

**COPS Talking Points Dr. Holland  
(July 17, 2015)**

**2 CFR 200 – New Terms and Conditions: Uniform Administrative Requirements Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.**

**Contact Ms. Brenda Barnett**

- NIFA has been participating in a multi-agency (e.g., NIFA, NSF, NIH, and some other federal agencies) in an “overlay” effort (to develop a mutually-agreed upon new terms and conditions which incorporates the uniform guidance). This multi-agency effort is still ongoing.
- NIFA developed NIFA-specific award terms (i.e., NIFA Grant and Cooperative Agreement GTC).
  - This document underwent legal review and NIFA is preparing to release the award terms via a memo to NIFA awardees.
  - These terms will replace award terms referenced in awards dating back to Dec 26, 2014. The terms will be viewed as accepted by awardees unless the awardee contacts NIFA.
  - NIFA will continue utilizing these terms until the multi-agency overlay effort is complete.

**Centers of Excellence (COE):**

- For COE, NIFA will schedule webinars (likely in August, 2015) but dates have not been set yet. The dates of the COE webinars will be announced on the NIFA website. (NIFA would like to make sure most of the AFRI panels are completed prior to asking for stakeholder feedback on the COE.)

**Commodity Boards:**

- NIFA will publish the Federal Register Notice the week of July 20, 2015. Two webinars are scheduled: Thursday August 6<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.
- AFRI Only
- Information directed to National Commodity Boards, State Commodity Boards, and NIFA Partners
- Also look for information from the Agriculture Marketing Service

**As requested, NIFA is releasing Capacity RFAs in late June to mid-July with due dates August to September 2015. FY 16 Capacity Awards proposed publishing and due dates:** As of 7/20, 9 of the 11 FY16 Capacity RFAs have been published!

The 2 remaining RFAs are currently pending Appendix A's: 1) McInnitre Stennis (MS) (addressing CSU calculations) and 2) Animal Health (pending appropriations). Animal Health is on hold until further notice.

- FY 16 Capacity Awards published the week of 7/15:
  - 1) 1890 Extension RFA
  - 2) 1890 Research RFA
  - 3) Smith Lever and University of the District of Columbia consolidated RFA
  - 4) Special Needs RFA
  - 5) FERS Retirement Contributions RFA
  - 6) Hatch Regular RFA
  - 7) Hatch Multi State RFA

- 8) McIntire Stennis RFA
- 9) Renewable Resources Extension Act RFA
- 10) Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program RFA
- 11) Animal Health Disease and Research RFA (tentative)
- o 2 RFAs will now be combined, the 1) District of Columbia Public Postsecondary Education Reorganization Act Program RFA and the 2) Smith Lever Regular RFA
- o Animal Health Disease and Research RFA may be held until we receive a budget for the RFA
- o The CSRS Retirement Contributions Program RFA published its last RFA in 2015. The program is now phased out. No future CSRS RFAs will be published in FY 2016

**Grantor:**

- Accenture’s NIFA Assessment is complete.
- NIFA taking lead on IT subcommittee.
- OCFO taking lead, as a core solution, on Grants.gov integration and build of the Application Review Process (ARP). NIFA will be heavily engaged.
- OCFO and FAS taking lead on interagency agreement (reimbursable agreements) functionality in Grantor. NIFA is engaged.

**Late Application Policy:**

- A one-page summary document was created containing the policy, what constitutes a late application, how an application is determined to be late, examples of extenuating circumstances, what to do if your application is late due to an extenuating circumstance, and how to appeal a decision not to accept a late application based on an extenuating circumstance.
- The one-pager is referenced under the Apply for a Grant section of the following web page (<http://nifa.usda.gov/apply-grant>).
- A reference to the one-page also was included in Part IV, section 1.9 of the NIFA Grants.gov Application Guide.

**NIFA Financial Assistance Policy Guide (“Policy Guide”):**

- The Policy Guide is located on NIFA web site at <http://nifa.usda.gov/policy-guide>.
- Feedback on the Policy Guide was recently solicited at the NERAOC 2015 conference.
- The Policy Guide is a “living” document and NIFA is still accepting public comments at [Policyguide@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:Policyguide@nifa.usda.gov).
- Currently under revision for the 2014 Farm Bill, Uniform Guidance (2 CFR part 200), late application guidance, address comments, review the administrative manuals to ascertain all necessary info is contained in the guide, etc.
- The release of the updated version is anticipated for October 2015.

**Grants Modernization**

- The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) strategic plan initiatives include modernizing our grants systems and processes. This effort will:
  - o improve management and data reporting,
  - o strengthen financial oversight,
  - o provide transparency and simplify processes,
  - o provide self-service capabilities for applicants/grantees, and,
  - o promote a paperless environment.

- In the long-term, grants modernization will reduce costs and staff time required to process, manage, and close-out grants. It will also help applicants and grantees better understand the processes and give them additional options and features, improving their overall experience.
- Decrease the time it takes to process a grant application from receipt to award. NIFA expects to be able to get funding into the hands of grant recipients faster as a result.
- NIFA has decided to partner with the USDA and use their grants management system, USDA Grants.
- USDA Grants provides a robust financial management component.
- USDA Grants is the de facto grant management system for USDA. NRCS, FAS, FNS, AMS, RD, NIFA and Forest Service will use USDA Grants for grant making.
- USDA Grants is currently testing self-service capabilities for use by applicants. Several land-grant universities are part of the testing team.
- USDA Grants will be fully integrated with Grants.gov and will support the NIFA research and related forms.
- NIFA has just completed an eight month assessment phase of USDA Grants's current capabilities and NIFA's needs. Implementation planning is underway. An implementation schedule will be developed over the summer that will outline when each process will be brought on-line for use by staff and partners. Initial implementation will begin with Capacity Grants commencing in FY 2017.
- NIFA will continue to partner with NIH where appropriate such as on the use of Star Metrics and Federal RePorter

### **Continuous Process Improvement**

NIFA has established an agency-wide Continuous Process Improvement (CPI) Program as a part of the Secretary's Lean Six Sigma (LSS) initiative for improving business processes. NIFA's CPI governance board and the Secretary have approved the following CPI projects: Streamline RFA Development Timeline, Grant Authorization (Payment) Process, Streamline Program Grant Awarding process, Grant Life Cycle Analysis, and Indirect Cost Approval Process.

### **Plan of Work Panel**

A Plan of Work Panel of Experts representing Extension and Research in each of the five regions convened June 16-18 to discuss the path forward for the Plan of Work.

Some agreed upon preliminary recommendations were made and each Land-Grant representative is taking back them to their respective regions for further vetting.

A final draft set of recommendations will be discussed by members of the panel in a virtual meeting by the end of July.

Another virtual meeting will be held in August to finalize the recommendations.

The final recommendation report will be completed and shared with NIFA by September 1.

NIFA will provide a response to each of the recommendations within 60 days of receiving the final recommendations; within its response, NIFA will identify a general timeline for carrying out the recommendations.

THERE ARE MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR INPUT AND THAT THE VARIOS ENTITIES ARE REPRESENTED ON THE PANEL. IF THERE ARE CONCERNS PLEASE WORK THROUGH YOUR REP ON THE PANEL.

BART HEWITT AT NIFA CAN ALSO REPOSND TO COMMENTS OR CONCERNS.