

Notice of Funding Opportunity Rural Health and Safety Education Competitive Grants Program

FUNDING YEAR: Fiscal Year (FY) 2026

APPLICATION DEADLINE: June 23, 2026

ANTICIPATED PROGRAM FUNDING: \$3,000,000

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: USDA-NIFA-RHSE-011696

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 10.516

ANNOUNCEMENT

National Institute of Food and Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture

Assistance Listing Number (ALN). The Rural Health and Safety Education (RHSE) program is listed in the Assistance Listings under number 10.516.

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
Application:	5:00 P.M. Eastern Time, June 23, 2026
Applicants Comments:	Within six months from the issuance of this notice (<i>NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month</i>)

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 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 Notice of Funding Opportunity (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 Rural Health and Safety Education (RHSE) NOFO.

Centers of Excellence. Applicants are encouraged to visit the NIFA's [Centers of Excellence \(COE\)](#) for information on COE designation process, including COE criteria, and a list of programs offering COE opportunities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NIFA requests applications for the Rural Health and Safety Education (RHSE) Competitive Grant Program for FY 2026 to address the needs of rural Americans by providing individual and family health education programs. The amount for awards in FY 2026 is approximately \$3,000,000.

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

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PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The authority for the Rural Health and Safety Education (RHSE) Competitive Grant Program is under Section 502 (i) of Title V of the Rural Development Act of 1972, as amended ([7 U.S.C. 2662\(i\)](#)).

B. Purpose and Priorities

The [Rural Health and Safety Education Program](#), under ALN 10.516, seeks to foster quality of life in rural communities by providing the essential knowledge necessary for successful programs of rural development; improving coordination among Federal agencies, other levels of government and institutions, and private organizations in rural areas; and developing and disseminating information about rural conditions.

The RHSE program supports quality of life in rural communities across the United States by addressing the relationship between rural prosperity and rural health and safety in the context of food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences.

Per the authorizing legislation described in [Part I, A](#) of this NOFO, the RHSE program addresses the health and well-being of rural America through supporting the development and/or implementation of projects focused on:

1. Individual and family health education programs with specified contents;
2. Rural health leadership development education programs to assist rural communities in developing health care services and facilities and assist community leaders and public officials in understanding their roles and responsibilities; and
3. Farm safety education programs to provide information and training to farm workers, timber harvesters, and farm families.

In FY 2026, NIFA is only soliciting applications for RHSE in the area of Individual and Family Health Education.

The RHSE program proposals in the individual and family health education area are expected to be health education and capacity-building projects that provide individuals and families living in rural areas with:

1. Information about the value of good health at any age;
2. Information to increase individual or families' motivation to take more responsibility for their own health;
3. Information about and access to health promotion activities;
4. Information to support the utilization of learning plans for opioid and substance education and training in rural communities; and
5. Training for volunteers and health services providers concerning health promotion and health care services for individuals and families in cooperation with State, local, and community partners.

Projects conducted with grants awarded under this program must:

1. Coordinate with the respective [State Office of Rural Health](#) and other appropriate programs of the Department of Health and Human Services, such as a [Federally Qualified Health Center](#); and
2. Provide leadership within the State for the dissemination of appropriate rural health and safety information resources possessed or promoted by the Rural Information Center established at the National Agricultural Library

Proposals submitted to the RHSE program in FY 2026 may focus on the prevention and/or reduction of opioid and other substance misuse and abuse per Congressional guidance for this program as directed in the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (Pub. L. 115-334, Sec. 6101(a)(1)(C)).

