

International Science and Education (ISE) Grants Program

FY 2011 Request for Applications

Application Deadline: January 26, 2011

ISE Program:

Telephone: 202-720-3801

Email: ISE@nifa.usda.gov

Internet:

<http://www.nifa.usda.gov/fo/educationinternationalscience.cfm>

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (CFDA)

10.305 International Science and Education Grants

NIFA Funding Opportunity Number

USDA-NIFA-CIP-003379



United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food and
Agriculture

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

**INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE AND EDUCATION COMPETITIVE GRANTS
PROGRAM (ISE)**

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.305, International Science and Education Grants.

DATES: Applications must be received by Grants.gov by close of business (COB) on January 26, 2011 (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. Such comments 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. Comments should be submitted as provided for 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: RFA-OGFM@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 International Science and Education Competitive Grants Program RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the International Science and Education Competitive Grants Program (ISE) for fiscal year (FY) 2011 to support research, extension, and teaching activities that will enhance the capabilities of American colleges and universities to conduct international collaborative research, extension and teaching. NIFA anticipates making approximately \$2.9 million available for ISE awards.

This notice identifies the objectives for ISE projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for an ISE grant. 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

Section 229 of the Agricultural Research, Extension and Education Reform Act of 1998 (AREERA) amended Section 1459 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA) (7 U.S.C. §3292b) to authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to make competitive grants to colleges and universities in order to strengthen United States economic competitiveness and to promote international market development.

Section 7141 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 8701 note) reauthorized the International Science and Education Competitive Grants Program (ISE).

ISE projects are expected to enhance the international content of curricula; ensure that faculty work beyond the U.S. and bring lessons learned back home; promote international research partnerships; enhance the use of application of foreign technologies in the U.S., and strengthen the role that colleges and universities play in maintaining U.S. competitiveness.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The purpose of ISE is to support the internationalization of food, agriculture and related programs at U.S. universities and colleges. It is intended that ISE will improve the ability of American students, business people, and community members to compete more effectively in the global world of agriculture. ISE projects are awarded to strengthen the global competence and competitiveness of American colleges, universities and businesses in the food, agriculture, and related sectors. In addition, ISE projects must be directed to agricultural research, extension, and/or teaching activities that enhance the capabilities of American colleges and universities to conduct international collaborative research, extension and teaching.

U.S. success in the global arena will increasingly require U.S. colleges and universities to produce graduates who can operate competently in domestic and international settings. Through their outreach efforts, universities and colleges also play a critical role in helping U.S. producers successfully operate in foreign markets.

In response to these national needs, ISE is designed to foster innovative campus-based programs. **Internationalization of U.S. campus-based programs is the primary focus of the ISE program. Proposals that do not show benefit to the U.S. will not be reviewed. Since the ISE program is an integrated program, proposals should have an integrated approach - focusing on at least 2 of the 3 main components – agricultural research, extension and teaching. Single function proposals will not be reviewed.** For descriptions of previously funded projects, please visit our website at (http://cris.nifa.usda.gov/cgi-bin/starfinder/0?path=iseclink.txt&id=anon&pass=&search=CG=*-51160*%20and%20gy%3e2002&format=WEBTITLES). NIFA priority areas include adaption/mitigation to climate change, sustainable bioenergy, reduction in childhood obesity, increased food security and increased food safety.

Funded project areas 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.

Proposals should demonstrate how the proposed work responds to the specific needs and strengths of the university or college in addressing one or both of the following areas:

1. Strengthening the Global Competence of Students, Faculty, and Staff in Agriculture and Related Areas

Students, faculty, and staff should clearly understand international factors that affect U.S. food and agriculture, and faculty and staff should convey an understanding of the international dimensions of agricultural and related sciences to students. Areas of emphasis may include but are not limited to: (a) planning, implementing and evaluating initiatives that enhance the international content of the curricula in colleges and universities so as to ensure that United States students acquire an understanding of the international dimensions and trade implication of their studies; (b) ensuring that U.S. scientists, extension agents, and educators convey the implications of their international findings to students, peers and other users in the United States; or (c) enhancing the capabilities of colleges and universities to conduct collaborative research with other countries, in cooperation with other Federal agencies, on issues relevant to U.S. agricultural performance.

