REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Agriculture Business Innovation Center at an HBCU Institution

FUNDING YEAR:	FY 2022
APPLICATION DEADLINE:	January 13, 2022
LETTER OF INTENT DEADLINE:	Not applicable
AWARD AMOUNT:	$2,000,000
CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE NUMBER:	10.231

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT
National Institute of Food and Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture

Assistance Listing. The HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center is listed in the Assistance Listings (formerly CFDA) under number 10.231.

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
Application:	**5:00 P.M. Eastern,** January 13, 2022
Letter of Intent:	Not applicable
Applicants Comments:	Within six months from the issuance of this notice (*NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month*)

Stakeholder Input. The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) seeks comments on all requests for applications (RFAs) to deliver programs efficiently, effectively, with integrity, and focus on customer service. NIFA considers comments, to the extent possible when developing RFAs and use feedback 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 (email is for comments only). Please use the following subject line: Response to the Agriculture Business Innovation Center at an HBCU RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The FY 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act, Section 766 (Public Law 116-260) authorized NIFA to issue a competitive grant to support the establishment of an Agriculture Business Innovation Center at a historically black college or university (HBCU). The Agriculture Business Innovation Center must serve as a technical assistance hub to enhance agriculture-based business development opportunities. This notice identifies deadlines, funding information, eligibility criteria for applicants, application forms and associated instructions for the HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center funding opportunity.

Funding appropriated for the Agricultural Business Innovation Center program may be used by an HBCU or collaborative group led by an HBCU to serve as a technical assistance hub to enhance agriculture-based business development opportunities, including:

1. Provide technical assistance to food and agricultural producers, including production scale assessments, market planning and development, business planning, and other advisory services.
2. Assist startups in agriculture business including planning and obtaining funding.
3. Provide workforce development and educational experiences for students interested in careers in agriculture business.
4. Offer outreach services and activities, including the training, workshops and dissemination of information and materials.

The anticipated amount available for grants in FY2022 is approximately $2,000,000.

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PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The FY 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act, Section 766 (Public Law 116-260) authorized NIFA to issue a competitive grant to support the establishment of an Agriculture Business Innovation Center at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). Funding appropriated for the Agricultural Business Innovation Center program may be used by a HBCU to serve as a technical assistance hub to enhance agriculture-based business development opportunities.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center program, Assistance Listing 10.231 is aligned with the following USDA Strategic Goals:

1. Strategic Goal 2: Maximize the Ability of American Agricultural Producers to Prosper by Feeding and Clothing the World.
2. Strategic Goal 4: Facilitate Rural Prosperity and Economic Development.
3. Strategic Goal 7: Provide all Americans Access to a Safe, Nutritious, and Secure Food Supply.

The establishment of this center will enhance agriculture-based business development opportunities to include the following:

1. Provide technical assistance to food and agricultural producers, including production scale assessments, market planning and development, business planning, and other advisory services.
2. Assist startups in agriculture business including planning and obtaining funding.
3. Provide workforce development and educational experiences for students interested in careers in agriculture business.
4. Offer outreach services and activities, including the training, workshops and dissemination of information and materials.

Successful applicants **must not** use grant funds awarded under the authority of this RFA to renovate or refurbish education or outreach space; purchase or install fixed equipment in such space, or plan, repair, rehabilitate, acquire, or construct buildings or facilities.

"**HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center**" refers to an administrative unit, not a brick-and-mortar facility. The HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center facilitates administration, coordination, and management of multidisciplinary and multi-institutional, teaching, outreach, and integrated projects within the scope of agriculture and business. The HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center serves as a focal point to assess regional and national needs in Agriculture Business and establish priorities for collaborative projects.

The HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center provides leadership and administrative support for planning, development, implementation, and performance tracking of the teaching and outreach projects targeted at identified Agriculture Business needs. The HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center also ensures the relevancy, quality, and performance of funded projects. The HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center can partner with other

non-HBCU institution or a non-governmental organization to support the Centers' administrative and coordination responsibilities. If included, applicants are required to include detailed description of such sub-awards through the partnership in the submitted proposal.

