

I'm Thinking of Applying for the USDA Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program

Part II



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for
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OKAY...You have your program plan developed and you are ready to start writing the narrative and assembling your grant package for submission!

Step 1: Read the RFA from beginning to end two or three times. You will pick up new details each time you read it and the “big picture” will begin to become clear.

All details are important!

Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program

2014 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: March 31, 2014



**U.S. Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture**

You should already have these things in place:

- DUNS Number
- Registration with grants.gov
- Basic project program plan, goals, projected outcomes and activities to achieve the goals and produce the outcomes.
- Documentation of low-income community involvement in the project planning process such as:
 - Survey or community food assessment results
 - Summary of talking circle or focus group ideas and discussions
 - Participation and feedback from pilot projects
 - Feedback from informal conversations with community members and leaders
 - Ideas from a “Suggestion Box”
 - Requests from community partners working in the same low-income community

Your project program plan should address the **four primary goals** of the CFPCGP (Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program) and the overall intention of the program. (RFA page 4)

- Meet the food needs of low-income individuals through food distribution, community outreach to assist in participation in Federally assisted nutrition programs, or improving access to food as part of a comprehensive service;
- Increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for the food needs of the communities;
- Promote comprehensive responses to local food access, farm, and nutrition issues; and
- Meet specific state, local or neighborhood food and agricultural needs including needs relating to:
 - Equipment necessary for the efficient operation of a project;
 - Planning for long-term solutions; or
 - The creation of innovative marketing activities that mutually benefit agricultural producers and low-income consumers.

Community Food Projects are intended to bring together stakeholders from the distinct parts of the food system and to foster understanding of national food security trends and how they might improve local food systems.

Now let's go through the RFA...



Right away you will see the the “Purposes and Priorities” of the CFP program, as shown on the previous slide. These are also the first criteria that the reviewers will use to evaluate your proposal.

Note the emphasis on strategic partnerships and relationship of CFP projects to government Nutrition and Childhood Obesity initiatives:

The CFPCGP RFA directly aligns with the Research, Education, and Economics Action Plan and specifically addresses Goal 4, Nutrition and Childhood Obesity by *strengthening established strategic partnerships and strengthening implementation practices to encourage healthy eating and physical activity at the individual and community levels, focusing on high-risk groups.*

The next section describes the CFP Program Areas. The CFP and PP (Planning Projects) share the same goals and preferences. This section clearly states the goals of the CFP program and should be read carefully to ensure that your project will be in alignment with the CFP program goals. Note that the first Evaluation Criteria examines how well your project addresses these goals (page 23, #1)

Important points:

- Projects are self-sustaining with a one-time infusion of federal funds
- Project is community-based
- Project is in alignment with CFPCGP primary goals (slide 4)
- Planning Projects work toward community food security and the CFP goals in a defined community with well-described activities and outcomes

Be sure to look at the types of projects that are given preference and make sure your project is addressing as many of these areas as possible. Note that the Evaluation Criteria that reviewers are required to use these preferences when considering your project include an analysis of how well the proposed project addresses these areas of preference (page 23, #3).

CFP is \$300,000 up to 3 years and PP is \$25,000 up to 3 years.

Eligibility (page 9)

For the first time in the program's history, it is not necessary for tribal organizations to have a 501(c)(3) to apply for CFPCGP funds. *“Public food program service providers, tribal organizations, or private nonprofit entities, including gleaners”* are eligible applicants.

Additional Eligibility Requirements:

- Experience in food work in low-income communities
- Implementation competency and fiscal accountability
- Willingness to share project results and information including a dissemination plan, and
- Willingness to partner with at least one local partner to achieve one “Hunger Free Communities” goal.

Applicants are encouraged to collaborate with community organizations, especially Promise Zone and StrikeForce organizations.

Links to information about all of these programs are given on RFA page 9.

Match (page 10)

CFP requires a **dollar-for-dollar** match for all CFP and PP applicants.

