

Women and Minorities in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Fields Program (WAMS)

FY 2012 Request for Applications

Application Deadline: April 12, 2012

WAMS Program:

Telephone: 202-720-0384

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Internet:

<http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/womenandminoritiesinsciencetechnologyengineeringandmathematics.cfm>

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (CFDA):
10.318**

**NIFA Funding Opportunity Number:
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United States
Department of
Agriculture

National Institute
of Food and
Agriculture

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

**WOMEN AND MINORITIES IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND
MATHEMATICS FIELDS PROGRAM (WAMS)**

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.318.

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on **April 12, 2012** (5:00 pm 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) requests comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and 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. Written stakeholder comments on this RFA should be submitted in accordance with the deadline set forth 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: Policy@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 Women and Minorities in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Fields Program (WAMS) Grants Program RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA requests applications for the Fiscal Year 2012 Women and Minorities in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Fields Program (WAMS) to support research and extension activities that increase the number of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas who will pursue and complete a postsecondary degree in science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) disciplines.

Specifically, the purpose of the WAMS grant program is to support research and extension projects that provide STEM knowledge, skills and competencies to women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas with successful placement: (a) in the workforce in STEM fields, or (b) as innovators and entrepreneurs adding value to the STEM fields in areas that have relevancy

to the USDA Secretary's priorities of Sustainable Energy; Climate Change; Food Safety; Nutrition and Childhood Obesity; and Global Food Security.

In FY 2012, approximately \$350,000 is made available to support the WAMS program. Eligible applicants are strongly encouraged to develop public-private alliances and advisory groups that allow coordination and access to resources which will ensure successful placement of WAMS participants in STEM fields that address USDA mission science. Where possible, projects that also contribute to the economic viability of rural communities are also encouraged.

This notice identifies the objectives for WAMS projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a WAMS award. 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

The Legislative authority for the Women and Minorities in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics Fields (WAMS) Program is contained in Section 7204 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (FCEA) (Pub. L. 110-246). This authority amends Section 1672 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 5925) for the Secretary of Agriculture to make competitive grants to increase the participation of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas (definition Part VIII E) in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) in higher education. Priority is extended to eligible institutions that carry out continuing programs funded by the Secretary.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The WAMS Program supports research and extension projects that have robust collaborations to increase the participation of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas in STEM fields that are relevant to USDA NIFA priority science areas as identified by the Secretary.

NIFA has recently refocused its mission to direct food and agricultural sciences research, education, and extension programs toward addressing societal challenges in the following five Challenge Areas:

- 1. Global Food Security and Hunger**
- 2. Climate Change**
- 3. Sustainable Energy**
- 4. Childhood Obesity**
- 5. Food Safety**

Guided by the five compelling NIFA Challenge Areas, WAMS-funded projects ensure a competent and qualified workforce to guide the food and agricultural sciences system. At the same time, WAMS-funded projects improve the economic health and viability of rural communities through the development of research and extension initiatives focused on new and emerging employment opportunities in STEM occupations. Finally, WAMS projects address the national challenge to increase the number and diversity (i.e., having a food and agricultural sciences workforce representative of the nation's population) of students entering food and agriculture related STEM disciplines. Where possible, projects that also contribute to the economic viability of rural communities are also encouraged.

To sustain viable, long-term STEM employment, WAMS student beneficiaries seeking research and extension opportunities should be pursuing a postsecondary degree supporting a STEM discipline. Therefore, applications submitted to this grants program must state how the funded project will address both of the following **WAMS Grant Program Goals**:

1. Develop successful academic recruitment and retention programs increasing the number of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas who will pursue and complete a postsecondary degree in STEM disciplines funded by the U.S. Secretary of

Agriculture, and for FY 2012, encourage projects focused on any of the five NIFA Challenge Areas listed in Part I, B; and,

2. Foster partnerships among academic institutions and employers that develop sustainable research or extension initiatives to increase the participation of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas in experiential learning opportunities leading to STEM-related careers in disciplines funded by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, and for FY 2012, encourage projects focused on any of the five NIFA Challenge Areas listed above.

To contribute to America's competitiveness, the target audience for this program, women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas, will have a greater probability of placement into the workforce where they can have a direct impact on improving the rural economy.

Applicants must address the following items within specified sections of the 'R&R Other Project Information Form (Part IV, B.3.):

1. Address one of the three Program Areas below (Part I, C.1.);
2. Within the Project Evaluation Plan (Part I, C.2.), discuss how project activities will advance the two WAMS Program Goals; and,
3. Document how project accomplishments (products, results, impacts, etc.) will be published or otherwise disseminated to the broadest extent throughout the academic community and the public (Part I, C.3., Dissemination and Continuation Plans).

Note: Your project's Program Area and primary NIFA Challenge Area must appear on the required Project Summary/Abstract. The applicant must follow the format suggested in Part IV, B.3. Field 7, for completing this Project Summary/Abstract.

Applicant institutions/organizations must demonstrate capacity for and a significant ongoing commitment to: teaching of the food and agricultural sciences, and specific discipline(s) for which a grant is requested.

C. Program Area Description

1. Program Areas:

A WAMS project should focus on at least one of the following three **Program Areas**:

- (a) **Recruitment/Retention Strategies:** Projects specifically developed to identify, advise, and place women and underrepresented minority students from rural areas into postsecondary academic degree-granting programs within STEM disciplines addressing at least one of the five NIFA Challenge Areas in Part I, B., and ensure their continued success through mentoring activities.
- (b) **Research and Extension Strategies:** Projects specifically developed to identify, advice, and place women and underrepresented minority students from rural areas into experiential learning opportunities within STEM disciplines listed in the five NIFA Challenge Areas and ensure their continued success through mentoring

activities. Where possible, projects that also contribute to the economic viability of rural communities are also encouraged.

- (c) **Career Guidance Programs or Motivational Strategies:** Projects specifically developed to identify, advise, and select women and underrepresented minority employees from rural areas currently working in non-STEM occupations to obtain any necessary, postsecondary academic coursework, research or extension training needed to switch to STEM-related occupations addressing the five NIFA Challenge Areas.

WAMS-funded projects encourage academic institutions, organizations, and employers to collectively identify and address a state, regional or national opportunity in STEM fields within the food and agricultural sciences with the potential to address any of the five NIFA Challenge Areas. An application submitted to the WAMS grants program should propose comprehensive and coordinated activities involving appropriate academic institutions and employers to address that challenge or opportunity. WAMS-funded project activities should demonstrate a state, regional or national impact on increasing the number of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas who pursue STEM employment.

