

Find a RIFA Mentor

Does your RIFA Project require you to find a UC Mentor? Try this handy guide for some tips in finding a great mentor that will support you throughout your project. Also included is a one-pager you can give to potential mentors describing RIFA and the responsibilities of the mentor position.

What to consider when choosing a RIFA mentor:

- A mentor must be a University of California faculty, faculty emeritus or non-faculty academic.
- Your best bet is choosing a staff or faculty member on your campus so you have a better opportunity for face-time while planning your project, and local mentors generally have more buy-in (harder to ignore you). If you have strong faculty contacts at other UC campuses or there is a 'perfect-fit' faculty, please feel free to pursue those mentor options if you feel comfortable.
- Find out any potential connections between the host organization and your UC campus (or any UC campus). Have any UC researchers collaborated with this host in the past, acted as advisors, or participated in any groups or committees with them? This can be useful leverage when approaching a faculty to be your project mentor.
- If you haven't found a connection yet, search out faculty/staff that have 1) worked in the region/country of the project or 2) have an expertise or research history that matches the project's activities.
- There's nothing wrong with asking your major professor or faculty advisor to be your mentor, they already have buy-in to your educational and professional growth.
- Feel free to ask RIFA staff – we may be able to help or give recommendations.

Being a RIFA Mentor

What is RIFA?

The Research and Innovation Fellowship for Agriculture (RIFA) offers early-career professionals enrolled in agricultural and development-oriented graduate programs at all University of California campuses the opportunity to plan, engage and implement two to six-month-long international projects in developing countries.

RIFA Fellows collaborate with a host institution in the country they are working to develop robust projects that address global challenges in agriculture and food systems. Host organizations define the available opportunities and a fellow's collaborative work contributes integrally to the success and sustainability of ongoing projects and programs. Mentors are an integral piece of the RIFA Fellowship Program and work with the student(s) to create their implementation plans, build connections with their partners and follow their progress throughout the project cycle.

Mentor's Role:

A RIFA mentor is a University of California-based faculty or non-faculty academic who provides guidance and some oversight for a RIFA fellow. A mentor generally has a field of expertise or knowledge of the host organization that makes them a resource for the fellow while they complete the in-country portion of their fellowship. The mentor serves as the US contact that is more easily reachable for questions before the fellow leaves for the project. This mentor generally has knowledge of the host organization or has a field of expertise aligned with the RIFA project, and therefore is someone the fellow is accountable too in fulfilling their project requirements.

Mentor Responsibilities:

- Review fellow's project implementation plan (completed before departure) and offer feedback/critiques
- Be available for communication/questions from fellow before and after they leave (the level of interaction varies by fellow, but you are a resource and not a lifeline).
- Review fellow's monthly field reports and offer feedback for any questions in the "Challenges and Questions" section
- Review fellow's final report

If you have any questions or concerns about becoming a RIFA Mentor, please feel free to contact:

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