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NIFA Update: A Year of Transformation

Parag R Chitnis

Acting Director

National Institute of Food and Agriculture

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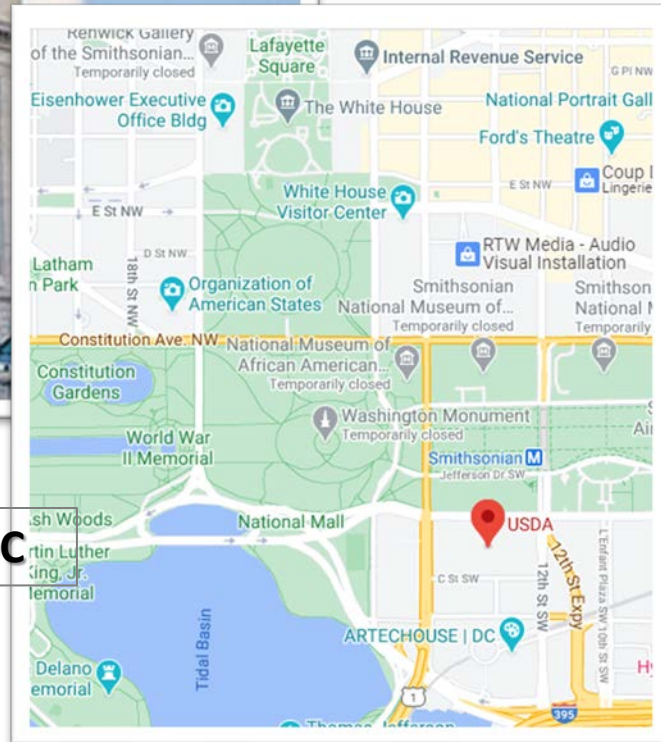
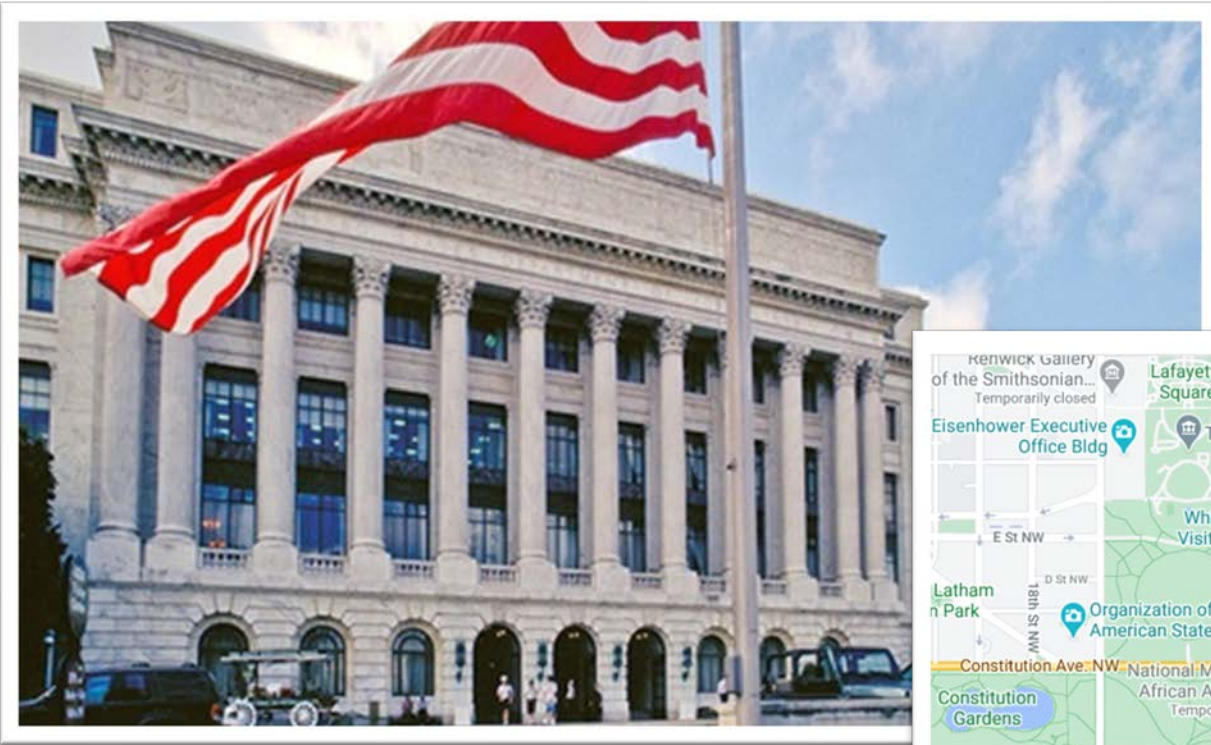
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FY 2020 New NIFA-Places

