USDA-NIFA Funded
Request for Applications

Sun Grant Program
Southeastern Region

Competitive Grants Program
2020 - 2021

Pre-proposal Due: August 15, 2020

Full Application Deadline: October 1, 2020

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; or individuals within the Sun Grant Program - Southeastern Region. Projects must fit into the regional priority areas and feedstocks categories outlined in this RFA to be considered for funding.

Section 1

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 bioderived economy. Sun Grant institutions are charged with making significant advances in bioderived 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 (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 - Southeastern Region (SGP-SER)

The Sun Grant Program - Southeastern Region (SGP-SER), located at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee, is the administrative unit for the region composed of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands.

External Grant Program

Through a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture – National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA), the SGP-SER will be awarding approximately **$2 million** in projects in 2020 - 2021.

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.

The application process consists of a pre-proposal followed by a full proposal using the Webnibus online system.

Funded grants will support multi-institutional and multi-state research, extension and education programs on technology development, and integrated research, extension and education programs on technology implementation. Projects must seek to accomplish the following requirements:

a. Enhance national energy security through the development, distribution, and implementation of bioderived energy technologies;
b. Promote diversification and environmental sustainability of agricultural production in the United States through bioderived energy and product technologies;
c. Promote economic diversification in rural areas of the United States through bioderived 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. Department of Transportation
    iv. Land-grant and non land-grant colleges and universities
    v. Industry

Scope of Solicitation

SGP-SER invites proposals that will further its mission of developing viable alternative bioderived energy (e.g., sustainable aviation fuel) and products while enhancing economic opportunities in rural areas. The following are priority areas and feedstocks identified by USDA-NIFA and the SGP-SER. NOTE: Proposals must address *at least one* of the Research Areas **AND** *at least one* of the Feedstock Priority Areas.

Research, Education, and Extension Priority Areas

- Preprocessing and storage of biomass for high-quality feedstock
- Feedstock characteristics-conversion performance interactions (biochemical and thermochemical processes)
- Innovative outreach and information delivery methods for stakeholders
- Sustainability, including water quality and ecosystem services
- New Bioderived Products (energy, chemicals or materials)

Feedstock Priority Areas

- Woody Biomass (e.g. Short rotation woody crops, pine, forest residues, etc.)
- Perennial Grasses (e.g. Switchgrass, Miscanthus, etc.)
- Annual Grasses (e.g., Biomass sorghum, etc.)

Section 2

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; or individuals within the Sun Grant Program - Southeastern 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

PIs must be employed in Southeastern Region, i.e. Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands. Co-PIs, associate PIs, and collaborators may be from inside and outside the region, and can include state agricultural experiment stations; colleges and universities; university research foundations as well as other research institutions and organizations; Federal agencies; national laboratories; private organizations or corporations; or individuals.

Cost Match

Not less than 20 percent of the cost of an activity must be matched with funds, including in-kind contributions, from a non-Federal source. **However, 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 OMB Circular A-21 (2 C.F.R. Part 220), 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: Matching Funds cannot come from Federal sources. Organizations are required to provide 20% of Total Project Costs as match.

Cost Match Calculation Examples
As an example, a PI is requesting $75,000 from the SGP-SER to fund a project.
1. REQUESTED FEDERAL DOLLARS = $75,000
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 DOLLARS by dividing the REQUESTED FEDERAL DOLLARS (from Step 1) by the FEDERAL FUNDS DENOMINATOR (from Step 2). $75,000 ÷ 0.80 = $93,750
4. Finally, determine the COST SHARE/MATCHING DOLLARS by subtracting the TOTAL REQUESTED DOLLARS (from Step 3) from the REQUESTED FEDERAL DOLLARS (from Step 1). $93,750 - $75,000 = $18,750
The total value of the project will be $93,750 with 80% from federal funds ($75,000) and 20% from non-federal funds ($18,750).

Facilities and Administrative Costs (F&A)

Pursuant to Section 716 Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (Pub. L. 113-76), in-direct costs are limited to the lesser of the applicant's official negotiated indirect cost rate or 30% of Total Federal Funds provided (TFF) (30% TFF = 42.857% TDC). Thus, if the project is requesting $150,000 TFF, the indirect request is limited to $45,000 and direct costs would be $105,000.

