**USDA AFRI Mentoring Plan**

**September 2025**

**Instructions:** A mentoring plan is required for all USDA NIFA AFRI grant applications (excluding conference/workshop grants, equipment grants, sabbatical grants, and pre/post-doctoral fellowships) that involve any type of education, training, or mentoring of students or other individuals, including high school students, undergraduate students, graduate students, professional degree students, postdoctoral scholars, other professionals, or any other individual receiving any type of formal, or non-formal training on the proposed project.

* General guidance is summarized below, but see USDA AFRI [Mentoring Plan FAQ](https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/programs/agriculture-food-research-initiative/faq/applying/mentoring-plans); and specific solicitations, e.g., [FY2026 RFA AFRI FAS](https://www.nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2025-08/FY26-AFRI-FAS-RFA-2P.pdf) (p. 7), and [FY2026 AFRI FAS Additional information for Part IV C](https://www.nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2025-08/FY%202026%20AFRI%20Foundational%20and%20Applied%20Science%20%28FAS%29%20Additional%20Information%20for%20Part%20IV%2C%20C.pdf) (p. 13) for full instructions.
* Mentoring plan page limits are **two pages** for seed and standard grant applicationsand **three pages** for coordinated agricultural projects.
* Only **one** mentoring plan is allowed per application. Each institution involved in mentoring activities should be included in the mentoring plan.
* Title the attachment as “Mentoring Plan” and save file as “MentoringPlan”.
* The mentoring plan **must** **describe**:
  1. the training and/or credentials of individuals who will serve as mentors (i.e., mentor training),
  2. the groups of students or individual trainees to be mentored on the project,
  3. mentoring activities project participants will be engaged in, processes to ensure reasonable accommodations for program participants with disabilities or challenges with accessing program activities, and
  4. expected outcomes from the mentoring.
* The mentoring plan **must be organized by distinct categories or groups** of students and/or trainee participants, e.g., youth, undergraduate students, graduate students, and/or postdoctoral fellows. If all categories of trainees will participate in the same mentoring activities, specify that. If different mentoring activities will be provided for different categories of trainees, please explain.
* Below are more detailed instructions and examples that could be included for each applicable participant group. **Delete these instructions before submitting.**

**Mentor Training and Credentials**

Describe the past or proposed training and/or credentials of individuals who will serve as mentors, including equipping, mentoring, or monitoring activities they have received or will receive to help them effectively mentor students and trainees during the project.

* For students and postdocs, the mentor is most likely their advisor, so the advisor’s domain expertise and credentials are relevant to include in this section.
* Describe specific training (if any) the mentor has for mentoring the target audience.
  + Resource: [UNL’s Executive Vice Chancellor Mentoring TipSheet and Resources](https://executivevc.unl.edu/tipsheets/how-be-successful-mentor/)
* Describe the mentor’s experience training the target audience.
  + Resource: [UNL’s Executive Vice Chancellor Leading and Teaching TipSheet and Resources](https://executivevc.unl.edu/tipsheets/leading-and-teaching-compassion/)

**Trainees and Students**

Describe the groups of students or individual trainees to be mentored on the project, including students grades 9-12, undergraduate students, graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, professionals, and other individuals.

**Mentoring Activities**

Describe in detail the mentoring activities to be delivered throughout the project to each distinct category or group of students and/or trainee participants, including those activities provided through research, education, Extension, or outreach and engagement efforts. examples include:

1. ***Career counseling and advising examples:***
   * Advising structure, e.g., frequency of one-on-one meetings, setting, etc.
   * Advising topics, e.g., setting expectations, establishing milestones, evaluating progress, strategies to overcome setbacks, etc. Deb’s suggestion.
   * Individual Development Plan ([IDP](https://myidp.sciencecareers.org/)), [IDP workshops](https://graduate.unl.edu/graduate-support/workshops) to set career goals
   * Office of Graduate Studies [workshops](https://graduate.unl.edu/graduate-support/workshops) on the academic hiring process, CVs, cover letters, teaching statements, course design, etc.
   * Paid internships at companies or in federal government, e.g., labs or on Capitol Hill
   * Additional resources
     + [You Need a Game Plan](https://www.science.org/content/article/you-need-game-plan) (Science)
     + [IDP and Mentoring](https://postdocs.stanford.edu/faculty-mentors/individual-development-plan-and-mentoring) (Stanford Office of Postdoctoral Affairs)
     + [75 Things To Do with Your Mentees](https://my.lerner.udel.edu/wp-content/uploads/75-Things-To-Do-With-Your-Mentees.pdf) (Linda Phillips-Jones)
     + [Combine IDPs with Mentoring for Success](https://mentorloop.com/blog/individual-development-plans-mentoring/) (Mentorloop)
2. ***Research and technical training examples:***
   * Student/postdoc orientation to lab/field procedures, safety, and equipment
   * [Responsible Conduct of Research](https://research.unl.edu/researchcompliance/online-in-person-training/) training (virtual in CITI or in-person at UNL)
   * Research Compliance Services [videos](https://research.unl.edu/researchcompliance/rcr-education-training/) on research misconduct, conflict of interest, and authorship designation
   * NUtech Ventures training and [events](https://events.unl.edu/NUtech/upcoming/), e.g., [Nebraska I-Corps](https://www.nutechventures.org/nebraska-introduction-to-customer-discovery/) customer discovery training for potential startups, technology commercialization etc.
   * Research methods and data collection (for students)
   * Best practices for team transdisciplinary research (if applicable)
3. ***Professional development examples:***
   * Grant writing and management training, e.g., [Write Winning Grant Proposals](https://research.unl.edu/research-education/grant-writing-seminar/) and [Research Administration Essentials](https://research.unl.edu/research-education/research-administration-essentials)
   * Opportunities to co-author publications and present work at national conferences
   * Community engagement training, e.g., [Foundations of Community Engagement](https://learningcentre.tamarackcommunity.ca/foundations-of-community-engagement) online course ([Tamarack Institute](https://learningcentre.tamarackcommunity.ca/)), annual [AMPLIFY Engagement Conference](https://myextension.unl.edu/amplify-engagement) (Nebraska Extension)
   * Journal clubs, seminars, and competitions (oral or poster) within UNL or at science society meetings
   * Annual grant workshops by U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Science Foundation, and National Institutes of Health
   * Grant or publication writing workshops offered through science societies’ webinars or at annual meetings
   * Project management training, e.g. UNL [College of Business certificate programs](https://business.unl.edu/online/graduate-certificate-programs/) or [UNO project management certification](https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-business-administration/executive-and-professional-development-program/certificates/project-management-certficate.php)
   * Nebraska Extension [digital badges](https://extension.unl.edu/current-digital-badges/)
4. ***Leadership and mentorship examples:***

* Guidance on how to effectively collaborate with researchers from diverse backgrounds and disciplinary areas
* Teaching experience, e.g. by serving as graduate teaching assistants
* Laboratory management, e.g., by leading experiments and supervising and mentoring undergraduate and high school students
* Peer mentoring among grad students/postdocs, e.g., at lab meetings, study groups, etc.

1. ***Special Accommodations examples:***

* Describe the processes to ensure reasonable accommodations for program participants with disabilities or challenges with accessing program activities. For example:
* [Services for Students with Disabilities](https://www.unl.edu/ssd/home)
* Mental and physical well-being resources, e.g., [Counseling and Psychological Services](https://caps.unl.edu/), [University Health Center](https://health.unl.edu/), etc.
* [Financial aid](https://financialaid.unl.edu/) access for undergrads from Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid
* [Students with Children](https://students-with-children.unl.edu/) support
* [Husker Safe Walk](https://police.unl.edu/services/student-care-information/), UNL Police walking escort

**Expected Outcomes**

Describe the expected outcomes derived from the mentoring activities and prospective impact(s) on the food and agricultural sciences.