

Notice of Funding Opportunity Supplemental and Alternative Crops

FUNDING YEAR: Fiscal Year (FY) 2026

APPLICATION DEADLINE: June 25, 2026

ANTICIPATED PROGRAM FUNDING: \$1,815,036

AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL AWARD RANGE: \$230,000 - \$460,000

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: USDA-NIFA-OP-011756

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 10.200

ANNOUNCEMENT

National Institute of Food and Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture

Assistance Listing Number (ALN): The Supplemental and Alternative Crops (SAC) program is listed in the Assistance Listings under number 10.200.

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
Application:	5:00 P.M. Eastern Time, June 25, 2026
Applicants Comments:	Within six months from the issuance of this notice (<i>NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month</i>)

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

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

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

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

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

Stakeholder Input. NIFA seeks comments on all NOFOs so it can deliver programs efficiently, effectively, with integrity, and with a focus on customer service. NIFA considers comments to

the extent possible when developing NOFOs and uses comments to help meet the requirements of Section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 ([7 U.S.C. 7613\(c\)\(2\)](#)). Applicants may submit written comments to Policy@usda.gov. Please use the following subject line: Response to the Supplemental and Alternative Crops (SAC) NOFO.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The total funding amount available for SAC in FY 2026 is approximately \$1,815,036. This notice identifies the objectives for SAC projects, deadlines, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions. The statutory language covers all supplemental and alternative crops, including but not limited to canola and industrial hemp. Supplemental and alternative crops help farmers diversify their operations and improve economic stability.

Examples include but are not limited to:

- Oilseeds/Industrial: Canola, Castor beans.
- Food/Industrial: Industrial hemp (fiber/seed), Confectionary sunflowers.
- Grains/Pseudocereals: Buckwheat, Amaranth, Quinoa, Pearl millet, Rye, Spelt
- Legumes/Pulses: Lentils, Mung beans, Dry edible beans.

The development of supplemental and alternative crops for agronomic rotational purposes is of critical importance to producers of agricultural commodities, and the SAC program supports this focus. This program requires integrated research and extension projects that aim to increase the cost effectiveness and competitiveness of supplemental and alternative crops grown as components of production systems nationwide. SAC supports development of superior-performing supplemental and alternative crop cultivars and production practices that result in improved cost efficiencies, reduced grower risks, and wider use in production systems. Research results and technology developed are expected to be rapidly transferred to producers and other users through effective extension outreach and other engagement efforts.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ANNOUNCEMENT 2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 4

TABLE OF CONTENTS 5

TABLE OF KEY INFORMATION..... 6

PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION 7

A. Legislative Authority7

B. Purpose and Priorities.....7

C. Program Area Description8

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION 10

A. Available Funding10

B. Application Restrictions10

C. Project and Grant Types10

D. Ethical Conduct of Funded Projects10

PART III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION..... 11

A. Eligibility Requirements.....11

B. Cost Sharing or Matching.....11

PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION 12

A. Method of Application12

B. Content and Form of the Application12

C. Funding Restrictions.....16

PART V. APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS 18

A. NIFA’s Evaluation Process18

B. Evaluation Criteria.....18

C. Organizational Management Information.....19

D. Application Disposition.....20

PART VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION 21

A. General21

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.....21

C. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements21

PART VII. OTHER INFORMATION 22

A. Use of Funds and Changes in Budget.....22

B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards23

C. Regulatory Information23

D. Language Access Services.....23

APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS..... 25

APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS 26

TABLE OF KEY INFORMATION

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines.....	2
Table 2: Supplemental and Alternative Crops Program Key Information	8
Table 3. Steps to Obtain Application Materials.....	12
Table 4: Help and Resources	12
Table 5: Key Application Instructions.....	13

PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

In accordance with [7 U.S.C. 3319d\(c\)](#), the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to make competitive grants to conduct fundamental and applied research related to the development of new commercial products derived from natural plant material for industrial and agricultural applications.

