

Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative

FY 2012 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: March 9, 2012



U.S. Department of Agriculture

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

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

ORGANIC AGRICULTURE RESEARCH AND EXTENSION INITIATIVE

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.307, Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative.

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on **March 9, 2012 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time)**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is requesting comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program, 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 Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: NIFA announces the availability of grant funds and requests applications for the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) for fiscal year (FY) 2012 to solve critical organic agriculture issues, priorities, or problems through the integration of research and extension activities. OREI funds research and extension programs that enhance the ability of producers and processors who have already adopted organic standards to grow and market high quality organic agricultural products. The amount available for support of this program in FY 2012 is anticipated to be approximately \$19 million.

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

grant. NIFA additionally requests stakeholder input from any interested party for use in the development of the next RFA for this program.

*******Please Read*******

Important Information Regarding Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative Policies and Procedures

*******Please Read*******

- The Executive Summary (see Part IV, B. 3b) and the Bibliography & References (see Part V, 4.9 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide) are required documents.
- Please note a new project type to support development of data products and analytics on the impacts of research and extension activities funded by the Integrated Organic Program (Organic Research and Extension Initiative and Organic Transitions Program) on the organic industry. See Part II, C. for additional information.
- No planning grants will be offered this year.
- Certain proposals are required to include funds for a project director workshop in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area in the budget (see Part IV, B. 6).
- A new priority is offered (2012 Priority 8). See Part I, B. for further information.
- Inclusion of eXtension or eOrganic in proposals is not required. If included, supporting documentation must be attached. See Part I, C. for additional information.

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

Section 7206 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (FCEA) amended section 1672B of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade (FACT) Act of 1990 (7 U.S.C. 5925b) amending and re-authorizing the Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative (OREI). The FACT Act, as amended, authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture, in consultation with the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board (NAREEEAB), to make competitive grants to support research and extension activities regarding organically grown and processed agricultural commodities for eight legislatively-defined goals (see Part I, B. of this RFA).

B. Purpose and Priorities

The OREI seeks to solve critical organic agricultural issues, priorities, or problems through the integration of research and extension activities. The purpose of this program is to fund high priority research and extension projects that will enhance the ability of producers and processors who have already adopted organic standards to grow and market high quality organic agricultural products. Priority concerns include biological, physical, and social sciences, including economics.

The OREI has eight legislatively-defined goals. Applicants are encouraged to develop proposals that give consideration to as many of the following legislatively-defined goals as feasible:

1. Facilitating the development of organic agriculture production, breeding, and processing methods.
2. Evaluating the potential economic benefits to producers and processors who use organic methods.
3. Exploring international trade opportunities for organically grown and processed agricultural commodities.
4. Determining desirable traits for organic commodities.
5. Identifying marketing and policy constraints on the expansion of organic agriculture.
6. Conducting advanced on-farm research and development that emphasizes observation of, experimentation with, and innovation for working organic farms, including research relating to production and marketing and to socioeconomic conditions.
7. Examining optimal conservation and environmental outcomes relating to organically produced agricultural products.
8. Developing new and improved seed varieties that are particularly suited for organic agriculture.

The OREI is particularly interested in research and outreach projects that will assist farmers and ranchers with whole farm planning by delivering practical research-based information. Applicants should describe how the results of their research and extension programs will improve the ability of growers to develop the Organic System Plan required for certification. Organic systems fieldwork must be done on certified organic land or on land in transition to organic certification, as appropriate to project goals and objectives. Refer to the USDA National Organic Program (www.ams.usda.gov/nop) for organic production standards. For FY 2012, special emphasis will be given to research and extension relating to management of diseases, insect pests and weeds in specific regions, such as the southern region, where organic acreage is demonstrably increasing and yet the region remains deficient in terms of numbers of certified and exempt organic farms, as compared to nationwide averages. This priority applies to all project types described in Part II, C. of this RFA.

