

## Tip Sheet for Integrated Food Safety Proposals

### What is an “integrated” proposal?

Integrated proposals combine *research, education, and extension*. An integrated proposal contains at least 2 of the 3 components (research and education, research and extension, or education and extension).

Integrated proposals should be *multi-state and/or multi-institutional*, and should involve a team of experts with *multi-disciplinary* backgrounds.

A proposal is optimally integrated if the *components complement one another* and are truly necessary for the ultimate success of the project. In other words, 2 or more components shouldn't just be “thrown in” to meet the “letter of the law”. They should, by necessity, be complementary.

### How does NIFSI define “research”?

The focus of NIFSI is on “*applied*” research, which includes: 1) developing, implementing, and evaluating interventions; 2) applying new technologies; and 3) applying existing technologies to new conditions or new audiences. In other words, applied research does not focus on *developing* new science, new technologies or new methodologies, but rather on *applying* new science, technologies, or methodologies. In addition to traditional laboratory and field research, applied research may include educational research, behavioral or social research, and/or research focused on defining the behavioral determinants of food safety practices. This can also include evaluative, survey, and focus group research.

### How does NIFSI define “education”?

NIFSI defines this as education that occurs in the “formal” classroom setting. This can include elementary, secondary, undergraduate, or graduate education.

### How does NIFSI define “extension”?

NIFSI defines this as education and/or training that occurs outside the formal classroom. Where there is no extension program, outreach activities that deliver science-based knowledge and informational education to people in a variety of non-formal settings are an acceptable substitute. This can include youth education (e.g., 4-H clubs, Boys and Girls Clubs), adult education, health fairs, community nutrition programs, community kitchens, industry and retail training and education, HACCP training, food handler certification, and food safety training and education for a variety of commercial and non-commercial audiences, among others. In addition to education and training, extension components may include the development and distribution of educational materials, such as pamphlets, fliers, fact sheets, training curricula, videotapes, audiotapes, CD ROMS, interactive software, website development, and a variety of other audiovisual and print media.

**Does each grant proposal have to include more than one university?**

No, the requirement for multi-institutional proposals can be met as long as multiple institutions are involved, including academia, government, industry, and non-profit organizations. For example, a single university might collaborate with their local Health Department, Department of Agriculture, Department of Education, and/or one or more industry groups.

**Who can apply for NIFSI grants?**

Only those from 4-year, accredited colleges and universities may apply (land-grant and non-land-grant). The Farm Bill also allows those from the tribal colleges to apply, even though most of the tribal colleges are 2-year institutions.

**Can Federal laboratories, industry groups, health departments, or other groups apply for NIFSI grants?**

No, only those from 4-year colleges and universities, and tribal colleges may apply. However, those at colleges and universities may subcontract with federal laboratories, industry groups, health departments, or others. By law, at least 51% of the funds must stay at the university, but up to 49% of the funds can be subcontracted to other collaborators, including international collaborators.

**Can NIFSI subcontracts go to Agricultural Research Service (ARS) laboratories?**

Yes, as long as the research being funded is university research, and not on-going ARS research. In other words, we will not grant federal dollars to support federal research. But the university may pay ARS faculty to do laboratory work because of their unique expertise or lab facilities. The Principal Investigator must justify why the research needs to be conducted, in part, at an ARS lab. If the rationale is satisfactory, funds may be subcontracted to an ARS lab.

**Can NIFSI subcontracts go to international partners and collaborators?**

Yes, but only if the commodity and/or intervention under investigation has an impact on U.S. agriculture.

**What if a proposal focuses on basic research, and not applied research?**

Such a proposal is not likely to be funded. The CSREES flagship program for basic research is the National Research Initiative (NRI). Basic science proposals should be submitted to NRI.

**What if a proposal does not include 2 of the 3 components of research, education, and extension?**

Such a proposal is not likely to be funded. NIFSI is an integrated program, and we give priority consideration to integrated proposals. An integrated proposal must include at least 2 of the 3 components of research, education, and extension.