The program under this statutory authority may include, but shall not be limited to: conducting comprehensive resource and infrastructure assessments; developing and introducing supplemental and alternative income-producing crops; developing and expanding domestic and export markets for such crops; providing technical assistance to farm owners and operators, marketing cooperatives, and others; and conducting fundamental and applied research related to the development of new commercial products derived from natural plant material [including hemp (as defined in [7 U.S.C. 1639o](#))] for industrial and agricultural applications. This definition of industrial hemp was recently revised in the H.R. 5731 - 119th Congress (2025-2026) ([Continuing Appropriations, Agriculture, Legislative Branch, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Extensions Act, 2026](#))

B. Purpose and Priorities

The SAC program, Assistance Listing Number 10.200, supports projects that lead to expanded adaptation and increased acreage in the United States of alternative crops grown for food/feedstuff, oil, and feedstocks for industrial value-added products. Such crops are important to U.S. agriculture in that these can provide new and profitable cropping options in response to low commodity prices and changes in consumer demand for new agricultural-based products. Oilseed, grain, and feedstock crops have major uses in healthy human foods and animal feeds, as natural pest control when used as cover crops, and as a feedstock in industrial chemical manufacture and biofuel production. Grains/pseudocereals and legumes/pulses can play an important role in the cropping rotation for food/feedstuff and/or feedstock for industrial value-added purposes, as cover crops, and as habitat for pollinators.

The purpose of this program is to support integrated research and extension projects that adapt these multiple-purpose crops to different growing regions in the United States, so that food/feedstuff and feedstock for industrial value-added production can be significantly increased and be profitable nationwide. Such efforts require strategically designed, region-based research approaches and effective communication of useful information and the transfer of technologies to users as rapidly as possible. SAC supports research and extension in conventional and organic production systems.

Handling of baseline data and data collection will be addressed in the Data Management Plan (DMP) in accordance with the [Part IV\(B\)](#) of this NOFO.

Table 2: Supplemental and Alternative Crops Program Key Information

Title	Description
Program Code:	HW
Program Code Name:	Supplemental and Alternative Crops
ALN:	10.200
Project Type:	Integrated Research and Extension
Grant Type:	Standard
Application Deadline	June 25, 2026
Grant Duration:	24-48 Months
Anticipated # of Awards:	4 - 8
Minimum Award Amount:	\$230,000
Maximum Award Amount:	\$460,000

C. Program Area Description

SAC is a program that focuses on projects with integrated research and extension objectives that aim to improve the productivity and profitability of supplemental and alternative crops grown for food/feedstuff, oil, and as feedstock for industrial value-added products through their expanded use as components in production systems across the United States. By definition, an integrated project includes at least **two** of three functions of the agricultural knowledge system (i.e., research, education, and extension within a project), but no single component must exceed 67% of the budget. The SAC program requires that all applications must be integrated projects and must include research and extension. Education is optional but may be added if it is a desired component of the project.

The SAC program encourages applicants to establish and work through region-based, multi-state research networks to address priority national or regional science needs of the supplemental and alternative crop industries. The SAC program seeks to accelerate the development and use of superior varieties and practices adapted to regional conditions that produce benefits to growers and allied industries. By bringing together expertise across multiple universities, federal agencies, and industry organizations and states, the SAC program seeks to enhance the effectiveness of limited state, federal, and industry resources to produce greater impacts. Research results, information, and technology developed are expected to be rapidly transferred to producers and other users through effective extension outreach and other engagement efforts. Virtual methods of outreach are encouraged to expand potential audience reach.

NIFA is soliciting applications for the FY 2026 SAC for all crops covered by this NOFO (see Executive Summary) under the following areas:

1. Oilseed and food/feedstock crops:
 - a. Testing germplasm and breeding to develop superior performing alternative crop cultivars that increase productivity, profitability, and adaptation to a range of U.S. growing environments.
 - b. Conducting fundamental and applied research and extension activities to develop innovative planting, cultivating, and harvesting methods for use in production systems that include superior performing cultivars to improve input cost efficiencies and reduce producer and other supply chain participant risks.

- c. Conducting fundamental and applied research and extension activities to develop production practices that enhance the use of supplemental and alternative crops as pollinator-friendly crops.
2. Feedstock for Industrial Value-Added Purposes:
- a. Fundamental and applied research to develop production systems for industrial hemp grown for grain or fiber, or any other feedstock for industrial value-added products, including cultivar evaluation and development, plant spacing, and harvesting techniques.
 - b. Economic research and extension that leads to expanded development of markets for crops grown as feedstock used in industrial value-added products, including the current size of the markets, the potential for market increases, prices that can be expected by growers, and potential bottlenecks in the supply chain.

