

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE****Cooperative State Research,  
Education, and Extension Service****Request for Proposals (RFP): Fund for  
Rural America Program**

**AGENCY:** Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Announcement of availability of grant funds and request for proposals for the Fund for Rural America Program.

**SUMMARY:** The Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 established an account in the Treasury of the United States to provide funds for rural development programs and a competitive grant program to support research, education, and extension activities.

This notice pertains only to the competitive grant program for research, education, and extension activities. It identifies eligible participants in the program, the program areas to be supported, and the funding levels for each area; provides instructions for preparing and submitting proposals; and describes the selection process and evaluation criteria to be used to make funding decisions. To obtain program application materials, please contact the Proposal Services Unit, Grants Management Branch; Office of Extramural Programs; USDA/CSREES at (202) 401-5048. When calling the Proposal Services Unit, please indicate that you are requesting forms for the Fund Program. These materials may also be requested via Internet by sending a message with your name, mailing address (not e-mail) and phone number to [psb@reeusda.gov](mailto:psb@reeusda.gov) which states that you want a copy of the application materials for the Fiscal Year 1997 Fund Program. The materials will then be mailed to you (not e-mailed) as quickly as possible.

*Planning Grant Applications* must be received on or before March 24, 1997. Planning Grant proposals received after March 24, 1997, will not be considered for funding.

*Standard Project Grant Applications* must be received on or before April 28, 1997. Standard project proposals received after April 28, 1997, will not be considered for funding.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Dr. Patrick O'Brien, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, STOP 2240, Washington, D.C. 20250-2240; telephone (202) 401-1761.

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**Part I. General Information****A. Legislative Authority**

The Fund for Rural America (The Fund), authorized under Section 793 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (FAIR Act) (7 U.S.C. 2204(f)), is established as an account in the Treasury of the United States. The Fund will provide \$100 million in each of three years for rural development programs and a competitive grant program for research, education, and extension activities. Not less than one-third of the funds will be available for research, education, and extension activities, one-third will be available for the Department's rural development programs, and one-third will be allocated between the rural development and research activities according to the Secretary's discretion.

Grants are to be awarded on the basis of merit, quality, and relevance to advancing the purposes of federally supported agricultural research, extension, and education provided in Section 1402 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended (7 U.S.C. 3101). Section 1402 identifies the following purposes:

- (1) Enhance the competitiveness of the United States agriculture and food industry in an increasingly competitive world environment;
- (2) Increase the long-term productivity of the United States agriculture and food industry while maintaining and enhancing the natural resource base on which rural America

and the United States agricultural economy depend;

(3) Develop new uses and new products for agricultural commodities, such as alternative fuels, and develop new crops;

(4) Support agricultural research and extension to promote economic opportunity in rural communities and to meet the increasing demand for information and technology transfer throughout the United States agriculture industry;

(5) Improve risk management in the United States agriculture industry;

(6) Improve the safe production and processing of, and adding of value to, United States food and fiber resources using methods that maintain the balance between yield and environmental soundness;

(7) Support higher education in agriculture to give the next generation of Americans the knowledge, technology, and applications necessary to enhance the competitiveness of United States agriculture; and

(8) Maintain an adequate, nutritious, and safe supply of food to meet human nutritional needs and requirements."

Section 793(c)(2)(A) of the FAIR Act authorizes the Secretary to use the Fund for competitive research, education, and extension grants to:

- (i) Increase international competitiveness, efficiency, and farm profitability;
- (ii) Reduce economic and health risks;
- (iii) Conserve and enhance natural resources;
- (iv) Develop new crops, new crop uses, and new agricultural applications of biotechnology;
- (v) Enhance animal agricultural resources;
- (vi) Preserve plant and animal germplasm;
- (vii) Increase economic opportunities in farming and rural communities; and
- (viii) Expand locally-owned, value-added processing."

**B. General Definitions**

For the purpose of awarding grants under this program, the following definitions and applicable:

(1) *Administrator* means the Administrator of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) and any other officer or employee of the Department to whom the authority involved may be delegated.

(2) *Authorized departmental officer* means the Secretary or any employee of the Department who has the authority to issue or modify grant instruments on behalf of the Secretary.

(3) *Authorized organizational representative* means the president or

chief executive officer of the applicant organization or the official, designated by the president or chief executive officer of the applicant organization, who has the authority to commit the resources of the organization.

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

(5) *Cash contributions* means the applicant's cash outlay, including the outlay of money contributed to the applicant by non-Federal third parties.

(6) *College or university* means an educational institution in any State which admits as regular students only persons having a certificate of graduation from a school providing secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such a certificate, is legally authorized within such State to provide a program of education beyond secondary education, provides an educational program for which an associate's degree, a bachelor's degree or any other higher degree is awarded, is a public or other nonprofit institution, and is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association.

(7) *Core initiative* means the programs encompassing the one-third of The Fund designated for research, education, and extension activities in the following areas: international competitiveness, profitability, and efficiency; environmental stewardship; and rural community enhancement.

(8) *Department* or *USDA* means the United States Department of Agriculture.

(9) *Grant* means the award by the Secretary of funds to a Federal research agency, a national laboratory, a college or university or a research foundation maintained by a college or university, or a private research organization to assist in meeting the costs of conducting, for the benefit of the public, an identified project which is intended and designed to accomplish the purpose of the program as identified in this guidelines.

(10) *Grantee* means the organization designated in the grant award document as the responsible legal entity to which a grant is awarded.

(11) *Matching* means that portion of allowable project costs not borne by the Federal Government, including the value of in-kind contributions.

(12) *Peer review panel* means a group of experts qualified by training and experience in particular fields to give expert advice on the merit of grant applications in such fields, who evaluate eligible proposals submitted to this program in their personal area(s) of expertise.

(13) *Private research organization* means any non-governmental corporation, partnership, proprietorship, trust, or other organization with an established and demonstrated capacity to perform research or technology transfer which (1) conducts any systematic study directed toward new or fuller knowledge and understanding of the subject studied, or (2) systematically relates or applies the findings of research or scientific experimentation to the application of new approaches to problem solving, technologies, or management practices; and (3) has facilities, qualified personnel, independent funding, and prior projects and accomplishments in research or technology transfer.

(14) *Project director* means the single individual designated by the grantee in the grant application and approved by the Secretary who is responsible for the direction and management of the project.

(15) *Prior approval* means written approval evidencing prior consent by an authorized departmental officer as defined in (2) above.

(16) *Project* means the particular activity within the scope of the program supported by a grant award.

(17) *Project period* means the period, as stated in the award document and modifications thereto, if any, during which Federal sponsorship begins and ends.

