Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate and Postgraduate Fellowship (NNF) Grants Program

FY 2011 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: June 1, 2011

NNF Program Office:
Telephone: 202-720-1973
Email: NNF@nifa.usda.gov

Program Website: http://www.nifa.usda.gov/fo/graduateandpostgraduatefellowshipsserd.cfm

Program Code: KK
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (CFDA): 10.210
NIFA Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-HEP-003435

U.S. Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

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

FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES NATIONAL NEEDS GRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE FELLOWSHIP (NNF) GRANTS PROGRAM

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.210.

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on **June 1, 2011** (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. 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: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is requesting comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and will be used 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)). This section requires the Secretary to solicit and consider input on a current RFA from persons who conduct or use agricultural research, education and extension for use in formulating future RFAs for competitive programs. Written stakeholder comments on this RFA should be submitted in accordance with the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice.

Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by mail to: Policy and Oversight Division; Office of Grants and Financial Management; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: RFP-OGFM@nifa.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the **Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship Grants Program RFA**.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship (NNF) Grants Program for fiscal year (FY) **2011** to provide traineeship programs to eligible institutions for meeting the national need to develop scientific and professional expertise in the food and agricultural sciences, through graduate level training programs. **Applicants should be institutions that confer a graduate degree in at least one of the Targeted Expertise Shortage Areas (TESA) (see Part I, C, 2).** This RFA is being released prior to the passage of an Appropriations Act for FY 2011. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an Appropriation Act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. It is anticipated that approximately $3.6 million will be made available to support the NNF program. Awards are made to eligible colleges and

universities. **Individuals are not eligible to apply for these grants to support their graduate education.**

This notice identifies the objectives for NNF projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a NNF grant. NIFA additionally requests stakeholder input from any interested party for use in the development of the next RFA for this program.

In FY 2011, the special emphasis on Forest Resources is made possible by supplemental funds provided under a reimbursable agreement between NIFA and the U.S. Forest Service. NOTE: Targeted Expertise Shortage Area "Forest Resources" in this RFA.

NIFA supports the development of 21st Century skills, research-based knowledge, assessment, and utilization of technology and resources to advance a first class next-generation, diverse work force in USDA mission sciences. In a separate Request for Applications, NIFA supports fellowships to individuals pursuing Pre-doctoral and Post-doctoral studies in the Agricultural and Food Research Initiative (see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/rfas/afri_rfa.html).

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

Section 7106 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act (FCEA) of 2008 (P.L. 110-246) amends the legislative authority for this program contained in section 1417 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA) (99 Stat. 1548; 7 U.S.C. 3152) to include the University of the District of Columbia as an eligible applicant.

USDA/NIFA administers this Federal assistance grant program specifically designated for graduate degree programs and postgraduate training of the next generation of policy makers, researchers, and educators in the Food and Agricultural Sciences. USDA initiated the NNF Grants Program in FY 1984. This program in collaboration with eligible higher education institutions is developing intellectual capital to ensure the preeminence of U.S. food and agricultural systems. **This program is subject to federal regulations [http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_05/7cfr3402_05.html] as outlined in administrative provisions that can be found at 7 CFR 3402.**

B. Purpose and Priorities

The purpose of the NNF Grants Program is to provide funding to support students' training and completion of Master's and/or doctoral degree programs in identified national need areas within the food and agriculture sciences. It also provides funding support for the postdoctoral training of Fellows who have completed their doctoral degrees at colleges and universities that have demonstrable teaching and research competencies in the food and agricultural sciences. Awards made under NNF are specifically intended to support traineeship programs that engage outstanding students to pursue and complete their degrees or obtain postdoctoral training in areas where there is a national need for the development of scientific and professional expertise in the food and agricultural sciences. NNF awards invest in graduate training and relevant international experiential learning for a cadre of diverse individuals who demonstrate their potential to successfully complete graduate degree programs in disciplines relevant to the mission of the USDA.

For the FY 2011 award cycle, NIFA intends to support graduate Fellowship training grants for both Master's and doctoral levels of study only. **Post-doctoral Fellowships will not be awarded** under this grant announcement. Future funding of post-doctoral Fellowships will be dependent on the availability of funds.

Applications are being solicited for the Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship Grants Program under the following areas:

(1) Graduate Fellowships to support the training for and completion of Master's and doctoral degree programs in food, agricultural and related sciences, and;

(2) Special International Study or Thesis/Dissertation Research Travel Allowances (IRTA) for eligible Master's and doctoral USDA Fellows or current applicants.

The objectives of the FY 2011 NNF program, working collaboratively with eligible institutions, are:

(1) To support the training of students at the Master's and doctoral levels, in order to fill the nationally identified expertise shortage areas in the food and agricultural sciences.

(2) To encourage and recruit outstanding students, including those from traditionally underrepresented groups, to enter and complete graduate training in the food and agricultural sciences.

(3) To increase the quality and diversity of students completing graduate degrees in the food and agricultural sciences.

(4) To increase the number of students with graduate degrees in the food, agricultural and related sciences awarded by at least 50 per annum.

(5) To support at least 10 eligible National Needs Fellows to build science competency and have international exposure within the Targeted Expertise Shortage Area (TESA) in food and agricultural sciences through the IRTA awards.

The Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship Grant Program contributes to the development of a strong STEM workforce, which is needed to keep this Nation's competitiveness, through the research and academic training of graduate students.

The importance of this STEM workforce development could not be overemphasized, and is the focus of many education programs addressing various academic levels from P-20. In 2009, a report by the National Research Council of the National Academies of Sciences entitled "*A New Biology for the 21st Century: Ensuring the United States Leads the Coming Revolution*," recognized that the most effective leveraging of investments would come from a coordinated, interagency effort to encourage the emergence of a New Biology to address broad and challenging societal problems. The four societal challenges identified are: (1) *Generate food plants to adapt and grow sustainably in changing environments; (2) Understand and sustain ecosystem function and biodiversity in the face of rapid change; (3) Expand sustainable alternatives to fossil fuels; and (4) Understand individual health*.

In response to and building upon these societal challenges, USDA/NIFA has refocused its mission to direct agricultural sciences research, education, and extension programs on addressing the following five *Priority Areas*:

1. **Global Food Security**
2. **Agriculture Science for Climate Variability and Change**
3. **Sustainable Bioenergy**

4. **Childhood Obesity Prevention**
5. **Food Safety**

Moreover, in a separate 2009 report by the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences on Agricultural Education, "*Transforming Agricultural Education for a Changing World*," it was recommended that academic institutions with undergraduate programs in agriculture implement the following nine steps below (click to follow links) to better meet the needs of students, employers, and the broader society:

- Implement Strategic Planning
- Broaden Treatment of Agriculture in the Overall Curriculum
- Broaden the Student Experience
- Prepare Faculty to Teach Effectively
- Reward Exemplary Teaching
- Build Stronger Connections among Institutions
- Start Early K-12 Outreach
- Build Strategic Partnerships
- Focus Reviews of Undergraduate Programs in Agriculture

The full report may be viewed at: http://dels.nas.edu/ag_education/report.shtml.

The whitepaper published by the Academic Programs Section of APLU titled "*Human Capacity Development: The Road to Global Competitiveness and Leadership in Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (FANRRS),*" also provided recommendations in developing the next generation of food and agriculture scientist. This whitepaper may be read at: http://www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=1639.

The NNF grant program responds to the need for expanding the intellectual capital of the STEM workforce in areas relevant to USDA priorities identified by the Secretary: (i) Promotion of a safe, sufficient, and nutritious food supply for all Americans and for people around the world; (ii) Sustainable agricultural policies that foster economic viability for small and mid-sized farms and rural businesses, protect natural resources, and promote value-added agriculture; (iii) National leadership in climate change mitigation and adaptation; (iv) Building a modern workplace with a modern workforce; and (v) Support for 21st century rural communities. For more information see http://www.usda.gov/documents/VilsackLetter.pdf.

NNF projects will give beneficiaries the ability to address complex issues, including food security and hunger, nutrition and obesity, renewable energy, climate change, and food safety. The NNF grants program is an opportunity to give attention to the recommendations and influence future innovations and innovators integral to the food and agricultural systems domain.

In preparing applications in response to this FY 2011 NNF RFA, applicants are strongly encouraged to look into these publications and use them as a guide for developing approaches and strategies in the training of students; setting their program goals and objectives; and identifying their measurable outcomes.

