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

FY 2012 Request for Applications

Application Deadline: March 1, 2012

DEG Program:

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NIFA Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-NIFA-RIGP-003625

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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 FOR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN INSULAR AREAS (DEG)

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

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

DATES: Applications must be received by Grants.gov by close of business (COB) on **March 1, 2012** (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. 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: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is requesting comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and will be used 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)). This section requires the Secretary to solicit and consider input on a current RFA from persons who conduct or use agricultural research, education and extension for use in formulating future RFAs for competitive programs. Written stakeholder comments on this RFA should be submitted in accordance with the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice.

Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by mail to: Policy and Oversight Division; Office of Grants and Financial Management; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: Policy@nifa.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Distance Education Grants Program for Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas (DEG).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA announces the availability of grant funds and requests applications for the Distance Education Grants Program for Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas (DEG) for fiscal year (FY) 2012. This program is designed to strengthen the capacity of Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas to carry out resident instruction, curriculum, and teaching programs in the food and agricultural sciences through distance education technology. NIFA anticipates FY 2012 support for the DEG program at approximately $750,000.

This notice identifies the objectives for DEG projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a DEG award. NIFA additionally requests stakeholder input from any interested party for use in the development of the next RFA for this program.

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PART I-FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

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 education programs*** (see Definitions, Part VIII. E.) in the food and agricultural sciences. In FY 2012, approximately $750,000 is available for a program of competitive grants, with funds to be awarded to one or more individual, eligible institutions of higher education in Insular Areas (Insular Area Institutions) or consortia of such eligible institutions, to carry out a distance education program in the food and agricultural sciences.

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

Background

In July, 2008, the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, and Department of Energy asked the National Research Council's Board on Life Sciences to convene a committee to"*… examine the current state of biological research in the United States and recommend how best to capitalize on recent technological and scientific advances that have allowed biologists to integrate biological research findings, collect and interpret vastly increased amounts of data, and predict the behavior of complex biological systems."* The committee produced a report entitled "New Biology for the 21st Century: Ensuring the United States Leads the Coming Revolution," and a set of recommendations that recognize the most effective leveraging of investments would come from a coordinated, interagency effort to encourage the emergence of a New Biology to address broad and challenging societal problems.

That committee outlined four broad societal challenges in food, environment, energy, and health that could be addressed by the New Biology. The four challenges are: (1) *Generate food plants to adapt and grow sustainably in changing environments; (2) Understand and sustain ecosystem function and biodiversity in the face of rapid change; (3) Expand sustainable alternatives to fossil fuels; and (4)Understand individual health*.

USDA – NIFA Response: Building upon the four "New Biology for the 21st Century" *challenges* above, NIFA has refocused its mission to direct agricultural sciences research, education, and extension programs on addressing the following five Priority Areas:

1. **Global Food Security and Hunger;**
2. **Climate Change;**
3. **Sustainable Bioenergy;**
4. **Childhood Obesity; and**
5. **Food Safety.**

The DEG is a NIFA-administered competitive grants program focused on improving formal, postsecondary agricultural sciences education. Guided by critical societal issues laid out in the "New Biology for the 21st Century" report, as well as the five compelling NIFA Priority Areas, DEG-funded projects ensure a competent and qualified workforce to serve the food and agricultural sciences system. At the same time, funded projects improve the economic health and viability of rural communities through the development of degree programs emphasizing new and emerging employment opportunities in agriscience and agribusiness. Finally, funded projects are also focused to address the national challenge to increase the number and diversity of students entering other agriculture related science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines (i.e., having an agricultural sciences workforce representative of the Nation's population).

Therefore, applications submitted to this grants program must state how the funded project will address the two **DEG Program Goals**:

1. To increase the number and diversity of students who will pursue and complete a 2- or 4-year postsecondary degree in the food and agricultural sciences, or other STEM fields closely related to the food and agricultural sciences, and for FY 2012, encourage study in areas that contribute to any of the five NIFA Priority Areas listed directly above in Part I, A; and
2. To enhance the quality of postsecondary instruction in order to help meet current and future national food and agricultural sciences workplace needs.

B. Purpose and Priorities

1. **Applicants to the DEG program are reminded of a closely related competitive grants program administered by NIFA for eligible Insular Area Institutions: *The Resident Instruction Grants Program for Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas (RIIA).*** As separate programs with their respective authorization and appropriation and Requests for Applications (RFA), applicants are advised to coordinate DEG and RIIA project applications to ensure overall coordinated project objectives and to efficiently integrate proposed teaching and evaluation assessment practices for both projects.
2. DEG projects must focus on any of the five NIFA Priority Areas listed above in Part I. A.
3. **Focus**: All DEG-funded projects should focus on improving the quality of *academic instruction* within the postsecondary system in order to recruit and retain a greater number of qualified and diverse graduates who are either: (a) capable of entering the agricultural sciences workforce with occupational competencies expected by employers, or (b) encouraged to pursue an advanced degree in disciplines supporting the five NIFA Priority Areas. '*Academic instruction,*' as used in the previous sentence, includes improving curricula, faculty competencies, and interactions with other academic institutions or employers to increase student recruitment and retention levels in order to meet the demands of a changing U.S. agricultural sciences workforce. *Educational Need Areas* explained in Part I. C.2., provide further, specific project focus.
4. **Scale**: All DEG-funded projects should seek to address a greater number of prospective students or qualified faculty, and demonstrate the potential for adoption by other

academic institutions to address similar challenges. Projects should also maximize available educational resources, encourage partnerships, and reduce duplication of efforts among participating academic institutions, especially in areas of faculty expertise, course offerings, and transfer or articulation agreements between institutions, all to enhance students' interests and abilities to pursue advanced degrees. *Project Types* explained in Part II. C., provide further, specific encouragement to scale up a funded project to create greater impact.

5. **Impact**: All DEG-funded projects should seek to create measurable impacts. *Impacts* are defined as anticipated benefits to the target project audience. Impacts should be measurable. Measuring impacts begins with a comprehensive Project Evaluation Plan that includes developing assessment instruments. The *Project Evaluation Plan* explained in Part I.C.3., provides further, specific guidance on the importance of developing a compelling impact.

The purpose of the DEG program is to promote and strengthen the ability of Insular Area Institutions to: (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 provide 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.

DEG-funded projects encourage academic institutions, organizations, and employers in Insular Areas to collectively identify and address Insular Area education opportunities with the potential to address any of the five NIFA Priority Areas. An application submitted to this grants program should propose comprehensive and coordinated activities to address that challenge or opportunity. DEG-funded project activities should demonstrate an impact on increasing the number of students who pursue a higher degree within STEM disciplines, and should improve student learning and retention. These activities could include, but are not limited to, developing, evaluating, and disseminating:

- Educational materials for any postsecondary course, laboratory, or related curricula that encourage study in areas that contribute to any of the five NIFA Priority Areas;
- Instructional delivery methods to improve student retention of academic content; and/or
- Professional development approaches to improve the capacity of faculty and teaching assistants to provide effective and updated instruction.

DEG-funded project activities should support the creation and adaptation 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*,

available at: http://books.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=9853. Projects should also promote faculty expertise and encourage widespread implementation of educational innovation. This solicitation especially encourages projects with the potential to transform classroom practices at the institutional level, to address current understanding of how students learn most effectively, and in response, how faculty adopt instructional approaches.