Section 3

Grant Application Process and Requirements

Online Submission

All grant applications (pre-proposals and full proposals) will be submitted electronically via the Webnibus online application system. Instructions for registration and access to the system are located at https://webnibus.org/sungrant/ southeast/logn/logn_login.php.

Pre-Proposals <u>must</u> 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.
- 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.

Full Proposals <u>must</u> be fully and completely submitted electronically using Webnibus online application system no later than 10/1/20. Late full proposals will not be accepted.
- 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 to be attached using the Sun Grant budget template
- Full proposals must be approved by an institutional signing official (such as a department accountant, grants and contracts office, sponsored programs office, or other authorized representative).

Webnibus

Pre-proposals and full proposals will be submitted via the online Webnibus system, accessed through the SGP-SER website. Look for the section entitled *Research Grants* for the appropriate information. Detailed submission instructions are also available here. 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-SER Webnibus homepage, found at https://webnibus.org/sungrant/southeast/logn/logn_login.php. 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 Southeastern 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, or the user has difficulty logging into Webnibus, he or she may call the center at 865.974.7370 for assistance. The Center will not provide or change passwords for anyone but the corresponding registered individual.

Pre-Proposal Guidelines:

Pre-Proposals are due August 15, 2020.

Pre-proposals are **<u>required</u>**. Pre-proposals will be used to suggest possible collaborations in an effort to strengthen the full proposal. **Do not skip any component of the application, or the project may not be considered for funding.** Pre-proposals will also be used to secure appropriate reviewers. The components of a pre-proposal are:

1. Title page
   - Project title
   - Proposed project period
   - PI name, organization, and contact information
   - Senior personnel name, organization, and contact information
   - Budget estimate
   - Cost share (and sources of cost share)
   - Collaborators' names and participating institutions
   - External partners' contact name(s) and affiliation(s)

2. Narrative of <u>no more than</u> 4,000 characters or approximately two pages, double-spaced. The narrative should summarize 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 Southeastern Sun Grant region? What are the priority areas this project addresses? What 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.

3. PI Biosketch is a two-page CV summary of the PIs qualifications. It includes:
   - Contact Information
   - Education
   - Employment
   - Professional Recognition
   - Publications
   - Graduate Students and Post-Docs Supervised
   - 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.

4. 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 Southeastern 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 have 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 Southeastern Sun Grant Center's Webnibus. User IDs and passwords from other Sun Grant Centers will not work with this region's specific database.*

Pre-proposals submitted by the deadline will be screened and those selected will be asked to submit a full application by the application deadline.

Full Proposal Guidelines:

Full proposals are due October 1, 2020.

The full proposal application package must consist of the following components. **Submissions omitting any of these items will not be considered for funding.** The components will be entered into Webnibus as directed. Note that components submitted in the pre-proposal stage will be carried over by Webnibus into the full proposal application. It is advised that the proposal package be completed in a word processing software and then uploaded or pasted into the system.

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 Word or PDF document)
- Budget forms
- Budget justification
- Suggested reviewers
- File attachments of supporting documentation:
  - Budget(s): An attached Excel spreadsheet of the budget for the sub awards *(if applicable).*
  - 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.
- 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: Any other supporting documentation.

Content and Format of Application

To complete an online Webnibus application, the PI, all associated Senior Personnel and Departmental/Institutional Approvers must have a Webnibus profile. More details on each section are as follows:

1. **Biosketch**: Two page curriculum vitae summary for the PI. This is carried over from the pre-proposal stage, but may be edited as needed.

2. **Senior Personnel**: This is carried over from the pre-proposal stage, but may be edited as needed. 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 Southeastern region, the PI will have to 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 carried over from the pre-proposal stage. It may be edited as needed. Note that during the full proposal stage, the Total Funds Requested of Sun Grant and the Total Cost Share Proposed will be automatically calculated and updated from the Full Proposal Budget Forms (see #10 in this section).

4. **Proposal Sign-Off Sheet**: This is where the PI, Senior Personnel, and Approver certify they have read the proposal and approve 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 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 PI should make any needed changes before the approver certifies. 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 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. Also, be sure to include the appropriate SGP-SER *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)
   - PI and Collaborators (copied from the Senior Personnel section)
   - Total Sun Grant Funds Requested (copied from Budget Forms section)
   - Total Cost Share Funds (copied from the Budget Forms section)
   - Start Date and End Date (copied from the Title Page section)

   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 pre-proposal summary was submitted previously (during the pre-proposal stage) and is provided here for reference purposes only.