Prevention and/or Reduction of Opioid Misuse and Abuse

In March 2025, the Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) renewed the opioid crisis public health emergency, which was initially declared in October 2017. Opioid abuse as well as substance abuse disorder generally continues to be a critical issue across the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), there were an estimated 107,622 drug overdose deaths in the United States during 2021, an increase of 15 percent from 2020. Approximately 150 Americans die daily from synthetic opioids (primarily fentanyl).¹ Costs for opioid use disorder and fatal opioid overdose in 2017 were estimated to be \$1.02 trillion. The majority of the economic cost is attributed to reduced quality of life from opioid use disorder and the value of life lost due to fatal opioid overdose.² Family instability is another stark consequence of opioid abuse contributing to the prevalence of adverse childhood experiences, a strain on child welfare systems, and increases in the number of relatives raising children. It is also important to note the high prevalence of polysubstance use within the opioid epidemic.

In FY 2026, NIFA will support the implementation of new evidence-based, outcome-based educational approaches and programs delivered through the Cooperative Extension Service which promote protective factors and reduce the impact of risk factors leading to the prevention of: a) initiation of substance use; b) delayed early use; and c) the progression from use to problematic use or to a substance use disorder. Since the occurrence and context of risk behavior is complex, applicants are encouraged to address intersecting factors that have the potential to also prevent or reduce opioid and substance initiation, misuse, and abuse. Additionally, where appropriate, we encourage collaborative approaches with allied health sciences located at academic institutions, local health care entities, and community organizations. In addition to supporting projects that implement new programs or approaches that support the utilization of learning strategies for education and training in rural communities related to opioid

⁴ U.S. Health and Human Services (2025, March 18). Secretary Kennedy Renews Public Health Emergency Declaration to Address National Opioid Crisis. <https://www.hhs.gov/press-room/secretary-kennedy-opiod-crisis-emergency-declaration.html>

⁵ Florence C, Luo F, Rice K. The economic burden of opioid use disorder and fatal opioid overdose in the United States, 2017. *Drug Alcohol Depend.* 2021 Jan 1;218:108350. doi: 10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2020.108350. Epub 2020 Oct 27. PMID: 33121867; PMCID: PMC8091480.

⁶ Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health. (2018). [Life in Rural America](#)

⁷ Monnat, S. M. & Rigg, K. K. (2015). Rural Adolescents Are More Likely Than Their Urban Peers to Abuse Prescription Painkillers. Carsey Research, National Fact Sheet #32.

and substance misuse and abuse, the RHSE program will also support projects seeking to scale up to State or multistate levels. Existing programs or approaches must have demonstrated evidence of impact focused on the prevention and/or reduction of opioid and substance misuse and abuse. An applicant may form a multistate partnership to support scaling up a program or approach.

Table 2: Program Key Information

Title	Description
Program Code:	LX
Program Code Name:	Rural Health and Safety Education Competitive Grants Program
ALN	10.516
Project Type:	Extension
Grant Type:	Standard
Application Deadline	June 23, 2026
Grant Duration:	36 Months
Anticipated # of Awards:	10-11
Maximum Award Amount:	\$350,000

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The amount available for the Rural Health and Safety Education (RHSE) program in FY 2026 is approximately \$3,000,000. 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's 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.

Applications for FY 2026 are limited to the following application type:

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).

NIFA will *not* consider or fund the following types of applications to the FY 2026 RHSE program:

1. Proposals without a plan for measuring participant outcomes;
2. Proposals planned for less than 36 months;
3. Proposals that exceed the maximum Federal budget request for the type of application proposed (\$350,000);
4. Proposals that fail to meet the Project Narrative requirements for font size, margins, and spacing, or exceed the page allowance;
5. Proposals that fail to include any of the following items:
 - Summary/Abstract;
 - Project Narrative;
 - Budget; and
 - Budget Narrative
6. Proposals with objectives or approaches that do not fit the purpose and scope of the RHSE Program;
7. Proposals with a focus on topic areas specific to other NIFA grant programs, such as programs under the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), Assistive Technology Program for Farmers with Disabilities, Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network, or Youth Farm Safety Education and Certification;
8. Proposals with a focus on research (other than evaluation related to project outputs, outcomes, and impacts), formal education (K-12, university), or clinical interventions; or
9. Proposals focused on the clinical treatment of individuals with substance use disorders.