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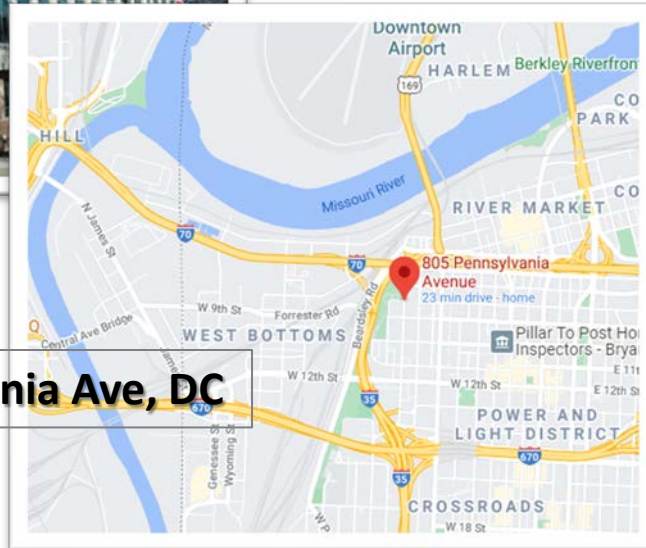
NIFA Location – Headquarters



1 Miles from 1600 Pennsylvania Ave, DC

- **Small DC staff (~20) located at the USDA Headquarters (Whitten Building)**
- **National Science Liaisons will host visitors and meet with DC-based organizations**
- **From Nov 21, 2020**

NIFA Location – Main Location



1059 Miles from 1600 Pennsylvania Ave, DC

- **805 Pennsylvania Avenue, Kansas City**
- **~300 positions in KC**
- **NIFA panels, Project Director meetings, and other events will be hosted in KC.**
- **From Nov 2, 2020**



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FY 2020 New NIFA- People

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NIFA is growing!

	Sept 27, 2020
Total positions	302
Permanent Staff	188+36
2020 New Hires	
Washington DC	2
Kansas City	130
Additional Selections in process	36

**~5 new hires per pay period
(every two weeks)**

**18 New National Program
Leaders**

**Two successful recruitment
events (U Missouri and K-
State collab)**

**Virtual interviews and
onboarding**

NIFA Transition – New Division Directors

- **New Science Division Directors**
 - Kevin Kephart for Agricultural Engineering and Economics
 - Peter Motavalli for Education and MSI programs
 - Mark Carter for Foods Science and Nutrition
 - Suzanne Stluka for Family and Consumer Sciences and 4H
 - Deb Hamernik for Animal Production and Health
- **Other Division Directors and Office Directors**
 - Faith Peppers, Communications
 - Drenda Williams, Equal Opportunity
 - Kate Fink, Legislative and Stakeholders Affairs
 - Katina Hanson, Policy and Oversight Division
 - Calvin Mitchell, Awards Management Division



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FY2020 New NIFA Got the Job Done

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New Programs in 2020

	Budget (in million)	Status
1890 Centers of Excellence	6	Awarded
1890 Scholarship	15	Awarded
ECDRE (Citrus Greening)	50	Awarded
New Beginnings for Tribal Students	5	Awarded
Ag. Genome to Phenome	1	Awarded
Research Equipment Grant	5	Awarded
Urban Agriculture	10	RFA to be published

New NIFA Highlights

- All one-year awards processed
- Very few 'funds release' left
- Responded to new needs and opportunities because of COVID-19
- Staff working from home
- Remotely hired and on-boarded 80 staff members