Priorities for FY 2012: Proposals addressing any of the legislatively defined goals listed above will be accepted for consideration by panels. In FY 2012, priority will be given to proposals in the following areas (1-8 below):

1. Conduct advanced on-farm research and development that emphasizes observation of, experimentation with, and innovation for organic farms, including animal and crop production and marketing and socioeconomic issues. These issues could include both identification of factors reducing yields, efficiency, productivity, and economic returns on organic farms and the economic and socioeconomic contributions of organic farming to producers, processors and local communities.
2. Develop and demonstrate educational tools for Cooperative Extension personnel and other agricultural professionals who advise producers on organic practices. Applications bringing end-users together with OREI-funded research and extension teams are encouraged. Development of online content should be coordinated with eXtension and the eOrganic Community of Practice.
3. For both plant and animal-based organic products: develop, improve and evaluate allowable post-harvest handling, processing and food safety practices to reduce toxins and microbial contamination, while increasing shelf-life, quality and other economically important characteristics.
4. Strengthen organic seed systems, including seed and transplant production and protection, and plant breeding and selection for organic production. Breeding and selection characteristics for organic systems may be different from those in conventional systems. Goals of organic seed systems proposals can include, but are not limited to: disease and pest resistance, stress tolerance, quality and yield improvement, and genetic mechanisms to prevent inadvertent introduction of GMO traits through cross-pollination.
5. Develop, improve and evaluate systems-based integrated pest management programs to address pest and pest-related problems for organically grown crops. Systems-based evaluations can include the safety and efficacy of allowable pest management materials and

practices. Proposals addressing management of diseases, nematodes, weeds and insect pests in the Southern Region are especially encouraged.

6. Develop or improve systems-based animal production and pest management practices, especially in the areas of nutrition, grazing, pasture and confinement requirements to improve animal productivity, health and welfare while retaining economic viability.
7. Catalog, characterize and/or select animal genotypes and breeds adapted to organic systems. This would include, but is not restricted to: identification of and selection for pest and disease resistance; health and performance under organic pasture and feed regimens; and performance in small, mixed or innovative farming operations.
8. Develop cultural practices and other allowable alternatives to substances recommended for removal from the National Organic Program's National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances (www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop). This may include effective substitutes or new technologies, cultural practices, cultivars or breeds that render the substance in question unnecessary under organic growing conditions. A systems approach is encouraged, but proposals narrower in scope will also be considered. For FY 2012, we are especially interested in alternatives to the use of antibiotics, such as tetracycline and streptomycin, to control diseases such as fire blight in organically grown crops. The maximum award under this priority is limited to \$500,000.

Clinical trials investigating animal health issues need not be conducted in a certified organic setting unless animal management could play a pivotal role in the response of the animal to the proposed intervention. For example, animals that have been raised under organic standards should be used to compare pasture-raised animals to those from a contained animal feeding operation.

OREI strongly encourages applicants to develop partnerships that include collaboration with: (1) small- or mid-sized, accredited colleges and universities; (2) 1890 Land-Grant Institutions, 1994 Land-Grant Institutions, Hispanic-serving institutions, and/or other institutions that serve high-risk, under-served, or hard-to-reach audiences; and/or (3) international partnerships, linkages, and exchanges that contribute to solving or solve critical organic agriculture issues, priorities, or problems in the United States.

C. Program Area Description

Applications are being solicited for the OREI under the following areas:

Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative Program Code 113.A

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) expects that applicants will consult with organic producers and/or processors before developing project applications. Producers and/or processors should play an important role in developing project goals and objectives; in implementing the plan; and in evaluating and disseminating project results and outcomes. Prospective applicants with little training or experience in developing and implementing research

and outreach projects should consult with appropriate researchers, extension workers or consultants. Projects must involve work that is viewed by stakeholders as both necessary and important. There is an expectation that a local and/or regional advisory panel will inform the program throughout its life, including ongoing identification and prioritization of research and extension objectives. An outcome-oriented plan for disseminating information derived from project work must be an integral part of the project. This information delivery plan should consider a number of delivery systems and methods. The metrics for evaluating research and extension learning outcomes should be clearly described and appropriate to project goals.