7. **Full Proposal Narrative**: PIs should use Word to develop the full proposal narrative, and then upload the file into Webnibus under the Full Proposal Narrative section. If desired, the PI may PDF the document before uploading it into Webnibus. **The Full Proposal Narrative may not exceed a total of 12 pages with 12-point font (Times New Roman preferred) and double-spaced. All margins (top, bottom, left, and right) must be at least 1 inch. 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 separately attached document labeled References. *Note that the page limit includes graphics and tables, but does NOT include the references section.*

The Project Narrative must include the following:

a. *Introduction:* A clear statement of the long-term goal(s) and supporting objectives or research questions of the proposed project should be included. Summarize the body of knowledge or other past activities that substantiate the need for the proposed project. Describe on-going or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed project,

including the work of key personnel. Describe preliminary data/ information pertinent to the proposed research should be included in this section.

b. *Goals and project period objectives:* Expand on the details of the long-term goals and objectives discussed in the *Introduction*. Concisely present the 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. Any novel ideas or contributions that the proposed project offers should also be discussed in this section.

c. *Methodology:* Activities proposed or problems being addressed must be clearly stated and the approaches being applied clearly described. Specifically, this section must include methods to be used in carrying out the proposed project and the feasibility of the methods. In addition, identify any limitations to the proposed methodology.

d. *Work plan and benchmarks including timeline:* A description of the proposed activities, their sequence, and time frames for completion.

e. *Expected Outcomes:* Describe expected outcomes and deliverables, including how results or products will be used and the pitfalls that may be encountered. Please fully explain implication of the project for reducing barriers along the biofuels supply chain.

f. *Proposed Outreach Activities:* It is important to disseminate information from SGP-SER funded projects. At least one product of significance, i.e. Experiment Station report, Extension bulletin, or white paper is required for all funded projects. Ideally, at least one peer-reviewed article would result from funded research. Investigators must acknowledge USDA-NIFA and SGP-SER in all publications and presentations. PIs will be invited to present research findings at regional and/or national conferences sponsored by Sun Grant Centers. Describe all anticipated outreach activities and or peer-reviewed articles that would result from the proposed research.

g. *Project Management and Evaluation*: 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 consulting or collaborative arrangements with others, such arrangements must be fully explained and justified. If the consultant(s) or 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 Webnibus, 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 application, as well as a signed detailed budget from the collaborating institution's authorized official.

i. *References*: All work cited should be referenced in this section of the application. 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 section is submitted as a separate attachment. References do not count toward the page limit.

8. **Budget**: The requested budget must be entered into the budget form provided by the Webnibus system. Note that the budget estimate is carried over from the pre-proposal stage, and may be edited in the full-proposal stage. The budget will include a cumulative budget page and a breakdown for each year of the project.

Important: The total Sun Grant and Cost Share dollar amounts from the Webnibus Budget Forms will automatically populate the Webnibus Title Page and Proposal Summary Sections. *The Title Page and Proposal Summary sections are the main pages visited by the reviewers and oversight team.*

The budget form includes the line items listed below:

a. Salaries and wages for all senior personnel, staff, and students. For inputting salaries, the PI will need the person's Monthly Salary, Benefits Percentage, Sun Grant Man Months, Cost Share Man Months, Sun Grant FullTime Equivalent (FTE), and Cost Share FTE. Staff and students may be categorized as Professional, Research Associate, Research Assistant Grad Student, Professional School Student, Pre-Baccalaureate Student, Secretarial-Clerical, Technical Shop, etc. *Note that PI and senior personnel salaries are not normally allowed on Sun Grant funds. Exceptions require extreme justification.*
b. Fringe benefits
c. Expendable Supplies and Equipment (equipment under $5k)
d. Total Travel – specify whether domestic or international
e. Publication Costs
f. Total Other Costs - itemize in budget justification (such as graduate student tuition or subrecipients)
g. Subtotal Direct Costs
h. Graduate Student Tuition - Note: Will need to know semester(s), fee, Sun Grant Term (1-4), and Cost Share Term (1-4)
i. Permanent equipment over $5k - include an itemized list and cost in the budget justification
j. Total Direct Costs (a-g)
k. Facilities and Administrative costs (F&A)
l. Grand Total Request

m. Cost share/matching allocation for each line-item must be shown in Grantee Share Column.

