

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY
FY2023 Scientific Cooperation Research Program

Application Submission Deadline: May 10, 2023

Summary

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), Fellowship Programs, announces this funding opportunity to support the Scientific Cooperation and Research Program (SCRP) by issuing new awards. This opportunity is available to State cooperative institutions or other colleges and universities in the United States, as defined at 7 USC 3103. In addition, applicants must be former Mentors and Fellows from USDA/FAS's Borlaug International Agricultural Technology Fellowship Program with an ongoing collaboration. This program is intended to support applied research, extension, and education collaborations between U.S. researchers and their foreign counterparts from selected emerging market economies.

A. Program Description

USDA's FAS administers the SCRCP. This program has historically supported up to 10 collaborative research programs annually. All applications must include foreign collaborations, and projects should not exceed two years. Funding may be allocated to foreign collaborators through subawards.

The SCRCP supports FAS's Borlaug Fellowship Program and other USDA strategic goals by mobilizing the scientific communities' accumulated knowledge and technologies through the funding of joint research, extension, and education projects. These projects are between U.S. researchers and researchers from selected emerging market economies, last up to two years, and address issues including but not limited to agricultural trade and market access, animal and plant health, biotechnology, food safety and security, climate smart agriculture, and sustainable natural resource management. Since 1980, the program has supported hundreds of projects, enhancing the technical skills of agricultural professionals, and helping beneficiary countries further develop their relationships with the U.S. agriculture sector.

In the 2023 program cycle, the SCRCP will support applied research, extension, and education projects between U.S. researchers and their foreign counterparts from selected emerging market economies (as defined at 7 USC § 5623(d)(1), *generally including countries listed in the low- and middle-income groups by the World Bank*) who seek to create practical solutions to challenges faced by farmers and build regional or global trade capacities in target countries. Both collaborators must be a previous Mentor/Fellow pair from USDA/FAS's Borlaug International Agricultural Technology Fellowship Program (Borlaug Fellowship Program).

In general, applications should support one or more of the following strategies of the Global Food Security Act of 2016 (Public Law No: 114-195):

1. Accelerate inclusive, agricultural-led economic growth that reduces global poverty, hunger, and malnutrition, particularly among women and children.

2. Increase the productivity, incomes, and livelihoods of small-scale producers, especially women, by working across agricultural value chains, enhancing local capacity to manage agricultural resources effectively, and expanding producer access to local and international markets.
3. Build resilience to food shocks among vulnerable populations and households while reducing reliance upon emergency food assistance.
4. Create an enabling environment for agricultural growth and investment, including through the promotion of secure and transparent property rights.
5. Improve the nutritional status of women and children, with a focus on reducing child stunting, including through the promotion of highly nutritious foods, diet diversification, and nutritional behaviors that improve maternal and child health.
6. Align with and leverage broader United States strategies and investments in trade, economic growth, science and technology, agricultural research and extension, maternal and child health, nutrition, and water, sanitation, and hygiene.

Funding Opportunity Number

USDA-FAS-10961-0700-10.-23-0001

Assistance Listing Number

10.961 Scientific Cooperation and Research

Authorizing Legislation

National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, PL 95-113, as amended, 7 USC §§ 3291 and 3319a

B. Federal Award Information

Total Available Federal Funding: Up to \$1,000,000 total, up to \$50,000 per award

Anticipated Number of Awards: up to 20

Cost Share/Match Requirement: None/Not Required

Projected Period of Performance Start: September 1, 2023

Projected Period of Performance End: August 31, 2025

Extensions to this program are permitted, subject to approval.

Type of Assistance Instrument:

USDA/FAS anticipates that a Cost-Reimbursable Agreement will be funded pursuant to this funding opportunity.

This type of agreement allows for a collaborative relationship between USDA/FAS, the selected recipient, and other collaborating partners. The particular scope and depth of this collaboration

may vary throughout performance, depending on the needs of the activity and the desires of the participants.

Additional Awards

USDA/FAS reserves the right to make additional awards under this solicitation, consistent with Agency policy and guidance, if additional funding becomes available after the original selections are made. Any additional selections for awards will be made no later than 6 months after the original selection decisions.

C. Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants:

State cooperative institutions or other colleges and universities in the United States, as defined at 7 USC 3103

All applicants must have an active registration in the U.S. Government System for Award Management (www.sam.gov) before the application submission deadline of the announcement; applicants with inactive, expired, pending, or excluded listings will be deemed ineligible. Exceptions, waivers, or extensions will not be considered. Please contact the program officer(s) listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact, if you have questions about this requirement.

Cost Share/Match Requirement: None/Not Required

Ineligible activities: If an application is submitted that includes any ineligible tasks or activities, that portion of the application will be ineligible for funding and may, depending on the extent to which it affects the application, render the entire application ineligible for funding.

Eligibility Criteria:

State cooperative institutions or other colleges and universities in the United States, as defined at 7 USC 3103.

In addition, participating personnel must include former Mentors and Fellows from USDA/FAS's Borlaug International Agricultural Technology Fellowship Program with an ongoing collaboration.

All applicants must have an active registration in the U.S. Government System for Award Management (www.sam.gov) by the closing date of the announcement; applicants with inactive, expired, pending, or excluded listings will be deemed ineligible. Exceptions, waivers, or extensions will not be considered. Please contact the program officer(s) listed in Section G if you have questions about this requirement.

D. Application and Submission Information

This announcement contains all information necessary to apply to this funding opportunity.

Submission Dates and Times

Application Submission Deadline: May 10, 2023 at 11:59pm EDT (UTC -04:00)

Applications received after this time will not be accepted. Applicants are advised to make their submissions 1-2 days before this deadline in case of computer problems.

Anticipated Funding Selection Date: June 30, 2023

Anticipated Award Date: August 1, 2023

Content and Form of Application Submission

A complete application package must include:

- Standard Form SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance, showing the Unique Entity Identifier, and signed by the applicant.
- Standard Form SF-424A, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs, showing the budget categorization. Applicants are advised to consult 2 CFR 200 Subpart E for guidance on proper categorization of cost items. An improper categorization will not itself be grounds for a determination of ineligibility but may delay approval and/or adversely impact the application's scoring.
- A detailed budget and narrative, in which cost items are quantified and described in sufficient detail to enable USDA/FAS to independently determine that the proposed costs are reasonable and allowable for the project and consistent with applicable regulations.
- A detailed project narrative or plan of operation that addresses the following:
 - Justify the significance of the research as it relates the interests of both the United States and the collaborating country;
 - Justify the importance of the research plan as it relates to the ongoing relationship between Mentors and Fellows from USDA/FAS's Borlaug International Agricultural Technology Fellowship Program;
 - Provide a tentative research plan, including topics to be covered, possible field visits and other activities;
 - Include a narrative description of the proposed research, how it will be administered, and the role of the university faculty and support staff;
 - Briefly describe the expertise and international experience of the recipient in the field of interest and various countries;
 - Demonstrate understanding of cultural context and needs of the beneficiary country;
 - Identify the expected skills or knowledge to be gained at the end of the program;
 - Demonstrate flexibility in the training plan to account for potential program changes and explain the institution's ability to respond to unforeseen circumstances;
 - Include a quality assurance plan explaining how unforeseen problems that can arise will be addressed;
 - The layout includes a description of what is being proposed, how it will be conducted, and what is the desired result.
- An application that follows these formatting guidelines:
 - Organized, written in English, free of excessive grammatical and spelling errors.

- Source information cited appropriately.
- Submitted in PDF format.
- Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the application.
- Standard Form SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, if applicable to the applicant

Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Each applicant is required to:

- (i) Have an active registration in SAM before submitting its application;
- (ii) Have assented to the federal assistance certifications in the SAM platform;
- (iii) Provide a valid Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) in its application; and
- (iv) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a federal awarding agency.

SAM.gov registration requires several weeks to process and cannot be expedited; prospective applicants should therefore ensure that registrations are submitted timely.