The intent of a DEG-funded project is to make a significant impact on the challenge or opportunity being addressed, with the expectation that major portions of the impact will be sustained after NIFA funding ends. Project design should reflect an awareness of the diversity of the STEM education community, and the project should include mechanisms for impacting a significant proportion of this community. Projects are expected to encourage broad participation of students in agricultural sciences STEM disciplines. All projects should be grounded by concepts documented in relevant background literature promoting innovations in education and student learning, and show an awareness of relevant prior experience and personnel adequacy in those areas.

Educational instrumentation and related equipment requests are appropriate expenses in this grants program. However, such purchases must directly support the specific student learning outcome proposed by this grant application. Convincing documentation and justification for such expenses are required in the grant application.

While research and extension activities may be included in a funded DEG project, the primary focus must be to improve teaching within a degree-granting program.

By authorizing and funding this program, Congress expects DEG projects to: (a) produce measurable impacts aligned with DEG program goals and encourage study in areas that contribute to any of the NIFA Priority Areas; (b) promote innovative, educational practices within the food and agricultural sciences that improve how students learn; and (c) include a rigorous evaluation component to assess when project outcomes are met. Essentially, your application must convince a peer panel of a: compelling educational challenge; clearly indicate how your methodology is both unique and with merit; offer significant promise of adoption by others; and the expectation that impacts will continue once grant funds end.

Applicants must address the following items within specified sections of the 'R&R Other Project Information' Form (Part IV, B.3.):

1. Within the Project Narrative (Part IV, B.3.Field 8.1.b.), identify and describe at least one Educational Need Area (Part I, C.2.) for each institution in the consortium, or for each institution submitting an application, and explain how this Educational Need Area supports the two DEG Program Goals listed above.
2. Within the project's Evaluation Plan (Part IV, B.3.Field 8.2.d.), document how Project Accomplishments (products, results, impacts, etc.) will be published or otherwise disseminated to the broadest extent throughout the academic community. Applicants are encouraged to develop a project web page as part of their dissemination activities. Applicants are also encouraged to develop a non-campus review committee to evaluate

their progress and termination reports. This activity will help maximize the quality of the content within these reports.

3. Applicants are strongly encouraged to engage a sponsoring private organization, State, or Federal agency to leverage grant funds and/or contribute towards overall goals and objectives of the funded project. These may include opportunities for student internships, faculty mentoring, curriculum development, and other partnership activities. Potential USDA agencies may include the Farm Service Agency (FSA), Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Rural Development Agency (RD), the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), Economic Research Service (ERS), Forest Service (FS), Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyard Administration (GIPSA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Risk Management Agency (RMA), Agricultural Research Service (ARS), and the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

4. Project applications should be guided by the recommendations for change as reported in the National Academy of Science 2009 publication entitled, *Transforming Agricultural Education for a Changing World*. This report recommends that academic institutions with undergraduate programs in agriculture implement the following nine steps to better meet the needs of students, employers, and the broader society. For information on the full report, please refer to http://dels.nas.edu/ag_education/report.shtml and click on recommendations. The list of recommendations is as follows:

    - Implement Strategic Planning;
    - Broaden Treatment of Agriculture in the Overall Curriculum;
    - Broaden the Student Experience;
    - Prepare Faculty to Teach Effectively;
    - Reward Exemplary Teaching;
    - Build Stronger Connections among Institutions;
    - Start Early K-12 Outreach;
    - Build Strategic Partnerships; and
    - Focus Reviews of Undergraduate Programs in Agriculture.

You are also encouraged to refer to a 2009 white paper on Human Capacity Development prepared by the Academic Programs Section of the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities. Copies of the white paper entitled "Human Capacity Development The Road to Global Competitiveness and Leadership in Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (FANRRS)," can be found at: http://www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=1639.

Applicants are encouraged to submit a *consortium project application* (see definition in Part VIII, E.). While each institution comprising the consortium may have unique challenges and activities to address, the consortium project should focus on those challenges and activities common to all members of the consortium. The submitted consortium project should, therefore, describe how the consortium institutions will form partnerships to capitalize upon each other's

strengths, and share resources, to address common objectives. Consortium projects should build linkages among Insular Area Institutions and with other institutions (including other colleges and universities, units of State government, and private sector entities) having a significant, demonstrable commitment to higher education programs in the food and agricultural sciences and to each specific subject area where grant funds are requested: (1) to strengthen institutional education capacities (including libraries, curriculum, faculty, scientific instrumentation, instruction delivery systems, and student recruitment and retention strategies), in order to respond to State, regional, national, or international education needs in the food and agriculture sciences; (2) to attract and support undergraduate and graduate students in areas of national need in the food and agricultural sciences; (3) to conduct undergraduate scholarship programs to assist in meeting national needs for training food and agricultural scientists; and (4) to facilitate cooperative initiatives between two or more Insular Area Institutions, or between Insular Area Institutions and units of State Government or organizations in the private sector, to maximize the development and use of resources such as faculty, facilities, and equipment. These partnerships generate a critical mass of expertise and activity focused on increasing cost-effectiveness through achieving economies of scale, strengthening the scope and quality of a project's impact, and promoting coalition building likely to transcend the project's lifetime and lead to future ventures.

NIFA encourages innovative proposals with the potential for national impact to serve as models for other institutions.

C. Program Area Description

1. Program Scope

Funded projects in this year's competition must enhance academic instruction that strengthens the capacity of Insular Area Institutions to carry out coordinated, multi-institutional delivery of teaching, learning, and faculty development (especially through distance education methods to enhance curriculum delivery, articulation agreements, student and faculty exchanges, and expanded career planning activities) in the food and agricultural sciences. Consortium project applications are encouraged.

2. Educational Need Areas

(a) Projects must focus on an Educational Need Area listed below, and applications must demonstrate how the chosen Need Area will help achieve DEG Program Goals from Part I, A, above. Consortium applications may address several Educational Need Areas, but each separate institution within the consortium should identify its own Need Area and provide a narrative response to Part IV.B.3. Field 8. **Note: Applications must include an Evaluation Plan (Part IV, B. 3. Field 8, 2d.) for each Educational Need Area selected. This Plan should indicate how success in completing the program objectives within the chosen Need Area will be measured. Therefore, choose only the Need Areas that are relevant to and within the resources of the institution in order for a rigorous Evaluation Plan to be developed.**

Educational Need Areas for the DEG program are:

(1) Curricula Design, Materials Development, and Library Resources. The purpose of this initiative is to promote the development of distance education methods to improve and disseminate curricula, instructional materials and technology; to enable the acquisition of library resources including books and journals relating to the food and agricultural sciences; and to stimulate the use of new approaches to the study of traditional subjects, new research on teaching and learning theory, and new applications of knowledge. The overall objective is to increase the quality of, and continuously renew, the academic programs of Insular Area Institutions in the food and agricultural sciences.

(2) Faculty Preparation and Enhancement for Teaching. The purpose of this initiative is to advance distance education methods related to faculty development activities in the areas of teaching competency and leadership, subject matter expertise, or student recruitment and advising skills. Applications may emphasize, but are not limited to: obtaining experience with recent developments and new applications in a field; expanding competence in innovative technologies and new methods to deliver instruction; developing new skills in a field of science or education including student advising skills; or pursuing graduate-level study in a field related to the food and agricultural sciences.

Each faculty recipient of support for developmental activities must be an "eligible participant" as defined in Part VIII, E. Definitions.