Proposals must include stakeholder input in priority setting, project development, and implementation, and must pursue research and extension activities. Applicants must provide evidence as appropriate of interdisciplinary, multi-regional cooperation, and use the expertise and resources of Land-grant and other colleges and universities, federal agencies, and private industry.

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The amount available for SAC in FY2026 is approximately \$1,815,036. USDA is not committed to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

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

B. Application Restrictions

NIFA will evaluate applications using the criteria described in [Part V](#) of this NOFO.

Application for FY 2026 is limited to the following application types:

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

C. Project and Grant Types

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

1. Project Types

Only Integrated Projects that specifically include research and extension will be considered. Education may be added but is optional. Project periods may be extended but may not exceed five years total. Applicants are required to provide evidence of multi-regional cooperation and, where appropriate, use other relevant and complementary expertise and resources of Land-grant and other colleges and universities, other federal agencies, and private industry.

2. **Grant Types**: All projects for will be standard grants. Standard Grants support targeted Integrated Projects.

D. Ethical Conduct of Funded Projects

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

PART III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligibility Requirements

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

Colleges and universities (as defined in section 1404 of NARETPA, [7 U.S.C. 3103](#)), other Federal agencies, and private sector entities are eligible to submit applications. Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

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

Duplicate or Multiple Submissions – duplicate or multiple submissions are not allowed. NIFA will disqualify both applications if an applicant submits duplicate or multiple submissions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

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

PART IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION

A. Method of Application

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

Table 3. Steps to Obtain Application Materials

Steps	Action
Step One: Register	<i>New Users</i> to Grants.gov must register early with Grants.gov prior to submitting an application.
Step Two: Download Adobe	Download and Install Adobe Reader (see Adobe Software Compatibility for basic system requirements).
Step Three: Find Application	Using this funding opportunity number USDA-NIFA-OP-011756, search for application here: Opportunity Package .
Step Four: Assess Readiness	Contact an AR prior to starting an application to assess the organization's readiness to submit an electronic application.

Table 4: Help and Resources

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

B. Content and Form of the Application

The [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) is part of the corresponding application package for this NOFO. The NOFO overrides the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) if there is a discrepancy between the two documents. Applicants that do not meet the application requirements, to include partial applications, risk being excluded from NIFA's review. NIFA will assign a proposal number to all applications that meet the requirements of this NOFO. Applicants must refer to the proposal number when corresponding with NIFA. **Table 5** outlines other key instructions for applicants.

Table 5: Key Application Instructions

Instruction	References (All references are to the NIFA Grants Application Guide)
Attachments must be in a portable document format (PDF) format.	Part IV
Check the manifest of submitted files to verify attachments are in the correct format.	Part IV
Conduct an administrative review of the application before submission.	Part IV
Follow the submission instructions.	Part IV
Provide an accurate email address, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R.	Part V
Contact the Grants.gov helpdesk for technical support and keep a record of the correspondence.	N/A
Contact NIFA if applicant does not receive correspondence from NIFA regarding an application within 30 days of the application deadline.	N/A

SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet. See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) for the required certifications and assurances.

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

R&R Other Project Information Form. See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

1. **Field 7. Project Summary (PS)/Abstract.** The PS must show how the project goals align with the project goals of the SAC. See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#) for instructions and suggested templates.
2. **Field 8. Project Narrative (PN).** The PN must not exceed 18 *1.5-spaced* pages of written text, figures, and tables (the font size for written text should be 12-point type and for tables should be no smaller than 11 points, Times New Roman. Pages should have no less than 1-inch margins). The page limits outlined here ensure fair competition. Appendices to the PN are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. Do not add appendices to circumvent the page limit. Only the first 18 pages of written text, including tables and figures, that count towards the page limit will be reviewed if the application is found to exceed the page limit. The PN must include all the following:
 - a. **Introduction.** Identify the program area to which you are applying. Define the states working on the project. Clearly state the high-priority needs of the supplemental and alternative crop, who will benefit and how they will benefit, and the specific goals of the proposed research. Summarize the body of knowledge or other past activities related to your proposed research, citing the work of key project personnel or others that are relevant to the project. Preliminary data or information pertinent to the

