Notices

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. 98–053–1]

National Wildlife Services (Formerly Known as Animal Damage Control) Advisory Committee; Meeting

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: We are giving notice of a meeting of the National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee.

PLACE, DATES, AND TIME OF MEETING: The meeting will be held at the USDA Center at Riverside in the Conference Center, 4700 River Road, Riverdale, MD 20737. The Committee will meet on May 27–28, 1998, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Martin Mendoza, Director, Operational Support Staff, WS, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 87, Riverdale, MD 20737–1234, (301) 734–7921.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee (Committee) advises the Secretary of Agriculture concerning policies, program issues, and research needed to conduct the Wildlife Services (WS) program. The Committee also serves as a public forum enabling those affected by the WS program to have a voice in the program's policies.

The meeting will focus on operational and research activities, and will be open to the public. However, due to time constraints, the public will not be allowed to participate in the Committee's discussions. Written statements concerning meeting topics may be filed with the Committee before or after the meeting by sending them to Mr. Martin Mendoza at the address listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**, or may be filed at the meeting. Please refer to Docket No. 98–053–1 when submitting your statements.

This notice of meeting is given pursuant to section 10 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92–463).

Done in Washington, DC, this 8th day of May 1998.

Bobby R. Acord,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 98–12660 Filed 5–11–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–34–P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Business-Cooperative Service

Request For Proposals: Fiscal Year 1998 Funding Opportunity for Research on Rural Cooperative Opportunities and Problems

AGENCY: Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) announces the availability of approximately $1.9 million in competitive cooperative agreement funds allocated from FY 1998 appropriations. RBS hereby requests proposals from institutions of higher education or nonprofit organizations interested in applying for competitively awarded cooperative agreements for research related to agricultural and nonagricultural cooperatives serving rural communities. The intent of the funding is to encourage research on critical issues vital to the development and sustainability of cooperatives as a means of improving the quality of life in America's rural communities.

DATES: Cooperative agreement applications must be received on or before June 30, 1998. Proposals received after June 30, 1998, will not be considered for funding. Comments regarding the information collection requirements under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 must be received on or before July 13, 1998, to be assured of consideration.

ADDRESSES: Send Proposals and other required materials to Dr. Thomas H. Stafford, Director, Cooperative Marketing Division, Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA, Stop 3252, Room 4204, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250–3252. Telephone: (202) 690–0368.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Thomas H. Stafford, Director, Cooperative Marketing Division, Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA, Stop 3252, Room 4204, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250–3252. Telephone: (202) 690–0368.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

General Information

This solicitation is issued pursuant to the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1998 making appropriations for programs administered by USDA's Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1998. The Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) was established by the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994. The mission of RBS is to improve the quality of life in rural America by financing community facilities and businesses, providing technical assistance, and creating effective strategies for rural development. RBS has authority to enter into cooperative agreements pursuant to section 607(b)(4) of the Rural Development Act of 1972, as amended by section 759A of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996.

The primary objective of this funding is to encourage research through cooperative agreements on critical issues vital to the development and sustainability of cooperatives as a means of improving the quality of life in America's rural communities. Among others, these issues include:

(1) The appropriate role of cooperatives in fostering rural development;

(2) The role of cooperatives in filling the farm income safety net ''void'' created by the reduction or elimination of price support programs;

(3) The role of cooperatives in an increasingly global environment;

(4) The role of cooperatives in highly integrated agricultural industries;

(5) Effective structures and operations for agricultural bargaining associations;

(6) The role of cooperatives in low-resource areas.

(7) Barriers to small and new farmer membership in agricultural marketing cooperatives.

(8) Cooperation as a tool for small-farmer use of farmers markets.

(9) Models for shared or cooperatively-owned agricultural production inputs.

A Cooperative Agreement reflects a relationship between the United States Government and an eligible recipient where (1) the principal purpose of the relationship is the transfer of money, property, services, or anything of value to the eligible recipient to carry out research related to rural cooperatives; and (2) substantial involvement is anticipated between RBS acting for the United States Government, and the eligible recipient during the performance of the research in the agreement. Cooperative agreements are to be awarded on the basis of merit, quality, and relevance to advancing the purpose of federally supported rural development programs which increase economic opportunities in farming and rural communities.

