

The Department of Agriculture (USDA) – Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS)
Global Programs

Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
Scientific Exchanges Program

NOTE: If you are going to apply for this funding opportunity and have not obtained a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and/or are not currently registered in the System for Award Management (SAM), please take immediate action to obtain a DUNS Number, if applicable, and then to register immediately in SAM at www.sam.gov. It may take four weeks or more after you submit your SAM registration before your registration is active in SAM. Detailed information regarding DUNS and SAM is also provided in Section D of this NOFO, subsection, Content and Form of Application Submission.

In addition to obtaining a DUNS number and registering in SAM, you must also obtain Level 2 eAuthentication to apply for this funding opportunity in ezFedGrants. You must submit an online form requesting access. Normally you will receive an email within 24 hours of your submission, if your request is approved. After this occurs, you will need to schedule an appointment with an LRA. Once you meet with the LRA, your Level 2 eAuthentication should be granted within two to three days after that meeting. See Section D of this NOFO for detailed information.

A. Program Description

Program Overview and Priorities

The Scientific Exchanges Program (SEP) advances USDA's agricultural research goals to promote collaborative programs among agricultural professionals of eligible countries, the United States, the international agricultural research system, and United States entities conducting research in the agricultural sciences. SEP accomplishes this by providing fellowships to individuals from eligible countries who specialize or have experience in agricultural education, research, extension, or other related fields. Fellowships promote food security and economic growth in eligible countries by educating a new generation of agricultural scientists, increasing scientific knowledge and collaborative research to improve agricultural productivity, and extending that knowledge to users and intermediaries in the marketplace. The collaborative nature of the training and research programs benefits the fellow, his or her home institution, and partner country; the U.S. host institution, its professors, researchers, and students; and the global agricultural sector by improving agricultural productivity, systems, and processes in partnering nations through the transfer of new science and agricultural technologies.

Program Objectives

USDA will issue up to 11 awards under this announcement.

Award 1: USDA will provide an award focusing on understanding food safety issues with a direct impact on international agricultural trade, such as sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures and technical barriers to trade (TBT). The award will focus on assisting West African nations in improving their food safety systems by offering “real-world” research opportunities on food safety issues and topics related to SPS measures and TBT. Recipients should consider the potential for using Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) to improve food safety. Additionally, the award will provide a platform for researchers of the same cohort to share ideas and foster collaboration to lead to better intraregional coordination on food safety issues. More broadly, through their research, fellows will affirm the importance of the international standard setting bodies (Codex Alimentarius, the International Plant Protection Convention and the World Organization for Animal Health) to agricultural policy makers responsible for the development or improvement of national food safety regimes throughout West Africa.

After recipient(s) are awarded, they will be expected to identify and propose fellows to USDA for final concurrence. Although each fellow should be assigned a specific faculty member as a one-on-one research mentor, USDA envisions that fellows will participate as a cohesive cohort, rather than at individual times, and applicants should prepare their approach accordingly. The award will support a group of fellows from the West Africa region. After recipient(s) are awarded, a project workplan will also be required.

Awards 2-11: USDA will provide up to 10 awards for CSA and food systems research. CSA is an integrated approach to managing landscapes—cropland, livestock, forests, and fisheries—that address the interlinked challenges of food security and accelerated climate change. Food systems refers to how climate change efforts can be addressed throughout the agricultural production system, including food loss and waste, sustainable materials management and the development of local and regional markets. USDA is seeking proposal submissions that includes CSA for countries in the African, Asian, Central American, Latin American, and or the Middle Eastern Regions.

For all Awards: Each program plan should incorporate elements of leadership and science communication to empower fellows to advocate for sound policy to peers, decision-makers, and the public. In addition, plans should contribute to the strategic goals and objectives of individual fellows, the host institutions and USDA, as well as provide an opportunity for the application of research agendas that can have a direct impact on international trade, food security and economic growth in emerging economies. CSA should be factored into each prospective program plan.

Programs are expected to include collaboration with and input from relevant stakeholders, such as U.S. regulatory agencies and the Office of the United States Trade Representative.

Ideally, fellows and host institutions will share the knowledge gained through these endeavors in their classroom and extension work with their faculty, students, extension officers, constituents, policy makers, and other stakeholders in the international agricultural marketplace; and that they will continue to maintain professional contacts with the fellows after their departure from the United States.

