U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Foreign Agricultural Service

NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY
2024 Scientific Exchange Program – Women in Sustainable Food Systems

Application Submission Deadline: March 25, 2024

The 2024 Scientific Exchanges Program for "Women Leadership and Empowerment in Food Systems and Climate Change" will focus on advancing women's leadership in food systems transformation efforts.

Summary
The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, Fellowship Programs, announces this funding opportunity to support the Scientific Exchanges Program by issuing new awards. This opportunity is available to U.S. State Cooperative Institutions or other colleges and universities in the United States and is intended to enhance the Fellows' capacity for understanding applications of agricultural research.

A. Program Description

The Scientific Exchange Program (SEP) leverages the latest developments in cross-cutting agricultural priorities, research, and technologies to educate a new generation of agricultural scientist to promote trade, trade policy, trade capacity building, and food security. The collaborative nature of the SEP leadership training and research programs improves agricultural productivity, systems, and processes in partnering emerging market economies through the transfer of new science and agricultural technologies. USDA may also use the program as a market development tool to assist in opening markets and decreasing or eliminating trade barriers in low to middle income countries, which ultimately increases and creates new trade opportunities for U.S. agricultural exports.

SEP focuses on a cohort of Fellows who spend up to 12 weeks at the U.S. academic institution (host institution) and work directly with U.S. scientists in their fields. SEP Fellow(s) hold a minimum of a Master's-level degree, are in the middle stage of their career, and represent a university, government agency, or research entity in their home country. Mentors coordinate the training program in the United States. Upon the Fellow's return home, the Mentor travels to the Fellow's country to follow-up. SEP is administered by USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, Global Programs, Fellowship Programs.

Objectives

For fiscal year 2024, USDA/FAS is seeking proposals that (1) promote the mentorship and leadership role of women researchers and scientists in food systems and, (2) that strengthen the science and evidence-base for the role and needs of women in food systems, including as it relates to climate change.

In accordance with the United States Government's commitment to invest in food systems

strengthening at home and abroad, successful applicants will be able to demonstrate how prospective Faculty Mentors have strong awareness and engagement with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and specifically the 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit and its ongoing implementation (e.g., the 2023 'UN Food Systems Summit +2 Stocktaking Moment'). Faculty Mentors and Fellows will: (1) represent the gamut of food systems research across the three pillars of sustainability (social, environmental, and economic), and (2) have a focus in their research on the role of women and women's empowerment, and the needs of women and children, in food system transformation.

USDA/FAS is seeking applications that focus on training and empowering Fellows from low to middle income economies in Africa and the Middle East, Asia, as well as Latin America and the Caribbean (as defined by The World Bank). USDA/FAS envisions multiple Fellows on each award to participate as a cohesive geographical cohort who will spend up to 12 weeks at the U.S. academic institution (host institution), rather than at individual times. Additionally, all Fellows from all awards must participate in the program at the same time as a cohort. The awarded institutions will collaborate as a cohesive consortium to implement the program, and applicants must prepare their approach accordingly. Ideally, this period would align with the 2024 Fall session of classes at the respective host university. Fellows are expected to arrive in the 2024 Fall and attend the 2024 World Food Prize; and therefore, awardees must budget for the event in their proposal submissions. The cohort may comprise of Fellows with a policy governance, and research and technical expertise background. Additionally, the award will provide a platform for Fellows of the same cohort to share ideas and foster collaboration to lead to better regional and intraregional coordination on improving food systems.

USDA/FAS is seeking applications that also advance diversity, leadership, and science communication objectives to empower Fellows to advocate for sound policy to peers, decision-makers, and the public. USDA encourages women researchers and scientists to participate in this program. The focus, country, topic, size, and nature of each exchange project will be identified by USDA/FAS, in consultation with the staff at U.S. embassies and consulates overseas, and the award recipient during the course of the award period. Under the Scientific Exchanges Program, USDA/FAS staff are responsible for identifying countries and topics eligible for exchange project, program announcement and outreach through U.S. embassies and consulates. This includes selection and arranging for fellows to obtain a J-1 visa, related entries in SEVIS, and monitoring impacts of policy to the program implementations.