The lead HBCU institution for the HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center will maintain fiduciary responsibility for the awarded funds. NIFA encourages a consortium of HBCU institutions to provide programmatic and administrative direction for the HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center. The Center must also have developed a process for soliciting input and partnerships from relevant entities (e.g., industry, government, community-based organizations).

The lead HBCU institution for the HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center must have:

1) demonstrated commitment and competencies related to the mission of the Center.
2) ability to provide broad programmatic leadership for teaching and outreach activities administered by the Center.
3) demonstrated competency in grant and subcontract management; and
4) ability and willingness to provide administrative support for the Center.

If funded, the lead HBCU institution will:

1) demonstrate that they have an established business program and some agriculture expertise or collaboration with the agribusiness community,
2) justify how they will serve as a technical assistance hub to enhance agriculture-based business development opportunities, and
3) provide a progress report on their impacts. (detailed below)

The HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center must submit an annual accomplishment report and a final report into the NIFA REEport system within 90 days from the end of the reporting period as per the Terms and Conditions. Annual and Final reports must include: 1) an outline of project information including specific projects and project objectives and goals for awards funded by the Center; 2) a concise description of individual project progress; and 3) how the work aligns with the HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center goals, and USDA and NIFA strategic goals.

Additional Applicant Information

Applicants must provide evidence of prior experience and impacts of their work in Agriculture Business. Previous experience may be demonstrated through NIFA-funded projects or funding from other sources.

Centers will receive a maximum award of $2,000,000 to be utilized over a 3-year period.

Leadership Skills Development. The development of leadership skills, knowledge, and qualities are necessary to prepare students for agricultural business and related careers in the private sector, government, and academia. The HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center teaching/education applications must demonstrably incorporate a leadership development component to equip students with technical and leadership abilities upon graduation. Specific activities may include:

1. Developing practical applications to increase understanding of leadership roles, including critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills; ethics and professionalism; and working in teams.
2. Providing workforce development and educational experiences for students interested in careers in agriculture business.
3. Connecting the academic classroom experience with daily leadership roles and organizational activities.
4. Providing opportunities for mentoring and shadowing; and
5. Organizing leadership academies, workshops, trainings, etc.

Table 2: Program Key Information

Title	Description
Program Code:	Teaching (EP), Outreach (EWE)
Program Code Name:	HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center (ABIC)
CFDA Number	10.231
Project Type:	Teaching/Education Project, Outreach Project, Integrated Project
Grant Type:	Standard Grant
Application Deadline: **Letter of Intent Deadline:**	January 13, 2022 Not applicable
Grant Duration:	3 Years
Anticipated # of Awards:	1
Maximum Award Amount:	$2,000,000

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The anticipated amount available for the HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center program in FY 2022 is approximately $**2,000,000**. 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, Bureau of Fiscal Service, is the designated payment system for awards resulting from this RFA.

B. Type of Application

NIFA will evaluate applications using the criteria described in Part V of this RFA. Application for FY 2022 is limited to the following applications type:

1. *New application*: **Only new applications** will be accepted and evaluated using the criteria described in Part V of this RFA and are subject to the due dates herein.

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

C. Project Types

Applicants must propose one of the following project types:

a. ***Teaching/Education Projects*:** A teaching or education project should develop human capital in order to help meet current and future national food and agricultural sciences workplace needs. Examples of relevant activities under this project type include (but are not limited to) the following: formal classroom instruction, laboratory instruction, and practicum experience such as faculty development, student recruitment and services, curriculum development, instructional materials and equipment, and innovative teaching methodologies.

b. ***Outreach Projects*:** Single-function outreach projects conduct programs and activities that deliver science-based knowledge and informal educational programs to people, enabling them to make practical decisions. Program delivery may range from community-based to national audiences and use communication methods from face-to-face to electronic or combinations thereof. Outreach projects may also include related matters such as certification programs, in-service training, client recruitment and services, curriculum development, instructional materials and equipment, and innovative instructional methodologies appropriate to informal educational programs. These projects must lead to measurable, documented changes in learning, actions, or conditions in an identified audience or stakeholder group. These projects must synthesize and incorporate a wide range of the latest relevant research results.

c. ***Integrated Projects**:* An Integrated Project includes the two of the three functions of the agricultural knowledge system (i.e., teaching/education, and outreach) within a project. The project must name one of the project types (teaching/education, or outreach) as the **primary project type**. The primary project type is defined as the area which will receive most of the funding (up to two-thirds of the total funding). There is no program code for the integrated application. Therefore, it is imperative that the applicants clearly identify

the primary project type in their summary and select the appropriate program code for this area.

