

# USDA NIFA

## RFAP: Research Facilities Act Program - FY2026

### Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Technical Assistance Webinar



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## Topics We Will Cover

- ◇ NIFA Overview (2 min.)
- ◇ Program Overview (10 min.)
- ◇ Application Details and Documents (10 min.)
- ◇ Application Evaluation Process (10 min.)
- ◇ Additional Information/Resources (10 min.)

## NIFA Overview



**National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)** is the extramural science-funding agency within USDA's Research, Education, and Economics mission area.



NIFA **invests in and supports** initiatives that ensure the long-term viability of agriculture.



NIFA provides **funding and strategic leadership** for programs that ensure groundbreaking discoveries in agriculture-related sciences and technologies reach the people who can put them into practice.

## Purpose and Priorities

The Research Facilities Act Program (RFAP) is listed in the Assistance Listings under number 10.246. RFAP is designed to provide financial assistance to qualifying institutions for the construction, alteration, acquisition, modernization, renovation, or remodeling of agricultural research facilities to conduct research in the fields of food and agricultural sciences.

### Purpose and Priorities (contd.)

“**Agricultural research facility**” means a proposed facility for research in food and agricultural sciences for which Federal funds are requested to assist in the construction, alteration, acquisition, modernization, renovation, or remodeling of the facility ([7 U.S.C. 390](#)).

Agricultural research facility refers to a proposed facility or facility complex that supports advancing research and training in the food and agricultural sciences. This includes spaces and infrastructure that enable basic, applied, and developmental research, as well as extension and teaching activities integral to preparing the next generation of researchers and professionals in these fields.

### Purpose and Priorities (contd.)

Facilities may encompass, but not limited to, a wide range of infrastructure that supports research, research training, and integrated activities in food and agricultural sciences.

#### Eligible Facilities

- ◇ Single buildings
- ◇ Stand-alone structures
- ◇ Multi building complexes

### Purpose and Priorities (contd.)

#### Examples:

- ◇ Research laboratories
- ◇ Specimen storage and instrumentation suites
- ◇ Classroom, training or experiential learning spaces that support hands-on research and research focused instruction
- ◇ Integrated complexes that co-locate research, extension and teaching functions
- ◇ Greenhouses, growth chambers, shade houses, screen houses, and other controlled environment facilities
- ◇ Standalone agricultural research structures, including barns, animal care or husbandry facilities, aquaculture units, or other specialized facilities.

## Eligibility

USDA will not accept competitive applications for grants and cooperative agreements submitted for dangerous gain-of-function research, as defined in [Section 8 of E.O. 14292](#).

## Eligibility

- 1994 Land-Grant Institutions
- State Agricultural Experiment Stations
- 1862 Land-Grant Institutions
- Accredited school or college of veterinary medicine or State Agricultural Experiment Station that conducts animal health and disease research in accordance with section 1433(c) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 ([7 U.S.C. 3195](#))
- 1890 Land-Grant Institutions
- Hispanic-Serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities (HSACU) as defined in [7 U.S.C. 3103](#)
- [Non-Land-Grant Colleges of Agriculture \(NLGCA\) - Institutions satisfying the eligibility requirements for NLGCA designation.](#)
- Insular Area Institutions-Institution of higher education, as defined in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1995 ([20 U.S.C. 1001\(a\)](#)).
- Institutions eligible for "McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Act" ([16 U.S.C. 582a et seq.](#))
- Other entities eligible to receive funds under a capacity and infrastructure program (as defined in section [6971\(f\)\(1\)\(C\)](#)). See [Appendix IV](#) under capacity and infrastructure programs.

## Application Submission & Award Limitations

**Eligible institutions may not submit more than one application to this program as a lead institution.**

Please work with your Office of Research/Sponsored Programs regarding your institution's process to select applications for submission.



