

(b) To qualify as responsible, an applicant must meet the following standards as they relate to a particular project:

(1) Adequate financial resources for performance, the necessary experience, organizational and technical qualifications, and facilities, or a firm commitment, arrangement, or ability to obtain same (including by proposed sub-agreements);

(2) Ability to comply with the proposed or required completion schedule for the project;

(3) Satisfactory record of integrity, judgment, and performance, including, in particular, any prior performance under grants or contracts from the Federal government;

(4) Adequate financial management system and audit procedures that provide efficient and effective accountability and control of all funds, property, and other assets; and

(5) Otherwise be qualified and eligible to receive a grant under the applicable laws and regulations.

(c) Any applicant who is determined to be not responsible will be notified in writing of such finding and the basis therefor.

§ 3415.4 How to apply for a grant.

(a) A program solicitation will be prepared and announced through publications such as the FEDERAL REGISTER, professional trade journals, agency or program handbooks, the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance, or any other appropriate means, as early as practicable each fiscal year.

The Department may elect to solicit preproposals each fiscal year in order to eliminate from consideration proposed research that does not address narrowly focused program objectives. A preproposal will be limited in length (in comparison to a full proposal) to alleviate waste of time and effort by applicants in the preparation of proposals and USDA staff in the review of proposals. If the Department solicits preproposals through publication of the annual program solicitation, the Department does not anticipate publishing a subsequent solicitation for full proposals. Applicants submitting preproposals deemed appropriate to the objectives of this program as set out in

the annual solicitation will be requested to submit full proposals; the full proposals will then be evaluated in accordance with §3415.5 through §3415.15 of this part.

The annual program solicitation will contain information sufficient to enable applicants to prepare preproposals or full proposals under this program and will be as complete as possible with respect to:

(1) Descriptions of the specific research areas that the Department proposes to support during the fiscal year involved, including anticipated funds to be awarded;

(2) Eligibility requirements;

(3) Obtaining application kits;

(4) Deadline dates for submission of preproposal or proposal packages;

(5) Name and mailing address to send preproposals or proposals;

(6) Number of copies to submit; and

(7) Special requirements.

(b) *Application Kit.* An Application Kit will be made available to any potential grant applicant who requests a copy. This kit contains required forms, certifications, and instructions applicable to the submission of grant preproposals or proposals.

(c) *Format for preproposals.* As stated above, the Department may elect to solicit preproposals under this program. Unless otherwise indicated by the Department in the annual program solicitation, the following general format applies for the preparation of preproposals:

(1) "*Application for Funding (Form CSREES-661)*". All preproposals submitted by eligible applicants should contain an "Application for Funding", Form CSREES-661, which must be signed by the proposing principal investigator(s) and endorsed by the cognizant authorized organizational representative who possesses the necessary authority to commit the applicant's time and other relevant resources. The title of the proposal must be brief (80-character maximum), yet represent the major thrust of the project. Because this title will be used to provide information to those who may not be familiar with the proposed project, highly technical words or phraseology should be avoided where possible. In addition, phrases such as

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“investigation of” and “research on” should not be used.

(2) *Project summary.* Each preproposal must contain a project summary, the text of which may not exceed three (3) single- or double-spaced pages. The Department reserves the option of not forwarding for further consideration a preproposal in which the project summary page limit is exceeded. The project summary is not intended for the general reader; consequently, it may contain technical language comprehensible primarily by persons in disciplines relating to the food and agricultural sciences. The project summary should be a self-contained specific description of the activity to be undertaken and should focus on:

(i) Overall project goal(s) and supporting objectives;

(ii) Plans to accomplish project goal(s); and

(iii) Relevance or significance of the project to United States agriculture.

(3) *Budget.* A budget detailing requested support for the proposed project period must be included in each preproposal. A copy of the form which must be used for this purpose, along with instructions for completion, is included in the Application Kit identified under § 3415.4(b) of this part and may be reproduced as needed by applicants. Funds may be requested under any of the categories listed on the budget form, provided that the item or service for which support is requested may be identified as necessary for successful conduct of the proposed project, is allowable under applicable Federal cost principles, and is not prohibited under any applicable Federal statute.

(4) *Special requirements.* (i) The annual program solicitation will describe any special preproposal submission requirements, such as paper size or type pitch to be used in the preparation of preproposals. The solicitation will also describe special program requirements, such as conference attendance or electronic project reporting, for which applicants may allocate funds when preparing proposed budgets.

(ii) By signing the “Application for Funding” identified under § 3415.4(c)(1) in its submission of a preproposal, the applicant is certifying compliance with the restrictions on the use of appro-

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priated funds for lobbying set out in 7 CFR part 3018.

(5) *Evaluation of preproposals.* Preproposals shall be evaluated to determine whether the substance of the proposed project is appropriate to the objectives of this program as set out in the annual program solicitation. Subsequently, the Administrator shall request full proposals from those applicants proposing projects deemed appropriate to the objectives of this program as set out in the annual program solicitation. Such proposals shall conform to the format for full proposals set out below and shall be evaluated in accordance with § 3415.5 through § 3415.15 of this part.

