Distance Education Grants (DEG) Program for Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas

2018 Request for Applications (RFA)

APPLICATION DEADLINE: Friday, April 6, 2018

ELIGIBILITY: See Part III, A of RFA



United States Department of Agriculture

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

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

DISTANCE EDUCATION GRANTS (DEG) FOR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INSULAR AREAS

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.322, Distance Education Grants Program for Higher Education in the Insular Areas

DATES: Applications must be received by **5 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, April 6, 2018**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding (see Part IV, C of this RFA). Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: We at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) seek your comments about this RFA. We will consider your comments when we develop the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and we'll use them to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). Submit your written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this notice via email to Policy@nifa.usda.gov. (This email address is only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and ***not*** for requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Distance Education Grants (DEG) Program for Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the Distance Education Grants (DEG) Programs for Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas for fiscal year (FY) 2018 to strengthen the capacity of Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas to carry out resident instruction, curriculum, and teaching programs in the food, agriculture, natural resource and human (FANH) sciences through distance education technology. This RFA is being released prior to the passage of an appropriation act for FY 2018. Enactment of continuing resolutions or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. The anticipated amount available for grants in FY 2018 is approximately $800,000.

This notice identifies the objectives for DEG projects, deadline dates, funding information, eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a DEG grant.

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority

The Distance Education Grants for Insular Areas (DEG) program is administered under the provisions of 7 U.S.C. 3362, to strengthen the capacity of Insular Area institutions to carry out distance food and agricultural education programs using digital network technologies. Funds will be awarded to individual eligible institutions of higher education in Insular Areas (Insular Area Institutions) to carry out a distance education program in the food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The purpose of this programs is to strengthen the capacity of Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas to carry out resident instruction, curriculum, and teaching programs in the food, agriculture, natural resource and human (FANH) sciences through distance education technology.

DEG-funded project activities shall support the creation, adaptation, and adoption of learning materials and teaching strategies to operationalize what we know about how students learn. Many of these concepts are identified in the National Research Council's publication: *How People Learn.* DEG-funded projects shall also focus on imparting both technical knowledge as well as 'soft' skills such as communication, team work, and problem solving. These concepts may be found in the publication: *Comparative Analysis of Soft Skills: What is Important for New Graduates?*

The need is great for academic institutions to broaden the undergraduate student experience by integrating opportunities to participate in research, education, and extension. To strengthen this, four-year colleges and universities can enhance connections with community colleges, Hispanic-serving Institutions, Alaska Native-Serving and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions, 1890 and 1994 land-grant institutions, and non-land grant colleges and universities of agriculture.

The DEG Program directly aligns with:

- 2014-2018 USDA Strategic Plan, Strategic Goal #1 -- Assist Rural Communities to Create Prosperity so They Are Self-sustaining, Repopulating, and Economically Thriving
- 2016 Research, Economics, and Education Action Plan, Strategic Goal #6 – Education and Science Literacy
- 2014-2018 NIFA Strategic Plan, Strategic Goal #1 Science - Sub-goal 1.7 -- Ensure the development of human capital, communities, and a diverse workforce through research, education, extension, and engagement programs in food and agricultural sciences to support a sustainable agriculture system

The DEG Program encourages (but does not require) projects that develop content suitable for delivery through eXtension (https://extension.org/).

C. Program Area Description

Key Information:

Program Code – DEG
Program Code Name – Distance Education Grants Program for Higher Education in the Insular Areas (DEG)
Code of Federal Domestic Assistance - 10.322
Requested Project Types – Education/Teaching Projects
Requested Grant Types – Standard Grants
Application Deadline - Friday, April 6, 2018

Grant Duration	24-36 months
Award Amount	Up to $150,000
Number of Applications	Up to 3 per institution (as lead)
Award Limit per Institution	Maximum of 3 per institution
Funding Limit per Institution	$450,000

A Letter of Intent is not required for this program

NIFA is soliciting applications for the DEG program to strengthen the capacity of insular area institutions to carry out distance food, agriculture, natural resource and human science education programs using network technologies under the following characteristics and conditions:

1. Acquire the equipment, instrumentation, networking capability, hardware and software, digital network technology, and infrastructure necessary to teach students and teachers about technology in the classroom;
2. Develop and enhance educational services (including faculty development) to prepare students or faculty seeking a degree or certificate that is approved by the State or a regional accrediting body recognized by the Secretary of Education;
3. Provide teacher education, library and media specialist training, and preschool and teacher aid certification to individuals who seek to acquire or enhance technology skills in order to use technology in the classroom or instructional process;
4. Implement a joint project to provide education regarding technology in the classroom with a local educational agency, community-based organization, national nonprofit organization, or business; OR
5. Provide leadership development to administrators, board members, and faculty of eligible institutions with institutional responsibility for technology education.

Leadership Skills Development:

All DEG projects are required to provide leadership skills opportunities. The development of leadership skills, knowledge and qualities are necessary for preparing students for agricultural related careers in private sector, government and academia. Projects must demonstrably incorporate a leadership development component to ensure that students are equipped with both technical and leadership abilities. Specific activities may include:

- Developing practical applications to increase understanding of leadership roles, including critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills; ethics and professionalism; and working in teams;
- Connecting the academic classroom experience with daily leadership roles and organizational activities;
- Providing opportunities for mentoring and shadowing; and
- Organizing leadership academies, workshops, trainings, etc.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The anticipated amount available for DEG grants in FY 2018 is approximately $800,000. This RFA is being released prior to the passage of an appropriations act for the FY 2018. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. Funds will be awarded competitively through a peer panel review process.

Institutions receiving a grant under this program are eligible to receive DEG grants in subsequent years. Receiving a grant under any other authority does not affect eligibility for this DEG grants program.

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

The Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP), operated by the Department of Treasury's Bureau of the Fiscal Service, is the designated payment system for awards resulting from this RFA. For more information see https://www.fiscal.treasury.gov/fsservices/gov/pmt/asap/asap_home.htm.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2018, only 'new' or 'resubmitted' applications will be accepted:

New application: This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the DEG Program. We will review all new applications competitively using the screening for administrative requirements, review panel evaluation of proposals using evaluation criteria and selection process described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

Resubmitted application: This is an application that had previously been submitted to the DEG program but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (see Response to Previous Review, Part IV). We must receive resubmitted applications by the relevant due dates. We will evaluate resubmitted applications in competition with other pending applications in the appropriate area to which they are assigned and review them according to the same evaluation criteria (Part V, B) as new applications.

C. Project and Grant Types

1. **Project Types:**

   The DEG program will only accept Education/Teaching Projects

An education or teaching project shall develop human capital in order to help meet current and future national food, agriculture, natural resource and human (FANH) science workplace needs.

DEG projects shall focus on one or more of the Need Areas listed below and fall under the characteristics and conditions referenced in Part I, C. Please note that at least one of these Need Areas must be indicated on the Project Summary (See Part IV, B. 3). Need Areas for FY 2018 are defined below:

Curricula Design, Materials Development, and Library Resources:
To promote the development of courses of study and degree programs, new and improved curricula, and instructional materials and technology; promote the acquisition of library resources including books and journals relating to the food and agricultural sciences; and stimulate the use of new approaches to the study of traditional subjects, new research on teaching and learning theory, and new applications of knowledge.

Faculty Preparation and Enhancement for Teaching:
To advance faculty development in the areas of teaching competency and leadership, subject matter expertise, or student recruitment and advising skills.

Instruction Delivery Systems:
The purpose of this initiative is to encourage the use of alternative methods of delivering instruction to enhance the quality, effectiveness, and cost efficiency of teaching programs. Focus should be on ways to maximize program quality, reduce duplication; and implementation of innovative instructional techniques, methodologies, and delivery systems in response to advances in knowledge and technology.

Additional Information:
The use of students with only routine office, laboratory or field work is not considered education for the purposes of this program. Students will need to be actively engaged in the scholarship of research activities will be considered as education related.