**If all 3 components of research, education, and extension are included in a proposal, is that proposal more likely to be funded than one that only includes 2 of the 3 components?**

No, the only requirement for funding consideration is that 2 of the 3 components be included in a proposal. Proposals with 3 components will get the same consideration as those with 2 components.

**Can the extension component of a proposal focus on developing and distributing fliers, brochures, fact sheets, posters, videotapes, or other audio-visual materials?**

Yes, but *only if* there is an attempt to evaluate the impact of those materials on the target audience(s). Without this evaluation, there is no way to determine if knowledge, attitude, and/or behavior change has taken place. Unless the focus is on changing knowledge, attitudes, and/or behavior, ‘information dissemination’ has taken place, but no extension education has occurred.

**Can the education component of a proposal focus on training and education of one or two graduate students involved in conducting the project?**

No. The education component, by definition, must include education that occurs in the formal classroom setting. The education component should include developing, conducting, and/or evaluating courses and seminars for multiple students.

**Must all extension and education components in a grant proposal include an evaluation component? What is meant by this?**

Yes, the extension and/or education intervention must be evaluated to determine whether there has been an actual change in knowledge, attitude, and/or behavior among the target audience(s). This can be done through a variety of quantitative or qualitative means, using statistical analysis, follow-up surveys (on all or subsets of program participants), pre-post tests, interviews, etc.

**Must all extension and education components in a grant proposal include a referenced research base? What is meant by this?**

Yes, the extension and/or education intervention must include a referenced research base. For example, the Principal Investigator should include references that explain why the research team chose that particular intervention, and how successful that intervention has been with similar audiences in the past. If there is no referenced research base for the

intervention, the PI should clearly state that, and use references for similar interventions and similar audiences, where appropriate.

**Should each grant proposal include a literature review.**

Yes. A current and thorough literature review should be conducted. Taken as a whole, the literature review should help to demonstrate the need for the project.

**Will the review panel look very closely at proposed budgets?**

Yes and no. We ask the panelists to perform a ‘cursory’ review of the budgets, with the understanding that budgets will undergo a very close, internal scrutiny by the Panel Manager and National Program Leaders once the proposal has been recommended for funding. A cursory review of the budget should be limited to checking for anything that stands out, such as: 1) over-inflated budgets; 2) requests for expensive equipment; 3) requests for extensive travel; and 4) requests for recruitment and hiring of critical personnel (folks who are critical to the success of the project).

**How are the proposals rated?**

Three assigned reviewers will rate the proposal as *Excellent*, *Very Good*, *Good*, *Fair*, or *Poor* based on their review of the proposal before the full panel meets. The assigned reviewers are instructed to review and rate each proposal *on the basis of its own merit*, rather than on a comparative basis to other proposals. Following the full panel meeting, the full panel will give the proposal an overall rating of *Excellent*, *Very Good*, *Good*, *Fair*, or *Poor*. An *excellent* proposal makes a strong contribution to the field of food safety, has major strengths, has no major weaknesses, and is highly recommended for funding. A *very good* proposal has high priority for funding. A *good* proposal has medium priority for funding. A *fair* proposal is not recommended for funding because it needs substantial revisions before it can be re-submitted. A *poor* proposal has a fatal flaw(s) and will not be considered for funding. Finally, the full panel will rank all proposals in order, from highest to lowest ranking.

**What are some of questions the reviewers ask when reviewing each proposal?**

Does the project include significant effort in at least 2 of the 3 components (research, education, and extension)?

Do those components complement each other? (i.e. Are they integral to the success of the project?)

Is the project multi-disciplinary, multi-state and/or multi-institutional?

Is the proposal a resubmission? If so, did the authors adequately respond to the concerns of the previous panel?

What is the major contribution this paper makes to the field of food safety?

Does the proposal include an acceptable plan for evaluating the effectiveness of the education and/or extension component?

Do the investigators have sufficient experience and resources to complete the project successfully?

Is the scope of the project sufficient to accomplish the desired results in the allotted timeframe?

Is the budget too large or too small to accomplish the desired results in the allotted timeframe?