PLACE OF PERFORMANCE

- The applicant is expected to host fellows at a research facility on their campus in the United States, with orienting visits to U.S. government regulatory agency in Washington, DC or elsewhere; and field visits as appropriate.
- Programs should include time at the USDA in Washington DC at the commencement and at the end of their fellowship program to brief and debrief with key USDA officers. The selected awardees will coordinate with the USDA program manager. Programs should also include virtual meetings, outreach, and other activities.
- Each fellow's one-on-one mentor is expected to make a reciprocal visit of up to two weeks to the fellow's home institution.

Issued By

Foreign Agricultural Service, Global Programs, Fellowship Programs

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number and Title

10.620 Scientific Exchanges Program

Notice of Funding Opportunity Title

Scientific Exchanges Program

NOFO Number

USDA-FAS-10620-0762-10.-21-0001

Authorizing Authority for Program

The legislative authority for the Scientific Exchanges Program is provided in Section 1458 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended, 7 USC § 3291.

Appropriation Authority for Program

Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (PL 116-159)

Announcement Type

New

**B. Federal Award Information
Award Amounts, Important Dates, and Extensions**

Available Funding for the NOFO: up to \$1,300,000 total, *subject to funding availability*
One award will be up to \$700,000.
10 awards will be up to \$60,000 per award.

Projected Number of Awards: 11

Period of Performance: 36 months

Projected Period of Performance Start Date(s): September 1, 2021

Projected Period of Performance End Date(s): August 31, 2024

Extensions are allowable, please see Section H. Additional Information to see how to requests one should the need arise.

Cost Share or Match requirements: A cost match or cost share is not required.

Funding Instrument: USDA will enter into a Cost Reimbursable agreement under 7 USC § 3319a with selected universities. Program staff will maintain involvement in the administration of the Scientific Exchanges Program.

Note that indirect costs, by law, cannot exceed 10% of direct costs under this agreement instrument. FAS has no authority to waive this ceiling.

Subawards are allowable under the agreement if included in the original application.

C. Eligibility Information

Eligible Applicants

U.S. State Cooperative Institutions or other colleges and universities in the United States.

Eligibility Criteria

All applicants must have an active registration in the SAM database at www.sam.gov – pending or expired registrants are not eligible. This requirement must be met by the closing date of the announcement and will not be waived. Please contact the program officer listed if you have questions about this requirement.

An applicant may submit more than one proposal, i.e. to address each proposed subject area.

In addition to obtaining a DUNS number and registering in SAM, you must also obtain Level 2 eAuthentication to apply for this funding opportunity in ezFedGrants (eFG). You must submit an online form requesting access. Normally you will receive an email within 24 hours of your

submission, if your request is approved. After this occurs, you will need to schedule an appointment with an LRA. Once you meet with the LRA, your Level 2 eAuthentication should be granted within two to three days after that meeting. See Section D of this NOFO for detailed information.

Maintenance of Effort (MOE)

MOE is not allowable.

D. Application and Submission Information

Key Dates and Times

Application Start Date:	April 16, 2021
NOFO Posted Date:	April 16, 2021
Application Submission Deadline:	June 10, 2021 at 11:59PM EDT
Anticipated Funding Selection Date:	July 30, 2021
Anticipated Award Date:	July 30, 2021

Address to Request Application Package

This NOFO represents the full application information.

Applications will be processed through the ezFedGrants portal at <https://grants.fms.usda.gov> – prospective applicants are encouraged to register for this portal. Applicants that are unable to access the ezFedGrants portal should contact the program manager for alternative submission instructions. Note that if selected, registration is a requirement of performance.

Content and Form of Application Submission

Institutions must be able to host multiple groups over the period of performance and should submit a proposal following the guidelines below:

Required forms and certifications, including:

- [Standard Form 424](#), signed by the applicant
- SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities, when warranted.
- [Standard Form 424A](#). This should be accompanied by a detailed budget worksheet and a detailed budget narrative (NOTE: A budget narrative must be provided). All line items should be described in sufficient detail that would enable FAS to determine that the costs are reasonable and allowable for the project per federal regulations. Definitions of cost items are listed below.
 - a. **Personnel:** Costs of employee salaries and wages. For each staff person, provide the name (if known), title, time commitment to the project as a percentage of a full-time equivalent (FTE), annual salary, and grant funded salary. Do not include the costs of consultants. Consultants are to be included under “Contractual.”

