

Notice of Funding Opportunity

Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program – Organic Transitions

FUNDING YEAR: Fiscal Year (FY) 2026

APPLICATION DEADLINE: July 13, 2026

ANTICIPATED PROGRAM FUNDING: \$7,500,000

AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL AWARD RANGE: \$20,000 - \$1,000,000

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: USDA-NIFA-ICGP-011901

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 10.303

ANNOUNCEMENT

National Institute of Food and Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture

Assistance Listing Number (ALN): The Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program – Organic Transitions (ORG) is listed in the Assistance Listings under number 10.303.

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines

Task Description	Deadline
Application:	5:00 P.M. Eastern Time, July 13, 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 NOFO should align with [USDA Secretary’s Memorandum 1078-020](#) Directive on Departmental Research and Development Priorities:

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

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

Centers of Excellence. Applicants are encouraged to visit the NIFA's [Centers of Excellence \(COE\)](#) for information on COE designation process, including COE criteria, and a list of programs offering COE opportunities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NIFA requests applications for the Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program – ORG for the FY 2026 funding cycle, to solve U.S. organic agriculture issues, priorities, or problems. The amount available for grants in FY 2026 is approximately \$7,500,000.

In FY 2026, all applications are required to address:

1. The project's relevance to organic agriculture stakeholder needs and
2. The USDA organic certification status of the fields or facilities to be used for the research.

This notice identifies the objectives for ORG projects, deadlines, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions. Applicants considering applying should check the [Organic Transitions webpage](#) to access the NOFO and check for updates.

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PART I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program –ORG, authorized under Section 406 of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 ([7 U.S.C. 7626](#)), enables the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a competitive grants program that provides funding for integrated, multifunctional agricultural research, extension, and education activities.

Subject to the availability of appropriations to carry out this program, the Secretary may award grants to colleges and universities [as defined by section 1404 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA) ([7 U.S.C. 3103](#))], as amended, on a competitive basis for projects that address priorities in United States agriculture and involve integrated research, education, and extension activities, as determined by the Secretary in consultation with the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board (NAREEEAB).

B. Purpose and Priorities

The overall goal of the ORG program, under assistance listing 10.303 is to support the development and implementation of research, extension, and higher education programs that improve the competitiveness of U.S. organic livestock and crop producers, as well as those adopting organic practices.

The ORG program addresses organic practices and systems including organic crops, organic animal production, and organic systems that integrate crop and animal production. The most meaningful metrics or models for quantifying the benefits of organic systems are critically needed for organic agriculture. A better understanding is needed, and documentation of these outcomes will allow for the adjustment of organic practices to optimize benefits and to quantify and document those effects in the areas of grower practices. This information will help farmers better assess the financial benefits and costs of their practices and improve their ability to quantify effects.

The National Organic Program (NOP) has specifically requested research directed to finding replacements for listed prohibited substances that are critical for many segments of the industry, for producers already certified for organic production, and for those in transition or considering transition. [7 C.F.R. Part 205](#) defines the NOP and lists the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (see [National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances](#)). The [National Organic Standards Board](#) (NOSB) maintains an annual list of research priorities. The NOSB Research priorities can be accessed [here](#). Research findings will not have their intended impact on the organic agriculture industry unless they reach and are adopted by producers. Effective extension or other outreach efforts are required.

NIFA is soliciting applications for ORG under the following program priorities (not listed in order of importance):