For the WAMS grant program to have a sustained impact on women and minorities from rural areas, projects must encourage student beneficiaries to pursue an academic foundation of postsecondary academic coursework relevant to the occupational competencies required in the STEM workforce. Accordingly, a WAMS-funded project must first focus upon ensuring women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas selected to participate in this grants program have the appropriate academic credentials. A project narrative describing a WAMS-funded initiative must be creative in addressing the educational pipeline issues related to participation in STEM fields of women and underrepresented groups from rural areas. Examples of initiatives that WAMS might support include, but are not limited to:

- Implementing academic, research or extension training programs and providing related services to engage and encourage participation by women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas in STEM fields;
- Developing and administering training programs for educators, career counselors, and industry representatives in recruitment and retention strategies to increase and retain women and underrepresented minority students and job entrants into STEM fields; and
- Supporting education-to-workforce programs for women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas that provide counseling, job shadowing, mentoring, and entrepreneurial internship opportunities to guide participants in academic, research or extension training and work experience needed for STEM careers. Where possible, projects that also contribute to the economic viability of rural communities are encouraged.

In any WAMS initiative, collaborative partnerships among applicants and Federal and State agencies, national laboratories, or private industries and corporations, will ensure more viable opportunities for WAMS project beneficiaries to develop knowledge, skills and competencies that are relevant to the STEM workforce needs.

2. Project Evaluation Plan

All projects, regardless of the scope or program component they address, must have an evaluation plan that includes strategies for: (a) monitoring the project as it evolves to provide feedback to guide these efforts; (b) evaluating the effectiveness of the project in achieving its goals; and, (c) identifying positive and negative findings when the project is completed.

The complexity of the evaluation will depend on the scope of the project. Grantees are encouraged to obtain an independent evaluation to secure appropriate documentation of the project's outcomes and impacts. Such efforts should be led by knowledgeable and experienced individuals. Up to 10 percent of grant funds may be used to support this purpose.

In addition to measuring progress toward achieving specific project outcomes, the Evaluation Plan must also include a strategy for assessing how the project advances the two WAMS Program Goals identified in Part I, B. It should state the overall goal of the project, identify the measurable objectives, and indicate the outcome measures that will determine the success of the project and the relevance of these to the WAMS Program Goals. At a minimum, the project assessment should indicate a projected number of students impacted by the project as a result of the proposed activities.

The following suggested evaluation examples are derived from the Department of Education's Report of the Academic Competitiveness Council, May 2007, Federal STEM Goals and Metrics, Education Undergraduate National Goals and Metrics (<http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/competitiveness/acc-mathscience/index.html>).

- a. To demonstrate progress toward increasing the number of graduates, the following metric is suggested: first **provide baseline data** for the year preceding the grant award showing the number and/or percentage of students who declare and/or complete a major program of study within your unit; and second, provide similar data for the final year of the grant and include an assessment of the impact of your project on changes from the baseline data. List the expected number of students benefiting from this project and their level of education, a table is recommended.
- b. Suggested resources to obtain quantitative, baseline, student enrollment, degrees granted and employment data for comparison purposes; postsecondary institutions may find appropriate information in the Food and Agricultural Education Information System (FAEIS) at: <http://faeis.ahnrit.vt.edu/>, and from the publication: *Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in Food, Renewable Energy, and the Environment United States, 2010-2015* at:

<http://www.ag.purdue.edu/usda/employment/pages/default.aspx>. Other, similar source(s) may also be consulted.

- c. Applications should include a logic model detailing the activities, outputs, and outcomes of the proposed project. This information may be provided as a narrative or formatted into a logic model chart. The logic model planning process is a tool that should be used to develop your project **before** writing your proposal. More information and resources related to the logic model planning process are provided at http://www.nifa.usda.gov/about/strat_plan_logic_models.html.

Additional Resources for Project Evaluation

- NSF 02-057: The 2002 User-Friendly Handbook for Project Evaluation, a basic guide to quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods for educational projects
<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2002/nsf02057/start.htm>
- Field-Tested Learning Assessment Guide (FLAG): This website is designed for Science, Math, Engineering, and Technology Instructors who are interested in new approaches to evaluating student learning, attitudes, and performance. It has a primer on assessment and evaluation, classroom assessment techniques, discipline-specific tools, and resources - all in a searchable, downloadable data base, <http://www.flaguide.org/>
- American Evaluation Association. Online Resources
(<http://www.eval.org/resources.asp>)

3. Dissemination and Continuation Plans

Include in the project's Dissemination Plan a description of how the applicant plans to communicate project accomplishments (products, results and impacts, etc.) to the broadest extent throughout the academic community. This plan may include educational journals or other professional discipline publications, and presentations at regional or national conferences and workshops.

Include in the project's Continuation Plan a statement describing how project outcomes are expected to continue after NIFA funding ends. This Plan should include expected outputs and how these will become institutionalized in the academic program. Describe any strategies for adapting or expanding these outputs for a larger audience. Provide details of these changes, the expected outcomes, and the targeted audience from the expanded project.

4. Available Program Area Reference Materials

WAMS project activities should support the creation and adaptation of teaching strategies, research opportunities or extension projects that 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. Projects should also promote faculty expertise and encourage widespread implementation of educational innovation. This solicitation especially encourages projects with the potential to transform classroom practices

at the institutional level, to address current understanding of how students learn most effectively, and in response, how faculty adopt instructional approaches.

To enhance America's competitiveness, the STEM workforce has to be prepared in new ways to leverage nontraditional partnerships in disciplines, and sectors. WAMS projects will give beneficiaries the ability to address complex issues, including renewable energy, climate change and food safety. The following reference materials will be helpful in supporting your application and improving your proposed WAMS project. A new National Academies Report on *The New Biology for the 21st Century: Ensuring the United State Leads the Coming Biology Revolution* (http://books.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=12764) is a highly recommended reference as it provides vision for addressing the major societal challenges of food, climate, energy, and health. The report lays out potential for the coordinated and focused approach needed, using integrative support and ownership, to address fundamental problems faced by society. The WAMS program is an opportunity to begin to give attention to the recommendations to produce future innovations and innovators in STEM fields integral to the food and agricultural systems domain.