(18) *Secretary* means the Secretary of Agriculture and any other officer or employee of the Department to whom the authority involved may be delegated.

(19) *Smaller institution* means a college or university or a research foundation maintained by a college or university that ranks in the lower one-third of such institutions on the basis of Federal research funds received (excepting monies received under the Fund).

(20) *The Fund* means the Fund for Rural America.

(21) *Third party in-kind contributions* means non-cash contributions of property or services provided by non-Federal third parties, including real property, equipment, supplies and other expendable property, directly benefiting and specifically identifiable to a funded project or program.

#### C. Eligibility

Proposals may be submitted by Federal research agencies, national laboratories, colleges or universities or research foundations maintained by a college or university, or private research organizations. National laboratories

include Federal laboratories that are government-owned contractor-operated or government-owned government-operated. If the applicant is a private organization, documentation must be submitted establishing that the private organization has an established and demonstrated capacity to perform research or technology transfer. A programmatic decision on the eligibility status of the private organization will be made based on the information submitted.

#### D. Available Funds and Award Limitations

Under this program, subject to the availability of funds, the Secretary may award competitive grants, for periods not to exceed five years, for the support of research, education, and extension projects to further the programs of the USDA. The first allocation to the Fund from the U.S. Treasury is \$100,000,000 on January 1, 1997. No less than one-third of the amount must be used for competitively awarded research, education, and extension grants. Funds for the competitive grants program are available to the Department for award during a two-year period. The Department expects to award approximately \$33,464,400 as grants to meritorious eligible applicants under this request for proposals (RFP), including all funds designated for the Secretary's Initiative. A subsequent RFP for Fund for Rural America (FRA) Centers will be issued for not more than \$7,584,000 of FY 1997 funds.

Funds, not to exceed one percent of total available funds, will be used to support the Planning Grants for FRA Centers. Proposals may be submitted for Center Planning Grants up to \$25,000 per proposed FRA Center for a maximum project period of six months; and Standard Project Grants up to \$600,000 per project for a maximum project period of four years. Note that CSREES will solicit Center grant applications only from those applicants who are successful in receiving a Center Planning Grant. Thus, applicants intending to submit a Center proposal should register that intention by submitting a Center Planning Grant application.

Not less than 15 percent of the funds awarded under this program for research, education, and extension activities under the Core Initiative and the Secretary's Initiative will be used for grants to colleges, universities, or research foundations maintained by a college or university that rank in the lowest one-third of such entities based on Federal research funds received

(excepting monies received under the Fund).

Funds awarded under this RFP may not be used for the construction of a new building or the acquisition, expansion, remodeling, or alteration of an existing building.

#### *E. Matching Funds Requirement*

A grant awarded for applied research that is commodity-specific and that is not of national scope must be matched by the recipient with equal funds from a non-Federal source. The matching requirement may be satisfied through allowable costs incurred by the recipient or subrecipient and through third party in-kind contributions.

There is no matching requirement for other grants awarded under this RFP.

### Part II. Program Description

#### *A. Purpose of the Program.*

The creation of the Fund coincides with fundamental reforms to Federal farm programs. Commodity program deficiency payments are eliminated and replaced with transition payments that are to decline over seven years. These policy changes are likely to have substantial impacts on production agriculture, most apparently by shifting price and income risk management away from government programs to farmers themselves.

At the same time, rural communities are experiencing the effects of transition due to changes in Federal natural resource policy, demographic shifts and increasing globalization. Farming is no longer the dominant source of economic activity in rural America. Most rural jobs are found in manufacturing, service or government. The natural resource base of rural areas often is valued more for its amenities as a place to retire, recreate and reside than it is for extractive industrial development such as timber harvesting and mining as demonstrated by recent population gains in high amenity communities. Changes in international trade policy may have put pressure on low-skill rural jobs from overseas competitors.

Given the dynamic changes and challenges facing agriculture and rural communities in general, The Fund provides a short-term opportunity (3 years) to invest in unique, innovative, high-impact research, education, and extension programs and projects to aid farmers, ranchers, and rural communities during this time of transition to place themselves in a more competitive position for the future. As a new and distinct element in USDA's portfolio of research, education, and extension programs, The Fund can

mobilize the agricultural knowledge system to respond to the emerging problems faced by agricultural producers and rural communities during this time of change.

The Fund provides an opportunity to develop a new program to complement USDA's existing portfolio of fundamental and applied research, extension, and higher education programs. The Fund allows, for the first time, the integration of research, education, and extension activities for joint funding. Successful application and adoption of research findings requires explicit coordination with education and extension activities. The Fund will encourage collaboration among educators, research scientists, and extension personnel to jointly identify and solve problems relevant to rural communities. The aim of The Fund is to advance the findings of research into practical applications to address current and emerging problems and to develop new opportunities for the benefit of rural America and the nation.

#### *B. Approach*

*Approaches to be Encouraged:* The Fund will be available for applied, developmental, and adaptive research; technology transfer; extension and related outreach activities; and education. Projects will be awarded for short- and intermediate-term application of existing investments in research and development (R&D) through integration of research, extension, and education activities. The Fund grants program will emphasize biological, physical, and social sciences to address systems-based problems. This requires involvement of affected parties within the system (such as producers, commodity groups, environmental interests, rural communities, and other program beneficiaries); therefore, The Fund will give priority to projects that are designed and proposed by eligible grant recipients in collaboration with institutions, organizations, and communities of interest. Strong partnerships will be critical to leverage and apply research, education, and extension investments to address user needs and solve community-defined problems.

For the purposes of assessing proposals submitted to The Fund, the following priorities will apply:

A *Systems-based* approach takes a broad rather than reductionist view, and thus describes how a set of elements or components are related and how those relationships are relevant to problematic situations. The Fund strongly encourages research, extension, and

education activities that explicitly recognize, account for, and enhance the interactions among agricultural, forestry, or agribusiness activities, natural resource or environmental quality, and economic or community well being.

*Inter- or multidisciplinary* approaches integrate or combine separate discoveries by scientists in different disciplines that can have their greatest potential value realized when related to one another. For example, findings from genetics, plant physiology, crop breeding, and economics are relevant to exploring alternatives for making crops more disease resistant without sacrificing other valued attributes and characteristics. The Fund strongly encourages proposals that integrate the findings or knowledge of multiple disciplines in order to gain the comprehensive understanding needed to solve complex problems.

