Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program

2019 Request for Applications (RFA)

APPLICATION DEADLINE: June 4, 2019

ELIGIBILITY: See Part III, A of RFA



United States Department of Agriculture

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under **10.522.**

DATES: Applications must be received by **5 p.m. Eastern Time** on **June 4, 2019** Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding (see Part IV, C of this RFA). Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: We at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) seek your comments about this RFA. We will consider your comments when we develop the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and we'll use them to 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)). Submit your written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this notice via email to Policy@nifa.usda.gov. (This email address is only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and *not* for requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program (FASLP) for fiscal year (FY) 2019 to increase knowledge of agriculture and improve the nutritional health of children. The anticipated amount available to fund grants under this authority in FY 2019 is approximately $869,498.

This notice identifies the goals and objectives for FASLP projects, deadline dates, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a FASLP grant.

An informational webinar will be held on Monday, May 13, 2019 at 2:00 p.m. Eastern Time for potential applicants. The Zoom Connection link is below is **Table 1**.

Table 1: Webinar Information for Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program

Online Access Information
Access Webinar: https://zoom.us/j/409600548 *Zoom Meeting:* Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program
Dial-in-Information
Dial by your location +1 646 558 8656 US (New York) +1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose) Meeting ID: 409 600 548

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

The Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program (FASLP) legislative authority is located in Section 413 of the Agricultural Research, Extension and Education Reform Act (AREERA) of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7633). Public Law 113-79, February 7, 2014, Title IV of AREERA was amended by adding Section 413.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The FASLP purpose is to increase knowledge of agriculture and improve the nutritional health of children. The primary goals of the FASLP are to (7 U.S.C. § 7633):

1. Increase capacity for food, garden, and nutrition education within host organizations or entities and school cafeterias and in the classroom;
2. Complement and build on the efforts of the farm to school programs implemented under section 18(g) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (2 U.S.C. 1769(g));
3. Complement efforts by the Department and school food authorities to implement the school lunch programs established under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq,) and the school breakfast program established by section 4 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1773);
4. Carry out activities that advance the nutritional health of children and nutrition education in elementary schools and secondary schools (as those terms are defined in section 9101 of the elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C 7801); and
5. Foster higher levels of community engagement and support the expansion of national service and volunteer opportunities.

Food and Agriculture Service Learning Programs are intended to increase the knowledge of agriculture and improve the nutritional health of children and to bring together stakeholders from the distinct parts of the food system to increase the capacity for food, garden, and nutrition education within host organizations or entities, such as school cafeterias and classrooms, while fostering higher levels of community engagement between farms and school systems. The initiative is part of a broader effort to not only increase access to school meals for low-income children, but also to dramatically improve their quality.

The development of leadership skills, knowledge, and qualities are necessary to prepare students for agricultural and related careers in the private sector, government, and academia. Teaching applications must demonstrably incorporate a leadership development component to equip students with technical and leadership abilities upon graduation.

Specific activities may include:

- Developing practical applications to increase understanding of leadership roles, including critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills; ethics and professionalism; and working in teams;

- Connecting the academic classroom experiences with daily leadership roles and organizational activities;
- Providing opportunities for mentoring and shadowing; and
- Organizing leadership academies, workshops, trainings, etc.

FASLP aligns with USDA Strategic Goals and specifically addresses Goal 7, *Provide all Americans Access to a Safe, Nutritious and Secure Food Supply*.

NIFA is soliciting applications for the FASLP for the Food and Agriculture Service Implementation Project (FASIP).

C. Program Area Description

Food and Agriculture Service Implementation Project

Food and Agriculture Service Implementation Projects are intended for eligible applicants to scale up or further develop existing farm to school initiatives and other food and agriculture experiential learning initiatives within a distinct area of communities and schools in a State or region. Applicants should also add to existing activities or include new activities such as training and technical assistance, evaluation activities, curriculum development, or incorporate farm to school strategies in trainings and professional opportunities along with working closely with agricultural producers in the local and regional areas.