Expected Products and Results:
The DEG program requires all project directors to provide appropriate metrics and describe the expected products and results, outcomes, and their potential impact on strengthening food, agricultural, natural resources and human sciences education, research and extension in the United States. Metrics to assess products, outputs and outcomes are to be clearly delineated in the proposal.

Incorporation of Social Sciences and Enhancing Impacts:
The DEG program supports social and behavioral science disciplines. DEG projects that integrate social and biological sciences to provide experiential learning opportunities for students in applied research, and related community development programs are encouraged. Incorporation of social and behavioral sciences is important for addressing many of the challenges facing agriculture and rural communities, such as increasing global demand for food production in the face of limited natural resources; improving

health and reducing obesity by engaging in heathy life styles and consuming heathy diets; and alleviating poverty by fostering economic opportunity.

2. Grant Types:

Only standard grants will be supported under this RFA.

A standard grant is an award instrument by which NIFA agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined project period without the announced intention of providing additional support at a future date.

An eligible institution may submit a standard project application for project activities undertaken principally on behalf of its own students or faculty, and managed primarily by its own personnel. In a standard grant, the applicant executes the project without the requirement of sharing grant funds with other project partners.

D. Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research:

While the Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research (RCR) policy is required for research projects, it includes ethical conduct expected of all projects, including education and extension. RCR topics that apply to all projects include plagiarism, reporting misconduct, data and research integration, and ensuring the quality, accuracy, and transparency of scientific information used to support decision making. Since ethical conduct is applicable to all projects, it is imperative that all applicants have a full understanding of, and adhere to the RCR. For information about the Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research, see http://nifa.usda.gov/responsible-and-ethical-conduct-research.

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PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may only be submitted by eligible institutions as described below. Failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration.

Institutions receiving a grant under this program are eligible to receive DEG grants in subsequent years. Receiving a grant under any other authority does not affect eligibility for this DEG grants program.

Each faculty recipient of support for developmental activities must be an "eligible participant" please refer to: 7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Financial Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions, for applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.

1. Individual Institutions

For the purposes of the DEG grant program, an eligible institution means an institution of higher education, as defined in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1995 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)), that is located in an Insular Area and that has a demonstrable capacity to carry out teaching and extension programs in the food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences. All public or non-profit 2-year and 4-year accredited institutions of higher education that offer certificate/degree programs in FANH sciences are eligible. Individual land-grant colleges and universities, and other institutions that have secured land-grant status through Federal legislation, and which are located in Insular Areas are automatically eligible for awards under the DEG grant program as direct individual applicants.

The eight insular areas are: American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Virgin Islands of the United States.

2. Branch Institutions of a State System

Individual branches of a State university system or public system of higher education that are separately accredited as degree-granting institutions are treated as separate, individual institutions eligible to apply for and receive awards, provided they otherwise satisfy the definition of "eligible institution" as specified above.

3. Independent Branch Campuses

Independent branch campuses of individual institutions may apply for and receive grant awards under this program, provided that they otherwise satisfy the definition of "eligible institution" as specified above. An "independent branch campus" means a unit of a 2-year or 4-year institution of higher education that is geographically apart from the main campus, is permanent in nature, offers courses for credit and programs leading to an associate or bachelor's degree, and is

autonomous to the extent that it has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization and its own budgetary and hiring authority.

4. Certification of Eligibility:

At the time of application, each primary applicant will be required to demonstrate or certify that it is an eligible institution as defined by this RFA. A non-land-grant institution must submit a letter signed by the institution's Authorized Representative (AR) certifying that it meets the requirements of an "eligible institution" as defined in Part III A paragraphs 1 and 2 above. The AR must also certify that the institution, or parent institution in the case of an independent branch campus:

a) Admits as regular students only persons having a certificate of graduation from a school providing secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such a certificate;

b) Is legally authorized by the Insular Area in which it is located to provide a program of education beyond secondary education;

c) Provides an educational program for which the institution awards a bachelor's degree or provides not less than a 2-year program that is acceptable for full credit toward such a degree; and

d) Is a public or other nonprofit institution; and is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association, or if not so accredited, is an institution that has been granted pre-accreditation status by such an agency or association that has been recognized by the Secretary for the granting of pre-accreditation status, and the Secretary has determined that there is satisfactory assurance that the institution will meet the accreditation standards of such an agency or association within a reasonable time.