(d) *Format for full proposals.* Unless otherwise indicated by the Department in the annual program solicitation, the following general format applies for the preparation of full proposals under this program:

(1) “*Application for Funding*” (Form CSREES-661). All full proposals submitted by eligible applicants should contain an Application for Funding”, Form CSREES-661, which must be signed by the proposed principal investigator(s) and endorsed by the cognizant authorized organizational representative who possesses the necessary authority to commit the applicant’s time and other relevant resources. Investigators who do not sign the full proposal cover sheet will not be listed on the grant document in the event an award is made. The title of the proposal must be brief (80-character maximum), yet represent the major emphasis of the project. Because this title will be used to provide information to those who may not be familiar with the proposed project, highly technical words or phraseology should be avoided where possible. In addition, phrases such as “investigation of” or “research on” should not be used.

(2) *Project summary.* Each full proposal must contain a project summary, the length of which may not exceed three (3) single- or double-spaced pages. This summary is not intended for the general reader; consequently, it may contain technical language comprehensible primarily by persons in disciplines relating to the food and agricultural sciences. The project summary

should be a self-contained, specific description of the activity to be undertaken and should focus on:

- (i) Overall project goal(s) and supporting objectives;
- (ii) Plans to accomplish project goal(s); and
- (iii) Relevance or significance of the project to United States agriculture.

(3) *Project description.* The specific aims of the project must be included in all proposals. The text of the project description may not exceed 15 single- or double-spaced pages. The Department reserves the option of not forwarding for further consideration proposals in which the project description exceeds this page limit. The project description must contain the following components:

(i) *Introduction.* A clear statement of the long-term goal(s) and supporting objectives of the proposed project should preface the project description. The most significant published work in the field under consideration, including the work of key project personnel on the current application, should be reviewed. The current status of research in the particular scientific field also should be described. All work cited, including that of key personnel, should be referenced.

(ii) *Progress report.* If the proposal is a renewal of an existing project supported under this program, include a clearly marked performance report describing results to date from the previous award. This section should contain the following information:

(A) A comparison of actual accomplishments with the goals established for the previous award;

(B) The reasons established goals were not met, if applicable; and

(C) A listing of any publications resulting from the award. Copies of reprints or preprints may be appended to the proposal if desired.

(4) *Rationale and significance.* Present concisely the rationale behind the proposed project. The objectives' specific relationship and relevance to the area in which an application is submitted and the objectives' specific relationship and relevance to potential regulatory issues of United States biotechnology research should be shown clearly. Any novel ideas or contribu-

tions that the proposed project offers also should be discussed in this section.

(5) *Experimental plan.* The hypotheses or questions being asked and the methodology to be applied to the proposed project should be stated explicitly. Specifically, this section must include:

(i) A description of the investigations and/or experiments proposed and the sequence in which the investigations or experiments are to be performed;

(ii) Techniques to be used in carrying out the proposed project, including the feasibility of the techniques;

(iii) Results expected;

(iv) Means by which experimental data will be analyzed or interpreted;

(v) Pitfalls that may be encountered;

(vi) Limitations to proposed procedures; and

(vii) Tentative schedule for conducting major steps involved in these investigations and/or experiments.

In describing the experimental plan, the applicant must explain fully any materials, procedures, situations, or activities that may be hazardous to personnel (whether or not they are directly related to a particular phase of the proposed project), along with an outline of precautions to be exercised to avoid or mitigate the effects of such hazards.

(6) *Facilities and equipment.* All facilities and major items of equipment that are available for use or assignment to the proposed research project during the requested period of support should be described. In addition, items of non-expendable equipment necessary to conduct and successfully conclude the proposed project should be listed.

(7) *Collaborative arrangements.* If the nature of the proposed project requires collaboration or subcontractual arrangements with other research scientists, corporations, organizations, agencies, or entities, the applicant must identify the collaborator(s) and provide a full explanation of the nature of the collaboration. Evidence (i.e., letters of intent) should be provided to assure peer reviewers that the collaborators involved have agreed to render this service. In addition, the proposal must indicate whether or not such a collaborative arrangement(s) has the potential for conflict(s) of interest.

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(8) *Personnel support.* To assist peer reviewers in assessing the competence and experience of the proposed project staff, key personnel who will be involved in the proposed project must be identified clearly. For each principal investigator involved, and for all senior associates and other professional personnel who expect to work on the project, whether or not funds are sought for their support, the following should be included:

(i) An estimate of the time commitments necessary;

(ii) Curriculum vitae. The curriculum vitae should be limited to a presentation of academic and research credentials, e.g., educational, employment and professional history, and honors and awards. Unless pertinent to the project, to personal status, or to the status of the organization, meetings attended, seminars given, or personal data such as birth date, marital status, or community activities should not be included. The vitae shall be no more than two pages each in length, excluding the publication lists. The Department reserves the option of not forwarding for further consideration a proposal in which each vitae exceeds the two-page limit; and

(iii) Publication List(s). A chronological list of all publications in referred journals during the past five years, including those in press, must be provided for each professional project member for whom a curriculum vitae is provided. Authors should be listed in the same order as they appear on each paper cited, along with the title and complete reference as these items usually appear in journals.