1. **Priority 1:** Document and understand the effects of organic practices on soil health and fertility; enhanced conservation; and understanding of weeds, pests, and disease dynamics for better management to build viability of the organic farming system, protect important natural resources used by organic growers, and provide other services. These practices include but are not limited to crop rotation; livestock feeding and management; livestock-crop system integration; organic manure, mulch, and/or compost additions; cover crops; and reduced or conservation tillage.
2. **Priority 2:** Develop improved technologies, methods, models, and metrics to document, describe, and optimize the services of organic crop, livestock, and integrated crop-livestock production systems.
3. **Priority 3:** Develop practices and other allowable alternatives to substances recommended for removal from NOP's [National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances](#). This may include effective substitutes or new technologies, practices, cultivars, or breeds that render the NOP-cited substance in question less limiting to production under organic standards. Studies of alternatives should include evaluation of efficacy based on resulting productivity, profitability, and natural resources stewardship effects.
4. **Increase** profitability of organic production. Projects under this priority should address major barriers that limit profitability during the transition to organic agriculture in a specific region, crop, or animal production system and develop practical information and tools for producer use. These can include, but are not limited to, production challenges, local and regional infrastructure constraints, marketplace challenges, disruptive conditions, and regulatory barriers. Any constraint must be acknowledged by growers and other stakeholders. Proposals to improve organic animal or crop production management strategies and production systems should be submitted to the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI). Lobbying and advocacy activities are not allowed.

Important Notes for All Priorities:

1. All fieldwork on organic practices must be done on USDA-certified organic land and/or in USDA-certified organic facilities. Refer to the USDA [National Organic Program](#) for organic production standards. However, as appropriate to project objectives, comparisons can include land and facilities in transition to organic certification and land not managed using organic practices. If the entire project is hosted by commercial organic operations whose gross income from organic sales totals \$5,000 or less, the certification requirement might be waived. A request for waiver, with justification, should be included in the proposal. If land or facilities in transition are to be used, documentation should be provided from the certifying agent confirming a transition plan has been developed and is in progress. In addition, the use of conventional production technologies (including the use of Genetically Modified Organisms or GMOs) for comparative purposes or proof of concept is permissible, if cross-contamination with the organic and transitional treatments is prevented.
2. Projects must use combinations of research, education, and/or extension activities

and describe expected outcomes and impacts. A hybrid of hands-on and virtual Cooperative Extension techniques that increase the impact, reach, and variety of integrated projects are encouraged.

3. Scale neutral and affordable technologies that are applicable to a broad range of production systems are encouraged.
4. All projects must develop and implement an evaluation plan that captures project outcomes and demonstrates the impact of the project. The evaluation section must describe how the project evaluator or evaluation team will determine whether project goals have been met and their impacts. Evaluation must be based on benchmarks, indicators, or expected outcomes related to project goals and activities.
5. Project goals are expected to be related to immediate, short-term, and intermediate-term expected changes that result from the project activities and measured outputs, outcomes, and impacts. The budget must include adequate resources for project evaluation, and evaluation procedures must be adequately described in the methods section.
6. Studies designed to compare organic production systems with conventional production systems are not appropriate for this NOFO. Those applications could be submitted to other NIFA programs, where appropriate. Please check the NIFA website for additional funding opportunities, including the [Agriculture and Food Research Initiative \(AFRI\)](#), [Specialty Crops Research Initiative \(SCRI\)](#), or [Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education \(SARE\)](#).
7. When working with growers and/or processors, sufficient funds should be requested and allocated for their compensation. These funds could include, but are not limited to, participation at project meetings, hosting project activities, compensation for certified land or facility use, and compensation for crop destruction or sampling.
8. The ORG program strongly encourages applicants to develop partnerships that include collaboration with small- or mid-sized colleges and universities as well as non-governmental organizations that are engaged in organic agriculture research, education, and extension.
9. Applications are expected to contain descriptions of stakeholder involvement in the research process from problem identification, planning, implementation, transfer of knowledge and technology, and evaluation. Applicants are strongly encouraged to assemble project teams that include those with expertise in research, education, extension, and evaluation, and to utilize a systems approach. Projects should plan to deliver applied production information to producers, students, or their information providers, such as extension agents/educators, agricultural consultants, and other service providers, or college teaching faculty.
10. The metrics for evaluation research, education, and extension/outreach outcomes should be clearly described and appropriate to project goals.