*Leveraging prior investments* in research and technology development (R&D) is essential to maximizing the impact of The Fund. Many federal research grant programs support basic research (the creation of new knowledge) or fundamental technology development (the development of prototypes or broadly applicable technologies). Although the private sector also has a relatively large role in applied research and more specific technology development, there are many research findings and new technologies that remain unexploited as keys to resolving natural resource management and other problems of agricultural, forest, and rural systems and that therefore require public support. The Fund strongly encourages proposals that: (1) take advantage of prior R&D investments in adapting those findings to actual production, processing, marketing, environmental, or community systems, and (2) investigate and propose solutions to overcoming barriers to adoption of new or improved technologies, particularly those technologies with the potential to resolve natural resource and environmental quality problems in agricultural and forest systems.

*Innovative collaborations and partnerships* are those designed to build sustainable solutions to agricultural and rural problems through community participation. Communities may include geographic locations, as well as broad communities of interest such as commodity groups, consumer and environmental interests, agricultural producers, and other research, education, and extension users and beneficiaries. It is increasingly recognized that long-run solutions to

agricultural and community issues require inclusive approaches encompassing diverse individuals and groups affected by the issue and the potential solutions. The Fund strongly encourages proposals that: (1) use collaborations and partnerships among institutions (including Federal agencies, national laboratories, established research organizations, and colleges and universities including community colleges and tribal colleges, as well as state agencies, associations and other interests) to build and enhance effective linkages with local communities, user groups, and their grass-roots leadership, and (2) bring together diverse organizations and interests to derive innovative approaches to problems and forge partnerships for the future.

### C. Focus of the Program

The Fund entails two initiatives: (1) The Fund Care Initiative which addresses and links international competitiveness, profitability, and efficiency; environmental stewardship; and rural community enhancement and, (2) The Secretary's Initiative to Ensure a Safe, Competitive, Nutritional and Accessible Food System.

#### 1. The Fund Core Initiative

Proposals will be solicited at three levels: (1) single issue areas that address barriers to solving systemic problems; (2) projects that include approaches at the intersection of two sets of issues; and (3) projects that address issues that relate all of the issue areas. Standard grant proposals may include multinational collaborations. At the fully integrated level, consortia, centers, and other multi-institutional collaborations will be considered.

The Fund will seek project proposals that will provide solutions to problems and advance new opportunities within three objectives that encompass the eight purposes of the enabling legislation (FAIR Act Section 703(c)(2)(A)), including:

(1) *International competitiveness, profitability, and efficiency.* This set of objectives centers on issues and opportunities arising from the changes in farm and trade legislation leading to globalization of markets in food, feed, and fiber, including exposure to risk, barriers to trade, and new market opportunities. In addition, it will address plant and animal systems and new technologies and management practices, particularly those which improve farm efficiency and

profitability. This program incorporates the following purposes included in The Fund provisions of the FAIR Act: (1) increase international competitiveness, efficiency, and farm profitability; (2) reduce economic and health risks; (4) develop new crops, new crop uses, and new agricultural applications of biotechnology; (5) enhance animal agriculture resources; (6) preserve plant and animal germplasm. This set of objectives also may contribute to achieving purposes (7) increase economic opportunities in farming and rural communities, and (8) expand locally-owned, value-added processing, of the enabling legislation.

Examples of potential research, education, and extension activities include, but are not limited to:

- Applied and adaptive research to develop new crops for value-added processing, to meet emerging markets, and increase flexibility and responsiveness to risk.
- Research to improve the science base for and compliance with sanitary and phytosanitary standards for meat and other agricultural and food products in international trade; integration of this with analysis of trade opportunities and barriers.
- Development and testing of new curricula to internationalize academic programs in agriculture, natural resources, and related sciences.
- Extension to improve producers' risk management knowledge, skills, and practices.

(2) *Environmental stewardship.* This set of objectives focuses on stewardship of the natural resource base underlying agriculture and forestry, as well as the amenity-based economic activities of rural communities. Several issues in this area include groundwater contamination; wildlife habitat loss; air and water pollution from agricultural activities, including animal waste; and soil erosion and decline in quality. It addresses the following purposes of the legislation: (3) conserve and enhance natural resources; (4) develop new crops, new crop uses, and new agricultural applications of biotechnology; and (6) preserve plant and animal germplasm.

Examples of potential research, education, and extension activities include, but are not limited to:

- Adoptive research to develop new strategies for animal waste management such as utilizing advances in genetics to directly and

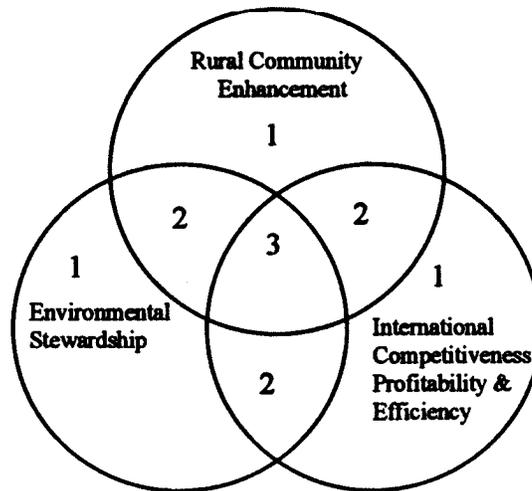
indirectly (through feeds) reduce environmental contaminants in animal waste.

- Technology development for mass rearing of biological control agents along with grower education.
- Extension on new water-efficient farming practices.
- Economic analysis of the amenity value of forests, wildlife and the biological landscape.
- Utilizing agroecosystems to line agricultural and natural resource education.

(3) *Rural Community enhancement.* This objective seeks to address the problems of outmigration, persistent poverty, unemployment, and low-skill and low-wage jobs in rural communities. Rural community enhancement objectives also include quality of life issues such as the cost and availability of services in rural areas, particularly those that influence health risks. This objective also could be achieved through the development of new crops, new crop uses and locally-owned, valued-added processing as rural economic development strategies in natural resource and agriculturally-based areas. This objective links farm and forest profitability to innovative practices, and crops and crop uses to community advancement. This issue set can address a broad range of purposes in The Fund including (1) increase international competitiveness, efficiency, and farm profitability; (2) reduce economic and health risks; (4) develop new crops, new crop uses, and new agricultural applications of biotechnology; (7) increase economic opportunities in farming and rural communities; and (8) expand locally-owned, value-added processing.

Examples of potential research, education, and extension activities include, but are not limited to:

- Local leadership development.
- Technology transfer models for linking advances in research to job growth, waste management and related challenges.
- Extension approaches to community strategic planning for jobs, resources, services, and economic stability.
- Risk assessment of vulnerabilities of rural, and isolated elderly and poor.
- Innovations in delivery of education and information in rural areas.



