

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Cooperative State Research,
Education, and Extension Service****Request for Proposals: Community
Food Projects Competitive Grants
Program**

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

ACTION: Announcement of availability of grant funds and request for proposals (RFP) for the Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program.

SUMMARY: The Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 established new authority for a program of Federal grants to support the development of community food projects designed to meet the food needs of low-income people; increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues.

This RFP sets out the objectives for these projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application procedures. Proposals are requested for projects designed to increase food security in a community (termed Community Food Projects).

This RFP contains the entire set of instructions needed to apply for a Fiscal Year (FY) 1999 Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program (CFPCGP) grant.

DATES: APPLICATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED ON OR BEFORE June 4, 1999. (See PART IV—SUBMISSION OF A PROPOSAL below for information on where and when to submit an application.) Proposals received after June 4, 1999 will be returned without review.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Mark R. Bailey, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, STOP 2241, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-2241; telephone: (202) 401-1898; Internet: mbailey@reeusda.gov., or Dr. Elizabeth Tuckermanty, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, STOP 2240, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20250-2240, telephone: (202) 205-0241; Internet: etuckermanty@reeusda.gov

Table of Contents

Part I—General Information:
A. Legislative Authority
B. Definitions

C. Eligibility
Part II—Program Description
A. Purpose and Scope of the Program
B. Available Funds and Award Limitations
C. Matching Funds Requirement
Part III—Preparation of a Proposal
A. Program Application Materials
B. Content of a Proposal
Part IV—Submission of a Proposal
A. What to Submit
B. Where and When to Submit
C. Acknowledgment of Proposals
Part V—Selection Process and Evaluation
Criteria
A. Selection Process
B. Evaluation Criteria
Part VI—Supplementary Information
A. Access to Review Information
B. Grant Awards
C. Use of Funds; Changes
D. Other Federal Statutes and Regulations that Apply
E. Confidential Aspects of Proposals and Awards
F. Evaluation of Program
G. Stakeholder Input

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

Section 25 of the Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended by Section 401(h) of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (Pub. L. 104-127) (7 U.S.C. 2034), authorized a new program of Federal grants to support the development of community food projects; \$16 million is authorized over seven years (1996-2002). For FY 1999, approximately \$2.5 million is available (\$2.5 million has been authorized in each subsequent year through fiscal year 2002). These grants are intended to assist eligible private nonprofit entities that need a one-time infusion of Federal dollars to establish and sustain a multi-purpose community food project.

B. Definitions

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

(1) *Administrator* means the Administrator of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service 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, director, or chief executive officer of the applicant organization or the official, designated by the president, director, 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) *Community Food Project* is a project that requires a one-time infusion of Federal assistance to become self-sustaining and is designed to: (i) Meet the food needs of low-income people; (ii) increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and (iii) promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues. These activities help to increase food security in a community.

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

(8) *Grant* means the award by the Secretary of funds to a private, non-profit entity to assist in meeting the costs of conducting, for the benefit of the public, an identified Community Food Project which is intended and designed to accomplish the purpose of the program as identified in these guidelines.

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

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

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

(12) *Private non-profit entity* means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative or other organization which (i) is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purposes in the public interest; (ii) is not organized primarily for profit; and (iii) uses its net proceeds to maintain, improve, and/or expand its operations. For this program, the term private nonprofit organization excludes public entities, including State, local, and Federally recognized Indian tribal governments.

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

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

(16) *Review experts* 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, and who evaluate eligible proposals submitted to this program in their personal and professional area(s) of expertise.

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

(18) *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 benefitting and specifically identifiable to a funded project or program.

C. Eligibility

Grantees under the CFPCGP are statutorily limited to private, nonprofit entities. Because proposals for Community Food Projects must promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues, applicants are encouraged to seek and create partnerships with public, private nonprofit, and private for-profit entities. However, no more than one-third of an award for a Community Food Project may be subawarded to a for-profit organization or firm.

