How-to Guide for Applying for USDA-NIFA Funding

The United States Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA) offers funding opportunities to support agricultural research, education, and extension projects. Applying for USDA-NIFA funding involves several steps, from identifying the right funding opportunity to submitting a detailed proposal. Here's a step-by-step guide to help you navigate the process.

Step 1: Identify the Right Funding Opportunity

1. **Research Funding Opportunities**: Visit the USDA-NIFA website to explore the various funding programs available. Look for programs that align with your research interests and goals.
2. **Read the Request for Applications (RFA)**: Carefully review the RFA for the specific program you are interested in. The RFA contains important information about eligibility, application requirements, deadlines, and evaluation criteria.

   NOTE: There are several grants available to *Hispanic-serving Institutions (HSI).* You should lean into what this means for Texas Tech and as an institution. You can learn more at https://www.depts.ttu.edu/access-engagement/hsi-initiatives/ or https://guides.library.ttu.edu/HSI_Resources.

Step 2: Prepare Your Proposal

NOTE: The TTU Office of Research Services will do both things for you and you do not have to file these independently.

1. **Intent to Submit:** Please fill out this **form** to notify ORS and Davis College Research that you intend to submit and will assist in development of your grant materials.
2. **Register Your Institution**: Ensure your institution is registered with the appropriate systems, such as the System for Award Management (SAM), and has a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number or Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).

3. **Register with Grants.gov**: Proposals must be submitted through Grants.gov. Create an account if you don't already have one.
4. **Find your designated department representative**: Schedule a time to meet with them to discuss your proposal and the timeline and budget. Find your designated contact **here.** Also, include Monica Hightower in your discussion and plans.

Step 3: Gather Required Documents

NOTE: Some grants will require additional documents. It is best to check the RFA to ensure you are supplying the correct documents associated with your grant.

1. **Project Narrative**: A detailed description of your proposed project, including:
   o **Introduction**: Background and significance of the project.
   o **Objectives**: Clear and concise goals of the project.
   o **Methodology**: Detailed description of the research methods and procedures.
   o **Project Timeline**: Timeline for project activities and milestones.
   o **Expected Outcomes**: Anticipated results and impacts of the project.
2. **Project Summary/Abstract**: A summary of the proposed project, usually no more than one page.
3. **Budget and Budget Justification**: A detailed budget outlining project costs and a justification for each budget item.
4. **Biographical Sketches**: Biographical information for the principal investigator (PI) and co-PIs, typically limited to two pages each.
5. **Current and Pending Support**: Information about current and pending support for all senior personnel.
6. **Facilities and Other Resources**: Description of the facilities, equipment, and other resources available to conduct research.
7. **Data Management Plan**: A plan for managing and sharing data generated by the project.
8. **Letters of Support/Collaboration**: Letters from collaborators, partners, or other stakeholders, if applicable. Consider every audience involved and that will benefit from your proposal if funded.
9. Is a contractor involved? If so, you should include their quotes.
10. **Conflict of Interest:**

Step 4: Write Your Proposal

1. **Follow USDA-NIFA Guidelines**: Adhere to the guidelines provided in the RFA and the USDA-NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.
2. **Be Clear and Concise**: Use clear, concise language and ensure your proposal is understandable to reviewers who may not be experts in your specific field.
3. **Highlight Innovation and Impact**: Emphasize the innovative aspects of your project and its potential impact on agriculture and society.

Step 5: Review and Revise

1. **Internal Review**: Have colleagues review your proposal and provide feedback. Monica Hightower can also assist with this.
2. **Revise Accordingly**: Incorporate feedback and make necessary revisions to improve clarity and impact.

Step 6: Submit Your Proposal/ Proposal Due Date

1. **Check for Completeness**: Ensure that all required documents are included and comply with USDA-NIFA guidelines.
2. **Submit via your Grants Contact in ORS.**
3. **Clear time in your schedule to submit the grant.**

Step 7: Follow Up

1. **Acknowledge Receipt**: USDA-NIFA will send an acknowledgment of receipt. Keep this for your records.
2. **Monitor Status**: Use Grants.gov to monitor the status of your proposal.
3. **Prepare for Revisions**: If your proposal is not funded, you may receive feedback from reviewers. Use this feedback to revise and resubmit your proposal in the future.

Items Needed for USDA-NIFA Proposal Submission

Note: Working with ORS will take some of the work out of these documents, so make sure you stay in contact with them during the whole proposal process.

- DUNS number or UEI and SAM registration for your institution
- Grants.gov account
- Project Narrative
- Project Summary/Abstract
- Budget and Budget Justification
- Biographical Sketches
- Current and Pending Support
- Facilities and Other Resources
- Data Management Plan
- Letters of Support/Collaboration (if applicable)

Additional Tips

- **Attend USDA-NIFA Webinars**: USDA-NIFA often hosts webinars on how to write successful proposals. Attend these to gain additional insights. There is often times for questions at the end and you can use the Chat function of Zoom call to ask those questions.
- **Contact Program Officers**: Don't hesitate to contact USDA-NIFA program officers with questions or to discuss your proposal idea.
- **Plan**: Start preparing your proposal well in advance of the deadline to ensure you have enough time for review and revisions.

Good luck with your USDA-NIFA funding application!