- b. Fringe Benefits:** Costs of employee fringe benefits unless treated as part of an approved indirect cost rate. Provide the method used to calculate the proposed rate amount. If a fringe benefit has been negotiated with, or approved by, a cognizant federal agency, **attach a copy of the negotiated fringe benefit agreement**. If no rate agreement exists, provide a breakdown of the amounts and percentages that comprise fringe benefit costs such as health insurance, FICA, retirement insurance, taxes, etc. Identify the base for allocating these fringe benefit expenses. (Attach the agreement to the application package.) For foreign entities this may not apply.
- c. Travel:** Costs of project-related travel by employees of the applicant organization (do not include costs of sub-contractor or consultant travel). For each proposed trip, provide the purpose, number of travelers, travel origin and destination, number of days, and a breakdown of costs for airfare, lodging, meals, car rental, and incidentals. The basis for the airfare, lodging, meals, car rental, and incidentals must be provided, such as past trips, current quotations, Federal Travel Regulations, etc.
- d. Equipment:** Equipment is **not** an allowable expenditure for this award. Any article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of (a) the capitalization level established by the organization for financial statement purposes, or (b) \$5000.
NOTE: Acquisition cost means the net invoice unit price of an item of equipment, including the cost of any modifications, attachments, accessories, calibration and maintenance services, or auxiliary apparatus necessary to make it usable for the purpose for which it is acquired. Ancillary charges, such as taxes, duty, protective in-transit insurance, freight, and installation shall be included in or excluded from acquisition cost in accordance with the organization's regular written accounting practices.
- e. Supplies:** Supplies are tangible personal property other than that included in the equipment category if the acquisition cost is less than the lesser of the capitalization level established by the non-Federal entity for financial statement purposes or \$5,000, regardless of the length of its useful life. Specify general categories of supplies and their costs. Show computations and provide other information which supports the amount requested. A computing device is a supply.
- f. Contractual:** Costs of all contracts for services and goods and subawards that further the work of the project. Sub-contractors, sub-awardees, and/or sub-grantees that do not perform technical work (i.e., landscapers, trash collectors, etc.) belong under other cost categories such as equipment, supplies, construction, other, etc.

Include third party evaluation contracts (if applicable) and contracts with secondary recipient organizations. Demonstrate that all procurement transactions will be conducted in a manner to provide, to the maximum extent practical, open and free competition. Identify proposed sub-contractor work and the cost of each sub-contractor. Provide a detailed budget for each sub-contractor that is expected to perform work estimated to be \$25,000 or more, or 50% of the total work effort, whichever is less.

- Identify each planned subcontractor and its total proposed budget. Each subcontractor's budget and supporting detail should be included as part of the applicant's budget narrative.
 - Provide the following information for each planned subcontract: a brief description of the work to be subcontracted; the number of quotes solicited and received, if applicable; the cost or price analysis performed by the applicant; names and addresses of the subcontractors tentatively selected and the basis for their selection; e.g., unique capabilities (for sole source subcontracts), low bidder, delivery schedule, technical competence; type of contract and estimated cost and fee or profit; and, affiliation with the applicant, if any.
 - All required flow down provisions in the award must be included in any subcontract.
- g. **Other Direct Costs**: Any other items proposed as direct costs. Provide an itemized list with costs, and state the basis for each proposed item.
- h. **Indirect Costs**: This will be a cost reimbursable agreement issued under 7 USC § 3319a. By statute, indirect cost rates for cost reimbursable agreements cannot exceed 10%.
- A project narrative that includes the following elements:
 - Indicate the name of the institution applying to host the fellow;
 - Indicate which of the two anticipated awards is applicable to the proposal
 - Provide a description of how the institution, if selected, will identify and recruit candidates, including any rubrics or existing contacts in the region, and including a reasonable timeline.
 - Provide an approach to achieve the objectives listed in each section, including topics to be covered, possible field visits and other activities;
 - A description of how the award, including the logistical elements, will be administered and the role of the university faculty and support staff;
 - A summary of relevant institutional capabilities for hosting international fellows in the applicable topic;
 - A brief description of the expertise and international experience of the recipient in the group's field of interest and various countries;
 - Demonstrated understanding of cultural context and needs of the trainees;
 - The skills or knowledge expected to be acquired by the fellows at the end of the program;
 - Means of flexibility to account for potential program changes and the ability to respond to unforeseen circumstances; this should include information on how unforeseen problems that can arise will be addressed.
 - A quality assurance plan.