To be eligible for a Community Food Project grant, a private nonprofit applicant must meet three requirements:

- (1) Have experience in the area of:
 - (a) Community food work that involves the provision of food to low-income people and familiarity with developing new markets in low-income communities to enhance their access to fresher, more nutritious foods; and/or
 - (b) Job training and business development activities for food-related activities in low-income communities to increase the potential for long-term sustainability in the food security project being proposed;
- (2) Demonstrate competency to implement a project, provide fiscal accountability and oversight, collect data, and prepare reports and other appropriate documentation; and
- (3) Demonstrate a commitment and willingness to share information with researchers, evaluators, practitioners, and other interested parties.

Successful applicants will be required to attend an evaluation training meeting and should include in their budget

request funding for travel to Washington, D.C. for two persons to attend a two to three day meeting. More information will be provided once successful applicants are identified.

The intent of the CFPCGP is to encourage and support community-based, grass-roots efforts that enhance food security. Applicants are strongly encouraged to link with academic and/or other appropriate professionals, and to involve other relevant community-based organizations and local government entities, as they plan for and then develop proposals that serve the mutual interests that support community food security projects.

Part II—Program Description

A. Purpose and Scope of the Program

Proposals are invited for competitive grant awards under the CFPCGP for FY 1999. This program is administered by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The purpose of this program is to support the development of Community Food Projects with a one-time infusion of Federal dollars to make such projects self-sustaining. Community Food Projects should be designed to: (i) Meet the food needs of low-income people; (ii) increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and (iii) promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues.

Community Food Projects are intended to take a comprehensive approach to developing long-term solutions to an identified community food need that help to ensure food security in communities by linking the food production and processing sectors to community development, economic opportunity, and environmental enhancement. Comprehensive solutions may include elements such as: (i) Improved access to high quality, affordable food among low-income households; (ii) expanded economic opportunities for community residents through local businesses or other economic development, improved employment opportunities, job training, youth apprenticeship, school-to-work transition, and the like, and (iii) support for local food systems, from urban gardening to local farms that provide high quality fresh foods, ideally with minimal adverse environmental impact. Any solution proposed must tie into community food needs.

Project goals should integrate multiple objectives into their design. Proposed projects should seek to address impacts beyond a specific goal

such as increasing food produced or available for a specific group. Goals and objectives should integrate economic, social, and environmental impacts such as job training, employment opportunities, small business expansion, neighborhood revitalization, open space development, transportation assistance or other community enhancements.

B. Available Funds and Award Limitations

The amount of funds available in FY 1999 for support of grant awards under this program is approximately \$2,400,000. Applicants should request a budget commensurate with the project proposed. However, due to the effort required to properly evaluate proposals, USDA strongly urges that the Federal funds requested for a Community Food Project not be less than \$10,000.

The spirit of the authorizing legislation is that no one grant should command a significant portion of the total funds available and that many grants be awarded each year. Therefore, USDA has concluded that no single grant shall exceed \$100,000 in any single year or more than \$250,000 over the life of the project.

Applicants may request one, two, or three years of funding, but in all cases, the grant term may not exceed three years for any one project. A Community Food Project may be supported by only a single grant under this program.

Awards will be made based on the merit of the proposed project with budgets considered only after the merits of the project have been determined. USDA reserves the right to negotiate final budgets with successful applicants. It is intended that the grantee will perform the substantive effort on the project. No more than one-third of the award, as determined by budget expenditures, may be subawarded to for-profit organizations. For purposes of obtaining additional knowledge or expertise that is not currently within the applicant organization, funds for expert consultation may be included in the All Other Direct Costs section of the proposed budget.

C. Matching Funds Requirement

Federal funds requested must be matched, at a minimum, on a dollar-for-dollar basis.

Successful applicants must provide matching funds, either in cash and/or third party in-kind, amounting to at least 50 percent of the total cost of the project (i.e., an amount equal to or greater than the amount of Federal funds being requested) during the term of the grant award as provided by

section 25(e) of the Food Stamp Act of 1977. The Federal share of the project costs can be no more than 50 percent of the total.

Grantees may provide for the non-Federal share through cash and/or third party in-kind contributions, fairly evaluated, including facilities, equipment, and services. A grantee may provide for the non-Federal share of the funding through State government, local government, or private sources. Examples of matching funds include direct costs such as: Rent for office space used exclusively for the funded project; duplication or postage costs; and staff time from an entity other than the applicant for job training or nutrition education.