New NIFA is Efficient

New NIFA is Agile

New NIFA is Resilient



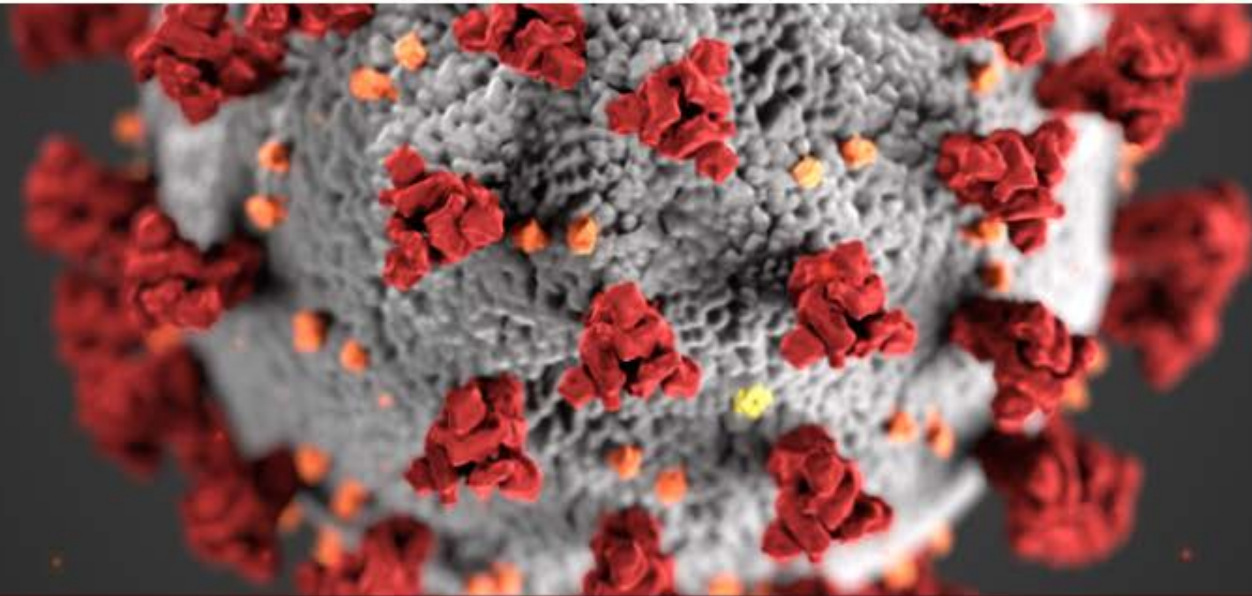
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NIFA

We Listened and We Responded.



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): Information for NIFA Partners,
Researchers, Stakeholders, Applicants, and Grantees



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NIFA

We Listened and We Responded.

**USDA-NIFA Grants
Nearly \$14 Million for
Rapid Response to
Help U.S. Universities
Find Scientific
Solutions Amid
Pandemic**



COVID 19 Impacts at Universities

- **Completing the currently funded projects**
 - Extensions and supplements
- **New Opportunities**
 - New Investigator Seed Grants in AFRI Foundational and Applied Science RFA
 - 300,000 for two years
 - >30% funding rate





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FY 2021

Building NIFA for Future

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New NIFA is focused on its partners and stakeholders

Public Service

NIFA invests in research, education, and extension with **integrity, efficiency, and respect** for all.

We value:

- **creative, diverse, and innovative** thinking
- a **teamwork** environment rooted in **trust**, commitment to **public service**, and **employee empowerment**
- an **inclusive** approach to collaboration and **clear, consistent, and transparent** communication, both within our teams and with our stakeholders and customers