1. The functions addressed in the project must be focused around a problem or issue and be interwoven throughout the life of the project to complement and reinforce one another. The functions must be interdependent and necessary for the success of the project and no more than two-thirds of the project's budget may be focused on a single component. Integrated applications must include individuals on the project team with significant expertise in each component of the project (teaching/education, and/or outreach).
2. Integrated applications may be submitted by a lead HBCU eligible institution where the expertise for all areas (teaching/education, and/or outreach) are within the Project Director's (PD) institution or multi-institutions where the expertise for one or two of the areas are from another institution(s).
3. For additional information on integrated programs, including tips for writing Integrated Project applications and an example of an integrated application, see Integrated Programs Application Information. You are also encouraged to contact the Program Contact to discuss the anticipated project parameters and outcomes to ensure the application content appropriately meets the requirements of an Integrated Project.

D. Grant Types.

The following grant type is provided below in this RFA for applicants:

a. ***Standard Grant*:** This is an award instrument by which NIFA agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined project period without the announced intention of providing additional support at a future date. Standard Grants support targeted original scientific Teaching/Education, Outreach, or Integrated Projects. An eligible, individual institution, independent branch campus, or branch institution of a State system may submit a grant application for project activities to be undertaken principally on behalf of its own students or faculty, and to be managed primarily by its own personnel. Applications for Standard Grants must address local or regional problems or opportunities in one of the listed Priority Areas. The application must have the potential to encourage regional or national program delivery in one of the selected priority areas. A Project Director may receive only one new award as the lead individual in a Need Area that focuses on a single subject or discipline. **Funds do not** have to be equally divided among project years.

E. 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 ABIC program must meet all the requirements discussed in this RFA. Applications may only be submitted by a lead and/or faculty member at an Historically Black College or University (HBCU).

Grant recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply for the purpose of supporting the overall coordination and administration of the HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center. 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 Grants Overview provides highly recommended information about grants and other resources to help understand the Federal awards process.

Duplicate or Multiple Submissions – duplicate or multiple submissions are not allowed. When the same applications are submitted twice or more, NIFA will accept the last submissions as the final application. For those new to Federal financial assistance, NIFA's Grants Overview provides highly recommended information about grants and other resources to help understand the Federal awards process.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

No Match Required - The HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center program has ***NO*** matching requirement. NIFA will not factor matching resources into the review process as an evaluation criterion.

PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

A. Method of Application

Applicants must apply to this RFA electronically; no other method or response is accepted. The electronic application for this RFA and additional resources are available on Grants.gov and Grants 101. **Table 3** provides instructions on how to obtain an electronic form. **Part II § 1** of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide (Application Guide) contains detailed information regarding the Grants.gov registration process.

Table 3. Steps to Obtain Application Materials

Steps	Action
Step One: Register	*New Users* to Grants.gov must register early with Grants.gov before applying (Register Here).
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-CBGP-008602, search for application here: Opportunity Package.
Step Four: Assess Readiness	Contact an AR before 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 Key Information: Customer service business Hours 24/7, except federal holidays.	Email: grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov Key Information: Business hours: Monday thru Friday, 7a.m. – 5p.m. ET, except federal holidays

B. Content and Form of the Application

The Application Guide is part of the corresponding application package for this RFA. The RFA overrides the Application Guide if there is a discrepancy between the two documents. NIFA will accept subsequent submissions to an application until the application deadline. However, applicants who do not meet the application requirements, including incomplete applications, risk being excluded from NIFA's review. NIFA will assign a proposal number to all applications that meet the requirements of this RFA. Applicants must refer to the proposal number when corresponding with NIFA. **Table 5** outlines other essential instructions for applicants.

