# Extension Risk Management Education Competitive Grants Program

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# 2026 Request for Applications

**Application Deadline: November 13, 2025**

**SOUTHERN EXTENSION RISK MANAGEMENT EDUCATION CENTER**

**REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS**

**FUNDING OPPORTUNITY TITLE: EXTENSION RISK MANAGEMENT EDUCATION COMPETITIVE GRANTS PROGRAM**

**ANNOUNCEMENT TYPE: Request for Applications (RFA)**

**Dates:** Applications must be submitted to Extension Risk Management's Results Verification System (RVS) website by 5:00:59 PM CST on November 13, 2025. Applications received after this deadline will <u>not</u> be considered for funding.

**Summary:** The four regional Extension Risk Management Education (ERME) Centers request applications for the Extension Risk Management Education Competitive Grants Program. This announcement seeks applications from eligible organizations with a demonstrated capacity to develop and deliver outcome-based risk management education and training programs to farmers, ranchers, producers and their families (producers).

**Funding/Awards:** The four regional Extension Risk Management Education Centers expect to award grants through three program areas – Risk Management Education Projects, Underutilization of Crop Insurance Projects, and Exploratory Projects. No award may exceed 18 months duration.

**Contents of this Announcement:**

## I.     Funding Opportunity Description

### A.  Legislative Authority and Background

The Agricultural Risk Protection Act (ARPA) of 2000, Public Law 106-224 authorized the Secretary of USDA, acting through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, herein referred to as NIFA, to carry out the program Partnerships for Risk Management Education. Under this authority NIFA partners with four regional Extension Risk Management Education (ERME) Centers to carry out a national competitive grants program in Risk Management Education to educate farmers, ranchers, and foresters (producers) about the full range of risk management activities. Community-based organizations, higher education institutions and eligible tribal entities can play a critical role with training that provides decision tools, practices and other risk management strategies that producers can adopt to improve their economic viability.

The authorizing language has been amended through successive legislation, namely the 2008 Farm Bill (P.L. 110-246), the 2014 Farm Bill (P.L. 113-79), and the 2018 Farm Bill (P.L. 115-334). As amended, the language describes the purpose as "educating agricultural producers and providing technical assistance to agricultural producers on a full range of farm viability and risk management activities, including futures, options, agricultural trade options, crop insurance, business planning, enterprise analysis, transfer and succession planning, management coaching, market assessment, cash flow analysis, cash forward contracting, debt reduction, production diversification, farm resources risk reduction, farm financial benchmarking, conservation activities, and other risk management strategies."

Section 11125 of the *Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018* provides authority for the USDA NIFA to expand the Partnerships for Risk Management Education program. Expanding ERME to provide education on the use of crop insurance for the full spectrum of crops and livestock that farmers and ranchers produce will allow ERME to better serve farmers and ranchers who underutilize crop insurance.

### B.  Stakeholder Input

The four regional ERME Centers welcome comments, suggestions and/or recommendations regarding this RFA from any interested party.  These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the Extension Risk Management Education Competitive Grants Program.  Written stakeholder comments should be submitted to the ERME Center in their region.

## C. Making Application to More Than One Region

Multi-regional projects are permitted, but an applicant seeking funding from more than one region must submit a separate application to each regional ERME Center for which their project is relevant. Letters of commitment must demonstrate a strong level of commitment and collaboration for the successful execution of a multi-regional project. Each ERME Center Review Panel will make the funding decision for the application submitted to their region independently of the other regions to which the application was submitted. Please read the Application Resources (https://z.umn.edu/ERME-Resources) for guidance on applications being submitted to more than one region.

## D. Purpose and Priorities

The ERME program provides funding for outcome-based risk management education projects designed to help producers learn and use tools and approaches that can reduce the adverse effects of the uncertainties of weather, yields, prices, credit, government policies, global markets and other factors, including human resources and legal issues – all of which may result in wide swings in farm income or threaten the economic viability of the farm or ranch. Applications must clearly identify what the risk management outcomes will be for producers and how they will improve their economic viability. Applications must also develop and use measurable outcome verification to evaluate the progress that participating producers make toward achieving the proposed risk management outcomes.

**Extension Risk Management Education Aspirational Goals and Objectives**

Risk management involves taking a deliberate and knowledgeable approach to dealing with one or more of the five primary sources of agricultural risk. The ERME program aspires to enhance farm and ranch profitability and viability by enabling producers to successfully manage these risks. Any of the five sources of risk identified for your proposed educational programming should align with its corresponding aspirational goal:

| Source of Risk | Aspirational Goals |
|---|---|
| **Production Risk** – Any production-related activity or event with a range of possible outcomes which could limit ag producers' ability to achieve their financial goals is a production risk. | Enhance understanding of yield variability, insurance products, technology, diversification and management systems to control costs and improve farm or ranch income. |
| **Marketing Risk** – Marketing is the part of a farm business that transforms production activities into financial success. Marketing risk is any market related activity or event that leads to the variability of prices ag producers receive for their products or pay for production inputs. | Improve producer understanding and use of commodity price risk management, product (niche) marketing strategies, differentiated (branding) marketing focus and relationship marketing to enhance farm or ranch viability. |
| **Financial Risk** – Financial risk encompasses those risks that threaten the financial health of | Grow farmer and rancher capacity to address strategic business planning, production cost |

| | |
|---|---|
| the business, including: 1) Capital cost and availability; 2) Ability to meet on-time cash flow needs; 3) Ability to maintain and grow equity; and 4) Ability to absorb short-term financial shocks. | management, recordkeeping analysis, asset management and financial planning to enhance cash flow, profitability and financial performance. |
| **Legal Risk** – Legal risk involves commitments that have legal implications, such as production activities that fail to take appropriate safety precautions, marketing products which can involve contract laws and human issues dealing with employer/employee rules. | Cultivate farmer and rancher ability to address business organization, contracts, regulatory policies and liability issues to manage businesses' legal risk exposure. |
| **Human Risk** – Human risk management is the ability to keep all people who are involved in the business safe, satisfied and productive such as: 1) Human health and well-being; 2) Family and business relationships; 3) Employee management; and 4) Transition planning. | Develop farmer and rancher understanding of employee recruitment, retention and management; internal and external business communication; business transition and farm safety systems to improve business and worker success. |

Key objectives are to help producers understand the risks inherent in their operation, the methods and tools available to mitigate these risks, how to effectively use these methods and tools, and how to manage risk by implementing these methods and tools. Applications must articulate the primary source(s) of risk faced by their target audience and develop training activities that will help those producers take specific actions that generate measurable outcomes from managing these risks.

Applications must achieve the objectives of the program by addressing one or more of the following risk management areas and topics:

| Topics | Examples of Educational Programming |
|---|---|
| *Production* | |
| Insurance Products | Crop insurance related education |
| Diversification | Any diversification projects including product, enterprise, geography, etc. |
| New production systems, technologies | Any projects related to new production systems or technologies and the risks that surround them |
| Environmental and weather-related risks | Environmental and weather-related risks include drought, fire, disaster, and any water use decisions or conservation decisions |
| Value-added enterprises | Education surrounding value-added enterprises including agritourism |
| *Marketing* | |
| Forward Pricing | Discusses commodity market forward pricing tools. Cash, futures, options as well as contract production |
| Direct marketing | Discusses any direct marketing topics. Branding, certifying, identity preserved marketing |

| | |
|---|---|
| Marketing plans and strategies | Marketing plans consists of developing marketing plans which would include any market fundamental analysis |
| **_Financial_** | |
| Asset management | Leasing, renting, and borrowing |
| Business and strategic planning | Business planning, goal setting, strategic planning |
| Cost of production and benchmarking | Input decisions, cost of production analysis, benchmarking |
| Financial records and analysis | Recordkeeping, financial statements, budgeting, financial planning |
| **_Legal_** | |
| Contracts and leases | Education around contracts or leases including rental contracts, livestock production, hunting, etc. |
| Environmental regulations | Wetland, livestock, manure, chemical use |
| Liability, business & food safety | Liability risk including business liability, chemical liability, visitor liability or food safety issues |
| State and Federal Farm Programs | Education around state and federal farm programs that help producers manage risk. |
| **_Human_** | |
| Labor management | All employee related items, including employee management and communication; labor supply, recruitment, and retention; as well as any labor regulations |
| Health, stress, family & business relationships | Health, stress, interpersonal, family & business relationships |
| Transition and estate planning | Includes asset transfer, communications, or legal issues surrounding transition and estate planning |