The SF-424 and SF-424A can be completed within the ezFedGrants platform. However, the other required forms must be downloaded from the Forms sections on Grants.gov or will be sent to you upon request to the program officer(s) named in Section G.

Please be aware that OMB Memorandum 18-24: Strategies to Reduce Grant Recipient Reporting Burden has been approved. Various required forms needed to apply for Federal Financial

Assistance no longer need to be completed individually at time of application. They are covered in the Financial Assistance Certifications Report.

Effective January 1, 2020, the Financial Assistance Certifications are a common set of certifications and representations required by Federal statutes or regulations in accordance with the grants guidance under Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR 200.208 Certifications and Representations). Those non-Federal entities who intend to apply for, or are already recipients of Federal grants or agreements, must read and agree to the corresponding certifications and representations. Registrants who reply yes to the questions are required to keep these certifications and representations current, accurate, and complete as part of their entity registration.

FAS will verify in SAM.gov that the proper forms are completed, and if they have not been, you will be contacted and directed to do so. Your award will not be issued until the proper forms are completed within the SAM.gov portal.

Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM)

Each applicant is required to:

- (i) Be registered in SAM (<https://www.sam.gov>) before submitting its application;
- (ii) Provide a valid DUNS number in its application; and
- (iii) Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency.

The Federal awarding agency may not make an award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable DUNS and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time the Federal awarding agency is ready to make a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

FAS is using ezFedGrants, which is an electronic grants management system. Applicant(s) with electronic access are required to submit their applications electronically through the ezFedGrants portal.

Before you can apply, you must have a DUNS number, be registered in SAM, and have access to the ezFedGrants website at <https://grants.fms.usda.gov>

Applicants are encouraged to register early. The registration process can take approximately four weeks to be completed. Therefore, registration should be done in sufficient time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required submission deadlines.

DUNS number. Instructions for obtaining a DUNS number can be found at the following website: <http://www.dnb.com/duns-number.html>

The DUNS number must be included in the data entry field labeled "Organizational DUNS" on the Standard Forms (SF)-424 forms submitted as part of this application.

System for Award Management. In addition to having a DUNS number, applicants applying electronically through ezFedGrants must register with SAM. Step-by-step instructions for registering with SAM can be found here:

www.sam.gov

Failure to register with SAM will result in your application being rejected during the submissions process.

ezFedGrants System Access and Electronic Signature

Level 2 eAuthentication. The next step in the registration process is to obtain a Level 2 eAuthentication account that will allow access to the ezFedGrants system. Instructions for getting a Level 2 eAuthentication account can be obtained by emailing ezFedGrants-cfo@usda.gov

If you experience any issues with self-registration or have eAuthentication-related questions, please contact the eAuthenticationHelpDesk for assistance:
By email to eAuthHelpDesk@usda.gov

Requesting a role in ezFedGrants. After obtaining eAuthentication, users will need a role in the system. Descriptions of the roles available and instructions on how to request a role can be obtained by emailing ezFedGrants@cfo.usda.gov.

Electronic Signature. Applications submitted through ezFedGrants constitute a submission as electronically signed applications. When you submit the application through ezFedGrants, the name of your Signatory Official on file will be inserted into the signature line of the application.

If you experience difficulties accessing information or have any questions please email the Helpdesk at ezFedGrants-cfo@usda.gov.

Intergovernmental Review

An intergovernmental review may be required. Applicant(s) must contact their State's Single Point of Contact (SPOC) to comply with the State's process under Executive Order 12372 (<https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/codification/executive-order/12372.html>) Name and addresses of the SPOCs are maintained at the Office of Management and Budget's home page at:

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/SPOC-February-2019.pdf>

Funding Restrictions

Generally, funds may not be used in any manner that is prohibited by 2 CFR Part 200 and 2 CFR Part 400, or the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Compensation for personal services (whether classified as personnel, contractual services, or any other form) may not exceed the pro-rated equivalent of Step III of the Executive Schedule. For calendar year 2019, this is \$176,900 per year; \$680.38 per day; or \$85.05 per hour. Non-monetized fringe benefits are generally excluded from this ceiling, however, a federally-negotiated fringe benefits rate agreement may be required if fringe benefits appear to be unusually high.

FAS agreement funds may only be used for the purpose set forth in the award, and must be consistent with the statutory authority for the award. Agreement funds and non-monetary support may not be used for matching contributions for other federal grants or cooperative agreements, lobbying, or intervention in federal regulatory or adjudicatory proceedings. Federal employees are prohibited from serving in any capacity (paid or unpaid) on any proposal submitted under this program. Federal employees may not receive funds under this award. In addition, federal funds may not be used to sue the Federal Government or any other government entity.