All eligible institutions must demonstrate that they have a significant commitment to higher education programs in the food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences and to each specific subject area for which grant funds are to be used.

Eligibility documentation must be submitted as part of the applicant's Project Narrative. See Part IV, B.3, Field 8.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

NIFA does not require matching support for this program, and matching resources will not be a factor in the review process as evaluation criteria.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA. We urge you to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For information about the pre-award phase of the grant lifecycle see http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/learn-grants/grants-101/pre-award-phase.html.

New Users of Grants.gov

Prior to preparing an application, we recommend that the Project Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) first contact an Authorized Representative (AR, also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative, or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grants.gov. If not (e.g., the institution/organization is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov), then the one-time registration process must be completed **PRIOR** to submitting an application. It can take as long as two weeks to complete the registration process so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. In such situations, the AR should go to **"Register," in the top right corner of the Grants.gov web page (or go to** http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/register.html**), for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov.** Part II,1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide contains detailed information regarding the registration process. Refer to item 2, below, to locate the "NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide."

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

To receive application materials:

1. You must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov to access, complete, and submit applications. For basic system requirements and download instructions, see http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html. Grants.gov has a test package that will help you determine whether your current version of Adobe Reader is compatible.

2. To obtain the application package from Grants.gov, go to http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/download-application-package.html and enter the funding opportunity number where appropriate

   Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-RIGP-006468

   Click "Search." On the displayed page, click the corresponding link to continue. A Grant Application Package is tied to a particular funding opportunity. You may submit an application ONLY to the particular funding opportunity to which the Grant Application Package is associated.

   Contained within the application package is the "NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide." This guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information

about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

If you require assistance to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms) **or submitting the application,** refer to resources available on the Grants.gov website (https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/support.html). Grants.gov assistance is also available at:

Grants.gov customer support
800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035
Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on federal holidays.
Email: support@grants.gov

Grants.gov iPortal (see https://grants-portal.psc.gov/Welcome.aspx?pt=Grants):
Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self-service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7 a.m. - 9 p.m. EST).
Have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov:

- Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
- Name of agency you are applying to
- Specific area of concern

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Electronic applications are to be prepared following Parts V and VI of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A of this part). The following is **additional information** you need to prepare an application in response to this RFA. **If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.**

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., PDF) in Part III, Section 3 of the guide. ANY PROPOSALS THAT ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS (e.g., content format, PDF file format, file name restrictions, and no password protected files) WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Grants.gov does not check for NIFA required attachments or whether attachments are in PDF format; see Part III, Section 6.1 of the guide for how to check the manifest of submitted files. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. We will accept subsequent submissions of an application until close of business on the closing date in the RFA (see Part V, 2.1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further information).

For any questions related to the preparation of an application, review the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide and the applicable RFA. If assistance is still needed for preparing application forms content, contact:

- Email: electronic@nifa.usda.gov
- Phone: 202-401-5048
- Business hours: Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. EST, excluding federal holidays.

1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. See Part V, Section 2.18 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for the required certifications and assurances (e.g., Prohibition Against Entities Requiring Certain Internal Confidentiality Agreements).

2. SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 3 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

3. R&R Other Project Information Form

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 4 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract.

The summary shall not exceed 250 words and include the relevance of the project to the goals of the DEG Program. See Part V. 4.7 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

b. Field 8. Project Narrative. (Required Attachment – Must be PDF format). Application will not be accepted for review if the project narrative is not included or not in PDF format.

NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 18 pages of written text and up to five additional pages for figures and tables. Formatting shall be one inch margins, no smaller than 12-point font (Times New Roman or similar), and double-spaced. We have established this maximum 23 pages to ensure fair and equitable competition. Project narratives that exceed this page limit requirement will not be accepted for review.

