

Notice of Funding Opportunity Sun Grant Program

FUNDING YEAR: Fiscal Year (FY) 2026

APPLICATION DEADLINE: August 17, 2026

ANTICIPATED PROGRAM FUNDING: \$2,801,160

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: USDA-NIFA-SGP-011878

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 10.320

ANNOUNCEMENT

National Institute of Food and Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture

Assistance Listing Number (ALN): The Sun Grant Program (SGP) is listed in the Assistance Listings under number 10.320.

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
Application:	5:00 P.M. Eastern Time, June 30, 2026 [Ref to Part I, B 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 SGP NOFO.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This notice requests proposals for the SGP for FY 2026 to: (1) enhance national energy security through the development, distribution, and implementation of biobased energy technologies; (2) promote varied agricultural production systems in the United States through biobased energy and product technologies; (3) promote economic growth in rural areas of the United States through biobased energy and product technologies; and (4) enhance the efficiency of bioenergy and biomass research and development programs through improved coordination and collaboration among the USDA, other appropriate Federal agencies, and Land-grant Institutions.

The anticipated amount available for the SGP in FY 2026 is approximately \$2,801,160. The grant will be issued as a five-year continuation award. This notice identifies the objectives for SGP projects, deadlines, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ANNOUNCEMENT	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
TABLE OF CONTENTS	5
TABLE OF KEY INFORMATION.....	6
PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION	7
A. Legislative Authority.....	7
B. Purpose and Priorities.....	7
PART II. AWARD INFORMATION	12
A. Available Funding	12
B. Application Restrictions	12
C. Project and Grant Types	12
D. Ethical Conduct of Funded Projects	12
PART III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION.....	13
A. Eligibility Requirements.....	13
B. Cost Sharing or Matching.....	14
PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION	15
A. Method of Application	15
B. Content and Form of the Application	15
C. Funding Restrictions.....	18
PART V. APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS	20
A. NIFA's Evaluation Process	20
B. Evaluation Criteria.....	20
C. Organizational Management Information.....	21
D. Application Disposition.....	21
PART VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION	22
A. General	22
B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.....	22
C. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements	22
PART VII. OTHER INFORMATION	23
A. Use of Funds and Changes in Budget.....	23
B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards	24
C. Regulatory Information	24
D. Language Access Services.....	24
APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACT.....	25
APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS.....	26
APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS	27

TABLE OF KEY INFORMATION

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines.....	2
Table 2: Program Key Information.....	7
Table 3: Steps to Obtain Application Materials.....	15
Table 4: Help and Resources	15
Table 5: Key Application Instructions.....	16

PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The SGP is authorized in section 7526 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 ([7 U.S.C. 8114](#)), as amended and reauthorized by section 7513 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018. NIFA regulatory administrative provisions for SGP may be found in [Subpart O of 7 CFR 3430](#).

B. Purpose and Priorities

In carrying out the SGP, under Assistance Listing Number 10.320, NIFA is authorized to make awards to fund subgrants and activities that:

1. Enhance national energy security through the development, distribution, and implementation of biobased energy technologies;
2. Promote varied agricultural production systems in the U.S. through biobased energy and product technologies;
3. Promote economic growth in rural areas of the U.S. through biobased energy and product technologies; and
4. Enhance the efficiency of bioenergy and biomass research and development programs through improved coordination and collaboration among the Department, other appropriate Federal agencies, and Land-grant Colleges and Universities.

The SGP will provide support for five regional Sun Grant Centers and a Subcenter (see [Part III, A](#) of this NOFO for a description of regions). The Sun Grant Centers and Subcenter will allocate 75 percent of grant funds to a competitive regional grants program supporting multi-institutional, integrated, and multi-state initiatives in research, extension, and education.

This NOFO is aligned with [Executive Order 14154 Unleashing American Energy](#) which encourages federal support and deregulation of the American grown biofuels industry. Sun Grant directly supports the USDA R&D plan by increasing Profitability of Farmers and Ranchers and Expanding Markets and Creating New Uses of U.S. Agricultural Products.

Table 2: Program Key Information

	Title	Description
Program Code:		SGP
Program Code Name:		Sun Grant Program
ALN:		10.320
Project Type:		Integrated Research, Education, and/or Extension Projects
Grant Type:		Standard Grants
Application Deadline		August 17, 2026
Grant Duration:		24-36 Months
Anticipated # of Awards:		1
Maximum Award Amount:		\$2,801,160

NIFA anticipates selecting one recipient that will lead a consortium of five Regional Centers and one Subcenter (Center/Subcenter) which will contribute to research, education, and extension

addressing the activities detailed above. The recipient is required to document Center/Subcenter activities, ensuring that regional programs target specific legislative priorities while adapting national bioenergy, products, and biomass objectives to local biogeography. Applicants must demonstrate how core scientific competencies will be maximized to enhance the production and long-term viability of regional bioenergy, products, and feedstocks.