The SEP Program may also include collaboration with and input from relevant stakeholders, such as U.S. regulatory agencies, the Office of the United States Trade Representative and relevant U.S. Embassies. Ideally, Fellows and host institutions will share the knowledge gained through these endeavors in their classroom and extension work with their faculty, students, extension officers, constituents, policy makers, and other stakeholders in the international agricultural marketplace; and that they will continue to maintain professional contacts with the Fellows after their departure from the United States.

Funding Opportunity Number
USDA-FAS-10620-0762-10.-24-0001

Assistance Listing Number
10.620 Scientific Exchanges Program

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

B. Federal Award Information

Total Available Federal Funding:	Up to $1,500,000 total, up to $300,000 per award *Subject to the availability of funding*
Anticipated Number of Awards:	Up to six awards
Cost Share/Match Requirement:	None/Not Required
Projected Period of Performance Start:	August 1, 2024
Projected Period of Performance End:	July 31, 2026

Extensions to this program may be permitted, subject to approval.

Type of Assistance Instrument:

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

This type of agreement allows for a collaborative relationship between USDA/FAS, the selected recipient, and other collaborating partners. The particular scope and depth of this collaboration may vary throughout performance, depending on the needs of the activity and the desires of the participants.

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

No Awards
USDA/FAS reserves the right to make no awards under this competition.

C. Eligibility Information

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

All applicants must have an active registration in the U.S. Government System for Award

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

Cost Share/Match Requirement: None/Not Required

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

Application packages submitted on expired/inactive standard forms could be deemed ineligible. Applicants should ensure they are utilizing the active/nonexpired forms available on grants.gov.

Multiple Applications/Awards
An individual applicant may submit more than one application in response to this NOFO, and may be offered more than one award.

Substantial Compliance
All applications will be reviewed for eligibility and must meet the eligibility requirements described in Section C to be considered eligible. Applicants deemed ineligible for funding consideration as a result of the threshold eligibility review will be notified 30 calendar days of the ineligibility determination.

Applications must substantially comply with the application submission instructions and requirements set forth in Section D of this solicitation or else they will be rejected. However, where a page limit is expressed in Section D with respect to the application, or parts thereof, pages in excess of the page limitation will not be reviewed. Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in application format, including selecting a legible font type and size for use in the application.

While these guidelines may establish the minimum type size requirements, applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in selection of an appropriate font for use in the application.

Evidence of Eligibility
Applicants are responsible for including documentation, if necessary, establishing that they meet the stated eligibility requirements, when it is not immediately obvious. Applicants should not presume that USDA/FAS is sufficiently familiar with their organization that this is unnecessary, and USDA/FAS will not make assumptions as to the nature of the applicant's organization.

D. Application and Submission Information

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

Applicants may submit questions about this funding opportunity to the Section G contact.

Deadline for Question Submission: March 13, 2024

Submission Dates and Times

Application Submission Deadline: **March 25, 2024 at 11:59pm EST (UTC -05:00)**
Applications received after this time will not be accepted. Applicants are advised to make their submissions 1-2 days before this deadline in case of computer problems.

Anticipated Award Date: **April 29, 2024**

Content and Form of Application Submission
A complete application package must include:

- Standard Form SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance, showing the Unique Entity Identifier, and signed by the applicant
- Standard Form SF-424A, Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs, showing the budget categorization. Applicants are advised to consult 2 CFR 200 Subpart E for guidance on proper categorization of cost items. An improper categorization will not itself be grounds for a determination of ineligibility, but may delay approval and/or adversely impact the application's evaluation scoring.
- A detailed budget and narrative, in which cost items are quantified and described in sufficient detail to enable USDA/FAS to independently determine that the proposed costs are reasonable and allowable for the project and consistent with applicable regulations.
    - Indirect costs are statutorily capped at 10% for cost reimbursable agreements.
- A detailed project narrative or plan of operation that addresses the following (there is no page limit or requirement, but narratives from 10 – 15 pages in length are expected):
    - Indicate the name of the institution that is applying to host the Fellows
    - Provide a proposal summary/abstract that includes a description of what is being proposed, how it will be conducted, and what the intended results will be
    - Include a narrative description of the proposed training including the following elements: orientations, classroom instruction, field demonstrations and/or field visits, leadership development, conference attendance, term break activities, and cultural opportunities
    - Include a narrative description of how the program will be administered and the expertise and roles of the university faculty, support staff, and collaborating scientists, including potential Mentors identified to participate
    - Provide a summary of relevant institutional capabilities for hosting international Fellows in the applicable topics and a description of how regional and university resources, including the presence of relevant agricultural practices in the region, would be used to enhance the program
    - Justify the significance of how the proposed activities would further collaborations between the participating regions, the U.S host university, and USDA, and how the proposed activities might help to advance the knowledge and understanding of the topic for farmers in the target regions
    - Explain the extent to which this research and associated activities will enhance agricultural infrastructure and be of benefit to the larger society (e.g., information