The following websites may be useful in developing OREI applications:

- National Organic Program (www.ams.usda.gov/nop) and National Organic Standards Board (www.ams.usda.gov/nosb);
- NIFA Organic Agriculture (www.nifa.usda.gov/organicagriculture.cfm)
- eOrganic Section of eXtension: www.extension.org/organic_production
- 2009, 2010 and 2011 OREI, Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) and Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE) Grantsmanship Workshops and NIFA Grantsmanship Workshops: www.nifa.usda.gov/business/training/cpworkshops_past.html
- 2007 census of Agriculture, 2008 Organic Production Survey factsheet: www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online_Highlights/Fact_Sheets/organics.pdf

The OREI encourages use of multiple extension delivery methods, including face-to-face meetings and tours, farmer-to-farmer mentoring, print publications and social media, as appropriate to project goals. In creating web-based electronic content however, project directors (PDs) are encouraged, but not required, to coordinate their efforts with eXtension, the national land grant university and extension web initiative, and the eOrganic Community of Practice (CoP). Extensive opportunities for collaboration, networking, integration of research and extension, and stakeholder engagement are offered within eXtension and the eOrganic CoP.

Funds may be requested to either establish a new eXtension CoP or enhance an existing CoP. To justify formation of a new CoP in eXtension, proposal language must clearly demonstrate that the proposed project does not duplicate or overlap with existing eXtension initiatives and CoPs. See <http://about.extension.org/> and about.extension.org/wiki/NIFA_RFA_Information for more information on including eXtension in your NIFA proposal and for contact information. Information on eOrganic is available at: eOrganic.info/ and http://extension.org/organic_production. Since the eOrganic CoP already exists, applicants wishing to develop electronic content on organic agriculture for eXtension are encouraged to coordinate with eOrganic either to form a new eOrganic group or to contribute to an existing group. Applications should demonstrate that the proposed new electronically delivered content will not duplicate or overlap with existing materials and that appropriate resources are budgeted for development and delivery of the new materials, as detailed below. Proposals incorporating eXtension should include funds to support core CoP functions (e.g., community development, editorial management, Ask-an-Expert, outreach, evaluation) and development of project-specific content for publication to eXtension. Budgets should include supporting funds for both core and project-specific functions.

Contact the leader of the appropriate CoP to explore options for collaboration early in the proposal development process (at least 4 to 6 weeks in advance of the due date) to allow sufficient time for collaborative development of the plan of work and budget, as well as time to obtain letters of collaboration from both eXtension and the target CoP, in this case eOrganic. Coordination with eXtension and eOrganic is not required in the creation and posting of OREI electronic content. However, proposals that do include substantial collaborative activities, such as content development or posting, must document prior arrangements through letters of collaboration and the inclusion of appropriate budgets from eXtension or eOrganic.

Please see the following links for more information:

eXtension Home Page: <http://about.extension.org/>

eXtension Background: www.extension.org/main/about

eOrganic Home page: eOrganic.info/ and www.extension.org/organic_production.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. Approximately \$19 million is available to fund applications in FY 2012.

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 www.nifa.usda.gov/business/method_of_payment.html.

B. Types of Applications

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

(1) **New application**. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the OREI. 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 OREI but not funded. Applications with substantive similarities to a prior, unsuccessful application should be presented as a resubmission. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary in the Project Narrative (see Part IV B. of this RFA). Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates. They will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in the area to which they are assigned according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

C. Project Types

The following four types of projects are being requested for the OREI in FY 2012. See the table at the end of this section for project periods, anticipated grant types, and suggested maximum funding requests.

(1) **Integrated Project Proposals**: Integrated project applications must include both research and extension activities. Awards will be made as standard grants or under certain circumstances, NIFA may determine that it will support continuation grants. See footnotes at the end of this section for definitions. In 2012, extension-emphasis proposals are especially encouraged. Every OREI proposal must have clear and documented integration of extension as part of the project. That integration needs to be evident and explicit.