2. Enhancing Business Performance in International Agriculture and Related Sectors

Through extension, research and/or teaching programs, enhance the ability of American agricultural producers, marketers and others in the agricultural community to operate effectively in the global arena. Supportable activities include but are not limited to: (a) enhancing the capabilities of U.S. colleges and universities to provide cooperative extension education that promotes the application of new technology developed in foreign countries to U.S. agriculture; or (b) enhancing the capability of U.S. colleges and universities, in cooperation with other Federal agencies, to provide leadership and education programs in market identification, international trade policies, new or existing markets, and production efficiencies. Such programs should strengthen the ability of American natural resources and food production, processing, and distribution businesses and industries to compete internationally.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. Approximately \$2.9 million is available to fund applications submitted in response to this RFA.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2011, applications may be submitted to the ISE Program as one of the following two types of requests:

1. **New application.** This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the ISE Program. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.
2. **Resubmitted application.** This is an application that had previously been submitted to the ISE Program but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (use R&R Other Project Information, Field 12 on the Form). Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in appropriate areas to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

C. Project Types

Multi-year proposals, up to a maximum of four years, may be submitted. The maximum amount under this program is \$150,000 per award, and no Project Director (PD) or co-PD may receive and/or participate in more than one ISE grant concurrently. In addition, no institution may receive and/or participate in more than one ISE grant as the lead organization for the current competition.

Partnerships with minority serving institutions and/or community colleges are encouraged but not required.

Funding levels may be adjusted based on the technical review of the projects.

For project budget and timeline purposes, the project start date should not occur prior to August 2011.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may be submitted by colleges and universities as defined in section 1404 of NARETPA. The terms “college” and “university” mean an educational institution in any State which (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 education program for which a bachelor’s degree or any other higher degree is awarded, (4) is a public or other nonprofit institution, and (5) is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association. Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

For the purposes of this program, the individual branches of a State university or other system of higher education that are separately accredited as degree-granting institutions are treated as separate institutions, and are therefore eligible for ISE Grants Program awards. Separate branches or campuses of a college or university that are not individually accredited as degree-granting institutions are not treated as separate institutions. An institution eligible to receive an award under this program includes a research foundation maintained by an eligible college or university. Accreditation must be by an agency or association recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

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

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to NIFA in response to this RFA. **Applicants are advised to submit early to the Grants.gov system.**

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 Grant.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 website: <http://www.grants.gov/section910/Grants.govRegistrationBrochure.pdf>.**

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

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-CIP-003379**, 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), refer to resources available on the Grants.gov Web site first (<http://grants.gov/>). Grants.gov assistance is also available as follows:

Grants.gov customer support

Toll Free: 1-800-518-4726

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on [Federal Holidays](#).

Email: support@grants.gov

See <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. Consult the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide (Part III. 3.1) for how to attach files using the proper format.

1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet

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 ISE applications; these fields do not need to be completed.

Field 5. Applicant Information – **This must be the legal name of the eligible college or university (See Part III. A, Eligible Applicant).** 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’ or ‘Resubmitted’ applications are permitted.

Field 12. Proposed Project Start Date and End Date – The project start date should not occur prior to August 2011. Choose the end date to correspond to the correct duration of the project.

Field 15. Estimated Project Funding – Total Estimated Project Funding = Amount of Federal funds requested.

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

2. 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 Form

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

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.

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

The Project Summary is limited to **250 words**. Title the attachment as ‘Project Summary’ in the document header and save file as ‘ProjectSummary’.

The summary should be a self contained, specific description of the activity to be undertaken and should focus on: overall project goal(s) and supporting objectives; plans to accomplish project goal(s); and relevance of the project to the goals of the ISE.

Field 8. Project Narrative – (Required Attachment – Must be PDF format). Title the attachment as ‘Project Narrative’ in the document header and save file as ‘ProjectNarrative’.

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed fifteen (15) pages of written text and up to a maximum of five (5) additional pages for figures and tables. This maximum (20 pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. Reviewers will not be required to review material in excess of this limit. **PROPOSALS THAT DO NOT CONFORM TO THE PREPARATION REQUIREMENTS WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW.** Appendices are not counted toward the 20-page Project Narrative limit.

The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

- i) An introduction which states the goals and objectives of the proposed activities, documents needs, describes ongoing related activities and includes relevant data;
- ii) A description of the project’s overall approach and any proposed cooperation. This section should 1) identify proposed activities and methods in clear and sufficient detail to be understood by expert reviewers, 2) explain any proposed cooperators, how they will contribute to the project and how they will be coordinated, and 3) describe institutional commitment to the project. Cooperators may be from organizations located outside of the U.S.; and
- iii) A description of the project’s potential for contributing to internationalization which includes 1) a description of expected short and longer term impacts, products and results, 2) indicators which will allow program results to be evaluated and verified, 3) a timetable with completion

dates for phases of the project, 4) a dissemination plan, and 5) continuation plans that describe post-project activities.

Field 9. Bibliography & References Cited – PDF Attachment. No page limit. Title the attachment as ‘Bibliography & References Cited’ in the document header and save file as ‘Bibliography&References Cited’.