sharing, collaboration, partnerships, and networks)
    - Explain the plan to disseminate the results and findings of the research and how it can enhance scientific and technological understanding about agricultural practices broadly
    - Provide a detailed tentative research plan, including topics to be covered, possible field visits, and other intended activities
    - Include a narrative description of the proposed research to explain how it will be administered and the roles of the university faculty and support staff
    - Briefly describe the expertise and international experience of the applicant in the field of interest and regions of focus
    - Demonstrate understanding of the cultural context and needs of the Fellows
    - Identify the expected skills or knowledge to be gained by the Fellow by the end of the program
    - Include information on the J-1 Visa compliant medical insurance coverage to be obtained for all Fellows and ensure it is comparable to NRIOL.net's J-1 Visa Health Insurance Coverage (https://www.nriol.net/j1-visa-health-insurance/)
    - Demonstrate flexibility within the training plan to account for potential program changes and explain the applicant's ability to respond to unforeseen circumstances
    - Include a quality assurance plan and a risk mitigation response plan explaining how unforeseen problems that could arise would be addressed and by whom
    - Ensure the project narrative or plan of operation is organized, written in English, is free of excessive grammatical and spelling errors, contains any source information properly cited, and is submitted in PDF format
        - Applicants are advised that readability is of paramount importance and should take precedence in application format, including selecting a legible font type and size for use in the application.
    - Demonstrate the ability to meet the Program Expectations as stated in Section F; including but not limited to Assignment of a Mentor, Travel and Transportation, Meals and Incidentals, Emergency Health Insurance, USDA FAS Headquarters Orientation and Debrief Visit, Mentor Follow-up Visit, as well as the 2024 Fall Fellow and Mentor World Food Prize Attendance.
- Standard Form SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, if applicable to the applicant

Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)
Each applicant is required to:

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

SAM.gov Registration Instructions
Organizations applying to this funding opportunity must have an active SAM.gov registration. If you have never done business with the Federal Government, you will need to register your

organization in SAM.gov. If you do not have a SAM.gov account, then you will create an account using login.gov[1] to complete your SAM.gov registration. SAM.gov registration is FREE. The process for entity registrations includes obtaining Unique Entity ID (UEI), a 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned an entity by SAM.gov, and requires assertions, representations and certifications, and other information about your organization. Please review the Entity Registration Checklist for details on this process.

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

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

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

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

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

Intergovernmental Review
Not applicable.

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

For example, agreement funds and other support may not be used for matching contributions for other federal grants or cooperative agreements, lobbying, or intervention in federal regulatory or adjudicatory proceedings. Federal employees are prohibited from acting as an agent of the applicant

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

in any capacity (paid or unpaid) on any proposal submitted under this program. Also, federal funds may not be used to sue the Federal Government or any other government entity.

Compensation for personal services: Employees, consultants, or other personnel, including those of subrecipients, and regardless of the method of engagement, may not exceed the pro-rata equivalent of GS-15 on the General Schedule (for 2024, $159,950 per year, $612.86 per day, or $76.60 per hour). Non-monetizable fringe benefits, such as health insurance coverage, are not included to this ceiling.

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

Other Submission Information
Applications should be submitted through the ezFedGrants system at https://grants.fms.usda.gov/

Applicants who require assistance with any USDA-managed computer system should reach out to the program officer(s) listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact, at least 5 business days in advance of the application submission deadline. Applicants should provide as much detail as possible to facilitate resolution of the issue.