The consortium will collectively provide guidance and oversight of each Center/Subcenter's competitive research, extension, and education grant programs. The Centers/Subcenter will provide competitive grants to individual eligible institutions that are in the region covered. The following are requirements where the recipient will:

1. Provide guidance and oversight to each Center/Subcenter in the development of regional competitive grant solicitations with guidance from regional advisory panels, which include representation from academia, the national laboratories, federal and state agencies, the private sector, and public interest groups, all with appropriate expertise and experience in the areas of biomass, bioenergy, and biobased products. Each region will solicit proposals using an open and competitive process. These proposals must be peer reviewed, by panels made up of appropriate academics with possible representation from appropriate federal and state laboratories, the national laboratories, and private and public interest groups, as appropriate.
2. Oversee and ensure adequate administrative requirements for competitive grants for each Center/Subcenter. Funded projects need not be initiated on the award effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds awarded must be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are awarded in accordance with the approved application and budget, applicable regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, and 2 CFR 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. Indirect Costs are unallowable for funds allocated to a Center/Subcenter for regional competitive grant programs. The following competitive procedures must be clearly demonstrated in the administration of the regional competitive grants activities by the Center/Subcenter:
 - a. **Subgrant Administration**
 - i. The Center/Subcenter must seek, accept, competitively review, and award proposals for subgrants, subject to NIFA approval. A subgrant awarded by a Center/Subcenter will have a period of performance from FY 2027 to FY 2030 (Federal fiscal year).
 - ii. The Center/Subcenter may use up to four percent of the funds on administrative expenses for implementation of competitive grant programs.
 - iii. Each Center/Subcenter must fund subgrants in a proportion that is a minimum 30 percent for conducting multi-institutional and multistate research, extension, and education programs on technology development and a minimum 30 percent for conducting integrated multi-institutional and multistate research, extension, and education programs on technology implementation. Each Center/Subcenter must clearly demonstrate a common procedure for ensuring the required allocations are met and for maintaining documentation of these required percentages for audit purposes.

- iv. The Center/Subcenter should implement appropriate business processes to minimize or eliminate the awarding of subgrants that unnecessarily duplicates activities already being sponsored under other awards, including awards made by other Federal agencies.
- v. For subawards made by the Center/Subcenter, not less than 20 percent of the costs must be matched with funds, including in-kind contributions, from a non-Federal source. This matching requirement does not apply to fundamental research conducted by sub-recipient. Fundamental research means research that increases knowledge or understanding of the fundamental aspects of phenomena and has the potential for broad application; and has an effect on agriculture, food, or nutrition. As a part of each application for a subaward, the Center/Subcenter must require a budget narrative that documents matching funds. The sources and amount of all matching support from outside the applicant institution should be summarized on a separate page and placed in the proposal as part of the budget narrative. All contributions, including cash and third party in-kind, must meet the criteria included in [2 CFR 200.306](#). The budget narrative must include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Written verification means:
 - a) For any third party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each donation, signed by the authorized representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) the dollar amount of the cash donation (the budget narrative must describe how the cash donation will be used on the project); and (5) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period.
 - b) For any third party in-kind contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each contribution, signed by the authorized representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) The name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the third party in kind contribution and a description of how the fair market value was determined; and (5) a statement that the donor will make the contribution during the grant period.

b. Peer and Merit Review

- i. The guiding principle for application review and evaluation is to ensure that each proposal is treated in a consistent and fair manner. After the evaluation process by the review panel, the program officer must ensure that applicants receive appropriate feedback and comments on their proposals and process the awards in as timely a manner as possible.
- ii. Prior to technical examination, a preliminary review will be made of all applications for responsiveness to the administrative requirements set forth in

the Center/Subcenter solicitation. Applications that do not meet the administrative requirements for the program may be eliminated from program competition. However, the Center/Subcenter retains the right to conduct discussions with applicants to resolve technical and/or budget issues, as deemed necessary. Applications must also be reviewed for eligibility. Eligible applicants for competitively awarded projects within the respective regions of the Center/Subcenter are: state agricultural experiment stations; colleges and universities; university research foundations; other research institutions and organizations; Federal agencies; national laboratories; private organizations or corporations; individuals; or any group consisting of two or more of the entities described in this paragraph. Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project, subject to NIFA approval.