Preference will be given to applicants who submit Food and Agriculture Service Implementation Projects that (U.S.C § 7633((c)(2):

1. Hold a proven track record in carrying out the purposes described in Part 1.B of this RFA;
2. Work in underserved rural and urban communities;
3. Teach and engage children in experiential learning about agriculture, gardening, nutrition, cooking, and where food comes from; and
4. Facilitate a connection between elementary schools and secondary schools and agricultural producers in the local and regional area.

Food and agriculture service learning activities supported by Food and Agriculture Service Implementation grants may include, but are not limited to:

a. Expanding farm to school programs beyond lunch to bring local or regional products into the School Breakfast program;

b. Operating service projects (e.g. AmeriCorps, VISTA, FoodCorps, local service corps programs, etc.) that support farm to school initiatives in schools;

c. Readying producers to participate in the school food market by providing training on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and other food safety-related topics;

d. Providing technical support in the form of face-to-face trainings, consultations, webinars, etc.;

e. Developing promotional campaigns in support of farm to school initiatives;

f. Expanding strategic planning efforts to expand or coordinate efforts across multiple districts;

g. Conducting farm to school evaluation efforts;

h. Establishing new or strengthening existing community partnerships (e.g. working with personnel to identify appropriate suppliers, etc.);

i. Encouraging increased consumption of fruits and vegetables through promotional activities, taste tests, and other activities;

j. Expanding experiential or agriculture-based learning opportunities, such as the creation of school gardens, support to ag/food clubs, or increased exposure to on-farm activities; and,

k. Developing and evaluating integrated curriculum to reinforce food and nutrition-based learning throughout the school environment.

Activities in State agency proposals may include, but are not limited to: hiring of staff to support statewide farm to school initiatives; creation of statewide marketing campaigns or harvest of the month initiatives.

All projects must involve underserved rural and urban communities and facilitate a connection between elementary schools and secondary schools with agricultural producers in the local and regional area.

Applicants are encouraged to seek and create partnerships with public or private, nonprofit or for-profit entities, including links with academic institutions (including minority-serving colleges and universities), and/or other appropriate professionals, community-based organizations, school districts, and local and state government entities. When planning collaborations, see Part III, B. Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the successful completion of the project. See Part IV, D., Funding Restrictions.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The anticipated appropriated amount available for NIFA support of this program in FY 2019 is approximately $869,498 million. There is no commitment by USDA 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. Types of Applications

In FY 2019, you may submit a new application to the FASLP Program:

New application. This is a new project application that has not been previously submitted to the FASLP. We will review all new applications competitively using the screening for administrative requirements, review panel evaluation of proposals using evaluation criteria and selection process described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

C. Project Type

Food and Agriculture Service Implementation Project (FASIP)
Applicants should request a budget commensurate with the proposed project. No single FASIP award may exceed $225,000 (including indirect costs – see Part IV D of this RFA) for project periods for up to 2 years. Applications that exceed budgetary guidelines will not be reviewed. A no-cost extension may be requested. An implementation project may be supported by only one grant under this program. All FASIP awards will be made based on the relevance and merit of the proposed project with budgets considered only after the relevance and merit of the project have been determined. USDA reserves the right to negotiate final budgets with successful applicants.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applicants for FASLP must meet all the requirements herein to receive an FASLP award.

1. Application to the FASLP is limited to the following groups: state agricultural experiment stations; colleges and universities; university research foundations; other research institutions and organizations; Federal agencies; national laboratories; private organizations, foundations, or corporations; individuals; or any group consisting of two or more entities described herein;
2. Applicants must have experience in the area of (i) community food work, including the provision of food to people in low-income communities, including farm to school programs, and the development of new markets in low-income communities working closely with agricultural producers; (ii) job training and business development activities, curriculum and development for food-related school activities in low-income communities; or (iii) efforts to reduce food insecurity in the community, including food distribution, improving access to services, or coordinating school services and programs; (iv) applicants must show evidence of existing community support and engagement with school districts and agricultural producers via no less than three letters of support;
3. Demonstrate competency to implement a project, conduct an evaluation, provide fiscal accountability, collect data, and prepare reports and other necessary documentation;
4. Demonstrate competency in the implementation of a food and agriculture and/or school service learning program;
5. Demonstrate a willingness to share information with researchers, evaluators, practitioners, and other interested parties, including a plan for dissemination of results; and
6. Collaborate with one or more local partner organizations to achieve at least one hunger-free communities goal. See Steps for a Hunger-Free Community.