C. Project Requirements and Recommendations

The following describes the project requirements and project recommendations:

1. Projects **must**:
 - a. Implement research-informed, outcome-based programs and approaches
 - b. Use Cooperative Extension as a mode of program outreach and delivery

- c. Serve rural areas: RHSE projects must be implemented in Federally classified rural areas, and applicants must select from the below Federal classifications to identify the project's rural areas.
 - i. The Economic Research Service's [Rural-Urban Continuum Codes](#) system lists codes by State. See the [2023 Rural-Urban Continuum Code County table to provide the](#) Rural-Urban Continuum Code for each rural county in which the project will be implemented. Only counties with codes #4-9 are appropriate for inclusion.
 - ii. The [2020 Rural-Urban Commuting Area \(RUCA\) Codes](#) from the Economic Research Service classify U.S. census tracts using measures of population density, urbanization, and daily commuting. To obtain the actual codes by State for the proposed project census tracts, see the [2020 Rural-Urban Commuting Area \(RUCA\) Codes table](#). For each rural census tract in which the project will be implemented, provide the rural-urban commuting area (RUCA) codes as found in the table. Only census tracts with the codes #4-10 are appropriate for inclusion.
 - iii. The [Rural Health Grants Eligibility Analyzer](#) from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) uses a combination of the RUCA codes, the [Economic Research Service Road Ruggedness Scale \(RRS\)](#), and the United States Census Bureau's nonmetropolitan counties. Eligibility of counties can be verified by including a screenshot or printout of the Eligibility Analyzer results.
- d. Plan for coordination of programs: Per the authorizing legislation for the Rural Health and Safety Education Program described in Part I (A) of this NOFO, projects are required to coordinate with [State Offices of Rural Health](#) or other appropriate programs of the Department of Health and Human Services, such as SAMHSA State Opioid Response (SOR) and Tribal Opioid Response (TOR) providers or HRSA [Federally Qualified Health Centers](#) on proposed health education activities and rural population outreach.
- e. Report on performance: Projects are required to develop and report on performance indicators that demonstrate measurable changes in knowledge and attitudes of project participants. Projects seeking to also capture behavioral changes are highly encouraged. These indicators should demonstrate the project's success at achieving the objectives of the proposed project and the overarching goal of the RHSE program. Applicants must involve an evaluator on the proposed project to help develop outcome-based performance measures and a plan for evaluating the project's performance.
- f. Use a theoretical and/or practice framework(s) to guide program development, implementation, and evaluation: Projects must identify an existing framework or model as a guide for their programs' health education and/or capacity building focus and their Extension outreach strategy.
- g. Disseminate information that is appropriate, applicable, and beneficial: Provide a plan for the dissemination of appropriate rural health and safety information resources across the State(s) that are possessed or promoted by the Rural Information Center established at the National Agricultural Library.

2. As appropriate, applicable, and beneficial, we **strongly recommend the proposed projects** plan programs and approaches that:
 - a. Collaborate across Cooperative Extension program areas (i.e., Family & Consumer Sciences, Agricultural and Natural Resources, 4-H/Youth Development, and Community Resource and Economic Development).
 - b. Include content experts across academic and clinical domains to inform project development, implementation, and evaluation.
 - c. In addition to capturing knowledge and behavioral change, where appropriate and relevant, include policy, systems, and environmental change strategies that can be reasonably implemented and assessed in the duration of the project.
 - d. Increase professionals' capacity to engage in health leadership in rural communities, which includes using skills to collaborate, connect, communicate, and build community capacity to address rural health.
 - e. Increase public access to new ideas and technologies related to opioid and substance misuse and abuse prevention.
 - f. Increase public health knowledge and engage the health system, leading to actions that promote or enhance rural health and well-being.
 - g. Increase the utilization of telehealth, telemedicine, and distance learning strategies for education and training in rural communities focused on opioid and substance misuse and abuse.