1. Projects or programs which address single issues in order to fill critical gaps in knowledge or practice, apply existing knowledge, and overcome barriers to solving problems in the context of community enhancement, environmental stewardship, and new markets and economic opportunities.
2. Projects, programs, or collaborations which address issues at the intersection of two spheres of problems such as developing new crops which meet new markets and contribute to improved environmental practices.
3. Project, programs, consortia, centers, multi-institutional collaborations which address all facets of a single issue (e.g. animal waste management as it relates to environmental quality, community concerns, sanitary standards and international trade), or multiple issues linked to all three spheres of problems, or broad scanning and application, activities such as technology transfer or development centers.

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Today's most pressing problems and emerging issues contain elements of each of the three constellations of issues to be addressed through The Fund, and are found at the intersections of the three areas. *The essential character of The Fund competitive grants program is defined by emphasis on the intersections of problems.* The greatest challenge to agriculture and rural America is trying to solve problems in the context of related issues. For example, community economic development strategies based on extraction of natural resources come into conflict with environmental conservation. The use of no-till soil conservation methods is suspected to be resulting in vomitoxin in wheat, jeopardizing U.S. wheat exports. Increasing global competitiveness can result in loss of low-skill jobs in rural communities. The Fund competitive grants program will give highest priority to projects which address multiple, contextual issues; it will also support

activities to overcome barriers in knowledge or technology which will enable solutions to complex, interrelated issues.

#### 2. The Secretary's Initiative to Ensure a Safe, Competitive, Nutritional and Accessible Food System

Providing food that is nutritious, safe, affordable and accessible is vital to agricultural production, to human health, and to the maintenance of the U.S. economy. Therefore the Secretary of Agriculture has set aside an additional \$10 million (approximately \$9.4 million net) of the Fund to support research, education, and extension activities that hold exceptional promise to provide needed information and education in the following areas:

1. *Research, technology transfer, and education for small meat and poultry processors to implement HACCP regulations for the control of hazardous pathogens.* In July 1996, the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) issued final regulations to strengthen food safety controls in meat and poultry

processing through a system known as Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP). HACCP requires meat and poultry processors to develop systematic plans for controlling physical, chemical and biological hazards, including microbial hazards in their processing plants. The deadline for compliance for "small" processing plants (between 10 to 499 employees) is 1999. The deadline for "very small" processing plants (less than 10 employees or with annual sales under \$2.5 million) is the year 2000. According to FSIS, about 8,300 small and very small processing plants will be affected. The resources and capabilities necessary for implementation of HACCP are limited by the size of these firms. They will need research-based educational assistance to comply with the regulations in order to continue producing a safe product. Assistance through the Fund will ensure that these firms stay competitive in the meat processing industry and provide farmers

and ranchers with competitive marketing outlets for their livestock.

Examples of potential research, education and extension activities include, but are not limited to:

- Assessment of educational needs of small and very small plants to achieve HACCP implementation.
- Analysis of the hazards unique to small and very small plants including biological, chemical, or physical risks.
- Applied and adaptive research on the control of microbials and related hazards, particularly in small plants.
- Training on monitoring protocols and recordkeeping to trace contamination to its source.
- Development and delivery of guidance and educational materials, methods and programs.

2. *Research, education, and extension to improve the competitive position of small, independent livestock producers in an increasingly concentrated market.* Increasing specialization and rapid growth in the meat packing industry has created a market situation with four large firms slaughtering about 80 percent of the fed cattle in the United States. A similar level of concentration exists in the lamb industry and concentration in the hog industry is increasing. Farmers need access to current market information and the most up-to-date marketing tools to market livestock to their best advantage.

USDA is making changes in its regulatory programs and market price reporting in response to recommendations from the USDA Advisory Committee on Agricultural Concentration. An increased emphasis on review of industry trade practices and competition in the industry is underway. At the same time, the Fund research, education and extension programs will supplement regulatory efforts by providing independent producers with knowledge, skills, and technologies that will enable them to remain profitable and competitive in the livestock market.

Alternative marketing tools and new market outlets are needed to keep small sellers competitive in the livestock industry. Production technologies and management systems appropriate for smaller sellers are needed to identify and enhance the competitive position of small sellers. For example, small sellers may have the ability to meet a growing number of niche markets for specialized meat products. Research, education, and extension is needed to test this potential. Emphasis will be given to the needs of small and moderate-sized livestock producers.

Examples of potential research, education and extension activities include, but are not limited to:

- Research, development and on-farm extension education about low-cost production facilities, such as hoop housing for swine production, combined with management systems and genetics appropriate to these facilities.
- Research and extension on management-intensive grazing systems for beef and dairy production to realize potential for reduced capital and feed costs through greater use of management skills for optimizing labor availability and the natural benefits of grazing pastures.
- Research and extension on integrated crop and livestock systems. Smaller, more diversified farms typically integrate “economies of scope” compared to larger, industrialized farms that concentrate on specialization and “economies of scale.” Research and extension education to enhance crop and livestock integration in ways that increase efficiencies, reduce costs and prevent environmental pollution can strengthen the competitive position of small producers.
- Economic analysis and market feasibility studies are needed to identify new and expanded market opportunities where small producers would have tools and strategies to meet consumer demand (both domestic and international) for specialized, lean or natural meats and specialized value-added products. Opportunities for cooperative marketing and value-added strategies for meat production and processing could be explored and demonstrated through innovative extension and outreach programs.
- Technology assessment comparing the technological resources of large, specialized producers with the technological needs of small producers to identify and transfer existing technology across all sizes and scales and/or identify the specific research and education needs of each.
- Analysis to evaluate the economic impact of integrator’s practices and procedures on contract poultry growers. Greater understanding of the underlying economics in the poultry industry is needed to guide policy development. Research and analysis is needed to examine the growers’ investments, length of contracts, exposure to early termination, other risks, operating characteristics (e.g., type of poultry houses, equipment and layout periods), operating costs

by type of cost (labor, capital, fuels, utilities, dead bird disposal, etc.), responsibility for costs (grower or integrator), productivity, revenue and contract settlements.

- Development of new research methods and procedures to collect necessary data and measures for reporting of line-of-business profits for meat packers. Detailed financial and statistical data are needed to generate meaningful industry performance indicators, such as profitability, procurement expense, selling expense, research and development costs, and various financial ratios. The collection of appropriate data is needed for economic analysis of industry structure, conduct and performance issues. Cost allocations, revenue allocations, definitions of lines of business, and frequency of reporting are examples of issues needing research.