- iii. Reviews are undertaken to ensure that projects supported by the SGP are awarded on the basis of merit, quality, and relevance to advancing the purposes of and are consistent with the goals and requirements of the program. Applications submitted must undergo a programmatic evaluation to determine the worthiness of support under the SGP.
- iv. The scientific peer review is performed by peer reviewers. Reviewers will be selected based on training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields taking into account the following factors:
 - a) Level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, and extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities.
 - b) Need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, and extension fields.
 - c) Need to include as reviewers 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.
 - d) Need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and nonprofit organizations) from within the region, and/or with the appropriate level of documented expertise.
 - e) Need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.
- v. The identities of reviewers should remain confidential to the maximum extent possible. Therefore, the names of reviewers may not be released to applicants. If it is possible to reveal the names of reviewers in such a way that they cannot be identified with the review of any particular application, this will be done at the end of the fiscal year or as requested. Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. During the evaluation process, extreme care should be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review

or evaluation. Reviewers are expected to be in compliance with a standardized set of confidentiality and conflict of interest guidelines.

- vi. Evaluation Criteria.
 - a) To ensure any project receiving funds is consistent with the broad goals of the funding program, the recipient will be responsible for ensuring that each Center/Subcenter will establish a pre-determined set of review criteria, agreed upon by NIFA, by which each proposal submitted will be evaluated on. It is the responsibility of the recipient to develop, adopt, adapt, or otherwise establish the criteria by which proposals are to be evaluated. It may be appropriate for the Center/Subcenter to involve other scientists or stakeholders in the development of criteria or to extract criteria from legislative authority or appropriations language. The review criteria must be described in the solicitation and may not include criteria concerning any cost sharing or matching.
 - b) For all potential applicants of a program to have similar opportunities to compete for funds, all reviewers will receive from the Center/Subcenter a description of the review criteria. Reviewers are instructed to use those same evaluation criteria, and only those criteria, to judge the merit of the proposals they review.
- b. **Research, education, and extension activities conducted at Centers/Subcenter.** The remainder of the Center/Subcenter funds must be used for multi-institutional and integrated, multistate research, extension, and education programs on technology development and technology implementation.
- c. **Sun Grant Information Analysis Center.** The recipient shall maintain, at the North Central Center, a Sun Grant Information Analysis Center to provide the Centers/Subcenter with analysis and data management support. Each Center/Subcenter shall allocate a portion of the funds available for administrative or indirect costs to maintain the Sun Grant Information Analysis Center.

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The amount available for SGP in FY 2026 is \$2,801,160. Similar funding levels may be awarded for up to an additional four years as continuation awards provided performance has been satisfactory, funding is available for this purpose, and continued support is in the best interests of the Federal Government and the public. 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 FY 2026 is limited to the following application types:

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

C. Project and Grant Types

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

1. Project Type. **Integrated Research, Education, and/or Extension Projects.** Multifunction Integrated Projects bring together at least two of the three components of the agricultural knowledge system (*i.e.*, research, education, and extension) around a problem or issue. The functions addressed in the project should be interwoven throughout the life of the project and act to complement and reinforce one another. The proposed research component of an Integrated Project should address knowledge gaps that are critical to the development of practices and programs to address the stated problem. The proposed education component of an Integrated Project should strengthen institutional capacities and result in curricula and related products that will be sustained beyond the life of the project. The proposed extension component of an Integrated Project should lead to measurable, documented changes in learning, actions, or conditions in an identified audience or stakeholder group.
2. Grant Type. **Standard Grant.** Standard Grants support targeted, original scientific Research, Education, Extension, or Integrated Projects.

D. Ethical Conduct of Funded Projects

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

PART III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligibility Requirements

Applicants for the SGP 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.

Eligible applicants must represent a consortium of 1862, 1890, and 1994 Land-grant Institutions comprised of one entity from each of the Sun Grant regions and sub-region as detailed in the table below. Land-grant colleges and universities may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply, provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

