



FACTSHEET

CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE IMPLEMENTATION FOR NIFA COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAMS

The **Agricultural Act of 2014** requires the National Institute of Food and Agriculture to recognize Centers of Excellence for food and agricultural research, education, and extension beginning in fiscal year 2015. Applicants who meet the requirements of designated funding opportunities are also eligible to apply for Center of Excellence designation as part of their grant application. If so designated, a Center of Excellence application receives priority consideration during the peer review process. NIFA is not establishing Centers of Excellence, but recognizing them and providing applicants who meet the eligibility requirements with priority consideration during the peer review process.

In July 2014, NIFA held listening sessions and accepted written comments from stakeholders to inform NIFA's implementation of the centers of excellence provision. Information from the webinars and a summary of the input gathered are available on NIFA's website at http://www.nifa.usda.gov/about/offices/legis/cntr_ex_webinar_documents.html.

ELIGIBILITY

To be considered, one or more of the following entities has to provide financial or in-kind support to a center being proposed, as described in the grant application: The following programs will be offering Centers of Excellence opportunities in fiscal year 2015:

- State agricultural experiment stations
- Colleges and universities
- University research foundations
- Other research institutions and organizations
- Federal agencies
- National laboratories
- Private organizations, foundations, or corporations
- Individuals
- A group consisting of two or more of the entities described above

The following programs will be offering Centers of Excellence opportunities in fiscal year 2015

- Agriculture and Food Research Initiative - Foundational Program and Challenge Areas
- Aquaculture Research
- Biomass Research and Development Initiative
- Biotechnology Risk Assessment Research Grants Program
- Children, Youth, and Families at Risk
- Crop Protection/Pest Management
- Farm Business Management and Benchmarking
- Farm Safety and Youth Farm Safety Education and Certification
- Methyl Bromide Transition
- Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative
- Organic Transition Program
- Rural Health and Safety Program
- Specialty Crop Research Initiative

continued next page >>

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(CONTINUED)

PRIORITY CONSIDERATION

Priority in funding will be provided after all eligible applicants have been competitively peer reviewed, and ranked in accordance with program's standard evaluation criteria. Applications that rank highly meritorious and request consideration as Centers of Excellence will be further evaluated by peer panels to determine whether they have met the standards to be centers described above.

In instances where they are found to be equally meritorious with applications of non-Centers of Excellence, based on peer review, selection for funding will be weighed in favor of applicants meeting the center of excellence criteria. NIFA will effectively use the center of excellence prioritization as a "tie breaker."

Applicants that rank highly meritorious but who did not request consideration as a center of excellence or who are not deemed to have met the Centers of Excellence standards may still receive funding.

Applicant's Notice of Award will reflect that, for that particular grant program, the applicant meets all of the requirements of a center of excellence. Entities recognized as centers of excellence will maintain that distinction for the duration of their award or as identified in the terms and conditions of that award.

APPLICATIONS REQUIREMENTS

In fiscal year 2015, each request for applications describes the type of grant applications and the criteria applicants must meet to be considered as a Center of Excellence. Applicants must justify the following as it relates to the implementation of the proposed research and/or extension activity outlined in the application:

- The ability of the center of excellence to ensure coordination and cost effectiveness by reducing unnecessarily duplicative efforts regarding research, teaching, and extension.
- In addition to any applicable matching requirements, the ability of the center of excellence to leverage available resources by using public-private partnerships among agricultural industry groups, institutions of higher education, and the federal government. Resources leveraged should be commensurate with the size of the award.
- The planned scope and capability of the center of excellence to implement teaching initiatives to increase awareness and effectively disseminate solutions to target audiences through extension activities
- The ability or capacity of the center of excellence to increase the economic returns to rural communities by identifying, attracting, and directing funds to high-priority agricultural issues.
- Additionally, where practicable (not required), center of excellence applicants should describe proposed efforts to improve teaching capacity and infrastructure at colleges and universities (including land-grant colleges and universities, cooperating forestry schools, certified Non-Land Grant Colleges of Agriculture, and schools of veterinary medicine).
- This brief justification statement is to be included as part of and within the page limits of their project narratives.



United States
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NEW MATCHING REQUIREMENTS FOR NIFA COMPETITIVE GRANT AWARDS

OVERVIEW

THE AGRICULTURAL ACT OF 2014 ADDED A NEW REQUIREMENT FOR FINANCIAL MATCHING OF SOME National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) competitive grant awards. Matching for these awards means that a grantee must provide funds, in-kind contributions, or a combination of both, from sources other than funds provided through such grant in an amount that is at least equal to the amount awarded by NIFA, unless the grantee is exempt from the matching requirement or the requirement is waived. The new requirement impacts grants made after October 1, 2014. No AFRI awards are impacted by the new matching requirement. • The questions below will help determine if you need to meet the new matching requirement for competitive grant programs.