The National Academy of Science 2009 report entitled, *Transforming Agricultural Education for a Changing World* recommends that academic institutions with undergraduate programs in agriculture implement nine steps to better meet the needs of students, employers, and the broader society. For information on the full report, please refer to http://dels.nas.edu/ag_education/report.shtml and click on recommendations.

A 2009 white paper on Human Capacity Development prepared by the Academic Programs Section of the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities also provides recommendations that are useful in developing the agricultural workforce. Copies of the white paper entitled "Human Capacity Development - The Road to Global Competitiveness and Leadership in Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (FANRRS)," can be found at: <http://www.aplu.org/NetCommunity/Document.Doc?id=1639>. A WAMS project can benefit more women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas by leveraging the educational activities of beneficiaries of funded WAMS projects.

For the purpose of the WAMS program, underrepresented minority means any ethnic group – African American, Alaskan Native, American Indian, Asian American, Hispanic American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, or any other group – whose representation among food and agricultural professionals in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields is disproportionately less than their proportion in the general population as indicated in standard statistical references, or as documented on a case-by-case basis by national survey data submitted to and accepted by the Secretary.

5. Stakeholder Input on WAMS Grants Program

To align WAMS projects with workforce opportunities in STEM fields, as part of the WAMS application, a detailed plan is required that describes, establishes, and implements a process for gathering Stakeholder input regarding the focus of the planned activities of this program. Accordingly, each applicant must:

- a) Report actions taken to seek Stakeholder input (includes from Federal, State, and local programs; public-private partners; and others) that encourages their participation;
- b) Provide a brief statement on the process used by the recipient institution to identify individuals and groups who are Stakeholders and to collect input from them; and
- c) Provide a statement of how collected input was considered.

Each applicant must submit with the application, a report not to exceed one page (double spaced) that describes actions to seek stakeholder input on priorities to address participation of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas in STEM fields relevant to the USDA mission, and how this was considered in setting proposed project goals. See Part IV, B, 3(f) for information on attaching this report to the application.

The Women and Minorities in STEM Fields Program encourage projects that develop content and programs suitable for delivery through the Cooperative Extension System's eXtension Initiative. Funds may be used to contribute to existing Communities of Practice (CoP) or to form a new CoP focused on the STEM workforce in USDA mission areas (for examples of developing COPs and guidance on forming COPs, see http://cop.extension.org/wiki/Main_Page). Projects must align with the eXtension vision, mission, and values. A letter of acknowledgement from eXtension is required, and a letter of support may be required from one or more of the Communities of Practice. For detailed guidance on how to partner with eXtension, go to <http://create.extension.org/node/2057>.

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. It is anticipated that approximately \$350,000 will be made available to support the WAMS program.

Awards issued as a result of this RFA will have designated the Automated Standard Applications for Payment System (ASAP), operated by the Department of Treasury's Financial Management Service, as the payment system for funds. For more information see http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/method_of_payment.html.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2012, applications may be submitted to the WAMS program as one of the following types of requests:

(1) New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the WAMS 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 WAMS Program but not funded. Applicants must respond to the previous review panel summary, (see Responses to Previous Review, Part IV). Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

C. Project Types

WAMS applications may be submitted in one of two project types: (i) Regular Projects; and, (ii) Joint Projects:

Project periods for either project type may range from 18 to 36 months. Recipients may be eligible for no-cost extensions, but no carry over or extension is permitted for these projects beyond five years. Any unexpended funds must be returned to the U.S. Treasury. Projects should conclude no sooner than 18 months after the award start date to allow sufficient time to evaluate project results and to report project impacts. The statutory time limit for awards under this program is five years. Awards cannot be extended beyond this time period.

1. Regular Projects (Single Institution/Organization)

Applicants may request between \$75,000 to \$150,000 (total, not per year) for a Regular Project. In a Regular Project, the applicant executes the project without the requirement of sharing grant funds with other project partners.

2. Joint Projects (Applicant + Two or more Partners)

Applicants may request up to \$300,000 (total, not per year) for a Joint Project. In a Joint Project, the applicant executes the project with assistance from at least two additional partners. To demonstrate a substantial involvement with the project, **the applicant institution/organization submitting a joint project must retain at least 30 percent of the awarded funds, but no more than 70% of the awarded funds and no cooperating entity may receive less than 10 percent of awarded funds.**

The total number of grants awarded by this grant program will depend on the number and type of meritorious applications submitted in response to this notice. There is no predetermined number of Regular or Joint Project that may be awarded in any competition.

Based on the project scope and budget of all applications selected for awards, the actual individual grant amounts awarded by NIFA under this grants program may differ from the funds requested by the applicant. In such cases, revised budgets and revised plans of work may be required by NIFA before an award is made.

There is no limit on the number of applications that may be submitted by an eligible applicant. However, a successful applicant institution/organization will only be awarded a maximum of one (1) grant per fiscal year under this program.

There are no limits on a cumulative basis (i.e., funding from multiple years). The limits previously described are only applicable to FY 2012 funding.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may be submitted by eligible applicants and may be a collaborative state, tribal, local, or regionally-based network or partnership of public or private entities. Eligible applicants are: (a) State agricultural experiment stations; (b) colleges and universities; (c) university research foundations; (d) other research institutions and organizations; (e) Federal agencies; (f) national laboratories; (g) private organizations or corporations; (h) individuals; or (i) any group consisting of 2 or more of the entities described in subparagraphs (a) through (h). Priority will be given to eligible institutions that carry out continuing programs funded by the Secretary.

An applicant's failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of an application deadline will result in NIFA failing to review, or even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award.

Award recipients may subcontract portions of the project to organizations not eligible to apply, provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

For institutions of higher education, individual branches of a State university system, or other system of higher education, separately accredited as degree granting institutions, are treated as separate institutions, and are therefore eligible to apply for WAMS Program awards. Separate branches or campuses of a college not individually accredited as degree-granting institutions are not treated as separate institutions, and are therefore, not eligible to apply for WAMS Program awards. Accreditation must be by an agency or association recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

Grant recipients are required to match the USDA funds awarded on dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources with cash and in-kind contributions (see Part IV, B. 6. for details).

NIFA may waive the matching funds requirement for a grant if NIFA determines that:

- (a) The results of the project, while of particular benefit to a specific agricultural commodity, are likely to be applicable to agricultural commodities generally; or
- (b) The project involves a minor commodity, the project deals with scientifically important research, and the grant recipient is unable to satisfy the matching funds requirement.