Table 5: Key Application Instructions

Instruction	References (All references are to the 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 V
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 the 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** the Application Guide for the required certifications and assurances.

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

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

1. Field 7. Project Summary (PS)/Abstract. The PS must show how the project goals align with the project goals of the HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center program. See **Part V** of the Application Guide for instructions and suggested templates.

2. **Field 8**. Project Narrative (PN). **For Standard Grant applications**, the PN must not exceed 20 *1.5 spaced* pages of written text and up to 5 *1.5 spaced* additional pages for figures and tables (the font size for tables should be no smaller than 11 points, Times New Roman). Figures and tables may come after the 20 pages of text or be intertwined with the text (but they should not exceed 5 pages).

3. Proposals with project narratives that exceed the page limit requirement will not be accepted for review. Applicants must address all components of the Evaluation Criteria in their Project Narrative (see Part V, B.).

The PN must include **all** the following:

- **Cover Page** (first page of the narrative) will not count towards the page limit of the PN and should include the following;
  i. Type of Application (see Part II, B.)
  ii. Project Type (see Part II, C.)
  iii. Grant Type (see Part II, D.)
  iv. Need Area addressed (see Part II, Di)
  v. Program Code (see **Table 2**). For integrated project applications, the program code for the primary component must be listed. For example, if the primary component of an integrated project is research, then the applicant must indicate "EQ" as the program code.
  vi. Primary ABIC Priority Area (see **Table 2**)

- **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 RFA, Part III § 3.1 of the Application Guide and NIFA's Data Management Plan).

- **Logic model**. The logic model is required for Integrated Project applications, and recommended for Teaching/Education, and Outreach Project applications. The logic model planning process is a tool that should be used to develop your project before writing your proposal. It should detail the activities, outputs, and outcomes of the proposed project. Two additional pages may be used solely for the logic model. The logic model does not count towards the page limit of the narrative, and it should be placed directly after the 25-page narrative section in the application. More information and resources related to the logic model planning process are provided at Logic Model Planning Process.

- **Project Narrative.** To facilitate application review and evaluation, the applicant must include the following headings (A. through D.), followed by the applicant's response for each numbered item under A. through D. below:

A. Potential for Building and Strengthening Capacity and Advancing the Quality of Teaching/Education, or Outreach

1. **Significance of the Problem and Opportunity**. Clearly state the specific instructional, or outreach problem or opportunity to be addressed and the connection(s) with the institutional goals, strategic plan, or Plan of Work.

2. **Project Justification**. Summarize the body of knowledge justifying the need for the proposed HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center. Discuss the target audiences that the Center will engage, and the potential beneficiaries. Discuss how projects funded through the Center will be of value at the regional, national, or international level(s).

3. **Impact on Building and Strengthening Capacity**. Describe the institution's capability to perform the project and the degree to which the project will enhance its teaching/education, or extension capacity. Include a description of baseline information/preliminary data. Additionally, include the project's potential for adoption by other HBCU institutions.

4. **Continuation Plans**. Describe the likelihood of, or specific plans for, continuation or expansion of the project beyond the period of USDA support. Applicants must indicate if eventual self-support is built into the project and if plans are being made to institutionalize the program if it is successful.

5. **Innovation**. Describe the creative approach to 1) improving the quality of food and agricultural sciences, 2) the approach to solving a scientific problem or advancing a field of science that address objective(s) that are of high importance at the HBCU institution, and 3) the potential results in institutional capacity building.

6. **Multidisciplinary and/or Problem-based Focus**. Indicate how the teaching/education project is relevant to multiple disciplines in the food and agricultural sciences, or with other academic curricula and how the outreach project is multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary, and/or involves integrated (teaching/education, outreach) activities. Identify the field of science and the objective(s) that are of high importance and will be addressed at your HBCU institution. If partners are included, provide a concise plan on how they will be managed and coordinated. Identify potential results in HBCU institutional capacity building.