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 Rural Health and Safety Education (RHSE) 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 may be submitted by 1862 and 1890 Land-grant Colleges and Universities that are eligible to receive funds under the [Act of July 2, 1862 \(7 U.S.C. 301 et seq.\)](#), and the [Act of August 30, 1890 \(7 U.S.C. 321 et seq.\)](#), including Central State University, Tuskegee University, and West Virginia State University. Applications also may be submitted by any of the Tribal Colleges and Universities designated as 1994 Land-grant Institutions under the Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994, as amended.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

USDA **will not accept** competitive 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 – duplicate or multiple submissions are not allowed.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

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

C. Centers of Excellence

Pursuant to [Section 7214 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 \(7 U.S.C. 5926\)](#), NIFA will recognize and prioritize COE applicants that carry out research, extension, and education activities that relate to the food and agricultural sciences. A COE is composed of one or more of the following entities that provide financial or in-kind support to the COE.

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

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. [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-RHSE-011696 ,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, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. CT, 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 received correspondence from NIFA regarding an application within 30 days of the application deadline.	N/A

SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet. See **Part V** 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 RHSE. 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 24 1.5-spaced pages with 1-inch margins of written text in portrait orientation, including figures and tables. **Note:** Landscape orientation and single-spacing is allowed for figures and tables. The font size must be no smaller than 12 points, Times New Roman (this includes figures and tables). The page limits outlined here ensure fair competition. The PN must include all the following within the 24 pages (you may label the timeline, logic model, and evaluation plan as an appendix but must be within the PN field 8 submission and 24 pages allotted):
 - a. [Issue Statement and Planned Approach](#);
 - b. [Objectives, Activities, Outcomes, Timeline, and Logic Model](#);
 - c. [Division of Labor](#);
 - d. [Project Performance Assessment Plan](#);
 - e. [Management Plan](#);
 - f. [Project Communication and Dissemination](#);
 - g. [Viability](#);
 - h. [Data Management Plan \(DMP\)](#); and

- i. [Centers of Excellence Justification](#) (if applicable).

Issue Statement and Planned Approach

Provide a brief justification of the project by describing the nature and magnitude of the rural health/safety issue(s) the project is seeking to address and a brief explanation of how the project will address the issue(s). Make specific notation if the proposal seeks to support the utilization of learning strategies for education and training in rural communities related to opioid and substance misuse and abuse. Provide the most recent relevant data for the State or States in which the proposed RHSE project will be implemented, including data on the incidence of individual and family health issue(s) relevant to the project. Provide references for the data. Explain and substantiate any assumptions made.

In addition, please address the following elements:

1. **Theoretical and/or practice framework(s):** Projects must identify an existing framework or model as a guide for their programs' health education and/or capacity building focus and their outreach strategy.
2. **Projected Gaps/Needs Addressed:** Briefly discuss related programs currently available in the State(s) in which the proposed RHSE project will take place and how the project will address gaps and limitations among currently available programs/services. Provide evidence of community stakeholder input and buy-in on the selected project focus, delivery, and evaluation of success. Indicate whether the program has been implemented by Cooperative Extension in other States/regions.
3. **Program or Approach Description:** Briefly describe the proposed program (i.e., objectives, target audience, delivery methods, etc.) and if the program or approach is existing. Include a brief history of the program, cumulative data on individuals served, program outcomes and impacts to date, and program partners. If you are scaling up the programs, please include scaling implementation details.
4. **Related Publications:** If the program's content has been published in peer-reviewed sources, please provide citations and/or links to pertinent publications. If the program's evaluation results have been published in peer-reviewed sources, please provide citations and/or links to pertinent publications.
5. **Rurality:** Identify rural area(s) in which the project will be implemented and the rural population(s) the project will target (e.g., children, adults, older adults, military families, veterans, farmer/rancher families, physicians/health care providers, etc.).
 - a. For Rural (Nonmetro) classifications systems, see Part II, Section C of this NOFO.
 - b. Provide the criteria used to select the population group to be served. Support for targeting these specific groups must be clearly reflected in the data and estimates you already provided for the State(s).
6. **Audience Experience:** Describe the partners' prior experience in addressing the needs of the audience(s). Describe the team's ability and readiness to provide appropriate education, training, and outreach for such audience(s).
7. **Team Capacity and Ability:** Justify the institution's and team's capacity and ability to meet the gaps and limitations for the issue you have identified by detailing the accomplishments from similar projects. If the project involves collaboration between Land-grant Institutions and/or other organizations, identify each partner's relevant