(3) Instruction Delivery Systems. The purpose of this initiative is to encourage the development and use of alternative methods of distance delivery to enhance the quality, effectiveness, and cost efficiency of teaching programs, while simultaneously addressing the unique geographical challenges of Insular Area Institutions. Applications may emphasize, but are not limited to: conducting needs assessments of institutional academic and technological capacities; developing inter-institutional collaborations that deliver instruction in ways that maximize program quality and reduce unnecessary duplication; assisting faculty to incorporate alternative instructional methodologies and technologies that respond to differences in student learning styles; and helping institutions in the consideration and implementation of innovative instructional techniques, methodologies, and delivery systems in response to advances in knowledge and technology.

(4) Student Experiential Learning. The purpose of this initiative is to further the development of distance delivery systems to facilitate and increase student scientific and professional competencies through experiential learning programs that provide students with opportunities to solve complex problems in the context of real-world situations. Applications may emphasize, but are not limited to: preparing future graduates to advance knowledge and technology that enhance quality of life, conserve resources, and address community and economic development issues. Projects should focus on advancing student problem-solving, decision-making and communication skills, and improving real-life technological expertise. Activities may include, but are not limited to the ability of distance education to enhance: field-based internships; laboratory research; work-study practicum experiences; study abroad opportunities; and participation with faculty in professional conferences.

(5) <u>Student Recruitment, Retention, and Educational Equity</u> (including the provision of student financial assistance). The purpose of this initiative is to enhance educational equity for students from under-represented groups by using distance education methods. Projects should strengthen student recruitment and retention programs that ensure the future strength of the Nation's scientific, professional, and technical work force in the food and agricultural sciences. Applications may emphasize, but are not limited using distance education to: initiating new projects (or supplementing current efforts) to attract increased numbers of students from under-represented groups to attend college in order to prepare them for careers as food and agricultural scientists, professionals, and technicians; agricultural and science literacy programs at the high school level to attract students to college and careers in the food and agricultural sciences; mentoring programs and other initiatives for student retention; and the provision of student financial support to attend college.

(b) Note: NIFA has determined that grant funds awarded under these authorities to address any Need Area <u>may not be used for the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities</u> (i.e., greenhouses, laboratories, or other structures).

(c) Projects must be innovative and promote and strengthen academic instruction or activities that lead to completion of a student's formal degree. Your project should have broad-based applicability beyond a single course or an individual instructor. Projects are encouraged that include partnerships among several academic institutions to more efficiently deliver coordinated, academic instruction that reduces instructional duplication and costs. Equally valued are projects between an academic institution and employer(s) of that institution's graduates to better prepare students to meet increasingly more scientific, technical and professional work force needs. Academic instruction that can be coordinated by articulation agreements with the applicant and either secondary, or 2- or 4-year postsecondary colleges and universities to increase academic program quality are also strongly encouraged. Successful projects should also have a positive impact on large numbers of students and on activities that achieve cost-effective economies of scale in meeting the two Program Goals.

(d) Each student recipient of monetary support for education costs or developmental purposes must be enrolled at an eligible institution and meet the requirement of an "eligible participant" as defined in Part VIII, E., Definitions.

(e) Stipends to support students' experiential, academic learning activities outside of the traditional classroom are permitted (as long as such activities are clearly related to a student's degree program and are not extracurricular). Stipends may be requested for materials or supplies to facilitate a student's broad exposure to research/field techniques and methodologies, as well as for reasonable travel expenses and per diem related to student educational experiences (e.g., field trips, data collection, and scientific meetings) directly supporting this funded project. In order for the students to be provided a stipend, they must be currently matriculating in the institution(s) where the projects are being implemented.

(f) Project design should reflect an awareness of the diversity of the STEM education community, and the project should include mechanisms for impacting or including a significant

proportion of this community. Projects are expected to encourage broad participation of students in STEM disciplines.

(g) Funded project outcomes are expected to continue after NIFA funding ends (See Dissemination and Continuation Plans section #4, below).

3. Evaluation Plan

All projects, regardless of the scope or program component they address, must have an evaluation plan that includes both a strategy for monitoring the project as it evolves (to provide feedback to guide these efforts), 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.

For a consortium project, the Evaluation Plan should provide an assessment of how the combined institutional activities supported by the funded project contribute toward common project objective(s).

The complexity of the evaluation will depend on the scope of the project. Grantees are encouraged to obtain an independent evaluation to secure appropriate documentation of the project's outcomes and impacts. Such efforts should be led by knowledgeable and experienced individuals. **As a guide, up to 10 percent of grant funds may be used to support this purpose.**

In addition to measuring progress toward achieving specific project outcomes, the Evaluation Plan (see Part IV, B.3. Field 8.2.d.) must also include a strategy for assessing how the project advances the two DEG Program Goals. It should state the overall goal of the project, identify the measurable objectives, and indicate the outcome measures that will determine the success of the project and the relevance of these to the DEG Program goals. At a minimum, project assessment should indicate a projected number of students or faculty impacted by the project as a result of the proposed activities as one assessment measure.

The following suggested evaluation examples are derived from the Department of Education's Report of the Academic Competitiveness Council, May 2007, Federal STEM Goals and Metrics, Education Undergraduate National Goals and Metrics.

> To demonstrate progress toward increasing the number of graduates, the following metric is suggested: first **provide baseline data** for the year preceding the grant award showing the number and/or percentage of students who declare and/or complete a major program of study of agriscience or agribusiness within your unit; and second, provide similar data for the final year of the grant and include an assessment of the impact of your project on changes from the baseline data. List the expected number of students benefiting from this project and their level of education, a table is recommended.
>
> To demonstrate progress toward increasing the quality of instruction, the following metric is suggested: first **provide baseline data** for the year preceding the grant award showing the current number and/or percentage of graduates who either graduate and pursue a vocation in

the food and agricultural sciences, or who pursue advanced degrees within the food and agricultural sciences; and second, provide similar data for the final year of the grant and include an assessment of the impact of your project on changes from the baseline data.

Suggested resources to obtain quantitative, baseline, student enrollment, degrees granted, and employment data for comparison purposes, postsecondary institutions may find appropriate information in the Food and Agricultural Education Information System (FAEIS) at: http://faeis.ahnrit.vt.edu/ , and from the publication: *Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in Food, Renewable Energy, and the Environment United States, 2010-2015* at: http://www.ag.purdue.edu/usda/employment/pages/default.aspx. Other, similar source(s) may also be consulted.

Applications should include elements of a logic model detailing the activities, outputs, and outcomes of the proposed project. This information may be provided as a narrative or formatted into a logic model chart. The logic model planning process is a tool that should be used in developing projects **before** writing the proposal. Two additional pages are allowed for this information. See Part IV.B.3, b. (Field 12) for details on where to attach this information in the application. More information and resources related to the logic model planning process are provided at http://www.nifa.usda.gov/about/strat_plan_logic_models.html.

