

### § 3430.31

following pages (specify) contain proprietary information which (name of proposing organization) requests not to be released to persons outside the Government, except for purposes of evaluation.”

(c) *Disposition of applications.* By law, the Department is required to make the final decisions as to whether the information is required to be kept in confidence. Information contained in unsuccessful applications will remain the property of the proposer. However, the Department will retain for three years one file copy of each application received; extra copies will be destroyed. Public release of information from any application submitted will be subject to existing legal requirements. Any application that is funded will be considered an integral part of the award and normally will be made available to the public upon request, except for designated proprietary information that is determined by the Department to be proprietary information.

(d) *Submission of proprietary information.* The inclusion of proprietary information is discouraged unless it is necessary for the proper evaluation of the application. If proprietary information is to be included, it should be limited, set apart from other text on a separate page, and keyed to the text by numbers. It should be confined to a few critical technical items that, if disclosed, could jeopardize the obtaining of foreign or domestic patents. Trade secrets, salaries, or other information that could jeopardize commercial competitiveness should be similarly keyed and presented on a separate page. Applications or reports that attempt to restrict dissemination of large amounts of information may be found unacceptable by the Department and constitute grounds for return of the application without further consideration. Without assuming any liability for inadvertent disclosure, the Department will limit dissemination of such information to its employees and, where necessary for the evaluation of the application, to outside reviewers on a confidential basis. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

### 7 CFR Ch. XXXIV (1–1–11 Edition)

## Subpart C—Pre-award: Application Review and Evaluation

### § 3430.31 Guiding principles.

The guiding principle for Federal assistance application review and evaluation is to ensure that each proposal is treated in a consistent and fair manner regardless of regional and institutional affiliation. After the evaluation process by the review panel, CSREES, through the program officer, ensures that applicants receive appropriate feedback and comments on their proposals, and processes the awards in as timely a manner as possible.

### § 3430.32 Preliminary application review.

Prior to technical examination, a preliminary review will be made of all applications for responsiveness to the administrative requirements set forth in the RFA. Applications that do not meet the administrative requirements may be eliminated from program competition. However, CSREES retains the right to conduct discussions with applicants to resolve technical and/or budget issues, as deemed necessary by CSREES.

### § 3430.33 Selection of reviewers.

(a) *Requirement.* CSREES is responsible for performing a review of applications submitted to CSREES competitive award programs in accordance with section 103(a) of AREERA (7 U.S.C. 7613(a)). Reviews are undertaken to ensure that projects supported by CSREES are of high quality and are consistent with the goals and requirements of the funding program. Applications submitted to CSREES undergo a programmatic evaluation to determine the worthiness of Federal support. The scientific peer review or merit review is performed by peer or merit reviewers and also may entail an assessment by Federal employees.

(b) *CSREES Peer Review System.* The CSREES Application Review Process is accomplished through the use of the CSREES Peer Review System (PRS), a Web-based system which allows reviewers and potential reviewers to update personal information and to complete and submit reviews electronically to CSREES.