C. Program Area Description

The Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship (NNF) Grants will support Master's and doctoral levels of study with NNF and/or IRTA awards for eligible USDA Fellows and current applicants. **The Program Code is KK and the Program Code Name is National Needs Graduate Fellowship Program for all applications submitted under this announcement.**

NNF supports NIFA's goal to increase human resource diversity in the agricultural enterprise by providing funds for eligible full-time students pursuing graduate studies at the Master's and doctoral levels within the Food and Agricultural Science disciplines identified as national needs or expertise shortage areas. The IRTA component also supports NIFA's goal by allowing students to have additional training through experiential learning or research opportunities and travel awards that are expected to expand the competencies and skills of USDA Fellows and eventually lead to their completion of advanced degrees in the food and agriculture sciences. IRTA grants are provided to recipients who must be current National Needs Fellows, or those proposed under current applications to allow them to conduct thesis/dissertation research or undertake studies outside the United States.

1. Student Eligibility

a) Eligibility for NNF – The grantee institutions develop the selection criteria and it is their responsibility to award fellowships to high caliber students in good academic standing. Only individuals who meet the eligibility requirements listed below will be awarded fellowships. In order for individuals to receive Fellowship stipend support they must:

(1) Be citizens or nationals of the United States as defined in this announcement (refer to 7 CFR 3430.202 Definitions);

(2) Have strong interest as judged by the institution, in pursuing a degree in a national targeted expertise shortage area (TESA), are preparing for a career as a food or agricultural or natural resources scientist or professional, are registered as full-time students; and

(3) Not have:

a. Completed two semesters or equivalent hours (one (1) year) of full-time study as defined by the institution, or
b. Passed candidacy/qualifying examinations, whichever is later; and
c. Been enrolled previously in the academic program at the same degree level.

b) Eligibility for IRTA – At the time of travel under the IRTA grant award, USDA Fellows conducting research outside the United States must:

(1) Be supported under a USDA National Needs Graduate Fellowship grant and be registered as a full-time student;

(2) Have completed one academic year of full-time study, as defined by the institution under the fellowship appointment;

(3) Have formalized arrangements to study and/or conduct research in the foreign location(s) (see Part IV, B, 3, (b));

(4) Have sufficient time remaining in their fellowship award to complete the proposed IRTA travel or research; and

(5) Have a completed NIFA Form 2010 – Fellowship Appointment Form on file with the funding agency (NIFA).

2. FY 2011 Targeted Expertise Shortage Areas (TESA)

Applicants should propose training projects at the Master's and/or doctoral levels to support graduate fellowship stipends for NNF and/or IRTA in **ONE** of the following **Targeted Expertise Shortage Areas (TESA):**

(a) Animal and Plant Production – specifically targeting Animal Well-Being (Ethologists; Bioethicists; Turkey Reproductive Physiologists); Integrated fields of quantitative genetics, statistics, computational biology, and breeding for animals and for plants.

(b) Forest Resources – in particular within the areas of decision sciences; land use and landscape analysis; ecosystem processes and forest health; utilization technology; and communicating forest research results, new technologies, and scientific applications to resource managers.

(c) Agricultural Educators and Communicators – specifically related to: (a) training educators who will strengthen the STEM preparation of K-12 students in order to enter two- and four-year colleges and pursue degrees that will impact the USDA mission; (b) advancing research-based cyberlearning; and (c) developing branding to increase public understanding that food, agricultural and related sciences are vital to U.S. participation in the global science and technology economy.

(d) Agricultural Management and Economics – primarily in agricultural trade policy, resource economics, and economics of alternative energy.

(e) Food Science and Human Nutrition – focus will be in food and nutrition for health, and reduction of childhood obesity.

(f) Sciences for Agricultural Biosecurity – particularly in animal pathology and food animal diagnostics, invasive species, and other areas impacting the security of the food systems.

(g) Integrative Biosciences for Sustainable Food and Agricultural Systems – (integrative training in food and agricultural, social and economic disciplines) for food, agricultural and

environmental systems, particularly in sustainable ecosystems and functional integrative environmental and natural resources management.

Institutions that have not previously applied are especially encouraged to do so. (See eligibility information in Part III of this RFA.) **Applicants should be institutions that confer a graduate degree in at least one of the TESAs listed above.** Awards are made to eligible colleges and universities. **Individuals are not eligible to apply for these grants to support their graduate education.**

Successful applications must select and identify Fellows and award Fellowships within eighteen (18) months of the effective date of a grant. Institutions that fail to meet this deadline will be required to refund monies associated with unawarded Fellowships to NIFA. Graduate fellowship appointments must be awarded only to registered students who are pursuing full-time study in graduate programs in the TESA and at the degree level supported by the grant.

Applicants may not request partial fellowships. A USDA Fellow at the Master's degree level who maintains satisfactory progress is eligible to receive grant support for a maximum of **twenty-four (24) months** during a thirty-month period. A USDA Fellow at the doctoral degree level who maintains satisfactory progress is eligible to receive grant support for a maximum of **thirty-six (36) months** within a forty-two-month period.

It is the intent of this program that Graduate Fellows pursue full-time uninterrupted study or thesis/dissertation research, including time spent pursuing USDA-funded special international study or thesis/dissertation research activities. Graduate Fellows in academic institutions are not entitled to regular annual leave but are entitled to the normal student holidays observed by the institution. The time between academic semesters or quarters is to be utilized as an active part of the grant period. During the period of support, USDA Graduate Fellows, at the discretion of their institutions, may accept additional supplemental employment that would positively contribute to their training or research and would make them eligible for tuition waivers (e.g., full or partial tuition waivers with research or teaching assignments).

3. Funding preference

Funding preference will be given to applications that propose to:

(a) Establish innovative frameworks for graduate training with collaborative research and technology transfer components that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries in agriculture (NOTE: innovative means new or unique or creative approaches to training students in order for them to develop not only core competencies or skills, but also excel in their abilities and expertise to join the scientific workforce and meet the needs identified in the TESA);

(b) Establish Master's degree programs where Fellows can pursue related summer research opportunities (especially at other colleges/universities, industry or federal agencies); or establish doctoral programs with teaching and/or extension opportunities in related topics;

(c) Establish multidisciplinary graduate training programs in areas of: bio-security; food, agricultural and environmental sustainability, including renewable energy; human nutrition and obesity;

(d) Increase the multicultural (economic, social, cultural, racial, ethnic, geographical, gender, traditionally underserved populations) diversity of the nation's scientific and professional expertise in the food and agricultural sciences;

(e) Partner with teaching/research/extension or across colleges/institutions or public/private sectors in order to provide exceptional graduate training in the food and agricultural sciences to develop human capital while meeting the mission of the USDA (See Part VIII, Definitions);

(f) Provide relevant leadership, teaching, research, extension, management and international learning experiences for graduate training in such a way as to demonstrate the potential for USDA Fellows to effectively communicate, in any audience, and become emerging knowledge experts in food and agricultural science disciplines; and

(g) Develop performance measures for evaluating the overall effectiveness of: the graduate training that USDA National Needs Fellows receive, the development of expertise in the TESAs listed above, the proficiency with which they pipeline to associated areas of the workforce or further related training; and the conveyance of identified core competencies for: (i) subject matter and related disciplines; (ii) skilled communication; and (iii) aptitude to be effective in a globally-oriented and technologically-driven world economy.

The start date for new awards under this announcement is January 12, 2012.

Applicants are required to provide a 5-year budget with a zero dollar budget for any year where support is not allocated (i.e., recruitment activities are only sponsored activities that year). Applicants should factor into their application, a recruitment interval to meet the program requirements. The statutory limit for this program is 5 years. **Due to statutory restrictions no extensions beyond the 5-year period are allowed.** Any eligible institution may, however, apply for a new award with a different scope of work in any fiscal year(s) in which appropriated funds are available for this program. The title of **the application** should be different from the program name. **As noted above the program name is National Needs Graduate Fellowship Program**.

NNF encourages projects that develop content suitable for delivery through eXtension (http://about.extension.org/mediawiki/files/5/51/EXECUTIVE_SUMMARY_-_March_14%2C_2006_-_YEAR_2.pdf). This content is for end users, as opposed to staff development, and must align with the eXtension Implementation Plan (available at http://about.extension.org/wiki/Planning). Funds may be used to contribute to existing Communities of Practice (COPs) (http://about.extension.org/wiki/Glossary_of_eXtension_Terms#Community_of_Practice_.28CoP.29:) or form new COPs that focus on science content development for the K-12 educational system (for examples of developing COPs and guidance on forming COPs, see http://cop.extension.org/wiki/Main_Page).

