Funding Opportunity: USDA NIFA Releases FY 2022 AFRI Sustainable Agricultural Systems RFA

Lewis-Burke Associates, LLC – March 9, 2022

On March 8, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) released a request for applications (RFA) for the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI) Sustainable Agricultural Systems (SAS) program, which aims to transform U.S. food and agricultural systems to support increased production while addressing environmental sustainability challenges to ultimately bring about societal benefits and improved quality of life. The fiscal year (FY) 2022 SAS solicitation focuses on local and regional climate-smart products; nutritious, safe, and accessible foods; and rural economic development. Proposals must address current challenges and incorporate an interdisciplinary vision of resilient future food systems, including projected social, economic, cultural, health, and environmental impacts of these systems.

This solicitation is for integrated projects only, which means that each proposal should include research, education, and extension components. Applicants are encouraged to take a systems-level approach and utilize advancements in science and technology to solve pressing agricultural challenges and to demonstrate and distribute the economic and environmental benefits of sustainable agriculture. Education activities should focus on supporting the training and development of an agricultural workforce with skills relevant to the program. The research components should seek to identify and address knowledge gaps. Extension should encourage the adoption of sustainable production and consumption practices and engage the target populations in the design.

Applications must address one of the following goals:

- **Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry (CSAF):** CSAF aims to “improve mitigation, adaptation, and resiliency of agricultural and forestry production systems to climate change.” These projects must enhance understanding of at least one of the following: greenhouse gas mitigation, markets and socioeconomics, or regionally appropriate climate adaptation and resilience. CSAF projects are also encouraged to collaborate with USDA Climate Hubs.

- **Strengthening the Bioeconomy:** These projects should aim to “foster economic development and prosperity in rural America by developing and advancing production of clean, renewable, and sustainable energy and bio-based products from forests and agriculture.” Projects must address sustainable bioenergy and bio-based products, resilience and robustness of the food and agricultural system, and potential sustainability impacts.

- **Food and Nutrition Security:** These projects should aim to increase the importance of food and agriculture to health through resilient local and regional food systems, or adoption of new or existing technologies, educational programs, and other resources to improve access to safe, nutritious, and affordable food. Food and Nutrition Security projects must address at least one of the following: local and regional food systems, nutrition-sensitive climate-smart agriculture, or nutrition security and diet-related health disparities.
Due to the long-term focus of the SAS program, proposals should include concrete metrics for success, which may include measure a system’s productivity and profitability, impact on the environment, contributions to food supply and safety, employment opportunities, benefits to underserved communities, and/or improvements to human health and nutrition.

**Eligibility:** Colleges and universities are eligible to apply for Integrated Projects.

**Deadlines:** Letters of intent are due **April 27, 2022 at 5:00pm ET.** Applications must be submitted by **July 28, 2022 at 5:00pm ET.**

**Total Funding and Award Size:** USDA anticipates making $80 million available for this program. Individual award amounts may not exceed $10 million with a program period of up to five years.

**Cost-Share Requirement:** Applicants must provide matching contributions on a dollar-for-dollar basis for all Federal funds granted. If an Integrated Project is commodity-specific and not of national scope, matching funds from non-Federal sources with cash or in-kind contributions are required. NIFA may waive this requirement if the project meets criteria specified in the RFA.

**Sources and additional information:**
- FY AFRI SAS program page is available at [https://nifa.usda.gov/program/afri-sas](https://nifa.usda.gov/program/afri-sas).