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(g) *Project period* means the total length of time that is approved by the Director for conducting the research project as outlined in an approved grant application.

(h) *Budget period* means the interval of time (usually 12 months) into which the project period is divided for budgetary and reporting purposes.

(i) *Awarding official* means the Director and any other officer or employee of the Department to whom the authority to issue or modify research project grant instruments has been delegated.

(j) *Peer review group* means an assembled group of experts or consultants qualified by training and experience in particular scientific or technical fields to give expert advice, in accordance with the provisions of this part, on the scientific and technical merit of grant applications in those fields.

(k) *Ad hoc reviewers* means experts or consultants qualified by training and experience in particular scientific or technical fields to render special expert advice, whose written evaluations of grant applications are designed to complement the expertise of the peer review group, in accordance with the provisions of this part, on the scientific or technical merit of grant applications in those fields.

(l) *Research* means any systematic study directed toward new or fuller knowledge and understanding of the subject studied.

(m) *Methodology* means the project approach to be followed and the resources needed to carry out the project.

[56 FR 58147, Nov 15, 1991, as amended at 76 FR 4806, Jan. 27, 2011]

§ 3400.3 Eligibility requirements.

(a) Except where otherwise prohibited by law, any State agricultural experiment station, all colleges and universities, other research institutions and organizations, Federal agencies, private organizations or corporations, and individuals, shall be eligible to apply for and to receive a special research project grant under this part, provided that the applicant qualifies as a responsible grantee under the criteria set forth in paragraph (b) of this section.

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

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

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

(3) Have a satisfactory record of integrity, judgment, and performance, including, in particular, any prior performance under grants and contracts from the Federal Government;

(4) Have an adequate financial management system and audit procedure which provides efficient and effective accountability and control of all property, funds, and other assets; and

(5) Be otherwise qualified and eligible to receive a research project grant under applicable laws and regulations.

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

§ 3400.4 How to apply for a grant.

(a) A request for proposals 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 of solicitation, as early as practicable each fiscal year. It will contain information sufficient to enable all eligible applicants to prepare special research grant proposals and will be as complete as possible with respect to:

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

(2) Deadline dates for having proposal packages postmarked;

(3) Name and address where proposals should be mailed;

(4) Number of copies to be submitted;

(5) Forms required to be used when submitting proposals; and

(6) Special requirements.

(b) *Grant Application Kit.* A Grant 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 proposals.

(c) *Format for research grant proposals.* Unless otherwise stated in the specific program solicitation, the following applies:

(1) *Grant Application.* All research grant proposals submitted by eligible applicants should contain a Grant Application form, 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.

(2) *Title of Project.* The title of the project must be brief (80-character maximum), yet represent the major thrust of the research. This title will be used to provide information to the Congress and other interested parties who may be unfamiliar with scientific terms; therefore, highly technical words or phraseology should be avoided where possible. In addition, phrases such as "investigation of" or "research on" should not be used.

(3) *Objectives.* Clear, concise, complete, enumerated, and logically arranged statement(s) of the specific aims of the research must be included in all proposals.

(4) *Procedures.* The procedures or methodology to be applied to the proposed research plan should be explicitly stated. This section should include but not necessarily be limited to:

(i) A description of the proposed investigations and/or experiments in the sequence in which it is planned to carry them out;

(ii) Techniques to be employed, including their feasibility;

(iii) Kinds of results expected;

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

(v) Pitfalls which might be encountered; and

(vi) Limitations to proposed procedures.

(5) *Justification.* This section should describe:

(i) The importance of the problem to the needs of the Department and to the Nation, including estimates of the magnitude of the problem.

(ii) The importance of starting the work during the current fiscal year, and

(iii) Reasons for having the work performed by the proposing organization.

(6) *Literature review.* A summary of pertinent publications with emphasis on their relationship to the research should be provided and should include all important and recent publications. The citations should be accurate, complete, written in acceptable journal format, and be appended to the proposal.

(7) *Current research.* The relevancy of the proposed research to ongoing and, as yet, unpublished research of both the applicant and any other institutions should be described.

(8) *Facilities and equipment.* All facilities, including laboratories, which are available for use or assignment to the proposed research project during the requested period of support, should be reported and described. Any materials, procedures, situations, or activities, whether or not directly related to a particular phase of the proposed research, and which may be hazardous to personnel, must be fully explained, along with an outline of precautions to be exercised. All items of major instrumentation available for use or assignment to the proposed research project during the requested period of support should be itemized. In addition, items of nonexpendable equipment needed to conduct and bring the proposed project to a successful conclusion should be listed.