(2) **Conference and Analytical Proposals**: Conference proposals support workshops or symposia bringing together scientists and others, including end-users, to identify research or extension needs, update information, or advance understanding of organic issues and problems

using a systems-based approach. Conferences intended to provide current information to farmers and ranchers should be held in conjunction with meetings regularly attended by organic producers and processors to the extent possible and should occur within 12 months of award start date. Conference awards cannot exceed \$50,000, and are usually not renewable. **In addition, in 2012 Evaluation (Analytical) Projects resulting in conferences, symposia and/or analytical products detailing the impact of NIFA, and predecessor agency, Organic Research since the inception of the program in 2002 are encouraged.** Either the overall impact of research and extension funded by this program, or the impacts of research in a particular area, such as dairy, fruit, grains or plant breeding, may be documented. If the proposal includes both an analytical product and a conference, the total request can go up to \$100,000 and a 1 year no-cost extension is allowed. The proposal should clearly indicate that an analytical component is included if the request is more than \$50,000.

Applicants should decide the project type best suited to the objectives of their proposed project and develop a budget that fits the objectives. The suggested maximum funding requests are intended only as a guide and some degree of deviation will not result in a failure to review the proposal.

Project Types	Project Periods	Anticipated Grant Types	Suggested Maximum Funding Requests
Integrated Project Proposals*	2-4 years	Standard** or Continuation***	\$2,000,000
FY 2012 Priority 8 Integrated Project Proposal	2-4 years	Standard*	\$500,000
Conference Proposal	1 year	Standard	\$50,000
Integrated Organic Program Analytical Proposals (can be combined with Conference proposal, but this is not required)	1 year	Standard	\$50,000 or \$100,000 if combined conference and analytical proposals

*** Projects under FY2012 Priority 8 are limited to \$500,000.**

****A standard grant is an instrument by which NIFA agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined project period without any statement of intention to provide additional support at a future date.**

*****A continuation grant is an instrument by which NIFA agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined project period with a statement of intention to provide additional support at a future date, provided that performance has been satisfactory, funds are available for this purpose, and continued support would be in the best interest of the Federal government and the public. NIFA is under no obligation to award a continuation grant and should NIFA decide to make such an award, the Authorized Departmental**

Officer (ADO) must make an affirmative decision to do so. In no case, however, can the total funding period exceed 5 years.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

The following entities are eligible to apply for and receive a grant under this program.

1. State agricultural experiment stations;
2. Colleges and universities;
3. University research foundations;
4. Other research institutions and organizations;
5. Federal agencies;
6. National laboratories;
7. Private organizations or corporations;
8. Individuals who are United States citizens or nationals; or
9. A group consisting of two or more of the entities described in subparagraphs (1) through (8).

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. An applicant's failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of an application deadline may result in the application being excluded from consideration or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude NIFA from making an award.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

(1) General Requirement

The Secretary shall require the recipient of a grant under this section to provide funds or in-kind support from non-Federal sources in an amount at least equal to the amount provided by the Federal Government. See R&R Budget section regarding matching funds, Part IV, B. 6. of this RFA for more details.

(2) Waiver

NIFA may waive the matching funds requirement specified in the above paragraph 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 Grants.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 two weeks or more 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 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 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: www.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp.
2. The application package must be obtained via Grants.gov, go to 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-ICGP-003649** 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 (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.

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 Form

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

a. Field 7. Project Summary/Abstract.

The Abstract is limited to **250 words**. The abstract should be concise and informative and include the relevance of the project to the goals of the OREI. Conference and Planning proposals should state the objectives of the conference, symposium, workshop, or planning activity as well as the proposed location and probable date(s).

See Part V. 4.7 of NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

b. Field 8. Project Narrative.

For Integrated Project Proposals: The Project Narrative section may not exceed a total of 21 single- or double-spaced pages, including figures and tables. The Introduction may not exceed 6 pages, and the rest of the Project Narrative may not exceed 15 pages.

