

# **Notice of Funding Opportunity**

## **Urban, Indoor, and other Emerging Agricultural Production Research, Education, and Extension Initiative**

FUNDING YEAR: Fiscal Year (FY) 2026

APPLICATION DEADLINE: July 27, 2026

ANTICIPATED PROGRAM FUNDING: \$4,000,000

AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL AWARD RANGE: \$50,000 - \$500,000

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: USDA-NIFA-OP-011777

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 10.333

# ANNOUNCEMENT

National Institute of Food and Agriculture  
United States Department of Agriculture

**Assistance Listing Number (ALN):** The Urban, Indoor, and other Emerging Agricultural Production Research, Education and Extension Initiative (UIE) is listed in the Assistance Listings under number 10.333.

**Table 1:** Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
<b>Application:</b>	5:00 P.M. Eastern Time, July 27, 2026 [Ref to <a href="#">Part I, C</a> of this NOFO]
<b>Applicants Comments:</b>	Within six months from the issuance of this notice (NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month)

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

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

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

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

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

**Stakeholder Input.** NIFA seeks comments on all Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) so it can deliver programs efficiently, effectively, with integrity, and with a focus on customer service. NIFA considers comments to the extent possible when developing NOFOs and uses comments to help meet the requirements of Section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 ([7 U.S.C. 7613\(c\)\(2\)](#)). Applicants may submit written comments to [Policy@usda.gov](mailto:Policy@usda.gov). Please use the following subject line: Response to the UIE NOFO.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This notice identifies the objectives for the UIE projects, deadlines, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions. UIE supports research, education and extension activities that facilitate development of urban, indoor, and other emerging agricultural production systems. UIE emphasizes activities on several segments of the value chain, including production, harvesting, transportation aggregation, packaging, distribution, and marketing needs. The amount available for UIE for the combined FY26 and FY27 is approximately \$4 million. This NOFO is being released prior to funding for FY27 becoming available, which may affect the timing and availability of funds for this program.

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## PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

### A. Legislative Authority

Section 1672E of the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 ([7 U.S.C. 5925g](#)).

### B. Purpose and Priorities

The UIE program (ALN 10.333) supports research, education, and extension activities through competitive grants designed to address key production and market challenges of local, regional, and national importance. The authorization covers the full food value chain, including production, harvesting, transportation, aggregation, packaging, distribution, and market development. Public input was solicited through [Federal Register Notice 2020-08402](#), stakeholder listening sessions, and consultation with the Federal Advisory Committee (FAC) for Urban Agriculture to help identify the most urgent needs in the above listed food value chain stages. This input helped identify the most urgent needs across the food value chain.

To address the most critical challenges in agricultural production and market growth, applications must align with the FY 2026 Priority Focus of identifying and promoting the horticultural, social, and economic factors that contribute to successful agricultural production in high-population-density settings, indoor and controlled-environment systems, and other emerging agricultural production approaches.

Applicants must include local community organizations in the project team. Priority will be given to proposals that involve the cooperation of multiple eligible applicants.

**Table 2:** Program Key Information

	Title	Description
<b>Program Code:</b>	UIE	
<b>Program Code Name:</b>	Urban, Indoor, and Emerging Agriculture	
<b>ALN:</b>	10.333	
<b>Project Type:</b>	Integrated	
<b>Grant Type:</b>	Standard, Workshop	
<b>Application Deadline</b>	July 27, 2026	
<b>Grant Duration:</b>	24-36 Months	
<b>Anticipated # of Awards:</b>	8	
<b>Maximum Award Amount:</b>	\$500,000	

### C. Program Area Description

The UIE program seeks applications that address **all** of the following:

- Explain the magnitude of the most urgent and critical needs or problems for the target agricultural system and how they will be addressed in the grant;
- Engage local community organizations in the project team, including project development;
- Focus on opportunities to develop and strengthen:
  - Income or employment,
  - Enhanced quality of life and access to safe nutritious food for communities in high population-density areas,
  - Estimated or actual economic return for UIE food production systems,

- Private industry investment,
  - Site selection and reduce barriers to land access;
- Describe a meaningful approach for blending research and extension expertise and other outreach and implementation approaches throughout the project to address principal objectives;
- Provide evidence that the project is aligned to stakeholder-provided priorities listed above;
- Present expected solutions or improvements and how these will be assessed and measured; and
- Address the potential costs of a proposed solution and describe how it can be scaled to be sustainable in the short term and long term.
- Explain how the project will strengthen the target agricultural and food-production systems and how results will be adopted or applied at a local, regional, or national level.

## PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

### A. Available Funding

The amount available for UIE in FY 2026 is approximately \$4,000,000. This amount includes approximately \$2,000,000 from FY 2026 and \$2,000,000 from FY 2027. This NOFO is being released prior to funding for FY 2027 becoming available, which may affect the timing and availability of funds for this program. USDA is not committed to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

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

### B. Application Restrictions

NIFA will evaluate applications using the criteria described in [Part V](#) of this NOFO. Application for FY2027 is limited to the following application types:

1. *New application*: New applications will be evaluated using the criteria described in [Part V](#) of this NOFO and are subject to the due dates herein (see [Appendix III](#) for definition).
2. *Resubmitted application*: Resubmitted applications must include the response to the previous review panel summary and are subject to the same criteria and due dates herein. Resubmitted applicants must enter the NIFA-assigned proposal number of the previously submitted application in the *Federal Field (Field 4)* on the application form (see [Appendix III](#) for definition).

### C. Project and Grant Types

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

1. Project Types.
  - a. Integrated Projects. An Integrated Project includes at least two of the three functions of the agricultural knowledge system (i.e., research, education, and extension) within a project. For this program, each proposal must include a research component. Additionally, the projects should have either an extension component or an education component or both as relevant to project objectives. Any one component cannot exceed 67 percent and has to be a minimum of 33 percent of the project activity and budget.
    - Research activity means a scientific investigation or inquiry which results in the generation of knowledge.
    - Education activity means formal classroom instruction, laboratory instruction, and practicum experience in the food and agricultural sciences and other related matters.
    - Extension activity means a series of educational activities with identified learning objectives that deliver science-based knowledge to people outside of the traditional classroom, enabling them to make practical decisions.
2. Grant Types.
  - a. Standard Grants

Standard Grants for UIE support targeted original Integrated Projects. Standard awards cannot exceed \$500,000.

b. Workshop Grants

Workshop Grants support workshops bringing together scientists and others, including end-users, to identify research, education, or extension needs; update information; or advance understanding of food systems targeted by this program's priorities. These should occur within 12 months of the award start date. Workshops providing current information to growers should be held to the extent possible in conjunction with meetings regularly attended by target producers and processors. Workshop grants should go beyond just meeting activities and should lead to clear outputs and outcomes. Documentation of outputs and outcomes may include, but is not limited to proceedings, white papers, opinion papers, fact sheets, bulletins, or priority setting. This information should be publicly available. Workshop Grants cannot exceed \$50,000.

**D. Ethical Conduct of Funded Projects**

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

## PART III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

### A. Eligibility Requirements

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

Applications may only be submitted by the following entities:

- (A) State Agricultural Experiment Stations;
- (B) Colleges and universities;
- (C) University research foundations;
- (D) Other research institutions and organizations;
- (E) Federal agencies;
- (F) National laboratories;
- (G) Private organizations, foundations, or corporations;
- (H) Individuals; or
- (I) Any group consisting of two or more of the entities described in subparagraphs (A) through (H).

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

**Duplicate or Multiple Submissions** – duplicate or multiple submissions are not allowed. NIFA will disqualify both applications if an applicant submits duplicate or multiple submissions. Each Project Director (PD) may only submit one application to this program per fiscal year as the lead PD.

### B. Cost Sharing or Matching

**No Match Required** - The UIE has no matching requirement. NIFA will not factor matching resources into the review process as an evaluation criterion. While not required, cost share is encouraged.

## PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

### A. Method of Application

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

**Table 3.** Steps to Obtain Application Materials

Steps	Action
<b>Step One: Register</b>	<i>New Users</i> to <a href="https://www.grants.gov">Grants.gov</a> must register early with <a href="https://www.grants.gov">Grants.gov</a> prior to submitting an application ).
<b>Step Two: Download Adobe</b>	Download and Install <a href="#">Adobe Reader</a> (see <a href="#">Adobe Software Compatibility</a> for basic system requirements).
<b>Step Three: Find Application</b>	Using this funding opportunity number <b>USDA-NIFA-OP-011777</b> , search for application here: <a href="#">Opportunity Package</a> .
<b>Step Four: Assess Readiness</b>	Contact an AR prior to starting an application to assess the organization’s readiness to submit an electronic application.

**Table 4:** Help and Resources

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

### B. Content and Form of the Application

The NIFA Grants Application Guide is part of the corresponding application package for this NOFO. The NOFO overrides the NIFA Grants Application Guide if there is a discrepancy between the two documents. Applicants that do not meet the application requirements, to include partial applications, risk being excluded from NIFA’s review. NIFA will assign a proposal number to all applications that meet the requirements of this NOFO. Applicants must refer to the proposal number when corresponding with NIFA. **Table 7** outlines other key instructions for applicants.