Additional Resources for Project Evaluation:

- NSF 02-057: The 2002 User-Friendly Handbook for Project Evaluation, a basic guide to quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods for educational projects http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2002/nsf02057/start.htm
- Field-Tested Learning Assessment Guide (FLAG): This Web site is designed for Science, Math, Engineering, and Technology Instructors who are interested in new approaches to evaluating student learning, attitudes, and performance. It has a primer on assessment and evaluation, classroom assessment techniques, discipline-specific tools, and resources – all in a searchable, downloadable database, http://www.flaguide.org/
- American Evaluation Association. Online Resources (http://www.eval.org/resources.asp)

4. Dissemination & Continuation Plans

Include in the project's Dissemination Plan (see Part IV, B.3. Field 8.2.e.), a description of how the applicant plans to communicate project accomplishments (products, results and impacts, etc.) to the broadest extent throughout the academic community. This may include educational journals or other professional discipline publications, and presentations at regional or national conferences and workshops, including any scheduled Project Director's Conference (see Part VI, D.1.).

Continuation Plan: Applicants are also expected to include a statement describing how project outcomes are expected to continue after NIFA funding ends. This Plan should include expected outputs and how these will become institutionalized in the curriculum. Also, describe any strategies for adapting or expanding these outputs for a larger audience. Provide details of these

changes, what are the expected outcomes, and the targeted audience who benefits from this project.

PART II-AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

NIFA anticipates FY 2012 support for the DEG program at approximately $750,000. NIFA has no commitment to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

Awards issued as a result of this RFA will have designated the Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP), operated by the Department of Treasury's Financial Management Service, as the payment system for funds. For more information see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/method_of_payment.html.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2012, applications may be submitted to the DEG Program as one of the following types of requests:

(1) New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the DEG program. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V–Application Review Requirements.

(2) Renewal application. This is a project application that requests additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in an original or amended award. Applications for renewed funding must contain the same information as required for new applications. Applications must be received by the relevant due date, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

(3) Resubmitted application. This is an application that had previously been submitted to the DEG program only, but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (use R&R Other Project Information. See Part IV, B.3, Field 12, Response to Previous Review). Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in the appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

C. Project Types

NIFA encourages the submission of consortium project applications, and anticipates funding one consortium award to address DEG program objectives in FY 2012. However, NIFA may fund one or more additional, non-consortia grants, and reserves the right to fund any mix of applications based on the number and merit of applications received.

The following two Project Types are accepted by this grants program:

1. Regular Project

An eligible institution may submit a regular project application for project activities undertaken principally on behalf of its own students or faculty, and managed primarily by its own personnel. In a Regular Project, the applicant executes the project without the requirement of sharing grant funds with other project partners (See award size limit below in item E).

2. Consortium Project

To facilitate inter-institutional cooperation and collaborative initiatives, two or more eligible, individual institutions may form a consortium, or use an existing consortium of which they are members, and submit a consortium project application. In such cases, one institution or fiscal agent is to be designated as the "lead institution." The designated lead institution, fiscal agent, and PD, all situated on one campus or site, will receive the award on behalf of all the consortium members and will be responsible for managing the grant. Eligible consortium members may be sub-grantees of the primary award. Other entities not eligible to receive an award directly from NIFA under this program may, however, participate in fulfilling grant objectives and receive a sub-grant via the designated lead institution.

A consortium project application must contain an overall project plan of operation and overall budget from the lead institution, as well as a separate plan of operation and a separate budget (see Part IV, B.6 & 7.) for each consortium member receiving funds as a sub-grantee. Sub-grantees may not normally receive less than 10 percent of total grant funds. Applications proposing that sub-grantees receive less than 10 percent of total grant funds must be fully justified and approved by NIFA. Only in justified and exceptional instances will NIFA approve involvement by sub-grantees at a lower level (See award size limit below in item E).

D. Project Duration

A project application may request funding for a project period from 18 to 36 months duration. The project start date should not occur prior to August 2012.

E. Number and Size of Grant Awards

The number of grants awarded will depend on the number and type of applications submitted in response to this notice. However, NIFA anticipates making only one consortium project award.

NIFA estimates that, if awarded in FY 2012, maximum funding for a Regular Project application will be no greater than $70,000.

NIFA estimates that awards for Consortium Project applications will be no greater than $750,000 for a DEG project.

Note that the amount of grant funds for eligible consortium members as sub-grantees does not have to be the same for each sub-grantee. However, a sub-grantee normally should not receive less than 10 percent and the lead (applicant) institution normally should not receive less than 30

percent, or more than 70 percent, of the awarded funds. Requests for deviations from these restrictions must be fully justified and approved by NIFA in advance. Such approval will be made only under the most exceptional circumstances.

NIFA has determined that the dollar amounts awarded to eligible institutions, or made available to eligible institutions through sub-grants in consortium arrangements, may vary from institution to institution and from year to year, depending upon institutional educational capacity, project scope, and the level of involvement of each institution participating in grant activities. Grants will be made only to eligible institutions or consortia of eligible institutions as outlined below.

Based on the project scope and budget of all applications selected for awards, the actual, individual grant amounts awarded by NIFA under this Grants Program may differ from the funds requested by the applicant. In such cases, revised budgets and revised plans of work may be required by NIFA before an award is made.

F. Application Submission Limitations

In FY 2012, each eligible institution may submit (or be a party to) a maximum of **one** DEG application for funding. If an institution (or its fiscal agent) submits, or is a party to, a DEG Consortium Project application, that institution is not eligible to also submit a Regular Project application under this RFA in the same year.

G. Award Limitations per Institution

An eligible institution may receive (or be a party to) a maximum of **one** grant award per competition. If submitting a Consortium Project application, an institution may only receive **one** DEG award in any year. This ceiling includes sub-grant awards made under a consortium arrangement, i.e., an institution may participate, as either the lead institution or as a sub-grantee, in only one Consortium Project awarded in this year's competition. Institutions receiving a grant under this program in any one competition 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.

H. Funding Limitations per Institution

There are no limits on the total program funds that may be awarded to any one institution. The amount of funds awarded may vary from institution to institution depending on project goals and objectives.

PART III-ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may only be submitted by an Eligible Institution. For the purposes of the DEG grants 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 and agricultural sciences. 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 grants program, either as direct applicants or as parties to a consortium agreement.

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

The following criteria must also be met by Eligible Applicants to this grants program:

1. Branch Institutions of a State System:
For the purposes of the DEG program, the 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.

2. 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.

3. Consortium Arrangements:
Two or more eligible, individual institutions, independent branch campuses, or branch institutions of a State university system may form a consortium to carry out education, training, and teaching programs in the food and agricultural sciences. In addition to the eligible, individual institutions, such a consortium also may include units of State government and private sector entities. A consortium established for such purposes may also apply for and receive a Consortium Project under the DEG grants program. Such a Consortium also may include units of State government and private sector entities.

4. Certification of Eligibility:
At the time of application, each primary applicant will be required to certify that it is an eligible institution as defined by this RFA. If the applicant is part of a new or existing consortium, at least two members of the consortium must certify that they are eligible, individual institutions, independent branch campuses, or branch institutions of a State system as defined in paragraphs 1-3 above. Individual institutions that have land-grant status under Federal statutes, and consortia of which they are members applying under a consortium agreement, are exempt from the requirements of certification as specified in this section. 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 paragraphs 1, 2, or 3 above. The AR must also certify 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 State 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 and agricultural 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.