E.  **Program Area Description**
ERME is soliciting applications under the following program areas:

1.  **Risk Management Education Projects**
The long-term goals for Risk Management Education projects are to help producers achieve risk management outcomes that will improve their economic viability. Key objectives are to help producers understand the risks inherent in their operation, the methods and tools available to mitigate these risks, how to effectively use these methods and tools, and how to manage risk by implementing these methods and tools. Applications must articulate the primary source(s) of risk faced by their target audience and develop training activities that will help those producers take specific actions that generate measurable outcomes from managing these risks.

The maximum award will be **$75,000** with a grant duration of 18 months. Each regional Center anticipates funding 12-15 new grants from this announcement, subject to the availability of funds and the quality of applications received.

2. **Underutilization of Crop Insurance Projects**

The long-term goals for Underutilization of Crop Insurance projects are to enhance farm and ranch profitability and economic viability by enabling producers who underutilize crop insurance products or programs to successfully manage one or more of the five primary sources of agricultural risk. Project outcomes may include strategies other than crop insurance; however, the educational focus should align with enhanced understanding and use of crop insurance tools. Examples include recordkeeping, financial literacy, or marketing, as well as risk management strategies to use when a crop insurance program is not available or not applicable.

Examples of crop insurance educational topics include but are not limited to:
- Covered and non-covered crops;
- Cover crops;
- Importance of risk management strategies for perennial/specialty/organic crops;
- Prevented planting provisions;
- Understanding policy selections;
- Understanding price and coverage levels;
- Importance of unit selection;
- Whole Farm Revenue Protection;
- Livestock policies;
- Online crop insurance resources and tools;
- Grain/crop marketing;
- Financial recordkeeping;
- Production recordkeeping;
- Benchmarking and crop planning;
- Sales closing and acreage reporting deadlines;
- Written agreements where crop insurance is not available;
- Production history and its relevance to crop insurance;
- Types of insurance policies and options within each type;
- Filing a claim;
- Relationship building with other insurance agents and other ag influencers
- Dairy risk management policies.

The maximum award will be **$100,000** with a grant duration of 18 months.

Each regional Center anticipates funding 7-10 new grants from this announcement, subject to the availability of funds and the quality of applications received.

3. **Exploratory Projects**
These smaller, simplified projects provide a unique opportunity to initiate ideas and/or explore emerging risk topic areas to better address farmer/rancher risk management education needs. Exploratory projects can be used to organize and host a producer education workshop(s) or conference or be used for development projects that can lead to application for a Risk Management Education or Underutilization of Crop Insurance project in a future year. The maximum award will be **$10,000** with a grant duration of 18 months.

**F.** Southern ERME Center (SRMEC) Priorities, 2026
The Southern ERME Center serves Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. RFAs have been concurrently released for each regional ERME Center – please visit the respective websites for additional information.

Each year, the SRMEC Advisory Council meets for an educational and strategic planning meeting. This year's meeting resulted in the following overriding requirement and priorities for FY 2026: Each project (standard education or producers underserved by crop insurance projects) should have a plan for capturing measurable qualitative and quantitative economic effects and/or behavioral changes related to risk management. Projects with detailed evaluation plans that capture higher level producer impacts (i.e. implement versus understand across the ERME spectrum of producer actions) are ranked higher

## A. Education Projects Regional Priorities

1. Develop and deliver programs and decision tools to help producers implement financial management strategies, alternative production systems, and/or farm data management.
2. Educate producers to implement marketing risk strategies.
3. Aid producers in understanding information and obtaining certifications (e.g. local, grass-fed, sustainable, organic, regenerative, etc.) and marketing labels that expand market opportunities and strengthen regional/local supply chains (cooperatives, diversification, scale/scaling- up, food safety, distribution, value-added, processing, etc.).
4. Develop and deliver strategies to help producers implement programs to attract, train, and retain employees.
5. Educate producers to implement strategies to manage production and labor risks during times of natural disaster and health emergencies.

6. Develop and deliver a legal tool kit for producers to adopt and manage day-to-day and long-term risks (e.g. contracts, labor, liability, regulatory compliance, heirs' property, estate planning and succession planning).
7. Develop enterprise budgets that can be implemented for non-traditional and specialty crops.


**B. Producers Underserved by Crop Insurance Projects Regional Priorities**

1. Business financial literacy focused on recordkeeping, documentation, and taxes appropriate for crop insurance participation, especially small-scale, urban agriculture, organic, and/or specialty crop including direct marketing operations.

2. Training, educating, and/or assisting producers on crop insurance and other programs including livestock, whole farm, micro-farm insurance products, noninsured disaster assistance (NAP), cover crop practices, prevented planting, and replant practices.

3. Crop insurance training that addresses transition, succession, estate planning, and heirs' property .

4. Record keeping and/or documentation for livestock (including dairy), pasture, rangeland, and forage policies appropriate for insurance participation.

5. Educating specialty crop growers on available crop insurance options including written agreements.

6. Educating and/or training producers for natural disaster mitigation strategies using crop insurance including hurricane and tropical storm insurance.

7. Projects that leverage collaborations among non-profits and community-based organizations (NGOs), government agencies, and Land-Grant Institutions to enhance crop insurance training.

8. Educating producers on working with lenders and Crop Insurance Agents to expand access to programs and crop insurance products available in other geographic areas where federal crop insurance isn't available (written agreements and program expansion).

9. Innovative projects that address precision, regenerative, and/or Artificial Intelligence as it relates to crop insurance.

10. Educate producers on the use of crop insurance to help mitigate risk due to financial stress.


## II.    Award Information

### A.  Type of Application
**New application.** New applications will be evaluated using the criteria described in Part V of this RFA and are subject to the due dates herein. We will review all new applications competitively using the screening for administrative requirements, review

panel evaluation of proposals using evaluation criteria and selection process described in Part V – Application Review Requirements.

## B. Project Types
Applications will be accepted for three project types in FY 2026:
1) Risk Management Education Projects
2) Underutilization of Crop Insurance Projects; and
3) Exploratory Projects

## C. Project Period
The estimated project period for awards will be 18 months beginning on **April 1, 2026** and completed no later than **September 30, 2027.**

## D. Award Type
The funding for selected projects will be in the form of a subaward agreement.  Each regional ERME Center will determine the precise terms and conditions defining contractual obligations that are a part of the award process and will include, but may not be limited to the following:

1. Approval of your final budget and narrative that is part of the application submission.
2. Compliance with Uniform Guidance (UG).
3. Monitoring your (organization's) performance through quarterly and final reports.
4. Reviewing federal funds spent on requests for reimbursement (invoices).

## E. Project Director Training
All Project Directors (PDs) receiving an ERME grant award are required to attend a Project Directors' Training.  Each ERME Center will conduct a separate training meeting for their respective regions. Attendance at this regional training should be considered when developing the project budget, with estimated costs included. If training attendance is not possible, the PD must contact their regional Center in order to receive the required information and fulfill the contractual obligations of the grant. Regional Centers will share additional information following the award announcements.

While other ERME regional Centers offer project director training during the National Extension Risk Management Education Conference, SRMEC prefers to deliver this training virtually. If project directors want to use program funds to attend the National ERME Conference, they should provide a written justification within their proposal detailing how attendance at the national conference will enhance their submitted project resources and/or delivery.