Applicants must not submit proposals with significant overlap in objectives and scope to both the ORG and OREI programs. If proposals with significant overlap are submitted to both ORG and OREI, both proposals will be rejected.

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

Table 2: Program Key Information

Title	Description
Program Code:	112.E
Program Code Name:	Organic Transitions
ALN:	10.303
Project Type:	Integrated
Grant Type:	Standard
Application Deadline	July 13, 2026 5:00 P.M. Eastern Time
Grant Duration:	24-48 Months
Anticipated # of Awards:	8
Minimum Award Amount:	\$20,000
Maximum Award Amount:	\$1,000,000

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The amount available for ORG in FY 2026 is approximately \$7,500,000. It is the intent to fully fund awards as Standard Grants ([Part II, C. 2](#)); however, NIFA may use available funds to fund the first year of new projects as continuation awards. For continuations, similar funding levels may be awarded for up to an additional three years provided performance has been satisfactory, funding is available for this purpose, and continued support is in the best interests of the Federal government and the public. 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 respond 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. **Integrated Projects**. Applicants must propose to resolve problems through the application of science-based knowledge and address needs identified by stakeholders. Integrated projects clearly identify anticipated outcomes and have a plan for evaluating and documenting the success of the project. ORG projects should include research and at least one of the other two functions of the agricultural knowledge system (extension and education) focused on a problem or issue. However, single-function projects with sufficient justification will be considered. The functions addressed in the project should be interwoven throughout the life of the project; complement and reinforce each other; and be interdependent and necessary for the success of the project. Integrated projects must include a data management plan that clearly describes how the data will be disseminated and made accessible to the public.
2. **Standard Grants**. Applicants must select a project with a period of 2 to 4 years. The budgets that applicants provide may not exceed \$400,000 per year, with the total amount budgeted per award not to exceed \$1,000,000.

D. Ethical Conduct of Funded Projects

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

PART III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligibility Requirements

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

Applications will only be accepted if submitted by colleges and universities, as defined in [7 U.S.C. 3103](#), 1994 Institutions, and Hispanic-serving agricultural colleges and universities.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply, provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project, and subject to NIFA approval.

Failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award.

USDA **will not accept** competitive applications for grants and cooperative agreements submitted 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

Match Required – Applicants **MUST** provide matching contributions on a dollar-for-dollar basis for all Federal funds awarded under the ORG. NIFA may waive the matching funds requirement for a grant if one of the following applies:

1. The results of the project, while of particular benefit to a specific agricultural commodity, are likely to be applicable to agricultural commodities generally; or
2. The project involves a minor commodity, the project deals with scientifically important research, and the grant recipient is unable to satisfy the matching funds requirement.

C. Centers of Excellence

Pursuant to Section 7214 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 ([7 U.S.C. 5926](#)), NIFA will recognize and prioritize COE applicants that carry out research, extension, and education activities that relate to the food and agricultural sciences. A COE is composed of one or more of the following entities that provide financial or in-kind support to the COE.

1. State agricultural experiment stations.
2. Colleges and universities.
3. University research foundations.
4. Other research institutions and organizations.
5. Federal agencies.
6. National laboratories.

7. Private organizations, foundations, or corporations.
8. Individuals; or
9. Any group consisting of two or more of the entities described in (1) through (8).