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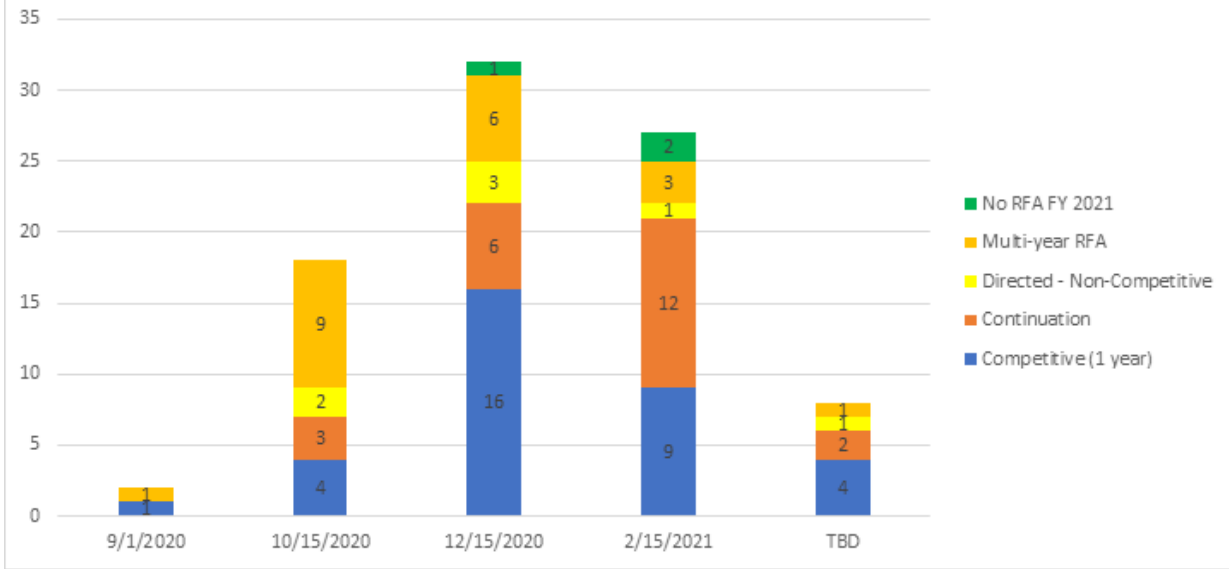
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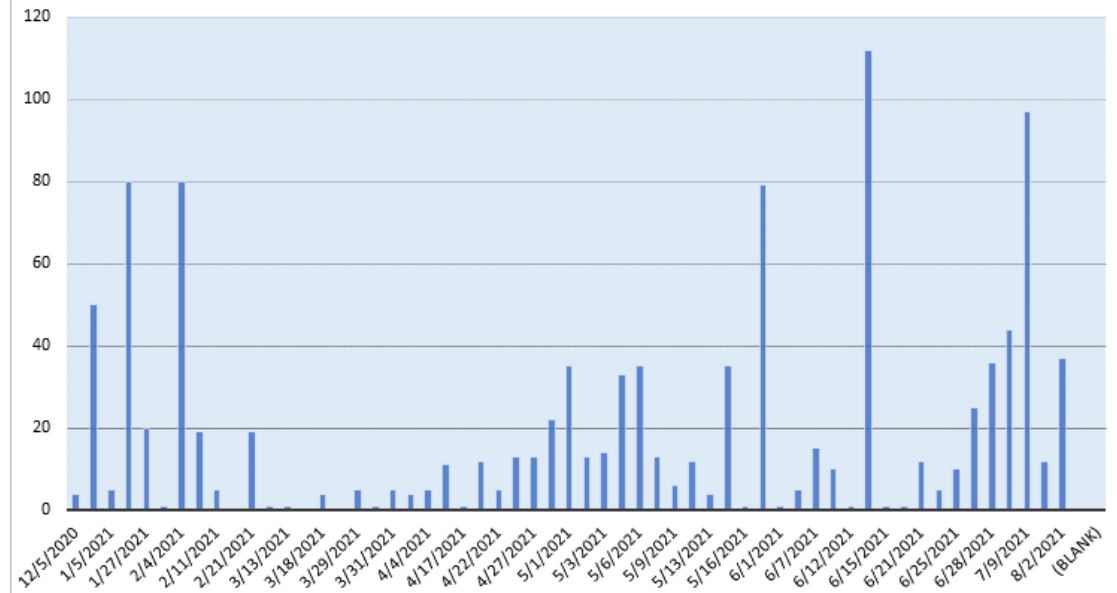
Planning 2021 RFAs

Schedule of Program Implementation from RFAs to Awards

USDA NIFA Non-AFRI RFA Target Publication Dates



Estimated Date Non-AFRI Awards Delivered to the USDA NIFA Awards Management Division





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10am - 4pm
Monday - Saturday
Closed Sunday