The eligibility requirements are limited to the applicant. Project partners and collaborators need not meet the eligibility requirements. Failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award. For those new to Federal financial assistance, a grants overview page is available on the NIFA website. This page includes information about free Grants 101 Training and other resources that are highly recommended for those seeking an understanding of Federal awards.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

No Match Required - The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (HR 2) removed the matching requirements for some NIFA competitive grants imposed by the Agricultural Act of 2014. The FASLP has ***NO*** matching requirement. NIFA will not factor matching resources into the review process as an evaluation criterion.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA. We urge you to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For information about the pre-award phase of the grant lifecycle see http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/learn-grants/grants-101/pre-award-phase.html.

New Users to Grants.gov must register with Grants.gov prior to submitting an application (Register Here). Registration may take up to two weeks to process, so applicants are encouraged to register early. Contact an AR prior to starting an application t assess the organization's readiness to submit an electronic application. **Part II § 1** of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide (Application Guide) contains detailed information regarding the registration process.

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

To receive application materials:

1. You must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov to access, complete, and submit applications. For basic system requirements and download instructions, see http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html. Grants.gov has a test package that will help you determine whether your current version of Adobe Reader is compatible.

2. To obtain the application package from Grants.gov, go to http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/download-application-package.html and enter the funding opportunity number

   Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-FASLP-006736

   From the search result, click "Select Package" to access the application package. A Grant Application Package is tied to a particular funding opportunity. You may submit an application to the particular funding opportunity to which the Grant Application Package is associated.

   Contained within the application package is the "NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide." This guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

   If you require assistance to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms) **or submitting the application,** refer to resources available on the Grants.gov website (https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-training.html). Grants.gov assistance is also available at:

   Grants.gov customer support

800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035
Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on federal holidays.
Email: support@grants.gov

Grants.gov iPortal (see https://grants-portal.psc.gov/Welcome.aspx?pt=Grants): Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self-service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7 a.m. - 9 p.m. EST). Have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov:

- Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
- Name of agency you are applying to
- Specific area of concern

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

You should prepare electronic applications following Parts V and VI of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A of this part). The following is **additional information** you need to prepare an application in response to this RFA. **If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.**

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., PDF) in Part III, Section 3 of the guide. ANY PROPOSALS THAT ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS (e.g., content format, PDF file format, file name restrictions, and no password protected files) WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Grants.gov does not check for NIFA required attachments or whether attachments are in PDF format; see Part III, Section 6.1 of the guide for how to check the manifest of submitted files. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. We will accept subsequent submissions of an application until close of business on the closing date in the RFA (see Part V, 2.1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further information).

For any questions related to the preparation of an application, review the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide and the applicable RFA. If assistance is still needed for preparing application forms content, contact:

- Email: electronic@nifa.usda.gov
- Phone: 202-401-5048
- Business hours: Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. ET, excluding federal holidays.

1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. See Part V, Section 2.17 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for the required certifications and assurances (e.g., Prohibition Against Entities Requiring Certain Internal Confidentiality Agreements).

2. SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 3 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

3. R&R Other Project Information Form

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 4 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract.

The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of FASLP. See Part V. 4.7 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

b. Field 8. Project Narrative.

NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 10 pages of written text, regardless of whether it is single- or double-spaced, and up to 5 additional pages for figures and tables. We have established this maximum (15 pages) to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following or the proposal will not be reviewed:

The Project Narrative for FASIPs must include the heading followed by the response for each of the points noted below.