**Table 5: Key Application Instructions**

Instruction	References (All references are to the NIFA Grants Application Guide)
Attachments must be in a portable document format (PDF) format.	Part IV
Check the manifest of submitted files to verify attachments are in the correct format.	Part IV
Conduct an administrative review of the application before submission.	Part IV
Follow the submission instructions.	Part IV
Provide an accurate email address, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R.	Part V
Contact the <a href="#">Grants.gov helpdesk</a> for technical support and keep a record of the correspondence.	N/A
Contact NIFA if applicant does not receive correspondence from NIFA regarding an application within <b>60</b> days of the application deadline.	N/A

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

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

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

**a) Field 7. Project Summary (PS)/Abstract.**

The PS must show how the project goals align with the project goal of the UIE. See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide for instructions and suggested templates.

**b) Field 8. Project Narrative (PN).**

Page limits are listed individually for each section within the PN. The PN must use 1.5 spaced pages of text in size 12-point Times New Roman Font, with 1-inch margins. Figures and tables should use a font size no smaller than 11-point Times New Roman. The application must adhere to these formatting requirements and the page limits listed in each section, or their application will be returned without review. The only appendices to the PN are those listed in Field 12 below. The Project Narrative must include all the following:

**i) Response to the previous panel review**

Page limit: One page

This requirement only applies to Resubmitted Applications or Resubmitted Renewal Applications as described in Part II, B. Include the previous proposal number in the first line, and the title “Response to Previous Review”.

**ii) Table of Contents**

iii) **Executive summary**

Page limit: Two pages

Applications without an executive summary containing the following parts will not be considered for funding. Note that this section is in addition to and different from the Project Summary page.

1. Project title.
2. Project type (see Part II C. of this NOFO).
3. Describe how your project addresses the legislatively defined goal of identifying and promoting the horticultural, social, and economic factors that contribute to successful agricultural production systems.
4. Indicate the approximate distribution of percentage of effort between research, education and extension.
5. Program Staff and their role. Include a table with staff name, title, affiliation, address, and e-mail for PD(s), Co-PD(s) and Collaborators. Please note all people listed as co-PD should be eligible and able to fulfill the role of PD for the project if the need arises. Review of Co-PD roles will be included in project review. Please be clear about Co-PDs vs sub-contractors. A template table is included below.

**Table 6:** List of Program Staff

Role	Name	Title	Institution	City, State	Email
Project Director (PD)					
Co-Project Director (Co-PD)					
Co-Investigator					

6. A brief summary (2-3 sentences) describing the critical stakeholder needs addressed by the project and the project's long-term goals. Provide cross-references to full descriptions in the narrative.
7. A brief summary (2-3 sentences) of how stakeholders were engaged in the development of the questions being addressed by the project, and how they will continue to be engaged throughout the project. Provide a cross-reference to the full description in the narrative.
8. A brief summary (2-3 sentences) of the outreach and/or education plan proposed by the project. Provide a cross-reference to the full description in the narrative.
9. A brief summary (2-3 sentences) describing potential economic, social, and other benefits. (Who benefits and how will it be measured?)

iv) **Project Description**

Page limit: 18 pages

The Project Description must include the following components:

## 1. Introduction

- Provide a clear statement of the long-term goal(s), the critical need(s) of the kind of agriculture being addressed and supporting outreach objectives, and how stakeholders were involved in the development of these goals.
- Summarize the body of knowledge or other past activities that substantiate the need for the proposed project and provide relevant citations.
- Describe significant ongoing or recently completed activities related to the proposed project including the work of key project personnel. Documentation is particularly important of prior research, education, and extension. Applications should demonstrate how duplication of effort with similar activities by other investigators will be avoided.
- Preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed work should be included in this section. All works cited should be referenced.

## 2. Rationale and Significance

Concisely present the rationale behind the proposed project. The specific relationship of the project's objectives to one or more of UIE priorities should be clear. Discuss novel or innovative aspects of the proposed project.

## 3. Objectives

Clearly state the project objectives.

