

Notice of Funding Opportunity

Special Research Grants Program for Aquaculture Research

FUNDING YEAR: Fiscal Year (FY) 2026

APPLICATION DEADLINE: June 15, 2026

ANTICIPATED PROGRAM FUNDING: \$1,813,840

AVERAGE INDIVIDUAL AWARD RANGE:
\$50,000 - \$300,000

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY NUMBER: USDA-NIFA-SRGP-011856

ASSISTANCE LISTING NUMBER: 10.200

ANNOUNCEMENT

National Institute of Food and Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture

Assistance Listing Number (ALN): The Special Research Grants for Aquaculture Research 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 15, 2026 [Ref to Table 2 of this NOFO]
Applicants Comments:	Within six months from the issuance of this notice (NIFA may not consider comments received after the sixth month)

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

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

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

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

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

Stakeholder Input. NIFA seeks comments on all Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) so it can deliver programs efficiently, effectively, with integrity, and with a focus on customer service. NIFA considers comments to the extent possible when developing NOFOs and uses

comments to help meet the requirements of Section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 ([7 U.S.C. 7613\(c\)\(2\)](#)). Applicants may submit written comments to Policy@usda.gov. Please use the following subject line: Response to the Special Research Grants for Aquaculture Research NOFO.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NIFA requests applications for the Special Research Grants Program for Aquaculture Research for FY 2026. The amount available for grants in FY 2026 is approximately \$1,813,000. If this program receives appropriated funds in FY 2027, meritorious projects identified in the FY 2026 competition that did not receive funding in FY 2026 may be recommended for award using FY 2027 funds. In this case, a separate NOFO may not be issued for the FY 2027 funds.

This program funds applied aquaculture research projects to address issues related to:
1) Genetics and genomics of commercial aquaculture species; 2) Critical pest and disease issues impacting commercial aquaculture species; 3) Maximizing farmer profit through novel technologies, improved production systems, and/or more effective management strategies for commercial aquaculture species; or 4) Economic research for increasing commercial aquaculture profitability.

This notice identifies the objectives for Special Research Grants Program for Aquaculture Research projects, deadlines, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions.

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 Authority.....7

B. Purpose and Priorities.....7

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION 9

A. Available Funding9

B. Application Restrictions9

C. Project and Grant Types9

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.....19

C. Organizational Management Information.....19

D. Application Disposition.....19

PART VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION 20

A. General20

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.....20

C. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements20

PART VII. OTHER INFORMATION 21

A. Use of Funds and Changes in Budget.....21

B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards22

C. Regulatory Information22

D. Language Access Services.....22

APPENDIX II: GLOSSARY OF TERMS..... 24

APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS 25

TABLE OF KEY INFORMATION

Table 1: Key Dates and Deadlines.....	2
Table 2: 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

The authority for the Special Research Grants Program for Aquaculture Research is contained in the Competitive, Special, and Facilities Research Grant Act, Pub. L. No. 89-106, as amended ([7 USC 3157 \(c\)\(1\)\(A\)](#)).

B. Purpose and Priorities

The purpose of the Special Research Grants Program for Aquaculture Research (Assistance Listing Number 10.200) is to support the development of a vibrant, robust, and profitable aquaculture industry in the United States by generating new, science-based information and technology to address industry constraints. Applied research is needed to develop practical solutions that will facilitate growth and remove limitations to expansion of the United States aquaculture industry. Results of projects supported by this program are intended to help improve the profitability of the United States aquaculture industry, reduce the multi-billion-dollar United States seafood trade deficit, increase domestic food security, expand markets for United States-produced products, and provide more jobs for rural and coastal America.

Applications must:

1. Directly address major constraints to the United States aquaculture industry.
2. Focus on one or more of the following Program Area Priorities:
 - a. Genetics and genomics of commercial aquaculture species.
 - b. Critical pest and disease issues impacting commercial aquaculture species.
 - c. Maximizing farmer profit through novel technologies, improved production systems, and/or more effective management strategies for commercial aquaculture species.
 - d. Economic research for increasing commercial aquaculture profitability.

Other Key Information:

1. This program is limited to applied research only.
2. Applications must include United States aquaculture industry involvement. This can include, but is not limited to, a United States aquaculture producer as a co-project director or partner or assembling an industry advisory committee (e.g., a farmer's advisory committee for the project that can include producer-based organizations, feed manufacturers, animal health industry, etc.).
3. Applicants must provide a budgeted plan to release results to the public in a timely manner. This plan must clearly state how the research results or technology developed will be transferred to end-users outside of direct, scientific peers.
4. Applicants must clearly describe how their specific research project will increase United States aquaculture production or profitability in the short or medium-term (1-5 years after the grant ends).
5. For the critical disease Program Area Priority, proposals that focus on pathogens that pose a risk to humans or human food safety (vs. those that affect the health of an aquaculture species) are outside the scope of this program and will not be accepted or considered for review.
6. Applicants must include statistical power analyses, when appropriate, and describe the experimental design, experimental unit, replication, and sample size for each experimental group.