Important points:

- Match can not come from federal sources
- Match can be cash, in-kind and/or third-party contributions (coming from outside your organization)
- Contributions used as match must be for the exclusive use of the funded project
- In-kind contributions must be “fairly evaluated.” (Use fair market value for goods, time and services to attach a dollar amount to them)
- Match, or non-federal funds and contributions, must be equal to or greater than amount requested over the grant period
- All match, including source of match and amount, must be shown in a separate budget justification attached with the requested funds justification
- Detailed letters of commitment are required for all match

More on match later...

Now is a good time to download the “NIFA [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) Application Guide.”

Go to [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) > Applicants > Apply for Grants > Download a grant application package and enter CDFA number 10.225 > Download package. Choose Opportunity Number USDA-NIFA-CFP-004489 and click Download.

Click “Application Instruction” for the NIFA Guide.

This Guide will show all of the forms that are needed for submission and has detailed instructions for filling them out.

Look at this NOW and go to [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) under “Forms” to print them. If you fill out hardcopies it will make filling in the information in [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) go smoother and you will have a record of the info in case of an electronic problem.

Click “Application Package” and you will see the actual submission format.

The appropriate forms will appear in the [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) application once you get started.

You should sign in to [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) soon and start getting familiar with the forms and how to move them, save them, etc.

Project Summary and Narrative

- Even though the summary is inserted before the narrative, it is a good idea to write your summary after you have finished the narrative. You need to include a lot of info in a very concise 250 words for the summary and that is not possible until you have everything organized.
- The Summary and Narrative should be converted to separate PDF documents so that they can be added as Attachments in 7 and 8 under R&R Other Project Information.
- 12 point font or larger
- 1 inch margins
- No line spacing requirement
- Number pages sequentially in narrative

See page 10 in the NIFA Guide for more content and format details.

Be very careful to comply with all formatting and content requirements.

Your application will be disqualified if there are mistakes!!!

Narrative Content (pages 13-16)

The RFA is very clear about the information that is needed to write a complete and compelling narrative. Read each item carefully and supply as much info as possible within the 10 page total limit. Here are highlights:

Community and Needs

- Describe your community in great detail so that reviewers who live in urban/academic/relatively affluent situations will get a clear picture of everyday life in your community
- Use current statistics to give poverty rates, number of free and reduced meal students, etc <http://www.city-data.com> is a convenient source for info
- Describe assets as well as needs
- Clearly state how low-income community members have been a part of the project planning process and have contributed to the decisions regarding choice of project goals and activities

Organizations/Communities Involved in Project

- Clearly describe the experience in low-income food work for each key partner
- Describe the low-income food work experience of project staff in your organization and staff involved with project from key partners
- Reference all forms of community input in project planning and how community members will be involved in project implementation
- Include a broad range of Letters of Support from community members
- Required to include Letters of Support from key partner organizations “acknowledging their support and contributions.”

Narrative Content (con't)

Goals and Intended Outcomes

- Think of “outcomes” like objectives...they need to be S.M.A.R.T.
- When deciding on activities, be sure to choose those that closely align with the CFPCGP primary goals and describe this relationship to CFPCGP goals in detail
- Create a Timeline (up to 3 pages) with implementation details like milestones, number of participants, etc. Attach as a separate document and it does not count against the 10-page limit.
- Make sure that your activities relate directly to outcomes you have stated
- Your budget must accurately reflect what is needed to accomplish the goals and outcomes