- proposed research should be included in this section. Describe the qualifications of key personnel, adequacy of facilities, and the project management capability of the applicant institution.
- b. Rationale and significance. Concisely present the rationale behind the proposed research as it relates to the goals of this NOFO as well as the specific research area to be addressed. This section should:
 - i. Address the priority-setting process and the method of engaging stakeholder involvement in problem identification, planning, implementation of research, evaluation, and utilization of results.
 - ii. Describe any coordination of the research in national or regional efforts and describe how this research complements other work conducted by Land-grant and other universities, federal agencies, and industry.
 - iii. Discuss novel ideas or contributions that the proposed project offers.
 - c. Objectives. State the project objectives to meet the NOFO goals.
 - d. Approach. Describe how each stated objective will be addressed. Include:
 - i. Methods to be used in carrying out the research and Extension components.
 - ii. Means by which results will be analyzed, assessed, and interpreted.
 - iii. A detailed description of how you will communicate your findings and transfer technologies to intended users (Information Dissemination Plan).
 - iv. A clear description of each team member's role and responsibility.
 - v. Project timeline: For the entire project, a timeline that outlines all important phases as a year-by-year function of time, including periods beyond the grant funding period.
 - vi. Expected outcomes and benefits. Projects must include a clear description of the expected accomplishments and how progress and benefits (outputs and outcomes) will be tracked and measured. This section can include:
 1. Anticipated specific uses for your results or products.
 2. Specific changes in knowledge about the supplemental and alternative crops and their performance that will directly result from the research.
 3. Performance measures such as the number of supplemental and alternative crop acres planted, increased seed sales, relative changes in land use, enhanced efficiency of production systems, or change in market share.
 4. Estimated increases in profit or risk reductions from growing these crops, or other quantitative measures of impact.
 5. The potential long-term benefits of utilizing the new technology based on current knowledge and practice, and the estimated impact on the supplemental and alternative crops and American agriculture.
 - vii. Cooperation and institutional involvement.
 - e. Project timeline
 - f. Response to previous review: The response to previous review must not exceed 3 *1.5-spaced* pages. The response to previous review does not count towards the page limit for the PN.
3. **Field 12. Add Other Attachments.** See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).
- a. **Data Management Plan (DMP).** A DMP is required for this program with a two-page limit. Applicants should clearly articulate how the project director (PD) and co-PDs plan to manage and disseminate the data generated by the project. The DMP will

- be considered during the merit review process (see [NIFA's Data Management Plan](#)). If you need help in preparing a data management plan or have questions about what constitutes a data management plan for this role (including questions about data privacy, etc.), please contact the NIFA program mailbox listed at the end of this NOFO.
- b. **Logic model.** A logic model must include elements detailing the activities, outputs, and outcomes of the proposed project. There is a three-page limit per logic model. The logic model planning process is a tool that should be used to develop a project before writing the application. This information may be provided as a narrative or formatted into a logic model chart. See logic model information on NIFA website: [Logic Model Planning Process | National Institute of Food and Agriculture \(usda.gov\)](#).
 - c. **Mentoring Plan (MP).** An MP is required for all grant types that involve student or participant training or mentoring. There is a two-page limit for standard grant applications. All student/trainee types can be included in the same mentoring plan. The guidelines below apply to all grant types.

The MP should describe:

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

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

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

R&R Budget. See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

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

Supplemental Information Form. See **Part V** of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

1. **Field 2. Program to which the applicant is applying.** Enter the program name "Supplemental and Alternative Crops/SAC" and the program code "HW". Accurate entry is critical.
2. **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.** See Part V of the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

C. Funding Restrictions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

all Federal awards until such time as a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate for a rate, which it may do at any time.

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

PART V. APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. NIFA's Evaluation Process

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

Scientific Peer Review Process:

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

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

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

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

After the review process has been completed, NIFA sends copies of reviews, *not* including the identity of reviewers, and a summary (if applicable) of the review panel comments to the PD.

Conflicts of interest. NIFA takes extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may influence the review or evaluation (see [NIFA Peer Review Process for Competitive Grant Applications](#)).