To obtain an application kit containing instructions and all required forms, please contact Cooperative Services Program; USDA/RBS, at (202)690–0368 or FAX (202)690–2723. When calling Cooperative Services, please indicate that you are requesting an application kit for Fiscal Year 1998 (FY 1998) Research on Rural Cooperative Opportunities and Problems (RRCOP). The application kit may also be requested via Internet by sending a message with your name, mailing address (not E-mail) and phone number to ''thomas.stafford@usda.gov'' which requests an application kit for FY 1998 funding for research on rural cooperatives. The application kit will be mailed to you (not e-mailed or faxed) as quickly as possible.

Use of Funds

Funds may be used to pay up to 75 percent of the costs for carrying out relevant projects. Applicants' contribution may be in cash or in-kind contribution and must be from nonfederal funds. Funds may not be used to: (1) Pay more than 75 percent of relevant project or administrative costs; (2) pay costs of preparing the application package; (3) fund political activities; or (4) pay costs incurred prior to the effective date of the cooperative agreement. Indirect costs may not exceed current negotiated rates. If no rate has been negotiated, an indirect cost rate proposal must be submitted for approval.

Available Funds and Award Limitations

The amount of funds available for cooperative agreements in FY 1998 is approximately $1.9 million. Up to one-quarter of the total funds awarded will be allocated to research on nonagricultural cooperatives serving rural areas. Nonagricultural cooperatives include, but are not limited to housing, child care, health care, shared services, wholesale or retail consumer cooperatives, and credit unions. Agricultural cooperatives are grower-owned and controlled businesses which purchase farm inputs, market farm products, or provide other services to their members. The actual number of cooperative agreements funded will depend on the quality of proposals received and the amount of funding requested. Maximum amount of Federal funds awarded for any one proposal will be $100,000. It is anticipated that a typical award would range from $25,000 to $50,000.

Eligible Applicants

Proposals may be submitted by public or private colleges or universities, research foundations maintained by a college or university, or private nonprofit organizations. Under the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, an organization described in section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (26 U.S.C. 501(c)(4)) which engages in lobbying activities, is not eligible to apply.

Methods for Evaluating and Ranking Applications

Applications will be evaluated by a panel of RBS technical experts. Applications will be evaluated competitively and points awarded as specified in the Evaluation Criteria and Weights section of this notice. After assigning points upon those criteria, applications will be listed in rank order and presented, along with funding level recommendations, to the Administrator of RBS, who will make the final decision on awarding of agreements. Applications will then be funded in rank order until all available funds have been expended.

RBS reserves the right to make selections out of rank order to provide for a geographic distribution of funded projects. With respect to any approved proposal, the amount of funding and the project period during which the project may be funded and will be completed, are subject to negotiation prior to finalization of the cooperative agreement.

Evaluation Criteria and Weights

RBS will initially determine whether the submitting organization is eligible and whether the application contains the information required by this notice. Prior to technical examination, each proposal will be reviewed for responsiveness to the funding solicitation. Submissions which do not fall within the guidelines as stated in the solicitation will be eliminated from the competition and will be returned to the applicant.

After this initial screening, RBS will use the following criteria to rate and rank proposals received in response to this notice of funding availability. The maximum number of points is 100. Zero points on any criteria will disqualify the proposal.

(1) Relevance: Focuses on an agricultural or nonagricultural cooperatives serving rural areas and demonstrates a clear relationship with the research topics contained in this notice (maximum 20 points);

(2) Demonstrates potential to contribute innovative ideas or solutions to identified problems or issues (maximum 20 points);

(3) Shows capacity for broad applicability in facilitating new or improved cooperative development or new or improved cooperative approaches (maximum 15 points);

(4) Outlines a sound plan of work and appropriate methodology to accomplish the stated objective of the research (maximum 15 points);

(5) Adequately documents the need for and clearly defines the objectives of the research (maximum 10 points);

(6) Demonstrates cost effectiveness (maximum 10 points);

(7) Identifies qualified resources and personnel, including a demonstrated track-record of similar research (maximum 10 points).

Deliverables

Upon completion of the project, recipients will deliver the results of the research to RBS, in the form of a document of publishable quality, accompanied by all applicable supporting data. Publishable documents include, but are not limited to, manuscripts, videotapes, or software, or other media, as may be identified in approved proposals. RBS retains publishing rights to such documents, as well as rights to any raw or preliminary data collected as part of the project.

Content of a Proposal

A proposal should contain the following:

(1) *Form SF–424,* ''Application for Federal Assistance.''

(2) *Form SF–424A,* ''Budget Information—Non-Construction Programs.''