**Recipients are limited to only one active RFAP award at a time.**

Parent institution at the system level – U Cal all 10 campuses...all are one

Phased approaches think about timing so one project at a time. Some window for overlapping projects but determined by NIFA

23, 24, 25 awards not considered as active awards...starts with this new RFAP

## Project and Grant Types

### PROJECT TYPES

Facilities Project

### GRANT TYPES

Standard

**The project duration is between 12 – 48 months**

Can apply for no-cost extensions but funding for 5 years is returned to treasury. First request is automatic, others become more involved

## Project Type Description

- ◇ **Level I – Planning Activities : \$100,000 - \$200,000**  
Advanced planning, feasibility and needs assessments, site surveys, environmental reviews, preliminary architectural and engineering designs, cost estimation and budgeting
- ◇ **Level II – Small Facility Upgrades: \$250,000 - \$2,000,000**  
Renovations, modernization of labs, small facility upgrades

## Project Type Description

- ◇ **Level III – Mid-Scale Construction/Expansion: \$2,000,000 - \$ 10,000,000**  
Expansions, specialized research wings, major retrofits
- ◇ **Level IV – Large-Scale Research Complex : \$10,000,000 - \$30,000,000**  
Entire new buildings, major research complexes, specialized labs, controlled environment research facilities

4 levels of awards...examples of what can be funded

Planning less than \$100k that is okay...same for others if you need less

These are the Federal award amount not including 1:1 match

## Allowable Costs

- ◇ Construction, restoration, renovation, or acquisition
- ◇ Permanently affixed equipment
- ◇ Architectural and engineering plans
- ◇ Installation of critical building systems
- ◇ Construction phase activities
- ◇ Acquisition of real property

## Unallowable Costs

- ◇ Standalone research equipment that is not permanently attached to the facility
- ◇ Portable, movable, or non-affixed equipment

## Cost Share or Matching

- ◇ 1:1 non-Federal cash match is required
- ◇ Not permitted : in-kind contributions
- ◇ Match may come from : private donors, state governments, or local governments
- ◇ Document source, amount, and timing
- ◇ Matching contributions must be incurred during the federal award period (2 CFR 200.306)
- ◇ Territories exception: Under 48 U.S.C 149a, matching requirements under \$200,000 may be waived for American Samoa, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

Does this include PR?

Attest or certify matching up front but some flexibility...full amount in application with source identified but can be phased with project and can raise additional funding during funding period.

## Application Details and Documents

### Application Changes from Prior Year

- ◇ All Key Personnel **must complete and certify** the Common Form for Biographical Sketch and the Common Form for Current and Pending (Other) Support using **SciENCv** and **submit the certified form(s) at time of application** (V.130 R&R Senior/Key Person Profile - Field 2, Field 3).
  - Key personnel are essential individuals whose expertise, authority, and responsibilities are critical to the success of the program or award. This includes organizational leaders, program managers, principal investigators, and other staff with substantial involvement.
- ◇ [SciENCv](#) gathers and compiles information on expertise, employment, education and professional accomplishments.

Submit certified forms at time of application through SciENCv

## Application Details

NOFO is available online at [Funding Opportunity Page](#)

**Application Deadline:** 5 p.m. (Eastern Time) 07/17/2026

- ◇ Submit through Grants.gov.

**Total Funding Available In FY 2026:** \$121,127,200

**Program Code:** RFAP

**MAXIMUM AWARD AMOUNT:** \$30,000,000

**Applications Per Institution:** 1

**Awards Per Institution:** 1

## Key Documents

### KEY COMPONENTS OF YOUR APPLICATION:

- ◇ Project Summary/Abstract (V.120 R&R Other Project Information – Field 7)
- ◇ Project Narrative (V.120 R&R Other Project Information – Field 8)
- ◇ Other Attachments (See NOFO and [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#)) (V.120 R&R Other Project Information – Field 12)

## Application Submission

**NIFA only accepts ELECTRONIC submission of applications.**

➤ Reference the [NIFA Grants Application Guide](#).