Evaluation

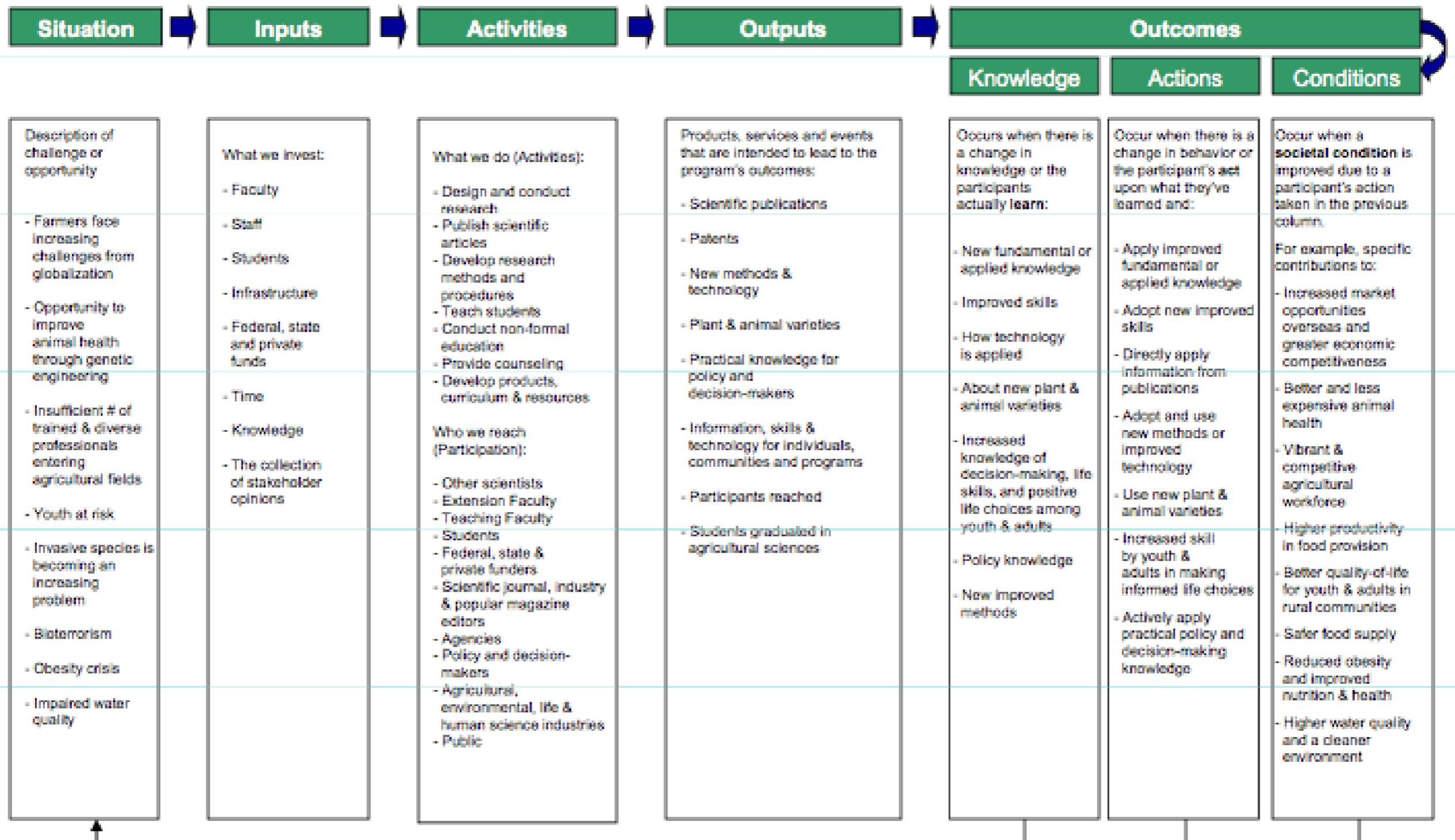
- A logic model (see definition on page 35) is required as an Attachment. The NIFA logic model is found at http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/reporting/part/gen_logic_model.pdf
- Include “Indicators of Success” based on Whole Measures for Community Food Systems fields of evaluation. Document is available at <http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/ppatch/documents/WholeMeasuresCFS.pdf>
- Include both “process” and “outcome” evaluations in your plan.
- Allow between 5% and 10% of project budget for evaluation. Applicants are encouraged to contract an experienced Evaluator (often from outside your organization) to work with you

Self-Sustainability

- Show how the “one-time infusion” of funds will suffice to “advance local capacity-building and achieve sustainability.” for key components of your project
- Include a Business plan or Feasibility Study (5 page limit) as an Attachment supporting your sustainability plan.