These funds cannot be used for construction purposes, general purpose acquisitions (no particular scientific, technical, or programmatic purpose), equipment exceeding \$5,000 per item, entertainment, capital improvements, thank you gifts, or other expenses not directly related to the project

This will be a cost reimbursable agreement issued under 7 U.S.C. 3319a. Award recipient's indirect costs for cost reimbursable agreements are limited to 10% of direct costs.

Management and Administration (M&A) Costs:

M&A costs are not allowable.

Indirect Facilities & Administrative (F&A) Costs.

Indirect F&A costs means those costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefiting more than one cost objective and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefited without effort disproportionate to the results achieved. By statute, indirect costs for cost reimbursable agreements cannot exceed 10% of direct costs.

Other Submission Requirements

All applications must be submitted electronically as indicated above.

E. Application Review Information

Application Evaluation Criteria

Prior to making a Federal award, the Federal awarding agency is required by 31 U.S.C. 3321 and 41 U.S.C. 2313 to review information available through any OMB-designated repositories of government-wide eligibility qualification or financial integrity information. Therefore application evaluation criteria may include the following risk based considerations of the applicant: (1) financial stability; (2) quality of management systems and ability to meet management standards; (3) history of performance in managing federal award; (4) reports and

findings from audits; and (5) ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements.

In addition, the following applies:

- i. Prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold as defined by 48 CFR § 2.101, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM (currently FAPIIS).
- ii. An applicant, at its option, may review information in the designated integrity and performance systems accessible through SAM and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered and is currently in the designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.
- iii. will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in 2 CFR §200.205 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

Factor 1: Technical Expertise and Experience (40 points)

The host research institution and mentor must have the appropriate technical background to provide the desired, advanced research experience. Collaborating faculty should be identified to meet the objectives, and it should be clear how faculty will be selected and matched with individual fellows. Experience and knowledge (by the institutions and/or by individual faculty) of relevant agricultural conditions within the fellow's country or a similar location will be considered; relevant agricultural practices within the region of the university will be considered as appropriate. The recipient's experience with international training and adult-education will also be considered.

Factor 2: Overall Program (35 points)

A demonstrated ability to identify appropriate fellows, accounting for appropriateness of the fellows' current and future roles, geographic diversity, and technical skills. The overall program plan and design should be relevant to the stated objectives and background. The program plan should be thorough, and it should also help achieve the desired post-program deliverables and account for goals and objectives of individual fellows. Relevant university resources should be identified. Additional resources/organizations should be identified as appropriate. Site visits and meetings should be meaningful to the objectives of the program, if included.

Factor 3: Budget (25 points)

The proposed budget should be appropriate for the number of fellows and length of the program. The budget should include appropriate cost savings where available and narrative should accompany each line item.

Review and Selection Process

In all cases, the Program Manager will conduct an initial responsiveness review of all applications submitted to determine if the submission is complete and followed the rules outlined in this announcement. This review will ensure the following: 1) the application was submitted on time as specified in this announcement (**See Section D. Application and Submission Information**), 2) the applicant is eligible (**see Section C. Eligibility Information**), 3) all the required forms and documents are submitted timely as outlined (**See Section D. Application and Submission Information, Content and Form of Application Submission**). If an applicant is determined to be ineligible (**see Section C. Eligibility Information**) or an application is determined to be non-responsive, FAS will notify the applicant.

In addition, FAS conducts a two-part application review process. If the Agency determines your application to be responsive, the application will be reviewed by a review panel.

1. FAS will assemble reviewers which may include both federal and non-federal reviewers to review the eligible applications. Reviews of submitted applications will be conducted either on site or by remote review.
2. Technical reviewers will review each eligible application against the evaluation criteria. The reviewers will ensure that the organization is capable of delivering the programs/activities as described in the announcement based on the applicant's project narrative. The reviewers will assign a score and provide summary comments based on the evaluation criteria identified above. Evaluation Criteria: the evaluation criteria must be directly related to key aspects of the project. The criteria must be measurable with an associated point range. It is a best practice, but not required, that the entire review criteria score range should be out of 100. From the scoring process, a recommendation list may be composed and sent to the FAS Administrator, or his/her designee.
3. An application may be selected for a post-review quality control and possible rescoring if it received significantly diverging scores and comments from reviewers.