## III.   Eligibility Information

### A. Eligible Entities

1. Any public or private organization that has demonstrated experience in providing agricultural education or other agriculturally related training to producers. This includes, but is not limited to:
   - An 1862, 1890, or 1994 land grant institution, or other institutions of higher education, including community colleges, that deliver agricultural education.
   - An Indian Tribal community college, an Alaska Native cooperative college, an Indian Tribe, or a national Tribal organization.
   - A Hispanic-serving institution of higher education.
   - Agricultural organizations, agencies, or other entities.
2. Individuals are NOT eligible applicants.
3. Grant applicants and their partners, affiliates, and collaborators for this Announcement will not be allowed to receive funding to conduct activities that could be perceived by producers as promoting the services or products of one private company over the services and/or products of another company that provides the same or similar services or products. If applying for funding, such organizations must be aware of potential conflicts of interest and must describe in their application the specific actions they will take to avoid actual and perceived conflicts of interest. Applications from applicants who inadequately identify and/or disclose conflicts of interest may result in, among other possible outcomes, additional explanation of project activities, application rejection, funding reimbursement denial, and/or project termination.

**B. Qualifying Criteria for Applications**

Any applications that are non-compliant with the following requirements will be at risk of being excluded from review.  Applicants who are disqualified on these grounds will be notified via email.

1. Applications must comply with the submission instructions and content requirements set forth in this announcement, including the Required Documents Section (IV.B.1 [Item 13], IV.B.2 [Item 13], IV.B.3 [Item 9]). Any materials submitted beyond the required documentation will not be considered in the review process.
2. Any application that arrives later than 5:00:59 PM CST will be disqualified from competition.
3. Applications must be submitted via the online Results Verification System through the applicant's regional ERME Center website, except in extenuating circumstances as determined and documented by that Center.
4. Maximum amount of funding may not exceed the amount identified for each program area. See section I.E.

**C. Cost-Sharing or Matching**

ERME does **not** allow matching support, that includes in-kind services, for this program.

## IV.    Application and Submission Information

### A. Form of Application Submission
All applications must be submitted through the Extension Risk Management online Results Verification System (RVS).  First time applicants will be required to register in the RVS through their respective regional ERME Center's website. If an applicant experiences technical difficulty with the RVS, they may contact their regional ERME Center to obtain an alternate method of electronic submission (i.e., email).

All applicants will be notified, by e-mail, with confirmation of receipt of the application by ERME RVS.

### B. Content of Application Package Submission
Complete the sections described below specific to the program area to which you are applying: 1. Risk Management Education Projects, 2. Underutilization of Crop Insurance Projects, or 3. Exploratory Projects. Review components/requirements of the [Extension Risk Management online application system (RVS)](#) prior to filling out your application.

### 1. Risk Management Education Projects

1) **Project Overview –** Describe: (i) the risk management education subject topic(s) the proposed project will cover; (ii) the methods used to deliver the project; (iii) the target audience, including the geographical location; (iv) the number of workshops or educational activities; (v) the risk management outcomes producers are expected to achieve through participation in the project; and (vi) the estimated number of producers who will achieve these outcomes . It is critical that there is a logical connection between the Project Overview and the Proposed Outcomes section of your application.  **200 Word Limit**

2) **Proposed Outcomes –** (i) Identify each risk management outcome that you want producers to understand, develop, or implement; (ii) identify, for each outcome, the risk area, risk management topic, participant action, and the number of producers you anticipate will achieve that action/outcome; and (iii) identify verification/performance measures for tracking producer achievement of each of the proposed risk management outcomes.  **A maximum of 12 outcomes is allowed.**

3) **Project Outcomes Narrative –** Describe the risk management issue(s) this project addresses and how it will help producers improve their economic viability. It is critical this section: (i) identifies the primary source(s) of risk for the target audience; (ii) demonstrates the education and/or training methods are appropriate; (iii) describes a plan for evaluating producer outcomes and impacts; and (iv) discusses the potential and/or anticipated economic impact of this project upon the producers being trained.  If applicable, discuss how the project addresses the regional priorities.

Applicants can also discuss their ability to be flexible with a contingency plan for delivering proposed training activities and adjusting evaluation methods in the event of unexpected program interruptions and/or other extenuating circumstances. Discussing innovative program delivery alternatives is encouraged as part of your project narrative. **400 Word Limit**

4) **Project Steps –** Describe a **logical progression** of the project's plan of work that will lead your target audience to achieve the proposed outcomes. Map out the timeline for each task/project step to be accomplished during the proposed award period including a plan for evaluation of each proposed outcome. Each project step needs to identify actions the **project team** will take to help participants accomplish the proposed risk management outcomes and where applicable, actions that **participants** will take toward achieving these outcomes.

5) **Producer Demand –** Demonstrate the willingness of your primary audience group(s) to participate in your project. Provide specific indicators that demonstrate why they will be attracted to the program, including but not limited to: benchmark information on participants' knowledge level and attitude that support the proposed risk management education; follow-up evaluations from prior workshops that document interest in topics for future workshops; and farmer or rancher contributions to the proposed program content that demonstrate their interest in the risk management topics being offered. Secondary census data from USDA, while not a demonstration of producer demand, may be of value in supporting the demand statement. **200 Word Limit**

6) **Organizational Capacity –** Describe your organization's history and experience delivering risk management education programs to producers. Describe your organizational capacity to lead outcome-based projects; include the skills, knowledge and experience of your team members. Indicate the capability of the Project Director (Co-Project Director) to achieve the program purpose and priorities stated in this funding announcement, including evidence of solid working relationships within the agricultural community. Applicants demonstrating experience in providing agriculture training with the capacity to lead a program on risk management education for the target audience are preferred.

7) **Project Team –** Team members are the Project Director, (Co-Project Director) and all other individuals who will actively participate in the development, delivery and management of the project - whether from the applicant organization or not. For each team member provide: (i) name; (ii) organization; (iii) email address; (iv) telephone number; (v) a description of their role and responsibility in the project; and (vi) a description of actions related to conflict(s) of interest if applicable (see section III.A.3). Project Team members who will serve as a consultant or sub-awardee are required to submit additional documentation (see section IV.C).

8) **Project Collaborators –** Collaborators are people or organizations who will bring expertise or provide access to your target audience, but who are not involved in the day-to-day management of the project. Letters of commitment are required from all listed collaborators. For each project collaborator provide: (i) name; (ii) organization; (iii) email address; (iv) telephone number; (v) a description of their role and responsibility in the project; (vi) a description of actions related to conflict(s) of interest, if applicable. (see section III.A.3) and (vii) uploaded letter(s) of commitment. Letters of commitment must clearly state the collaborator's contributing role, expertise, and/or knowledge that will support the delivery of proposed outcomes. Letters must be signed and dated and addressed to the Regional Center's Director, but delivered to applicant for inclusion with the application. Letters must be uploaded as PDF documents. **Form letters are not allowed.** Project Collaborators who will serve as a consultant or sub-awardee are required to submit additional documentation (see section IV.C).

9) **Tools and Curriculum –** Describe the educational tools and/or curriculum your project will develop or utilize to train producers; include software, manuals, worksheets, notebooks and/or other educational resources and tools. Describe the delivery methodology and why it is appropriate for your audience.