The Project Narrative must include all of the following sections:

1) Introduction: Include a clear statement of the medium- and long-term goal(s) of the proposed activities. Summarize the body of knowledge or other past activities that substantiate the need for the proposed project. Describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities that relate to the proposed project including the work of key project personnel. Include preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed project. In addition, this section should include in-depth information on the following, when applicable:

a. Estimates of the magnitude of the issues and their relevance to stakeholders and to on-going state-federal food and agricultural research, education and extension programs;
b. The role of stakeholders in problem identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation as appropriate;
c. Reasons for performing the work at the proposing institution

2) Objectives: Include a statement(s) of specific aims of the proposed effort in clear, concise, complete, and logically arranged terms.

3) Methods: Explicitly state the procedures or methodology you will apply to the proposed effort. This section should include, but not necessarily be limited to, descriptions of:

a. Stakeholder involvement in problem identification, planning and implementation;
b. Proposed project activities, listed sequentially;
c. Techniques to be employed including feasibility and rationale;
d. Expected results;
e. How the activities will be evaluated;
f. How data will be analyzed or interpreted;
g. Plans to communicate results to stakeholders and the public; and
h. Limitations that might be encountered and how they will be addressed

4) Project Timetable: The proposal should outline all important phases as a function of time, year to year, for the entire project, including periods beyond the grant funding period.

5) Evaluation Plan: All projects shall include an Evaluation Plan that includes both a strategy for monitoring the project as it evolves as well as a strategy for evaluating the effectiveness of the project in achieving its goals and for identifying positive and negative findings when the project is completed. Grantees are encouraged to obtain an independent evaluation to secure appropriate documentation of the projects outcomes and impacts. Such efforts should be led by knowledgeable and experienced individuals. As a guide, up to 10% of the grant funds may be used to support this purpose.

c. Field 12. Add Other Attachments
See Part V. Section 4.12 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide (Field 12 on the form) for instructions regarding mandatory Felony Convictions or Tax Delinquent Status.

The following instructions are in addition to those noted in Part V 4.12 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

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

- **Expected Outcomes – PDF Attachment**
  Title the attachment "Expected Outcomes" in the document header and save file as "ExpectedOutcomes." Please use a format, similar to what is provided below, to submit expected outcomes and attach it as the last page of the application. This data will be requested when a grant is recommended for an award. A fillable version of this document can be also found at https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/recommended-format-submitting-expected-impacts

Recommended Format for Submitting Expected Outcomes

Primary Project Function: (Choose one)			
EDUCATION: ☐	EXTENSION : ☐	RESEARCH: ☐	
DATA FOR MSI PROGRAMS: 1890s, HSI, 1994s, ANNH, Insular			
Total expected impact during entire grant period			Expected Number
1. Number of farmers/community members to be served, for example, provided with training and/or new information regarding markets, technology, production practices, etc.			
2. Number of products to be developed for the education and training of students through grant funds during the project period			
2-A. curricula, academic programs			
2-B. recruitment/retention programs			
2-C. teaching or educational materials, distance education capability, experiential learning opportunities			
3. Number of faculty supported by this grant for professional development during the grant period: participation in sabbaticals, workshops, conferences, etc.			
4. Number of students who will indirectly benefit from the products produced from the grant during the grant period (i.e., using the curriculum/instrumentation, enrolled in the program, recruited or retained but not paid by the grant using scholarships, fellowships and assistantships).			
5. Number of male students to be directly supported by this grant (i.e., scholarships, fellowships, assistantships, internships included as a cost in your project budget) for undergraduate or post-graduate education			
6. Number of underrepresented[1] male students to be supported during the grant period (Provide the best estimate based on past experience)			
7. Number of female students to be directly supported by this grant (i.e., scholarships, fellowships, assistantships, internships included as a cost in your project budget) for undergraduate or post-graduate education			
8. Number of underrepresented[1] female students to be supported during the grant period (Provide the best estimate based on past experience)			
9. Number of students supported by this grant (i.e., scholarships, fellowships, assistantships) who are pursuing their degree			
9-A. Two year or other certificates			
9-B. Undergraduate or other 4 year degrees			
9-C. Master's degree			
9-D. Ph.D. degree			
9-E. Postdoctoral training			
10. Number of students who will be supported by this grant on an internship or other experiential learning opportunity			
10-A. Domestic experiences, with a government or non-governmental organization that is not affiliated with your university			
10-B. International experiences, including study abroad, educational travel longer than a month, etc.			