(9) *Budget.* A detailed budget is required for each year of requested support. In addition, a summary budget is required detailing requested support for the overall project period. A copy of the form which must be used for this purpose, Form CSREES-55, along with instructions for completion, is included in the Application Kit identified under §3415.4(b) of this part and may be reproduced as needed by applicants. Funds may be requested under any of the categories listed, provided that the item or service for which support is requested may be identified as necessary for successful conduct of the proposed

project, is allowable under applicable Federal cost principles, and is not prohibited under any applicable Federal statute.

(10) *Research involving special considerations.* A number of situations encountered in the conduct of research require special information and supporting documentation before funding can be approved for the project. If any such situation is anticipated, the proposal must so indicate. It is expected that a significant number of proposals will involve the following:

(i) *Recombinant DNA and RNA molecules.* All key personnel identified in a proposal and all endorsing officials of a proposed performing entity are required to comply with the guidelines established by the National Institutes of Health entitled, "Guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant DNA Molecules," as revised. The Application Kit, identified above in §3415.4(b), contains a form which is suitable for such certification of compliance (Form CSREES-662).

(ii) *Human subjects at risk.* Responsibility for safeguarding the rights and welfare of human subjects used in any proposed project supported with grant funds provided by the Department rests with the performing entity. Regulations have been issued by the Department under 7 CFR Part 1c, Protection of Human Subjects. In the event that a project involving human subjects at risk is recommended for award, the applicant will be required to submit a statement certifying that the project plan has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the proposing organization or institution. The Application Kit, identified above in §3415.4(b), contains a form which is suitable for such certification (Form CSREES-662).

(iii) *Experimental vertebrate animal care.* The responsibility for the humane care and treatment of any experimental vertebrate animal, which has the same meaning as "animal" in section 2(g) of the Animal Welfare Act of 1966, as amended (7 U.S.C. 2132(g)), used in any project supported with grant funds rests with the performing organization. In this regard, all key personnel associated with any supported project

and all endorsing officials of the proposed performing entity are required to comply with the applicable provisions of the Animal Welfare Act of 1966, as amended (7 U.S.C. 2131 *et seq.*) and the regulations promulgated thereunder by the Secretary of Agriculture in 9 CFR parts 1, 2, 3, and 4. The applicant must submit a statement certifying that the proposed project is in compliance with the aforementioned regulations, and that the proposed project is either under review by or has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. The Application Kit, identified above in §3415.4(b), contains a form which is suitable for such certification (Form CSREES-662).

(11) *Current and pending support.* All proposals must list any other current public or private research support (including in-house support) to which key personnel identified in the proposal have committed portions of their time, whether or not salary support for the person(s) involved is included in the budget. Analogous information must be provided for any pending proposals that are being considered by, or that will be submitted in the near future to, other possible sponsors, including other USDA programs or agencies. Concurrent submission of identical or similar proposals to other possible sponsors will not prejudice proposal review or evaluation by the Administrator or experts or consultants engaged by the Administrator for this purpose. However, a proposal that duplicates or overlaps substantially with a proposal already reviewed and funded (or that will be funded) by another organization or agency will not be funded under this program. The Application Kit, identified above in §3415.4(b), contains a form which is suitable for listing current and pending support (Form CSREES-663).

(12) *Additions to project description.* Each project description is expected by the Administrator, the members of peer review groups, and the relevant program staff to be complete while meeting the page limit established in §3415.4(d)(3). However, if the inclusion of additional information is necessary to ensure the equitable evaluation of the proposal (e.g., photographs that do

not reproduce well, reprints, and other pertinent materials that are deemed to be unsuitable for inclusion in the text of the proposal), the number of copies submitted should match the number of copies of the application requested in the program solicitation. Each set of such materials must be identified with the name of the submitting organization, and the name(s) of the principal investigator(s). Information may not be appended to a proposal to circumvent page limitations prescribed for the project description. Extraneous materials will not be used during the peer review process.

(13) *Organizational management information.* Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one-time basis prior to the award of a grant identified under this Part if such information has not been provided previously under this or another program for which the sponsoring agency is responsible. The Department will contact an applicant to request organizational management information once a proposal has been recommended for funding.

§3415.5 Evaluation and disposition of applications.

(a) *Evaluation.* All proposals received from eligible applicants and submitted in accordance with deadlines established in the annual program solicitation shall be evaluated by the Administrator through such officers, employees, and others as the Administrator determines are uniquely qualified in the areas of research represented by particular projects. To assist in equitably and objectively evaluating proposals and to obtain the best possible balance of viewpoints, the Administrator shall solicit the advice of peer scientists, *ad hoc* reviewers, or others who are recognized specialists in the areas covered by the applications received and whose general roles are defined in §3415.2. Specific evaluations will be based upon the criteria established in subpart B, §3415.15, unless CSREES and/or ARS determine that different criteria are necessary for the proper evaluation of proposals in one or more specific program areas, or for specific types of projects to be supported, and announces such criteria