1) **The Community and Schools to Be Involved in the Project and the Needs to Be Addressed.** Identify and succinctly describe the critical elements and needs of the local food economy or food system, school system/school district, including demographics, income, and geographic characteristics of the area or community to be served. Beyond a recitation of statistics, applications should describe local capabilities and assets, such as those identified in a community food assessment, school food environment assessment, and involvement of low-income communities and school districts in the context of project activities and operations.

   Most relevant is an explanation of why the applicant and its partners selected the activities proposed in the application. Note the main targets or beneficiaries of the project and the community and school system needs and opportunities being addressed. The needs addressed should directly relate to project goals and objectives described below. It is recommended that this section be no more than one and one-half pages.

2) **The Organizations and Communities Involved in the Project.** List the organizations and communities to be involved in carrying out the proposed project and the segments of the

local food economy or system they link. Include a description of the relevant experience of each community group or organization, including the applicant organization that will be involved, and any related project history. Proposals must demonstrate extensive community linkages, including schools or school corporations, and coalitions. Applicant organizations should demonstrate a history of commitment to and direct involvement in food security projects in low-income communities or in communities with low-income groups, as well as success in outreach to low-income participants. The qualifications of staff involved with the proposed project and/or organizational leadership must reflect the expertise necessary to carry out the proposed project activities or similar types of activities. Experience in and connections with the community will be considered as important as academic or professional credentials in this regard. The applicant organization demonstrates a history of, commitment to, and direct involvement in food and agriculture service learning programs in addition to food security projects in low-income communities and school districts, as well as success in actively engaging low-income participants/students.

In particular, describe how the communities and/or school districts being served – particularly the targeted audience and organizations – were involved in planning the project and will be engaged in its implementation. Please reference planning activities, assessments, meetings, or other activities that demonstrate community input into key decision-making.

No less than three letters from the key organizations involved in the project, acknowledging their support and contributions, must be provided. Additional support letters – such as those from farmers or schools, where appropriate, are encouraged to provide evidence of broad community involvement in both planning and future decision-making. All support letters must be attached in Field 12, Other Attachments (See Part IV, B. 3. c., below, Key Organization Support).

3) Project Goals and Intended Outcomes. List the goals and intended outcomes of the project. Outcomes must describe specific changes or results that will occur as a consequence of the project and that will constitute "success" for the initiative. These may include benefits caused by program activities such as changes in participants' skills, behaviour, or qualities of life, and positive changes in conditions in the school environment and/or community served or reductions in negative conditions. Outcomes must be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely, describe what will be accomplished, and who and how many people, e.g., students, participants, will benefit. It is recommended that this section be no more than two pages.

4) Activities to Achieve the Goals. Discuss how the goals and intended outcomes will be achieved. Discuss how the proposed project outcomes will be realized by providing a systematic description of how the most important steps or milestones will be accomplished. In addition to these descriptions, it is recommended that a table of up to three pages be provided with implementation details for these activities, including: (a) specific steps and

achievements in planning and implementation; (b) timetables for milestones, and, as relevant; (c) expected number of participants involved in each step of the process.

5) Relationship to Program Goals and Objectives. Discuss how the project and its proposed outcomes will address the goals and objectives of the Food and Agriculture Service Implementation Project (FASIP) as described in Part I., B. Discuss the specific changes that will result among participants, students, or in the communities served that address these Implementation Project priorities. It is recommended that this section be no more than one page.

6) Evaluation. FASIP proposals should contain a strong evaluation component. Innovative evaluation strategies are especially encouraged. Evaluations must focus on "logic models" (The logic model should be attached to Field 12, see Part IV.B.3.c.) and the measurement of outcomes and impacts in meeting the legislative goals and objectives of the Food and Agriculture Service Learning Project (FASLP). (See Part VIII, D., Definitions.) Through FASLP project operations and an evaluation of them, USDA seeks to determine best practices, including valuable lessons learned; therefore, proposals are encouraged that include both process evaluations (developing and monitoring indicators of progress towards the objectives) and outcome evaluations (to determine whether the objectives were met). In order to allow for sufficient evaluation of projects as described, it is recommended that applicants set aside between five and ten percent of the total project budget for evaluation purposes. (Note that USDA reserves the option to provide further detail regarding specific metrics and evaluation expectations at the time grants are awarded, or any time thereafter.)