Generic Logic Model for NIFA Reporting

(This model is intended to be illustrative guide for reporting on NIFA-funded research, education and extension activities. It is not a comprehensive inventory of our programs.)



ASSUMPTIONS - These are the premises based on theory, research, evaluation knowledge etc. that support the relationships of the elements shown above, and upon which the success of the portfolio, program, or project rests. For example, finding animal gene markers for particular diseases will lead to better animal therapies.

EXTERNAL FACTORS - A brief discussion of what variables have an effect on the portfolio, program or project, but which cannot be changed by managers of the portfolio, program, or project. For example, a plant breeding program's success may depend on the variability of the weather...etc.

Field 12. Other Attachments (pages 17-21)

Attachments **MUST BE** in PDF format. This includes your Narrative and Summary. Everything you create for the application must be in PDF or your proposal will not get past the first step of review, the technical review, and the peer review panel will never see it!

Everything is spelled out in these pages as to how to get all of the information into the [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) application format. **Pay attention to detail!!!** It is a very good idea to get into the [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) system right away and get familiar with how to add attachments and fill out the forms that are provided there.

Be sure that you have completed all of the required documents (logic model, Current and Pending Support forms, biological sketches and resumes for key personnel, budget justifications, Match and Partner commitment letters, etc.) and as many of the optional ones (Letters of Support, especially from community members, timeline, etc.) as possible.

This is a very competitive grant program as it is the only one directly targeting low-income communities and their food system work. Having everything completed and in the package can mean the big difference between getting funded this round or having to try again next year.

CURRENT & PENDING SUPPORT

Name: _____

Instructions:

Who completes this template: Each project director/principal investigator (PD/PI) and other senior personnel that the Request for Applications (RFA) specifies

How this template is completed:

- Record information for active and pending projects, including this proposal.
- All current efforts to which PD/PI(s) and other senior personnel have committed a portion of their time must be listed, whether or not salary for the person involved is included in the budgets of the various projects.
- Provide analogous information for all proposed work which is being considered by, or which will be submitted in the near future to, other possible sponsors, including other USDA programs.
- For concurrent projects, the percent of time committed must not exceed 100%.

Note: Concurrent submission of a proposal to other organizations will not prejudice its review by CSREES.

NAME (Last/PI #1 first)	SUPPORTING AGENCY AND AGENCY ACTIVE AWARD/PENDING PROPOSAL NUMBER	TOTAL \$ AMOUNT	EFFECTIVE AND EXPIRATION DATES	% OF TIME COMMITTED	TITLE OF PROJECT
	Active:				
	Pending:				

This file MUST be converted to PDF prior to attachment in the electronic application package.

Budget, Budget Justification and Form R&R Budget (Fed/Non-Fed)

Detailed instructions and information for completion of this form is available on pages 40-51 of the NIFA Guide. It will take you through the budget form step-by-step. Note that you will be filling out a budget form for each year of the project. The form will pre-populate totals for the cumulative budget at the end.

It is a good idea to create your own excel or numbers spreadsheet with the same line item categories as the R&R Budget form. That way you can plug in numbers and make adjustments. It will also be very valuable, if you are funded, as a guide to set up your bookkeeping.

Be sure to show your match in the Non-Federal (\$) column.

Be sure that all line items are fully described in your budget justification or budget narrative.

While the close scrutiny of the budget will only occur if your project is recommended for funding by the peer review process, the peer reviewers will look to see that it is reasonable for the activities proposed and if the budget matches the goals, activities and outcomes for the project. They will also notice the balance of expenditures (disproportionate amount used for high salaries in a low-income community, are low-income participants fairly compensated?, is there enough allowed to do a good job with all proposed activities?, etc.) Your budget should benefit the low-income community through funded activities, staffing, resources and services offered, etc.

Consultant Services

Applicants are encouraged to meet most of the project needs in-house with the exception of professional Evaluators.