10) **Review of Past Projects –** Identify and review **two** ERME past projects to show how the proposed project can build upon or collaborate with previously funded projects, and/or how the project is unique and innovative. Reviewing a previously funded project(s) from applicant organization will not satisfy the requirements for this section. You can review all previously funded ERME projects at the website identified below. Use the "Search Criteria" to help you filter the search down by funding opportunity, topic, etc.
Extension Risk Management Education : Completed Projects (https://z.umn.edu/ERME-Ed-Completed-Projects ).
**200 Word Limit**

11) **Budget** – Enter the total amount of funds requested. A separate, detailed, budget form must be uploaded to the application as a required document. The budget form is available for download in the online application system and detailed instructions for each line item are available in Appendix A to this RFA (Budget and Budget Narrative Instructions).

   a. **Indirect Costs** – Indirect costs allowed for projects submitted under this RFA may not exceed the lesser of the institution's official federally negotiated indirect cost rate <u>or</u> 30% of the total Federal funds awarded. If your organization does not have a federally negotiated indirect cost rate (IDC), an indirect rate of 15% Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) will be allowed.

b. **Proposed or Pending Applications** – Identify the source and amount of funding, if any, received for this project; and/or funding pending from other sources.

12) **Budget Narrative** – Enter your Budget Narrative information directly into the online application system. Identify and describe costs associated with each budget line-item amount; include subawards or sub-contracts, consultants, and indirect costs. Detailed instructions are available in: (i) Appendix A to this RFA (Budget and Budget Narrative Instructions); (ii) the online application Instructions; and (iii) Application Resources (https://z.umn.edu/ERME-Resources).

13) **Required Documents** – All submitted applications must contain the documents listed below. Any materials submitted beyond the stated content requirements will not be considered in the review process.

a. **ERME Cover Sheet (SF424)** - Is a fillable PDF template that must be completed and signed by applicant organization's authorized representative or fiscal agent. Applicants must upload as a PDF document.

b. **ERME Budget Form** - Is a fillable PDF template that must be completed and uploaded as a PDF document.

c. **Letters of Commitment** from Project Collaborators, Consultants and Subawards are to be uploaded as PDF documents in the Project Collaborator section and the Project Team section if a Team member(s) is serving as consultant or sub-awardee.

2. **Underutilization of Crop Insurance Projects**

1) **Project Overview** – Describe: (i) the risk management education subject topic(s) the proposed project will cover; (ii) the methods used to deliver the project; (iii) the target audience, including the geographical location; (iv) the number of workshops or educational activities; (v) the risk management outcomes producers are expected to achieve through participation in the project; and (vi) the estimated number of producers who will achieve these outcomes. It is critical that there is a logical connection between the Project Overview and the Proposed Outcomes section of your application. **200 Word Limit**

2) **Project Audience** – Applicants must be able to describe who their project audience is and why they underutilize the Federal crop insurance program; including why there is a low level of crop insurance participation and availability; why existing crop insurance products do not provide an effective risk management tool; or why this audience may not normally be reached through typical risk management tools or education offerings. Applicants

should also be able to demonstrate how their audience will achieve access to and participation in crop insurance programs through the proposed risk management education.

3) **Proposed Outcomes** – (i) Identify each risk management outcome that you want producers to understand, develop, or implement; (ii) identify, for each outcome, the risk area, risk management topic, participant action, and the number of producers you anticipate will achieve that action/outcome; and (iii) identify verification/performance measures for tracking producer achievement of each of the proposed risk management outcomes. **A maximum of 12 outcomes is allowed.**

4) **Project Outcomes Narrative** – Describe the risk management issue(s) this project addresses and how it will help producers improve their economic viability through utilization of crop insurance products or programs. It is critical this section: (i) identifies the primary source(s) of risk for the target audience; (ii) demonstrates appropriate education and/or training methods; (iii) describes a plan for evaluating producer outcomes and impacts; and (iv) discusses the potential and/or anticipated economic impact of this project upon the producers being trained. If applicable, discuss how the project addresses the regional priorities.

   Applicants should discuss their ability to be flexible with a contingency plan for delivering proposed training activities and adjusting evaluation methods in the event of unexpected program interruption and/or other extenuating circumstances. Discussing innovative program delivery alternatives is encouraged as part of your project narrative. **400 Word Limit**

5) **Project Steps** – Describe a **logical progression** of the project's plan of work that will lead your target audience to achieve the proposed outcomes. Map out the timeline for each task/project step to be accomplished during the proposed award period including a plan for evaluation of each proposed outcome. Each project step needs to identify actions the **project team** will take to help participants accomplish the proposed risk management outcomes and where applicable, actions that **participants** will take toward achieving these outcomes.

6) **Organizational Capacity** – Describe your organization's history and experience delivering risk management education programs to producers. Describe your organizational capacity to lead outcome-based projects; include the skills, knowledge and experience of your team members. Indicate the capability of the Project Director (Co-Project Director) to achieve the program purpose and priorities stated in this funding announcement, including evidence of solid working relationships within the agricultural community and/or with the producers you propose to reach. Applicants demonstrating

experience in providing agriculture training with the capacity to lead a program on risk management education for the target audience are preferred.

7) **Project Team –** Team members are the Project Director, (Co-Project Director) and all other individuals who will actively participate in the development, delivery and management of the project - whether from the applicant organization or not.  For each team member provide: (i) name; (ii) organization; (iii) email address; (iv) telephone number; (v) a description of their role and responsibility in the project; and (vi) a description of actions related to conflict(s) of interest, if applicable (see section III.A.3). Project Team members who will serve as a consultant or sub-awardee are required to provide additional documentation (see section IV.C).

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9) **Tools and Curriculum –** Describe the educational tools and/or curriculum your project will develop or utilize to train producers; include software, manuals, worksheets, notebooks and/or other educational resources and tools. Describe the delivery methodology and why it is appropriate for the target audience.

10) **Review of Past Projects –** Identify and review **two** ERME past projects to show how the proposed project can build upon or collaborate with previously funded projects, and/or how the project is unique and innovative. Reviewing a previously funded project(s) from applicant organization will not satisfy the requirements for this section. You can review all previously funded ERME projects at the website identified below. Use the "Search Criteria" to help you filter the search down by funding opportunity, topic, etc.

Extension Risk Management Education : Completed Projects (https://z.umn.edu/ERME-Ed-Completed-Projects ).

**200 Word Limit**

11) **Budget** – Enter the total amount of funds requested. A separate, detailed, budget form must be uploaded to the application as a required document. The budget form is available for download in the online application system and detailed instructions for each line item are available in Appendix A to this RFA (Budget and Budget Narrative Instructions).

    a. **Indirect Costs** – Indirect costs allowed for projects submitted under this RFA may not exceed the lesser of the institution's official federally negotiated indirect cost rate or 30% of the total Federal funds awarded. If your organization does not have a federally negotiated indirect cost rate (IDC), an indirect rate of 15% Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) will be allowed.

    b. **Proposed or Pending Applications –** Identify the source and amount of funding, if any, received for this project; and/or funding pending from other sources.

12) **Budget Narrative –** Enter your Budget Narrative information directly into the online application system. Identify and describe costs associated with each budget line item amount; include subawards or sub-contracts, consultants, and indirect costs. Detailed instructions are available in: (i) Appendix A to this RFA (Budget and Budget Narrative Instructions); (ii) the online application Instructions; and (iii) Application Resources (https://z.umn.edu/ERME-Resources).

13) **Required Documents –** All submitted applications must contain the documents listed below. Any materials submitted beyond the stated content requirements will not be considered in the review process.

    a. **ERME Cover Sheet (SF424)** - Is a fillable PDF template that must be completed and signed by applicant organization's authorized representative or fiscal agent. Applicants must upload as a PDF document.

    b. **ERME Budget Form** - Is a fillable PDF template that must be completed and uploaded as a PDF document.

    c. **Letters of Commitment** from Project Collaborators, Consultants and Subawards are to be uploaded as PDF documents in the Project Collaborator section and the Project Team section if a Team member(s) is serving as consultant or sub-awardee.