7) Self-Sustainability. Describe which aspects or components of the project will continue beyond the end of the project period. Discuss how a one-time infusion of Federal funds will be sufficient for the proposed Implementation Project to advance local capacity-building and achieve sustainability. Projects should identify actual or potential funding sources for continuation of the project after federal funding has ended.

Projects should provide evidence, e.g., a market analysis or the outline of a business plan, to demonstrate that it is likely to become self-sustaining. Business plan outlines or any other document of evidence for sustainability may not exceed five pages and must be included as an appendix. Such evidence must be included as an Other Attachment, Field 12 (see Part IV.B.3.c.).

c. Field 12. Add Other Attachments. All attachments must be in PDF Format.
See Part V. Section 4.12 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide (Field 12 on the form) for instructions for this field.

1) **Key Organization Support.** Attach signed letters from key organizations involved in the project acknowledging their support, contributions and commitment; title the attachment 'Key Organization Support'. Provide evidence of broad community involvement in both planning and decision-making. This section is limited to two page

letters of support for each key organization. (See subsection 1. or 2., as appropriate, of Part IV, B.3.b. for additional information).

2) **Appendices to Project Narrative.** Title the attachment as 'Appendices' in the document header and save file as 'Appendices'. Appendices to the Project Narrative are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. The addition of appendices must not exceed seven (7) pages for IP proposals and should not be used to circumvent the text and/or figures and tables page limitations.
3) **Logic Model.** Title the attachment as 'Logic Model' in the document header and save file as 'LogicModel'. Applicants should seek the help of academic or other experts in evaluation design and implementation, as appropriate and available. A logic model or chart may also be used. It is recommended that this section be no more than one page.

   https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/logic-model-planning-process

4) **Fiscal Agent Letter.** See Part III.A. If it is necessary to include a fiscal agent letter then title the attachment as 'Fiscal Agent' in the document header and save file as 'FiscalAgent'.

Data Management Plan. A Data Management Plan (DMP) is required and is to 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). **See Part III Section 3.1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for NIFA attachment specifications.**

4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)
Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 5 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This section of the guide includes instructions about senior/key person profile requirements, and details about the biographical sketch and the current and pending support, including a link to a suggested template for the current and pending support.

5. R&R Personal Data – As noted in Part V, 6 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award. Part V.6 also notes the importance and use of the information.

6. R&R Budget
Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 7 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field D. Domestic Travel.

During the tenure of a grant, PDs must attend a PD meeting each year. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss their projects, opportunities for collaborative efforts, and to enhance dissemination of exemplary end products/results. Reasonable travel expenses to attend this meeting may be included in the application's budget under travel expenses.

b. Matching or Cost Sharing. No matching is required.

c. Field H. Indirect Costs. For further information and instructions regarding indirect costs, refer to Part V, section 7.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

7. Supplemental Information Form

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part VI, 1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 2. Program to which you are applying. Enter the program code name (i.e., enter "Food and Agriculture Service Implementation Project (FASIP)") and the program code (i.e., enter "FASIP").). Note that accurate entry of the program code is very important for proper and timely processing of an application.

b. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List. See Part VI, 1.8 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

8. Representations Regarding Felony Conviction and Tax Delinquent Status for Corporate Applicants

This is a required form for corporate applicants. See Part VI, 2 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for a description of the term, "corporation," and detailed information related to the questions on this form.

C. Submission Dates and Times

We recommend that you conduct an administrative review of the application before submission of it via Grants.gov to ensure that it complies with all preparation instructions. An application checklist is included in Part VII of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide to assist with this review.