2-1a Fleming House
134 Renfrew Street
Glasgow
G3 6ST

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Project Café

*Collaboratively
Achieving Functional
Excellence*

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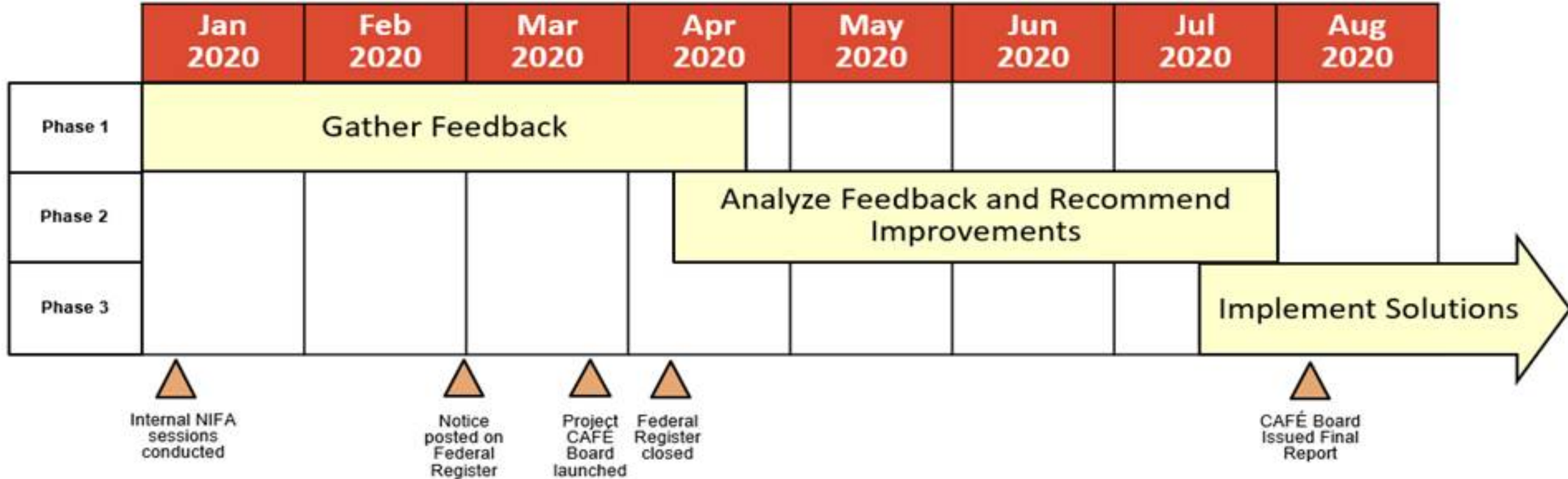
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Project Café Timeline





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High Level Take-Aways From Stakeholder Feedback

- **NIFA's current IT systems**
 - A source of frustration for applicants, grantees and staff.
 - Inhibiting NIFA from effectively and efficiently carrying out its mission
- **Management and oversight of capacity programs**
 - Disconnect between NIFA's staff and its LGU partners
- **Current overlapping reporting processes and requirements**
 - Grantees and NIFA employees are frustrated
- **Communications about all aspects of NIFA**
- **Awareness about tools and processes already in place**

Longer-term CAFÉ Improvements by Predominant Theme & Priority

Communication & Documentation

- Re-engineer RFAs (1)
- Communication plan – granting process (5)
- Internal access to updated roles within NIFA (19)
- Quality control of NIFA materials (20)
- Quick reference material of key grant information (22)
- Communication plan – capacity programs (37)
- NIFA contact information for external stakeholders (14)
- Communication plan – NIFA impact & successes (23)
- Update NIFA guide (38)
- Audit guides & results summaries (12)
- NIFA’s geographic-based email lists (31)
- NIFA functional meetings (32)

Leadership, Strategic Planning & Governance

- Portfolio review of grant programs (9)
- Alternative organization models for NIFA (25)
- Regulatory requirements review (33)
- Capacity governance & operations (35)
- Programs to improve employee satisfaction (40)

Process

- RFA timelines & deadlines (2)*
- Peer review process (7)*
- Award notification to budget transfer (10)*
- Review of current reporting (11)
- Application process tools & support (3)
- Streamlining capacity processes (36)
- Up-to-date status on applications (8)
- Viability of capacity accounting suggestions (39)

Technology

- NIFA’s website (27)
- Full review of NIFA’s IT systems (28)
- Smaller improvements to existing IT systems (29)
- Research clearinghouse for external stakeholders (30)

Talent Management

- Train NIFA new hires (4)
- Cross functional training for NIFA staff (26)
- NPL networking training (17)
- Technical continuing educations for NPLs (24)

Outreach & Customer Service

- Gathering customer issues & perspectives (15)
- Partnerships with federal agencies (6)
- Customer query management (13)
- Increase collaboration among NIFA stakeholders (18)*
- External stakeholder workshops / webinars (21)
- Customer-specific NIFA roles (16)
- Equal opportunity for capacity programs (34)

of Improvements by Theme

	#
Communication & Documentation	12
Outreach & Customer Service	7
Process	8
Leadership, Strat. Plan & Governance	5
Technology	4
Talent Management	4

Legend

- Red font = High priority
- Blue font = Medium priority
- Green font = Lower priority

**NOTE: The asterisks and italicized text represent the four improvements that the Board recommends moving to higher priority levels as a result of the rationales described in the special considerations section*



Project CAFÉ Dashboard

as of August 24, 2020



Overall Status of Project CAFÉ

Gather Feedback

100%

Analyze Feedback &
Recommend Improvements

100%

Implement
Improvements*

30%

Gather Feedback Phase

100% Complete

Key stats:

- Received feedback from **40 sources**, comprised of 36 external stakeholder groups and 4 sources of internal feedback (e.g., listening sessions and survey)
- In total, these sources provided approximately **900 comments** that directly responded to the four questions posed by NIFA

Analyze Feedback & Recommend Improvements

100%

Status of analysis by comment category:

Category	# of Comments	% of Total	Analysis Status
Process Improvement	204	23%	100% Complete
Communication & Documentation	244	27%	100% Complete
Knowledge Management	66	7%	100% Complete
Technology	109	12%	100% Complete
Capacity Programs	212	23%	100% Complete
Funding Requirements	36	4%	100% Complete
Other	35	4%	100% Complete

Results of analysis to-date:

- Eight quick action** opportunities identified
- 40 longer-term** improvement opportunities identified

The CAFÉ recommendation report was submitted to NIFA's Executive Council on 8/5/20

Implement Improvements*

30%

Status of improvements identified:

	Identified (#)	Presented to Executive Council (#)	Approved by Executive Council (#)
Quick Action Opportunities	8	8	5
Longer-term Improvements	40	40	0

Status of approved opportunities:

	Estimated Completion (# days)	Task Order Issued	Kick-off Date	Project Status
Program & Grants Management Specialist training	90	7/10/20	7/21/20	40% Complete
Reinforce quality comments from panels to applicants	90	7/10/20	7/23/20	50% Complete
Standardize application deadlines	90	7/10/20	7/20/20	50% Complete
Reliable technology and support for virtual panels	90	7/10/20	7/28/20	40% Complete
Memo to PIs regarding mitigation of delays from notification to award	90	7/10/20	7/23/20	15% Complete

Project status legend:

	Project Status
Dark Green	Complete
Light Green	On track to complete on time
Yellow	Delay encountered – mitigation in place
Red	Off track – no mitigation in place

*status reflects **approved** opportunities only



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Some quick actions already taken

- **Deadlines for proposal submission**
- **Panel summary quality**
- **Virtual panels best practices**
- **Training NIFA staff**
- **Award information to the selected awardees**



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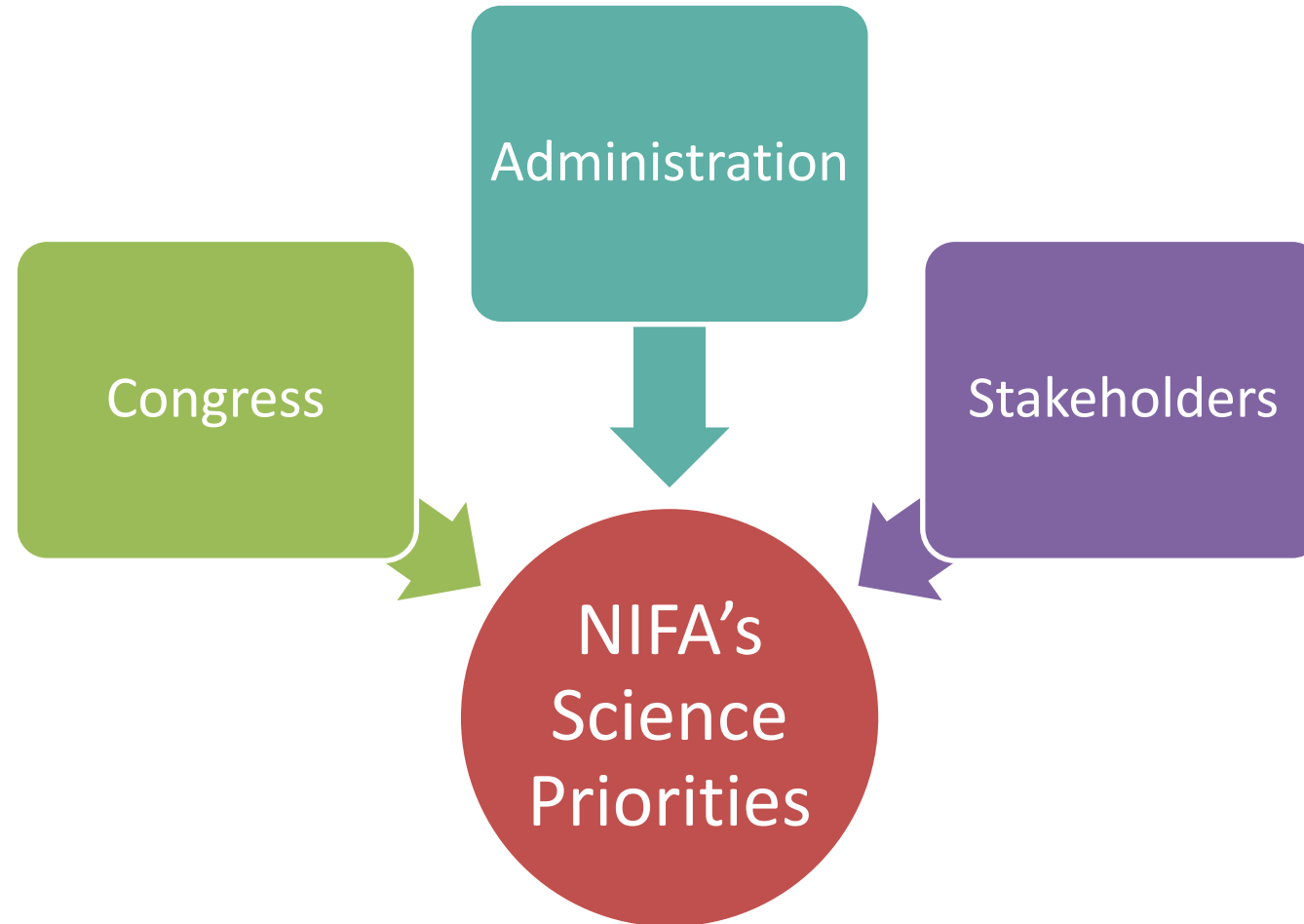
FY2021