3. **Exploratory Projects**

    1) **Project Overview** – Describe: (i) the risk management education subject topic(s) the proposed project will cover; (ii) the methods used to deliver the project; (iii) the target audience, including the geographical location; (iv) the

number of workshops or educational activities; (v) the risk management outcomes producers are expected to achieve through participation in the project; and (vi) the estimated number of producers who will achieve these outcomes. It is critical that there is a logical connection between the Project Overview and the Proposed Outcomes section of your application.
**200 Word Limit**

2) **Proposed Outcomes –** (i) Identify each risk management outcome that you want producers to understand, develop, or implement; (ii) identify, for each outcome, the risk area, risk management topic, participant action, and the number of producers you anticipate will achieve that action/outcome; and (iii) identify verification/performance measures for tracking producer achievement of each of the proposed risk management outcomes. **A maximum of 6 outcomes is allowed.**

3) **Project Narrative –** Describe the risk topic areas this project proposes to address and your plans for a producer education program which addresses farmer/rancher risk management education needs. Describe how this development project might result in a full education project after completion. This section needs to (i) identify the primary source(s) of risk for the target audience; (ii) demonstrate the education and/or training methods are appropriate (iii) describe how you will cultivate producer interest in the project for this new topic area(s); and (iv) include a timeline for each task/project step to be accomplished during the proposed award period; i.e. the activities and outputs that will occur as a result of this project. If applicable, discuss how the project addresses the regional priorities. **400 Word Limit**

4) **Project Team –** Team members are the Project Director, (Co-Project Director) and all other individuals who will actively participate in the development, delivery and management of the project - whether from the applicant organization or not. For each team member provide: (i) name; (ii) organization; (iii) email address; (iv) telephone number; (v) a description of their role and responsibility in the project; and (vi) a description of actions related to conflict(s) of interest, if applicable. (see section III.A.3). Project Team members who will serve as a consultant are required to submit additional documentation (see section IV.C).

5) **Project Collaborators –** Collaborators are people or organizations who will bring expertise or provide access to your target audience, but who are not involved in the day-to-day management of the project. Letters of commitment are required from all listed collaborators. For each project collaborator provide: (i) name; (ii) organization; (iii) email address; (iv) telephone number; (v) a description of their role and responsibility in the project; (vi) a description of actions related to conflict(s) of interest, if applicable (see section III.A.3) and (vii) uploaded letter of commitment. Letter must clearly state the collaborator's contributing role, expertise, and/or knowledge that will support the delivery of proposed outcomes. Letters must be signed and dated

and addressed to the Regional Center Director, but delivered to applicant for inclusion with the application.  Letters must be uploaded as PDF documents. **Form letters are not allowed.** Project Collaborators may <u>not </u>serve as a sub-awardee; however, they may serve as a consultant (see section IV.C for required documentation).

6) **Review of Past Projects –** Identify and review **two** ERME past projects to show how the proposed project can build upon or collaborate with previously funded projects, and/or how the project is unique and innovative. Reviewing a previously funded project(s) from applicant organization will not satisfy the requirements for this section. You can review all previously funded ERME projects at the website identified below. Use the "Search Criteria" to help you filter the search down by funding opportunity, topic, etc. [Extension Risk Management Education : Completed Projects](https://z.umn.edu/ERME-Ed-Completed-Projects) ([https://z.umn.edu/ERME-Ed-Completed-Projects](https://z.umn.edu/ERME-Ed-Completed-Projects)).
   **200 Word Limit**

7) **Budget** – Enter the total amount of funds requested. A separate, detailed, budget form must be uploaded to the application as a required document.  The budget form is available for download in the online application system and detailed instructions for each line item are available in Appendix A to this RFA (Budget and Budget Narrative Instructions).

   a. **Indirect Costs** – Indirect costs allowed for projects submitted under this RFA may not exceed the lesser of the institution's official federally negotiated indirect cost rate <u>or</u> 30% of the total Federal funds awarded.  If your organization does not have a federally negotiated indirect cost rate (IDC), an indirect rate of 15% Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) will be allowed.

   b. **Proposed or Pending Applications –** Identify the source and amount of funding, if any, received for this project; and/or funding pending from other sources.

8) **Budget Narrative –** Enter your Budget Narrative information directly into the online application system.  Identify and describe costs associated with each budget line-item amount; include consultants and indirect costs. **Subawards are not allowed on Exploratory projects.** Detailed instructions are available in: (i) Appendix A to this RFA (Budget and Budget Narrative Instructions); (ii) the online application Instructions; and (iii) Application Resources ([https://z.umn.edu/ERME-Resources](https://z.umn.edu/ERME-Resources)).

9) **Required Documents –** All submitted applications must contain the documents listed below. Any materials submitted beyond the stated content requirements will not be considered in the review process.

a. **ERME Cover Sheet (SF424)** - Is a fillable PDF template that must be completed and signed by applicant organization's authorized representative or fiscal agent. Applicants must upload as a PDF document.

b. **ERME Budget Form** - Is a fillable PDF template that must be completed and uploaded as a PDF document.

c. **Letters of Commitment** from Project Collaborators and Consultants are to be uploaded as PDF documents in the Project Collaborator section and the Project Team section if a Team member(s) is serving as consultant.

## C. Subawards and Consultants

Funding may be used to provide subawards not to exceed 49 percent of the requested budget. Subawards are NOT allowed on Exploratory Projects. All sub-awardees must comply with applicable requirements for subawards. Consultants are subject to the allowable rates of pay as identified in Appendix A. Sections A & B Salaries. Detailed instructions for subawards and consultants are available in Appendix A to this RFA (Budget and Budget Narrative Instructions) and in the online application Instructions. The following documentation is required:

1. Consultant
   a. Letter of commitment which contains a brief description of what they or the organization will bring to the project, the **specific responsibility** that they will have within the project and their hours and rate of pay.
   b. An abbreviated (2 page maximum) resume or curriculum vitae (if the CV limit is exceeded only the first two pages of the submitted CV will be included for review).
2. Subaward
   a. A separate subaward budget form (utilize the ERME Budget Form).
   b. A separate budget narrative.
   c. A letter of commitment outlining the organization's statement of work for the project.

## D. Submission Dates and Times

We recommend that you conduct a thorough review of your application before submission via the Results Verification System. A checklist is included in Appendix B of this RFA to assist with the review. Applications must be submitted to the RVS no later than 5:00:59 PM CST on **November 13, 2025**. Email confirmation of receipt will be sent to all applicants.

## E. Confidential Information

In accordance with 7CFR 2500.017, the names of entities submitting applications, as well as application contents and evaluations, except those involved in the review process, will be kept confidential to the extent permissible by law. If an applicant chooses to include

confidential or proprietary information in the application, it will be treated in confidence to the extent permitted by law, provided that the information is clearly marked by the applicant with the term "confidential and proprietary information."

### F.  Pre-Submission Application Assistance

1.  Links to assist in the application process and to access application resources will be provided on each regional ERME Center's website.
2.  Each regional ERME Center will respond to questions from individual applicants regarding eligibility criteria, administrative issues related to the submission of the application, and requests for clarification about the announcement.  Such questions should be submitted to the appropriate regional ERME Center. **Regional ERME Centers may not assist individual applicants by reviewing draft applications.**

### G.   RFA Definitions

A list of definitions for terms found in this RFA, as they relate to the ERME Program, is available in the RVS Resources page (https://z.umn.edu/ERME-Resources).

## V.    Application Review Information

### Evaluation Criteria

Applications that meet the threshold criteria in Section III of this announcement will be reviewed according to the evaluation criteria set forth below.

Applications are evaluated on their strengths and weaknesses relative to the merits of all other applications. Final funding decisions will be made based on the final rankings and recommendation of each regional ERME Center's review panel. Applicants will be notified of funding decisions no later than February 13, 2026.

