



Sun Grant Program *South Central Region*

USDA-NIFA FUNDED Request for Applications

Competitive Grants Program FY2020

Deadlines:

Pre-Proposal:	08/15/20
Full Proposal:	10/01/20

Note: Eligible applicants are State agricultural experiment stations, colleges and universities, university research foundations, other research institutions and organizations, Federal agencies, national laboratories, private organizations or corporations, and individuals within the Sun Grant Program – South Central Region. Projects must fit into the regional priority areas outlined in this RFA to be considered for funding.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

ABOUT THE SUN GRANT PROGRAM

Authorized by Congress in 2004, the Sun Grant Program (SGP) is a national network of land-grant universities working in collaboration with national laboratories and government agencies, partnering to build a biobased economy. Sun Grant institutions are charged with making significant advances in biobased industries for the benefit of America's independent farmers, rural communities, and the public-at-large. The primary goal of the SGP is to address national energy needs and establish a national bioeconomy through coordinated regional research, education, and Extension activities focused on agriculture and forest-based fuels, products (chemicals and materials) and power.

The SGP is organized as a network of five land grant universities serving as regional Sun Grant Centers: South Dakota State University (North Central), Oregon State University (Western), Oklahoma State University (South Central), The University of Tennessee-Knoxville (Southeastern) and Pennsylvania State University (Northeastern), plus a Subcenter: the University of Hawaii). These centers facilitate federally funded research, extension, and education programs in their respective regions. Each program embraces the multi-institution, multi-state, multi-disciplinary integrated approach that is at the heart of the land-grant method of addressing needs and opportunities.

SUN GRANT PROGRAM – SOUTH CENTRAL REGION

The Sun Grant Program – South Central Region (SGP-SCR), located at Oklahoma State University (OSU), is the administrative unit for the region composed of the states of Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. In this Request for Applications (RFA), the terms Sun Grant Program – South Central Region, SGP-SCR, and the Center will be used interchangeably.

EXTERNAL GRANTS PROGRAM

Through a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture – National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA), the SGP-SCR will be awarding approximately **\$2.0 million** for projects in 2020-2024.

Project Funding Guidelines

Projects have a maximum duration of approximately 36 months with no more than 40% of award amount provided at project start; whereas, three additional 20% installments will be made available during the 4th quarter of Years 1, 2, and 3 and is contingent upon agency availability of funds and project progress described in quarterly reports. The maximum funding request for the USDA-NIFA program is **\$342,230**. Proposals must include substantive, multi-institutional and multi-state participation with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for each partner. Multi-institutional does not include branches of the same university in different locations. Roles and responsibilities of each partner must be clearly outlined through a letter of commitment during the full proposal stage. Funded grants will support research, extension and education programs on technology development, and integrated research, extension and education programs on technology implementation.

Projects must seek to accomplish as many of the following as possible:

- a. Enhance national energy security through the development, distribution, and implementation of biobased energy technologies;
- b. Promote diversification and environmental sustainability of agricultural production in the United States through biobased energy and product technologies;
- c. Promote economic diversification in rural areas of the United States through biobased energy and product technologies; and
- d. Enhance the efficiency of bioenergy and biomass research and development programs through improved coordination and collaboration among -
 - i. Department of Agriculture
 - ii. Department of Energy
 - iii. Land-grant and non land-grant colleges and universities
 - iv. Industry

Research, Education, and Extension Priority Areas and Feedstock Priority Area Guidelines

SGP-SCR invites proposals that will further its mission of developing viable alternative biobased energy sources and products while enhancing economic opportunities in rural areas. The following are priority areas and feedstocks identified by USDA-NIFA and the SGP-SCR. NOTE: Proposals must address *at least one* of the Research, Education and Extension Priority Areas **AND** *at least one* of the Feedstock Priority Areas.