5. Fiscal Agents:
If an institution cannot accept Federal funds directly, it must submit a letter stating that it will accept the award, but that funds must be administered through a fiscal agent. This agent must be identified in the letter from the applicant and the letter must be countersigned by a representative of the fiscal agent organization. The letter should include the fiscal agent's point of contact, address, telephone number, fax number and e-mail address. Both the fiscal agent and the applicant institution must submit complete management information (see Part V, D.). Nevertheless, the legal recipient of the award must be an eligible, individual institution, independent branch campus, or branch institution of a State system, or a

consortium of eligible institutions. Examples of fiscal agent arrangements include, but are not limited to, the following scenarios:

(a) A State university system or a public system of higher education may apply on behalf of an eligible, individual institution, independent branch campus, or branch institution in its State. In such cases, the State system will act as fiscal agent for the eligible institution under a Regular Project award to advance the purposes of the DEG grants program.

(b) A research foundation or other, similar foundation established and maintained by an eligible, individual institution to facilitate the application and management of externally funded grant awards may apply on behalf of its eligible, parent institution. In such cases, the foundation will act as fiscal agent for the eligible, individual institution under a Regular Project award to advance the purposes of the DEG grants program.

(c) A State university system, or a public system of higher education, may apply on behalf of two or more eligible, individual institutions, independent branch campuses, or branch institutions in its State under a consortium arrangement. In such cases, the State system will act as fiscal agent for the eligible institutions under a Consortium Project award to advance the purposes of the DEG grants program.

(d) A research foundation, or other similar foundation, established and maintained by an eligible, individual institution to facilitate the application and management of externally-funded grant awards, may apply on behalf of its parent institution and at least one additional eligible, individual institution, independent branch campus, or branch institution of a State system under a consortium arrangement. In such cases, the foundation will act as fiscal agent for the eligible institutions under a Consortium Project award to advance the purposes of the DEG grants program.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply to this DEG grants program provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

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

New Users of Grants.gov

Prior to preparing an application, it is suggested that the 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 the organization is not prepared (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 much 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 **"Get Registered" on the Grants.gov left navigation bar (or go to http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp) for information on registering the institution/organization with Grants.gov. A quick reference guide listing the steps is available as a 4-page PDF document at the following Web site: http://www.grants.gov/assets/Grants.govRegistrationBrochure.pdf.**

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

1. In order to access, complete, and submit applications, applicants must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov. This software is essential to apply for NIFA Federal assistance awards. For basic system requirements and download instructions, please see http://www.grants.gov/help/download_software.jsp. To verify that you have a compatible version of Adobe Reader, Grants.gov established a test package that will assist you in making that determination. Grants.gov Adobe Versioning Test Package: http://www.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp.

2. The application package must be obtained via Grants.gov; go to http://www.grants.gov, click on "Apply for Grants" in the left-hand column, click on "**Step 1:** Download a Grant Application Package and Instructions," enter the funding opportunity number **USDA-NIFA-RIGP-003625** in the appropriate box and click "Download Package." From the search results, click "Download" to access the application package.

   Contained within the application package is the "NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov." 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 assistance is needed to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms), **or submitting the application,** then refer to resources

available on the Grants.gov Web site first (http://www.grants.gov/). Grants.gov assistance is also available as follows:

Grants.gov customer support
1-800-518-4726 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: Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. ET). Get help now!

Please have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov to help expedite your inquiry:

- Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
- Name of Agency You Are Applying To
- Specific Area of Concern

See http://grants.gov/applicants/app_help_reso.jsp or http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html for additional resources for applying electronically.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Electronic applications should be prepared following Parts V and VI of the document entitled "A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov." This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed in order 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: Some forms will contain a field with instructions to attach additional information in a separate file. All such attachments must be in PDF file format. **Note the attachment requirements (e.g., portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the Guide. ANY PROPOSALS THAT ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS (i.e., content format, pdf file format, file name restrictions, and no password protected files) WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW. Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. With documented prior approval, subsequent submissions of an application will be accepted until close of business on the closing date in the RFA.**

If you do not own PDF-generating software, Grants.gov provides online tools to assist applicants. Users will find a link to "Convert Documents to PDF" on http://www.grants.gov/assets/PDFConversion.pdf.

For any questions related to the preparation of an application please review the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide and the applicable request for applications. 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, 7:00 am – 5:00 pm Eastern Time, 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.

Complete all applicable fields. The following, additional information may be helpful:

Field 2. Date Submitted and Applicant Identifier – This field is provided for the Applicant's use if they have an internal tracking system they would like to use in tracking applications they have submitted. This field is not required.

Field 3. Date received by State and **State Application Identifier** – This is not applicable for DEG applications; these fields do not need to be completed.

Field 5. Applicant Information – This must be the legal name of eligible Insular Area academic institution (See Part III. A. Eligible Applicant). If a fiscal agent will be involved (see Part III. A.5.), do not list that organization in this field. **Official correspondence will be directed to either the Project Director (Field 14) or the Authorized Representative (Field 19).**

Field 8. Type of Application – Only 'New', 'Renewal' or 'Resubmitted' applications are permitted.

Field 12. Proposed Project Start Date and End Date – A project's duration should normally be at least 12 months (to allow time for assessment and evaluation) and no more than 36 months. Project Start Date should not occur before August 2012.

Field 15. Estimated Project Funding – **Total Estimated Project Funding** = Amount of Federal funds requested (See Part II. E), for maximum award amounts that should be entered in this field, i.e., Regular Project applications no greater than $70,000 each; Consortium Project applications no greater than $750,000 each.

Field 20. Pre-application – Not applicable to the DEG program. No attachments needed.

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

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 3. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

3. R&R Other Project Information

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 4. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Complete all applicable fields. Note: If a 'Yes' response is provided for Fields 1, 2, or 4.a, the applicant must provide the necessary assurances prior to an award being made.

a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract – (Required Attachment – Must be PDF format)

The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of the DEG Program. See Part V, 4.7 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

Include the following underlined text along with your responses:

- List the Project Title;
- List the Project Director (and any) Co-Project Director(s) (include institutional affiliation for each);
- Project Type: Regular, or Consortium (list one only). If Consortium Project, the following bullet items should be listed for each member institution comprising the Consortium.
- Total Funds Requested: (List total Federal funds requested for this application. If this project is a Consortium Project, also list each partner's total funds requested next to that institution's name);
- Partners: If a Consortium Project, list all partner institutions/organizations that will share grant funding (Note: Each Partner so identified needs to have their budget information submitted on a separate R&R Subaward Budget Attachment);
- List each institutional project's *primary* NIFA Priority Area: (see Part I, A.; list only one Area)
- List each institutional project's *primary* Educational Need Area: (Part I, C.2.);
- List each institutional project's *primary* Discipline: (e.g., list one or more subject areas that are the focus of this project, including, as an example: animal sciences, tropical horticulture, marine science/aquaculture, food safety, human nutrition, etc.); and
- List the overall application's Summary Text - Provide a very concise (approx. 250 word) summary to include the following, underlined elements (Note: For a Consortium Project, this summary should be a general, overall explanation of the entire project. Each institution in the consortium will provide a more detailed description of these elements within their individual Project Narrative.):
  - Purpose: What is the major problem your project will address?
  - Audience: Who are the intended beneficiaries? Who will be impacted?
  - Products: What will be produced? and
  - Outcome/Impact: What is the intended result (consequence) of your project? Describe as the primary benefits to the intended target audience. Note: outcomes/impacts should be measurable, and should be included in the project's assessment/evaluation plan. These should demonstrate whether or not these benefits were achieved (See Field 8 2.c., below).

b. Field 8. Project Narrative – (Required Attachment – Must be PDF format)

PLEASE NOTE:

- The Project Narrative for a **Regular Project** application (see Part II, C.1.) shall not exceed 20 pages of written text and up to a maximum of five additional pages for figures and tables. This maximum 25-page limit has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. Reviewers are instructed not to review material in excess of this limit. See Note below for Field 8 Project Narrative.