The second part of the application review process includes an internal review panel consisting of FAS staff, and the Administrator, or his/her designee, reviewing the recommendation list which will display the highest ranked applications. From this list this internal review panel will make final funding recommendations. The internal review panel may take applications out of rank order in consideration of: 1) strategic program priorities, 2) geographical distribution or 3) the incorporation of minority serving institutions.

4. FAS will perform an additional review of the applicant organization which may include reviewing any and/or its key personnel. This review will include

reviewing audit reports, publicly available materials and/or government databases and may have a bearing on award outcome. FAS may request additional materials from the applicant as part of this review, including:

- The summary letter from the applicant's most recent audit report; and
 - Documentation of previous grant award completion that includes the name of the grantor, amount awarded, and whether the grant recipient sufficiently completed the requirements of the grant award (e.g., a final close-out report, certification of grant award completion, etc.)
5. After the technical review and before making final funding decisions, FAS may contact the highest ranking applicants to seek clarification and to negotiate technical and programmatic aspects of the application. If an application includes a sub-awardee, FAS may request to speak with all parties included in the application to ensure sufficient planning and coordination has taken place prior to making an award.

Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

Technical and cost proposals submitted under this funding opportunity will be protected from unauthorized disclosure in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. FAS may use one or more support contractors in the logistical processing of proposals. However, funding recommendations and final award decisions are solely the responsibility of FAS personnel.

FAS screens all technical reviewers for potential conflicts of interest. To determine possible conflicts of interest, FAS requires potential reviewers to complete and sign conflicts of interest and nondisclosure forms. FAS will keep the names of submitting institutions and individuals as well as the substance of the applications confidential except to reviewers and FAS staff involved in the award process. FAS will destroy any unsuccessful applications after three years following the funding decision.

F. Federal Award Administration Information

Notice of Award

Notice of award will be given to the institution via email. This email is not an authorization to begin performance. The notice of Federal award, signed by the Deputy Administrator of Global Programs, is the authorizing document through electronic means. It should also indicate if there are any pass-through obligations that successful applicants are required to meet upon receiving award funds, including specific timeline requirements.

Administrative and National Policy Requirements

All successful applicants for all grant and cooperative agreements are required to comply with Standard Administrative Terms and Conditions for Federal Assistance Awards, which are on the FAS website at:

<https://www.fas.usda.gov/grants-and-cooperative-agreements-administrative-general-terms-and-conditions>

The applicable Standard Administrative Terms and Conditions will be for the last year specified at that URL, unless the application is to continue an award first awarded in an earlier year. In that event, the terms and conditions that apply will be those in effect for the year in which the award was originally made unless explicitly stated otherwise in subsequent mutually-agreed amendments to the award.

Before accepting the award the Recipient should carefully read the award package for instructions on administering the grant award and the terms and conditions associated with responsibilities under Federal Awards. Recipients must accept all conditions in this NOFO as well as any Special Terms and Conditions in the Notice of Award to receive an award under this program.

Federal Financial Reporting Requirements

The Federal Financial Reporting Form (FFR), as known as the SF-425, must be submitted semi-annually, within 30 days after the end of each reporting period, and a final report within 90 days of the end of the agreement. The required form is available online at:

<https://www.gsa.gov/portal/forms/download/149786>

Program Performance Reporting Requirements

Performance Progress Reporting must be filed semi-annually, within 30 days after the end of each reporting period, and a final report must be filed within 90 days of the end of the agreement and should include details the activities undertaken and progress made.

Performance Expectations:

(1) Assignment of a Principal Investigator (Training Coordinator)

The host institution will designate a contact person as the Principal Investigator (PI) responsible for coordinating all administrative and programmatic arrangements.

(2) Selection of Fellows

- Institutions will recruit and identify appropriate fellows, who are “up and coming” researchers with strong future potential to influence policy decisions, and who reflect appropriate geographic diversity within the applicable region. Fellows must have sufficient capacity in the English language to participate in the program; this will be independently assessed by the U.S. Department of State, and waivers are not available.

(3) Assignment of a Mentor

A key component of the program is matching each fellow with a mentor. The host institution will select an appropriate mentor for one-on-one work with each fellow for the duration of the program.

- The mentor will establish a professional relationship, providing guidance and training in the fellow’s research and studies.