7. **Products and Results**. Explain, including metrics, the expected products, and results, outputs, and their potential impacts on strengthening agriculture business, food, agricultural, natural resources, and human sciences education, research, and outreach in the United States. Metrics to assess products and outputs are to be clearly delineated in the proposal. Describe the economic, environmental, or social gains resulting from the project outcomes (see Definitions, 'Outcomes' in Part VIII, E.). If the application has a collaborator(s), include a clear identification of the role of the collaborator(s), and the expected outcomes for the HBCU institution (see Part IV, B., c., Field 12 – Other Attachments).

8. **Institutional Commitment**. Explain the institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials) that are available to carry out the project.

B. Overall Approach, Cooperative Linkages and Quality of the Proposal

1. **Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages**. Cite and discuss the specific project objectives to be accomplished. For Integrated Project proposals, identify the individual(s) responsible to accomplish each objective.

2. **Plan of Operation and Methodology**. Describe procedures for accomplishing the objectives of the project. Describe plans for management of the project to ensure its

proper and efficient administration. Clearly identify and describe the metrics for evaluating successful project management. Discuss extent to which students from the HBCU institution will be involved in the teaching/education, outreach, or integrated project.

a. Plan for soliciting stakeholder (i.e., industry, government, community-based organizations, etc.) input regarding funding priorities; and

b. Any known non-HBCU subcontractor(s) who will support the overall administration and coordination of the HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center.

3. **Timetable**. Provide a timetable for conducting the project. Identify all important project milestones and dates as they relate to project start-up, execution, evaluation, dissemination, and closeout. Identify limitations that may impact the timetable and provide strategies to avoid or compensate for the limitations.

4. **Evaluation Plan**. Program evaluation is a systematic method for collecting, analyzing, and using information to answer basic questions about proposed initiatives to build or strengthen capacity of the HBCU institution in a specific area in the food and agricultural sciences.

- Provide a methodology and implementation plan for evaluating the accomplishment of stated objectives, results, and measurable outcomes during the project.
- Clearly identify the performance measure(s) by which the project's success will be assessed. In the evaluation plan, indicate the criteria and corresponding weight of each to be used in the evaluation process.
- Describe any data to be collected and analyzed and explain the methodology that will be used to determine the extent to which the needs underlying the project are met. Indicate how the evaluation will determine whether and to what degree the project had an impact on teaching/education, research, and extension capacity.
- Identify those personnel who will be responsible for assessing project results and administering the project evaluation and reporting process and include a description of their expertise or credentials.
- The evaluation plan is a crucial component of the application. The **following outline** may be used as a guide when developing an evaluation plan to monitor institutional capacity building/strengthening:

    a. **Section I:** A description of the evaluation framework which specifies what you want to evaluate, what questions are to be addressed in the evaluation, and the timeframe for conducting the evaluation.
    b. **Section II:** A description of the program implementation objectives.
    c. **Section III:** A description of the program outcome objectives, performance measures, and impact.
    d. **Section IV:** Procedures for managing and monitoring the evaluation and reporting.

5. **Dissemination Plan**. Document how project accomplishments (products, results, and impacts, etc.) will be disseminated to the broadest extent throughout the academic or scientific community and to policy makers and the public. Discuss the HBCU institution commitment to disseminate project results and products. Identify target audiences and explain methods of communication.

6. **Partnership and Collaborative Efforts**. Explain how the project will maximize partnership and collaborative efforts to strengthen food and agricultural sciences across teaching/education, and outreach (e.g., involvement of faculty in related disciplines at the same institution or expand cooperative activities with business or industry at the institution). As appropriate, clearly describe the collaborative management plan to ensure successful outcomes towards project goals.

   Field 12, Add Other Attachments. See **Part V** of the Application Guide.

   - **Collaborative Arrangements** – PDF Attachment. Title the attachment as "Collaborative Arrangements" in the document header and save the file as "Collaborative Arrangement". If it is necessary to enter into formal consulting or collaborative arrangements with others, such arrangements should be fully explained and justified. If the consultant(s) or collaborator(s) are known at the time of the application, a vitae or resume should be provided. In addition, evidence (e.g., letter of support signed by the AR of the consultant/collaborating organization) should be provided that the collaborators involved have agreed to render these services. The applicant also will be required to provide additional information on consultants and collaborators in the budget portion of the application.

   - **Letters of Commitment** should be included for all individuals, HBCU consortia members, and other organizations included in the proposal.

