by the Federal awarding agency, [48 CFR Part 31, Contract Cost Principles and Procedures](#);
5. Transfer of funds budgeted for participant support costs to other categories of expense ([2 CFR 200.456 Participant support costs](#));
6. Sub-awarding, transferring or contracting out of any work under a Federal award, including fixed amount sub-awards (see [2 CFR 200.333, Fixed Amount Sub-awards](#)), unless described in the application and funded in the approved Federal awards. This provision does not apply to the acquisition of supplies, material, equipment, or general support services;
7. Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-Federal entity;
8. The need for additional Federal funds to complete the project;
9. Salary rates of pay exceeding an Executive Level IV salary range (see “Rates of Pay for the Executive Schedule” under the “Executive & Senior Level Employee Pay Tables” header at <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/>) require prior NIFA approval. This rate does not include any fringe benefits, general and administrative (G&A), overhead, or other expenses. Requests for approval must include the salary rate of pay and a justification for the rate and be sent to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) to awards@usda.gov;
10. No more than 50 percent of the total dollars of this award may be subcontracted to another party(ies) without prior written approval of the ADO, except subcontracts to Federal agencies;
11. Transferring funds between the construction and non-construction work under a Federal award; and
12. A no-cost extension (meaning, an extension of time that does not require the obligation of additional Federal funds) of the period of performance, other than any one-time extension authorized by the Federal agency in accordance with paragraph 2 CFR 200.308(g)(2). All

requests for no-cost extensions should be submitted at least 10 calendar days before the conclusion of the period of performance. The Federal agency may approve multiple no-cost extensions under a Federal award if not prohibited by Federal statute or regulation.

B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

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

C. Regulatory Information

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

D. Language Access Services

NIFA offers language access services, such as interpretation and translation of vital information, free of charge. If you need interpretation or translation services, please visit [NIFA Language Access Services](#).

APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACT

For Programmatic questions please email:
RCDG Staff - SM.REE.NIFA.RCDG@usda.gov

For administrative questions related to;

1. Grants.gov, see [Part IV](#) of this NOFO
2. Other NOFO or application questions, please email grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov
3. Awards under this NOFO, please email awards@usda.gov

U.S. Postal Mailing Address:

National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 419205, MS 10000
Kansas City, MO 64141-6205

Courier/Package Delivery Address:

National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
2312 East Bannister Road, MS 10000
Kansas City, MO 64141-3061

APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Glossary of Terms

Assistance Listing Number – ALN

Authorized Departmental Officer – ADO

Authorized Representative – AR

Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 – AREERA

Data Management Plan – DMP

National Institute of Food and Agriculture – NIFA

Notice of Funding Opportunity – NOFO

Research, Education, and Economics – REE

United States Department of Agriculture – USDA

APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS

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

Definitions

Matching:

The process through which a grant recipient match awarded USDA funds with cash and in-kind contributions on a dollar-for-dollar basis. The matching funds must derive from non-Federal sources.

New Application:

An application not previously submitted to a program.