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/assets/Grants.govRegistrationBrochure.pdf>.** Item 2. below mentions the “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.” Part II.1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide contains additional explanatory language regarding the registration process.

Steps to Obtain Application Package Materials

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

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-WAMS-003711”** 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), **or submitting the application** then refer to resources available on the Grants.gov Web site first (<http://www.grants.gov/>). Grants.gov assistance is also available as follows:

Grants.gov customer support
1-800-518-4726 Toll-Free or 606-545-5035
Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Closed on [Federal Holidays](#).
Email: support@grants.gov

Grants.gov iPortal: Top 10 requested help topics (FAQs), Searchable knowledge base, self service ticketing and ticket status, and live web chat (available 7:00 A.M. - 9:00 P.M. ET). Get help now!

Please have the following information available when contacting Grants.gov, to help expedite your inquiry:

- Funding Opportunity Number (FON)
- Name of Agency You Are Applying To
- Specific Area of Concern

See http://grants.gov/applicants/app_help_reso.jsp or <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 the attachment requirements (e.g., portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the Guide. **ANY PROPOSALS THAT ARE NON-COMPLIANT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS (i.e., content format, pdf file format, file name restrictions, and no password protected files) WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM NIFA REVIEW.** Partial applications will be excluded from NIFA review. With documented prior approval, subsequent submissions of an application will be accepted until close of business on the closing date in the RFA.

If you do not own PDF-generating software, Grants.gov provides online tools to assist applicants. Users will find a link to “Convert Documents to PDF” on http://grants.gov/help/download_software.jsp#pdf_conversion_programs.

For any questions related to the preparation of an application please review the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide and the applicable request for applications. If assistance is still needed for preparing application forms content, contact:

- Email: electronic@nifa.usda.gov
- Phone: 202-401-5048
- Business hours: Monday through Friday, 7:00 am – 5:00 pm Eastern Time, excluding Federal holidays.

1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

Field 8. Type of Application – Only ‘New’ or ‘Resubmitted’ applications are permitted.

Field 12. Proposed Project Start Date and End Date – A project’s duration should be at least 18 months (to allow time for assessment and evaluation). The statutory time limit for projects is 36 months. **The effective date for projects must be on or before September 1, 2012.**

Field 15. Estimated Project Funding –

Total Estimated Project Funding = Amount of Federal funds requested (See Part II. C. for maximum award amounts permitted.)

Total Federal & Non-Federal Funds = Federal funds + Matching Funds (Note: The Matching Requirement for this program is 100% (see Part III. B.))

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

2. SF 424 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

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

a. *Field 7.* Project Summary/Abstract – (PDF Attachment)

Title the attachment ‘Project Summary’ in the document header and save file as ‘Project Summary’. Include the following underlined text along with your responses:

- List the Project Title (must be descriptive of the proposed project);
- List the Project Director (and any) Co-Project Director(s) (include institutional/organizational affiliation for each);
- List your project’s Program Area: (see Part I, C.1.; list only one Program Area);
- List your project’s *primary* NIFA Challenge Area: (see Part I, B.; list only one Area)
- Joint Project: Yes or No? (See ‘Definitions’, Part VIII. E.);

- Partners: If Joint Project, list all partner institutions/organizations that will share grant funding (Note: Each Partner so identified needs to have their budget information submitted on a separate subaward budget attachment);
- Total Funds Requested: (List total Federal funds requested for this application. If this project is a Joint Project Proposal, also list each partner's total funds requested next to the institution/organization's name); and
- Summary Text - Provide a very concise (250 word) summary of your project to include:
 - a. Purpose: What is the major problem your project will address?
 - b. Audience: Who are the intended beneficiaries? Who will be impacted?
 - c. Products: What will be produced? and
 - d. Outcome/Impact: What is the intended result (consequence) of your project? Describe as the primary benefits to your audience. Note: outcomes/impacts should be measurable, and should be included in your project's assessment/evaluation plan to demonstrate you will assess whether or not these benefits were achieved.

b. *Field 8*. Project Narrative (PDF attachment).

Title the attachment 'Project Narrative' in the document header and save file as 'ProjectNarrative'.

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative for Regular Projects **shall not exceed 20 double-spaces pages** of written text. The Project Narrative for Joint Projects **shall not exceed 30 double-space pages** of written text (excluding up to a maximum of 5 additional pages for supporting figures and tables in both Regular and Joint Projects). This maximum page limit ensures fair and equitable competition. Applications exceeding the applicable page limitation will not be reviewed. Reviewers will be instructed not to review material in excess of this limit. This page limitation applies regardless of whether figures or tables are included. All pages, including those with figures and tables, should be numbered sequentially.

The Project Narrative in this Field 8 attachment contains the major description of your project. It follows the WAMS program Evaluation Criteria (Part V. B). Accordingly, please provide your responses in the following format: (Note: To facilitate application review and evaluation, include the following underlined wording as headings in your attached Project Narrative, followed by your response for each item).

1. **Relevancy – A. Introduction**: The introduction should include a clear statement of how the project will address the two WAMS Program Goals from Part I, B. Documentation should also include the long-term goal(s) and supporting objectives of the proposed project. Discuss the potential long-range impacts of the proposed project on the participation of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas in STEM fields, relevant to the USDA mission. Describe in detail the applicant's experience with USDA-funded programs in serving the identified audiences of women and underrepresented minorities in rural areas. Explain and document how the project addresses collaborations that align with the proposed project's objectives and WAMS Program Goals.