(9) *Collaborative arrangements.* If the proposed project requires collaboration with other research scientists, corporations, organizations, agencies, or entities, such collaboration must be fully explained and justified. Evidence should be provided to assure peer reviewers that the collaborators involved agree with the arrangements. It should be specifically indicated whether or not such collaborative arrangements have the potential for any conflict(s) of interest. Proposals which indicate collaborative involvement must state

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which proposer is to receive any resulting grant award, since only one eligible applicant, as provided in §3400.3 of this part, may be the recipient of a research project grant under one proposal.

(10) *Research timetable.* The applicant should outline all important research phases as a function of time, year by year.

(11) *Personnel support.* All personnel who will be involved in the research effort must be clearly identified. For each scientist involved, the following should be included:

(i) An estimate of the time commitments necessary;

(ii) Vitae of the principal investigator(s), senior associate(s), and other professional personnel to assist reviewers in evaluating the competence and experience of the project staff. This section should include curricula vitae of *all* key persons who will work on the proposed research project, whether or not Federal funds are sought for their support. The vitae are to be no more than two pages each in length, excluding publications listings; and

(iii) A chronological listing of the most representative publications during the past five years shall be provided for each professional project member for whom a curriculum vitae appears under this section. Authors should be listed in the same order as they appear on each paper cited, along with the title and complete reference as these usually appear in journals.

(12) *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, along with instructions for completion, is included in the Grant Application Kit identified under §3400.4(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 is allowable under applicable Federal cost principles and can be identified as necessary for successful conduct of the proposed research project. No funds will be awarded for the renovation or refurbishment of research spaces; purchases or installation of

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fixed equipment in such spaces; or for the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of a building or facility. All research project grants awarded under this part shall be issued without regard to matching funds or cost sharing.

(13) *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 such situations are anticipated, the proposal must so indicate. It is expected that a significant number of special research grant proposals will involve the following:

(i) *Recombinant DNA 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 Grant Application Kit, identified above in §3400.4(b), contains forms which are suitable for such certification of compliance.

(ii) *Human subjects at risk.* Responsibility for safeguarding the rights and welfare of human subjects used in any research 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 research plan has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the proposing organization or institution. The Grant Application Kit, identified above in §3400.4(b), contains forms which are suitable for such certification.

(iii) *Laboratory animal care.* The responsibility for the humane care and treatment of any laboratory 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 research project supported with Special Research Grants Program funds rests with the

performing organization. In this regard, all key personnel identified in a proposal and all endorsing officials of the proposed performing entity are required to comply with applicable provisions of the Animal Welfare Act of 1966, as amended (7 U.S.C. 2131 *et. seq.*) and the regulation promulgated thereunder by the Secretary of Agriculture in 9 CFR parts 1, 2, 3, and 4. In the event that a project involving the use of a laboratory animal is recommended for award, the applicant will be required to submit a statement certifying such compliance. The Grant Application Kit, identified above in §3400.4(b), contains forms which are suitable of such certification.

(14) *Current and pending support.* All proposals must list any other current public or private research support, in addition to the proposed project, to which key personnel listed in the proposal under consideration have committed portions of their time, whether or not salary support for the person(s) involved is included in the budgets of the various projects. This section must also contain analogous information for all projects underway and for pending research proposals which are currently being considered by, or which will be submitted in the near future to, other possible sponsors, including other Departmental programs or agencies. Concurrent submission of identical or similar projects to other possible sponsors will not prejudice its review or evaluation by the Director or experts or consultants engaged by Director for this purpose. The Grant Application Kit, identified above in §3400.4(b), contains a form which is suitable for listing current and pending support.

(15) *Additions to project description.* Each project description is expected by the Director, members of peer review groups, and the relevant program staff to be complete in itself. However, in those instances in which the inclusion of additional information is necessary, the number of copies submitted should match the number of copies of the application requested in the annual solicitation of proposals as indicated in §3400.4(a)(4). Each set of such materials must be identified with the title of the research project as it appears in the Grant Application and the name(s) of

the principal investigator(s). Examples of additional materials may include photographs which do not reproduce well, reprints, and other pertinent materials which are deemed to be unsuitable for inclusion in the proposal.

(16) *Organizational management information.* Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one-time basis prior to the award of a research project 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. Copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling the requirements contained in this section will be provided by the agency specified in this part once a research project grant has been recommended for funding.

§3400.5 Evaluation and disposition of applications.

(a) *Evaluation.* All proposals received from eligible applicants in accordance with eligible research problem or program areas and deadlines established in the applicable request for proposals shall be evaluated by the Director through such officers, employees, and others as the Director 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 Director shall solicit the advice of peer scientists, *ad hoc* reviewers, or others who are recognized specialists in the research program areas covered by the applications received and whose general roles are defined in §§3400.2(j) and 3400.2(k). Specific evaluations will be based upon the criteria established in subpart B §3400.15, unless NIFA determines that different criteria are necessary for the proper evaluation of proposals in one or more specific program areas, and announces such criteria and their relative importance in the annual program solicitation. The overriding purpose of such evaluations is to provide information upon which the Director can make