[1]underrepresented = those whose representation among food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences professionals is disproportionately less than their proportion in the general population as indicated in standard statistical references, or as documented on a case-by-case basis by national survey data (e.g. the U.S. Department of Education's Digest of Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Agricultural Education Information Systems, etc.).

Note

1. Please provide your best estimate based on past experiences, graduation rates, retention rates, etc.
2. Number of underrepresented students to be supported during the grant period (questions #6 and #8) should be less than or equal to total number of students supported by the grant (questions #5 and #7).
3. Response to question #9 should be the sum of 9-A through 9-E; Response to question #6 should be the sum of 10-A and 10-B.

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

Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 5 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This section of the guide includes instructions about senior/key person profile requirements, and details about the biographical sketch and the current and pending support, including a link to a suggested template for the current and pending support.

Biographical Sketch - The following are additional instructions of information to include:

1) Author identifier (ORCID, https://orcid.org) of the researcher if available.
2) Digital Object Identifier (DOI) of all publications where possible.

You may also include a list of data publications or published data products relevant to the proposed project, following recommended data citation format.

5. R&R Personal Data – As noted in Part V, 6 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award. Part V.6 also notes the importance and use of the information.

6. R&R Budget
Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part V, 7 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Detailed budgets for each year of the project and a cumulative budget are required along with a budget justification for each budget line item for the cumulative budget. Budgets for each year do NOT have to be the same from year to year.

Total budgets should not exceed $150,000. Actual amounts may differ from the amounts requested in the application submitted to the program, and that revised budgets and revised plans of work may be required by NIFA before an award is made.

The number of grants awarded in FY 2018 will depend on the number of applications recommended for funding by a peer review panel.

NIFA does not require matching support for this program, and matching resources will not be a factor in the review process as evaluation criteria.

For further information and instructions regarding indirect costs, refer to Part V, section 7.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. For indirect cost funding restrictions, refer to Part IV, D. of this RFA.

7. Supplemental Information Form
Detailed information related to the questions on this form is available in Part VI, 1 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. **Field 2. Program to which you are applying.** Enter the program code name (i.e., "Distance Education Grants for Insular Areas") and the program code (i.e., "DEG"). Note that accurate entry of the program code is very important for proper and timely processing of an application.

b. **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List**. See Part VI, 1.8 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by **5 p.m. Eastern Time on Friday, April 6, 2018.** Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

We recommend that you conduct an administrative review of the application before submission of it via Grants.gov to ensure that it complies with all preparation instructions. An application checklist is included in Part VII of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide to assist with this review.

The application should be checked for the following items to be attached in Field 12:

- **Logic Model (not required)**
- **Management Plan (not required)**
- **CVs, Current and Pending, Conflict of Interest Forms of all PDs and Co-PDs (required)**
- **Certification of eligibility letter (required)**
- **Tax and Felony Form (required)**
- **Expected Impacts Table (required)**

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

If you have trouble submitting an application to Grants.gov, you should FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Part IV. A for Grants.gov contact information.

We send email correspondence to the AR regarding the status of submitted applications. We strongly encourage you to provide accurate email addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received correspondence **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 30 days of the established deadline, contact the Agency Contact identified in Part VII of the RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, you should cite this number on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

Section 713 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016 (Pub. L. 114-113) limits indirect costs to 30 percent of the total Federal funds provided (or 42.857 percent of total direct costs) under each award. Therefore, when preparing budgets, you should limit your request for the recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of your institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 30 percent of total Federal funds awarded. See Part V section 7.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further indirect cost information.