3. *Research, education and extension to identify and utilize phytonutrients with cancer-prevention potential in the design of functional foods for disease prevention.* Current research on cancer and diet linkages has led to the identification of over 600 plant-derived chemicals (phytochemicals, or phytonutrients) along with non-nutrient plant components with cancer-prevention potential. These include anti-oxidants such as beta carotene and vitamins E and C. Further research is needed to understand the independent and interactive effects of phytonutrients and to identify additional protective components. Genetic engineering techniques make it possible to transfer, enhance or suppress specific genes from one plant species to another for the development of “functional foods.” Functional foods refers to any modified food or food ingredient with the potential to provide a health benefit and to prevent against disease. Congress called for greater research efforts to develop new varieties of fruits and vegetables for the prevention of diet-related diseases in the FAIR Act Sec. 1424A, Pilot Research Program to Combine Medical and Agricultural Research.

Following on the research recommendations outlined by the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, examples of potential research, education and extension activities include, but are not limited to:

- Research to create foods that have increased amounts of the beneficial components found in fruits, vegetables and grains.

- Methods to monitor the effectiveness of functional foods on improving health and preventing diseases.
- Research and analysis to support the issuance of regulatory guidelines to ensure the safety and efficacy of functional food products.
- Research on food choice behavior leading to extension and education programs designed to increase the intake of foods rich in phytonutrients.

4. *Research, education and extension to promote increased gleaning and food recovery.* The most commonly referenced information on the loss and waste of food at various stages of the food system is based on 1974 data assembled by the General Accounting Office. This information does not reflect current trends in food production, transport, storage, acquisition or consumption patterns and preferences—all of which have significantly changed over the past two decades.

Examples of research, education and extension activities include, but are not limited to:

- Current information concerning the source(s) of greatest loss in order to facilitate an expansion in gleaning and food recovery activities.
- Research and extension efforts to develop and implement mechanisms such as community-operated canneries or dehydration facilities to extend the “shelf life” of recovery food.
- Extension education and outreach to provide food safety training in safe food handling practices for organizations involved in gleaning and food recovery programs.

#### E. *Funding Mechanisms*

Two funding mechanisms will be utilized to support projects under this RFP: (1) Standard Program Grants (for The Fund Core Initiative and The Secretary’s Initiative), (2) Planning Grants for Fund for Rural America (FRA) Centers (for the Fund Core Initiative only).

*Standard Project Grants* Opportunities for research, education and extension in the aforementioned areas of the Fund Core Initiative and the Secretary’s Initiative have been underscored as a means of providing exceptional promise for solving current and unforeseen problems in rural communities and agriculture. Successful Standard Project Grants will form the basis of The Fund by bringing a broad array of expertise and approaches to individual or collaborative efforts in specified problem areas and/or which relate two or more of the issue areas described in

the Fund Core Initiative. Standard Project Grants may involve separate research, education, and extension activities to fill gaps in knowledge or programs which constitute barriers to contextual problem solving. The Fund emphasizes multi-functional, integrated problem solving, however. See “Preparation of a Proposal” section for details on Standard Project Grant application requirements.

*Planning Grants for a FRA Center* CSREES intends to assist eligible applicants as described in Part I.C. of this RFP to establish centers that bring together individuals, institutions, states and/or regions in support of research, education and extension in a collaborative process towards a common goal. An “FRA Center” is expected to meet needs in agricultural research, education and extension that cannot be met through funding of separate efforts. It is the intent of CSREES to promote collaboration, open communication, exchange of information and resources, and integration of activities among individuals, institutions, states or regions now working independently into coordinated efforts around common themes that span institutional or geographical boundaries. By supporting Centers, CSREES will bring together a critical mass of individuals and expertise to address problems and issues outlined to be important to rural communities, producers, and the agricultural enterprise. Centers will minimize isolation and over-competitiveness, reduce duplication of effort, enhance multidisciplinary, multifunctional and collaborative efforts, and provide an accessible source of expert information, technology, and education upon which the public can draw.

While FRA Centers should focus on the purposes of the Fund, it is expected that each Center will broadly span functional areas and address problems that bridge research, education and extension. FRA Centers may focus on a defined issue with multiple facets which span the three main goals of the Core Initiative, or may be established to identify opportunities to solve problems through broad strategies such as technology transfer. Funding will be provided to eligible applicants for the management, administration and technical operations of the Center; however, construction, acquisition, expansion, remodeling, or alteration of facilities or buildings and purchase of fixed equipment with Fund grant money is prohibited.

In preparation for a subsequent solicitation of Center applications, CSREES will support a limited number

of FRA Center Planning Grants. The purpose of Planning Grants will be to provide up to \$25,000 of funds to enable project leaders to bring together the necessary people and technology to plan a Center application. By awarding Center Planning Grants, CSREES will enable a greater number of groups to be at an equal stage of planning when the solicitation for Center grants occurs, allowing for the submission of high quality Center applications. CSREES will solicit Center applications only from those applicants who are successful in receiving a Center Planning Grant. Thus, applicants intending to submit an FRA Center proposal should register that intention by submitting a Center Planning Grant Application. The current RFP Planning Grants will support only the planning stage of a FRA Center. It is expected that Center applications will be solicited approximately 4 to 6 months after Center Planning Grants are awarded. See “Preparation of a Proposal” section for Centers Planning Grant application requirements.

#### Part III. Preparation of a Proposal

##### A. *Program Application Materials*

Program application materials will be made available to eligible entities upon request. These materials include information about the purpose of the program, how the program will be conducted, and the required contents of a proposal, as well as the forms needed to prepare and submit grant applications under the program.

To obtain application materials, please contact the Proposal Services Unit, Grants Management Branch; Office of Extramural Programs; USDA/CSREES at (202) 401-5048. When calling the Proposal Services Unit, please indicate that you are requesting forms for the Fund Program. These materials may also be requested via Internet by sending a message with your name, mailing address (not e-mail) and phone number to [psb@reeusda.gov](mailto:psb@reeusda.gov) and state that you want a copy of the application materials for the Fiscal Year 1997 Fund for Rural America Program. The materials will then be mailed to you (not e-mailed) as quickly as possible.

##### B. *Content of a Proposal*

A proposal should contain the following:

1. Cover Page: Complete the “Application for Funding”, Form CSREES-661, in its entirety.

- a. Note that providing a Social Security Number is voluntary, but the number is an integral part of the

CSREES information system and will assist in the processing of the proposal.

b. One copy of the "Application for Funding" form must contain the pen-and-ink signatures of the project director(s) and authorized organizational representative for the applicant organization.

c. Note that by signing the "Application for Funding" form the applicant is providing the required certifications set forth in 7 CFR Part 3017, as amended by 61 Federal Register 250, January 4, 1996, regarding Debarment and Suspension and Drug-Free Workplace, and 7 CFR Part 3018, regarding Lobbying. The certification forms are included in this application package for informational purposes only. It is not necessary to submit the forms to USDA.