E. Application Review Information

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

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

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

The agency will convene a review panel, which may include both federal and non-federal reviewers, to review the eligible applications against the evaluation criteria described below. The reviewers will ensure that the applicant is capable of delivering the programs/activities as described in the announcement based on the applicant's project narrative and assign a score and provide

summary comments based on the evaluation criteria identified below. The review panel will make a recommendation list to the selecting official, who is not a member of the panel.

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

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

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

Factor 1: Intellectual merit and applicability of the proposed activities (30 Pts)
The applicant will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they demonstrate the intellectual merit of the research collaboration and proposed activities including:

- Applicability and Connection to the USDA-FAS strategic goals (30 Pts)
    - Applicant's consideration of how the proposed activities would further collaborations between the participating regions, the U.S host university, and USDA, and how the proposed activities might help to advance the knowledge and understanding of the topic for farmers in the target regions.

Factor 2: Impact of the proposed activities (30 Pts)
The applicant will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which they explain the potential impacts resulting from the research collaboration and proposed activities including:

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

Factor 3: Professional detailed budget and budget narrative (30 Pts)
The applicant will be evaluated on the reasonableness, cost-effectiveness, and adequacy of the proposed budget to accomplish the project, along with the extent to which the budget documents are detailed, organized, in-scope, and appropriate, including:

- Appropriate and Detailed Content Included (15 Pts)
    - Applicant's demonstration that the proposed budget is appropriate for the number of participating Fellows and the length of the program;

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

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

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

- Professional Formatting, Spelling, and Grammar Utilized (10 Pts)
    - Applicant's demonstration of professional organization and formatting throughout the project narrative and supporting documents with limited spelling and grammatical errors.

Integrity in Performance

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

Prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, currently $250,000, the federal agency is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov (currently FAPIIS).

- An applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM.gov and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov.
- The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR § 200.206

Conflict of Interest

The Applicant's Conflict of Interest (COI) Point of Contact as defined in USDA/FAS Conflict of Interest Policy must notify the USDA/FAS contact identified in Section G of this solicitation of any actual or potential conflict of interest that they are aware of that may provide the Applicant with an unfair competitive advantage in competing for USDA/FAS financial assistance awards within 10 calendar days of becoming aware of the conflict of interest. Examples of an unfair competitive advantage include but are not limited to situations in which an USDA/FAS employee reviewed and commented on or drafted all or part of an applicant's application. Note that USDA/FAS does not

generally consider receiving information from an USDA/FAS employee limited to whether the applicant or the applicant's proposed project is eligible to compete for funding to confer an unfair competitive advantage. In addition, assistance agreements made under this solicitation will include a term and condition notifying recipients of their COI disclosure obligations and responsibilities under the award including the need to have systems in place to address, resolve and disclose COIs to USDA/FAS.

F. Federal Award Administration Information

Federal Award Notices

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

Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All successful applicants for all grant and cooperative agreements are required to comply with the applicable General Administrative Terms and Conditions, which can be found at https://www.fas.usda.gov/grants/general_terms_and_conditions/default.asp. The applicant is presumed to have read, understood, and accepted these terms when accepting a USDA/FAS award. Applicants with questions about the applicable terms should contact the program officer(s) listed in Section G, Federal Awarding Agency Contact.

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

Subaward and Executive Compensation Reporting

Applicants must ensure that they have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the subaward and executive total compensation reporting requirements established at 2 CFR 170, unless they quality for an exception from the requirements, should they be selected for funding.

Mandatory Disclosures

As required by 2 CFR 200.113, non-federal entities or applicants for a Federal award must disclose, in a timely manner, in writing to the Federal awarding agency or pass-through entity all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud, bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the Federal award. Failure to make required disclosures can result in any of the remedies described in 2 CFR 200.339 including suspension and debarment.

Performance Expectations

(1) Assignment of a Principal Investigator (Training Coordinator)

The host institution should designate a contact person as the Principal Investigator (PI) responsible for coordinating all administrative and programmatic arrangements.

(2) Assignment of a Mentor

A key component of the program is matching the Fellow with a Mentor. The host institution will select an appropriate Mentor for one-on-one work with the Fellow for the duration of the program.