SAM.gov Registration Instructions

Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active SAM.gov registration. If you have never done business with the Federal Government, you will need to register your organization in SAM.gov. If you do not have a SAM.gov account, then you will create an account using login.gov¹ to complete your SAM.gov registration. SAM.gov registration is FREE. The process for entity registrations includes obtaining Unique Entity ID (UEI), a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned an entity by SAM.gov, and requires assertions, representations and certifications, and other information about your organization. Please review the [Entity Registration Checklist](#) for details on this process.

Entities outside the United States (defined at 2 CFR 200.1 as “[foreign organizations](#)” and “[foreign public entities](#)”) must obtain a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) Code prior to SAM.gov registration. An NCAGE is required for all foreign entities prior to registering in SAM.gov. You can complete the registration once you enter the NCAGE. You can submit your request for an NCAGE Code by going to the NATO Support Activity (NSPA) NCAGE Request Tool at [CAGE/NCAGE Code Request](#) which contains detailed instructions.

If you have done business with the Federal Government previously, you can check your entity status using your government issued UEI to determine if your registration is active. SAM.gov requires you renew your registration every 365 days to keep it active.

Please note that SAM.gov registration is different than obtaining a UEI only. Obtaining an UEI only validates your organization’s legal business name and address. Please review the [Frequently Asked Question](#) on the difference for additional details.

¹ Login.gov a secure sign in service used by the public to sign into Federal Agency systems including SAM.gov and Grants.gov. For help with login.gov accounts you should visit [http://login.gov/help](https://login.gov/help).

Organizations should ensure that their SAM.gov registration includes a current e-Business (EBiz) point of contact name and email address. The EBiz point of contact is critical for Grants.gov Registration and system functionality.

Contact the [Federal Service Desk](#) for help with your SAM.gov account, to resolve technical issues or chat with a help desk agent: (866) 606-8220. The Federal Service desk hours of operation are Monday – Friday 8am – 8pm ET.

Intergovernmental Review

Not applicable.

Funding Restrictions

Generally, funds may not be used in any manner that is prohibited by applicable regulations, including 2 CFR Part 200 and 2 CFR Part 400. Awards issued pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity may only be used for the purpose set forth in the award, consistent with the statutory authority for the award. Capital expenses, such as the purchase of equipment, not entirely attributable to this award, must be pro-rated.

For example, agreement funds and other support may not be used for matching contributions for other federal grants or cooperative agreements, lobbying, or intervention in federal regulatory or adjudicatory proceedings. Federal employees are prohibited from acting as an agent of the applicant in any capacity (paid or unpaid) on any proposal submitted under this program. Also, federal funds may not be used to sue the Federal Government or any other government entity.

Compensation for personal services: Employees, consultants, or other personnel, including those of subrecipients, and regardless of the method of engagement, may not exceed the pro-rata equivalent of GS-15 on the General Schedule (for 2023, \$152,771 per year, \$585.33 per day, or \$73.17 per hour). Non-monetizable fringe benefits, such as health insurance coverage, are not included to this ceiling.

Indirect Costs: In general, costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective but not readily assignable to specific awards, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved, are considered indirect costs. These may include facilities not specific to individual projects, enterprise-wide services such as IT, and enterprise management. For cost-reimbursable agreements, indirect costs may not exceed 10% of direct costs, as stipulated at 7 USC 3319a.

Pre-Award Costs: Costs incurred prior to the effective date of the Federal award, directly pursuant to the negotiation and in anticipation of the Federal award, and where such costs are necessary for efficient and timely performance of the scope of work, are not allowable.

Other Submission Requirements

Applications should be submitted through the ezFedGrants system at <https://grants.fms.usda.gov/>

Applicants who require assistance with any USDA-managed computer system should reach out to the program officer(s) listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact, at least 5

business days in advance of the application submission deadline. Applicants should provide as much detail as possible to facilitate resolution of the issue.

E. Application Review Information

Review and Selection Process

In all cases, the agency will conduct an initial responsiveness review of all applications submitted to determine:

- 1) the application was submitted on time as specified in this announcement (See Section D. Application and Submission Information);
- 2) the applicant is eligible (see Section C. Eligibility Information);
- 3) all the required forms and documents are submitted no later than the Application Submission Deadline specified in Section D. Application and Submission Information, Content and Form of Application Submission.