2. **Table of Contents:** For ease in locating information, each proposal must contain a detailed Table of Contents immediately after Form CSREES-661, "Application for Funding." The Table of Contents should include page numbers for each component of the proposal. Pagination should begin immediately following the Table of Contents.

3. **Project Summary:** The proposal must contain a project summary of 250 words or less on a separate page. This page must include the title of the project and the names of the primary project director(s) and the applicant organization, followed by the summary. The summary should be self-contained, and should describe the overall goals and relevance of the project. The summary should also contain a listing of all organizations involved in the project. The Project Summary should immediately follow the Table of Contents.

4. **Project Narrative:** All proposals are to be submitted on standard 8½" x 11" paper with typing on one side of the page only. In addition, margins must be at least 1", type must be 12 characters per inch (12 pitch or 10 point) or larger, no more than 6 lines per inch, and there should be no page reductions. If applicable, proposals should include original illustrations (photographs, color prints, etc.) in all copies of the proposal to prevent loss of meaning through poor quality reproduction. Such illustrations are not included in the page limitation for project narratives.

#### A. *Standard Project Narrative*

The narrative portion of the Standard Project Proposal is limited to 20 pages of text.

1. **Introduction.** A clear statement of the goal(s) and objective(s) of the project should be included. The problem

should be set within the context of work that has come before it and in context of the present-day situation. Summarize the body of knowledge which substantiates the need for the proposed project. Preliminary information pertinent to the proposed work should also be cited.

2. **Rationale and significance.** Substantiate the need for the proposed project. Describe the impact of the project on the end user. Describe the project's specific relationship to the purposes of the Fund, to the purposes of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended (7 U.S.C. 3107), and to the problem addressed.

3. **Objectives and approach.** Cite and discuss the specific objective(s) to be accomplished under the project. A detailed description of the approach must include:

- ◆ Techniques and/or procedures used to carry out the proposed activities and for accomplishing the objectives
- ◆ The results expected
- ◆ Limitations

4. **Time table.** Tentative schedule for conducting the major steps of the project.

5. **Evaluation.** Provide a plan for assessing and evaluating the accomplishments of the stated objectives during the conduct of the project and describe ways to determine the effectiveness of the end results upon conclusion of the project.

6. **Relationship to partners, communities of interest, and stakeholders.** Describe how the project will involve partners and communities of interest. Describe how and by whom the focus and scope of the project were determined, how partners will be involved during the course of the project, and how end users will be impacted by results. Clearly describe how results and information will be disseminated or transferred to end users. Evidence that arrangements necessary for collaborative partnerships have been discussed with the parties involved and can realistically be expected to come to fruition, or have actually been finalized contingent on an award under this program, must be provided via letters by the parties involved. A letter from a university must be signed by the dean or research director, a representative of the university's central administration, or a higher university official. A letter from a business or industry must be signed by an official who has the authority to commit the resources of the organization. Such letters should be placed immediately following the Project Narrative in the proposal.

7. **Coordination and management plan.** Describe how the project will be coordinated among the various participants and clearly describe the nature of the collaborations. Describe plans for management of the project to ensure its proper and efficient administration.

#### B. *Planning Grants for FRA Centers Narrative*

In preparing Center Planning Grants, applicants should include the following information in place of the information identified in Part III.4.A.:

(1) **Center Concept:** Describe the Center to be proposed, how the Center fits within the objectives of the Fund, how the Center bridges research, education and/or extension, how the Center will add value over funding of separate efforts (2 pages maximum).

(2) **Planning Activity:** Describe the activities to be included under the planning portion of the Center activity. Activities could include: meetings of involved parties, forums to gain input from communities of interest, review and assessment of reports of agricultural and rural communities strategic plans and objectives, etc. (2 pages maximum).

(3) **Collaborative Arrangements:** Identify collaborations and provide a full explanation of the nature of the collaborations (1 page maximum).

(4) **Timetable:** Describe how planning activities can be completed in a four- to six-month time period (expected length of time between award of Center Planning Grants and solicitation of Center proposals).

5. **Key Personnel:** Identify the primary project director and the co-project director(s) and other key personnel required for this project. Include vitae that provide adequate information so that proposal reviewers can make an informed judgment as to their capabilities and experience.

6. **Conflict of Interest List:** A Conflict of Interest List must be provided for individuals identified as key personnel. Each list should be on a separate page and include alphabetically the full names of the individuals in the following categories: (1) all collaborators on projects within the past five years, including current and planned collaborations; (2) all co-authors on publications within the past five years, including pending publications and submissions; (3) all persons in your field with whom you have had a consulting or financial arrangement within the past five years who would stand to gain by seeing the project funded; and (4) all thesis or postdoctoral advisees/advisors within the past five years.

## 7. Budget

A. Budget Form: Prepare the budget, Form CSREES-55, in accordance with instructions provided with the form. A budget form is required for each year of requested support. In addition, a summary budget is required detailing the requested total support for the overall project period. The budget form may be reproduced as needed by applicants. Funds may be requested under any of the categories listed on the form, provided that the item or service for which support is requested is allowable under the authorizing legislation, the applicable Federal cost principles, and these program guidelines, and can be justified as necessary for the successful conduct of the proposed project.

The following guidelines should be used in developing your proposal budget(s):

1. *Salaries and Wages.* Salaries and wages are allowable charges and may be requested for personnel who will be working on the project in proportion to the time such personnel will devote to the project. If salary funds are requested, the number of Senior and Other Personnel and the number of CSREES Funded Work Months must be shown in the spaces provided. Grant funds may not be used to augment the total salary or rate of salary of project personnel or to reimburse them for time in addition to a regular full-time salary covering the same general period of employment.

2. *Fringe Benefits.* Funds may be requested for fringe benefit costs if the usual accounting practices of your organization provide that organizational contributions to employee benefits (social security, retirement, etc.) be treated as direct costs. Fringe benefit costs may be included only for those personnel whose salaries are charged as a direct cost to the project.

3. *Nonexpendable Equipment.* Nonexpendable equipment means tangible nonexpendable personal property including exempt property charged directly to the award having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit. As such, items of necessary instrumentation or other nonexpendable equipment should be listed individually by description and estimated cost.

In addition, pursuant to Section 716(b) of Pub. L. No. 104-180 (the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1997), in the case of any equipment or product that may be authorized to be purchased with funds provided under this program, entities receiving such funds are encouraged to use such funds to

purchase only American-made equipment or products.

4. *Materials and Supplies.* The types of expendable materials and supplies which are required to carry out the project should be indicated in general terms with estimated costs.

5. *Travel.* The type and extent of travel and its relationship to project objectives should be described briefly and justified. If foreign travel is proposed, the country to be visited, the specific purpose of the travel, a brief itinerary, inclusive dates of travel, and estimated cost must be provided for each trip. Airfare allowances normally will not exceed round-trip jet economy air accommodations. U.S. flag carriers must be used when available. See 7 CFR Part 3015.205(b)(4) for further guidance.