Sun Grant Regions and Sub-Regions

North Central Region	Northeastern Region	Southeastern Region
• Illinois • Indiana • Iowa • Minnesota • Montana • Nebraska • North Dakota • South Dakota • Wisconsin • Wyoming	• Connecticut • Delaware • District of Columbia • Massachusetts • Maryland • Maine • Michigan • New Hampshire • New Jersey • New York • Ohio • Pennsylvania • Rhode Island • Vermont • West Virginia	• Alabama • Florida • Georgia • Kentucky • Mississippi • North Carolina • South Carolina • Tennessee • Virginia • The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico • The United States Virgin Islands
South Central Region	Western Region	Western Insular Pacific Sub-Region
• Arkansas • Colorado • Kansas • Louisiana • Missouri • New Mexico • Oklahoma • Texas	• Alaska • Arizona • California • Hawaii • Idaho • Nevada • Oregon • Utah • Washington	• Alaska • Hawaii • Guam • American Samoa • The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands • The Federated States of Micronesia • The Republic of the Marshall Islands • The Republic of Palau

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

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

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

1. **Center/Subcenter Matching Requirement.** There is no matching requirement for the Centers/Subcenter. While not required, cost share is encouraged.
2. **Center/Subcenter Subgrant Matching Requirement.** The Center/Subcenter shall require that not less than 20 percent of the costs be matched with funds, including in-kind contributions, from a non-Federal source. This matching requirement does not apply to fundamental research conducted by sub-recipient. Fundamental research means research that increases knowledge or understanding of the fundamental aspects of phenomena and has the potential for broad application and has an effect on agriculture, food, nutrition, or the environment. With prior approval, the Center/Subcenter may reduce or eliminate the matching requirement for applied research if the Center/Subcenter determines that the reduction is necessary and appropriate pursuant to guidance issued by NIFA. Applied research means research that includes expansion of the findings of fundamental research to uncover practical ways in which new knowledge can be advanced to benefit individuals and society.

PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

A. Method of Application

Applicants must apply to this NOFO electronically; no other method or response is accepted. The electronic application for this NOFO and additional resources are available on [Grants.gov](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 and 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-SGP-011878 , 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 .

B. Content and Form of the Application

The NIFA Grants Application Guide is part of the corresponding application package for this NOFO. The NOFO overrides the NIFA Grants Application Guide if there is a discrepancy between the two documents. Applicants that do not meet the application requirements, to include partial applications, risk being excluded from NIFA's review. NIFA will assign a proposal number to all applications that meet the requirements of this NOFO. Applicants must refer to the proposal number when corresponding with NIFA. **Table 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 SGP. See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide for instructions and suggested templates.
2. **Field 8. Project Narrative (PN).** The PN must not exceed 20 *1.5 spaced* pages of written text and up to 4 *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. The PN must include all the following:
 - a. Consortium Selection and Oversight of Centers. Description of the mechanism the Consortium will use to select the Centers and provide guidance and oversight into the science priorities and grant programs.
 - b. Consortium Objectives. Clear, concise, complete, and logically arranged statement(s) of the specific aims of the proposed effort.
 - c. Centers/Subcenter Activities. The procedures or methodology to be applied to the proposed effort must be explicitly stated. This section will include but not necessarily

- be limited to: (i) a description of the proposed implementation of the competitive program for identifying priorities, developing regional solicitations, administering subgrants, and overseeing compliance with reporting requirements; (ii) administrative techniques to be employed for the competitive sub-award program; (iii) means by which subgrant proposals for the competitive subgrant program will be reviewed and awarded; (iv) a description of the proposed implementation of the research, extension, and education activities to be conducted at the Centers/Subcenter; (v) pitfalls which might be encountered in the competitive subgrant program and the activities to be conducted at the Centers/Subcenter; (vi) limitations to proposed procedures utilized in administering the competitive sub-award program and the activities to be conducted at the Centers/Subcenter; and (vii) kinds of results expected from the competitive subgrant program and the activities to be conducted at the Centers/Subcenter.
- d. Timeline for issuing regional solicitations and making subgrants, reporting requirements for sub-recipients, and process for documenting evidence of jointly developing the proposals submitted to the SGP.
 - e. Literature Review. A summary of pertinent publications with emphasis on their relationship to the effort being proposed must be provided and should include all important and recent 15 publications from other institutions, as well as those from your institution. The citations themselves must be accurate, complete, and written in an acceptable journal format.
 - f. Current Work. Current unpublished institutional activities to date related to the goals of this program must be described.
 - g. Experience. A description of the expertise and resources of the Consortium members that will allow them to successfully provide leadership to the implementation of the SGP.
 - h. Comprehensive Project Timetable. The application must outline all important phases of both required project types as a function of time for the entire project period.
3. **Field 12. Add Other Attachments.**
- a. 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**.

Match – If an applicant concludes that the matching requirements described under [Part III, B](#) of this NOFO is not applicable to them; the applicant must include an explanation of their conclusion in the *budget justification*. NIFA will consider this justification when determining final matching requirements or if required matching can be waived. NIFA retains the right to make final determinations regarding matching requirements.