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. This RFA is being released prior to the passage of an Appropriations Act for FY 2011. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an Appropriation Act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. It is anticipated that approximately $**3.6 million** will be available to fund awards in the FY 2011 funding cycle. NNF plans to award $41,000 for each Master's level training [$18,500 per year for two (2) years as student stipend] and $79,500 for each doctoral level training [$24,500 per year for three (3) years as student stipend]. For each level of student training, there is a $2,000 per student per year cost-of-education allowance for the institution. For the IRTA awards, there will be $8,000 for doctoral level USDA Fellows and $4,500 for Master's level USDA Fellows. In FY 2011, at the Master's level, it is anticipated that approximately $1.25 million will be available for training and IRTA awards. Approximately $2.35 million available for doctoral training, including IRTAs.

Awards issued as a result of this RFA will have designated the Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP), operated by the Department of Treasury's Financial Management Service, as the payment system for funds. For more information see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/method_of_payment.html.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2011, applications may be submitted to the NNF Program as one of the following types of requests:

(1) New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the NNF Program. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

(2) Resubmitted application. This is an application that had previously been submitted to the NNF Program but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (see Response to Previous Review, Part IV). Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

C. Project Types

A single application may propose funding under any single TESA for any of the Award Categories listed below, either singly or in any combination, **up to a maximum of $262,500 per application.** Applicants may not request partial fellowships.

Award Category No. 1 -- Master's Level Training: Funding at $41,000 for each Fellow. This consists of a student stipend of $18,500 (minimum) per year for two years, plus $2,000 per year cost-of-education allowance.

Award Category No. 2 -- Doctoral Level Training: Funding at $79,500 for each Fellow. This consists of a student stipend of $24,500 (minimum) per year for three years, plus $2,000 per year cost-of education allowance.

Award Category No. 3 -- Special International Study or Thesis/Dissertation Research Travel Allowances (IRTA): One-time award of $4,500 for an eligible USDA National Needs Master's Fellow and/or one-time award $8,000 for an eligible USDA National Needs Doctoral Fellow.

There is no limit to the number of applications an eligible institution may submit; however, **an institution may only receive support up to a maximum of $525,000 in awards**. This support may be provided through multiple grant awards.

Each application may request any combination of Award Category No. 1 (Master's), Award Category No. 2 (doctoral) or Award Category No. 3 (IRTA) funds, not to exceed $262,500. A separate application must be submitted for each Targeted Expertise Subject Area (see Part I, B.) for which support is requested. NIFA reserves the right to fund fewer Fellows than requested in an application, and to partially fund IRTA requests.

Project Directors with an active NNF award from a previous year may submit application(s) requesting funds to support IRTA(s) ONLY for current, eligible National Needs Fellow(s). Such Award Category No. 3 (IRTA) applications must be clearly identified as requesting support ONLY for current, eligible National Needs Fellow(s) and will be evaluated as described in Part V, B. 2.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Pursuant to **section 1417 of the NARETPA of 1977 (99 Stat. 1548; 7 U.S.C. 3152), and administrative provisions that can be found at 7 CFR 340** (http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_05/7cfr3402_05.html) applications may be submitted by:

(1) Land-grant institutions including the University of the District of Columbia;
(2) Colleges and universities having significant minority enrollments and a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food and agricultural sciences; and
(3) Other colleges and universities having a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food, and agricultural sciences.

Research foundations maintained by an eligible college or university are eligible to submit graduate training proposals under this RFA. **Applicants should be institutions that confer a graduate degree in at least one of the Targeted Expertise Shortage Areas (TESA).** Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

There are no matching requirements and matching resources will not be factored into the review process as evaluation criteria.

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. **Applicants are advised to submit early to the Grants.gov system.**

New Users of Grants.gov

Prior to preparing an application, it is suggested that the PD/PI first contact an Authorized Representative (AR)(also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grant.gov. If the organization is not prepared (e.g., the institution/organization is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov), then the one-time registration process must be completed **PRIOR** to submitting an application. It can take as much as two weeks to complete the registration process so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations the AR should go to **"Get Registered" on the Grants.gov left navigation bar (or go to http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp) for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov. A quick reference guide listing the steps is available as a 4-page PDF document at the following website: http://www.grants.gov/section910/Grants.govRegistrationBrochure.pdf.**

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

1. In order to access, complete and submit applications, applicants must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov. This software is essential to apply for NIFA Federal assistance awards. For basic system requirements and download instructions, please see http://www.grants.gov/help/download_software.jsp. To verify that you have a compatible version of Adobe Reader, Grants.gov established a test package that will assist you in making that determination. Grants.gov Adobe Versioning Test Package: http://www.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp.

2. The application package must be obtained via Grants.gov, go to http://www.grants.gov, click on "Apply for Grants" in the left-hand column, click on "**Step 1:** Download a Grant Application Package and Instructions," enter the funding opportunity number **USDA-NIFA-HEP-003435** in the appropriate box and click "Download Package." From the search results, click "Download" to access the application package.

   Contained within the application package is the "NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov." 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 assistance is needed to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms), **or submitting the application** then refer to resources available on the Grants.gov Web site first (http://www.grants.gov/). Grants.gov assistance is also available as follows:

Grants.gov customer support
Toll Free: 1-800-518-4726
Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on Federal Holidays.
Email: support@grants.gov

See http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html for additional resources for applying electronically.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Electronic applications should be prepared following Parts V and VI of the document entitled "A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov." This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed in order 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., portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the Guide. ANY PROPOSALS CONTAINING NON-PDF DOCUMENTS WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. With documented prior approval, resubmitted applications will be accepted until close of business on the closing date in the RFA.

If you do not own PDF-generating software, Grants.gov provides online tools to assist applicants. Users will find a link to "Convert Documents to PDF" on http://grants.gov/assets/PDFConversion.pdf.

For any questions related to the preparation of an application please review the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide and the applicable request for applications. 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, 7:00 am – 5:00 pm Eastern Time, 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. The anticipated start date for applications proposed under this RFA is January 12, 2012 and the duration is 60 months.

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

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 3. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

3. R&R Other Project Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 4. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract.

The *Project Summary* must: (1) include the relevance of the project to the goals of NNF; (2) be concise and precise at approximately 250 words; (3) clearly identify the Targeted Expertise Shortage Area (TESA) being addressed (below) – applicants must select only ONE TESA per application; (4) identify the major academic program or discipline being addressed (below) – applicants may indicate a single or multiple discipline code(s); (5) indicate the number of Fellows and degree level(s) to be supported under the application; and (6) indicate the number and degree level of IRTAs to be supported.

In addition to the above, the *Project Summary* should:

(1) Provide a clear description of the **type of project** proposed (fellowships and/or IRTA), succinctly providing information about its major features and a specific description of the activities to be undertaken;
(2) State the overall project **goal(s)** and supporting measurable **objectives;**
(3) Give a concise **overview** of plans for training project to accomplish project goal(s) for national targeted expertise shortage area, include measurable targets, in specified timeline, to meet proposed objectives;
(4) State the **relevance** of the project to the NNF program goals, and the USDA Strategic Goals and Objectives http://www.NIFA.usda.gov/about/strat_plan.html; and
(5) State the anticipated, measurable **national impact(s)** on the Targeted Expertise Shortage Areas (TESAs).

The importance of a concise, informative *Project Summary* cannot be overemphasized. If the *Project Summary* does not include the information above and specifically address relevance, merit, and broader impacts on the USDA Fellows' research program for meeting the TESAs, the proposal will not be reviewed.

The **TESA addressed by the application should be identified in the *Project Summary***. Applicants should also select one of the disciplines listed below that best describes the major academic program area addressed by the application. This information is important to assigning qualified subject area experts for peer review.