previous experiences and successes that speak to its ability to successfully fulfill their role on the proposed RHSE project.

8. **Coordination with State Office(s) of Rural Health or other relevant DHHS agency or unit:** Describe how the project has/will coordinate with the applicable state office(s) of rural health and other relevant DHHS agency or unit to successfully complete the project.

Objectives, Activities, Outcomes, Timeline, and Logic Model

Projects must provide a clear description of the project objectives and activities. Please develop a logic model (for example resource, see [Logic Model Planning Process](#)). The following elements must be addressed and objectives must address program priorities listed in [Part I, Section B](#):

1. Explain how the activities will help to achieve the objectives and which audience is the intended beneficiary of each.
2. Clearly show the relationships between objectives, inputs, activities, desired outcomes, and anticipated impacts.
3. The sum of activities under each objective must lead to completion of those objectives within the three-year project duration. Arrange activities and associated outcomes and impacts by project year (Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3).
4. List and describe all intended outcomes to be tracked and monitored (e.g., changes in participant knowledge, awareness, competency, behavior, and condition, as well as policy and systems change, if applicable).
5. Provide a timeline to demonstrate the duration and the sequence of project activities, as well as division of labor (as noted in the next section of this NOFO). Each objective may have multiple activities. Chart against a quarterly scale so that the timeline depicts three years and twelve quarters.
6. Identify implementation challenges and procedural limitations you might encounter during the proposed project. Briefly describe how you plan to address those challenges and limitations.

Division of Labor

1. State Cooperative Extension Services and non-land-grant partners may jointly or individually provide leadership for different objectives and/or activities.
2. If applicable, describe each partner's role on the project.
3. Briefly describe roles of key staff on the proposed RHSE project and the percentage of time each will be dedicating to the project. If the percentages are expected to change in Year 2 and/or Year 3 of the proposed project, please indicate so and provide an explanation.
4. Indicate who on the team will provide the leadership and oversight for design, technical assistance, and completion of project outcomes evaluation. We highly recommend including a faculty/professional with expertise/strong experience in developing and implementing program evaluations to lead the design and completion of the RHSE project's logic model, project timeline, and outcome evaluation.

Project Performance Assessment Plan

Proposals must contain a strong performance assessment plan. Plans must clearly state the goals of the project and explain how project activities will lead to results (both outputs and outcomes). The plan must also identify the project's most significant outcomes and explain the methods by which those outcomes will be measured. NIFA strongly recommends that these plans include or refer to the project's logic model. Please be as specific as possible in describing the linkages among activities, outputs, and different types of outcomes (e.g., changes in participant knowledge, awareness, competency, and behavior; or changes in condition, policy, and/or system). Again, NIFA strongly encourages projects to include an evaluator who can help develop an evaluation plan and perform the evaluation. The purpose of the evaluation is to provide sound and reliable insight into the project's impact or missed opportunities and best practices that could be applied to future projects. For example, a goal of an evaluation might be to explain differences in results across target populations.

Management Plan

1. Describe the fiscal and administrative oversight for the project.
2. If the proposed RHSE project represents a collaboration between two or more Land-grant Institutions and/or non-land-grant partners, provide an explanation of how the relationship(s) and communication will be managed.