7. The inclusion of students actively engaged in research projects providing hands-on, experiential learning and training opportunities is strongly encouraged. Actively engaged students should be encouraged to contribute to presentations, articles, posters, and other expressions of scholarship.

Table 2: Program Key Information

Title	Description
Program Code:	AQUA
Program Code Name:	Special Research Grants Program for Aquaculture Research
ALN:	10.200
Project Type:	Research Projects
Grant Type:	Standard Grants
Application Deadline	June 15, 2026
Grant Duration:	24 Months
Anticipated # of Awards:	6-7
Maximum Award Amount:	\$300,000

PART II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The amount available for the Special Research Grants Program for Aquaculture Research in FY 2026 is \$1,813,000.

Subject to availability of funding in FY 2027, meritorious projects identified in the FY 2026 competition that did not receive funding in FY 2026 may be recommended for award using FY 2027 funds. In this case, a separate NOFO may not be issued for the FY 2027 funds.

The start date of a two-year project funded with funds appropriated in FY 2026 appropriations, must be before October 1, 2026. (i.e., These projects must be initiated in the Federal fiscal year in which the funds were appropriated). Recipients may be eligible for a no-cost extension for a third year, but no carryover or extension is permitted for any project beyond three years from the project start date (any unexpended funds must be returned to the U.S. Treasury).

If fundable projects identified in this competition are supported with FY 2027 appropriations, applicants will be notified, and additional documentation may be requested. The start date of the projects funded with funds appropriated in FY 2027 will be adjusted to a date in FY 2027.

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

Research Projects: All projects must focus on applied aquaculture research. Applied research means research that includes expansion of the findings of fundamental research to uncover practical ways in which new knowledge can be advanced to benefit aquaculture as a production system in the United States. All proposed projects must directly address major constraints to the United States aquaculture industry and focus on one or more of the Program Area Priorities. Duplicate or multiple submissions are not permitted.

Standard Grants: Applied research will be funded through standard grants that address program priorities with a maximum award of \$300,000 and maximum duration of two years.

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

Eligible applicants include:

1. State Agricultural Experiment Stations.
2. Colleges and universities (including junior colleges offering associate degrees or higher).
3. University research foundations.
4. Other research institutions and organizations.
5. Federal agencies.
6. National laboratories.
7. Private organizations or corporations.
8. Individuals who are U.S. citizens, nationals, or permanent residents.
9. Any group consisting of two or more entities identified in (1) through (8).

Eligible institutions do not include foreign and international organizations.

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 (i.e., project director) submits duplicate or multiple submissions.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

No Match Required - The Special Research Grants for Aquaculture Research 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 5** 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-SRGP-011856 , 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 90 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 Special Research Grants for Aquaculture Research program . 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 fifteen *1.5 spaced* pages of written text (the font size should be no smaller than 12 points, Times New Roman) 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 (e.g. letters of support) 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. Introduction

1. Include a clear statement of the long-term goal(s) of the proposed project.
2. Summarize the body of knowledge that substantiates the need for the proposed project.
3. Include preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed project.

4. All works cited should be referenced.
- b. Rationale and Significance**
1. Present the rationale behind the proposed project and reasons for performing the work at the proposing institution.
 2. Describe the specific relationship of the proposed project to the Program Area Priorities, and state which Program Area Priority the proposal is primarily addressing. Applications that do not address at least one Program Area Priority will not be reviewed.
 3. Clearly document the expected improvement in profitability or productivity of the United States aquaculture industry.
 4. Estimate the magnitude of the issues and their relevance to stakeholders and to ongoing state-Federal food and agricultural research, education, and extension programs.
 5. Document the role of stakeholders and indicate the amount of industry participation in problem identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation as appropriate.
- c. Objectives**
- Include a clear statement of proposed objectives for the completion of the project. Any interdependence of proposed objectives should be addressed during the discussion of potential pitfalls.
- d. Approach**
- The activities proposed or problems being addressed must be clearly stated and the approaches applied must be clearly described. Specifically, this section must include:
1. A description of the activities proposed and the sequence in which the activities are to be performed.
 2. Methods to be used in carrying out the proposed project, including the feasibility of the methods and the role and qualification of project partner(s).
 3. Expected outcomes.
 4. Means by which results will be analyzed, assessed, or interpreted.
 5. How results or products will be used.
 6. Plans to communicate results to stakeholders and the public (e.g., extension, technology transfer, education activities, workshops) that articulate how the research results will be transferred to end-users outside of direct scientific peers.
 7. How this specific research project will advance aquaculture production in the United States in the short or medium term (1-5 years after the grant ends).
 8. How the impacts will be evaluated and reported.
 9. If undergraduate, graduate students, and postdoctoral research fellows are included, how they will be actively engaged in the research.
 10. Pitfalls that may be encountered.
 11. A full explanation of any materials, procedures, situations, or activities related to the project that may be hazardous to personnel, along with an outline or precautions to be exercised to avoid or mitigate the effects of such hazards.
- e. Project Timeline**
- Include a clear description of how the project objectives will be completed within the requested project duration.