For Conference and Analytical Proposals: The Project Narrative section may not exceed a total of 7 single- or double-spaced pages, including figures and tables. Proposals with both conference and analytical components may not exceed 14 pages.

All pages, including those with figures and tables, should be numbered sequentially. Applications exceeding the applicable page limitation **may not be reviewed**. These maximums have been established to ensure fair and equitable reviews.

The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

(i) **Response to the previous panel review:** An application with substantive similarities to a prior, unsuccessful project should be presented as a resubmission. Resubmitted applications must provide a detailed response to the previous panel review. The response should be as concise as possible, but there is no limit to the number of pages that may be submitted. The response to the previous review **is not** counted against the page limit of the Project Narrative. A NIFA-issued proposal number *must* be included in the response to the previous review (also see instructions in section 2.8 of Part V of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide).

(ii) **Executive summary and table of contents:** The project narrative is to start with the response to the previous panel review, if applicable, followed by the executive summary and table of contents. The executive summary and table of contents does not count toward the narrative's page limitation, but must include the following information in a combined executive summary and table of contents. Applications without an executive summary containing the following parts will **NOT** be considered for funding. Note that this section is in addition to and different from the Project Summary page.

1. Project title.
2. Project type (see Part II C. of this RFA).
3. List the legislatively-defined goals being addressed (see Part I B. of this RFA), and provide an estimate of the percentage of effort/funds dedicated to each (sum of percentages should equal 100 percent).
4. Indicate the approximate distribution of percentage of effort between research and extension.
5. Program Staff – include name, title, affiliation, address, and e-mail for PD(s), Co-PD(s) and Key Personnel.
6. A brief summary (2-3 sentences) describing the critical stakeholder needs addressed by the project and the project's long-term goals (provide cross-references to full descriptions in the narrative).
7. A brief summary (2-3 sentences) of the outreach plan proposed by the project (provide a cross-reference to the full description in the narrative).
8. A brief summary (2-3 sentences) describing potential economic, social, and other benefits (Who benefits and how will it be measured?).
9. A brief summary (2-3 sentences) describing stakeholder engagement throughout the project (provide a cross-reference to the full description in the narrative).

(iii) **Introduction:**

1. Provide a clear statement of the long-term goal(s), the critical need(s) of organic agriculture being addressed, and supporting outreach objectives.
2. Describe how stakeholders were engaged to identify project goals and objectives, and as appropriate, how stakeholder involvement will continue.
3. Summarize the body of knowledge or other past activities that substantiate the need for the proposed project.

4. Describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed project including the work of key project personnel. Documentation of prior research and extension activities in organic agriculture are particularly important. Applications should also demonstrate how duplication of effort with similar activities by others will be avoided.
5. Preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed work should be included in this section. All works cited should be referenced and attached at Field 9 on the Form, Bibliography & References Cited. Refer to Part V, 4.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. The Bibliography & References Cited is also a required section.

(iv) **Rationale and Significance:** Concisely present the rationale behind the proposed project. The specific relationship of the project's objectives to one or more of the FY 2012 OREI priorities should be clear. These purposes and priority areas are described under Part I. B. Purpose and Priorities. Discuss novel or innovative aspects of the proposed project.

(v) **Approach:** Clearly state the activities proposed or problems being addressed. Describe the approaches to be used. Specifically, this section must include:

1. A description of the activities proposed, key personnel and institutional roles in those activities, and the timeline;
2. Methods to be used in carrying out the proposed project, including the feasibility of the methods and why they were selected;
3. Expected results and outcomes, including how the project will contribute to long-term profitability and sustainability of organic agriculture;
4. Means by which these results and outcomes will be analyzed, assessed, or interpreted;
5. How results or products will be used;
6. Outreach plan: including science-based tools disseminated, participants involved in delivery, and how impacts will be measured, including the learning outcomes;
7. Pitfalls that may be encountered;
8. Limitations to proposed procedures; and
9. A full explanation of any materials, procedures, situations, or activities related to the project that may be hazardous to personnel, along with an outline or precautions to be exercised to avoid or mitigate the effects of such hazards. For work with organisms that might be perceived as potentially invasive species, indicate precautions to prevent spread or specific information on the context in which they are being used.

c) Field 11. Other Attachments. Any matching pledge agreements must be included as PDF attachments in this field.