### A.  Evaluation Criteria for Risk Management Education Projects

| Criteria | Weight |
|---|---|
| 1.  **Proposed Outcomes:** ERME will evaluate the extent to which the proposed risk management outcomes include clear statements of what you anticipate producers will understand, develop, or implement through participation in the project; how realistic and attainable estimated producer numbers are; and the relative level of rigor associated with the progression of producer actions - from understanding to implementation. | 40 |
| 2.  **Regional Priorities:** ERME will evaluate the degree to which proposed outcomes address regional priorities as identified in the RFA. | 10 |

| | |
|---|---|
| 3. **Outcomes Verification:** ERME will evaluate the effectiveness of the applicant's plan for evaluating and tracking producer achievement of the proposed risk management outcomes. | 10 |
| 4. **Producer Demand:** Applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to demonstrate demand by producers for the proposed risk management education, taking into account: (i) documentation that indicates their willingness to participate in the training/education being proposed; (ii) specific indicators that demonstrate their interest in the program such as producer surveys or follow-up evaluations from prior workshops. | 15 |
| 5. **Team/Organizational Capacity and Collaborators:** ERME will attribute equal value to: (i) evaluating the skills, knowledge and experience of the project team and organization to effectively deliver risk management education projects; and (ii) evaluating how well-engaged collaborating public or private organizations will increase the likelihood of farmer/rancher participation and strengthen the project. Additionally, past performance on prior ERME projects will be considered if applicable. | 15 |
| 6. **Review of Past Projects, Innovative Approach and Wide Application:** ERME will evaluate: (i) the extent to which the project employs innovative approaches to develop or deliver training, materials, or tools; (ii) how well your proposed project builds upon or collaborates with at least two previously ERME funded projects, or alternatively, how it is a totally unique and innovative project; and (iii) the extent to which the proposed project might have wide application; including adapting materials to specialized audiences, marketing and promotion techniques, eliciting high interest in basic risk management principles with new methodologies, or other ideas that would enable the project to have wide application. | 10 |

**B. Evaluation Criteria for Underutilization of Crop Insurance Projects**

| Criteria | Weight |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. **Proposed Outcomes:** ERME will evaluate the extent to which the proposed risk management outcomes include clear statements of what you anticipate producers will understand, develop, or implement through participation in the project; how realistic and attainable estimated producer numbers are; and the relative level of rigor associated with the progression of producer actions - from understanding to implementation. | 40 |
| 2. **Regional Priorities:** ERME will evaluate the degree to which proposed outcomes address regional priorities as identified in the RFA. | 10 |
| 3. **Outcomes Verification:** ERME will evaluate the effectiveness of the applicant's plan for evaluating and tracking producer achievement of the proposed risk management outcomes. | 10 |
| 4. **Project Audience:** Applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to describe: (i) who the producers are that underutilize crop insurance; (ii) why there is a low level of crop insurance participation and availability; (iii) why existing crop insurance products do not provide an effective risk management tool; and (iv) why this audience is not normally reached through other risk management tools or education offerings. Applicants will also be evaluated on whether they can demonstrate how this audience will achieve access to and participation in crop insurance programs through the proposed risk management education. | 15 |
| 5. **Team/Organizational Capacity and Collaborators:** ERME will attribute equal value to: (i) evaluating the skills, knowledge and experience of the project team and organization to effectively deliver risk management education projects and meet the needs of producers who underutilize crop insurance; and (ii) evaluating how well-engaged collaborating public or private organizations will increase the likelihood of farmer/rancher participation; which includes a commitment to recruit producers who underutilize crop insurance. Additionally, past performance on prior ERME projects will be considered if applicable. | 15 |

| Criteria | Weight |
|---|---|
| 6. **Review of Past Projects, Innovative Approach and Wide Application:** ERME will evaluate: (i) the extent to which the project employs innovative approaches to develop or deliver training, materials, or tools – how it is a totally unique and innovative project; (ii) how well your proposed project builds upon or collaborates with at least two previously ERME funded projects, or alternatively, how it is a totally unique and innovative project; and (iii) the extent to which the proposed project might have wide application; including adapting materials to specialized audiences, marketing and promotion techniques, eliciting high interest in crop insurance strategies with new methodologies, or other ideas that would enable the project to have wide application. | 10 |

## C. Evaluation Criteria for Exploratory Projects

| Criteria | Weight |
|---|---|
| 1. **Proposed Outcomes:** ERME will evaluate the extent to which the proposed risk management outcomes include clear statements of what you anticipate producers will understand, develop, or implement through participation in the project. The level of rigor of each outcome should be realistic and aligned with the subject matter or risk topic areas being introduced. | 30 |
| 2. **Regional Priorities:** ERME will evaluate the degree to which proposed outcomes address regional priorities as identified in the RFA. | 10 |
| 3. **Outcomes Verification:** ERME will evaluate the effectiveness of the applicant's plan for evaluating and tracking producer achievement of the proposed risk management outcomes. | 10 |

| | |
|---|---|
| 4. **Project Narrative:** Applicants will be evaluated based on their ability to i) identify the primary source(s) of risk for the target audience; (ii) demonstrate the education and/or training methods are appropriate; (iii) describe how producer interest will be cultivated for this new topic area(s); and (iv) include a timeline for each task/project step to be accomplished during the proposed award period; i.e. the activities and outputs that will occur as a result of this project. If applicable, discuss how the project addresses the regional priorities. | 25 |
| 5. **Team and Collaborators:** ERME will attribute equal value to: (i) evaluating the skills, knowledge and experience of the project team to effectively deliver risk management education projects; and (ii) evaluating how well-engaged collaborating public or private organizations will increase the likelihood of farmer/rancher participation and strengthen the project. | 15 |
| 6. **Review of Past Projects, Innovative Approach and Wide Application:** ERME will evaluate: (i) the extent to which the project employs innovative approaches to develop or deliver training, materials, or tools; (ii) how well your proposed project builds upon or collaborates with at least two previously ERME funded projects, or alternatively, how it is a totally unique and innovative project; and (iii) the extent to which the proposed project might have wide application; including adapting materials to specialized audiences, marketing and promotion techniques, eliciting high interest in basic risk management principles with new methodologies, or other ideas that would enable the project to have wide application. | 10 |

**D. Selection of Reviewers**

Reviewers are selected based upon training and experience in relevant agricultural fields. Reviewers are drawn from a diverse group of experts to create balance in terms of gender, ethnicity, age and professional expertise.

## VI. Award Administration Information

**A. Award Notices**

Following evaluation of applications, all applicants will be notified regarding their status.

1. **Application Notifications and Feedback:** ERME anticipates notification of successful and unsuccessful applicants via email or postal mail by **February 13, 2026**. This notification will be sent only to the Project Director. Applicant feedback will be provided using the procedures established in the Operational Guidelines for the regional ERME Centers.

2. **Successful Applicants:** ERME will advise the applicant that their proposed project has been successfully evaluated and recommended for funding. This notification is not an authorization to begin work. The subaward agreement is the authorizing document and will be provided to each awardee organization electronically or via postal mail. All subaward agreements will be finalized by **April 1, 2026**; however, situations may arise over which the regional ERME Center has no control, and which could delay this date.

## B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements
A listing and description of general federal regulation and cost principles applicable to subaward agreements under this RFA are available in Appendix A to the RFA (Budget and Budget Narrative Instructions).

## C. SAM Registration and Unique Entity Identifier Number
In accordance with the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), all applicants must register with the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) and obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number. There is no cost to use SAM.gov and you can use this site to update, renew, or check the status of your entity's registration. After your entity is successfully registered with SAM.gov, your Unique Entity ID will be automatically generated and viewable in SAM.gov's workspace. If your entity is registered in SAM.gov today, your UEI has already been assigned and is viewable in SAM.gov. This includes inactive registrations. The UEI is located on your entity registration record. The UEI replaces the DUNS number previously used when doing business with the federal government.

## D. Reporting Requirements
The following reporting requirements will apply to awards provided under this RFA. ERME reserves the right to revise the schedule and format of reporting requirements as necessary in the subaward agreement.