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 application, 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. Please 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. A proposed statement of work, vitae, and a budget for each arrangement involving the transfer of substantive programmatic work or the provision of financial assistance to a third party must be supplied. *In multi-institutional applications, a budget and budget narrative must be included for each institution involved.* The lead institution and each participating institution must be identified.

   Important: Budget Justification must include a description of the matching funds provided, including sources. <u>If the project is fundamental research, matching is not required.</u> If the project is not fundamental research, matching is required. Matching Funds cannot come from Federal sources. Organizations are required to provide 20% of Total Project match. Funds requested by industrial partners are subject to a 100% match.

   Facilities and Administrative (F&A) Costs - Pursuant to Section 716 Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (Pub. L. 113-76), indirect costs are limited to the lesser of the applicant's official negotiated indirect cost rate or 30% of Total Federal Funds provided (TFF). Thus, if the project is requesting $150,000 TFF, the indirect request is limited to $45,000 and direct costs would be $105,000.

10. **Suggested Reviewers**: Please suggest up to six potential reviewers not affiliated with your institution or proposed project.

11. **File Attachments**: Include supporting documentation such as cooperative agreements and letters of commitment signed by an institutional authorized official. (*See 7h. above.*)
    - Budget(s): An attached Excel spreadsheet of the budget for the sub awards. *(if applicable)*
    - 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.
    - 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.

> 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). Do not wait until the last minute to notify them.
> Note that some institutions only allow authorized officials to submit proposals rather than the PI. In this case, access rights must be given to your organization's authorizing official.

Confidentiality/Proprietary Information
Confidentiality will be maintained in the application review process. Applications will not be used for any purpose other than evaluation of merit for funding. **However, if the proposal includes any proprietary, confidential information, it <u>must be clearly marked as such</u>.**

Pre-proposal must be submitted online, using Webnibus, no later than 5:00 p.m. EST on 08/15/20.

Full proposals must be submitted online, using Webnibus, no later than 5:00 p.m. EST on 10/1/20.

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-SER in all publications and presentations.
- Required reports are due 10 days after the end of each quarter, with the periods beginning in January and ending in December. 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 three-year maximum duration with no more than 40% of award amount provided in Year 1; 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.
- Final technical report due one month (30 days) after the project's end date.

Contact Persons for Questions on Proposal Development and Submission

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Section 4
Proposal Review Information

Peer and Merit Review

The guiding principle for application 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 applications will be evaluated for responsiveness to the administrative requirements set forth in the RFA. Applications 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, applications submitted will undergo a programmatic evaluation by USDA-NIFA to determine the worthiness of Federal support.

Full Application

1. All applications 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 Advisory Board. The following criteria will be used to evaluate the submissions:

   - **Scientific Merit of the Application for Research (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 Project Personnel, Adequacy of Facilities, and Project Management (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 application

- **Project Relevance (25%)**

  - Relevance to Sun Grant's mission
  - Alignment to USDA/Sun Grant Priority Areas (see page 4 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 application is peer reviewed by scientists who are not associated directly with the 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 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 Technical Review Panel/Advisory Board will be used to construct the final rank order of the proposals.

5. The recommendations made by Technical Review Panel/Advisory Board will be reviewed by USDA-NIFA 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.

Technical Reviews

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

Section 5
Award Administration

Administrative Program Management

The administrative program management will be handled by the Southeastern Sun Grant Center. Contracts and payments for the awards will be written and distributed from the University of Tennessee. Reports and reviews will be collected and maintained by the University of Tennessee.

Award Notice

Notification of awards will come from The Southeastern Sun Grant Center at the University of Tennessee.

Access to Proposal Reviews

Written reviews will be provided to the Sun Grant Center for each proposal. The review forms will be maintained by the Center for the benefit of PI's that may request feedback on their proposal. The proposal reviews for a project will be returned to the lead author for the proposal.

Investigator Reporting Requirements

A quarterly report of progress must be submitted by each funded project to be considered for continuation of funding. Successful applicants will be given detailed guidelines for reporting. This report will be a one-page document that will be submitted via email.

Continuation of funding

Continuation of funding beyond the first year will be determined by first year performance, as well as continued funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture - National Institute of Food and Agriculture.