All works cited, including that of key personnel, should be referenced in this section of the application. All references to works cited should be complete, including titles and all co-authors, and should conform to an acceptable journal format. References should be listed in alphabetical order using the last name of the first author. References are not considered in the page-limitation for the Project Narrative.

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 ‘ResponsetoPreviousReview’. This requirement only applies to “Resubmitted Applications” as described under Part II, B., “Types of Applications”. PDs must respond to the previous review panel summary on **no more than one page**, titled, “RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS REVIEW.” If desired, additional comments may be included in the text of the Project Narrative, subject to the page limitations of that section.
- **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 Arrangements’. If it will be 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) 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.

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

Complete all applicable fields. Consult the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions.

A R&R Senior/Key Person Profile should be completed, at a minimum, for the PD, each co-PD, senior associate, and other professional personnel. A paraprofessional is an individual who

through formal education, work experience and/or training has the knowledge and expertise to assist a professional person.

Also, **you must attach** ‘Current and Pending Support’ information (see NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide p. 33, item 5.3, for guidelines and information format) for each senior/key person identified above. **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. Make sure time commitment does not exceed 100% for all current and pending projects. All projects listed must show a commitment of time even if it is 1%**

5. R&R Personal Data

Complete all applicable fields. Consult the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions. 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

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. This form (accompanied by the required Budget Justification attachment) contains the itemized listing and description of your project’s budget. Complete all applicable fields. Consult the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions.

The following, additional information may be helpful:

a) Use the R&R Budget Form for the ISE Program. Prepare a separate budget for each year of requested support. In addition, a cumulative budget is required detailing the requested total support for the overall project period. Funds may be requested under any of the categories listed on the form, provided that the item or service for which support is requested is allowable under the authorizing legislation, the applicable statutes, regulations, and Federal cost principles, and these program guidelines, and can be justified as necessary for the successful conduct of the proposed project (see Part IV, D. for some applicable funding restrictions).

Field H. Indirect Costs – See Part IV for limitations.

b) Field K. Budget Justification – (Required Attachment – Must be PDF Format)

Provide a Budget Justification that reflects each 12-month period, plus a cumulative budget justification for the entire project. The cumulative budget justification should include a cost breakdown and justification for each budget category.

7. NIFA Supplemental Information Form

Complete all applicable fields. Consult the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions.

a) Field 2. Program Code - Enter the Program Code name as International Science and Education Competitive Grants Program and the Program Code as ISECP.

b) Field 8. Conflict of Interest List (Required Attachment – Must be in PDF format)

See format in NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, Section VI, 1.8, p. 48, for instructions. Include this one-page attachment even if your responses to the questions are “N/A”.

C. Submission Date and Time

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 January 26, 2011 (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 a confirmation message from NIFA within 30 days of submission of the application, please contact the agency contact identified in Part VII of this 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

Section 7132 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, amended the National Agriculture Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3310(a)), limiting indirect costs to 22 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 22 percent of total Federal funds awarded.

Each institution may submit no more than two proposals as the lead institution. No institution acting as the principal or lead institution will receive no more than one grant during the current competition. Therefore, institutions are encouraged to establish on-campus quality control mechanisms to ensure that only the highest quality proposals are submitted for consideration.

Program funds *may not* be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities (i.e., greenhouses, laboratories, or other structures).

Statutory time limitation: The funding authorization for this program limits the length of these grants to five (5) years. Extensions of time beyond the maximum five years will not be permitted.

E. Other Submission Requirements

The applicant should follow the submission requirements noted in the document entitled “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov.”

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 January 26, 2011. 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 perform 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, 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 domestic and international 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 following evaluation criteria will be used to evaluate proposals submitted for funding:

1. Overall Approach and Collaboration. This criterion relates to the soundness of the proposed approach and the quality of cooperation.

(a) **Proposed Approach** - Do the objectives and plan of operation appear to be sound and appropriate relative to the issues being addressed? Are the procedures sound? Does the project build upon relevant faculty/university domestic and international experiences? Is the overall plan integrated with existing campus-based food and agricultural programs? Does the timetable appear to be realistic?

(b) **Cooperation** - If institutional partnerships are proposed, are there clear and appropriate levels of coordination between the lead institution and other partner institutions in the U.S. or overseas? Will the partnership clearly benefit U.S. institutions? If no institutional partnerships are proposed, will the proposing institution be able to effectively implement the activities on its own?

(c) **Institutional Commitment** - Is there evidence that the lead and any partnering institutions attribute a high priority to the project, that the project is linked to the achievement of the institutions' long-term globalization strategies? Will the project have reasonable access to other

needed resources such as equipment, facilities, computer services, library and other support resources?