Award recipients must submit their reports online via the Results Verification System website – the same system where the Application was submitted. The Proposed Outcomes and Project Steps sections of the Application are auto-populated in the online reporting system. A complete set of reporting instructions is provided in the RVS.

1. **Quarterly Progress Reports**: Quarterly Progress reports are due on the dates specified by the respective regional ERME Center, to be determined, but

consistent across Centers. Additional progress reports may be submitted or report information entered at any time throughout the project period.

2. **Invoices** (Financial Reports): Invoices must be submitted quarterly but may be submitted monthly.

3. **Final Report**: The Final Report is due within the time frame directed by each regional ERME Center and must demonstrate that producers achieved the risk management outcomes identified in the Application.  After the Final Report has been approved by the regional ERME Center, it becomes a public document available for viewing through the national ERME website: http://www.ExtensionRME.org.

4. **Final Invoice**: A Final Invoice must be submitted to the regional ERME Center within the time frame directed by the Center.  Final payment may be withheld until all reporting requirements are met.

## VII.    Program Contacts

**[Southern Extension Risk Management Education Center](#)**
**University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture**
Ron Rainey, Director
2301 South University Ave
Little Rock, AR 72204

Contact:  Erica Barnes Fields at 501-671-2146 or [efields@uada.edu](mailto:efields@uada.edu)

**[Northeast Extension Risk Management Education Center](#)**
**University of Delaware**
Laurie Wolinski, Director
112 Townsend Hall
Newark, DE 19716-2130

Contact:  Michelle McCullough at 302-831-6621 or [mmccull@udel.edu](mailto:mmccull@udel.edu)

**[North Central Extension Risk Management Education Center](#)**
**University of Nebraska-Lincoln**
Brad Lubben, Director
303 Filley Hall
Lincoln, NE 68583

Contact:  Christine Lockert at 402-472-2039 or [clockert2@unl.edu](mailto:clockert2@unl.edu)

**[Western Extension Risk Management Education Center](#)**
**Washington State University Extension**
Shannon Neibergs, Director
Jo Ann Warner, Associate Director
222 N. Havana
Spokane, WA  99202

Contact:  Jo Ann Warner at 509-477-2168 or [warnerj@wsu.edu](mailto:warnerj@wsu.edu)

<u>**Appendix A**</u>

*Extension Risk Management Education Competitive Grants Program*

<u>**BUDGET AND BUDGET NARRATIVE INSTRUCTIONS**</u>

The Extension Risk Management Education Centers review proposed project costs to make certain those costs are reasonable to the project and allowable per the following federal statutes and regulations that apply to project grants awarded under this program. The statutes include but are not limited to:

- **2 CFR, Part 200 –** Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.

**Copies of the applicable Code of Federal Regulations and USDA Federal Assistance Regulations may be found at the following website:** https://nifa.usda.gov/federal-regulations

To assist in this review, as well as to expedite the award process, applications are required to have both a budget and budget narrative detailing the various line items. The categories listed below are examples of some of the more common items found in project budgets. All items should be described in the narrative in sufficient detail to enable the Centers to determine that the costs are reasonable and allowable for the project per the regulations.

**BUDGET SECTIONS A & B:**

<u>**Salaries**</u> – Show the number of work months that will be charged to the project for which salary is paid by USDA [e.g., two project directors on a 12 month project – one will spend 100% of time (12 months) and one will spend 50% of time (6 Months); total work months would be 18 months]. List the funded months in either Academic and Summer <u>or</u> Calendar months depending on the academic appointment of the person. Non-academic institutions would report salary months under the Calendar category.

Profit and Non-Profit organizations salary rates of pay should not exceed an Executive Level IV salary range ($195,200/year or $93.85/hour, effective January 2025). This rate does not include any fringe benefits, G&A, overhead, or other expenses. Rates exceeding this amount must be documented and justified as to why the person or persons command a higher salary rate. Information on future Executive Level IV salary rates may be found at the Office of Personnel Management website: http://opm.gov. Click on "Policy", "Pay & Leave", then "Salaries and Wages".

Please note that only persons employed by the recipient organization should be listed in this category. Those employed elsewhere would be listed as subcontractors or consultants in the "Other Direct Costs" (ODC) category.

Secretarial and Clerical Salaries – The salaries of administrative and clerical staff should normally be treated as indirect costs. Direct charging of these costs may be appropriate only if <u>all</u> of the following conditions are met: 1) Administrative or clerical services are integral to a

project or activity; 2) Individuals involved can be specifically identified with the project or activity; 3) Such costs are explicitly included in the budget or have the prior written approval of the Federal awarding agency; and 4) The costs are not also recovered as indirect costs.

**Fringe Benefits** – Show the total of allowable fringe benefits.

**BUDGET SECTION C**:

**Equipment** – The purchase of equipment is not allowed under the program. Equipment is defined as an article of equipment equal to or in excess of $5,000 <u>and</u> having a useful life of more than one year. See Budget Section F.6. for possible alternatives.

**BUDGET SECTION D**:

**Travel** – Domestic travel (includes Canada, Mexico and U.S. Possessions). Foreign travel is not allowed. Provide information used in estimating the cost such as: the destination if known, purpose, number of travelers, and estimated cost per trip (e.g., St. Louis, Missouri to attend a conference, 2 persons - $1,000 ea.). This includes all travel paid directly by the grantee organization.

Use the GSA Domestic Per Diem Rate Schedule if you are unsure of the maximum rates allowable for specific locations. Travel and subsistence should be in accordance with organizational policy. Regardless of the organizational policy, allowances for airfare will not normally exceed round trip jet economy air accommodations.

**BUDGET SECTION E:**

**Participant/Trainee Support Costs** – If you are conducting a train-the-trainer project and/or your project has a train-the-trainer component, please consult with your regional Center to determine how these and other similar type costs should be listed.

**BUDGET SECTION F**:

**Other Direct Costs** (ODC) are those anticipated direct project charges not included in other budget categories. A description and cost must be included in the budget narrative for each item. Items in ODC should be listed with the corresponding dollar amounts, along with an explanation of the costs provided in the Budget Narrative. Examples of items are:

 **1. Materials and Supplies** – List <u>project specific</u> materials and supplies with estimated costs. This could include items such as educational or field supplies, software, or office supplies. For items that are not typical materials & supplies, a detailed narrative of how the item fits the program must be included. If you are requesting funds for generic or bulk office materials and supplies, these would normally be considered as organizational Indirect costs and not treated as Direct Costs.

 **2. Publication Costs** – This line is associated with costs related to the publishing of articles in a scientific or technical journal or other type of field/program related publication and is not allowed under this program. Printing of program materials should

be included under "Materials and Supplies".  Photocopying costs should be included under the "Other" category.

**3**. **Consultants** – A consultant is someone who renders expert advice in his/her field.  The consultant should not be affiliated with the performing organization.  This line item in the applicant budget narrative should include the name of the consultant and his/her organization, and a breakdown of the amount being charged to the project (e.g., number of days of service, rate of pay per hour, travel, per diem, etc.). See Sections A&B, Salaries for allowable rates of pay.  Each consultant must provide the following documentation to be uploaded as part of the application: 1) Signed Letter of Commitment that also outlines their Scope of Work, rate of pay, # of hours to be paid, travel, etc.; and 2) An abbreviated resume or vita no more than 2 pages in length. These documents should be combined into a complete package and uploaded as a PDF in the Project Team or Project Collaborators section of the application.

**4**. **Computer (ADP) Services** – Computer services are not allowed under the program. This represents the charges associated with the organization's shared computer system (i.e., line charges or computer processing usage costs). Charges for Internet access may be included in this category.  Equipment purchases should be listed under "Materials and Supplies" as appropriate.