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. Part V, 5. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide includes information about the individuals for which a Senior/Key Person Profile must be completed, and details about the Biographical Sketch and the Current and Pending Support including a link to a suggested template for the Current and Pending Support.

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.

6. R&R Budget

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7. of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide. Attach only the budget forms in this section.

Matching. If an applicant concludes that the project meets the criteria for a waiver and wish to seek approval for a waiver (as specified under Part III, B.), **a justification should be included in the Budget Narrative.** NIFA will consider this justification when ascertaining final matching requirements. NIFA retains the right to make final determinations regarding matching requirements.

For those projects where a waiver is not sought, applications shall include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and fair market value of in-kind contributions) from third parties (non-federal sources) in an amount at least equal to the amount awarded by the Federal government. Written verification means:

For any third party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each donation submitted on Donor Organization letterhead and signed by the authorized representative 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; and (5) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period.

For any third party in-kind contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each contribution submitted on Donor Organization letterhead and signed by the AR 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 including a basis for the estimate; and (5) a statement that the donor will make the contribution during the grant period.

The sources and the amount of all matching support from outside the applicant organization should be summarized on a separate page and placed in the application as a part of the Budget Justification attachment (see Field K on the Form R&R Budget).

The value of applicant contributions to the project shall be established in accordance with the applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circulars A-21, Cost Principles for Educational Institutions; A-87, Cost Principles for State, Local, and Tribal Governments; A-122, Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations; 2 CFR Part 215, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-110); and the cost principles in the Federal

Acquisition Regulation at 48 CFR 31.2 for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

Additional Budget Information

For Conference Proposals: These budgets may include appropriate amounts for transportation and subsistence costs for participants and for other allowable costs. These awards cannot exceed \$50,000 and are not renewable. Include an itemized breakdown of all support requested in the Budget Justification (Field K. of the R&R Budget).

For Analytical and Integrated Project Proposals: Applicants for Integrated and Integrated Organic Program Analytical proposal types are required to request funds for attendance to at least one Project Director’s workshop during the term of their project. Sufficient funds should be requested and reserved during the course of the project for the PD to attend at least one PD workshop in the metropolitan Washington, DC area. If a project has a multi-year project period, then the PD workshop is usually in the final year of the project. **The request for these funds should be clearly indicated in the Budget Justification** (Field K. of the R&R Budget). Applicants for Conference Proposals are not required to attend the Project Director’s Workshop and do not need to include these funds in their budgets.

7. 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 “**OREI**” and the program code “**113.A**”.
- b. **Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.** See Part VI, 1.8 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide for further instructions and a link to a suggested template.

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 Grants.gov by COB on **March 9, 2012** (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

Applicants who have problems with the submission of an application to Grants.gov are encouraged to FIRST contact the Grants.gov Help Desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence. See Part IV. A. for Grants.gov contact information.

Correspondence regarding submitted applications will be sent using e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received correspondence **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. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

NIFA has determined that grant funds awarded under this authority may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

Section 7132 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act amended section 1462 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3310), increasing the limit on recovery of indirect costs from 19 percent to 22 percent of total Federal funds provided under the award. Therefore, the recovery of indirect costs on awards made by NIFA under this program area may not exceed the lesser of the institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 22 percent of total Federal funds awarded.

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.”