Research, Education, and Extension Priority Areas

- Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Acres
- Sustainability
- Logistics including Feedstock Supply System
- Processing
- Biochemical and Thermochemical Conversions
- Extension Outreach
- Education

Feedstock Priority Areas

- Perennial Grasses (Switchgrass, *Miscanthus* or Mixed Grasses)
- Energy Cane
- Sorghum (Biomass or Sweet)
- Oil Feedstocks (Algae or Oilseeds)
- Woody Biomass (Fast Growth Trees and Residues)
- Annual Crop Residues (corn stover)

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are state agricultural experiment stations, colleges and universities, university research foundations, other research institutions and organizations, Federal agencies, national laboratories, private organizations or corporations, and individuals within the Sun Grant Program – South Central Region. Through the application process, the principal investigator (PI) and key personnel must demonstrate competency to implement and complete a project, provide fiscal accountability, prepare project reports and demonstrate a willingness to share information with researchers, educators and other interested parties.

Eligibility

The lead PI must be employed in the South Central Region, i.e. Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. Co-PIs, associate PIs, and collaborators may be from inside and outside the region.

Cost Sharing/Matching Requirements

Not less than 20 percent of the total project cost or 25% of Total Federal Funds requested must be matched with funds, including in-kind contributions, from a non-Federal source. **NOTE: Matching requirements do not apply to fundamental research.** Fundamental research is defined as research that increases knowledge or understanding of the fundamental aspects of phenomena and has the potential for broad application; and has a positive effect on agriculture, food, nutrition, or the environment.

In the event the project is not considered fundamental research, then cost share/matching is applicable. The Center requires a budget narrative that documents matching funds. The budget narrative should include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Written verification means:

Cash contributions: For any third party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each donation, signed by the authorized representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include:

1. The name, address, and telephone number of the donor
2. The name of the applicant organization
3. The title of the project for which the donation is made
4. The dollar amount of the cash donation (the budget narrative must describe how the cash donation will be used on the project)
5. A statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period.

In-kind contributions: For any third party in-kind contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each contribution, signed by the authorized representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include:

1. The name, address, and telephone number of the donor;
2. The name of the applicant organization;
3. The title of the project for which the donation is made;
4. A good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the third party in kind contribution and a description of how the fair market value was determined; and
5. A statement that the donor will make the contribution during the grant period.

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

The value of applicant contributions to the project shall be established in accordance with applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations §200 and §400, Cost Principles for Educational Institutions, for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs. All contributions, including cash and third party in-kind, must meet the criteria included in section 23 of 7 C.F.R. 3019, “Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-profit Organizations.”

Note: Applicants are required to provide 20% of Total Project Costs or 25% of Total Federal Funds requested as Institutional match/cost share. The matching funds cannot come from Federal sources. Waived F&A on the requested Federal funds cannot be used as part of the required match/cost share. However, institutional F&A calculated on the match/cost share direct costs can be used as part of the required match/cost share.

How to Calculate Cost Share/Matching (if needed)

As an example, a PI is requesting **\$150,000** from the SGP-SCR to fund a project.

1. **REQUESTED FEDERAL FUNDS = \$150,000.**
2. First, determine the **FEDERAL FUNDS DENOMINATOR** by subtracting the non-federal percentage (20%) from the total available percentage (100%). $100\% - 20\% = 80\%$
3. Next, calculate the **TOTAL REQUESTED FUNDS** by dividing the **REQUESTED FEDERAL FUNDS (from Step 1)** by the **FEDERAL FUNDS DENOMINATOR (from Step 2)**. $\$150,000 \div 0.80 = \mathbf{\$187,500}$
4. Finally, determine the **COST SHARE/MATCHING FUNDS** by subtracting the **TOTAL REQUESTED FUNDS (from Step 3)** from the **REQUESTED FEDERAL FUNDS (from Step 1)**. $\$187,500 - \$150,000 = \mathbf{\$37,500}$

The total value of the project will be \$187,500 with 80% from federal funds (\$150,000) and 20% from non-federal funds (\$37,500).

Facilities and Administrative Costs (F&A)

USDA does not allow F&A costs on this competitive program.

APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION PROCESS

SUBMISSION DEADLINES:

PRE-PROPOSALS must be fully and completely submitted electronically using the [Webnibus online application system](#) no later than **08/15/20**. Late pre-proposals will not be accepted.

- Webnibus can be accessed at sungrant.okstate.edu under “Funding Opportunities” tab.
- Requested funds and senior personnel identified during the pre-proposal stage may be modified during the full proposal stage.
- The pre-proposal stage does not require Letters of Commitment or Agreement.
- Pre-proposals do not need to be approved by an institutional signing official.

FULL PROPOSALS must be fully and completely submitted electronically using the [Webnibus online application system](#) not later than **10/01/20**. Late full proposals will not be accepted.

- Webnibus can be accessed through this [link](#).
- Full proposals require the following items:
 - Statements of Work
 - Letters of Commitment or Agreement
 - Cost Share/Matching Letters for senior personnel
 - PI and subaward budgets: An attached Excel spreadsheet of the budget for the PI and all subawards. The requested budget can be entered into your Institution’s standard budget form
 - Approval by an authorized organizational representative or institutional signing official (such as a department accountant, grants and contracts office, sponsored programs office).

Webnibus

Pre-proposals and full proposals will be submitted via the online Webnibus system, accessed by clicking this [link](#). **Do not skip any component of the application, or the project may not be considered for funding.**

IMPORTANT NOTE: To complete an online Webnibus pre- and full proposal, the PI, all associated Senior Personnel and Approvers must have a Webnibus profile. Each person may create a log-on by visiting the SGP-SCR Webnibus homepage, found at this [link](#). The PI will have the opportunity to look each person up in Webnibus to see if they have an existing account. If they do not have an account, the PI may add their name and Webnibus will invite them to sign-up, create their own profile and biosketch, and link to the proposal. If a PI, Co-PI, collaborator, or Organization Approver has been on the South Central Sun Grant Webnibus system previously, he/she may log-on using their current User ID (e-mail address) and password. If the password has been lost or forgotten, you can reset your password using the SGP-SCR Webnibus homepage. If the user has difficulty logging into Webnibus, he or she may call the center at (405) 744-2398 for assistance. **The SGP-SCR will not provide or change passwords for anyone but the corresponding registered individual.**

PRE-PROPOSAL GUIDELINES:

Pre-proposals are **required**.

Summary of Pre-Proposal Components

1. PI Biosketch
2. Senior Personnel
3. Title Page
4. Pre-Proposal Narrative

Pre-Proposal Component Description

1. **PI Biosketch** is a 2-page CV summary of the PIs qualifications. It includes:
 - a. Contact Information
 - b. Education
 - c. Employment
 - d. Professional Recognition
 - e. Publications
 - f. Graduate Students and Post-Docs Supervised
 - g. Current and Pending Support

Note: After being linked to a proposal in Webnibus, each Senior Personnel member will create or update their own Biosketch by logging-in using the credentials e-mailed to them by Webnibus.

2. **Senior Personnel** are added by the PI in this section. This includes Co-PIs, Associate PIs, and other Senior Personnel. The PI should search existing Webnibus members to link to their proposal. If the person is not a member of the South Central Sun Grant Webnibus database, the PI may choose an option to have Webnibus send an e-mail link, asking the person to create an account and link to the proposal (through invitation by the PI only). To add a new member into Webnibus, the PI must provide the person's e-mail address, first name, last name, organization, department, and phone number. When linking the person to the proposal, the PI may choose to let the Senior Personnel have "view only," "edit narrative only," "edit budgets only," or "full editing" access to the proposal.