Does the program to which I am applying have a matching requirement?

YES

Am I in a group that is exempt from the matching requirements? (See FAQ #2 on back page)

YES

You have no new match requirement to meet.

YES

You have no new match requirement to meet.

NO

You have no new match requirement to meet. The new matching requirement does not apply to AFRI awards.

NO

Do I have a qualifying partnership? (See FAQ #4 on back page)

NO

The new match requirement applies to you. (See FAQ #3 on back page for requesting a waiver)

For a list of matching requirements by NIFA competitive grants program, visit:
http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/matching_require_tbl_prgms.html

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Agricultural Act of 2014 added a requirement for financial matching of some of NIFA's competitive awards; however, it does not impact AFRI awards. For some grants made after Oct. 1, 2014, a grantee must provide funds, in-kind contributions, or a combination of both, from sources other than funds provided through such grant in an amount that is at least equal to the amount awarded by NIFA, unless the grantee is exempt from the matching requirement or the requirement is waived. Below you will find common questions that will help guide you through the details of the new requirement. ■ For additional questions, contact the Awards Management Staff at (202) 205-5799.

1 DOES THE NEW MATCHING REQUIREMENT APPLY TO CURRENT GRANTS?

The matching requirement only applies to new awards made on or after Oct. 1, 2014. No AFRI awards are impacted by the new matching requirement. It does not supersede matching requirements that were in place for competitive grant awards made before October 1, 2014 and only applies to competitive grants made under covered programs.

2 WHAT ENTITIES ARE EXEMPT FROM THE NEW MATCHING REQUIREMENT AS SPECIFIED IN THE FARM BILL?

- A. 1862 land grant institutions
- B. 1890 land grant institutions
- C. 1994 land grant institutions
- D. Recipients of continuing animal health and disease capacity and infrastructure funds
- E. Hispanic serving agricultural colleges and universities
- F. Insular area schools eligible to receive funds from the distance education/resident instruction grant programs
- G. Recipients of McIntire-Stennis cooperative forestry program funds
- H. Non-land grant colleges of agriculture
- I. Recipients of funds under a program established under section 1417 (b) of the national agricultural research, extension, and teaching policy act of 1977(7 U.S.C. 31529b0, including: (1) 1890 Teaching Institution, Research, and extension capacity building grants program; (2) higher education challenge grants program (3) higher education multicultural scholars program; and (4) food and agricultural sciences national needs graduate and post graduate fellowship grants program.
- J. Research agencies of USDA

3 WHAT OPTIONS EXIST FOR NONEXEMPT ENTITIES?

Nonexempt entities can partner with one of the exempt entities (see FAQ 2) or if they qualify apply for Non-Land Grant College of Agriculture (NLGCA) status and become exempt. Alternatively, they can request that NIFA waive the match requirement for one year for a particular application where proposed activities are consistent with priorities established by the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board. Instructions for requesting a waiver are provided in Requests for Applications for covered programs.

4 WHAT IS A PARTNERSHIP?

Entities that partner with an exempt entity become exempt from the matching requirement. Partnership requires that all partners have a substantial involvement in the project throughout the life of the project. If a partnership between multiple entities is proposed, the proposal must clearly identify the following:

- A narrative of each entity's clearly established role in the project;
- How each entity involved as a partner on the project will contribute to execution of project objectives, determination of experimental design, development of the project work plan and time table, and submission of collaborative timely reports; and
- A comprehensive project budget that reflects each entity's financial or in kind contribution to total project costs.

5 WHERE DO I DESCRIBE A PROPOSED PROJECT PARTNERSHIP ON THE RFA APPLICATION?

You should describe your partnership in the project narrative section detailing the role of each partner. While applicants can justify that a partnership meets the required criteria, the final decision about whether an entity is a "partner" rests with NIFA.

6 CAN THE NONEXEMPT ENTITIES BE THE LEAD?

Yes, as long as one of the partners is exempt either can be the lead.

7 WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT PARTNERSHIPS?

Please use the programmatic contact listed under the agency contact section of the Request for Applications.

8 WHAT IS NON-LAND GRANT COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE (NLGCA) STATUS AND HOW DO I APPLY?

For an institution to qualify as a NLGCA, it must be a public college or university offering a baccalaureate or higher degree in the study of food and agricultural sciences, as defined in 7 U.S.C. 3103(9). To apply for certification, go to: www.nifa.usda.gov/form/form.html

9 IF I APPLY FOR NON-LAND GRANT STATUS, WHEN WILL I KNOW?

Within 30 days of submitting this form, NIFA will provide the Administrative Point of Contact specified on the form, with a certification or a response indicating why certification is being denied.