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

Each application will be evaluated in a 2-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

B. Evaluation Criteria

Please note that for FY 2012, special emphasis will be given to integrated proposals (described in Part II.C. of this RFA) for research relating to management of diseases, insect pests and weeds in specific regions, such as the southern region, where organic acreage is demonstrably increasing and yet remain deficient in terms of numbers of certified and exempt organic farms, as compared to nationwide averages. Extension-emphasis integrated proposals are also emphasized in 2012. The evaluation criteria below will be used in reviewing applications submitted in response to this RFA:

1. Proposal Relevance (50 points):

For Integrated Proposals and Extension Proposals:

- (a) Documented need. Application includes documentation that the project is directed to current and likely future problems/challenges in organic agriculture. Application adequately addresses one of the FY 2012 OREI priorities referenced in Part I.B. or a legislative priority (15 points);
- (b) Stakeholder involvement. Application includes information on how stakeholders were selected and how their input was solicited and incorporated. There is an expectation that a local and/or regional advisory panel will inform the program throughout its life (10 points);

- (c) Outreach plan. Application includes a detailed outreach plan that includes deliverables and a description of how impacts will be measured. A description of the learning outcome metrics for training and educational activities should be included (10 points);
- (d) Potential for project to contribute to long-term profitability and sustainability of organic production or marketing systems (10 points); and
- (e) Importance of the commodity or production system or importance of constraints (marketing/yield/pest/other) and resulting impacts on the production system. Potential for project to make a difference (5 points).

For Conference and Analytical Proposals:

- (a) Demonstrated need. Justification of conference and analysis proposed. Application adequately addresses one of the 2012 OREI priorities referenced in Part I.B. (15 points);
- (b) Adequacy of background research. Listing of recent meetings, outreach activities or analytical products on the same subject with dates and locations for conferences or other data products for analytics (10 points);
- (c) Stakeholder involvement. Application includes names and organizational affiliations of the chair and other members of the organizing committee or planning team members, including information on how stakeholders were selected, how their input was solicited and incorporated, and a description of their future involvement in the project (10 points);
- (d) Quality of proposed program (or agenda) for the conference activity, including a listing of scheduled participants, their institutional affiliations, and a description of their expertise. For analytical products, a description of the purpose, the method of developing the product, and the intended use. Particular emphasis should be placed on a description of how impact of the programs being analyzed will be assessed. (10 points); and
- (e) Potential for the project to make a difference (5 points).

2. Proposal Quality (50 points): (All Project Types)

- (a) Conceptual adequacy. Application clearly states objectives and how they will be achieved within the timeframe, scope and budget of the proposed project (10 points);
- (b) Approach. The proposed method and approach are appropriate to project objectives (15 points);
- (c) Involvement of appropriate, relevant expertise (5 points);
- (d) Experience of key project personnel (5 points);

(e) Appropriateness of budget (5 points);

(f) Feasibility, probability of success (5 points); and

Adherence to guidelines: For proposals involving eXtension and eOrganic, this includes adherence to the guidelines on incorporating these into proposals, such as inclusion of supporting letters and budgets (5 points).

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: 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 preaward process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal financial and nonfinancial 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, the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015 and 3019 of 7 CFR), and the NIFA General Awards Administration Provisions at 7 CFR 3430, subparts A through E.

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 recompetition for funds;
- (6) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Director during the project period;
- (7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;
- (8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;
- (9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> to view NIFA award terms and conditions);

(10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and

(11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by NIFA to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to:

2 CFR Part 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 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. Details of annual and final technical reporting requirements also are included in the award terms and conditions.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Dr. Steve Smith

National Program Leader

Institute of Food Production and Sustainability, Animal Systems

National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA

STOP 2240; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW

Washington, DC 20250-2240

Telephone: (202) 401-6134

Fax: (202) 401-1782

E-mail: sismith@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 any applicable statutory limit or expiring appropriation limitation. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the awardee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of award.

f. Changes in Approved Budget: 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. The following are additional applicable definitions.

Organic System Plan means a plan of management of an organic production or handling operation that has been agreed to by the producer or handler and the certifying agent and that includes written plans concerning all aspects of agricultural production or handling described by the National Organic Program.