Targeted Expertise Shortage Area (TESA) FY 2011 Funding Cycle
Animal and Plant Production – specifically targeting animal well-being (ethologists; bioethicists; turkey reproductive physiologists); integrated fields of quantitative genetics, statistics, computational biology, and breeding for animals and for plants.
Forest Resources – in particular within the areas of decision sciences; land use and landscape analysis; ecosystem processes and forest health; utilization technology; and communicating forest research results, new technologies, and scientific applications to resource managers.
Agricultural Educators and Communicators – specifically related to: (a) training educators who will strengthen the STEM preparation of K-12 students in order to enter two- and four-year colleges and pursue degrees that will impact the USDA mission; (b) advancing research-based cyberlearning; and (c) developing branding to increase public understanding that food, agricultural and related sciences are vital to U.S. participation in the global science and technology economy.
Agricultural Management and Economics – primarily in agricultural trade policy, resource economics, and economics of alternative energy.
Food Science and Human Nutrition – focus will be in food and nutrition for health, and reduction of childhood obesity.
Sciences for Agricultural Biosecurity – particularly in animal pathology and food animal diagnostics; invasive species; and other areas impacting the security of the food systems.
Integrative Biosciences for Sustainable Food and Agricultural Systems – (integrative training in food and agricultural, social and economic disciplines) for food, agricultural and environmental systems, particularly in sustainable ecosystems and functional integrative environmental and natural resources management.

Relevant Disciplines for the FY 2011 Funding Cycle	Code
Animal Science	A
General/Basic Biotechnology, Biochemistry and Microbiology	B
Plant Sciences and Horticulture (includes Turf Grass/Weed Science/Plant Breeding)	P
Conservation and Renewable Natural Resources (includes any aspect of Forestry, Air Quality, Sustainable Agriculture, or Biofuels)	C
Environmental Sciences/Management (includes Economics, Decision Management and Biometry)	L
Soil Sciences (includes Soil Quality; Processes)	D
Water Sciences/Resources (includes Water Quality)	W
Agricultural/Biological Engineering (includes Rangeland, Urban/Rural Technology)	E
Agricultural Marketing and Management (includes Agricultural Economics)	M
Food Science/Technology/Manufacturing/Safety	F
Human Nutrition (includes obesity and relevant to USDA Strategic Goals)	N
International Agriculture (includes Disciplines Related to Global Food and Agricultural Systems and Competitiveness)	I
Agricultural Social Sciences (includes Rural Sociology)	S
Veterinary Medicine (graduate degree training)	V
Interdisciplinary, Sustainable Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Social Sciences and Economics Graduate Degree Programs	G
Agricultural Biosecurity	X

b. Field 8. Project Narrative.

The *Project Narrative* should not exceed twenty-five (25) pages of written text and up to five (5) additional pages for figures and tables. This maximum of thirty (30) pages has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. **One-inch margins, using no type smaller than 12 point font and double spaced**. Acceptable fonts are Times New Roman, Courier, Courier New, Arial, Geneva, or Helvetica. Applications that do not conform to these preparation requirements will not be reviewed.

Appendices to the *Project Narrative* are allowed if they are directly relevant to the proposed project but should not exceed five (5) pages. Appendices should not be used to circumvent the page limit. Reviewers are instructed **not** to review appended materials in excess of this limit. The *Table of Contents* must be the first page(s) of the *Project Narrative* and is not included in the page limit.

This portion of the application should describe how the proposed project offers unique opportunities for achieving the national objective of engaging outstanding students who will pursue and complete graduate degrees in an area of food and agricultural sciences, and when applicable forest resources, where there is a national need for the development of scientific and professional expertise. The *Project Narrative* must include and be organized into the four sections identified. A description of the information that must be included in each section is outlined below.

The ***Project Narrative*** must include a **Table of Contents** and **all** of the following:

Section 1:

(a) Institutional Data and Profile

(1) Discuss the quality of education for all students in the graduate program, describe aligned data, accountability and knowledge management to support graduate training program development for improvement in practice, policy, and strategy to increase achievement, graduation and post-graduation success in the targeted expertise shortage areas. Provide supporting data with numbers, demographics, and results from Program Quality Review(s); Describe curriculum and instructional approaches, the availability of research training opportunities, and strategies or activities for developing the leadership, management, critical thinking and problem-solving skills of students or unique mentoring experiences that may assist in preparing students for placement following graduation. **Where applicant is a past recipient of an NNF award, information is required about progress and outcomes from prior funding, including impacts on workforce expertise. Failure to provide this information about prior NNF awards will result in the application not being reviewed.**

(2) Present evidence that the overall academic program has an established record that recognizes and addresses current trends and future needs, and prepares students for the national targeted expertise shortage area of the application and successful careers in the food and agricultural

sciences professional and scientific workplaces; (Education Reporting Logic Model is a resource: http://www.NIFA.usda.gov/funding/nnf/pdf/education_logic_model.pdf)
(3) Discuss current or planned programs at the institution designed to engage outstanding graduate students, especially from traditionally underrepresented groups, to pursue and complete further graduate/professional studies to pipeline into the workforce, filling areas of management and leadership in food and agricultural sciences disciplines and how these programs will be synergistic or augment the current application.

(4) Substantiate clearly, with data indicating prior graduate training success in the TESA, the quality of graduate training and/or international experiential learning available through the institution's graduate teaching, research and experiential program(s) in the food and agricultural sciences in the discipline(s) for which Fellows are being recruited.

(5) Supportive information should also include the following institutional data and may be presented in table format:

(a) Student enrollment, retention and graduation rates by gender, racial groups, socio-economic groups, and ethnic groups for the past five years;
(b) Mean standardized college entrance exam scores of students from traditionally underrepresented groups and of other students admitted to the institution(s) for the past five years;
(c) Placement of graduates during the past five years; and
(d) Enrollment, graduation rates and placement of students from traditionally underserved groups and first generation college students and/or past Fellows.

(b) Additional Information for Section 1:

(1) Identify the national targeted expertise shortage area (TESA) addressed by the application;

(2) Identify the Award Category(ies) – Master's, Doctoral, and/or IRTA – and the discipline addressed by the application.

(3) Demonstrate the likelihood that the proposed program of graduate study will result in the development of outstanding graduates with effective leadership and communication skills and the technical and functional competence to meet the future needs of a globally interconnected, technologically advanced, rapidly diversifying and stakeholder-driven food and agricultural industry.

(4) If funds under Award Category 3 (International Research and/or Thesis/Dissertation Allowance) are requested, please include the information below:

When applying for the IRTA type of award for a **Current Eligible USDA Graduate Fellow**, the *Project Narrative* should include all of the following:

(a) The anticipated, specific destination(s) and duration of the travel;

(b) Information about the objectives, timeline, expected outcomes and deliverables from the participating, eligible USDA Fellow(s);
(c) The specific study or thesis/dissertation research activities (specific tasks) in which USDA Fellows will be engaged;
d) The NIFA award number which supports the Fellowship activities of the student;
(e) Explanation about how the international experience will contribute to the USDA Fellow's program of study;
(f) A budget narrative specifying and justifying the dollar amount requested for the travel;
(g) The contact personnel where Fellowship and/or IRTA activity will be undertaken; include the summary credentials of both the U.S. and international faculty or other professionals with whom the USDA Fellow will be working during the international experience and the nature of support to be provided to insure success of the Fellow's international experience;
(h) A letter from the dean of the USDA Fellow's college or equivalent administrative unit supporting the USDA Fellow's travel request and certifying that the travel experience will not jeopardize the USDA Fellow's satisfactory progress toward degree completion;
(i) A letter from the fellowship's grant project director certifying the USDA Fellow's eligibility, the accuracy of the USDA Fellow's travel request, and the relevance of the travel to the USDA Fellow's advanced degree objectives;
(j) The criteria that will be used to evaluate success of the Fellowship and/or IRTA; and
(k) A copy of an updated NIFA Form 2010 – Fellowship Appointment Form for any current USDA Fellow participating in the proposed Fellowships and/or IRTA opportunity should be attached to Field 12 (see Part VI, D).

To-Be-Recruited USDA Graduate Fellows who are to participate in the Special International Study or Thesis/Dissertation Research Travel Allowances (IRTA) - Should the proposed IRTA be for To-Be-Recruited Fellows, the Project Director should provide in the narrative the following information: (a) anticipated objectives relating how the IRTA will contribute to the program of study; (b) at least 150 days prior to travel, the specifics for the IRTA outlined in Part IV, B., 3, b, Section 1 along with the identity of the eligible USDA Fellows should be provided to the NNF Program Office.