- The Project Narrative for a **Consortium Project** application (see Part II, C.2.) must contain two parts: (1) an overall plan of operation limited to five (5) pages of written text, submitted by the lead institution, containing sufficient background and justification to document the capability (resources and personnel) and support of the lead institution to coordinate this overall consortium project, to include resources to support the overall project evaluation, and (2) a separate Project Narrative of no more than twenty (20) pages of written text for each institution within the consortium receiving grant funds (including the lead institution). A maximum of five additional pages for figures and tables for each institution may also be provided. This maximum page limit has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. Reviewers will not be required to review material in excess of this limit.

  Note: While each institution in the consortium should initially prepare its own Project Narrative, the lead institution submitting the consortium application should: (1) edit each institution's submission for consistent content (e.g., coordinate related, inter-institutional procedures and activities), and then (2) combine each institutional narrative into one, comprehensive file attachment containing the combined (but separate) Project Narratives from all participating consortium institutions. Since the lead institution is responsible for the overall consortium project (consistency, collaborative activities, communication and evaluation), this coordinated submission should assist the lead institution in focusing the project's multiple objectives and in promoting rigor and consistency in assessing the overall project's outcomes and impacts. See Note below for Field 8 Project Narrative.

The Project Narrative in this Field 8 attachment contains the major description of your project. It follows this program's Evaluation Criteria (Part V. B). Accordingly, please provide your responses in the following format (for both a Regular Project and a Consortium Project, include the Certification of Eligibility statement, followed by your responses to each of the elements 1-5, below. In your responses, include the following, underlined text to assist reviewers in assessing your response to each of the required elements. For a Consortium application, each institution should include a response for each of the elements, 1-5, below).

Certification of Eligibility: i.e., AR certification that the primary applicant organization is an "eligible institution." If the application is a consortium application, then the ARs from at least two members of the consortium must certify that they are "eligible institutions" (not required if the applicant or eligible consortium members have land-grant status (See Part III, A.4.).

1. Potential for Advancing the Quality of Education; Significance of the Problem:

a. Identification of Educational Problem and Project Impact. Briefly summarize: (1) the specific educational problem (or opportunity) to be addressed; (2) the project's target objective(s) (What change in education is proposed?); (3) the anticipated project audience; and (4) the anticipated, overall project *impact* (Impacts are anticipated project *benefits* that will improve the quality of food and agricultural sciences education. Note: Your *impacts* should be changes you can measure at the project's conclusion.).
Note: Previous Award Accomplishments and Relation to Proposed Project: **If the applicant has received previous funding from this grants program, you must update (summarize) that project's accomplishments to date. Indicate how objectives of this proposed project will complement objectives from your past award.**

b. Project Justification. Explain your project's chosen Educational Need Area (Part I.C.2). Justify how this Need Area will support your project objectives. Where appropriate, include how the project will specifically improve science, technology, engineering, and mathematical (STEM) capabilities of students. Will your project impact large numbers of students? Does your project have the potential for adoption by other institutions?

c. Institutional Long-range Goals. Explain how the project's objectives align with the institution's long-term (five- to ten-year) goals.

d. Innovation. Describe any creative, innovative approach your project will use to improve the quality of food and agricultural sciences education, solve an education problem, or advance equal opportunity for all students.

e. Multidisciplinary and/or Problem-based Focus. Indicate how the project is relevant to multiple disciplines within food and agricultural sciences education, or within other academic disciplines. Will the project enhance students' understanding of complex agricultural systems?

2. Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages:

a. Plan of Operation and Methodology. How do you plan to administer the project to ensure efficient and effective results?

b. Timetable. Identify all important project milestones and dates (performance targets that indicate when project goals will be met) as they relate to project start-up, execution, evaluation, dissemination, and closeout.

c. Products, Results and Measurable Outcomes. Outline your project's expected products/results and their outcome (impact) on strengthening food and agricultural sciences education.

(**Important Note: Make sure to differentiate among the three terms:**
"Products" may be actual *items or services* acquired with funds, e.g., "…developed three, new Web-based courses," "Results" are *accomplishments* related to the products, e.g., "...additional course materials now available online to reinforce student learning during non-classroom hours," and "Outcomes/Impacts" are the *benefits* to your audience, e.g., "…an observed, overall increase in student learning based upon 8% higher average test scores of those students who both attended class and used the supplemental, Web-based course materials." Outcomes/impacts are the consequences of your project and the most

critical elements in your Evaluation Plan. They are a measure of the results by comparison to what might have happened in the absence of the funded project.

d. Evaluation Plans. How will you know when anticipated products, results and measurable outcomes are achieved? Describe your assessment methods. Also, discuss the strategies and metrics for evaluating progress toward meeting the two Program Goals identified in Part I, B. This section should clearly indicate how you plan to measure outcomes/impacts.

e. Dissemination Plans. How do you plan to publicize your project's outcomes/impacts? Identify target audiences and explain communication methods to disseminate project results and products.

f. Partnerships and Collaborative Efforts. Explain how the project will maximize partnership and collaborative efforts to strengthen food and agricultural sciences education (e.g., involvement of faculty in related disciplines at the same institution, joint projects with other educational institutions, or cooperative activities with business or industry). Provide evidence of support via letters from key partners involved in the project.

3. Institution Capability and Capacity Building:

a. Institutional Commitment and Capability. Demonstrate how the institution is committed to ensure completion of this project.

b. Institutional Resources. Document that necessary institutional resources (administrative personnel, facilities, equipment, and/or materials), and other appropriate resources, will be made available to the project.

c. Academic Enhancement. Document how this project will improve teaching and education at the institution (including any partner institutions). Include how any project performance target(s) identified above (2.b., Timetable) will be incorporated into academic instruction at the institution.

d. Continuation Plans. Discuss the likelihood of, or specific plans for, continuation or expansion of the project beyond the period of USDA support. For example, does the institution's long-range budget or academic plan provide for the realistic continuation or expansion of the initiative undertaken by this project after the grant period ends, are plans for eventual self-support built into the project, are plans being made to institutionalize the program if it meets with success, and are there indications of other continuing non-Federal support?

4. Key Personnel: Discuss specific attributes, project responsibilities, and adequacy of each key person associated with the project. Also include the background and qualifications of those personnel who will be responsible for assessing project results and administering the project evaluation and reporting process.

5. Budget and Cost-effectiveness:

a. Budget. In addition to the separate, required budget forms and budget justification included with this application, also explain how such budget items as professional or technical staff time and salary, travel, equipment, etc., are necessary and reasonable to achieve project objectives. Justify that the total budget is allocated adequately between

the applicant and any collaborating institution(s), and will be appropriate to carry out the activities of the project.

b. Cost-effectiveness. Show how the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes educational value for the dollar, achieves economies of scale, or leverages additional funds. For example, discuss how the project has the potential to generate a critical mass of expertise and activity focused on an Educational Need Area, or to promote coalition building that could lead to future ventures.