If an applicant is determined to be ineligible or an application is determined to be incomplete, the agency will notify the applicant prior to commencing with evaluation of applications, usually within 5 business days of the Application Submission Deadline. An applicant that feels such a determination is made in error may request reconsideration, highlighting evidence supporting their claim, by email to the program officer(s) listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact, within 3 business days of notification.

The agency will convene a review panel, which may include both federal and non-federal reviewers, to review the eligible applications against the evaluation criteria described below. The reviewers will ensure that the applicant is capable of delivering the programs/activities as described in the announcement based on the applicant's project narrative and assign a score and provide summary comments based on the evaluation criteria identified below. The review panel will make a recommendation list to the selecting official, who is not a member of the panel.

The selecting official may select applications out of rank order in consideration of strategic program priorities, such as geographical distribution, incorporation of minority-serving institutions, or congressional directive. Selection determinations are final and cannot be appealed.

Prior to selection, the agency may contact the highest-ranking applicants to seek clarification and to negotiate technical and programmatic aspects of the application. If an application includes a subaward, FAS may request to speak with all parties included in the application to ensure sufficient planning and coordination has taken place prior to making an award.

Evaluation Criteria

Applicants will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate that they have the capabilities, staff, resources, and equipment to successfully perform the project as described in the following factors. Scoring will also be based on the level of detail and how clearly the applicant's capacities to address these factors are outlined in the proposal.

Factor 1: Intellectual merit and applicability of the proposed activities (30 Pts)

The applicant will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate the intellectual merit of the research collaboration and proposed activities including:

- Applicability and Connection to the USDA-FAS Borlaug Fellowship Program Included (30 Pts)
 - Applicant's consideration of how the proposed activities would further collaborations between the Borlaug Scholar and their faculty Mentor and demonstration that the program makes sense as a follow up to the original Borlaug research and helps to advance the knowledge and understanding of farmers in the target country.

Factor 2: Impact of the proposed activities (30 Pts)

The applicant will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they explain the potential impacts resulting from the research collaboration and proposed activities including:

- Agricultural Impacts Defined and Detailed (15 Pts)
 - Applicant's explanation of the extent to which this research and associated activities will enhance agricultural infrastructure (e.g., information sharing, collaboration, partnerships, and networks) and be of benefit to the larger society.
- Dissemination Plan Included (15 Pts)
 - Applicant's explanation of the plan to disseminate the results and findings of the research and how it can enhance scientific and technological understanding about agricultural practices broadly.

Factor 3: Professional detailed budget and budget narrative (30 Pts)

The applicant will be evaluated on the reasonableness, cost-effectiveness, and adequacy of the proposed budget to accomplish the project, along with the extent to which the budget documents are detailed, organized, in-scope, and appropriate, including:

- Appropriate and Detailed Content Included (15 Pts)
 - Applicant's demonstration that the proposed budget is appropriate for the number of participating Fellows and the length of the program;
 - Applicant's use of a detailed budget table that utilizes cost item categories and includes appropriate cost savings where available.
- Budget Narrative and Budget Table Included (15 Pts)
 - Applicant's use of a clear budget narrative accompanying the budget table to address each line item therein;
 - Applicant's demonstration of successful rounding and calculating with final budget narrative numbers exactly matching the budget line items, rounded to the penny.

Factor 4: Professional formatting, spelling, and grammar (10 Pts)

The applicant will be evaluated on the extent to which their budget documents are detailed, organized, in-scope, and appropriate including:

- Professional Formatting, Spelling, and Grammar Utilized (10 Pts)

- Applicant's demonstration of professional organization and formatting throughout the project narrative and supporting documents with limited spelling and grammatical errors.

Integrity in Performance

Prior to making a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency is required by [31 USC 3321](#) and [41 USC 2313](#) to review information available through any OMB-designated repositories of government-wide eligibility qualification or financial integrity information. Therefore, application evaluation criteria may include the following risk-based considerations of the applicant: (1) financial stability; (2) quality of management systems and ability to meet management standards; (3) history of performance in managing federal award; (4) reports and findings from audits; and (5) ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements.