- f. **Response to Previous Review:** The response to previous review must not exceed one *1.5 spaced* page. This 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.
1. **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](#)).
 2. **Mentoring Plan (MP);** A MP is required for all projects that involve student or participant training or mentoring. The MP is limited to two pages and should be included as an attachment separate from the project narrative.
The Mentoring Plan should describe:
 - a. 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.
 - b. 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.
 - c. 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.
 - d. Expected outcomes derived from the mentoring activities and prospective impact(s) on the field of aquaculture.
 3. **Logic Model (LM)** A LM is required for all projects.
 - a. The LM is limited to two pages and should be included as an attachment separate from the project narrative.
 - b. The LM should detail the activities, outputs, and outcomes of the proposed project. The logic model planning process is a tool that should be used to develop your project before writing your application. This information may be provided as a narrative or formatted into a logic model chart. For more information and resources, see [Integrated Programs' Logic Model Planning Process](#) at NIFA website.

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 Enter the program name (*Special Research Grants Program for Aquaculture Research*) and the program code (*AQUA*). 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, weighted equally, to evaluate applications to this program:

1. **Proposal Relevance and Effectiveness.** This ascertains if the proposed work is applied research directed toward at least one of the Program Area Priorities identified in this NOFO; directly addresses major constraints that currently limit development and progress of domestic aquaculture; includes direct U.S. aquaculture industry involvement in the project; clearly states how the research results or technology will be transferred to end-users outside of direct scientific peers; how it will accelerate United States aquaculture industry development, by increasing production or profitability, in the short- or medium-term (1-5 years after the grant ends); and includes reasonable budget justification and efficient use of limited resources.
2. **Technical/Scientific Merit.** This assesses whether the approach is technically sound and innovative; whether there are clear project goals and objectives; if preliminary data support the demonstration of feasibility; if the methods are appropriate and the proposal includes all components necessary to achieve goals and objectives; if the proposal includes a concrete, unambiguous, specific desired outcome for domestic aquaculture and has a high probability of achieving that outcome; if the proposal includes a way to objectively determine its success at achieving its outcomes; and (if in the case of student or participant involvement) a clear plan for mentorship is articulated.
3. **Overall Qualifications of Applicants.** This ascertains whether the applicant and others on the team possess the necessary education, experience, and training; a demonstrated record of successful technology transfer to end-users outside of direct scientific peers; and the facilities and resources to accomplish the project. This includes applicant's record of achievement with previous funding, as well as the qualifications of project partners. If the proposal includes the use of outside consultants not yet identified, this criterion includes how clearly the selection factors for the outside consultants are set out, and the expected qualifications of the consultants based on those selection factors.
4. **Data Management Plan.** This assesses the quality and completeness of the data management plan and whether the plan as laid out and the resources available will ensure the proper protection, retention, and accessibility of all data generated with the use of these Federal funds.

C. Organizational Management Information

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

D. Application Disposition

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

PART VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

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

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

The Notice of Award document will provide pertinent instructions and information as described in [2 CFR 200.211](#) (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](#); Transfer of funds budgeted for participant support costs to other categories of expense ([2 CFR 200.456 Participant support costs](#));
5. 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;
6. Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-Federal entity;
7. The need for additional Federal funds to complete the project.
8. 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;
9. 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;
10. Transferring funds between the construction and non-construction work under a Federal award; and
11. 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

Aquaculture.Input@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

Assistance Listing Number – ALN

Authorized Departmental Officer – ADO

Authorized Representative – AR

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

Data Management Plan – DMP

Logic Model - LM

Mentoring Plan - MP

National Institute of Food and Agriculture – NIFA

Notice of Funding Opportunity – NOFO

Research, Education, and Economics – REE

United States Department of Agriculture – USDA

APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS

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

Definitions

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.