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-ICGP-011901 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 [ORG]. 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 21 *1.5 spaced* pages of written text including figures and tables. The font size for tables should be no smaller than 11 points, Times New Roman. 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. The PN must include all the following:
 - a. **Response to previous review:** This requirement only applies to Resubmitted Applications as described in Part II, B. A three-page maximum response to the previous review (containing the previous proposal number in the first line) titled “Response to Previous Review” as the first page. The response to previous review must not exceed three *1.5 spaced* pages. This does not count towards the page limit for the PN
 - b. **Introduction:** Include a clear statement of the long-term goals and supporting objectives of the proposed activities. Describe ongoing or recently completed

- significant activities related to the proposed activity, including the work of key project personnel. Include preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed project. In addition, include in-depth information on the following, when applicable: estimates of the magnitude of the issues and their relevance to stakeholders and to ongoing state-federal food and agricultural research, education, and extension programs; description of the role stakeholders, including end users, have in problem identification, planning, and implementation and evaluation as appropriate; and reasons for performing the work at the proposing institution.
- c. **Objectives:** Include clear, concise, complete, and logically arranged statements of specific aims of the proposed effort, including the suitability of scale and transferability of project results or developed materials beyond the project scale. Projects must include specific objectives for Research, Education, and Extension functions (as appropriate), include evidence of necessary involvement from interdisciplinary teams, and demonstrate the extent to which partnerships with other institutions (federal, state, other) are developed.
 - d. **Approach:** Explicitly state the procedures or methods to be applied to the proposed effort. Include, but do not necessarily limit to:
 - i. Description of how the project will solicit and use stakeholder involvement;
 - ii. Description of the proposed project activities and the sequence in which they are to be carried out;
 - iii. Review of Co-Project Director (Co-PD) roles will be included in the project review. Please be clear about Co-PDs vs sub-contractors.
 - iv. Techniques and methodology to be employed in the project, including their feasibility and rationale;
 - v. Results expected within a reasonable time frame;
 - vi. How you will monitor and evaluate (as appropriate) Research, Extension, and Education activities;
 - vii. How you will analyze and interpret data;
 - viii. Limitations to proposed procedures;
 - ix. Pitfalls that might be encountered;
 - x. Suitability of scale and transferability of project results or developed materials beyond the project scale;
 - xi. Details of plans to communicate results to stakeholders and the public; and
 - xii. Plan to sustain activities beyond this funding period.
 - e. **Project timeline:** Outline all important phases as a function of time, year-by-year, for the entire project, including periods beyond the grant funding period. Include specific, measurable goals or projected accomplishments for each year of ORG funding and expected impacts or outcomes of the work.
 - f. **Centers of Excellence Justification:** Applicants requesting consideration of COE status must include their justification at the end of their PN and within the page limits provided for the PN; and
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. Applicants should clearly articulate how the project director (PD) and Co-PDs plan to manage

and disseminate the data generated by the project. The DMP will be considered during the merit review process (see [Part V, B](#) of this NOFO, [NIFA's Data Management Plan](#)). The DMP must be included as Other Attachment and not part of PN.

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.

1. Match – If an applicant concludes that the matching requirements described under [Part III, B](#) of this NOFO is not applicable to them; the applicant must include an explanation of their conclusion in the *budget justification*. NIFA will consider this justification when determining final matching requirements or if required matching can be waived. NIFA retains the right to make final determinations regarding matching requirements.

Grants that require matching funds as specified under [Part III, B](#) of this NOFO must list in their *budget justification* the matching sources, the identification of the entity(ies) providing the match, and the total pledged amount. A written verification of commitments of matching support (a pledge agreement) is not required. However, applicants are subject to the documentation, valuing and reporting requirements, as specified in [2 CFR Part 200, “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards \(the Uniform Guidance\),”](#) and [7 CFR 3430, “Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-Formula Federal Assistance Programs – General Award Administrative Provisions.”](#)

2. 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 “(ORG)” and the program code “(I12.E)”. Accurate entry is critical.
2. **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.** See **Part V** of the NIFA Grants Application Guide.

C. Funding Restrictions

1. 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](#).

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

evaluated by NIFA as part of its evaluation process. If such procurement is approved, specific information security requirements may be included in the terms and conditions of the grant to ensure that the grantees will incorporate those requirements in procurement solicitations of unmanned aircraft systems under the Federal award.