Part III—Preparation of a Proposal

A. Program Application Materials

Program application materials will be made available to interested 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 program application materials, please contact the Proposal Services Unit; Office of Extramural Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2245; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2245; Telephone: (202) 401-5048. When contacting the Proposal Services Unit, please indicate that you are requesting application materials for the FY 1999 Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program.

Application materials may also be requested via Internet by sending a message with your name, mailing address (not e-mail) and telephone number to psb@reeusda.gov that states that you wish to receive a copy of the application materials for the FY 1999 Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program. The materials will then be mailed to you (not e-mailed) as quickly as possible. You may also download this RFP and the application forms by contacting the agency home page at www.reeusda.gov, and clicking on "Funding Opportunities," that brings up "All Funding Opportunities," and then click on "Community Food Projects Program."

B. Content of a Proposal

(1) General

The proposal should follow these guidelines, enabling reviewers to more easily evaluate the merits of each

proposal in a systematic, consistent fashion:

(a) The proposal should be prepared on only one side of the page using standard size (8½" x 11") white paper, one inch margins, typed or word processed using no type smaller than 12 point font regardless of whether it is single or double spaced. Use an easily readable font face (e.g., Geneva, Helvetica, CG Times). Once accepted for review, your proposal will be read by at least three expert reviewers. Thus it is to your advantage to ensure that your proposal is not difficult to read.

(b) Each page of the proposal, including the Project Summary, budget pages, required forms, and appendices, should be numbered sequentially in the top right corner.

(c) The proposal should be stapled in the upper left-hand corner. Do not bind. An original and 9 copies (10 total) must be submitted in one package, along with 20 copies of the "Project Summary" as a separate attachment.

(2) Cover Page

Complete Form CSREES-661, Application for Funding, in its entirety. This form is to be utilized as the Cover Page. In Block 14., note the total amount of Federal dollars being requested.

(a) Blocks 7., 13., 18., 19., 20., and 21., have been completed for you.

(b) In Block 8., enter "Community Food Project". Ignore all references to a program number.

(c) Note that providing a Social Security Number is voluntary, but is an integral part of the CSREES information system and will assist in the processing of the proposal.

(d) The original 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.

(e) Note that by signing the Application for Funding form, the applicant is providing the required certifications set forth in 7 CFR part 3017 regarding Debarment and Suspension and Drug-Free Workplace, and 7 CFR part 3018, regarding Lobbying. The three certification forms are included in this application package for informational purposes only. It is not necessary to sign and submit the forms to USDA as part of the proposal.

(3) Table of Contents

For ease in locating information, each proposal must contain a detailed table of contents just after the Cover Page. The Table of Contents should include page numbers for each component of the proposal. Page numbers, shown in the

top right corner, should begin with the first page of the project summary.

(4) Project Summary

The proposal must contain a project summary of 250 words or less on a separate page. The summary must be self-contained and describe the overall goals and relevance of the project. The summary should also contain a listing of the major organizations participating in the project. The Project Summary should immediately follow the Table of Contents. In addition to the summary, this page must include the title of the project, the name of the applicant organization, the authorized organizational representative, and the project director(s), followed by the summary.

(5) Project Narrative

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 10 pages. This maximum has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. Reviewers are instructed that they need to read only the first 10 pages of the Project Narrative and to ignore information on additional pages. The Project Narrative must repeat and answer each of the following eight questions ((a) through (h) below):

(a) What is the community and the need(s) to be served by the proposed project? This part of the narrative lays the foundation as to the significance of the proposed project.

Succinctly describe critical elements of the local food economy or food system, demographics, income, and geographic characteristics of the area to be served and any other pertinent information, such as the community's assets and needs.

(b) What organizations will be involved in carrying out the proposed project and which segments of the local food economy or system do they link? This information will inform the reviewers on the extent to which the community is involved.

Include a description of the relevant experience of the organizations, including the applicant organization, that will be involved, and any project history. Letters from the organizations involved acknowledging their support and contributions must be provided in an appendix to the proposal. Letters specifying the type and amount of support, where appropriate, are strongly encouraged, for this provides evidence of community involvement. Proposals should demonstrate extensive community linkages and coalitions.

(c) What are the goals or purposes to be achieved by the proposed project?

List these goals and/or purposes of the project and a justification for the goals in terms of the needs stated above.

(d) How will the goals be achieved?