Field 9. Bibliography & Cited References - (Optional Attachment – Must be PDF format) If needed, provide a complete list of all references cited in the application. **For each reference, provide the complete name for each author, the year of the publication, full title of the article, name of the journal or book published, volume, and the page numbers.** The references should be listed in alphabetical order using the last name of the first author.

Field 10. Facilities & Other Resources - (Optional Attachment – Must be PDF format)
If needed, describe the types, location, and availability of instrumentation and physical facilities necessary to carry out the work proposed. **If special academic, private or government laboratories or facilities are being used, include a letter in the application from the authorized representative of the facility describing the proposed arrangements and availability.** This letter should be included as a part of Other Attachments, see Field 12 below.

Field 11. Equipment Documentation - (Optional Attachment – Must be PDF format)
Equipment purchased must be fully justified under this section. Note: Equipment, as previously defined, is normally not funded in this grant program. Other purchases under $5,000 (e.g., computers, laboratory materials…etc.) are described, instead, in the Budget Justification section under the 'Materials and Supplies' line item.

Field 12. Other Attachments - (Must be PDF format)

- **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 'Response to Previous Review.' 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.

- **Appendices to Project Narrative – PDF Attachment.** Title the attachment as 'Appendices' in the document header and save file as 'Appendices.' Appendices to the Project Narrative are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. The addition of appendices should not be used to circumvent the text and/or figures and tables page limitations.

- **Collaborative Arrangements – PDF Attachment. No Page Limit.** Title the attachment as 'Collaborative Arrangements' in the document header and save file as 'Collaborative Arrangement.' If it is necessary to enter into formal consulting or collaborative arrangements with others, such arrangements should be fully explained and justified. If

the consultant(s) or collaborator(s) are known at the time of the application, a vitae or resume should be provided. In addition, evidence (e.g., letter of support signed by the AR of the organization) should be provided that the collaborators involved have agreed to render these services. The applicant also will be required to provide additional information on consultants and collaborators in the budget portion of the application.

- **Documentation on Certification of Eligibility, e.g. "Designation as an Eligible Institution," "Notice of Award Letter," or AR certification that organization is eligible – PDF Attachment.** Part III, A. 4. Demonstration or Certification of Eligibility requires each primary applicant to demonstrate or certify that it is an eligible institution under this grants program (see Part III, A. 4.).

- **Logic Model – PDF Attachment.** Title the attachment as 'Logic Model' in the document header and save file as 'Logic Model.'

4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded) Complete all applicable fields.
Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide includes information about the individuals for which a Senior/Key Person Profile must be completed, 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.

Note: Even if no other funding is currently reported under the 'Active' section of this attachment, you must still list information for this grant application under the 'Pending' section of this attachment for each senior/key person identified above. The total time commitment for both active and pending projects cannot exceed 100 percent.

5. R&R Personal Data
Complete all applicable fields. 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. If you choose to submit this optional form, please **DO NOT PROVIDE THE SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER OF THE PROJECT DIRECTOR/PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR.**

6. R&R Budget
This form (accompanied by the required Budget Justification attachment) contains the itemized listing and description of your project's budget. Complete all applicable fields. Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. The following, additional information may be helpful:

Complete one R&R Budget Form for each 12-month period, plus a cumulative budget form for the entire project. If your project involves partners with whom you plan to share Federal funds (Consortium Project), make sure (a) you include a budget form for the applicant institution and each project partner (subaward/consortium), for each 12-month period and a cumulative budget form, and (b) your budget figures reflect the required budget sharing criteria (See 'Definitions', Part VIII. E, Consortium Project). Project Director(s) may be invited to attend at least one National Project Directors meeting, if offered, in Washington, DC, or any other announced

location. Reasonable travel expenses to attend this meeting may be included in your application's travel expenses.

Field H. Indirect Costs
Section 720 of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. 112-55) limits indirect costs to 30 percent of the total Federal funds provided under each award. Therefore, when preparing budgets, applicants should limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of their institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 30 percent of total Federal funds awarded.

Field K. Budget Justification – (Required Attachment – Must be PDF format)
Regular Project applications are no more than $70,000 each; Consortium Project applications are no more than $750,000 each.

(a) Provide a Budget Justification that reflects each 12-month period, plus a cumulative budget justification for the entire project. If your project involves partners with whom you plan to share Federal funds (Consortium Project), make sure the attachment reflects information (a) for the applicant institution as well as each project partner (subaward/consortium), for each 12-month period plus a cumulative column total for the entire project, and (b) your budget figures reflect the required budget sharing criteria (See 'Definitions', Part VIII. E, Consortium Project).

The Budget Justification should follow a standard spreadsheet format ('Budget Line Item' = row; 'Budget Year' and 'Cumulative Project' = columns) including a detailed, itemized breakdown of each of the line item categories reported on the R&R Budget form. This Budget Justification attachment provides a more detailed, itemized breakdown for each budget line item reported on the R&R Budget form (i.e., itemize your complete list of 'Materials and Supplies' showing per unit costs and number of units to be purchased, etc.). Include a description for each requested budget line item found on the R&R Budget form (i.e., total budget amount reported on the R&R Budget form should equal the total budget amount reported on the Budget Justification attachment).

(b) Matching: NIFA does not require matching support for this program and matching resources will not be factored into the review process as evaluation criteria.

7. R&R Subaward Budget Attachment – (Only required if submitting a Consortium Project application)

8. Supplemental Information
Complete all applicable fields. Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part VI, 1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 2. Program to which you are applying.
- For the 'Program Code Name' field, enter the text: "Distance Education Grants Program in Insular Areas."
- For the 'Program Code' field, enter: "DEG."

b. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List - (Required Attachment – Must be PDF format)
See format in NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, Section VI, 1.6 for further instructions and a link to a suggested template. Include this one-page attachment even if your responses to the questions are "NA."

C. Submission Dates and Times

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

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by COB on **March 1, 2012** (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

Applicants who have problems with the submission of an application to Grants.gov are encouraged to 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.

Correspondence regarding submitted applications will be sent using e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail 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, please contact the Program Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable 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, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

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 OMB 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 demonstrate that the alterations, renovations, or repairs are essential to achieving the major purpose of the project. Grant funds may not be used for endowment investing.

Section 720 of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. 112-55) limits indirect costs to 30 percent of the total Federal funds provided under each award. Therefore, when preparing budgets, applicants should limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of their institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 30 percent of total Federal funds awarded.

E. Other Submission Requirements

The applicant 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.

Described below are the requirements for successful submission of an application; all of the following steps must be met for an application to be considered for peer review:

1) Meeting the deadline: To electronically send the application to Grants.gov, the submit button is hit, which triggers a date and time stamp on the application. The date and time stamp is used to determine whether the application was received by Grants.gov before the deadline, which is prior to close of business (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time) on March 1, 2012. An application submitted or resubmitted after the deadline is late. Consideration of late applications is only given in extenuating circumstances (e.g., natural disasters, confirmed Grants.gov outage) with proper documentation and support of the Agency Contact (see Part VII). The occurrence of one of these situations does not automatically ensure that a late application will be accepted. If an applicant wants a late application considered under an extenuating circumstance, the applicant should contact the Agency Contact accordingly.

2) Successful Grants.gov validation: The Grants.gov system performs a limited check of the application, and applicants are notified by Grants.gov of the outcome of the initial review. Applications meeting Grants.gov requirements are made available to the funding agency for further processing. Applications that fail Grants.gov validation may be resubmitted to Grants.gov if the original agency deadline has not passed (Note that the Grants.gov system may allow applications to be submitted after the deadline has passed, but the application is considered late by NIFA).