Note: *Each of the five regional Sun Grant Centers has their own Webnibus database system. If any PI or other person associated with the proposal is registered with a different region, he/she must register with the South Central Sun Grant Center's Webnibus. User IDs and passwords from other Sun Grant Centers will not work with this region's specific database.*

3. **Title page** is a snapshot of the proposal. It contains:
 - a. Project Title
 - b. Proposed Project Period
 - c. PI Name, Organization, and Contact Information
 - d. Senior Personnel Name, Organization, and Contact Information
 - e. Total Funds Requested of Sun Grant
 - f. Total Cost Share Proposed
 - g. Sources of Cost Share
 - h. Collaborators' Names and Participating Organizations

4. **Pre-Proposal Narrative** of no more than 4,000 characters (which includes blank spaces). This is the document equivalent of approximately two pages, double-spaced. The narrative summarizes what the PI and partners intend to accomplish. In addition to a project description, the narrative should also indicate deliverables and potential impacts of the work by answering the following:
- What problem or opportunity is to be addressed? Why is this project important?
 - How does this project fit into the mission of the Sun Grant?
 - Why is this project beneficial to the South Central Sun Grant region? What are the SGP-SCR priority areas this project addresses? What specific feedstocks will be used in this project? List all.
 - Provide a brief and general description of the research methods to be used.
 - What are the expected deliverables? Delivery date of deliverables?
 - Who will be affected by the findings and how will they benefit from the results?
 - Cite any references.

NOTE that references are included in the 4,000 character limit.

FULL PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Pre-proposals will be screened by a selection committee to determine who will be invited to submit a full proposal. Full proposals will be by invitation only.

The full proposal application package must consist of the following components. Submissions omitting any of these items will not be considered for funding. Components must be entered into Webnibus. Note that components submitted in the pre-proposal stage will be carried over by Webnibus into the full proposal application.

Summary of Full Proposal Components

- PI Biosketch (carried over from the pre-proposal)
- Senior Personnel (carried over from the pre-proposal)
- Title Page (carried over from the pre-proposal)
- Proposal Sign-Off Sheet
- Proposal Summary
- Pre-Proposal Narrative (carried over from the pre-proposal)
- Full Proposal Narrative (attached as a Microsoft Word or PDF document)
- Budget Forms
- Budget Justification
- File Attachments of Supporting Documentation (Microsoft Word or Excel, or PDF)
 - BUDGET(S): An attached Excel spreadsheet of the budget for the PI and all subawards. The requested budget can be entered into your Institution's standard budget form.
 - REFERENCES: An attached document containing list of references used in developing the Full Proposal Narrative. All work cited should be referenced in this document. Citations must be complete and conform to an acceptable journal format. References should be listed in numerical order corresponding to their appearance in the text. References do not count toward the page limit.
 - COST SHARE/MATCHING LETTERS OF COMMITMENT: PI, Senior Personnel and other Collaborators' Cost Share/Matching Letters of Commitment signed by the appropriate organizational authorized official and printed on organizational letterhead.

- COLLABORATOR LETTERS OF COMMITMENT: Collaborators' or Industry Partners' Letter of Commitment regarding monetary or in-kind donations signed by the appropriate organizational authorized official and printed on organizational letterhead.
- OTHER ATTACHMENTS: Any other supporting documentation, such as cooperative agreements and letters of commitment signed by an authorized official of the organization.