The application should be checked for the following required item(s). The list includes:

1. Logic Model
2. Management Plan
3. Data Sharing Agreement
4. Current and Pending Support

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.5 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. Applications must be received by Grants.gov by **5 p.m. Eastern Time on.** Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. If you have trouble submitting an application to Grants.gov, you should FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence. **See Part IV. A for Grants.gov contact information.**

We send email correspondence to the AR regarding the status of submitted applications. We strongly encourage you to provide accurate email addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance. If the AR has not received correspondence **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 30 days of the established deadline, contact the Agency Contact identified in Part VII of the RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, you should cite this number on all future correspondence.

D. Funding Restrictions

1. Indirect Costs

Section 1462(a) and (c) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA) limits indirect costs for the overall award to 30 percent of Total Federal Funds Awarded (TFFA) under a research, education, or extension grant. The maximum indirect cost rate allowed under the award is determined by calculating the amount of indirect costs using:

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

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

If the results of number one, is the lesser of the two rates, the grant recipient is allowed to charge the negotiated indirect cost rate on the prime award and the sub-award(s), if any. Any sub-awards would be subject to the sub-awardee's negotiated indirect cost rate. The sub-awardee may charge its negotiated indirect cost rate on its portion of the award, provided the sum of the indirect cost 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 indirect cost rate allowed for the overall award, including any sub-award(s), is limited to 30 percent of the TFFA. That is, the indirect costs of the prime awardee plus the sum of the indirect costs 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 indirect costs 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 indirect cost is considered unallowable. See sections 408 and 410 of 2 CFR 200.

2. Construction and Renovation

Funds made available for grants under this subsection may not be used for the construction of a new building or facility or the acquisition, expansion, remodeling, or alteration of an existing building or facility (including site grading and improvement, and architect fees).

You may not use grant funds awarded under this authority to renovate or refurbish research, education, or extension space; purchase or install fixed equipment in such space; or the plan, repair, rehabilitate, acquire, or construction of buildings or facilities.

3. Subaward Restriction

The applicant must perform a substantive portion of the project and no more than 50 percent of an FASIP as determined by budget expenditures, may be sub awarded. Projects may divide their

budget allocations between partners as it fits their work plan. (For additional knowledge or expertise that is not available within the applicant organization, funds for expert consultation may be included in the "All Other Direct Costs" section of the proposed budget.)

3. Multiple Submissions

The Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program (FASLP) encourages applicants to submit one comprehensive proposal rather than multiple proposals under this RFA.

4. Funding Period Limitation

The funding period will commence on the effective date cited in the award instrument. Any such limitation also applies to subgrants made under awards subject to a funding period limitation.

E. Other Submission Requirements

You must follow the submission requirements noted in Part IV, Section 1.5 in the document entitled "NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide." For information about the status of a submitted application, see Part III, Section 6 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

We evaluate each application in a two-part process. First, we screen each application to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, a technical review panel will evaluate applications that meet the administrative requirements.

We select reviewers 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 FASLP will recommend that your project be approved for support from currently available funds or be declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review.

USDA reserves the right to negotiate with the PD/PI and/or with 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.

We will send copies of reviews, ***not*** including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments to the PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Evaluation Criteria

A reviewer's written evaluation entails two levels of assessment. First, the reviewer summarizes how well the application addressed each evaluation criterion. After the application has been assessed for strengths and weaknesses of each criterion, the reviewer then evaluates the overall likelihood that the project will have significant outcome and impact. These written reviews are

used to begin panel discussions with other reviewers serving on the peer review panel. Through these discussions, peer review panelists come to consensus on the final rating and ranking of proposals. A complete description of NIFA's peer review process can be found at NIFA Peer Review Process for Competitive Grant Applications.

We will use the evaluation criteria below to review applications submitted in response to this RFA:

1. The appropriateness of the goals, purposes, and outcomes of the project and how these goals will be achieved to invest in building the assets of the community, school districts, and producers and the capacities of the applicant and its partners.