Science for the Future Ag

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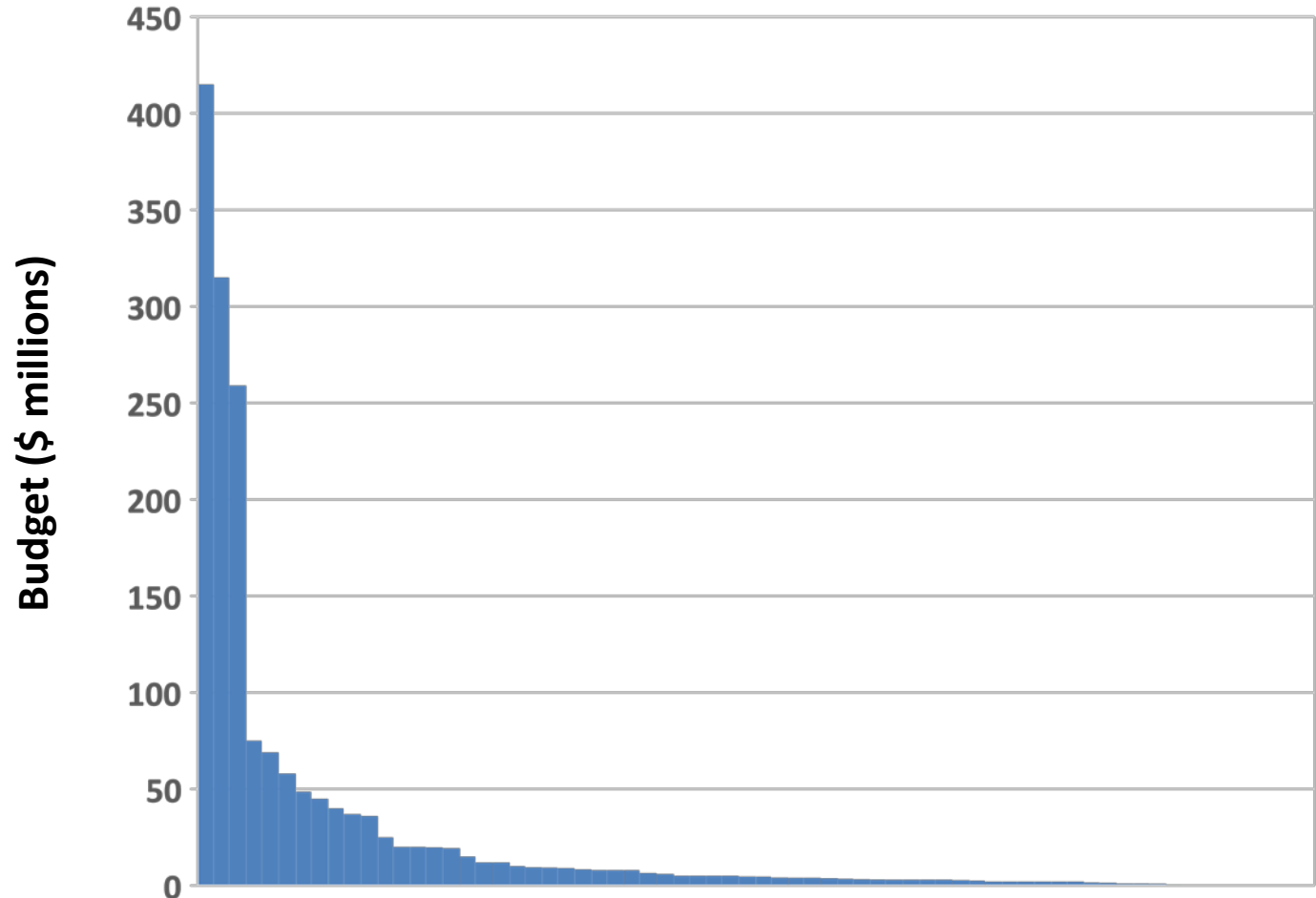
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Key Drivers for NIFA's Science