6. *Publication Costs/Page Charges.* Anticipated costs of preparing and publishing results of the research being proposed (including page charges, necessary illustrations, and the cost of a reasonable number of coverless reprints) may be estimated and charged against the grant.

7. *Computer (ADPE) Costs.* Reimbursement for the costs of using specialized facilities (such as a university- or department-controlled computer mainframe or data processing center) may be requested if such services are required for completion of the work.

8. *All Other Direct Costs.* Anticipated direct project charges not included in other budget categories must be itemized with estimated costs and justified on a separate sheet of paper attached to Form CSREES-55. This also applies to revised budgets, as the item(s) and dollar amount(s) may change. Examples may include space rental at remote locations, subcontractual costs, and charges for consulting services. You are encouraged to consult the "Instructions for Completing Form CSREES-55, Budget," of the Application Kit for detailed guidance relating to this budget category.

9. *Indirect Costs.* If requested, the current rate negotiated with the cognizant Federal negotiating agency should be used. Indirect costs may not exceed the negotiated rate. If no rate has been negotiated, a reasonable dollar amount in lieu of indirect costs may be requested, which will be subject to approval by USDA. In that grants supported by The Fund may include numerous activities other than traditional instruction or research, the institution may choose to request rates that are lower than the institution's approved negotiated research or instructional rate. Center Planning Grants may request indirect costs up to

a maximum of 8% of Total Federal Funds Awarded for this project.

Applications from colleges and universities that are not submitted through an Office of Sponsored Programs (or equivalent thereto) must provide a statement in the budget narrative verifying that the indirect costs requested are in accordance with institutional policies.

### B. Matching Funds (if required)

(1) Proposals must include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Written verification means:

(a) For any third party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each donation, signed by the authorized organizational representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) The name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) the dollar amount of the cash donation; and (5) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period; and

(b) For any third party in-kind contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the in-kind contribution; and (5) a statement that the donor will make the contribution during the grant period.

(2) The sources and amount of all matching support from outside the applicant institution should be summarized on a separate page and placed in the proposal immediately following the budget form. All pledge agreements must be placed in the proposal immediately following the summary of matching support.

(3) In order to use a cost as matching support, the cost must be allowable under the program.

c. Budget Narrative: All salaries and wages, nonexpendable equipment, foreign travel, subcontracts, and "All Other Direct Costs" for which support is requested must be individually listed (with costs) and justified on a separate sheet of paper and placed immediately behind Form CSREES-55.

8. Current and Pending Support: All proposals must contain Form CSREES-663 listing other current public or private 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 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 the possible sponsors will not prejudice proposal review or evaluation 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.

9. Assurance Statement(s). (Form CSREES-662): A number of situations encountered in the conduct of projects require special assurances, supporting documentation, etc., before funding can be approved for the project. In addition to any other situation that may exist with regard to a particular project, it is expected that some applications submitted in response to these guidelines will involve the following:

1. *Recombinant DNA or RNA Research.* As stated in 7 CFR Part 3015.205(b)(3), all key personnel identified in the proposal and all endorsing officials of the proposing organization are required to comply with the guidelines established by the National Institutes of Health entitled, "Guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant DNA Molecules," as revised. If your project proposes to use recombinant DNA or RNA techniques, the application must so indicate by checking the "yes" box in Block 19 of Form CSREES-661 ("Application for Funding") and by completing Section A of Form CSREES-662. For applicable proposals recommended for funding, Institutional Biosafety Committee approval is required before CSREES funds will be released.

2. *Animal Care.* Responsibility for the humane care and treatment of live vertebrate animals used in any grant project supported with funds provided by CSREES rests with the performing organization. Where a project involves the use of living vertebrate animals for experimental purposes, all key project personnel identified in a proposal and all endorsing officials of the proposing organization 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 in 9 CFR Parts 1, 2, 3, and 4 pertaining to the care, handling, and treatment of these animals. If your project will involve these animals or activities, you must check the "yes" box in Block 20 of Form CSREES-661 and complete Section B of Form CSREES-662. In the event a project involving the use of live vertebrate animals results in a grant award, funds will be released only after the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee has approved the project.

3. *Protection of Human Subjects.* Responsibility for safeguarding the rights and welfare of human subjects used in any grant project supported with funds provided by CSREES rests with the performing organization. Guidance on this issue is contained in the National Research Act, Pub. L. No. 93-348, as amended, and implementing regulations promulgated by the Department under 7 CFR Part 1c. If you propose to use human subjects for experimental purposes in your project, you should check the "yes" box in Block 21 of Form CSREES-661 and complete Section C of Form CSREES-662. In the event a project involving human subjects results in a grant award, funds will be released only after the appropriate Institutional Review Board has approved the project.

10. CRIS Forms AD-416 and AD-417: In order to document projects in the Current Research Information System's (CRIS) data base, CSREES requires the submission of the CRIS Forms AD-416 and AD-417 prior to the release of grant funds. Only one completed copy of each form must be submitted with the original pen-and-ink copy of the proposal. Fields 1, 19, 20, 21, 28, 29, 30 and "Duration" should be left blank, as these will be completed by CSREES upon award. CSREES will not release funds for the proposed award until the completed CRIS forms are received; therefore, prompt action on this requirement is essential for the initiation of the project.

11. Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA): As outlined in 7 CFR Part 3407 (the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service regulations implementing NEPA), the environmental data for any proposed project is to be provided to CSREES so that CSREES may determine whether any further action is needed. In some cases, however, the preparation of environmental data may not be required. Certain categories of actions

are excluded from the requirements of NEPA.

In order for CSREES to determine whether any further action is needed with respect to NEPA, pertinent information regarding the possible environmental impacts of a particular project is necessary; therefore, Form CSREES-1234, "NEPA Exclusions Form," must be included in the proposal indicating whether the applicant is of the opinion that the project falls within a categorical exclusion and the reasons therefor. If it is the applicant's opinion that the proposed project falls within the categorical exclusions, the specific exclusion must be identified. Form CSREES-1234 and supporting documentation should be included as the last page of the proposal.

Even though a project may fall within the categorical exclusions, CSREES may determine that an Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement is necessary for an activity, if substantial controversy on environmental grounds exists or if other extraordinary conditions or circumstances are present which may cause such activity to have a significant environmental effect.

#### Part IV. Submission of a Proposal

##### A. What to Submit

An original and 15 copies must be submitted. Each copy of each proposal must be stapled in the upper left-hand corner. (DO NOT BIND.) All copies of the proposal must be submitted in one package.