Provide a systematic description of the approach by which the goals will be accomplished.

(e) What are the major milestones that will indicate progress toward achieving the project goals?

Provide a time line or description for accomplishing major project objectives.

(f) The legislation outlines three major objectives of the CFPCGP: (i) Meet the food needs of low-income people;

(ii) increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and

(iii) promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm and nutrition issues.

What measures will be used to assess project progress toward each of these three objectives? How will you assess whether or to what degree the project achieves these outcomes?

For example, an applicant may propose to develop a farmers' market in a low-income urban area, selling produce grown by farmers in the surrounding area, and employing staff from both the urban and rural communities. The goals may be to increase access to fresh produce by community residents (addresses objective (i), increase employment and the income of farmers (addresses objective (ii), and reduce the extent of poor nutrition among low-income residents (addresses objective (iii)). Possible outcome measures are the change in the consumption of produce by customers, the number of jobs created by the market, and the change in income experienced by the farmers supplying the market.

Community Food Project proposals should contain a strong evaluation component. Innovative evaluation strategies are especially encouraged. Evaluations should focus on the measurement of success in meeting the major objectives of the CFPCGP. As required by the statute, a national evaluation of the CFPCGP is being planned. Additional information on how the evaluation process will affect projects funded under the program will be provided in the future.

Through CFPCGP project operations and an evaluation of them, USDA also hopes to learn more about what happens to make such projects succeed, partially succeed, or fail. Therefore, proposals are encouraged that include both process evaluations (developing and monitoring indicators of progress towards the objectives) and outcome evaluations (to determine whether the objectives were

met). Applicants should seek the help of experts in evaluation design and implementation as appropriate.

(g) How does the proposed project address each of the following issues: (i) Development of innovative linkages and coalitions between two or more sectors of the food system;

(ii) support for entrepreneurial and job-training projects; and

(iii) encouragement of both short-term and long-term planning activities that encompass many agencies and organizations with different food security interests and missions in order to promote multi-system, interagency approaches?

Provide a description of how each of these issues, as appropriate, will be addressed. Entrepreneurial projects should provide evidence (e.g., in the form of a market analysis or the outline of a business plan) to demonstrate that it is likely to become self-sustaining and provide employees with important job skills.

(h) What are the plans for achieving self-sustainability?

Describe why a one-time infusion of Federal funds will be sufficient for the proposed Community Food Project to advance local capacity-building and deliver sustainability.

(6) Supplementary Considerations

In drafting the project narrative, applicants should keep in mind the intent of the program. Proposed projects should seek solutions rather than be focused on short-term food relief. They should seek comprehensive solutions to problems across all levels of the food system from producer to consumer. This point is emphasized because many proposals submitted previously were primarily for expanding applicant efforts in food relief and assistance, or for connecting established or partially established programs (such as community gardens and farmers' markets) with little evidence of strategic planning and participation by stakeholders in the proposed project design. Proposals must emphasize a food system and/or food security approach (i.e., an applicant must describe the large food-related picture in the community and the place of the proposed project within it). They must also show evidence of information sharing, coalition building, and substantial community linkages.

Applicants should be aware of several USDA policy themes and initiatives that have the potential to strengthen the impact and success of some community food projects. These include food recovery and gleaning efforts; connecting the low-income urban

consumer with the rural food producer; aiding citizens in leaving public assistance and achieving self-sufficiency; and utilizing micro enterprise and/or development projects related to community food needs. Relevant ongoing USDA and other Federal initiatives include farmers' markets; USDA's Office of Sustainable Development and Small Farms; USDA and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development designated Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities; and the AmeriCorps National Service Program (a potential source of staff support for Community Food Projects).

Applicants should also recognize the role played by food and nutrition assistance programs administered by USDA and may want to discuss in their proposals the utilization of these programs by the community and the connection to the proposed Community Food Project. These programs include: the Food Stamp Program; child nutrition programs such as the School Lunch, School Breakfast, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Supplemental Nutrition, Child and Adult Care Food, and Summer Food Service Programs; and commodity distribution programs.

Applicants also should be cognizant of resources available from other Federal programs with similar or related goals, such as the Community Food and Nutrition Program (CFNP) and Job Opportunities for Low-Income Individuals (JOLI) program administered by the Office of Community Services within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Some solutions to food access problems may come from beyond a community's own boundaries, since most food also comes from outside. However, wherever possible, Community Food Projects should support food systems based on strategies that improve the availability of high-quality locally or regionally produced foods to low-income people.