- The mentor will work with the fellow before arrival to discuss appropriate work plan, site visits, and other arrangements. A work plan should be agreed upon and finalized no later than 2 weeks after the program start date.
- The mentor will provide draft of work plan through the PI to USDA/FAS for consultation and approval approximately 2 weeks before the commencement of the program.
- The mentor agrees to commit a significant amount of time each week for one-on-one work with the fellow during the program.
- The mentor will continue communicating with the fellow beyond the end of the program in the U.S. through the mentor visit.
- The mentor will submit semi-annual progress reports that indicate all program activities conducted.
- The mentor may assign other faculty members to assist with fellow's training and research activities.
- The mentor may not be assigned to multiple fellows during the same time frame.

(4) Mentor Follow-up Visit

- The mentor visit is required. Faculty whose schedules make international travel difficult should not be assigned as mentors.
- Each mentor will work with the fellow to plan a follow-up visit of 1-2 weeks to the fellow's home country. The trip should occur within 6 months to 1 year after the program ends.
- The mentor will follow up with the fellow for an additional year after their visit to provide continuing guidance and assess the impact of the exchange program.
- The PI will provide USDA/FAS with an agenda for mentor's reciprocal visit, including goals and objectives, three weeks prior to the trip. The mentor's travel information must be provided for emergency contact purposes and country clearance (if required by the cognizant FAS Overseas Office).
 - Under no circumstances may USDA-funded travel occur without, at minimum, notification to USDA in advance.
- Mentors will provide a trip report highlighting the trip's activities and results through the PI to USDA/FAS within 30 days after the visit.
- The mentor should plan to meet with the USDA/FAS Attaché or staff from the U.S. Embassy while they are traveling, if feasible. USDA/FAS can assist with coordination prior to the trip.

(5) Travel and Transportation

- Travel will be arranged consistent with Federal Travel Regulations (41 CFR 300 et seq.) and the institution's policies and procedures.
- The host institution will provide round trip, economy class, international airfare from the fellow's home to the university.
- The host institution is responsible for arranging and purchasing all domestic travel related to the fellow's training program.
- The host institution will provide housing for the fellow for the duration of the training program, taking into account gender and cultural norms.

- The host institution will pay lodging fees directly. The host institution will not require the fellow to pay for his or her lodging expenses, whether through reimbursement or advance payment.
- Lodging will include a private bedroom, private or shared bathroom, access to a laundry room, and access to a kitchen with pots, pans, and utensils.
- Necessities, such as sheets, towels, and cleaning supplies, will be provided for fellow's use. The fellow should not have to pay for these items.
- Lodging will be within walking distance to the campus/training location or easily accessible by public transportation.
- If public transportation is required to access campus/training location, the host institution will provide the fellow with a bus pass or proper allowance for transportation expenses.

When planning lodging options, the host institution should check with the fellow and account for any special dietary restrictions or preferences.

(6) Meals and Incidentals (M&IE)

- The host institution will provide each fellow with meal and living allowances for the duration of stay.
- Daily M&IE allowance may not exceed current [GSA per diem rates](#).
- The host institution can determine the frequency of per diem allotments, but the fellow must receive per diem within the first week of the program. The PI must inform the fellow and USDA/FAS immediately if this cannot be accommodated.

(7) Emergency Health Insurance

- The host institution will purchase emergency health insurance for the fellow for the duration of stay, as required for all J-1 Visa holders ([22 CFR 62.14](#)). Dates of coverage must include date of departure from home country to the university until date of arrival in home country from the university.
- The fellow will not be required to purchase his or her health insurance and then be reimbursed.
- The host institution will educate the fellow as to what is covered under health insurance policy, especially highlighting that pre-existing medical conditions are not covered.
- The host institution will immediately alert USDA/FAS staff if any health/medical conditions arise during the program.

(8) Communication

- The host institution will initiate contact with the fellow as soon as possible.
- The host institution will develop the training program in consultation with USDA/FAS and the fellow.
- The host institution will develop and implement a virtual meeting plan.
- The host institution will keep USDA/FAS informed regarding any logistical or program planning.

- The host institution will notify USDA/FAS immediately upon fellow's physical arrival and departure from the U.S. to comply with U.S. Department of Homeland Security requirements.
- The host institution will provide USDA/FAS with the fellow's temporary U.S. address and phone number, and emergency contact numbers for the PI, mentor, or other appropriate institution personnel. This information is required so that Fellow can be reached in the event of an emergency.