Project Communication and Dissemination

1. Briefly describe how results from this project will be communicated to state, regional, and national stakeholders, and the public. For example, consider how interfacing with Regional Rural Development Centers and State Offices of Rural Health might support the project's communication and dissemination.
2. Consider how lessons from the proposed project could be used to inform other Cooperative Extension initiatives in health and wellness in the State and at the regional level.
3. Include the main project communication and dissemination activities in the proposal timeline.

Viability

1. Describe steps toward the project's viability beyond the life of the NIFA RHSE grant. For example, identify opportunities (such as resources, trainings, partnerships, collaborations, or funding streams) you plan to explore/develop/enhance during the life of the proposed project to help you sustain project operations after NIFA funding has expired. If planning to sustain only certain aspects of the project beyond NIFA funding, clearly identify them. Include the main project viability activities in the proposal timeline.

Data Management Plan

1. 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](#)).

Centers of Excellence Justification (if applicable)

Applicants who wish to be considered as centers of excellence must provide a justification statement, at the end of the Project Narrative and within the page limits provided, describing how they meet the standards of a center of excellence, based on the following criteria:

1. The ability of the center of excellence to ensure coordination and cost effectiveness by reducing duplicative efforts regarding research, teaching, and extension in the implementation of the proposed research and/or extension activity outlined in this application
2. In addition to any applicable matching requirements, the ability of the center of excellence to leverage available resources, commensurate with the size of the award, in the implementation of the proposed research and/or extension activity outlined in the application by using public-private partnerships among agricultural industry groups, institutions of higher education, and the Federal Government
3. The planned scope and capability of the center of excellence to implement teaching initiatives to increase awareness and effectively disseminate solutions to target audiences through extension activities in the implementation of the proposed research and/or extension activity outlined in the application
4. The ability or capacity of the center of excellence to increase the economic returns to rural communities by identifying, attracting, and directing funds to high-priority agricultural issues

Additionally, where practicable (not required), applicants seeking Center of Excellence designation should describe proposed efforts to improve teaching capacity and infrastructure at colleges and universities (including Land-grant Colleges and Universities, cooperating forestry schools and certified Non-Land-Grant Colleges of Agriculture (NLGCA). See the list of [Certified Non-Land-Grant Colleges of Agriculture \(NLGCA\)](#), and schools of veterinary medicine).

Please indicate in this section if you are *not* pursuing status as a Center of Excellence.

3. **Field 12.** Add Other Attachments. See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

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. There must be a direct relationship between the items in the budget and budget narrative, as well as between budget narrative and the objectives/activities contained in the Project Narrative.
2. Every item in the budget must be justified in the proposal. The amount of detail depends on the nature of the project and the breakdown of costs.
3. Proposed budgets must not exceed \$350,000 total or request funding for more than 3 years.

4. Budget breakdown and budget narrative must be provided for each project year (Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3). **For FY 2026 applications, the project start date must be September 1, 2026 and the end date must be August 31, 2029.**
5. Annual budgets are to include reasonable expenses for three two-day trips for project director, project evaluation lead, and one representative from each partner institution receiving funds to attend RHSE investigators meeting. For FY 2026 applications, the first meeting will occur in winter 2027. The second and third investigator meeting will be held during the winters of 2028 and 2029, respectively. The purpose of these meetings is to encourage networking among State project teams from different regions and support alignment of efforts on rural health indicators and outcomes measures.
6. In budget narrative, costs (e.g., personnel, materials, travel, etc.) are to be broken down and itemized rather than shown as lump sums.
7. 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 Health and Safety Education “and the program code “LX.” Accurate entry is critical.
2. **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.** See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).
3. **Field 9. Bibliography.** See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

C. Funding Restrictions

Indirect Cost (IDC) is not to exceed 30 percent of the recipient’s Total Federal Funds Awarded (TFFA). [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:

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

If the result of number one above 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 rate 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 IDC 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](#)). The Uniform Guidance offers the option of electing to charge a de Minimis rate of 15 percent of modified total indirect 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](#).