- The Mentor will establish a professional relationship providing guidance and training in the Fellow's research and studies;
- The Mentor will work with the Fellow before arrival to discuss appropriate work plan, site visits, and other arrangements;
- The Mentor will provide the agreed upon work plan through the PI to USDA/FAS for consultation and approval approximately 2 weeks before the commencement of the program;
- The Mentor agrees to commit a significant amount of time each week for one-on-one work with the Fellow during the program;
- The Mentor will commit to visit the Fellow's country prior to Fellow's arrival in the United States;
- The Mentor will continue communicating with the Fellow beyond the end of the program in the U.S. through the mentor visit;
- The Mentor will submit semi-annual progress reports that indicate all program activities are conducted;
- The Mentor may assign other faculty members to assist with Fellow's training and research activities;
- The Mentor may not be assigned to multiple Fellows during the same time frame;
- The Mentor should include a leadership component to the training curricula; training course, workshop, or other suitable activity that provides leadership training to the Fellow.

(3) Travel and Transportation

- The host institution must comply with the Federal Travel Regulations (41 CFR 300 et seq.).
- The host institution will provide round trip, economy class, international airfare from the Fellow's home to Washington, D.C., and to the university.
- The host institution is responsible for arranging and purchasing all domestic travel related to the Fellow's training program; this includes transportation to and from Des Moines, Iowa for the 2024 World Food Prize.
- The host institution will provide housing for the Fellow for the duration of the training program, taking into account gender and cultural norms.
- The host institution will pay lodging fees directly. The host institution will not require the Fellow to pay for his or her lodging expenses, whether through reimbursement or advance payment.
- Lodging will include a private bedroom, private or shared bathroom, access to a laundry room, and access to a kitchen with pots, pans, and utensils.
- Necessities, such as sheets, towels, and cleaning supplies, will be provided for Fellow's use. The Fellow should not have to pay for these items.
- Lodging will be within walking distance to the campus/training location or easily accessible by public transportation.
- If public transportation is required to access campus/training location, the host institution will provide the Fellow with a bus pass or proper allowance for transportation expenses.

- When planning lodging options, the host institution should check with the Fellow and account for any special dietary restrictions or preferences, or accessibility needs.

(4) Meals and Incidentals (M&IE)

- The host institution will provide each Fellow with meal and living allowances for the duration of stay.
- Daily M&IE allowance may not exceed current GSA per diem rates.
- The host institution can determine the frequency of per diem allotments, but the Fellow must receive per diem within the first week of the program. The PI must inform the Fellow and USDA/FAS immediately if this cannot be accommodated.

(5) **Emergency Health Insurance**

- The host institution will purchase emergency health insurance for the Fellow for the duration of stay, as required for all J-1 Visa holders (22 CFR 62.14). Dates of coverage must include date of departure from home country to the university until date of arrival in home country from the university.
- The Fellow will not be required to purchase his or her health insurance and then be reimbursed.
- The host institution will educate the Fellow as to what is covered under health insurance policy, especially highlighting that pre-existing medical conditions are not covered.
- The host institution will immediately alert USDA/FAS staff if any health/medical conditions arise during the program.

(6) Communication

- The host institution will initiate contact with the Fellow as soon as possible.
- The host institution will develop the training program in consultation with USDA/FAS and the Fellow.
- The host institution will keep USDA/FAS informed regarding any logistical or program planning.
- The host institution will notify USDA/FAS immediately upon Fellow's physical arrival and departure from the U.S. to comply with U.S. Department of Homeland Security requirements.
- The host institution will provide USDA/FAS with the Fellow's temporary U.S. address and phone number, and emergency contact numbers for the PI, Mentor, or other appropriate institution personnel. This information is required so that Participant can be reached in the event of an emergency.

(7) Program

- The host institution will provide educational materials and supplies to each Fellow necessary for their full participation in the program.
- The host institution will pay for all fees related to the Fellow's training program, such as (but not limited to) technology fees, administrative fees, laboratory fees, etc.
- The host institution will arrange relevant field visits as applicable to the Fellow's training program.
- The host institution will ensure the submission of semi-annual performance and

financial reports as well as final performance and financial reports to USDA/FAS every six months and after the completion of the program respectively. Reports should include the following:

- Summary of activities, accomplishments, and any problems encountered or overcome.
- Photographs, when possible
  - The Mentor ensures that the Fellow completes the Post-Program Evaluation.