Section 2: Proposed activities

Describe in the detail the proposed activities and strategies that will be employed to carry out the following:

(1) Recruitment and selection of Fellows

(i) Describe the plans for the recruitment of **outstanding** Fellows, especially from traditionally underrepresented groups, including a brief justification for focusing recruitment efforts on any particular group(s), and if recruiting from specific colleges and universities include institutional letters of support from targeted institutions; the rationale for using proposed strategies and procedures should be provided.

(ii) Discuss the strategies and procedures for **recruiting and selecting** students committed to the TESA as participants in the Fellowship program, including selection criteria for choosing outstanding Fellows who are considered likely to pursue degrees in national targeted expertise shortage areas.

(2) Academic advising, research training, professional counseling, mentoring, pipelining

(i) Describe the organization and philosophy of the proposed graduate training program relative to the TESA, identify the core competencies that each Fellow will be expected to attain; and how these will be evaluated as part of the Fellowship outcome measures.

(ii) Describe plans and procedures for assessing, monitoring, counseling, guiding, and sustaining Fellows' continued commitment and progress toward securing an education with the core competencies to be attained in preparation for a career that meets the need of national targeted expertise shortage areas.

(ii) Describe the nature of **professional mentoring** to be provided to Fellows and the subsequent follow up on their graduation and further training or entry into the workforce; identify the specific type(s) of workforce positions the NNF Fellows are being trained for.

(3) Experiential learning: hands-on research, extension, teaching and other activities

(i) Discuss the plans that will allow the Fellows to be engaged in experiential learning such as hands-on research, teaching practicum, extension experience and other learning activities (written and oral communication skills, leadership training, service learning) that will enhance the academic experience of the fellows. Develop activities that are feasible and realistic based on the resources available at the institution(s).

(ii) Describe plans for mentorship and scholarship during the experiential learning opportunity.

(iii) Identify the goals of the experiential learning opportunity and their relevance to the TESA and overall objectives of the training project.

(4) Measuring performance outcomes

Using the mean of two years prior to project start as the baseline data, and demonstrating how the training project will help increase the number and/or percentage of students graduating with Master's or doctoral degree in Food and Agricultural Sciences versus the normal outcome without a grant award. Include:

(i) Plans for achieving a **completion rate of greater than the institutional average** for the specific graduate program of study. Completion rate is computed as number of Fellows graduated divided by number of Fellows recruited, expressed as a percentage;

(ii) Description of the institution's mentoring and other support services and how they **promote and achieve successful** multicultural and/or first-generation college graduate student retention through graduation and pipelining to further graduate training or the workforce; and

(iii) Plans and procedures to **measure and report** performance outcomes and impacts; describe ongoing evaluation of the graduate training project implementation and effectiveness, measuring program outcomes and impacts (e.g., technical competence; scholarly contributions), pipelining, and tracking Fellows' accomplishments up to five (5) years after graduation. Provide details of how the proposed graduate training will lead to achieving the goals of the NNF grants program. The applicant should project a goal for tracking (e.g. expressed as a less than 10 percent "unable-to-contact" rate during the 36-month post-graduation follow-up phase). As an example, the Unable-to-Track Rate is computed as the number of "unable-to-contact" graduated USDA Fellows divided by the number of graduated Fellows, expressed as a percentage. An escalating unable-to-contact rate is of considerable concern.

The project evaluation should describe a plan for assessment of outcomes and impacts for the TESA that includes: entry of Fellow(s) into a specific TESA; assessment if the training is well-tailored for the Fellow and should lead to expected outcomes, as well as meeting the needs of the TESA; determination of measurable change due to the training; and the accrued changes in the TESA due to the training program proposed. Describe the strategy or approach that will be used to evaluate project implementation and how success will be measured.

Describe the number of new or revised courses targeted at the STEM skills needed by the TESA; number of underrepresented and underserved students participating in the TESA; percentage of undergraduate students who move on to advanced education in the TESA. Include a discussion of how evaluation findings would be used to modify and improve future opportunities for Fellows.

(5) Dissemination of results and/or impacts

Wide dissemination of results and/or impacts of the graduate training program including student achievements, should be provided to the funding agency and other interested parties including the general citizenry. Make clear what specific avenues will be used and identify the expected impacts. Include plans for:

(i) Outcomes reporting, including impacts of experiential learning activities, of fellowship recipients; and

(ii) Disseminating project outcomes, impacts and achievements and relevance to meeting the program purpose and goals of the funding agency to a wide audience. Indicate in plan how dissemination of project outcomes will be broadened.

Section 3: Institutional resources, support, and commitment

Substantiate clearly, with supporting documentation, that:

(1) Processes, facilities and equipment, instructional, professional mentoring, and research support resources and other attributes (e.g., professional ranking of department, other funding sources, NIFA program evaluation) are excellent for providing outstanding teaching, research and/or extension at the forefront of science and technology related to the chosen discipline for the TESA(s).

(2) Fellowship recipients will be provided with curricula and experiential learning opportunities, including travel activities that are relevant to their course of study to prepare graduates to gain expertise and meet the national need.

(3) Demonstrate institutional commitment to supporting the Fellows' education and research over and beyond the funds provided by USDA. Such support beyond the USDA funding should be documented with signed letters of support.

(4) Describe support to matriculate knowledge experts and indicate plans to challenge the NNF Fellows in problem-solving and critical thinking in a broader context beyond TESA.

Section 4: Other supporting information

Identify practices and innovations in training and learning that have shown substantial achievement gains in knowledge, skills and competencies in the targeted expertise shortage area. Describe any **innovative** and special features of the proposed project that will be available **especially** to USDA Fellows, or required as a part of their degree programs. Such features may include:

1. Developing intellectual capital – increase in knowledge and skills – for advancement in higher education, development of a creative and innovative workforce, and informed participation in civic life. Specifically identify experiences and expected qualitative and quantitative outcomes from Fellows.

2. Including holistic concepts and analytical tools from a variety of disciplines to address sciences (environmental, social and economic) for sustainability and increase USDA mission science content in cyberlearning materials - based on how students learn - with deeper study of statistics, data analysis to ensure rigorous learning to advance STEM achievement of K-12 students. Specifically identify experiences and expected qualitative and quantitative outcomes from Fellows.

3. Providing intentional leadership, management and communication experiences for the Fellows that enhance the skills of the emerging professional to contribute to areas of national targeted expertise shortage in the food and agricultural sciences and advance America's competitiveness.

Specifically identify experiences and expected qualitative and quantitative outcomes from Fellows.

4. Describing the wider array of resources (such as private-sector companies; K-12 educational system; consulting firms; universities) that will be leveraged to increase educational assets and expand Fellows' professional development and intellectual capacity to impact the TESA as creative and innovative thinkers. Specifically identify experiences and expected qualitative and quantitative outcomes from Fellows

Field 9. Bibliography & Cited References - (Optional Attachment – Must be PDF format) Provide a complete list of all references cited in the application. **For each reference, provide the complete name for each author, the year of the publication, full title of the article, name of the journal or book published, volume, and the page numbers.** The references should be listed in alphabetical order using the last name of the first author.

Field 10. Facilities & Other Resources - (Optional Attachment – Must be PDF format) If needed, describe the types, location, and availability of instrumentation and physical facilities necessary to carry out the work proposed. **If special academic, private or government laboratories or facilities are being used, attach a letter to the application from the authorized representative of the facility describing the proposed arrangements and availability.** This letter should be included as a part of Other Attachments, see Field 12 below.

c. Other Attachments (Field 12. on the form)

(a) **Response to Previous Review - PDF Attachment. 1 Page Limit.** Title the attachment as '*Response to Previous Review*' in the document header and save file as '*ResponsetoPrevious Review*'. This requirement only applies to "Resubmitted Applications" as described under Part II, B., "Types of Applications". PDs must respond to the previous review panel summary on **no more than one page.** If desired, additional comments may be included in the text of the Project Narrative, subject to the page limitations of that section.

(b) **Appendices to Project Narrative – PDF Attachment.** Title the attachment as '*Appendices*' in the document header and save file as '*Appendice*s'. Appendices to the Project Narrative are allowed if they are directly relevant to the proposed project. The addition of appendices must not exceed five (5) pages and should not be used to circumvent the text and/or figures and tables page limitations.