3) Successful Agency validation: NIFA staff performs precursory review of the application. The agency validation process includes, for example, meeting eligibility requirements and following agency application guidelines (e.g., formatting, page limitations, and limits on budget requests). Applicants are notified by NIFA of the outcome of this review.

PART V-APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

Each application will be evaluated in a 2-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) 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; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers 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; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

B. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria below will be used in reviewing 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 and agricultural 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 partnerships and 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 and the dissemination 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 institution(s); 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, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution shall be determined by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 1801 Robert Fulton Drive, Suite 340, Reston, Virginia 20191. Phone: (888) 349-7715. Web site: http://www.hepinc.com.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one time basis, with updates on an as needed basis, as part of the responsibility determination 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 (**Note:** ***This management information will also be required from designated Fiscal Agents***). NIFA will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the preaward process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which 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).

PART VI-AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of NIFA 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 awarding official of NIFA 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. It should be noted that 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 shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's assistance regulations and the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015 and 3019 of 7 CFR).

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the following:

(1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to which the Director has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;

(2) Title of project;

(3) Name(s) and institution(s) of PDs chosen to direct and control approved activities;

(4) Identifying award number assigned by the Department;

(5) Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring recompetition for funds;

(6) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Director during the project period;

(7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;

(8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;

(9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html to view NIFA award terms and conditions);

(10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and

(11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by NIFA to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

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 include, but are not limited to:

2 CFR Part 215—Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-110).

2 CFR Part 220—Cost Principles for Educational Institutions (OMB Circular A-21).

2 CFR Part 225—Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments (OMB Circular A-87).

2 CFR 230—Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-122).

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A 129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A—USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR Part 331 and 9 CFR Part 121—USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21, A-87, and A-122, now codified at 2 CFR Parts 220, 225, and 230), and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224)), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR 3016—USDA Implementation of Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments.

7 CFR Part 3017—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement).

7 CFR Part 3018—USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3019—USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations (2 CFR Part 215).

7 CFR 3021—USDA Implementation of Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants).

7 CFR Part 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A 133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3407—NIFA procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

7 CFR Part 3430—NIFA procedures to implement Competitive and Noncompetitive Nonformula Grant Programs—General Grant Administrative Provisions and Program.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute) —prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in Federally assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq. —Bayh Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

Grantees are to submit initial project information and annual summary reports to NIFA's electronic, Web-based inventory system that facilitates both grantee submissions of project outcomes and public access to information on Federally-funded projects. The details of these reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions. Details of annual and final technical reporting requirements also are included in the award terms and conditions.

Project Directors Conference

During the tenure of a grant, Project Director(s) may be invited to attend at least one National Project Directors meeting, if offered, in Washington, D.C., or any other announced location. 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 enhance dissemination of exemplary end products/results. Reasonable travel expenses to attend this meeting may be included in your application's travel expenses.

PART VII-AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Dr. Salei'a Afele-Faamuli; National Program Leader; Division of Community and Education; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; STOP 2251; 1400 Independence Ave, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2251; Telephone: (202) 720-0384; Fax: (202) 720-2030; E-mail: sfaamuli@nifa.usda.gov.

PART VIII-OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access To Review Information

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, the awardee 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 Project Plans

a. The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.

b. Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.

c. Changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes.

d. Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

e. The project period may be extended by NIFA without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed any applicable statutory limit or expiring appropriation limitation. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the awardee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of award.

f. Changes in Approved Budget: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes, if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

C. 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 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. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of three years. Other copies will be destroyed. 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.

D. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the 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.

E. Definitions

Please refer to 7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Grant Programs--General Grant Administrative Provisions, for the applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.

Consortium of Insular Area Institutions means two or more eligible, Insular Area Institutions that have entered into a cooperative arrangement for the purpose of carrying out a common objective, and which demonstrates its ability to carry out allowed activities and its commitment to the goals of this grants program. The term also applies to a public or private nonprofit agency, organization, or institution designated or created by two or more eligible, Insular Area Institutions for the purpose of carrying out a common objective on the group's behalf, and which demonstrates its ability to carry out allowed activities and its commitment to the goals of this grants program.

Consortium project application means an application for a project: (1) which will involve a consortium of at least two or more eligible, Insular Area Institutions, which may work in cooperation with one or more other entities including units of State government and private sector organizations; and (2) where the applicant institution and each cooperating entity

receiving grant funds will assume a significant role in the conduct of the proposed project. To demonstrate a substantial involvement with the project, the applicant institution submitting a Consortium Project application must retain at least 30 percent but not more than 70 percent of the awarded funds, and no eligible DEG institution receiving funds as a sub-grantee may receive less than 10 percent of awarded funds. Only the consortium members receiving funds as eligible sub-grantees must meet the definitions for an eligible, Insular Area Institution as specified in this section; other institution(s) participating in a consortium project application under subcontracts are not required to meet the definitions for an eligible, Insular Area Institution.

Distance education, or distance learning, is a field of education that focuses on the pedagogy, technology, and instructional system designs to deliver education to students not physically on site in a traditional classroom or campus. Distance learning is the process of creating an educational experience outside the classroom, of equal quality to that of a resident student, to best suit student needs. Distance education technologies are divided into two groups: synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous technology is a mode of online delivery where all participants are "present" at the same time requiring a timetable to be organized. Web Conferencing is an example of synchronous technology. Asynchronous technology is a mode of online delivery where participants access course materials on their own schedule. Students are not required to be together at the same time. Message board forums, e-mail, and recorded video are examples of asynchronous technology. For the purpose of this grants program, either synchronous or asynchronous methods of academic instruction are encouraged.

Educational Need Area means the specific area(s) of educational focus identified in the RFA and addressed by the applicant's application. Educational Need Areas are derived from statutory language authorizing the grants program and specific Educational Need Areas may be targeted for priority funding support in the RFA.

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 as defined in this section, and that has a demonstrable capacity to carry out teaching and extension programs in the food and agricultural sciences. Land-grant colleges and universities in Insular Areas are automatically eligible institutions. The term eligible institution also applies to any branch of any institution of higher education that by itself satisfies the requirements contained in the definition of an Insular Area Institution, including:

(1) The individual branches of a State university system or public system of higher education that are separately accredited as degree granting institutions, provided that they otherwise satisfy the definition of an eligible institution;

(2) Independent branch campuses of individual institutions, provided that they otherwise satisfy the definition of an eligible institution; or

(3) A consortium of two or more eligible, individual Insular Area Institutions.

Eligible participant means an individual who is a citizen or national of the U.S. as defined in this section.

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.

Institution of higher education means an educational institution in any State that:
(1) 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;
(2) Is legally authorized within such State to provide a program of education beyond secondary education;
(3) 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;
(4) Is a public or other nonprofit institution; and
(5) 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 of Education for the granting of pre-accreditation status, and the Secretary of Education 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.

Insular Area Institution means an institution of higher education as defined in this section that is located in an Insular Area.

Nonprofit as applied to a school, college, university, agency, organization, or institution means a school, college, university, agency, organization, or institution owned and operated by one or more nonprofit corporations or associations, no part of the net earnings of which inures, or may lawfully inure, to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.