##### B. Where and When to Submit

Applications for Planning Grants for FRA Centers must be received by close of business on March 24, 1997. Standard Project proposals must be received by close of business on April 28, 1997. Proposals sent by First Class mail must be sent to the following address:

Proposal Services Unit, Grants Management Branch, Office of Extramural Programs, USDA/CSREES, STOP 2245, Washington, DC 20250-2245; Telephone: (202) 401-5048

Note: Hand-delivered proposals or those delivered by overnight express service should be brought to the following address: Proposal Services Unit, Grants Management Branch; Office of Extramural Programs; USDA/CSREES; Room 303, Aerospace Center; 901 D Street, S.W.; Washington, DC 20024. The telephone number is (202) 401-5048.

##### C. Acknowledgment of Proposals

The receipt of all proposals will be acknowledged in writing and this acknowledgment will contain an

identifying proposal number. Once your proposal has been assigned an identification number, please cite that number in future correspondence.

## Part V. Selection Process and Evaluation Criteria

### A. Selection Process

Each proposal will be evaluated in a two-part process. First, each proposal will be screened to ensure it meets the requirements as set forth in this RFP. Proposals that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated. Each proposal will be judged on its own merits.

### B. Technical Evaluation

The review of applications submitted for funding consideration, will consist of a technical evaluation conducted by CSREES using the competitive peer review process. Standard Project Grant applications will receive a technical evaluation using the following criteria:

1. *Merit*: Scientific, technical, or educational merit; Well defined problem; clearly defined objectives; appropriateness of approach, (including selection of proper approach to address systems, multifaceted, or multidisciplinary problems); demonstrated integration of components (such as research, education and extension components); degree of feasibility; soundness and effectiveness of management plan.

2. *Quality*: Creativity and innovativeness in addressing problem and issues; selection of most appropriate and qualified individuals to address problem; competence and experience of personnel; effective utilization of knowledge base in addressing problem; potential to contribute solutions to stated problem; identified potential for technology transfer and information dissemination.

3. *Relevance*: Proposal advances purposes for Federally supported research, education, and extension of the 1977 National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended (7 U.S.C. 3107); potential to contribute solutions to priority problems in agriculture; identification and involvement of stakeholders; involvement of communities of interest and stakeholders in the identification of problems set forth in proposal; partnership with those affected by the outcome.

Planning grants for FRA Centers will be judged using the following criteria;

- Merits of the FRA Center concept
- Relevance of the future FRA Center to the purposes of The Fund

- Appropriateness of planning activities in assembling a future FRA Center application

• Competence of identified participants  
Because planning grant applications will constitute a preliminary plan for development of a FRA Center, peer review panels will concentrate their evaluation on the merit and relevance of the conceptual framework to achieving the goals of The Fund.

### C. Programmatic Relevance Review

The National Agricultural Research, Education and Economics Advisory Board will review collective groups of recommended proposals (based on technical evaluation) to ensure the relevance of the work proposed for funding toward achieving the programmatic goals of the Fund.

## Part VI. Supplementary Information

### A. Access to Peer Review Information

After final decisions have been announced, CSREES will, upon request, inform the project director of the reasons for its decision on a proposal. Copies of summary reviews, not including the identity of the reviewers, will be made available to respective project directors upon specific request.

### B. Grant Awards

1. *General*: Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of CSREES shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose proposals are judged most meritorious in the announced program areas under the evaluation criteria and procedures set forth in this request for proposals. The date specified by the Administrator as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practicable so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by CSREES under this request for proposals shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, these application guidelines, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's assistance regulations (Parts 3015, 3016, and 3019 of 7 CFR).

2. *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 these application guidelines 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 sponsoring agency as part of the preaward process.

3. *Grant Award Document and Notice of Grant Award*: The grant award document shall include at a minimum the following:

a. Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the Administrator has awarded a grant under the terms of this request for proposals;

b. Title of Project;

c. Name(s) and address(es) of project director(s) chosen to direct and control approved activities;

d. Identifying grant number assigned by the Department

e. Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring recompensation for funds;

f. Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Administrator during the project period;

g. Legal authority(ies) under which the grant is awarded;

h. Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the grant award; and

i. Other information or provisions deemed necessary by CSREES to carry out its respective granting activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular grant.

4. *Notice of Grant Award*: The notice of grant award, in the form of a letter, will be prepared and will provide pertinent instructions or information to the grantee that is not included in the grant award document.

### C. Use of Funds; Changes

1. *Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility*: The grantee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of grant funds.

#### 2. Changes in Project Plans:

a. The permissible changes by the grantee, project director(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project grant shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the grantee and/or the project director(s) are uncertain as to whether a

change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the CSREES authorized departmental officer (ADO) for a final determination.

b. Changes in approved goals, or objectives, shall be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.

c. Changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by the ADO of CSREES prior to effecting such changes.

d. Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by the Department prior to effecting such transfers.

e. Changes in Project Period: The project period may be extended by CSREES without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the grantee and approved in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of a grant.

f. Changes in Approved Budget: Changes in an approved budget must be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes if the revision will:

(1) Involve transfers of amounts budgeted for indirect costs to absorb an increase in direct costs;

(2) Involve transfers of amounts budgeted for direct costs to accommodate changes in indirect cost rates negotiated during a budget period and not approved when a grant was awarded; or

(3) Involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost

principles, Departmental regulations, or in the grant award.

#### *D. Other Federal Statutes and Regulations that Apply*

Several other Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant proposals considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These include but are not limited to:

7 CFR Part 1.1—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 1c—USDA implementation of the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

7 CFR Part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-129 regarding debt collection.

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, implementing OMB directives (i.e., Circular Nos. A-21, and A-122) and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3017, as amended by 61 Federal Register 250, January 4, 1996—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants).

7 CFR Part 3018—USDA implementation of New Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3019—USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3051—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133 regarding audits of institutions of

higher education and other nonprofit institutions.

7 CFR Part 3407—CSREES procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

48 CFR Part 31—Contract Cost Principles and Procedures of the Federal Acquisition Regulation.

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute)—prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in Federally assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq.—Bayh-Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR part 401).

#### *E. Confidential Aspects of Proposals and Awards*

When a proposal results in a grant, it becomes a part of the record of the Agency's transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a privileged nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as privileged should be clearly marked as such and sent in a separate statement, two copies of which should accompany the proposal. The original copy of a proposal that does not result in a grant will be retained by the Agency for a period of one year. Other copies will be destroyed. Such a proposal will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. A proposal may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

Done at Washington, D.C., this 24th day of January, 1997.

B.H. Robinson,

*Administrator, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service.*

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