## 4. Approach

Clearly state the activities proposed to address the objectives. Specifically, this section must include all the following:

- Methods to be used in carrying out the proposed project, including the feasibility of the methods and why they were selected;
- Expected results and outcomes;
- Means by which these results and outcomes will be analyzed, assessed, or interpreted;
- How results or products will be used;
- Outreach plan (if appropriate), including science-based tools disseminated, participants involved in delivery, and how impacts will be measured, including the learning outcomes;
- Potential pitfalls;
- Limitations to proposed procedures; and
- A full explanation of any materials, procedures, situations, or activities related to the project that may be hazardous to personnel, along with an outline or precautions to be exercised to avoid or mitigate the effects of such hazards. For work with organisms that might be perceived as potentially invasive species, indicate precautions to prevent spread or specific information on the context in which they are being used;
- Alignment to USDA Research and Development Priorities.

## v) **Project Timeline**

Page Limit: 1 pages

Include a table, delineating the activities proposed, key personnel and institutional roles in those activities, and when the activities will be completed.

vi) **Logic Model**

Page limit: Two pages

A logic model is a visual framework that illustrates the logical relationships between a program's resources, activities, outputs, and intended outcomes to guide planning, implementation, and evaluation. See [Logic Model Planning Process](#) for more information about Logic Models. Logic Models are NOT required for Workshop Applications.

c) **Field 12. Add Other Attachments.**

See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide. You may only attach the following Appendices in this field:

i. **Appendix A: Data Management Plan (DMP).**

Page limit: Two pages, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins

Name this PDF "AppA\_DMP". Applicants should clearly articulate how the project director (PD) and co-PDs plan to manage and disseminate the data generated by the project. The DMP will be considered during the merit review process (see [Part V, B](#) of this NOFO, [NIFA's Data Management Plan](#)). DMPs are NOT required for Workshop Applications.

ii. **Appendix B: Mentoring Plan.**

Page limit: Two pages, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins

Name this PDF "AppD\_Mentoring\_Plan". Mentoring plans have a 2-page limit. All student/trainee types should be included in the same mentoring plan. Only include one mentorship plan total per project (not one per co-PD). Mentoring plans are not required for Workshop Grants. The Mentoring Plan should describe:

1. Past or proposed training of individuals who will serve as mentors including equipping, mentoring, or monitoring activities they have received or will receive to help them effectively mentor students and trainees during the project;
2. Groups of students or individual trainees to be mentored on the project, including students grades 9-12, undergraduate students, graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, professionals and any other individuals to be trained or mentored on the project;
3. Detailed mentoring activities to be delivered throughout the project to each distinct category or group of students and/or trainee participants, including those activities provided through research, education, Extension or outreach efforts; and
4. Expected outcomes derived from the mentoring activities and prospective impact(s) on the food and agricultural sciences.

iii. **Appendix C: Letters of Support.**

Page limit: None

Name this PDF "AppE\_Support\_Letters". A single pdf with all letters of support should be attached. It is helpful to reviewers if this appendix contains a list of those organizations that have provided letters of support at the beginning of the appendix. Applications without letters of support will be returned without review.

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

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

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

Indirect Costs (IDC) – See [Part IV, C](#) of this NOFO for funding restrictions regarding IDC, and **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide for additional information.

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

a. **Field 2. Program to which the applicant is applying.** Enter the program name “Urban, Indoor, and Emerging Agriculture Initiative” and the program code “UIE”. Accurate entry is critical.

b. **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.** See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide.

### **C. Funding Restrictions**

Indirect Cost (IDC) is not to exceed 30 percent of the recipient’s Total Federal Funds Awarded (TFFA). [7 U.S.C. 3310](#) limits the recovery of IDC for the overall award to 30 percent of the TFFA under a research, education, or extension grant. The maximum allowable IDC amount recoverable under the award, including the IDC charged by the sub-awardee(s), if any, is the lesser of the following and is determined by calculating the amount of IDC using:

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

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

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

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

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

awarded, the applicant will be required to submit a complete IDC proposal package to obtain a negotiated rate.

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

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

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

## PART V. APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

### A. NIFA's Evaluation Process

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

#### Scientific Peer Review Process:

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

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

After each peer review panel has completed its deliberations, the responsible program staff of NIFA will recommend that your project is either approved for support from currently available funds or declined due to insufficient funds or review results. USDA NIFA will consider alignment to the USDA Research and Development Priorities in their recommendation process.