Content and Format of Proposal

1. **PI Biosketch:** Two-page curriculum vitae summary for the PI. This is carried over from the pre-proposal stage, but may be edited as needed. Sections of the Biosketch include Contact Information, Education, Employment, Professional Recognition, Publications, Graduate Students and Post-Docs Supervised, and Current and Pending Support.
2. **Senior Personnel:** This is carried over from the pre-proposal stage, but may be edited as needed. Senior Personnel include Co-PIs, Associate PIs, and Other Senior Personnel. The PI must link all senior personnel to his or her proposal, including those added since the pre-proposal submission, to the Webnibus online application system. If the Senior Personnel member does not have a Webnibus account with the South Central region, the PI must invite them in Webnibus. After logging into the system and linking to the proposal, the Senior Personnel will add their Biosketch. The Biosketch components are the same as listed above for the PI.
3. **Title Page:** This is retained from the pre-proposal stage. It may be edited as needed. Sections include: Project Title; Proposed Project Period; PI Name, Organization, and Contact Information; Senior Personnel Name, Organization, and Contact Information; Total Funds Requested of Sun Grant; Total Cost Share Proposed; Sources of Cost Share; and Collaborators' Names and Participating Organizations.
4. **Proposal Sign-Off Sheet:** This is where the PI, Senior Personnel, and Approver certify they have read the proposal and approve with it as prepared. Once an individual has signed-off on the sign-off sheet (or certified), it may not be unsigned or uncertified. The Proposal Sign-off Sheet has three parts:
 - First, the PI must click on the sign-off sheet to verify he or she is following the ethical guidelines set forth.
 - Second, the PI and Co-PIs must all certify the full proposal prior to submission. In certifying, the team members are stating they have all read and concur with the proposal packet as prepared. The certification links (buttons) are located next to each name near the bottom of sign-off sheet.
 - Third, the proposal approver invited by the PI will certify that he or she has read the proposal and agrees with it as it has been prepared. The approver should make any needed changes before certifying. It is the PIs responsibility to add the appropriate approvers to the proposal (department accountant, department grants or contracts office, department sponsored programs office, or other authorizing official), notify the approver when the proposal is ready for review, and ensure the approver has the information required to access and certify the proposal in Webnibus. The PI should give the proposal approver a minimum of seven days before the deadline to review the proposal and attach the required letters and budgets.
5. **Proposal Summary:** The PI should make sure this section is accurate, complete, and sufficiently describes the proposal, as it is the first glimpse all reviewers and oversight team members have of the proposal. Do not exceed the character maximum. Webnibus

will only display for reviewers the maximum characters allowed; anything extra will not be visible or printable. Character maximums include spaces. Also, be sure to include the appropriate SGP-SCR *priority areas and feedstocks* addressed by the project in the proposal summary's key words, rationale, or expected outcomes. **Note that projects without a complete Proposal Summary may not be considered for funding.**

The following proposal summary sections will automatically appear based upon their entry in a different area:

- Project Title (copied from the Title Page section)
- Principal Investigator and Affiliations (copied from the Senior Personnel section)
- Start Date and End Date (copied from the Title Page section)

The PI must also provide the following in the proposal summary:

- Total Sun Grant Funds Requested
- Total Cost Share Funds

The PI must provide the following information:

- Key Words (1,000 character maximum)
- Objectives (2,000 character maximum)
- Methodology (2,000 character maximum)
- Rationale (2,000 character maximum)
- Expected Outcomes (2,000 character maximum)

6. **Pre-Proposal Narrative:** The narrative that was submitted previously (during the pre-proposal stage) is provided here for reference purposes only. After a pre-proposal is submitted into Webnibus, the PI may not edit it any further. Furthermore, the pre-proposal narrative may not be modified during the full proposal stage.
7. **Full Proposal Narrative (FPN):** PIs must upload a PDF of the full proposal narrative in Webnibus under the FPN section. **The FPN may not exceed a total of 10 pages with 12-point, Times New Roman or Arial font and single-line spacing. All margins (top, bottom, left, and right) must be at least 1" of white space. The header must contain the Project Title and PI's first and last name. The footer must contain page numbers aligned to the bottom, right-hand corner.** All works cited should be referenced in a separate attached document labeled FPN References. *Note that the page count does NOT include the references section.*

The following identifies key elements of the Full Proposal Narrative, plus suggested points to be addressed:

a. **INTRODUCTION**

- Provide a clear statement (paragraph) of the long-term goal(s).
- Provide a clear statement (numbered list) of the goals supporting objectives or research questions of the proposed project.
- Summarize the body of knowledge or other past activities that substantiate the need for the proposed project.
- Describe recently completed or on-going significant activities related to the proposed project, including the work of key personnel.
- Describe preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed research, including the SGP-SCR priority areas and feedstocks associated with this project,

should be included in this section. Indicate the percentage of the project devoted to the priority area(s) identified.