(3) *Form SF–424B,* ''Assurances—Non-Construction Programs.''

(4) *Form AD–1047,* ''Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters.''

(5) *Form AD–1049,* ''Certification Regarding Drug-Free Workplace Requirements.''

(6) *Table of Contents:* For ease of locating information, each proposal must contain a detailed Table of Contents immediately following the required forms. The Table of Contents should include page numbers for each component of the proposal. Pagination should begin immediately following the Table of Contents.

(7) *Project Summary.* A summary of the Project Proposal, not to exceed one-page should include the following: title of the project; names of principal investigators and applicant organization; and a description of the overall goals and relevance of the project.

(8) *Project Proposal:* The application must contain a narrative statement describing the nature of the proposed research. The Proposal must include at least the following:

(i) Project Title. The title of the proposed project must be brief, yet represent the major thrust of the project.

(ii) Project Leaders. List the names and contact information for the principal investigators. Minor collaborators or consultants should be so designated and not listed as principal investigators.

(iii) Need for the Project. A concisely worded rationale for the research must be presented. Included should be a summarization of the body of knowledge (literature review) which substantiates the need for the research. The need for the proposed research must be clearly and directly related to the facilitation of new or improved cooperative development or new or improved cooperative approaches.

(iv) Objectives of the Project. Discuss the specific objectives of the project and the impact of the research on end-users.

(v) Procedures. Discuss the hypotheses or questions being asked and the methodology or approach to be used in carrying out the proposed research and accomplishing the objectives. A description of any subcontracting arrangements to be used in carrying out the project must be included.

(vi) Time Table. A tentative schedule for conducting the major steps of the research must be included.

(vii) Expected Output. Describe how the results will be presented and disseminated.

(viii) Coordination and Management Plan. Describe how the project will be coordinated among various participants and the nature of the collaborations. Describe plans for management of the project to ensure its proper and efficient administration. Describe scope of RBS involvement in the project.

(9) *Personnel Support.* To assist reviewers in assessing the competence and experience of proposed principal investigators, the following must be included for each:

(i) estimated time commitment to the project;

(ii) a one-page curriculum-vitae;

(iii) a chronological list of all publications during the past five years.

What To Submit

An original and two copies must be submitted in one package.

When and Where To Submit

Proposals must be received by close of business on June 30, 1998. Proposals must be sent to Dr. Thomas H. Stafford, Director, Cooperative Marketing Division, Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA, Stop 3252, Room 4204, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20250–3252.

Other Federal Statutes and Regulations That Apply

Several other Federal statutes and regulations apply to proposals considered for review and to cooperative agreements awarded. These include but are not limited to:

7 CFR part 15, subpart A—USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations.

7 CFR part 3018—USDA implementation of New Restrictions on Lobbying.

7 CFR part 3019—Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grant Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR part 3051—Audits of Institutions of Higher Education and Other Nonprofit Institutions.

Paperwork Reduction Act

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Agency announces its intention to seek Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval of new reporting and recordkeeping requirements. These requirements have been approved by emergency clearance by OMB under OMB Control Number 0570–0028.

Approximately $1.9 million in cooperative agreement funds has been allocated from FY 1998 appropriations for programs administered by USDA's Rural Business-Cooperative Service (RBS) to encourage research related to rural cooperatives. The funds will be available to institutions of higher education or nonprofit organizations for research on critical issues vital to the development and sustainability of cooperatives as a means of improving the quality of life in America's rural communities. Among others, these issues include:

(1) The appropriate role of cooperatives in fostering rural development;

(2) The role of cooperatives in filling the farm income safety net ''void'' created by the reduction or elimination of price support programs;

(3) The role of cooperatives in an increasingly global environment;

(4) The role of cooperatives in highly integrated agricultural industries;

(5) Effective structures and operations for agricultural bargaining associations;

(6) The role of cooperatives in low-resource areas.

(7) Barriers to small and new farmer membership in agricultural marketing cooperatives.

(8) Cooperation as a tool for small-farmer use of farmers markets.

(9) Models for shared or cooperatively-owned agricultural production inputs.

The funds will be awarded on a competitive basis using specific selection criteria.

Public Burden in this Notice

At this time, the Agency is requesting OMB clearance of the following burden:

Form SF–424, ''Application for Federal Assistance.''

This application is used by applicants as a required face sheet for applications for federal funding.