2. How well the proposed project assists applicants, eligible entities, and others in achieving at least one of the primary goals of FASLP, which are to:

   a. Increase capacity for food, garden, and nutrition education within host organizations or entities and school cafeterias and in the classroom;

   b. Complement and build on the efforts of the farm to school programs implemented under section 18(g) of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (2 U.S.C. 1769(g));

   c. Complement efforts by the Department and school food authorities to implement the school lunch programs established under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq,) and the school breakfast program established by section 4 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1773);

   d. Carry out activities that advance the nutritional health of children and nutrition education in elementary schools and secondary schools (as those terms are defined in section 9101 of the elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C 7801); and

   e. Foster higher levels of community engagement and support the expansion of national service and volunteer opportunities.

3. The relevance of the experience of the organizations that are involved in the proposed project, including the applicant entity, and the type and extent of support that other organizations will be providing. *Applicants should demonstrate the knowledge of relevant best practices in the field and the use of them in their projects.* The qualifications of staff involved with the proposed project and/or organizational leadership reflects the expertise necessary to carry out the proposed activities or similar types of activities. Experience in and connections with the community and school system, in addition to experience in farming/gardening and connections to producers. Experience in using innovative marketing activities that mutually benefit agricultural producers and low-income consumers;

4. The viability of plans for realistically achieving self-sufficiency with a one-time infusion of Federal funds. Evidence is provided to demonstrate that the project is likely to become self-sustaining, e.g., a market analysis or the outlines of a business plan;

5. The strength of the proposed project's evaluation component and how it will contribute to the FASLP evaluations on a national basis, including sharing project results in a "exemplary practices" format; and

6. The timeline for accomplishing project goals, objectives and outcomes is realistic and achievable.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, we take extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. See http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/competitive_peer_review.html for further information about conflicts of interest and confidentiality as related to the peer review process.

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted one-time, with updates on an as-needed basis. This requirement is part of the responsibility determined prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another NIFA program. We will provide you copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, 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 involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

E. Application Disposition

An application may be withdrawn at any time before a final funding decision is made regarding the application. Each application that is not selected for funding, including those that are withdrawn, will be retained by FASLP for a period of three years.

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the NIFA awarding official shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the NIFA awarding official as the effective date of the grant shall 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 RFA may be used only for the purpose for which they are granted in accordance with 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 at 7 CFR part 3430, subparts A through E.

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the information described in 2 CFR 200.210.

See http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html to view current NIFA award terms and conditions.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These may include, but are not limited to, the ones listed on the NIFA web page – http://nifa.usda.gov/federal-regulations.

NIFA Federal Assistance Policy Guide—a compendium of basic NIFA policies and procedures that apply to all NIFA awards, unless there are statutory, regulatory, or award-specific requirements to the contrary—is available at http://nifa.usda.gov/policy-guide.

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

The output and reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions (see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html for information about NIFA award terms). If there are any program or award-specific award terms, those, if any, will be identified in the award. All awardees are expected to provide a progress report to NIFA each November, covering the process and outcome evaluation to the National Program Leader for the FASLP. Each awardee conducts an evaluation and the project director is expected to ensure the evaluation data and progress report are sent to NIFA by the November date for the duration of the project.

Grantees are also to use REEport, NIFA's electronic, web-based inventory system to submit an initial project initiation which documents expected products and outcomes of the project. Additionally, annual progress report documenting realized project outcomes must be submitted to the electronic system. The web-based system facilitates an electronic workflow between grantees and NIFA for project accomplishments to be easily searchable and allows for public access to information on Federally-funded projects. The details of these reporting requirements, including those specific to the annual and final technical reports, are included in the award terms and conditions.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Programmatic Contacts –

Dr. Jane Clary Loveless; National Program Leader, Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program; National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 2225 Washington, DC 20250-2225; telephone: 202-720-3891; fax: 202-(202)720-9366; e-mail: jclary@nifa.usda.gov; or

Dr. Pascale Jean, Program Specialist, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 2225 Washington DC 20250-2225; telephone: 202-720-6079; fax: 202-401-4888; email: Pascale.Jean@nifa.usda.gov.