2. Potential for Contributing to Internationalization -This criterion highlights the likelihood that the proposed activity will strengthen the ability of American faculty, staff, students, businesses and communities to understand the global dimensions of food, agriculture and related sectors so as to operate effectively in an international arena. **Emphasis will be given to proposals which offer new programs in internationalization; however, consideration will also be given to proposals that introduce new innovative approaches to ongoing programs.**

(a) **Impact** - Does the project address an important opportunity or constraint to internationalization in a college's or university's food, agriculture or related programs? Will it strengthen the capacity of the applicant institution(s) to conduct and participate in internationalization activities? Will it provide the means to raise student, faculty and/or private sector's awareness of the international dimensions of agriculture? Does it respond to the needs of private sector and/or communities in ways that can be addressed by the university or college? Is the problem or opportunity clearly documented? Will the project serve as a model for other activities?

(b) **Products and Results** - Are the expected products and results of the project clearly defined and likely to be of high quality? Will the project contribute to a better understanding of, or an improvement in, the use of international approaches and programs in extension, teaching and/or research?

(c) **Evaluation** - Are the evaluation plans adequate and reasonable for demonstrating overall success of project objectives? Do they allow for continuous or frequent feedback during the life of the project? Are the individuals involved in project evaluation skilled in evaluation strategies and procedures? Can they provide an objective evaluation based on strategies proposed in the project? Do evaluation plans facilitate the measurement of project progress and results?

(d) **Dissemination** - Does the proposed project include clearly outlined and realistic mechanisms that will lead to widespread dissemination of project results, including national electronic communication systems, publications, presentations at professional conferences, or use by faculty development or research/extension/teaching skills workshops?

(e) **Continuation Plans** - Are there plans for continuing or expanding the project after USDA support ends? Will the project lead to long-term relationships or cooperative partnerships, including those with the private sector, non-governmental organizations and/or international partners that are likely to enhance program impacts? Will the benefits to be derived from the project transcend the grant period?

3. Personnel Resources - This criterion relates to the number and qualifications of the key persons who will carry out the project. Are designated project personnel qualified to carry out a successful project? Are there appropriate numbers of personnel associated with the project to achieve the state's objectives and the anticipated outcomes?

4. Budget and Cost Effectiveness - This criterion relates to the extent to which the total budget adequately supports the project and is cost effective. Is the budget request clear and adequately justified? Are costs reasonable and necessary? Will the budget be adequate to carry out project activities? Does the budget maximize value per dollar of USDA support?

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., 6400 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 648, Falls Church, Virginia 22042. Phone: (703) 532-2300. 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. NIFA will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the pre-award process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal financial and non-financial 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 whom 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).

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

7 CFR Part 3—USDA debt collection regulation.

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 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 3021—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 Non profit 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-Specific Administrative Provisions for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative.

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

1. Project Directors Conference

During the tenure of a grant, Project Directors are encouraged 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, and opportunities to enhance dissemination of exemplary end products/results. Reasonable travel expenses to attend this meeting should be included in the application's budget under travel expenses.

2. Annual Performance Reports

An Annual Performance Report must be submitted within 90 days after the completion of the first year of the project, and annually thereafter during the life of the grant. Generally, the Annual Performance Reports should include a summary of the overall progress toward project objectives, current problems or unusual developments, the next year's activities, and any other information that is pertinent to the ongoing project or which may be specified in the terms and conditions of the award.

3. Final Performance Report

A Final Performance Report must be submitted within 90 days after the expiration date of the project. The expiration date is specified in the award documents and modifications thereto, if any. Generally, the Final Performance Report should be a summary of the completed project, including: a review of project objectives, accomplishments and impacts; a description of any products and outcomes resulting from the project; activities undertaken to disseminate products and outcomes; partnerships and collaborative ventures that resulted from the project; future initiatives that are planned as a result of the project; the impact of the project on the PDs, students, the departments, the institution, and the food and agricultural sciences higher education system; and data on project personnel and beneficiaries. The report must document how project accomplishments (products, results and impacts, etc.) have been published or otherwise disseminated to the broadest extent throughout the academic community. The Final Performance Report should be accompanied by samples or copies of any products or publications resulting from or developed by the project. The Final Performance Report also must contain any other information which may be specified in the terms and conditions of the award.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Patty Fulton, Center for International Programs, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA; STOP 2203; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2203; telephone: (202) 690-3852; fax: (202) 690-2355; e-mail: pfulton@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 agency 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. Changes in Project Period: 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 five years. 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: 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.

Collaboration or Cooperative effort means a joint effort among two or more institutions, organizations and/or other entities with the capacity to conduct projects intended and designed to accomplish the purpose of the program.