2. **Expected Outcomes and Evaluation:** Identify appropriate methodologies for reviewing and evaluating the project in relation to meeting WAMS Program Goals and expected project outcomes. Provide information that would include key elements that describe how you plan to assess an increase in participation of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas in STEM fields. What change(s) occurred as a result of the project as determined by comparison of the baseline pre-project to post-project? To what extent is the pathway reproducible, scalable, and portable? The development of a Logic Model as the proposed project is planned and executed will strengthen the potential for successful project outcomes. This information may be provided as a narrative or formatted into a logic model chart. The logic model planning process is a tool that should be used to develop your project **before** writing your proposal. See Part IV, B.3 (f) for details on where to attach this information to your application. More information and resources related to the logic model planning process are provided at: http://www.nifa.usda.gov/about/strat_plan_logic_models.html. Discuss plans to identify successes and build upon and disseminate them.
3. **Technical Merit** – Target Audience(s) and STEM Fields. Compare the numbers of students (or faculty) currently involved in food and agricultural activities with the expected number you plan will be directly impacted by this project’s activities. Justify the need for the proposed project by: (a) identifying the beneficiary target audience(s) and by (b) explaining their needs (size, region, potential economic value of trained beneficiaries, etc); and (c) by briefly summarizing all the other similar WAMS research and extension training programs that are available for the identified target audience. Make sure to clarify project objectives and outcomes, and to ensure these are aligned with the WAMS program purpose, priorities, and goals. Define any available baseline data on women and underrepresented minorities impacted by this funded project and describe information gathered from which variations will be measured. Identify who is being impacted by the project activities; which NIFA Challenge Areas are to be addressed; and indicate new careers or entrepreneurial enterprise by participants in STEM fields. State what percentage of your budget will be allocated to serving these group(s). Address the following, appropriate project issues in this section: (a) project necessity, innovation, and originality; (b) for proposed projects with *research* components, identify the scientific approach and potential to increase knowledge not only in STEM research but also in attracting women and minorities from rural areas in areas of STEM fields relevant to the USDA mission; (c) for proposed projects with *extension* components, identify the approach and potential to increase technology transfer not only in STEM but also in attracting women and minorities from rural areas in areas of STEM fields relevant to the USDA mission; (d) adequacy of the proposed activities to meet the needs of the targeted audience including suitability and feasibility of the approach; and (e) expected outcomes of the project in terms of the number of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas trained and placed in the STEM workforce, the value of their enterprise, and the needs of the targeted audience.
4. **Achievability - Rationale and Significance.** What is the: (a) probability of project success; and (b) probability of project sustainability beyond the life of the grant. Concisely present the rationale behind the proposed project. Describe the alignment of

the proposed project with the WAMS program purpose, priorities, and goal. Any novel ideas or contributions that the proposed project offers should also be discussed in this section.

5. **Key personnel** – Document key project personnel’s prior experience in research, extension, education, outreach, mentoring, and training of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas. Also, include qualifications of key personnel to carry out the administration of the proposed project and institutional experience and competence.
6. **Adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation** – Document that additional personnel, collaborations, facilities and other resources are available, committed and well-positioned to achieve the integration needed to ensure that the WAMS project will recruit, lead/train and place the target audience in STEM fields at the level and scale(s) to increase America’s competitiveness.
7. **Adequacy of Plans for Management, Dissemination of Evaluation of the proposed project** – Include a project timeline. Explain how the project timeline provides for: (a) sufficient time and resources to meet project objectives; (b) effective functioning of collaboration(s), (c) participatory evaluation of project activities, including the development and use of outcomes-based measures and reporting, (d) a plan for tracking success of participants in STEM fields, and (e) a proven marketing plan to communicate activities, outputs, and impacts to wide-ranging audiences.

c. *Field 9. Bibliography & Cited References* - (Optional PDF Attachment. No Page Limit). Title the attachment as ‘Bibliography & References Cited’ in the document header and save file as ‘Bibliography&ReferencesCited’.

All work cited in the text, including that of key personnel, should be referenced in this section of the application. All references must:

- Be complete;
- Include titles and all co-authors;
- Conform to an acceptable journal format; and
- Be listed in alphabetical order using the last name of the first author or listed by number in the order of citation.

References are not considered in the page limitation for the Project Narrative.

d. *Field 10. Facilities & Other Resources.* - (Optional PDF Attachment).

If needed, describe the types, location, and availability of instrumentation and physical facilities necessary to carry out the work proposed. **If special academic, private or government laboratories or facilities are being used, include a letter in the application from the authorized representative of the facility describing the proposed arrangements and availability.** This letter should be included as a part of Other Attachments, Field 12 below.

e. *Field 11. Equipment Documentation* - (Optional PDF Attachment).

Equipment purchased (defined as in excess of \$5,000 for each item or other threshold as determined by proposing organization) must be fully justified under this section. Other purchases (e.g., computers, laboratory materials, etc.) are described, instead, in the Budget Justification section under the 'Materials and Supplies' line item.

f. *Field 12. Other Attachments.*

- **Response to Previous Review - PDF Attachment. 1 Page Limit.** 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.

Matching Funds Documentation – PDF Attachment. Grant recipients are required to match the USDA funds awarded on dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources with cash and in-kind contributions.

NIFA may waive the matching funds requirement for a grant if NIFA determines that:

- (a) the results of the project, while of particular benefit to a specific agricultural commodity, are likely to be applicable to agricultural commodities generally; or
- (b) the project involves a minor commodity, the project deals with scientifically important research, and the grant recipient is unable to satisfy the matching funds requirement.

Matching funds must come from non-Federal sources, and are not required to come in any particular amount from any one source. However, all matching funds pledged in this application must be accompanied by documentation. Signed letters from each source of matching funds are required, and should be attached in this Field 12. Recommended contents of these letters are described below in item 6, R&R Fed and Non-Fed Budget.

- **Appendices to Project Narrative – PDF Attachment.** Title the attachment as 'Appendices' in the document header and save file as 'Appendices'.

Appendices are strictly limited to two (2) examples of materials from previous projects similar to those proposed in this project.

- Reprints (papers that have been published in peer-reviewed journals); and
- Preprints (only manuscripts in press for a peer-reviewed journal will be accepted and must be accompanied by letters of acceptance from the publishing journals). Preprints attached in support of the application should be single-spaced. Each preprint must be identified with the name of the submitting organization, the name(s) of the PD(s), and the title of the application.

Information may not be appended to an application to circumvent page limitations prescribed for the Project Narrative. Extraneous materials will not be used during the peer review process.

- **Stakeholder Implementation Plan** – (PDF Attachment). Title attachment ‘Stakeholder Implementation Plan’ in the document header and save file as ‘StakeholderImplementationPlan’.
- **Logic Model** – (PDF Attachment. 2-Page Limit). Title the attachment ‘Logic Model’ and save file as ‘LogicModel’.
- **Timeline/Management Plan** – (PDF Attachment. 3-Page Limit). Title the attachment ‘Management Plan’ and save file as ‘ManagementPlan’.