B. Evaluation Criteria

NIFA will use the following criteria to evaluate applications to this program:

1. **Design (60 points).** Each of the following components will be considered:

- a. The application’s methodologies and analytical approaches are appropriate to project objectives, have high scientific merit, and effectively integrate the research and Extension activities. (25 points)
 - b. The application demonstrates a “whole systems approach”; that is, a compelling understanding of the problem(s) it will address, the production system as a whole, and how the proposed solution(s) will contribute to both. (10 points)
 - c. Project is well planned and potentially attainable within project time, scope, and budget. (10 points)
 - d. Awareness of previous or alternative approaches is identified and explained when necessary. Even if a single component is the focus of the project, the proposal must provide a thorough analysis of the broader systems context for why that component is critical. (5 points)
 - e. Project feasibility or likelihood it will help maintain and expand the use of supplemental and alternative crops grown in the United States and advance the USDA Research and Development Priorities. (10 points)
2. **Outreach plan (20 points).** Application includes a detailed extension engagement and outreach plan and schedule for how: 1) team interacts with interested communities (e.g., farmers) to understand need, and 2) new genetic materials, information, knowledge, or other technology will be delivered to those served by the project. A description of how extension outreach impacts will be measured and reported is also included.
 3. **An interdisciplinary and industry-engaged approach (5 points).** The application documents the necessary collective expertise in biological sciences, physical sciences, engineering, socio-economic sciences, extension, and program evaluation, as well as participation from principal stakeholders and partners. Qualifications of project personnel are clearly demonstrated. How these experts collaborate to reach project goals, increasing the sustainability, productivity, and profitability of supplemental and alternative crops, are well described.
 4. **NOFO alignment (5 points).** Application clearly states which NOFO research area(s) will be addressed, and the specified objectives are relevant to NOFO purpose and priorities.
 5. **Appropriateness of budget (5 points).** Budget allocations reflect the personnel and tasks associated with the activities needed to accomplish the objectives. The budget plan describes how this program’s funding complements other funding sources including Federal capacity and competitive funds, and state, industry, and other kinds of support.
 6. **Suitability and feasibility of Data Management and Mentoring Plans. (5 Points).** The Data Management Plan should specify how the project director and collaborators plan to manage and disseminate data generated by this project and must be included in the application package. A Mentoring Plan is required if the project involves training or mentoring of students and/or other personnel (postdoctoral scholars, etc.) and reviewers should be satisfied that the plan is appropriate.

C. **Organizational Management Information**

Applicants must submit specific management information prior to an award and update the information as needed. Applicants may only need to provide an update if there was a change in previously provided information under this or another NIFA program. NIFA provides the requisite forms during the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible for award

under this program, there are factors that may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal financial and non-financial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual, or a determination that an applicant is not responsible).

D. Application Disposition

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

PART VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

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

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

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

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

C. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

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

PART VII. OTHER INFORMATION

A. Use of Funds and Changes in Budget

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

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

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

B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

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

C. Regulatory Information

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

D. Language Access Services

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

APPENDIX I: AGENCY CONTACT

For Programmatic questions please email.

SAC@usda.gov

For administrative questions related to;

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

U.S. Postal Mailing Address:

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

Courier/Package Delivery Address:

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

APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Glossary of Terms

Authorized Departmental Officer – ADO

Assistance Listing Number – ALN

Authorized Representative – AR

Data Management Plan – DMP

Indirect Costs – IDC

Mentoring Plan – MP

National Institute of Food and Agriculture – NIFA

Notice of Funding Opportunity – NOFO

Project Director – PD

Projects in Other States - POS

Project Narrative – PN

Project Summary - PS

Regional Integrated Research and Extension Projects - RIREP

Supplemental and Alternative Crops - SAC

Total Federal Funds Awarded – TFFA

United States Department of Agriculture – USDA

APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS

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

Definitions

Continuation Award:

An award instrument by which NIFA agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined period of time with a statement of intention to provide additional support at a future date, provided that performance has been satisfactory, appropriations are available for this purpose, and continued support would be in the best interest of the Federal government and the public.

Industrial hemp (hemp):

The term “hemp” means the plant *Cannabis sativa* L. and any part of that plant, including the seeds thereof and all derivatives, extracts, cannabinoids, isomers, acids, salts, and salts of isomers, whether growing or not, with a delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol concentration of not more than 0.3 percent on a dry weight basis. This definition is taken from the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Pub. Law 115-334) ([7 U.S.C. 1639o](#)) and was recently revised in the H.R. 5731 - 119th Congress (2025-2026) ([Continuing Appropriations, Agriculture, Legislative Branch, Military Construction and Veterans Affairs, and Extensions Act, 2026](#))

Matching:

The process through which a grant recipient match awarded USDA funds with cash and in-kind contributions on a dollar-for-dollar basis. The matching funds must derive from non-Federal sources.

New Application:

An application not previously submitted to a program.

Resubmitted Application:

A project application that was previously submitted to a program, but the application was not funded.