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

The UIE Program evaluation criteria are listed below:

**(1) Project Assessment (30%)**

This criterion relates to project performance outcomes. Elements include the soundness of the proposed research and education methodology, performance monitoring, plan of operation, logic model, expected products and results, metrics/targets for expected solutions or improvements, and results dissemination plan. Evaluation will include:

- Expected results or outcomes are clearly stated, measurable, and achievable within the allotted time frame.
- Plan and methods for evaluating success of project activities and documenting potential impact against measurable short and mid-term outcomes are suitable and feasible.
- For extension or education activities, curricula and related products will sustain education or extension functions beyond the life of the project.
- For extension or education activities, the resulting curricula or products share information and recommendations based on knowledge and conclusions from a broad range of research initiatives.

**(2) Rationale and Significance (25%)**

This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will have an impact upon developing and strengthening target agricultural systems. Primary evaluation factor will be the degree to which the proposal clearly explains how the project will strengthen agricultural and food-production systems and how results will be adopted or applied at a local, regional, or national level, as well as the degree to which stakeholders and/or community organizations were involved in the development of the project plan.

**(3) Objectives and Approach (25%)**

Evaluation factors include assessment of approach for blending research and extension expertise and other outreach and implementation approaches to address principal objectives. The extent to which the proposal considers the potential costs of a proposed solution and describes how it can be scaled to be sustainable in the short and long term will be considered in developing the objectives and approach. Project feasibility and probability of success will be evaluated. The extent to which proposals focus beyond surveys to identify factors that contribute to successful agricultural production systems is paramount.

- Project objectives and outcomes are clearly described, adequate, and appropriate. All project components (i.e., research, education, extension) – at least two are required – are reflected in one or more project objectives.
- Stakeholders are included as critical team members and are included in all aspects of the project.
- Proposed approach, procedures, or methodologies are innovative, original, clearly described, suitable, and feasible.
- Proposed research fills knowledge gaps that are critical to the development of practices and programs to address the stated problem or issue.
- Proposed extension leads to measurable, documented changes in learning, actions, or conditions in an identified audience or stakeholder group.
- Proposed education (teaching) has an impact upon and advances the

quality of food and agricultural sciences by strengthening institutional capacities and curricula to meet clearly delineated needs and train the next generation of scientists and educators.

**(4) Institutional Capacity, Division of Labor and Management Plan (10%)**

This criterion relates to the collaborating organizations' capability to perform the project and to the degree to which key personnel have expertise and management plan in place to successfully carry out the proposed work. The degree to which stakeholder involvement in project development, implementation, and evaluation is demonstrated is also considered.

- Roles of key personnel are clearly defined.
- Key personnel have sufficient expertise to complete the proposed project, and where appropriate, partnerships with other disciplines (e.g., social science or economics) and institutions are established.
- Evidence of institutional capacity and competence in the proposed area of work is provided.
- Support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation are sufficient.
- A clear plan is articulated for project management, including time allocated for attainment of objectives and delivery of products, maintenance of partnerships and collaborations, and a strategy to enhance communication, data sharing, and reporting among members of the project team.
- Data management plan is appropriate, clearly described, and feasible.
- Stakeholder involvement in project development, implementation, and evaluation is demonstrated, where appropriate.

**(5) Budget Justification (10%)**

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

- The budget clearly allocates sufficient resources to carry out a set of research, education (teaching), and/or extension activities that will lead to desired outcomes, with no more than two-thirds of the budget focused on a single project component.

**C. Organizational Management Information**

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

**D. Application Disposition**

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

## **PART VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION**

### **A. General**

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

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

The Notice of Award document will provide pertinent instructions and information as described in [2 CFR 200.211](#).

### **B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements**

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications and the projects outlined in this NOFO (some are listed here: [Federal Regulations](#)). Unless specifically noted by statute or award-specific requirements, [NIFA Federal Assistance Policy Guide](#) applies to all NIFA awards.

### **C. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements**

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

## PART VII. OTHER INFORMATION

### A. Use of Funds and Changes in Budget

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

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

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

**B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards**

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

**C. Regulatory Information**

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

**D. Language Access Services**

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

## APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACT

For Programmatic questions please email:

[NIFA.UIE@usda.gov](mailto:NIFA.UIE@usda.gov)

For administrative questions related to;

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

### **U.S. Postal Mailing Address:**

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

### **Courier/Package Delivery Address:**

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

## **APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

### **Glossary of Terms**

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative – AFRI

Assistance Listing Number – ALN

Authorized Departmental Officer – ADO

Authorized Representative – AR

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

Coordinated Agricultural Project – CAP

Centers of Excellence – COE

Data Management Plan – DMP

National Institute of Food and Agriculture – NIFA

Notice of Funding Opportunity – NOFO

Research, Education, and Economics – REE

United States Department of Agriculture – USDA

## APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS

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

### Definitions

#### 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.