FY2021: House Action Highlights

- **NIFA Budget \$1.8 B**
 - Appropriations and mandatory
- **>65 programs (budget lines)**
- **~2100 awards expected**
- **Notable new programs**
 - Research Equipment Grants (\$5M)
 - 1890 CoE program (\$14M)
 - 1890 Scholarships (\$10M)
 - Ag Genome (\$1M)



Science Goals for 2021- Context



USDA Science Blueprint

- Sustainable Ag Intensification
- Ag Climate Adaptation
- Food and Nutrition Translation
- Value Added Innovation
- Ag Science Policy Leadership



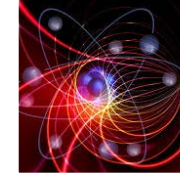
Ag Innovation Agenda

- Genome Design
- Digital and Automation
- Prescriptive Intervention
- Systems based management



OMB-OSTP 21

- American Security
- Industries of the Future
- Energy and Environment
- Health and Bioeconomy
- Space
- Workforce
- Research Environments
- High Risk- High Reward



Industries of the Future

- AI
- Quantum Science
- Biotech



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ECONOMY

NATIONAL SECURITY

BUDGET

IMMIGRATION

CORONAVIRUS.GOV

INFRASTRUCTURE & TECHNOLOGY

The Trump Administration Is Investing \$1 Billion in Research Institutes to Advance Industries of the Future

August 26, 2020 | 4 minute read



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BUDGET & LEGISLATION

CONTACT

LANGUAGE

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Office of Science and Technology Policy

The Trump Administration is taking stro in the industries of the future—artificial science (QIS), 5G communications, and shape our economy and security for ye

Today, the White House, the National Sc



TOPICS

PROGRAMS

GRANTS

NEWSROOM

IMPACTS

RESOURCES



USDA-NIFA and NSF Establish Nationwide Network of Artificial Intelligence Research Institutes



AIA and Science Blueprint influence NIFA priorities

- **FY2021 budget request highlighted science blueprint priorities**
- **AFRI Sustainable Agricultural Systems (\$10M per project)**
 - Sustainable Agricultural Intensification
 - Agricultural Climate Adaptation
 - Food and Nutrition Translation
 - Value Added Innovation
 - AFRI Sustainable Ag Systems RFA will be published in October
- **In other AFRI RFAs, focus on Data, Automation, Gene Editing, and AI Applications in Ag**



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AFRI 2021: Opportunities in Educational and Workforce Development

- **Post-doctoral Fellowships**
- **Graduate Fellowships**
- **Research and Extension Experience for Undergraduates**
 - Data Science (AI), automation, genome design, system management
- **Agricultural Workforce Training Grants (Community Colleges)**
- **Professional Development for Agricultural Literacy (K-12)**
- **Non-formal Education (4H) for Technology in Agriculture**
 - AI, automation, gene editing



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AFRI 2021: Opportunities in Foundational and Applied Science

- **Increased budget size**
 - \$650K minimum for regular grants
- **Partnership Opportunities (additional \$150K in budget)**
 - MSIs, small institutions
 - International
- **New Investigator seed grants (\$300K for two years)**
 - All AFRI program areas
 - Expected to attain >30% funding rate
 - Reviewed in the same panel but ranked separately



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Key messages

- **NIFA listens**

- Stakeholder Feedback is an important driver for NIFA's science priorities.

- **Engage and Communicate**

- NIFA wants to know your needs.
 - NIFA needs your impact stories.



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New NIFA

Transformed to serve you better

Thank you.

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