Each WAMS project must propose a timeline lifecycle that will address recruitment, training, successful placement, and participation in STEM fields relevant to USDA mission. The complexity of the WAMS projects therefore makes it important to have a clearly articulated timeline/management plan. Relate the experience your organization and key staff have in designing and operating activities similar to those described in this request for applications. Explain the selection of partner institutions by describing their roles and activities in the proposed project. Explain how the partnership will be managed. Describe the commitment of your organization and your partners to this project and how the project will be sustained beyond the period of the award. Include a strategy to enhance coordination, collaboration, communication, tracking success of participants in STEM fields, and data sharing and reporting among members of the project team and stakeholder groups.

- **Collaborative Efforts:** Cooperative, multi-institutional and multi-disciplinary applications are encouraged. For the WAMS grants program, successful project outcomes can be facilitated through collaborative efforts that will allow WAMS projects to meet the workforce needs in STEM fields for local, state, region, and/or national opportunities. Describe leveraging of resources in partnerships, at the project level, to contribute to achieving the WAMS program goals. Identify each institutional unit contributing to the proposed project and designate the lead institution or institutional unit. When appropriate, the project should be coordinated with the efforts of other state and/or national programs. Clearly describe and define the programmatic roles, responsibilities and budget for each collaborator: (1) A signed letter of Agreement by the collaborating institution or organization Authorizing Representative (AR) or Certifying Official indicating acceptance of the role in the proposed project; (2) a detailed statement of work outlining what role collaborating partner(s) will play, principals involved and detailed deliverables and timeframes; and, (3) a detailed budget for collaborating institution(s) or organization(s). A Biographical Sketch (vitae) should be provided for key personnel the collaborating institution or organization.

Also, explain how the project will maximize other partnership ventures and collaborative efforts to strengthen the food and agricultural sciences STEM workforce. Also, explain

how the project will stimulate participation of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas in STEM fields, in academia, federal, state, local, Tribal government, or the private sector in enhancing food and agricultural sciences, especially in rural communities.

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

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. A Senior/Key Person Profile should be completed for the PD and each co-PD, senior associate, and other professional personnel.

(1) Attach Biographical Sketch Field – (PDF Attachment. 2-Page Limit, excluding publications listings). A biographical sketch (vitae) of the PD and each co-PD, senior associate, and other professional personnel should be included. Title the attachment ‘Biographical Sketch’ in the document header and save file as ‘BiographicalSketch’.

(2) Attach Current and Pending Support Field – (PDF Attachment. No Page Limit). Title the attachment ‘Current and Pending Support’ in the document header and save file as ‘CurrentandPendingSupport’. A suggested template for the Current and Pending Support can be found at: http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/templates/current_pending.doc.

Current and Pending Support information is only required for personnel with PD or co-PD indicated as their Project Role on the R&R Senior/Key Person Profile. All applications must contain a list of all Current and Pending Support detailing public or private support (including in-house support) to which personnel identified in the application have committed portions of their time, whether or not salary support for person(s) involved is included in the budget (see link to template above). Please note that the project being proposed should be included in the pending section of the form. Total project time listed for each PD should be indicated as a percent effort and should not exceed 100% for concurrent projects.

5. R&R Personal Data – As noted in Part V, 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award. **If completing the information, do not enter any data in the field requesting the social security number.**

6. R&R Federal & Non-Federal 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.

Applications must contain an annual budget for each year of the project and a cumulative budget. A Budget Narrative in PDF format that justifies and documents specific expenditures and subcontracts is required. The budget should include cost to attend at least one Project Directors’ meeting. Reasonable travel and associated costs are allowable under the terms of this grant.

Matching Funds: This grants program requires matching funds as specified under Part III, B. The budget narrative should include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Written verification means:

- (a) For any third party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each donation, signed by the authorized representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) The name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) the dollar amount of the cash donation (the budget narrative must describe how the cash donation will be used on the project); and (5) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period; and
- (b) For any third party in-kind contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each contribution, signed by the authorized representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) The name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the third party in kind contribution and a description of how the fair market value was determined; and (5) a statement that the donor will make the contribution during the grant period.

The sources and amount of all matching support from outside the applicant institution should be summarized on a separate page and placed in the proposal as part of the Budget Narrative. All pledge agreements must be placed in the proposal immediately following the summary of matching support.

The value of applicant contributions to the project shall be established in accordance with applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circular A-21 (2 CFR Part 220), Cost Principles for Educational Institutions, for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs. **All contributions, including cash and third party in-kind, must meet the criteria included in section 23 of 7 CFR 3019, “Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-profit Organizations.”**

Indirect Costs (Field H)

If available, the current rate negotiated with the cognizant Federal negotiating agency should be used. Indirect costs (F&A) may not exceed the negotiated rate. If a negotiated rate is used, the percentage and base should be indicated. If no rate has been established the applicant may indicate "None—will negotiate" and a reasonable dollar amount for indirect costs may be requested, which will be subject to approval by USDA. In the latter case, if a proposal is recommended for funding, an indirect cost rate proposal to support the amount of indirect costs requested must be submitted and a rate negotiated prior to those funds being released. NIFA will request an indirect cost rate proposal and provide instructions, as necessary.

An applicant may elect not to charge indirect costs and, instead, use all grant funds for direct costs. If indirect costs are not charged, the phrase "None requested" should be written in this space. (Also see Part IV.D. for further details.)

7. R&R Subaward Budget Attachment (Only required if submitting a Subaward Proposal) All subawards' budgets must be included the R&R Subaward Budget Attachment. Annual budget(s)

including a budget justification and a cumulative budget are required for each sub-contractual arrangement.

8. Supplemental Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part VI, 1. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

- a. **Field 2. Program to which you are applying.** Enter the program code name “Women and Minorities in STEM Fields” and the program code “WAM”.
- b. **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.** See Part VI, 1.6 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template. Include this one-page attachment even if your responses to the questions are “N/A”.

A Conflict of Interest List must be provided for all individuals who have submitted a Biographical Sketch (vitae). Collate all Conflict of Interest lists into a single document. The list must be prepared as a table with headings and include complete information described under each heading. The headings are: (1) Name (please provide first name, middle initial, and last name); (2) Name of institution and or organization of affiliation; and (3) Category(ies) of conflict (see descriptions below). **The lists can only be submitted as a single PDF attachment.**

For all individuals who have submitted a Biographical Sketch (vitae), list alphabetically by last name (and with last name first) the full names of individuals and indicate which categorical conflict(s) listed below applies:

- (a) All co-authors on publications within the past three years, including pending publications and submissions;
- (b) All collaborators on projects within the past three years, including current and planned collaborations;
- (c) All thesis or postdoctoral advisees/advisors; and
- (d) All persons in your field with whom you have had a consulting/financial arrangement/other conflict-of-interest in the past three years.

