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title), and Executive Order 11222, as amended.

(b) Reviewers may not review proposals submitted by institutions or other entities with which they have an affiliation or in which they have an interest. For the purposes of determining whether such a conflict exists, an institution shall be considered as an organization if it possesses a significant degree of academic and administrative autonomy, as specified in the annual program solicitation.

[56 FR 57952, Nov. 14, 1991. Redesignated and amended at 60 FR 63368, 63370, Dec. 8, 1995]

§ 3411.13 Availability of information.

Information regarding the peer review process will be made available to the extent permitted under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552), the Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. 552a.), and Departmental implementing regulations (part 1 of this title).

§ 3411.14 Proposal review.

(a) All grant applications will be acknowledged. Prior to technical examination, a preliminary review will be made for responsiveness to the program solicitation (e.g., relationship of application to announced program area). Proposals which do not fall within the guidelines as stated in the program solicitation will be eliminated from competition and will be returned to the applicant.

(b) All applications will be carefully reviewed by the Administrator, qualified officers or employees of the Department, the respective peer review group, and *ad hoc* reviewers, as required. Written comments will be solicited from *ad hoc* reviewers when required, and individual written comments and indepth discussions will be provided by peer review group members prior to recommending applications for funding. Applications will be ranked and support levels recommended with the limitation of total available funding for each research program area as announced in the program solicitation.

(c) No awarding official will make a grant based upon an application covered by this part unless the application has been reviewed by a peer review group and/or *ad hoc* reviewers in accordance with the provisions of this part and said reviewers have made recommendations concerning the merit of such application.

(d) Except to the extent otherwise provided by law, such recommendations are advisory only and are not binding on program officers or on the awarding official.

§ 3411.15 Evaluation factors.

Subject to the varying conditions and needs of States, Federally funded agricultural research supported under this program shall be designed to, among other things, accomplish one or more of the following purposes: Continue to satisfy human food and fiber needs; enhance the long-term viability and competitiveness of the food production and agricultural system of the United States within the global economy; expand economic opportunities in rural America and enhance the quality of life for farmers, rural citizens, and society as a whole; improve the productivity of the American Agricultural system and develop new agricultural crops and new uses for agricultural commodities; develop information and systems to enhance the environment and the natural resource base upon which a sustainable agricultural economy depends; or enhance human health. Therefore, in carrying out its review under § 3411.14, the peer review group shall take into account the following factors unless, pursuant to § 3411.5(a), different evaluation criteria are specified in the program solicitation:

(a) Scientific merit of the proposal.

(1) Conceptual adequacy of hypothesis;

(2) Clarity and delineation of objectives;

(3) Adequacy of the description of the undertaking and suitability and feasibility of methodology;

(4) Demonstration of feasibility through preliminary data;

(5) Probability of success of project; and

(6) Novelty, uniqueness and originality.

(b) Qualifications of proposed project personnel and adequacy of facilities.

(1) Training and demonstrated awareness of previous and alternative approaches to the problem identified in