Form SF–424A, ''Budget Information—Non Construction Programs''

This form must be completed by applicants to show the project's anticipated budget breakdown in terms of expense categories and division of Federal and non-Federal sources of funds.

Form SF–424B, ''Assurances Non-Construction Programs''

This form must be completed by the applicant to provide the Federal government certain assurances of the applicant's legal authority to apply for Federal assistance and financial capability to pay the non-Federal share of project costs. The applicant also assures compliance with various legal and regulatory requirements as described in the form.

Project Proposal

The applicant must submit a project proposal containing the elements described in the notice and in the format prescribed. The elements of the proposal are:

(1) *Table of Contents:* For ease of locating information, each proposal must contain a detailed Table of Contents immediately following the required forms. The Table of Contents should include page numbers for each component of the proposal. Pagination should begin immediately following the Table of Contents.

(2) *Project Summary.* A summary of the Project Proposal, not to exceed one-page should include the following: title of the project; names of principal investigators and applicant organization; and a description of the overall goals and relevance of the project.

(3) *Project Proposal:* The application must contain a narrative statement describing the nature of the proposed research. The Proposal must include at least the following:

(i) Project Title. The title of the proposed project must be brief, yet represent the major thrust of the project.

(ii) Project Leaders. List the names and contact information for the principal investigators. Minor collaborators or consultants should be so designated and not listed as principal investigators.

(iii) Need for the Project. A concisely worded rationale for the research must be presented. Included should be a summarization of the body of knowledge (literature review) which substantiates the need for the research. The need for the proposed research must be clearly and directly related to the facilitation of new or improved cooperative development or new or improved cooperative approaches.

(iv) Objectives of the Project. Discuss the specific objectives of the project and the impact of the research on end-users.

(v) Procedures. Discuss the hypotheses or questions being asked and the methodology or approach to be used in carrying out the proposed research and accomplishing the objectives. A description of any subcontracting arrangements to be used in carrying out the project must be included.

(vi) Time Table. A tentative schedule for conducting the major steps of the research must be included.

(vii) Expected Output. Describe how the results will be presented and disseminated.

(viii) Coordination and Management Plan. Describe how the project will be coordinated among various participants and the nature of the collaborations. Describe plans for management of the project to ensure its proper and efficient administration. Describe scope of RBS involvement in the project.

(4) *Personnel Support.* To assist reviewers in assessing the competence and experience of proposed principal investigators, the following must be included for each:

(i) estimated time commitment to the project;

(ii) a one-page curriculum-vitae;

(iii) a chronological list of all publications during the past five years.

Use of Funds

Changes in approved goals and objectives, project leadership, or project time line must be submitted to the Deputy Administrator of Cooperative Services and approved in writing.

Reporting Requirements

Funding recipients will be required to submit written project performance reports on a quarterly basis. The project performance reports will include, but are not limited to: (1) A comparison of actual accomplishments to established objectives; (2) reasons established objectives were not met; (3) problems, delays, or adverse conditions which will materially affect attainment of planned project objectives; (4) objectives for the next reporting period; and (5) status of compliance with an special conditions on the use of awarded funds.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection is estimated to range from 15 minutes to 15 hours per response.

Respondents: Not-for-profit institutions.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 100.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 5.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 2,280 hours.

Copies of this information collection can be obtained from Michele Brooks, Regulations and Paperwork Management Branch, Support Services Division, at (202) 720–3158.

Comments

Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the Agency's estimate of the burden to collect the required information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

All responses to this notice will be summarized, included in the request for OMB approval, and will become a matter of public record. Comments may be sent to the Desk Officer for Agriculture, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Washington, D.C. 20503, and to Michele Brooks, Regulations and Paperwork Management Branch, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Housing Service, Stop 0743, Room 6345–S, 1400 Independence Avenue S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250–0743.

Dated: April 28, 1998.

Dayton J. Watkins,

Administrator, Rural Business—Cooperative Service.

[FR Doc. 98–12463 Filed 5–11–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–XV–U

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

Information Collection Activity; Comment Request

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35, as amended), the Rural Utilities Service's (RUS) invites comments on these information collections for which RUS intends to request approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by July 13, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: F. Lamont Heppe, Jr., Director, Program Development Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., STOP 1522, Room 4036 South Building, Washington, DC 20250–1522. Telephone: (202) 720–9550. FAX: (202) 720–4120.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) regulation (5 CFR 1320) implementing provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104–13) require that interested members of the public and affected agencies have an opportunity to comment on information collection and