(c) **Collaborative Arrangements – PDF Attachment. No Page Limit**. Title the att*achment as* '*Collaborative Arrangements*' in the docume*nt header* and save file as '*CollaborativeArrangement'*. If it is necessary in the IRTA to enter into formal consulting or collaborative arrangements with others, such arrangements should be fully explained and justified. If the consultant(s) or collaborator(s) are known at the time of the application, a vitae or resume should be provided. In addition, evidence (e.g., letter of support signed by the AR of the organization) should be provided indicating that the collaborators involved have agreed to render these services. The applicant will also be required to provide

additional information on consultants and collaborators in the budget portion of the application.

(d) **Fellowships/Scholarships Entry/Exit Form – PDF Attachment.** Include a copy of NIFA Form 2010. Title the attachment as "*Fellowships/Scholarships Entry/Exit Form*" in the document header and save file as "*Fellowships/ScholarshipsEntry/ExitForm*". For current eligible IRTA fellows, (see Part IV, B, 3).

4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. A biographical sketch (vita) and list of current and pending support for each key personnel member must be submitted. Each vita may not exceed two (2) pages. The following should be included, as applicable:

(a) The roles and responsibilities of each PD and/or collaborator should be clearly described;

(b) Vitae of the PD and each co-PD, senior associate, and other professional personnel. This section should include vitae of all key persons who are expected to work on the project, whether or not NIFA funds are sought for their support. The vitae should be limited to two (2) pages each in length, excluding publications listings. The vitae must include a presentation of academic and research credentials, as applicable: earned degrees, teaching experience, employment history, professional activities, honors and awards, and grants received, indicate TOTAL number of graduate students mentored or trained as well as **a chronological list of names of all graduate students trained (with role identified as chair or committee member) or mentored during the past four (4) years**;

(c) Vitae should also include all relevant publications in refereed journals during the past four (4) years, including those in press, must be provided for each project member for whom curriculum vitae is provided. Also list only those non-refereed technical publications that have relevance to the proposed project. All authors should be listed in the same order as they appear on each paper cited, along with the title and complete reference as these usually appear in journals; and

(d) Include the credentials of international or other personnel participating as mentors, trainers, advisors, teachers in directing the international travel experience or other training of the USDA Fellow, providing evidence for a scholarly experience that will enhance the graduate training. For to-be-recruited Fellows, this information should be submitted at least 150 days prior to the Fellows' participation in the IRTA.

The 'Current and Pending Support' information (see NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide p. 33, item 5.3, for guidelines and information format) for each senior/key person identified above **must be attached**. **Note: Even if no other funding is currently reported under the 'Active' section of this attachment, you must still list information for this grant application under the 'Pending' section of this attachment for each senior/key person identified above.**

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.

6. R&R Budget

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This form (accompanied by the required Budget Justification attachment) contains the itemized listing and description of your project's budget. All costs should be fully explained and justified. Complete all applicable fields. Consult the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions. The following, additional information may be helpful:

Complete one R&R Budget Form for each 12-month period, plus a cumulative budget and narrative for the entire project is required detailing the requested total support for the overall project period. Attach the budget narrative as a PDF document to the appropriate field. Applicants are required to provide a 5-year budget with a zero dollar budget for any year where support is not allocated. Planning will allow efficient recruitment and appointment of Graduate Fellows within the stipulated 18-month interval. Due to statutory restriction no extensions beyond the 5-year period are allowed.

On the R&R Budget Form Field E (Participant/Trainee Support Costs), the stipend is placed on Line 2 "Stipends" and the cost-of-education allowance (CoE) should appear on Line 5 "Other." The IRTA, if applicable, should be entered on Line 3 "Travel" of the R&R Budget Form. Costs in other sections of the budget, including PD salaries and Section F "Other Direct Costs" are not allowed.

Matching. There are no matching requirements and matching resources will not be factored into the review process as evaluation criteria.

Indirect Costs. Indirect costs not allowed. In lieu of indirect costs, institutions receive a $2,000 per year cost-of-education allowance for each Fellow supported by a Master's or Doctoral award. ***The Project Director is required to use part of the allowance to attend at least one NIFA-sponsored Project Directors' Conference held during the life of the grant.*** In addition, institutions may use the CoE to defray program-related expenses including, but not limited to, student retention and mentoring programs, Fellow travel to attend professional meetings, publications, or salaries of project personnel and/or to conduct research, laboratory fees and educational expenses (e.g., books and supplies). An institution may elect to apply the cost-of-education institutional allowance to a Fellow's tuition and fees; however, such is not required.

7. Supplemental Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part VI, 1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 2. Program Code. Enter the program code name ("**National Needs Graduate Fellowship Program**") and the program code ("**KK**").

b. Conflict of Interest. A conflict of interest list is required under this program. Conflicts of Interest for Senior/Key Personnel must be submitted. Provide the full names **with institutional affiliation** of the individuals in the following categories: (a) all co-authors on publications within the past four years, including pending publications and submissions; (b) all collaborators on projects within the past four years, including current and planned collaborations; (c) all thesis or postdoctoral advisees/advisors within the past four years; and (d) all persons in your field with whom you have had a consulting or financial arrangement within the past four years, who stand to gain by seeing the project funded. This form is necessary to assist program staff in excluding from application review those individuals who have conflicts of interest with the personnel in the grant application. The Program Contact must be informed of any additional conflicts of interest that arise after the application is submitted.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by COB on **June 1, 2011** (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

Applicants who have problems with the submission of an application to Grants.gov are encouraged to 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.

Correspondence regarding submitted applications will be sent using e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail 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, please contact the Program Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable 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, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

No indirect costs allowed. NIFA provides the $2,000 per year per Fellow cost-of-education allowance in lieu of indirect costs.

NNF stipend funds for fellowships must be used to: (1) support the same Fellow at the Master's degree level who maintains satisfactory progress and is eligible to receive grant support for **a maximum of twenty-four (24) months** during a thirty-month period, and/or (2) support the same Fellow at the doctoral degree level who maintains satisfactory progress and is eligible to receive grant support for a **maximum of thirty-six (36) months** within a forty-two-month

period. Institutions must use a minimum stipend amount of $18,500 per year for Master's Fellows and $24,500 per year for Doctoral Fellows.

If funds remain as a result of USDA Fellows completing their studies early (less than twenty-four months for a Master's degree or less than thirty-six months for a doctoral degree) or Fellowships being terminated prematurely, such funds may be used, within the time remaining on the award, to support: (1) pursuit of a doctoral degree in a TESA in the food and agricultural sciences by a Master's degree level Fellow at the grantee institution, or (2) a Replacement Fellow. The tenure of such a Replacement Fellow is limited to whatever time is remaining on the grant before it expires; however, an institution may not appoint a Replacement Fellow unless there is time for the student to complete at least one semester/quarter of study before the expiration date of the grant.

Replacement Fellows must meet all of the eligibility criteria and other requirements established for Fellow selection and are subject to the same provisions as other Fellows during their tenure in the program. Replacement Fellows are entitled, during their tenure, to the same benefits that other Fellows receive from the grant award and National Needs Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship Grants Program. Institutions may, but are not required to, continue a Replacement Fellow's tuition and other benefits beyond the expiration date of the grant using institutional or other funds. A Fellow may not be simultaneously supported, with stipend, under multiple National Needs Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship Grants and/or other NIFA funded grant program awards.

Remaining funds cannot be used to increase annual Fellowship stipends provided to existing Fellows. If less than one semester/quarter remains on the award, the grantee must refund unexpended monies to NIFA. Such funds cannot be used to increase the annual stipend amounts for current USDA Graduate Fellows.

Should a USDA Fellow require additional time beyond the grant period to complete his or her degree, it is expected that the grantee will consider alternatives to continue supporting the Fellow through other means.

Tuition and fees are the responsibility of the Fellow unless an institution elects to use its cost-of-education institutional allowance for this purpose or elects to pay such costs out of non-USDA monies. No dependency allowances are provided to any USDA Graduate Fellows. Stipend payments and special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowances may be made to Fellows by the institution, in accordance with standard institutional procedures for graduate fellowships and assistantships.

When grants are for IRTAs that will be used by To-Be-Recruited Fellows: The IRTA funds for To-Be-Recruited fellows will be withheld until the Project Director has submitted, to the NNF Program Office, all of the required documentation for eligibility of the Graduate Fellow for the IRTA as well as the required specifics outlined in the RFA for the IRTA. The information must be submitted for approval, no less than 150 days prior to the use of the IRTA funds (see PART IV, B, 3, b, Section 1). **This requirement will become a condition of the award.**

E. Other Submission Requirements

The applicant should follow the submission requirements noted in the document entitled "A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov."