If your institution does not have, or cannot obtain, a negotiated rate, you must calculate an indirect cost rate in order to request indirect costs. You should calculate an indirect cost rate based on actual costs for the entire organization for the most recently completed accounting year. If no prior cost history exists, you should use budgeted costs for the entire organization. You should follow the example(s) found at: http://nifa.usda.gov/business/indirect_cost_process.html for information regarding this process. You may elect to charge indirect costs and, instead, use all grant funds for direct costs. If indirect costs are not charged, the phase "None requested" should be written in this space.

You may not use grant funds awarded under this authority to renovate or refurbish research, education, or extension space; and purchase or install fixed equipment in such a space.

The use of grant funds to plan, acquire, or construct a building or facility is not allowed under this program. With prior approval, and in accordance with the cost principles set forth in 2 CFR part 220 (Circular No. A- 21), some grant funds may be used for minor alterations, renovations or repairs deemed necessary to retrofit existing teaching or research spaces in order to carry out a funded project. However, requests to use grant funds for such purposes must demonstrated that the work is essential to achieving the major purpose of the project. Grant funds may not be used for endowment funding.

Statutory language or agency policy limits the maximum potential funding period (including any awards transferred from another institution or organization) to five years in duration. The funding period will commence on the effective date cited in the award notification. Any such limitation also applies to subcontracts made under awards subject to a funding period limitation.

E. Other Submission Requirements

You should follow the submission requirements noted in Part IV, Section 1.9 in the document entitled "NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide."

For information about the **status of a submitted application**, see Part III, Section 6 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

We evaluate each application in a two-part process. First, we screen each application to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, a technical review panel will evaluate applications that meet the administrative requirements.

We select reviewers based upon their training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors and needs:

- 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;
- Include experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields;
- Include other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs;
- 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;
- Maintain a balanced composition with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and
- 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 DEG program staff will recommend that your project be approved for support from currently available funds or be declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review.

The DEG program reserves the right to negotiate with the PD/PI and/or with 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.

We will send copies of reviews, ***not*** including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments to the PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Evaluation Criteria

We will use the evaluation criteria below to review applications submitted in response to this RFA:

1. Potential for Advancing Quality of Education/Significance of the Problem (30 points). This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will have an impact upon and advance the quality of food, agriculture, natural resources and human sciences by strengthening institutional capacities to meet clearly delineated needs. Elements considered

include institutional long-range goals, identification of a problem or opportunity to be addressed, justification for the project, innovation, advancing educational equity, multidisciplinary and/or problem-based focus, and potential for adoption by other institutions.

2. Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages (25 points).
This criterion relates to the soundness of the proposed approach including objectives, methodology, plan of operation, timetable, expected products and results, evaluation, and dissemination plans. Emphasis is placed on the quality of educational or research support provided to the applicant institution through its inter-collegial engagement and partnership and necessary outside collaborative initiatives, and on the potential cooperative linkages likely to evolve as a result of this project.

3. Institutional Capability and Capacity Building (20 points).
This criterion relates to the institution's capability to perform the project and the degree to which the project will strengthen its teaching or research capacity. Elements include the institution's commitment to the project, the adequacy of institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials) available to carry out the project, potential for academic or research enhancement, and plans for project continuation or expansion beyond the period of USDA support.

4. Key Personnel (15 points).
This criterion relates to the adequacy of the number and qualifications of key persons who will develop and carry out the project, and the qualifications of project personnel who will provide for the assessment of project results and impacts of these findings.

5. Budget and Cost-Effectiveness (10 points).
This criterion relates to the extent to which the total budget adequately supports the project and is cost effective. Elements considered include the necessity and reasonableness of costs to carry out project activities and achieve project objectives; the appropriateness of budget allocations between the applicant and any collaborating inter-institutional sources and necessary outside collaborators; the adequacy of time committed to the project by key project personnel; and the degree to which the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes educational value for the dollar, achieves economies of scale, leverages additional funds, and focuses expertise and activity on high-priority educational or research need areas.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, we take extreme care to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. See http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/competitive_peer_review.html for further information about conflicts of interest and confidentiality as related to the peer review process.