b. GOALS AND PERIOD OBJECTIVES:

- Expand upon the details of the long-term goals and objectives described in the Introduction.
- Present the concise rationale behind the proposed research including the specific relationship of the project's objectives to one or more of the USDA-Sun Grant's Priority Areas (see Page 3 of this RFA). Describe why the specific Research, Education, and Extension Priority Areas and Feedstocks Priority Areas were chosen for this proposal.
- Describe any novel ideas or contributions that the proposed project offers.

c. METHODOLOGY:

- State clearly any activities proposed or problems being addressed.
- Describe clearly the problem-solving approaches being applied
- Describe the methods to be used in carrying out the proposed project and
- Identify the feasibility of the methods to be used.
- Identify any limitations to the proposed methodology.

d. TIME LINE: Identify the proposed activities, list in sequence, and estimate their time frame(s) for completion.

e. PROJECTED OUTCOMES AND ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATION:

- Describe the expected outcomes and deliverables.
- Describe how results or products will be used.
- Identify any pitfalls that may be encountered.
- **Prepare a succinct economic justification and analysis. Any member of the Senior Personnel team may write it.** The justification must describe an estimate of the proposal's displacement of foreign oil through the enhancement of a biobased economy.

f. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES: At least one product of significance, i.e., Experiment Station report, Extension bulletin, or white paper, is required for all funded projects. Investigators must acknowledge USDA-NIFA and SGP-SCR in all publications and presentations. In addition to outreach activities and submitted peer-reviewed articles, PIs will be invited to present research findings at regional and/or national conferences sponsored by the various regional Sun Grant Centers.

- Describe all anticipated outreach activities that disseminate information from the proposed research.
- Describe all anticipated peer-reviewed articles that would result from this research.

g. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND EVALUATION PROCEDURES:

- Clearly describe the project team and each individual's roles and responsibilities in the project.

- Describe the facilities, equipment, and resources that are available to support the needs of the project. Equipment and facilities purchased for the project must be documented in the budget justification.
 - Discuss how the results will be analyzed, assessed, or interpreted.
- h. **ROLE OF COLLABORATORS:*** If it will be necessary to enter into formal collaborative arrangements with others, such arrangements must be fully explained and justified. If the collaborator(s) are known at the time of application, a CV or resume should be provided in the senior personnel section.

NOTE: Evidence (*i.e. letter of support on university or company letterhead, signed by the senior personnel or collaborator's authorized official*) must be provided stating that the University or other collaborator involved with each PI, Co-PI and/or donor have agreed to participate and/or render these services, as well as provide any cost share or in-kind donations. These supporting documents are to be submitted as attached files in the Webnibus online proposal system and will not count toward the page limit. The applicant will also be required to provide additional information on consultants and collaborators in the budget justification portion of the proposal.

8. **Budget Forms:** *Do NOT use the budget form in Webnibus. The requested budget can be entered into your Institution's standard budget form.* The budget must include cost share amounts and the following line items:
- a.* Salaries and wages for all senior personnel, staff, and students: PI and senior personnel salaries are not normally allowed to be paid with Sun Grant funds. Exceptions require a strong justification.
 - b.* Fringe benefits.
 - c.* Permanent Equipment over \$5k: include an itemized list and cost in the budget justification.
 - d.* Expendable Supplies and Equipment: include equipment under \$5k per unit.
 - e.* Travel: include Domestic travel only. International travel is not allowed.
 - f.* Publication costs.
 - g.* Other Direct Costs: Show Personal Service Agreements and/or Subcontracts and for GRA Tuition, include semester(s) and fee in justification.
9. **Budget Justification:** All budget categories for which support is requested must be individually listed (with costs) in the same order as the budget. If consulting, collaborative, or subrecipient arrangements are included in the proposal, the arrangements must be fully explained and justified. The rate of pay for any consultant must be included, if known at the time of application. Include a cost breakdown for the consultant. Letters of consent or collaboration or other evidence must be included in the attachments section (on university or company letterhead, signed by the authorizing individual) to show that collaborators have agreed to participate. ***In multi-organizational proposals, a budget and budget narrative must be included for each organization involved.*** The lead organization and each participating organization must be identified. Your proposal approver – a person from your accounting, grants and contracts, or sponsored programs office – usually obtains these letters from your organization, as well as other organizations.