7. **Potential Pitfalls, Limitations, and Alternatives (if applicable)**. Identify and explain any potential challenges that might impede progress during the duration of the project. Additionally, describe any potential strategies or alternatives that might be implemented to address such challenges. **This section is optional for all applications and therefore, it will not count against the applicant during the evaluation process.**

C. Roles and Project Responsibility of Key Personnel

1. **Number and Qualifications of Project Personnel**. The application must clearly explain the adequacy of the number and qualifications of key persons who will develop and carry out the project.

2. **Capacity of Personnel to carry out the Project**. Qualified and sufficient personnel are critical for meeting the capacity building objective of a project. Proposals must clearly identify the role of all key personnel, responsibilities, and outcomes for each member, and describe the management plan to assure successful project outcomes.

D. Budget and Cost-Effectiveness

1. **Budget (including Justification)**. **In summary form**, explain how the total budget adequately supports the project. Details about the budget (as it pertains to the Evaluation Criteria in Part V., B.) should be included in the R&R Budget (see Part V, 7 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide).

2. **Cost Effectiveness**. **In summary form**, explain 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. Details about the cost-effectiveness of the budget (as it pertains to the Evaluation Criteria in Part V., B.) should be included in the R&R Budget (see Part V, 7 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide).

R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded). See **Part V** of the 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 Application Guide).

R&R Budget. See **Part V** of the Application Guide.
1. Match – Not Required
2. Indirect costs (IDC) – See Part IV § C of this RFA for funding restrictions regarding indirect cost, and **Part V** of the Application Guide for additional information. .

Supplemental Information Form. See **Part V** of the Application Guide.
1. Field 2. Program to which the applicant is applying. Enter the program name (**ABIC**) and the program code (see Table 2 for codes) Accurate entry is critical.
2. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List. See **Part V** of the Application Guide.

Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants. This is required for corporate applicants. See **Part VI § 2** of the Application Guide for a description of the term, "corporation."

C. Funding Restrictions

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

Indirect Cost (IDC) not to exceed 30 percent of Total Federal Funds Awarded (TFFA) of the recipient. 7 U.S.C. 3310 (a) and (c) Section 1462(a) and (c) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA) limits IDC for the overall award to 30 percent of Total Federal Funds Awarded (TFFA) under research, education, or

extension grant. The maximum IDC rate allowed under the award 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.

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

If the result of number one is the lesser of the two rates, 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 charged under the award by the prime awardee and the sub-awardee(s) does not exceed 30 percent of the TFFA.

If the result of number two is the lesser of the two rates, then the maximum IDC rate 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 (see 7 CFR §3430.52(b)). Amounts exceeding the maximum allowable IDC are considered unallowable. See sections 408 and 410 of 2 CFR 200.

Successful applicants must not use grant funds awarded under the authority of this RFA to renovate or refurbish research, education, or outreach space; purchase or install fixed equipment in such space, or plan, repair, rehabilitate, acquire, or construct buildings or facilities.

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

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

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

Each application will be evaluated by a minimum of three peer reviewers. We will use the evaluation criteria below (which are listed in priority order of importance) to review **Standard** applications submitted in response to this RFA:

Potential for Building and Strengthening Capacity and Advancing the Quality of Teaching/Education, or Outreach.

a) This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will have an impact on and advance the quality of the food and agricultural sciences by strengthening institutional capacities to meet clearly delineated needs of the HBCU institutional objectives, strategic plan, or Plan of Work.

b) Elements considered include institutional goals in the food and agricultural sciences, NIFA/USDA's Strategic Goals and/or Objectives, identification of a problem or opportunity to be addressed as one of the Priority Areas, justification for the project, innovation, advancing educational equity, multidisciplinary and/or problem-based focus, the institution's capability to perform the project and the degree to which the project will strengthen its Teaching/Education, or Outreach capacity, and potential for adoption by other institutions.

c) Elements include the institution's commitment to the project, the adequacy of institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials) available to carry out the project, potential for academic, or extension enhancement, and plans for project continuation or expansion beyond the period of USDA support.