Administrative/Business Contact –

Susan Bowman; Awards Management Branch Chief; Office of Grants and Financial Management; National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 2271; Washington, DC 20250-2271; telephone 202-401-4324; fax 202-401-6271; e-mail sbowman@nifa.usda.gov.

Adriene Woodin; Awards Management Branch Chief; Office of Grants and Financial Management; National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 2271; Washington, DC 20250-2271; telephone 202-401-4320; fax 202-401-6271; email awoodin@nifa.usda.gov.

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Use of Funds; Changes

1. 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.

2. 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:

a. Change in the scope or the objective of the project or program (even if there is no associated budget revision requiring prior written approval).

b. Change in a key person specified in the application or the federal award.

c. The disengagement from the project for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in time devoted to the project, by the approved project director or principal investigator.

d. The inclusion, unless waived by the federal awarding agency, of costs that require prior approval in accordance with 2 CFR 200 Subpart E—Cost Principles of this part 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 Part 31, "Contract Cost Principles and Procedures," as applicable.

e. The transfer of funds budgeted for participant support costs as defined in §200.75 Participant support costs to other categories of expense.

f. Unless described in the application and funded in the approved federal awards, the subawarding, transferring or contracting out of any work under a federal award, including fixed amount subawards as described in §200.332 Fixed amount subawards. This provision does not apply to the acquisition of supplies, material, equipment, or general support services.

g. Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-federal entity.

h. The need arises for additional Federal funds to complete the project.

The awardee will be subject to the terms and conditions identified in the award. See http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html for information about NIFA award terms.

B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of NIFA transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary of Agriculture determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. We will retain for three years a copy of an application that does not result in an award. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

C. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 2 CFR Part 415, Subpart C, this program is excluded from the scope of the 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. Definitions

Please refer to 7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Financial Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions, for applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.

For the purpose of this program, the following additional definitions are applicable:

Community Food Assessment is a collaborative and participatory process that systematically examines a broad range of community food issues and assets, so as to inform change actions to make the community more food secure.

Exemplary practices means high quality community food security work that emphasizes food security, nutritional quality, environmental stewardship, and economic and social equity.

Expert reviewers means individuals selected from among those recognized as uniquely qualified by training and experience in their respective fields to give expert advice on the merit of grant applications in such fields who evaluate eligible proposals submitted to this program in their respective area(s) of expertise.

Food planning association means a state, regional, or local entity that conducts long-term planning activities related to food, nutrition, or agriculture issues and addresses the needs of low-income people in a manner that is comprehensive and self-sustaining and mutually benefits agricultural producers and consumers.

Food policy council means a representative, multi-stakeholder, inter-agency body at the state, regional, or local level that is sanctioned by a government entity to address a broad range of food, nutrition, or agriculture issues in a manner that is comprehensive and self-sustaining and mutually benefits agricultural producers and low-income consumers.

Food security means access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for all people at all times.

Hunger-free Communities goal means any of the 14 goals described in House Concurrent Resolution 302, 102nd Congress, agreed to October 5, 1992.

Logic model means a systematic and visual way to present and share an understanding of the relationships among resources available to operate a program, and includes: planned activities and anticipated results; and the presentation of the resources, inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts.

Private non-profit entity means any nongovernmental corporation, trust, association, cooperative or other organization which: (i) is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purposes in the public interest; (ii) is not organized primarily for profit; and (iii) uses its net proceeds to maintain, improve, and/or expand its operations.

Sustainably produced foods means foods that are produced in ways that limit "food miles," and address social and economic justice issues as well as land stewardship. USDA's definition of sustainable development is defined as, "Economic, environmental, and social sustainability of diverse food, fiber, agriculture, forest, and range systems." USDA will balance goals of improved production and profitability, stewardship of the natural resource base and ecological systems, and enhancement of the vitality of rural communities. [***Special Reference Briefs Series* no. SRB 99-02, Updates SRB 94-05 September 1999,** revised August 2007, Alternative Farming Systems Information Center, National Agricultural Library, Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture https://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic.

E. Materials Available on the Internet

Request for Applications: https://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/food-and-agriculture-service-learning-program