**5. Subawards/Consortium/Contractual Costs** – When a portion of the work proposed will be performed by outside sources, funding may be used to provide subawards not to exceed 49 percent of the total funds awarded.  All sub-awardees must comply with applicable requirements for subawards.  The level of detail required for the subaward budget is the same as the applicant organization.  See Sections A&B, Salaries for allowable rates of pay.  Please note that any limitation or prohibition of indirect costs on the Program also applies to the subawards.  This line item in the budget narrative of the applicant organization should list the total amount of funding that will go to the subaward.  The subaward organization must provide the following documentation to be uploaded as part of the application:  1) Letter of Commitment signed by the authorizing representative that also includes a clear Scope of Work outlining their portion of the work to be completed; 2) Separate Budget for their portion of the funding; and 3) A detailed Budget Narrative supporting their portion of the budget.  These documents should be combined into a complete package and uploaded as a PDF in the Project Team or Project Collaborators section of the application.

**6. Equipment/Facility Rentals/User Fees** –

a**. Equipment Rental** – When there is a need to rent equipment for use on the project, provide information regarding the type of equipment to be rented, the purpose or use on the project, the length of time needed, and the rental rate.

b. **Facility** – When it is necessary to rent office or other facility spaces for project implementation, and the space(s) are located off-site from the organization's main facility in space not owned by the recipient organization, the cost of the rent may

be charged against the award if the space is used specifically for the project.  The budget narrative should provide details on the normal monthly rental charge and how the rent is pro-rated to the project.

**7.  <u>Alterations/Renovations</u>** – Alterations/Renovations are not allowed under the program.

**8.  <u>Other</u>** – For other costs not specifically listed above.  Identify and provide details of the costs involved.  Some of the more common items included in this category are:

a. **Communications** – Mailings, postage, express mail, faxes, and telephone long distance charges.  Specific dollar amounts are not required.

b. **Photocopying** – In-house photocopying of materials associated with the program. Photocopying should not be confused with Publications/Page Charges which are costs related to publishing in a journal or commercial printing of brochures and other materials. Specific dollar amounts may not be required.

c. **Service or Maintenance Contracts** – Costs should be in direct correlation to the use of the equipment for the project (i.e., if a particular machine is used 50% of the time for the project, the project should only be charged 50% of the service/maintenance costs).  Provide details of the type of equipment and the amount of the service contract to be paid from Federal funds.

d**. Conferences/Meetings** – Costs of holding a conference or meeting are included in this category.  Some examples are the rental of facilities and equipment for the meeting, honorariums or fees for trainers or guest speakers, and travel and per diem for participants and speakers.  Details of costs for each conference or meeting should be broken out and provided in the budget narrative.

Meals may not be charged as project costs when individuals decide to go to breakfast, lunch, or dinner together when no need exists for continuity of a meeting.  Such activity is considered to be an entertainment cost.  In contrast, it is NIFA policy that a formal group meeting being conducted in a business atmosphere may charge meals to the project if such activity maintains the continuity of the meeting and to do otherwise will impose arduous conditions on the meeting participants.  Breakfast meals are generally not allowable because no continuity of the meeting exists.

e. **Speaker/Trainer Fees –** Information on speakers should include the fee and a description of the services they are providing.

f. **Honorariums** – Honorariums to persons providing a service are allowable.  Provide information regarding the honorarium amount (rate of pay) and a brief statement regarding what the person is doing to earn the honorarium.

**BUDGET SECTION H**:

**Indirect Costs** – Indirect costs on awards supported by USDA/NIFA under this program may not exceed the lesser of the institution's official federally negotiated indirect cost rate <u>or</u> 30% of the total Federal funds awarded. If your organization does not have a federally negotiated indirect cost rate, an indirect rate of 15% Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) will be allowed. The budget narrative should identify the percentage rate used when calculating the total indirect costs.

**Other Items of Note**:

**Cost Sharing/Matching** – ERME does **not** allow matching support, that includes in-kind services, for this program.

## UNALLOWABLE COSTS

The following is a list of selected items of costs which are usually unallowable. This list is not all inclusive. For more information on whether costs are allowable, please refer to 2 CFR 200.420-475 General Provisions for Selected Items of Cost, in the Uniform Guidance: https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/part-200/subpart-e

- Alcoholic beverages
- Entertainment costs
- Promotional give away items such as tote bags, coffee mugs, t-shirts, etc.
- Incentives such as gift certificates, cash, etc. given to entice participation in meetings, surveys, and other events.
- Rent for grantee owned facilities
- Award ceremonies
- Receptions
- Application writing costs
- Meals –

> Meals are allowable when they are part of the cost of meetings and conferences, the primary purpose of which is the dissemination of technical information (in such instances the cost of transportation, rental of facilities, speakers' fees, and other items incidental to such meetings or conferences are also allowable). On the other hand, business meals may not be charged as project costs when individuals decide to go to breakfast, lunch, or dinner together when no need exists for continuity of a meeting. Such activity is considered to be an entertainment cost.

> Note: Meals consumed while in official travel status do not fall in this category. They are considered to be per diem expenses and should be reimbursed in accordance with the organization's established travel policies subject to statutory limitations.

## Appendix B

**EXTENSION RISK MANAGEMENT EDUCATION COMPETITIVE GRANTS
PROGRAM**
APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECKLIST

**1. Content of Application Package -** Each section of the application in the RVS should be completed relevant to the specific program area, to include:

☐ **Risk Management Education Projects**

| | |
|---|---|
| a. Project Information | i. Project Team |
| b. Project People | j. Project Collaborators |
| c. Project Overview | k. Tools and Curriculum |
| d. Proposed Outcomes | l. Review of Past Projects |
| e. Project Outcome Narrative | m. Budget/Amount Requested |
| f. Project Steps | n. Budget Narrative |
| g. Producer Demand | o. Required Documents |
| h. Organizational Capacity | |

☐ **Underutilization of Crop Insurance Projects**

| | |
|---|---|
| a. Project Information | i. Project Team |
| b. Project People | j. Project Collaborators |
| c. Project Overview | k. Tools and Curriculum |
| d. Project Audience | l. Review of Past Projects |
| e. Proposed Outcomes | m. Budget/Amount Requested |
| f. Project Outcomes Narrative | n. Budget Narrative |
| g. Project Steps | o. Required Documents |
| h. Organizational Capacity | |

☐ **Exploratory Projects**

| | |
|---|---|
| a. Project Information | g. Project Collaborators |
| b. Project People | h. Review of Past Projects |
| c. Project Overview | i. Budget/Amount Requested |
| d. Proposed Outcomes | j. Budget Narrative |
| e. Project Narrative | k. Required Documents |
| f. Project Team | |

☐ **2**. **ERME Budget Form –** upload as PDF under Required Documents and confirm that the file uploads correctly.

☐ **3**. **Signed ERME Cover Sheet (SF-424)** – upload as PDF under Required Documents and confirm that the file uploads correctly.

☐    **4. Collaborator Letters of Commitment**
   a. A letter is required from each listed Project Collaborator that clearly states their contributing role, expertise, and/or knowledge that will support the delivery of proposed outcomes (upload as PDF under Project Collaborators).

☐    **5. IF the Project Includes Consultants**
   a. Letter of Commitment from each consultant outlining role, hours and rate of pay (See Appendix A, Salaries for maximum hourly rate).
   b. Abbreviated **(2-page maximum**) Resume or Curriculum Vitae for each consultant.
   c. Upload complete package as PDF under Project Team or Project Collaborators.

☐    **6. IF the Project Includes a Subaward**
   a. Subaward Budget Form.
   b. Separate detailed Budget Narrative.
   c. Letter of Commitment from the subaward organization outlining the statement of work for that organization.
   d. Upload complete package as PDF under Project Team or Project Collaborators.

**SUBMIT your application prior to the deadline specified in your region's RFA.**