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 the 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. Issue Statement and Planned Approach (15 pts)

This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will effectively address the issue identified based on a quality description of the nature and magnitude of the rural health/safety issue(s) the project is seeking to address through evidence of community buy-in, the planned approach offered, and proposed collaborations and partnerships. Factors include those identified in the Project Narrative.

2. Objectives, Activities, Outcomes, Timeline, and Logic Model (15 pts)

This criterion is used to assess the soundness of and alignment between the proposed objectives, activities, collaborations and partnerships, outcomes, and timeline as they relate to the successful development and delivery of the proposed RHSE project. Factors include those identified in the Project Narrative.

3. Division of Labor (10 pts)

This criterion is used to assess the institution's capability as well as any collaborators and partners to perform the project and the degree to which key personnel have expertise to successfully carry out the proposed work. Factors include those identified in the Project Narrative.

4. Project Performance Assessment Plan (15 pts)

This criterion is used to assess the proposed program performance outcomes and program performance monitoring. The soundness of the proposed performance monitoring approach is based on several elements, including delineation of appropriate objectives, methodology, plan of operation, timetable, logic model, expected products and results, performance metrics/targets, and dissemination plans. Factors include those identified in the Project Narrative.

5. Management Plan (10 pts)

This criterion is used to assess the institution's capability to execute the project based on a quality management plan designed to successfully carry out the proposed work. Factors include those identified in the Project Narrative.

6. Budget and Budget Narrative (10 pts)

This criterion is used to assess how well the total budget supports the project and is cost effective. Elements considered include the necessity and reasonableness of costs to carry out project activities and achieve project objectives; the appropriateness of budget allocations between the applicant and any collaborating institution(s); the adequacy of time committed to the project by key project personnel; and the degree to which the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes educational value for the dollar, achieves economies of scale, and focuses expertise and activity.

7. Project Communication and Dissemination (10 pts)

This criterion is used to assess how well the proposed project communication and dissemination efforts will reach appropriate stakeholders at all levels with relevant, unbiased, and clear information based on the audience. Factors include those identified in the Project Narrative.

8. Viability (5 pts)

This criterion is used to assess the soundness of the project's proposed sustainability efforts with respect to identifying opportunities the project team will explore/develop/enhance

during the life of the proposed project to help sustain project operations after NIFA funding has expired. Factors include those identified in the Project Narrative.

9. Data Management Plan (DMP) (10 pts)

This criterion is used to assess how well the DMP articulates how the project director (PD) and co-PDs plan to manage and disseminate data generated by the project.

C. Centers of Excellence

In addition to evaluating applicants using the criterion listed in [Part V, B](#) of this NOFO, NIFA will use the COE standards described in this NOFO to evaluate applicants that rank highly meritorious and requested to be considered as a COE. In instances where applicants are found to be equally meritorious with the application of a non-COE applicant, NIFA will prioritize the COE applicant meeting the COE criteria. NIFA will effectively use the COE prioritization as a “tie breaker.” Applicants that rank highly meritorious but who did not request consideration as a COE or who are not deemed to have met the COE standards may still receive funding.

Applicants that meet the COE requirements will have the COE designation in their notice of award. Entities recognized as COE will maintain that distinction for the duration of their period of performance or as identified in the terms and conditions of that award.

D. 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).

E. 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](#).

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.

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 SM.REE.NIFA.RHSE@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

Assistance Listing Number – ALN

Authorized Representative – AR

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

Center of Excellence – COE

Data Management Plan – DMP

National Institute of Food and Agriculture – NIFA

Notice of Funding Opportunity – NOFO

Research, Education, and Economics – REE

Rural Health and Safety Education – RHSE

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.

Matching:

The process through which a grant recipient matches 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.