A separate Attachment must be submitted in Field 12 for each consultant containing:

- Justification for the use of such services
- A statement of work to be performed
- A resume or curriculum vita for each consultant (2 page limit)

Consultant expenses are listed in “Other Direct Costs” in the budget. The accompanying Budget Justification should list:

- The name(s) of the consultant(s)
- The name(s) of their organization(s)
- A breakdown of the amount being charged to the award (e.g., number of days of service, rate of pay, travel, per diem)

All of this information must be provided before the award money will be released.

Examples of Allowable Match

- Salaries and fringe from non-federal sources for your employees who will spend specific time on the project. Include annual rate of pay, hours or percentage of time committed to this project and a brief scope of work for this project in your Letter of Commitment
- Salaries and fringe from non-federal sources from partners with same info as above
- Consultant services
- Money that is donated directly for use on this project with statement of use in letter
- Travel expenses
- Donated materials and supplies at fair market value
- Land at appraised value if it is donated to the organization or fair market lease value
- Costs of printing and publication services specific to the project
- Rent for office or meeting space outside your regular office and meeting space
- Money in a savings account designated for use on the project
- Fair market lease value of equipment that a third party owns and is pro-rated for the amount of time it will be used for this project
- Cost of equipment, including shipping and maintenance, donated exclusively for the project
- Volunteer hours valued at the local rate for work of that type
- Insurance specific to the project activities
- Media time and exposure

All Matching costs must come from non-federal sources, be incurred during the grant period and be specific to the proposed project!!!

Examples of Unallowable Match

- Money paid for “overhead expenses” such as general office staff, rent, mortgage payments, general office utilities and communications services, professional services not specific to the project, general insurance costs, etc
- Costs of equipment or supplies that were purchased before the grant period started
- Office furniture and equipment
- Printing and reproduction equipment
- General use vehicles
- Facilities use if your organization owns the facilities
- Equipment use if your organization owns the equipment
- Fundraising costs
- Any cost that is unallowable under the CFP budget restrictions or federal standards as described in OMB Circular A-122

If you have questions about whether or not specific items are allowable as match contact the CFP Awards Management staff:

Susan Bowman; Awards Management Branch Chief;
202-401-4324, sbowman@nifa.usda.gov.

Adriene Woodin; Awards Management Branch Chief; 202-401-4320, awoodin@nifa.usda.gov.

Match Letters of Commitment (pages 19-20)

All match listed in the budget and budget narratives must have an accompanying Letter of Commitment from the contributor. You make one large PDF file of all the letters and a summary page that shows all in-kind and cash match and its source. Attach this PDF file to Field 12.

Letters of Commitment must:

- Be on the contributor's letterhead with address, phone and email contact info
- Be dated within two months of submission
- Provide the name of the applicant organization
- Provide the title of the project receiving the contribution
- Specifically name the contribution and its monetary value
- Explain how the monetary value was established
- State that the contribution will be made during the grant period
- Be signed by the Authorized Representative for each contributing organization
- The applicant organization needs to submit a Letter of Commitment for any cash or in-kind contributions to the project

Start TODAY gathering those letters of support and commitment. It is time-consuming, but very important to be successful with this grant program.

Evaluation Criteria (page 23)

CFP applications are reviewed under a “Peer Review” system. This means that the reviewers are people who have direct experience working in low-income communities on food system issues. The reviewers primarily base their comments and opinions as to the merit of the proposal and whether they would recommend it for funding on how well it meets the Evaluation Criteria.

You should review the Evaluation Criteria and keep them in mind as you write your proposal. Be very specific about how your project will meet these criteria.

Note that the criteria are listed in order of importance and Number One is how well your project addresses the primary goals of the CFPCGP.

If your project is selected for award, the application will go to the financial management staff who will go over the budget, including matching funds, to be sure all is in compliance. If something has changed with any of your match sources, you will be given the opportunity to provide an alternative source of match. If everything is not in compliance, the award will not be made. You will also be asked to submit several organizational documents including **audited financial or certified balance statements** for the last two years.



**Thank You
and
Good
Luck!!!**