A suggested template for the Conflict of Interest List can be found at:
http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/templates/conflict_of_interest.doc.

Note: Other individuals working in the applicant's specific area are not in conflict with the applicant unless those individuals fall within one of the listed categories. The National Program Leader(s) responsible for the WAMS program must be informed of any additional conflicts of interest that arise after the application is submitted.

C. Submission Dates and Times

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 close of business on **April 12, 2012** (5:00 pm 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 email. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate email addresses, where designated, on the SF 424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received a confirmation message **from NIFA** regarding a submitted application within 30 days of the established deadline, please contact the Program Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable 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 or a delay in the issuance of an award. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

Section 720 of the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2012 (P.L. 112-55) limits indirect costs to 30 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 30 percent of total Federal funds awarded.

Program funds may only be used for research and extension activities in the training, outreach and mentoring of rural women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas in STEM fields relevant to USDA mission. Funds made available for grants in this program shall not be used for scholarship or fellowship purposes, the construction of a new building or facility or the acquisition, expansion, remodeling, or alteration of an existing building or facility (including site grading and improvement, and architect fees).

Special Notices (Applicable to Grantees and Subcontractors)

1. NIFA will withhold all funds for a WAMS award to an applicant requesting indirect costs if the applicant has not negotiated an indirect cost rate with its cognizant federal agency.
2. If a grantee is in the process of negotiating an indirect cost rate with its cognizant federal agency, NIFA will withhold all funds from that grantee until the indirect cost rate has been established.
3. If an institution's indirect cost rate (with its cognizant federal agency) has expired or will expire in the near future, a clear statement on renegotiation efforts must be included in the application. (See Part IV B.6. R&R Federal & Non-Federal Budget, above.)
4. It is incumbent on all applicants to have a current indirect cost rate or begin negotiations (with its cognizant federal agency) to establish an indirect cost rate prior to the WAMS

submission deadline. Because it may take several months to obtain an indirect cost rate, applicants needing an indirect cost rate are encouraged to start work on establishing these rates well in advance of submitting a WAMS application. (Also see Part IV.B.6 for further details.)

5. For organizations or entities which do not have a federal cognizant agency, the applicant may indicate "None—will negotiate with USDA/NIFA" and a reasonable dollar amount for indirect costs may be requested, which will be subject to approval by USDA. If a proposal is recommended for funding, an indirect cost rate proposal to support the amount of indirect costs requested must be submitted and a rate negotiated prior to those funds being released. NIFA will request an indirect cost rate proposal and provide instructions, as necessary. (Also see Part IV.B.6 for further details.)

An applicant may elect not to charge indirect costs and, instead, use all grant funds for direct costs. If indirect costs are not charged, the phrase "None requested" should be written in this space.

6. Indirect cost rates will be established for primary awardee, but not for sub-awardees.

E. Other Submission Requirements

The applicant should follow the submission requirements noted in Part IV, section 1.9 in the document entitled “NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.”

For information about the **status of a submitted application**, see Part III., section 6. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

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.

WAMS proposals will be evaluated using a peer review process to find win-win matches between the proposed work, capabilities of applicant organization(s), and the WAMS grant program purpose, priorities and goals. 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 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, and managers/operators in STEM fields) 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 evaluation criteria below will be used in reviewing applications submitted in response to this RFA. The percentage weight that will be given to each criterion is listed after the criterion.

Following the completion of a peer review process for grant proposals received under this section, the Secretary shall provide a priority to those grant proposals, found in the peer review process to be scientifically meritorious, that involve the cooperation of multiple entities [see 7 U.S.C. § 5925{d}]. NIFA encourages applicants to (i) develop robust collaborations that include governmental, non-governmental, P-14 education, and community-based organizations with expertise in training and outreach to women and underrepresented minorities, from rural areas, in STEM fields relevant to USDA mission; and (ii) state what percentage of the project budget will be designated for use in identifying, **recruiting and placing** women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas in STEM fields.

All project applications submitted for funding shall be technically evaluated by a review panel using the criteria below, specifically:

- **Relevancy (20%)** – Explanation and documentation that the project is directed toward: (i) specific areas identified in Part I, B in this RFA. These areas are designed to yield improvements in participation in STEM fields by women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas as defined in FCEA; and (ii) collaborations that align with the proposed project’s objectives and WAMS grant program goals. Identify appropriate

methodologies for reviewing and evaluating expected project outcomes and impacts (Project Evaluation).

- **Technical merit (35%)** – will be evaluated on the basis of: (a) Necessity, innovation, and originality, (b) For proposed projects with research components, as practicable, scientifically sound approach, and potential to increase knowledge not only in STEM research but also in attracting women and minorities from rural areas in areas of STEM fields relevant to USDA mission, (c) Demonstrated awareness of previous and alternative research, extension, training, outreach, mentoring and education programs that address the needs identified for the target audience, (d) Clarity and delineation of objectives and outcomes and alignment of the proposed project with the WAMS program purpose, priorities, and goal, (e) Conceptual adequacy of the proposed activities to meet the needs of the targeted audience including suitability and feasibility of the approach, (f) Expected outcomes of the project in terms of the number of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas trained and placed in the STEM workforce, the value of their enterprise, and the needs of the targeted audience, (g) Probability of success of the project; and (h) Sustainability beyond the life of the grant.
- **Achievability (15%)** - Probability of success of the project is appropriate given the level of originality, and target audience.
- **Key personnel (10%)** - Demonstration of feasibility through prior experience in research, extension, education, outreach, mentoring, and training of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas. Also, qualifications of key personnel to conduct the proposed project and institutional experience and competence in serving the needs of the identified target audience.
- **Adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation and Adequacy of Plans for Management of the proposed project (20%).** – Demonstration that the personnel, collaborations and facilities and instrumentation are available, committed and well-positioned to achieve the integration needed to ensure that the WAMS project will recruit, lead/train and place the target audience in STEM fields at the level and scale(s) to increase America’s competitiveness. **Document the time and resources allocated for:** (a) systematic attainment of objectives and effective functioning of collaboration(s) to facilitate successful achievement of program and project goals and objectives; (b) a plan for participatory evaluation of project activities, development, and use of outcomes-based measures and reporting, and (c) an effective communication of activities, outputs, and impacts to wide-ranging audiences and for tracking success of participants in STEM fields; and (d) a plan for administration of the proposed project and its maintenance, partnerships, and collaborative efforts.