PART V. APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. NIFA's Evaluation Process

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

Scientific Peer Review Process:

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

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

After each peer review panel has completed its deliberations, the responsible program staff of NIFA will recommend that your project is either approved for support from currently available funds or declined due to insufficient funds or 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 equally weighted criteria to evaluate applications to this program:

1. First, the reviewer summarizes how well the application addressed each evaluation criterion. After the application has been assessed for the strengths and weaknesses of each criterion,
2. The reviewer then evaluates the overall likelihood that the project will have a significant outcome and impact.

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

NIFA will use the equally weighted evaluation criteria below to review applications submitted in response to this NOFO:

1. Technical merit of all aspects of the application, including research, education, and components, as appropriate.
 - a. Degree of integration of research, education, and extension
 - b. Extent to which proposed work addresses identified organic stakeholder needs in the priority areas described above;
 - c. Suitability and feasibility of methodology for successfully completing work in the allotted time;
 - d. Quality of monitoring, data management, and evaluation plans;
 - e. Qualifications of key project personnel and institutions, including institutional experience and competence in the proposed area of work, and adequacy of available support personnel, equipment, and facilities; and
 - f. Reasonable budget that is well justified, including but not limited to inclusion of low administrative costs.
2. Relevance of proposed project to ORG's purpose (see [Part I, B](#) of this NOFO).
 - a. Justification for problem addressed;
 - b. Evidence of appropriate involvement with interdisciplinary teams and institutional partners (federal, state, other);
 - c. Extent to which stakeholders, including end users, were and will be involved in future problem identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation;
 - d. Probability that the project will be successful, have a documentable impact, and produce transferable results; and Likelihood that the project will fill knowledge gaps that are critical to the development of organic practices and programs in the priority areas listed previously; and
 - e. Extent to which project includes performance measures that will demonstrate whether project has successfully improved the competitiveness of the U.S. organic agriculture industry.

C. Centers of Excellence

In addition to evaluating applicants using the criterion listed in [Part V, B](#) of this NOFO, NIFA will use the COE standards described in this NOFO to evaluate applicants that rank highly meritorious and requested to be considered as a COE. In instances where applicants are found to be equally meritorious with the application of a non-COE applicant, NIFA will prioritize the

COE applicant meeting the COE criteria. NIFA will effectively use the COE prioritization as a “tie breaker.” Applicants that rank highly meritorious but who did not request consideration as a COE or who are not deemed to have met the COE standards may still receive funding.

Applicants that meet the COE requirements will have the COE designation in their notice of award. Entities recognized as COE will maintain that distinction for the duration of their period of performance or as identified in the terms and conditions of that award.

D. Organizational Management Information

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

E. 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](#) (see [NIFA's Terms and Conditions](#)).

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications and the projects outlined in this 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.
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

OrganicPrograms@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

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative – AFRI
Assistance Listing Number – ALN
Authorized Departmental Officer – ADO
Authorized Representative – AR
Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 – AREERA
Coordinated Agricultural Project – CAP
Centers of Excellence – COE
Co-Project Director – Co-PD
Data Management Plan – DMP
Fiscal Year – FY
Genetically Modified Organism – GMO
Indirect Cost – IDC
National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board – NAREEEAB
National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 – NARETPA
National Institute of Food and Agriculture – NIFA
National Organic Program – NOP
National Organic Standards Board – NOSB
Non-Governmental Organization – NGO
Non-Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture – NLGCA
Notice of Funding Opportunity – NOFO
Research, Education, and Economics – REE
Office of Management and Budget – OMB
Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative – OREI
Organic Transitions – ORG
Portable Document Format – PDF
Principal Investigator – PI
Project Director – PD
Project Narrative – PN
Project Summary – PS
Specialty Crops Research Initiative - SCRI
Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education - SARE
United States Department of Agriculture – USDA

APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS

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

Definitions

Continuation Award:

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

Matching:

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

New Application:

An application not previously submitted to a program.

Resubmitted Application:

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