Important: Budget Justification must include a description of the matching funds provided, including sources. If the project is fundamental research, matching is not required. If the project is not fundamental research, matching is required. Matching Funds cannot come from Federal sources. Any waived F&A on the Federal funds cannot be used as part of the required match. However, organizational waived F&A on the matching direct costs can be used. Organizations are required to provide 20% of Total Project Costs or 25% of Total Federal Funds requested as match (*see cost sharing/matching requirements and example beginning on page 5 of this RFA*).

Facilities and Administrative (F&A) Costs – Are not allowed as part of this competitive program, per USDA requirements.

10. **File Attachments** (Microsoft Word or Excel, or PDF)

- **BUDGET(S):** An attached Excel spreadsheet of the budget for the PI and all subawards. Use the standard budget form of your institution.
- **REFERENCES:** An attached document containing list of references used in developing the Full Proposal Narrative. All work cited should be referenced in this document. Citations must be complete and conform to an acceptable journal format. References should be listed in numerical order corresponding to their appearance in the text. References do not count toward the page limit.
- **COST SHARE/MATCHING LETTERS OF COMMITMENT:** PI, Senior Personnel and other Collaborators' Cost Share/Matching Letters of Commitment signed by the appropriate organizational authorized official and printed on organizational letterhead.
- **COLLABORATOR LETTERS OF COMMITMENT:** Collaborators' or Industry Partners' Letter of Commitment regarding monetary or in-kind donations signed by the appropriate organizational authorized official and printed on organizational letterhead.
- **OTHER ATTACHMENTS:** Any other supporting documentation, such as cooperative agreements and letters of commitment signed by an authorized official of the organization.

Remember to provide access rights to all people who must review and approve your documentation prior to submission, especially the person who will serve as the authorized signature (usually a grants and sponsored programs office or pre-award representative)! Note that some organizations only allow authorized officials to submit proposals rather than the PI. In this case, full editing access rights must be given to your organization's authorizing official.

Confidentiality/Proprietary Information

Confidentiality will be maintained in the proposal review process. Proposals will not be used for any purpose other than evaluation of merit for funding. **However, if the pre-proposal includes any proprietary, confidential information, it must be clearly marked as such.**

Where to Submit

Pre-proposals and full proposals must be submitted using the online proposal submission system, Webnibus. No other submission type will be accepted. There is no limit to the number of log-ons

to online system. Information saved on the system will be available upon re-entry, and project team members may review materials online. Project team members should log onto the system in advance of the due date to register with the system and to review the proposal forms and process. The Webnibus system can be accessed [here](#).

Pre-proposal must be submitted electronically no later than 5:00 p.m. CST on 08/15/20.

Full proposals must be submitted electronically no later than 5:00 p.m. CST on 10/01/20.

About Funded Projects

- Projected start date is **February 1, 2021**, based upon the project's acceptance date by the funding agency.
- The submission of at least one product of significance, i.e., Experiment Station report, Extension bulletin, or white paper, is required for all funded projects.
- PI must acknowledge USDA-NIFA and SGP-SCR in all publications and presentations.
- Required reports are due 10 days after the end of each quarter, with the periods beginning in September and ending in August. A quarterly report template shall be provided.
- Projects will be reviewed quarterly to ensure satisfactory progress up to the maximum period allowed. All reports are subsequently submitted to USDA-NIFA for review.
- Invoices are subject to non-payment until the center receives any and all required reports or materials.
- Projects have a maximum duration of approximately 36 months with no more than 40% of award amount provided at project start in Year 1; whereas, three additional 20% installments will be made available contingent upon agency availability of funds and project progress described in quarterly reports.
- Final technical report due one month (30 days) after the project's end date.