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., 1801 Robert Fulton Drive, Suite 340, Reston, Virginia 20191. Phone: (888) 349-7715. 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 his/her 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 (parts 3015, 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 PD's 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 re-competition for funds;
- (6) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Director during the project period;
- (7) Legal authority (or authorities) 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 220 – Cost Principles for Educational Institutions (OMB Circular A-21).

2 CFR Part 225 – Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments (OMB Circular A-87).

2 CFR Part 230 – Cost Principles for Non-profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-122).

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

7 CFR Part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-129 regarding debt collection.

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 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21, A-87, and A-122, now codified at 2 CFR Parts 220, 225 and 230), and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224)), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3016 – USDA Implementation of Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments.

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 3019—USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations (2 CFR Part 215).

7 CFR Part 3021—USDA Implementation of 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 Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3407—USDA procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

7 CFR 3430—Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Grant Programs--General Grant Administrative Provisions.

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

Grantees are to submit initial project information and annual and summary reports to NIFA's electronic, Web-based inventory system or Current Research Information System (CRIS) that facilitates both grantee submissions of project outcomes and public access to information on Federally-funded projects. The details of these reporting requirements are included in the award terms and conditions.

Annual Performance Report:

Annual performance reports are due 90 days after the anniversary date of the award and should be submitted CRIS.

Annual performance reports must:

1. Identify each participant of target audience (women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas in STEM fields) in advancing from the baseline established in funded objectives;
2. Address the collaborations and placement of WAMS target audiences to demonstrate gainful employment in STEM fields;
3. Provide a comparison of actual accomplishments as gains in STEM knowledge skills and capabilities, as well as new participants in USDA mission science through outreach activities, new careers or entrepreneurial enterprise with the goals established for the

- reporting period;
4. If established goals were not met, give the reasons;
 5. Include documentation of outputs; i.e., significant activities, including dissemination activities, events, services or products that contribute toward achieving the goals and objectives of the project;
 6. Include outcomes/impacts; i.e., a change in knowledge, actions or conditions; and
 7. Include any other indication of increased capacity for carrying out the USDA mission.

Final Technical Report:

A final technical report must be submitted to CRIS 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 technical report should be a summary of the completed project, including:

1. Identify all of the WAMS project participants from the target audience who were recruited, trained and gainfully employed (full funding details and funds aligned to each beneficiary for the target audience will be needed);
2. A review of project objectives, tracking success on participants in STEM fields beyond funding, and accomplishments;
3. A description of outcomes resulting from the project and activities undertaken to disseminate these outcomes;
4. An explanation of partnerships and collaborative ventures that resulted from the project, including future initiatives that are planned as a result of the project;
5. A description of the project's impact on the PD(s), the institution(s) involved, and the community;
6. Any pertinent data on project personnel and beneficiaries. The final technical report also must contain any other information specified in the terms and conditions of the award; and,
7. Hard copies or samples of products or publications resulting from this project must be sent to the NIFA National Program Leader overseeing WAMS (see Part VII).

Project Director's Conference:

During the tenure of a grant, PD's must attend at least one National Project Directors' meeting, if offered, in Washington, DC, or any other announced location. The timing and intervals for PD meetings are determined by the WAMS program office. A reasonable amount for travel costs to attend the meeting should be included in the budget. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss project and grant management, opportunities for collaborative efforts, partnerships and capacity building, project updates/presentations, future directions for program reform, and opportunities to enhance dissemination of exemplary end products/results.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Dr. Saleia Afele-Faamuli, National Program Leader, Division of Community and Education, Institute of Youth, Family and Community, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA); Stop 2251; 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-2250; Telephone: (202) 720-0384; Fax: (202) 720-2030; E-mail: WAMS@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 program 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. 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 the award.

f. Changes in Approved Budget: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, 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 Federal Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions](#) for the applicable definitions for this NIFA grant program.

For the purpose of this program, the following additional definitions are applicable:

Institution of higher education means an educational institution in any state that:

- (1) admits as regular students those 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 educational program for which the institution awards a bachelor's degree or provides not less than a 2-year program that is acceptable for full credit toward such a degree;
- (4) is a public or other nonprofit institution; and,
- (5) is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association, or if not so accredited, is an institution that has been granted pre-accreditation status by such an agency or association that has been recognized by the Secretary of Education for the granting of pre-accreditation status, and the Secretary of Education has determined that there is satisfactory assurance that the institution will meet the accreditation standards of such an agency or association within a reasonable time.

Joint project means an application for a project: (1) which will involve the applicant institution/organization working in cooperation with **two or more** other entities not legally affiliated with the applicant institution/organization, including other schools, colleges, universities, community colleges, junior colleges, units of State government, private sector organizations, or a consortium of institutions; and (2) where the applicant institution/organization and each cooperating entity will assume a significant role in the conduct of the proposed project. To demonstrate a substantial involvement with the project, **the applicant institution/organization submitting a joint project must retain at least 30 percent but not more than 70 percent of the awarded funds, and no cooperating entity may receive less than 10 percent of awarded funds.** Only the applicant institution/organization must meet the definition of an eligible institution/organization as specified in this RFA; other entities participating in a joint project are not required to meet the definition of an eligible institution/organization.

Rural Area means any locality that has a population of 50,000 inhabitants or less, and is generally characterized as having fewer than 1,000 inhabitants per square mile (U.S. Census Bureau).

Training means the planned and systematic acquisition of practical knowledge, skills or competencies required for a trade, occupation or profession delivered by formal classroom instruction, laboratory instruction, or practicum experience that prepares women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas for participation in STEM fields.

Underrepresented minority means any ethnic group – African American, Alaskan Native, American Indian, Asian-American, Hispanic American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, or any other group – whose representation among food and agricultural professionals in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields is disproportionately less than their proportion in the general population as indicated in standard statistical references, or as documented on a case-by-case basis by national survey data submitted to and accepted by the Secretary.