Overall Approach, Cooperative Linkages, and Quality of the Proposal.

a) This criterion relates to the soundness of the proposed approach, with an emphasis on the following: objectives that show a clear connection to the institutional goals or strategic plan or Plan of Work; methodology; plan of operation, and timetable that describes limitations and strategies to avoid or compensate for identified limitations.

b) For Teaching/Education, Outreach, and Integrated proposals: emphasis is placed on the identified core competencies that students and/or clients will attain through new knowledge, the quality of educational, research, and/or extension support provided to the applicant institution through its partnerships and collaborative initiatives, and on the potential cooperative linkages likely to evolve as a result of this project that clearly identifies the key personnel responsibilities for products, outputs, outcomes, and potential impacts.

c) Metrics to assess products, outputs, and outcomes are to be clearly delineated in the proposal to include clear identification of the role of the partners and the outcomes for the HBCU institution. Participation of a USDA agency cooperator(s) is optional; however, if the application included a USDA cooperator(s), their role must be clearly identified.

d) Overall quality of the proposal relates to the degree to which the proposal complies with the application guidelines. The proposal is enhanced by its adherence to instructions (cover page, table of contents, organization, pagination, margin, font size, the specified page limitation, appendices, etc.); accuracy of forms; clarity of budget justification; well-prepared vitae for all key personnel associated with the project; and presentation.

e) Also assessed are how effectively ideas are presented, clearly articulated, and thoroughly explained, as well as the inclusion of all required forms.

Personnel Resources.

a) This criterion relates to the adequacy of the number and qualifications of key personnel who will develop and carry out the project, and the qualifications of project personnel who will manage the 1) successful attainment of the proposed outcomes, 2) assessment of project results and impacts, and 3) dissemination of these findings.

b) Proposals must clearly identify the role of all key personnel, responsibilities, and outcomes for each member, and describe the management plan to assure successful project outcomes. Qualified and sufficient personnel are critical for meeting the capacity building objective of a project.

Budget and Cost-Effectiveness.

a) This criterion relates to the extent to which the total budget adequately supports the project and is cost-effective.

b) 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).

c) 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, leverages additional funds, and focuses expertise and activity on high-priority Teaching/Education, Research, or Extension Need Areas based on the HBCU institutional objectives, strategic plan, or Plan of Work.

C. Organizational Management Information

Applicants must submit specific management information relating to an applicant prior to an award and update the information as needed. Applicants may only have to update their information if they had previously provided the information under this or another NIFA program. NIFA provides the necessary forms during the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible for an award under this program, some factors 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. Their applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures outlined in this RFA. 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. 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 as that as practical, project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by NIFA under this RFA may be used only for the purpose for which they are granted following the approved application and budget, regulations, terms and conditions of the award, applicable federal cost principles, USDA assistance regulations, and NIFA General Awards Administration Provisions,7 CFR part 3430, subparts A through E.

Release of Funds for HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center

The initial award will obligate the entire amount available for funding in the fiscal year, approve those costs related to and allowed for the administration of the HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center, and comply with approved streamlining agreements. The HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center will withhold funds for recommended projects/sub-awards pending submission of a NIFA-approved Request for Release of Funds, submitted on institutional letterhead, and signed by the AR of the host institution along with the Plan of Work for which the funds have been requested.

Plan of Work**:** A Plan of Work outlining information relative to individual projects must be submitted to the NIFA HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center Program staff for approval after the administrative Center has completed their respective competitions and have selected the projects that will be awarded. The Plan of Work must include:

- Project Title;
- Project Duration;
- Funding Requested by Subcontracting Institution;
- Executive Summary;
- Project Work Group;
- Background and Project Justification;
- Related Current and Previous Work; Project Goals and Specific Objectives;
- Alignment with USDA and NIFA strategic goals;
- Work Statement and Procedures;
- Timetable;
- Define teaching, and/or outreach components, as relevant;
- Budget Pages by Institution and year;
- Budget Narrative by Institution;
- One-page Vitas of Participating Collaborators; and
- Role of Participating Collaborators.

Award Notice. The 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 RFA (some are listed here: Federal Regulations). Unless specifically noted by statue or award-specific requirements, NIFA Policy Guide applies to all NIFA awards.

C. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

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

Due to the nature and administrative differences relative to the HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center Program, in addition to the reporting requirements listed in the Terms and Conditions of the initial administrative award, the following information must be submitted into REEport annually for each sub-award funded by the administrative Center:

1. NIFA Proposal Number;
2. NIFA Award Number;
3. Project Title;
4. Institutions involved;
    a. PD and co-PD names, title, and institution;
    b. All other participants involved in the project, funded or unfunded;
5. Purpose and Goals of the Project;
6. Specific Objectives of the Project;
    a. Update progress and results of each specific objective;
    b. Rationale for lack of progress on specific objectives;
    c. Actions to be taken to accomplish specific objectives;
7. Final Sub-award Project Report;
    a. Outcomes for each Objective

HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center Suggested Reporting Metrics

NIFA is required to develop an annual report to Congress on the HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center Program. NIFA has established 10 metrics (which are listed below) that each Center should address in their respective report.

These metrics are in addition to the metrics that were included in your grant application in response to the FY 2022 HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center RFA. If any of the metrics are not applicable to your Center, please include an explanation in your annual REEport progress report.

NIFA requests that HBCU Agriculture Business Innovation Center submit this information directly to the programmatic contact (see Appendix I) by October 15th of each year during the grant's period of performance. NIFA will send a reminder to the Centers one month in advance of the deadline. We ask that you submit this information directly to NIFA as a separate report; however, this information can also be included in your annual REEport progress report.

1. Number of students supported by the Center.
2. Number of students that participated in experiential learning and/or workforce development activities offered by the Center.
3. Demographics of students supported, and population served by the Center.
4. Number of start-up businesses established with support by the Center.
5. Number of Center-supported students participating in an internship in the agricultural business and economics and/or related fields.
6. Number of new technologies and/or processes introduced to stakeholders that are sponsored by the Center.
7. Number of new or enhanced courses or curricula (i.e., formal learning) for students offered by the Center.
8. Number of new trainings or professional development workshops (i.e., informal learning) offered by the Center.
9. Number of professional presentations emerging from education and outreach activities supported by the Center.
10. Number of publications, patents filed/awarded etc. from education and outreach activities supported by the Center.
11. Other (as determined by applicant).

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 requiring).
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 45 CFR Part 75 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,
5. 48 CFR Part 31, Contract Cost Principles and Procedures;
6. Transfer of funds budgeted for participant support costs to other categories of expense (2 CFR 200.456 Participant support costs);
7. 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.
8. Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-federal entity; and
9. The need for additional federal funds to complete the project.

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.

APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACTS

Program Contacts

Name	Email	Telephone
Maurice Smith	Maurice.smith2@usda.gov	816-518-1754
Keesha Corbin	keesha.corbin@usda.gov	816-469-9958

Administrative Contacts

Name	Email	Telephone
Awards Management Division (AMD)	SM.AMDAdministrativeContacts@usda.gov	N/A

For administrative questions related to

- Grants.gov, see Part IV of this RFA
- Other RFA or application questions, please email grantapplicationquestions@usda.gov
- Awards under this RFA, 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
United States Department of Agriculture
2312 East Bannister Road, MS 10000

APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Name	Acronyms
Authorized Representative	AR
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance	CFDA
Agriculture Business Innovation Center	ABIC
Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture and Mathematics	STEAM
Data Management Plan	DMP
National Institute of Food and Agriculture	NIFA
Request for Application	RFA
Letter of Intent	LOI
Research, Education, and Economics	REE
United States Department of Agriculture	USDA

APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS

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

Terms	Definitions
Continuation Award	An award instrument by which NIFA agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined period of time with a statement of intention to provide additional support at a future date, provided that performance has been satisfactory, appropriations are available for this purpose, and continued support would be in the best interest of the federal government and the public.
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.
Renewal Application	A project application that seeks additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in an original or amended award.
Resubmitted Application	A project application that was previously submitted to a program, but the application was not funded.
Resubmitted Renewal Application	A project application that requests additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in the original award. This is an application that had previously been submitted for renewal to but not funded.