F. Federal Award Administration Information

Federal Award Notices

Successful applicants will be notified of the status of their application/award by email. This notification is not authorization to proceed, and such notification should be construed as provisional.

Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All successful applicants for all grant and cooperative agreements are required to comply with the applicable General Administrative Terms and Conditions, which can be found at https://www.fas.usda.gov/grants/general_terms_and_conditions/default.asp

The applicant is presumed to have read, understood, and accepted these terms when accepting a USDA/FAS award. Applicants with questions about the applicable terms should contact the program officer(s) listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact.

The applicable Terms and Conditions will be for the last year specified at that URL.

Before accepting an award, the applicant should carefully read the award package for instructions on administering the award and the terms and conditions associated with responsibilities under Federal Awards. Recipients must accept all conditions in this NOFO as well as any Special Terms and Conditions in the Notice of Award to receive an award under this program.

Reporting

Financial Reports, using form SF-425, Federal Financial Report (FFR), must be submitted semi-annually, within 30 days of the end of the reporting period. A final financial report must be submitted within 120 days of the end date of the agreement.

Performance Progress Reports must be submitted semi-annually, within 30 days of the end of the reporting period. A final performance progress report must be submitted within 120 days of the end date of the agreement. The recipient may use any appropriate format for performance progress reports, provided the report includes:

- a) a comparison of actual accomplishments for the period;

- b) The reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate; and
- c) Additional pertinent information including, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs.

Recipients are encouraged to include photographs and other supplemental material in performance progress reports. For awards in which the total lifetime value exceeds \$500,000, additional reporting may be required as described in [Appendix XII to 2 CFR 200](#).

Monitoring

USDA/FAS through its authorized representatives, has the right, at all reasonable times, to make site visits to review project accomplishments and management control systems and to provide such technical assistance as may be required. During site visits, USDA/FAS will review recipients' files related to the program.

As part of any monitoring and program evaluation activities, grant recipients must permit USDA/FAS, upon reasonable notice, to review assistance agreement-related records and to interview the organization's staff and clients regarding the program, and to respond in a timely and accurate manner to FAS requests for information relating to the program.

Closeout

Within 120 days after the end of the period of performance, or after an amendment has been issued to close out a grant, whichever comes first, recipients must submit a final FFR and final progress report detailing all accomplishments and a qualitative summary of the impact of those accomplishments throughout the period of performance. After final reports have been reviewed and approved by the agency, and any residual amount due to the recipient or due to be returned to the agency, the award is subject to closeout. Acceptance of final reports by the agency constitutes a closeout of the award with no further notice or obligation to either party. This acceptance will indicate the period of performance has expired, and any remaining funds will be deobligated. Records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the final reports are submitted.

G. Federal Awarding Agency Contact

For all inquiries, contact:

Chris Biles

christine.biles@usda.gov

Hours of Operation: 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM ET

1400 Independence Ave SW

Washington, DC 20250

Inquiries will be returned within 24 working hours (3 business days). All questions must be received no later than 16 working hours (2 business days) prior to application submission deadline (See Section D). The agency contact listed will confirm receipt of applications upon request.

*Please identify the opportunity to which you are applying in your email correspondence by including the name of the program in the email subject line and any additional details as necessary.

H. Other Information

Budget Revisions

Transfers of funds between direct cost categories in the approved budget when such cumulative transfers among those direct cost categories exceed ten percent of the total budget approved in this Award require written approval from the agency. The total budget amount may not be increased without a bilaterally executed amendment to the award.

Post-award program income

In the event program income becomes available to the recipient post-award, it is the recipient's responsibility to notify the USDA/FAS Program Manager to explain how that development occurred, as part of their request for guidance and/or approval. If approval is granted, an award modification will be issued with an explanatory note in the remarks section of the face page concerning guidance and/or options pertaining to the recipient's approved recipient's approved request. All instances of program income shall be listed in the progress and financial reports.