Contact Information

For more information on proposal development, please contact:

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REVIEW PROCESS AND CRITERIA

Peer and Merit Review

The guiding principle for proposal review and evaluation is to ensure that each proposal is treated in a consistent and fair manner.

Late proposals will not be reviewed. Upon timely receipt, all proposals will be evaluated for responsiveness to the administrative requirements set forth in the RFA. Proposals that do not meet these requirements may be eliminated from competition. However, the Center retains the right to conduct discussions with applicants to resolve technical and/or budget issues, as deemed necessary.

Proposal reviews are undertaken to ensure that projects supported by the Center are awarded on the basis of merit, quality, and relevance to advancing the purposes of and are consistent with the goals and requirements of the funding program. As such, proposals submitted will undergo a programmatic evaluation by USDA-NIFA to determine the worthiness of Federal support.

Full Proposal

1. All proposals will undergo a rigorous review process, which will include technical peer review by scientists working in the appropriate fields. Proposals will also undergo review by a Technical Review Panel and the Sun Grant Oversight Team. Decisions will be made on the basis of the following factors:
 - **SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL MERIT (50%)**
 - Originality and innovativeness of the concept and approach
 - Awareness of previous work or strategies
 - Clarity of objectives and presentation of information
 - Feasibility of methodology to achieve objectives
 - Likelihood of success as proposed
 - Overall technical merit
 - **QUALIFICATIONS OF THE INVESTIGATORS(S), ADEQUACY OF THE FACILITIES, PROJECT MANAGEMENT, AND COSTS (25%)**
 - Eligibility of investigators
 - Qualifications of the investigator(s)
 - Appropriate collaborators included
 - Level to which stakeholders were involved in project planning and implementation
 - Planning and implementation strategies
 - Reasonable probability that meaningful progress can be made toward addressing the problem or opportunity within the permitted time frame
 - Reasonable budget
 - Adequacy of the facilities for carrying out the proposed research
 - Adherence to RFA guidelines
 - Completeness of proposal
 - **PROJECT RELEVANCE (25%)**
 - Relevance to Sun Grant's mission
 - Alignment to USDA/Sun Grant Priority Areas (see page 3 of the RFA)
 - Potential significance of the anticipated results to the region or nation

- Degree to which end-users or potential users of the project are consulted or involved in project planning and implementation, and the potential for project implementation
 - Adequate outreach program and strategies
2. Each proposal will be peer reviewed by scientists who are not associated directly with the South Central regional program. They will evaluate the proposals and submit their individual ranking of the proposals, as well as review comments to the Center.
 3. A panel of experts will be assembled to evaluate reviewer assessments. A lead panelist in each of the subfields will be identified and tasked with leading the discussion on that set of proposals. A secondary reviewer will also be identified to present additional information.
 4. The ranking of the outside reviewers and the individual rankings of the South Central Sun Grant Oversight Team will be used to construct the final rank order of the proposals.
 5. The recommendations made by South Central Sun Grant Oversight Team and Center Administration will be reviewed by USDA-NIFA via North Central Regional Sun Grant Center (NCRSGC) at South Dakota State University (SDSU) for final approval. The Center will seek to achieve a portfolio balance of research and education projects to address the bioenergy priorities of the region. Therefore, relevance to meeting these regional priorities may form the basis for selection among projects deemed of equivalent merit and quality.

Post-Review Process

- For those proposals selected for funding, the Center must obtain USDA-NIFA via NCRSGC approval before awards can be made. The PI may be asked to make changes to their proposal or budget based upon USDA-NIFA via NCRSGC recommendations. USDA-NIFA via NCRSGC may also request additional information from the PI before final approval is received.
- After approval is received from the funding agency, the center will email letters with award decisions and masked reviews to all who submitted Full Proposals.