Described below are the requirements for successful submission of an application, all of the following steps must be met for an application to be considered for peer review:

1) Meeting the deadline: To electronically send the application to Grants.gov the submit button is hit, which triggers a date and time stamp on the application. The date and time stamp is used to determine whether the application was received by Grants.gov before the deadline, which is prior to close of business (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time) on **June 1, 2011**. An application submitted or resubmitted after the deadline is late. Consideration of late applications is only given in extenuating circumstances (e.g., natural disasters, confirmed Grants.gov outage) with proper documentation and support of the Agency Contact (see Part VII). The occurrence of one of these situations does not automatically ensure that a late application will be accepted. If an applicant wants a late application considered under an extenuating circumstance, the applicant should contact the Agency Contact accordingly.

2) Successful Grants.gov validation: The Grants.gov system performs a limited check of the application, and applicants are notified by Grants.gov of the outcome of the initial review. Applications meeting Grants.gov requirements are made available to the funding agency for further processing. Applications that fail Grants.gov validation may be resubmitted to Grants.gov if the original agency deadline has not passed. (Note that the Grants.gov system may allow applications to be submitted after the deadline has passed, but the application is considered late by NIFA.)

3) Successful Agency validation: NIFA staff perform precursory review of the application. The agency validation process includes, for example, meeting eligibility requirements and following agency application guidelines (e.g., formatting, page limitations, limits on budget requests). Applicants are notified by NIFA of the outcome of this review.

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

Each application will be evaluated in a 2-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) 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; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

B. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria in Section 1 will be used in reviewing applications for Master's and doctoral traineeship projects (Category 1 and/or Category 2 projects with or without IRTA) to determine the intrinsic merit and alignment of proposed projects to the purpose, priorities and objectives of the NNF grants program. The criteria in Section 2 will be used when project directors with a current NNF award submit application(s) requesting funds ONLY to support IRTA(s) for current, eligible National Needs Fellow(s).

1. Applications for Graduate Training

The evaluation criteria and point values listed below will be used in reviewing all applications submitted in response to this RFA, **except** those requesting funds only for IRTA awards for current USDA Fellows:

(a) Potential for Advancing the Quality of Education (25 Points)

This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the proposed program of graduate study (training) will result in the development of outstanding graduates to meet the future needs of a globally interconnected, technologically advanced, rapidly diversifying and consumer driven food and agricultural or forestry industry. Elements include: quality (demonstrated track record or plan with high probability for successful completion) of the chosen academic training program to prepare experts in the national targeted expertise shortage area, current and future demand for

knowledgeable, multicultural graduates in chosen discipline(s), strength of the curriculum, instructional approaches, identification of the technical core and functional competencies that each Fellow will be expected to attain, strategies for developing critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills, and prior success in or potential for graduating Fellows to meet the purpose and goals of the NNF grant program.

(b) Proposed Approach (30 Points)

(i) Recruitment and selection: The applicant's strategies, procedures and established relationships for successfully identifying and recruiting outstanding student beneficiaries who are committed to careers in food and agricultural sciences, and forest resources as appropriate, and for pipelining into further graduate training or professions to increase the multicultural diversity of the workforce in the TESA.

(ii) Academic advising, professional mentoring, and student support services: The applicant's plans and procedures for assessing, monitoring, guiding, and sustaining a Fellow's continued commitment, and securing successful progress toward an education in preparation for a career in the TESA, and for providing appropriate career counseling, mentoring, support services, and persistence of Fellows to further professional opportunities.

(iii) Program evaluation and dissemination: The adequacy and reasonableness of the applicant's plans, as reflected in the proposal, for (1) evaluating project management; (2) determining overall effectiveness of the graduate training in areas of national targeted expertise shortage to prepare Fellows for careers as food and agricultural scientists or professionals; (3) tracking Fellows' accomplishments after graduation; (4) measuring performance outcomes that evaluate how the training project increases the number and/or percentage of students graduating, above the numbers that would result without the grant measure impacts at both the funded project level and this NNF funding opportunity at the program level; and (5) disseminating project outcomes and achievements to a wide audience of educators and policy makers, in order to expand the pipeline of outstanding students entering further graduate training or workforce in support of the TESA in food and agricultural sciences.

(c) Institutional Commitment and Resources (20 Points)

The degree to which the proposal substantiates clearly: (1) that the environment, facilities and equipment, instructional support resources, and other academic attributes are excellent for providing outstanding teaching and research at the forefront of science and technology related to the chosen discipline; and (2) the commitment to support the Fellow's education and research over and beyond the funds provided by NIFA during the grant, and continued support through other means, should a Fellow require additional time beyond the grant period.

(d) Key Personnel (15 Points)

The expertise, qualifications, and roles of key staff assigned to the project, particularly the project director and faculty or staff having the most frequent or influential contacts with Fellows.

Elements include such attributes as competence and/or experience in graduating post-baccalaureate students, research, teaching, community service, working with diverse cultural groups, students at risk of not completing their degree programs, and leading similar projects.

(e) Broader Context Impacts (10 points)

The degree to which the proposal provides training to impact the broader context of the development of the Fellow for overall success in the next generation work force. It will include: any innovative (see **Part IV, B. 3, b, Section 4**) special features of the academic program(s) that will be available *especially* to Fellows or required as a part of their degree program(s), including: an integrative interdisciplinary, multi-disciplinary, or cross-disciplinary approach; a focus on innovative, multi-disciplinary education programs, material, or curricula; a multi-university collaborative approach; an emphasis on a collateral specialization or minor in a related discipline; development of policy, research opportunities, internships, practicum, experiential learning opportunities, developing leadership, management, critical thinking and problem solving skills that may integrally incorporate science and values for sustainability in food and agricultural sciences; international research/educational training; and related work experiences to effectively matriculate Fellows with the expertise and proficiency to meet the needs of the targeted expertise shortage areas.

2. Applications for Special International Study or Thesis/Dissertation Research Travel Allowances (IRTA)

The following criteria will be used to review applications requesting IRTA funds only (for current National Needs Fellows).

(a) Potential for Advancing the Quality of Education (20 Points)

This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the proposed international/research learning experience for the eligible graduate Fellow(s) will contribute to training and will result in the development of outstanding graduates to meet the future needs of a globally interconnected, technologically advanced, rapidly diversifying and consumer driven food and agricultural industry. Elements include: quality of the chosen travel/research activity to enhance the graduate training program of the Fellow; and destination and duration - the degree to which the destination and duration of the travel experience is appropriate for enhancing the Fellow's academic program.

(b) Proposed Approach (40 Points)

(i) Advanced preparation – the degree to which the proposed study or research activities are well-planned, including the likelihood that these activities will come to fruition and that the participation of identified personnel will materialize based on: (1) the clarity of the learning objectives; (2) the planned activity(s); (3) established and documented evidence of availability of facilities and personnel at host institution; and (4) the completeness of arrangements for the travel and the stay.

(ii) Academic advising, professional counseling, mentoring, student support and pipelining – the applicant's plans and procedures for assessing, monitoring, guiding, and sustaining a Fellow's progress in the research/international experiential activities toward securing a positive impact on the academic program of the Fellow(s); strategies for application of critical thinking and problem solving skills in Fellows; and development of skills to sustain the discipline(s) and entry into the workforce or further graduate training.

(iii) Program evaluation and dissemination – the plans for (1) an *Outcomes Report* to be submitted to NIFA that describes accomplishments of the Fellow(s) after completing the IRTA - ***this is <u>not</u> an activity report with a daily log of tasks;*** (2) clear documenting of progress from entry to exit of training program to meet the needs of the TESA; <u>and</u> (3) disseminating impacts and achievements to a wide audience of educators and policy makers, in order to expand the pipeline of outstanding students interested in careers in food and agricultural sciences.

(c) Institutional Commitment and Resources (10 Points)

The degree to which the proposal substantiates clearly: (1) that the facilities and equipment, instructional/learning support resources and other academic attributes are excellent for providing outstanding international/research experiential learning opportunities at the forefront of science and technology related to the academic program of the Fellow(s); and (2) the documented commitment (**letters**) to support the Fellow(s) in the educational value of the international research experience.