(8) Orientation

- The PI/Training Coordinator will communicate directly with the Fellow at least 4-8 weeks before his or her arrival in the U.S. to ensure that all pertinent information is provided, including:
  - Name and contact information of PI/Training Coordinator
  - Name and contact information of Mentor
  - Institution information, weather information, and clothing needs
  - Housing and M&IE allowance
  - Program plan and anticipated site visits
  - Professional development expectations
  - Reminder to bring any necessary prescription medications
  - Explain what is and is not covered under emergency health insurance policy (e.g. no pre-existing conditions, no dental, etc.)
  - Institution will provide an orientation upon the Fellow's arrival to acquaint them with campus and community resources, such as:
  - Explanation and demonstration of local bus/transportation options
  - Explanation of cultural and legal expectations
- USDA will provide a welcome and orientation packet for Fellows upon arrival.

(9) Mentor Follow-up Visit

- The Mentor visit is a required component of the Scientific Exchanges Program.
- The Mentor will work with the Fellow to plan a follow-up visit to the Fellow's home country. The trip should occur within 6 months to 1 year after the program ends and no sooner than 3 months before the end of the agreement.
- The Mentor will follow up with the Fellow for an additional year after their visit to assess the impact of the exchange program.
- The PI will provide USDA/FAS with an agenda for Mentor's reciprocal visit, including goals and objectives, three weeks prior to the trip. The Mentor's travel information must be provided for emergency contact purposes and country clearance (if required by the cognizant FAS Overseas Office).
- The Mentor will provide a trip report highlighting the trip's activities and results through the PI to USDA/FAS within 30 days after the visit.
- The Mentor should plan to meet with the USDA/FAS Attaché or staff from the U.S. Embassy while they are traveling, if feasible. USDA/FAS can assist with coordination prior to the trip.

(10) USDA/FAS Headquarters Orientation and Debrief (DC Visits)

- The Fellow's USDA/FAS- Washington D.C. orientation and debriefs are a required component of the Scientific Exchanges Program.
- Institution will include a budgeted amount for a visit to USDA/FAS headquarters in

Washington D.C. upon the Fellow's arrival to and departure from the United States.

- The Fellow's USDA/FAS orientation and debrief will last one day and they will be hosted by USDA/FAS at their headquarters in Washington D.C.
- The Institution will send at least one representative to the USDA/FAS Headquarters orientation and debrief to welcome the Participant. Mentors are highly encouraged to represent the Institution at the USDA/FAS headquarters orientation and debrief.
- The Institution is expected to provide the following for the Fellow's orientation and debrief:
  - Flights from the Fellow's Country to and from Washington D.C.
  - Flights from Washington D.C. to the Fellow's Fellowship location
  - Hotel and M&IE while in Washington D.C.
  - Transportation around the D.C. Metro Area, including transportation to and from the airport.
- USDA/FAS will provide an agenda, and speakers for the Fellow's USDA orientation and debrief.

(11) 2024 Fall Fellow and Mentor's World Food Prize Attendance

- World Food Prize participation is a requirement for the Scientific Exchanges Program for Fellows and Mentors.
- The Institution will budget for the Fellow and Mentor transportation to and from Des Moines, Iowa.
- The Institution will budget for lodging allowance and M&IE for the Fellow and Mentor's time in Des Moines (at the Federal Government rates).
- USDA will provide an agenda and programming for the Fellow and Mentor's time in Des Moines.

Reporting

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

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

a) A comparison of actual accomplishments to those projected for the period;
b) The reasons why established goals were not met, if appropriate; and
c) Additional pertinent information including, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs.

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

Monitoring

USDA/FAS through its authorized representatives, has the right, at all reasonable times, to make site visits to review project accomplishments and management control systems and to provide such

technical assistance as may be required. During site visits, USDA/FAS will review recipients' files related to the program.

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

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

G. Federal Awarding Agency Contact

For all inquiries, contact:

Name: Joyce West
Email Address: Joyce.West@usda.gov
Hours of Operation: 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM Eastern Time
1400 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20250

H. Other Information

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

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

Electronic Signatures
Consistent with the Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce Act (ESIGN Act), USDA/FAS uses and accepts electronic signatures for application and award documents. USDA/FAS will neither solicit nor send physical copies of documents.