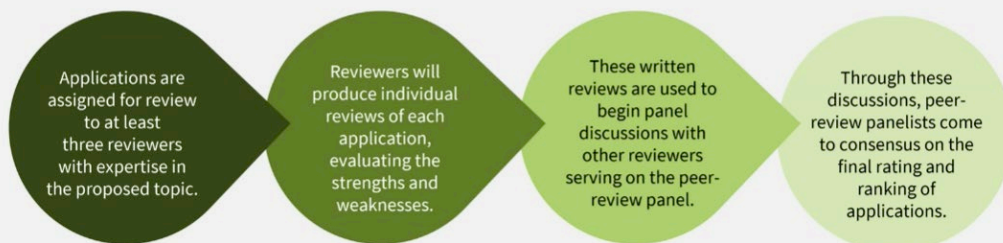
Application documents must be in **Portable Document Format (PDF)** to be accepted by NIFA, including your narrative and budget justifications.

- ◇ Grants.gov may allow other formats, but NIFA does not.
- ◇ Do not use third-party PDF builders.
- ◇ PDFs should not be password protected.

All documents must be pdf regardless of what Grants.gov allows...MUST by PDF for reviewers to access

## Application Evaluation Process

### Evaluation Process



## Evaluation Criteria

1. Rationale and Significance of the Proposed Agricultural Research Facility
2. Long-term Impact and Institutional Commitment
3. Project Planning and Activities
4. Financial Capacity and fundraising
5. Project team
6. Deliverables, outcomes, and Long-Term Viability

**Note:** Criteria 3 and Criteria 4 are not required for Level I Planning Activities.

## Timeline of RFAP

1. Application Deadline: July 17th, 2026
2. Peer Review Panel
3. Award Calls and Proposal Review Packages sent out
4. Award Processing
5. Award Announcements

**RFAP is 1-yr funding. MUST be awarded by September 30th!**

First year funding must be awarded before end of Federal Fiscal Year

## Grant Resources

- ◇ [Funding Opportunities](#)
- ◇ [Competitive Grants Flowchart](#)
- ◇ [NIFA Training Resources](#)
- ◇ [NIFA Policy Guide](#)
- ◇ [Indirect Costs](#)
- ◇ [A Guide for Preparation and Submission of NIFA Applications via Grants.gov](#)

Presentation with slides will be shared and session recorded but send questions to:

**Program Mailbox: [ree.nifa.rfap@usda.gov](mailto:ree.nifa.rfap@usda.gov)**

## Questions:

- Limit one per university system
- Forestry institutions are eligible
- One application – not multiple at different levels
- Non-profit eligibility...not as lead but could be subaward
- Non-LGU Colleges of Ag are eligible

- Facilities shared between institutions – they don't have details
- Level 4 funding – build at multiple locations (RECs and campus) – they don't have details
- Matching required at every level including matching grants
- 2-page limit for CVs...let them know if it generates longer
- Waiver for insulars – conflicting guidance as to those not on the list – they don't have details
- Multiple projects in one application – they don't have details
- US industry partners for cash match – they don't have details
- Match during award period...ongoing work before project...cannot use match for past work but unspent match can be used from ongoing project
- Can Sec Ag waive match...no (requires act of Congress)
- 1.5-line spacing project narrative...follow the NOFO for each document specifics
- ScienceCV will produce only 2 pages that are certified for the application but will have access to full CV
- One application per institution regardless of level...only 1 level allowed
- Matching funds source identified at time of application
- Previously raised funds can be used as match
- Cannot extend the deadline (must allocate all funding by Fed Fiscal Year) next year March with 90-day period
- In-kind is not considered...match must be cash
- Level 1 planning grant would be allowed subsequent application next year (strengthen)
- Salary as a match...not sure but think that it must be cash
- Unrecovered F&A – 3% be used as match – they don't have details
- Eligible institutions – could this be broadened in the future – they don't have details