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted one-time, with updates on an as-needed basis. This requirement is part of the responsibility determined prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another NIFA program. We will provide you copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, 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 involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

E. Application Disposition

An application may be withdrawn at any time before a final funding decision is made regarding the application. Each application that is not selected for funding, including those that are withdrawn, will be retained by DEG for a period of three years.

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the NIFA awarding official shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the NIFA awarding official as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. The project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by NIFA under this RFA may be used only for the purpose for which they are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, regulations, terms and conditions of the award, applicable federal cost principles, USDA assistance regulations, and NIFA General Awards Administration Provisions at 7 CFR part 3430, subparts A through E.

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the information described in 2 CFR 200.210.

See http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html to view current NIFA award terms and conditions.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These may include, but are not limited to, the ones listed on the NIFA web page – http://nifa.usda.gov/federal-regulations.

NIFA Federal Assistance Policy Guide—a compendium of basic NIFA policies and procedures that apply to all NIFA awards, unless there are statutory, regulatory, or award-specific requirements to the contrary—is available at http://nifa.usda.gov/policy-guide.

Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research

Refer to Part II, D for more information.

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

Project Directors Meeting:

During the tenure of a grant, Project Directors (PD)s must attend at least one National PD meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss project and grant management, opportunities for collaborative efforts, future directions for education reform, and opportunities to disseminate end products and results of the projects. Reasonable travel expenses to attend this meeting may be included in the application's budget under travel expenses.

The output and reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions (see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html for information about NIFA award terms). If there are any program or award-specific award terms, they will be identified in the award.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Programmatic Contact –
Joyce Parker, Ph.D.
Title: National Program Leader
Unit: Division of Community and Education
Location: 4405 Waterfront Center
Phone: **202-445-5403**
Email: joyce.parker@nifa.usda.gov

Administrative/Business Contact –
Bruce Mertz
Title: Team Leader
Unit: Office of Grants and Financial Management - OGFM
Location: 2174 Waterfront Centre, 800 9th St., SW, Washington, DC 20024
Phone: 202-401-5062

Email: bmertz@nifa.usda.gov

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Use of Funds; Changes

1. 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.

2. 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:

(i) Change in the scope or the objective of the project or program (even if there is no associated budget revision requiring prior written approval).

(ii) Change in a key person specified in the application or the federal award.

(iii) The disengagement from the project for more than three months, or a 25 percent reduction in time devoted to the project, by the approved project director or principal investigator.

(iv) The inclusion, unless waived by the federal awarding agency, of costs that require prior approval in accordance with 2 CFR 200 Subpart E—Cost Principles of this part or 45 CFR Part 75 Appendix IX, "Principles for Determining Costs Applicable to Research and Development under Awards and Contracts with Hospitals," or 48 CFR Part 31, "Contract Cost Principles and Procedures," as applicable.

(v) The transfer of funds budgeted for participant support costs as defined in §200.75 Participant support costs to other categories of expense.

(vi) Unless described in the application and funded in the approved federal awards, the subawarding, transferring or contracting out of any work under a federal award, including fixed amount subawards as described in §200.332 Fixed amount subawards. This provision does not apply to the acquisition of supplies, material, equipment, or general support services.

(vii) Changes in the approved cost-sharing or matching provided by the non-federal entity.

(viii) The need arises for additional federal funds to complete the project.

The awardee will be subject to the terms and conditions identified in the award. See http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html for information about NIFA award terms.

B. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of NIFA transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary of Agriculture determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the

application. We will retain for three years a copy of an application that does not result in an award. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

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. Definitions

Refer to 7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Financial Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions, for applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.

E. Materials Available on the Internet

DEG program information will be made available on the NIFA website at: https://nifa.usda.gov/program/resident-instruction-grants-riia-and-distance-education-grants-deg-institutions-higher