(d) Key Personnel (10 Points)

The degree to which the personnel, both U.S. and international, involved with the research and/or travel experience have the appropriate credentials and experience to direct the Fellow's international experience, and the likelihood that their participation as mentors, trainers, advisors, or teachers will contribute to the educational value of the travel experiences.

(e) Broader Context Impacts (20 points)

The degree to which the proposal provides training to impact the broader context of the development of NNF Fellow for overall successful performance in the next generation workforce. Include such special features that will focus on: (1) innovative approaches to generating a new body of knowledge that strengthens the academic program of the Fellow(s), (2) establishing a framework for overall success with a rigorous plan for assessment of outcomes and impacts, and; (3) an emphasis on learning and understanding global influences and competitiveness in a fast-evolving sphere.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution shall be

determined by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 6400 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 648, Falls Church, Virginia 22042. Phone: (703) 532-2300. Web site: http://www.hepinc.com.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one time basis, with updates on an as needed basis, as part of the responsibility determination 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. NIFA will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the preaward process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which 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).

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of NIFA 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 awarding official of NIFA 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. It should be noted that 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 shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015 and 3019 of 7 CFR).

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the following:

(1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the Director has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;

(2) Title of project;

(3) Name(s) and institution(s) of PDs chosen to direct and control approved activities;

(4) Identifying award number assigned by the Department;

(5) Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring recompetition for funds;

(6) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Director during the project period;

(7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;

(8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;

(9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html to view NIFA award terms and conditions);

(10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and

(11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by NIFA to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

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 include, but are not limited to:

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A—USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR Part 331 and 9 CFR Part 121—USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21 and A-122 (2 CFR Parts 220 and 230), and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3017—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement).

7 CFR Part 3018—USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3019—USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations (2 CFR Part 215).

7 CFR Part 3021—Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance).

7 CFR Part 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3407—NIFA procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

7 CFR 3430—Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Grant Programs--General Grant Administrative Provisions.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute) —prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in Federally assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq. —Bayh Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

1. Documentation of Progress on Funded Projects

Pursuant to 7 CFR Part 3402.23, Project Directors will be required to:

(a) Reporting on Individual Student Beneficiaries

(i) Student Appointment - Project Directors are required to complete and submit, to the NNF Program Office (NNF@NIFA.usda.gov), a Fellowships/Scholarships Entry Form, [Page 1 of Form NIFA-2010, http://www.NIFA.usda.gov/funding/all_forms.html] when eligible, committed students are appointed as National Needs Graduate Fellows under an award. This information must also be provided for replacement Fellows appointed under the program.

(ii) Annual Student Progress in Training Program - Project Directors are required to complete and submit, to the NNF Program Office, an Annual Update Form, [Page 2 of Form NIFA-2010] that provides information about the academic accomplishment including products, recognitions and professional mentoring outcomes, for each Fellow supported. This information is treated as confidential. The Annual Update is used to assess the continuing progress of Fellows through their graduate training program to meet the Targeted Expertise Shortage Area for the funded graduate training project.

(iii) Exit and/or Termination - Project Directors are required to complete and submit, to the NNF Program Office, a Fellowships/Scholarships Exit Form, [Page 3 of Form NIFA-2010] as soon as a Fellow either (1) graduates; (2) is officially terminated from the Fellowship or the academic program due to unsatisfactory academic progress or disciplinary action; or (3) voluntarily withdraws from the Fellowship or academic program. If a Fellow has not completed all degree requirements at the end of the 5-year award duration, NIFA may request a preliminary Fellowships/Scholarships Exit Form (Annual Update and Exit Reports). In such a case, a final Fellowships/Scholarships Exit Form would be required at a later date.

(b) Reporting on IRTA Activity(s)

If applicable, an Outcomes Report must be submitted to the USDA program contact personnel within 90 days of completion of the IRTA. This report is prepared by the USDA Fellow and submitted through the Project Director of the active Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship Grant Program award. ***This is not an activity report with a daily log of tasks.*** The Outcomes Report describes accomplishments and may include images. USDA Graduate Fellows selected to utilize IRTA funding should note that specific program evaluation and dissemination will include the following – the plans for: (1) an *Outcomes Report* to be submitted to the USDA that describes accomplishments of the Fellow(s) after completing the IRTA - *this is not an activity report with a daily log of tasks;* and (2) disseminating impacts and achievements to a wide audience of educators and policy makers, in order to expand the pipeline of outstanding students interested in careers in the food and agricultural sciences (see Part IV, D).

(c) Annual Accomplishment and **Final Technical Reporting on the Graduate Training Project**

Grantees are to submit initial project information and annual and summary reports to NIFA' s electronic, Web-based inventory system that facilitates both grantee submissions of project outcomes and public access to information on Federally-funded projects. The details of these reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions. Annually, Project Directors describe progress towards achieving goals of funded project. This includes highlighting success and reporting challenges and measures taken to address each goal, indicating unusual developments, planning for the next year's activities, and any other information that is pertinent and assessing overall progress of training of Fellows to meet the national need impact on workforce. The final Technical Report includes a summary of the overall progress toward project objectives, addresses problems in concluding project or which may be specified in the terms and conditions of the award. This information should include performance metrics and be aligned to the goals of the USDA, NNF grant program and the objectives of the funded graduate training project. [Note: ***The Annual Accomplishment Report and the Final Technical Report address the funded graduate training project as a whole and not the individual annual progress of each Fellow in his/her graduate program of study***.]

When NIFA has accepted a Final Technical Report **and** the Fellowships/Scholarships Exit Form for **each Fellow** supported by an award, the grantee has satisfied the requirement of the final performance reporting for the award. Additional follow-up reports to track Fellows' career patterns also may be requested.

(d) Project Director's Conference

The Project Director is required to use part of the CoE to attend at least one NIFA-sponsored Project Directors' Conference held during the life of the grant.

For informational purposes, the "Federal Financial Report," Form SF-425, consolidates into a single report the former Financial Status Report (SF-269 and SF-269A) and the Federal Cash Transactions Report (SF-272 and SF-272A). The NIFA Agency-specific Terms and Conditions include the requirement that Form SF-425 is due on a **annual basis no later than 90 days following the award's anniversary date *(i.e.*, one year following the month and day of which the project period begins and each year thereafter up until a final report is required). A final "Federal Financial Report," Form SF-425, is due 90 days after the expiration date of this award.**

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Dr. Irma Lawrence, National Program Leader
Division of Community and Education
Institute of Youth, Family and Community

National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Stop 2251
Washington, DC 20250-2251

Telephone: 202-720-1973
Fax: 202-720-2030
E-mail: NNF@NIFA.usda.gov

Program website: http://www.nifa.usda.gov/fo/graduateandpostgraduatefellowshipsserd.cfm

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access to Review Information

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, the awardee 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 Project Plans

a. The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.

b. Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.

c. Changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes.

d. Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

e. The project period may be extended by NIFA without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed any applicable statutory limit or expiring appropriation limitation. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the awardee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of award.

f. Changes in Approved Budget: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes, if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

C. 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 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. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of three years. Other copies will be destroyed. 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.

D. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), 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.

E. Definitions

Please refer to 7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Grant Programs--General Grant Administrative Provisions, and 7 CFR 3402, NNF grants program-specific Administrative Provision for the applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.

First generation means an individual neither of whose parents completed a baccalaureate degree, or in the case of any individual who regularly resided with and received support from only one parent, an individual whose only such parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree.

Graduate degree means a Master's or doctoral degree.

Minority means Alaska Native, American Indian, Asian-American, Black (African-American), Hispanic American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, or any other group underrepresented in undergraduate and first professional degree study in the food and agricultural sciences as indicated in standard statistical references, or as documented on a case-by-case basis by national survey data submitted to and accepted by the Secretary.

Multi-institutional means a request for funding for a single academic program or an interdisciplinary program involving two or more institutions in a graduate training program.

Traditionally underrepresented in the food and agricultural sciences means groups that have been historically, and are currently, underrepresented among recipients of undergraduate and first professional degrees in the food and agricultural sciences.

Underrepresented means proportionate representation as measured by degree recipients that is less than the proportionate representation in the general population--(i) As indicated by (A) The most current edition of the Department of Education's Digest of Education Statistics; (B) The National Research Council's Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities; or (C) Other standard statistical references, as documented by national survey data submitted to and accepted by the Secretary on a case-by-case basis.