Grants that require matching funds as specified under [Part III, B](#) of this 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.”](#)

1. Indirect Costs (IDC) – Not permitted.

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 “Sun Grant Program” and the program code “SGP”. Accurate entry is critical.
2. **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.** See **Part V** of the **NIFA Grants Application Guide**.

C. Funding Restrictions

1. Indirect Costs (IDC)

The Centers/Subcenter may not use grant funds for indirect costs of awarding grants under the competitive grant program. However, up to four percent of the total funds provided to the Center/Subcenter may be budgeted for administrative expenses incurred in awarding regional competitive grants.

IDC not to exceed 30 percent of the recipient’s Total Federal Funds Awarded (TFFA) are allowable for the remainder of the funds awarded to the Center/Subcenter to be used for multi-institutional and multistate research, extension, and educational programs on technology development; and integrated research, extension, and educational programs on technology implementation. [7 U.S.C. 3310](#) limits the recovery of IDC for the overall award to 30 percent of the TFFA under a research, education, or extension grant. The maximum allowable IDC amount recoverable under the award, including the IDC charged by the sub-awardee(s), if any, is the lesser of the following and is determined by calculating the amount of IDC using:

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

If the result of number one is the lesser of the two amounts, the grant recipient is allowed to charge the negotiated IDC rate on the prime award and the sub-award(s), if any. Any sub-awards would be subject to the sub-awardee’s negotiated IDC rate. The sub-awardee may charge its negotiated IDC rate on its portion of the award, provided the sum of the IDC amount charged under the award by the prime awardee and the sub-awardee(s) does not exceed 30 percent of the TFFA.

If the result of number two is the lesser of the two amounts, then the maximum IDC allowed for the overall award, including any sub-award(s), is limited to 30 percent of the TFFA. That is, the IDC of the prime awardee plus the sum of the IDC charged by the sub-awardee(s), if any, may not exceed 30 percent of the TFFA.

In the event of an award, the prime awardee is responsible for ensuring the maximum indirect cost allowed for the award is not exceeded when combining IDC for the Federal portion (i.e., prime and sub-awardee(s)) and any applicable cost-sharing. Amounts exceeding the maximum allowable IDC are considered unallowable. See sections [408](#) and [410](#) of [2 CFR 200](#).

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

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

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

2. Successful applicants must not use grant funds awarded under the authority of this NOFO for the construction of a new building or facility or the acquisition, expansion, remodeling, or alteration of an existing building or facility (including site grading and improvement and architect fees).
3. 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.
4. The need to include experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, and private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations.
5. The need to maintain a balanced composition with regard to the reviewer's area of expertise, geographic area, and entity type, as appropriate.
6. The need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness of each application to producers and the general public.

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

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

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

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

B. Evaluation Criteria

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

1. Clear explanation of how the long-term goals and objectives of the SGP will enhance national energy security and promote new markets for agricultural production, particularly in rural areas. [Weight: 15%]
2. How well preliminary data/pertinent information demonstrates an understanding of regional biomass, bioenergy, biobased products and the environmental, economic, and social impacts across the nation. [Weight: 15%]
3. Demonstrated experience in managing competitive grant programs for research and education programs that support the development of bioenergy, biomass feedstocks, and biobased products; with sufficient infrastructure in place. Demonstrated experience in ensuring adequate financial management and performance of recipients. [Weight: 25%]
4. Quality and variety of communication methods such as publications, presentations and other media. Inclusion of strategies for how the Consortium will communicate data from research to relevant stakeholders in a timely manner and how the success of those outreach efforts will be evaluated. [Weight: 15%]
5. Clear management plan for how the Consortium will improve collaboration amongst Land Grant Institutions, the Department of Agriculture, and other federal agencies to form a national network that will further enhance national energy security through the development, distribution, and implementation of biobased energy and related bioproduct technologies. For example, plans may include but are not limited to organizational structure, communication, intellectual property, and competitive grant processes. [Weight: 15%]
6. Quality and completeness of the data management plan and whether the plan is laid out and the resources available will ensure the proper protection, retention, and accessibility of all data generated with the use of the federal funds. [Weight: 15%]

C. Organizational Management Information

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

D. Application Disposition

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

PART VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

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

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

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

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications and the projects outlined in this NOFO (some are listed here: [Federal Regulations](#)). Unless specifically noted by 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.

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: sungrant@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

Data Management Plan – DMP

National Institute of Food and Agriculture – NIFA

Notice of Funding Opportunity – NOFO

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.