(9) Program

- The host institution will provide educational materials and supplies to each fellow necessary for their full participation in the program.
- The host institution will pay for all fees related to the fellow's training program, such as (but not limited to) technology fees, administrative fees, laboratory fees, etc.
- The host institution will arrange relevant field visits as applicable to the fellow's training program.
- The host institution will ensure the fellow submits an interim and final report (2-3 pages each) to USDA/FAS before the fellow leaves the United States.

(10) Orientation

- The PI/Training Coordinator will communicate directly with the fellow at least 4-8 weeks before his or her arrival in the U.S. to ensure that all pertinent information is provided, including:
 - Name and contact information of PI/Training Coordinator
 - Name and contact information of mentor
 - Institution information, weather information, and clothing needs
 - Housing and M&IE allowance
 - Program plan and anticipated site visits
 - Professional development expectations
 - Reminder to bring any necessary prescription medications
 - Explain what is and is not covered under emergency health insurance policy (e.g. no pre-existing conditions, no dental, etc.)
- Institution will provide an orientation upon the fellow's arrival to acquaint them with campus and community resources, such as:
 - Explanation and demonstration of local bus/transportation options
 - Explanation of cultural and legal expectations
- USDA will provide a welcome and orientation packet for mentors

Government Furnished Items: USDA FAS will provide fellows with a DS-2019 for the fellow to request and obtain a J-1 visa.

Monitoring

FAS through its authorized representatives, has the right, at all reasonable times, to make site visits to review project accomplishments and management control systems and to provide such technical assistance as may be required. During site visits, FAS will review recipients' files related to the funded program.

As part of any monitoring and program evaluation activities, recipients must permit FAS, upon reasonable notice, to review related records and to interview the organization's staff and clients regarding the program, and to respond in a timely and accurate manner to FAS requests for information relating to their program.

Close Out Reporting Requirements

Within 90 days after the end of the period of performance, or after an amendment has been issued to close out a grant, whichever comes first, recipients must submit a final FFR and final progress report detailing all accomplishments and a qualitative summary of the impact of those accomplishments throughout the period of performance.

If applicable, an inventory of all construction projects that used funds from this program has to be reported using the Real Property Status Report (Standard Form SF 429) available at:

<https://www.gsa.gov/portal/forms/download/149866>

Acceptance of final reports by the agency constitutes a closeout of the award with no further notice or obligation to either party. This acceptance will indicate the period of performance has expired, and any remaining funds will be deobligated. Records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the final reports are submitted, as described in 2 CFR 200.333

The recipient is responsible for returning any funds that have been drawn down or reimbursed but remain as unliquidated on recipient financial records.

G. Awarding Agency Contact Information

Contact and Resource Information

For all general questions, contact:

Cara Conley; International Program Specialist

Hours of operation: 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM Eastern Daylight Time

Telephone: (202) 285-8602

E-mail address: BorlaugFellowships@usda.gov

1400 Independence Ave SW, MS 1031

Washington, DC 20250-1031

Inquiries will be returned within 24 working hours (3 business days). All questions must be received no later than 16 working hours (2 working days) prior to submission deadline, except the point of contact will confirm receipt of proposals upon request

H. Additional Information

1. Extensions

Extensions to this program are allowed. Applicants may request a no-cost extension in order to complete all project activities. The request must be submitted 60 days prior to the expiration of the performance period. Requests for extensions are subject to approval.

2. Prior Approval of Pre-Award Costs

The Recipient shall not request reimbursement for costs incurred pertaining to the operation of the project, program, or activities prior to the approved project period.

3. Budget Revisions

a. Transfers of funds between direct cost categories in the approved budget when such cumulative transfers among those direct cost categories exceed ten percent of the total budget approved in this Award require prior written approval.

b. The Recipient shall obtain prior written approval for any budget revision that would result in the need for additional resources/funds.

c. The Recipient is not authorized at any time to transfer amounts budgeted for direct costs to the indirect costs line item or vice versa, without prior written approval.

4. Post-award program income

In the event program income becomes available to the recipient post-award, it is the recipient's responsibility to notify the FAS Program Manager to explain how that development occurred, as part of their request for guidance and/or approval. The Program Manager will review approval requests for program income on a case-by-case basis; approval is not automatic. Consistent with the policy and processes outlined in 2 C.F.R. Part 200, pertinent guidance and options, as determined by the type of recipient and circumstances involved, may be approved by the Grant Officer. If approval is granted, an award modification will be issued with an explanatory note.