Community Food Projects are intended to bring together stakeholders from the distinct parts of the food system. Solutions to hunger and access to food should reflect a process that involves partnership building among the public, private nonprofit, and private for-profit sectors. Together, these parties can address issues such as: the capacity of the community to produce food and support local growers; the need for, and location of, grocery stores that market affordable, high quality food; transportation constraints; economic opportunities for residents to

increase income, thereby increasing access to high quality nutritious food; community development issues; the environment; and so on.

Community Food Projects should not be designed to merely support individual food pantries, farmers' markets, community gardens or other established projects. Rather, proposed Community Food Projects should build on these experiences and encourage innovative long-term efforts. A project should be designed to endure and outlive the one-time infusion of government and other matching funds. Community Food Projects should be intended to become self-supporting (or have a sustainable funding source) and expand or prove to be a replicable model.

The primary objectives of the CFPCGP are to increase the food self-reliance of communities; promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm and nutrition issues; develop innovative linkages between the public, for-profit, and nonprofit food sectors; and encourage long-term planning activities and multi-system inter-agency approaches. The following are some examples of these objectives in practice:

- Developing a working link between a food bank and area farmers to market fresh produce to a community through community-supported agriculture. Community members provide the financial support while the project develops links to institutions such as restaurants, food pantries, schools, and other institutions. The process increases community awareness and commitment to local agriculture, while providing farmers a local market for their goods, thereby expanding the supply of and access to high-quality food.

- Implementing a comprehensive strategic plan for a lower-income neighborhood to increase residents' access to high-quality, affordable food through farmers' markets, community gardens, supermarkets, and other food programs. Such a plan should include transportation assistance, business development, and/or neighborhood improvement. As with other sector planning, the community participates in identifying its food-related priorities and works with institutions through a collaborative interagency process to meet its objectives.

- Developing a system of community farm stands sponsored by neighborhood organizations and managed by youth that sell locally grown produce in low-income communities. The project provides skills training and/or jobs and aims to become self-supporting within a reasonable time. It increases participants' understanding of the food

system, including food production and distribution, expands interest in good nutrition, and provides entrepreneurial training opportunities for young people.

- A local food policy council may develop and implement a plan that creates several new food ventures, including a new supermarket in a low-income neighborhood. The council serves as the planning and coordinating entity that brings together local farmers, for-profit food operators such as restaurants, processors, and retailers with low-income neighborhood development organizations and job training groups, emergency food providers, city hall, and other community service entities.

- Developing a comprehensive community response to job and food needs by creating job opportunities in food-related activities that respond to the needs of local businesses, building technical expertise that leads to well-paid jobs. It will be necessary to bring together resources that facilitate the development of work skills, work ethics, education completion and that respond to community food and nutrition needs.

(7) Key Personnel

Identify the key personnel to be involved in the project, including the project director, if known. (An organizational chart may be included if available.) What is their relevant experience? Include resumes or vitae that provide adequate information for proposal reviewers to make an informed judgment as to the capabilities and experience of the key personnel. For new positions in the project or for positions that are currently unfilled, a job description should be provided.

(8) Budget

(a) Budget Form: Prepare the budget form in accordance with instructions provided with the form. A budget form is required for each year of requested support. In addition, a cumulative budget is required detailing the requested total support for the overall project period. (For example, for a three-year project, the proposal would include four budget forms; one for each of the three years of the project and one cumulative budget for the full three years.) A detailed line-item breakdown of matching contributions should be submitted on separate pages following each yearly budget and the cumulative budget. 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. Applicants must also include a budget narrative or explanation sheet to explain and justify their budgets.

The relative merits of each proposal are judged without initially considering proposed budgets. Once proposals are ranked based on the evaluation criteria, then budgets are closely examined. Thus, applicants should attach an explanation for all budget items to the budget form. Such information is useful to the reviewers and CSREES staff in making final budget recommendations to the Administrator.

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

(i) 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: (a) The name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (b) the name of the applicant organization; (c) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (d) the dollar amount of the cash donation; and (e) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period; and

(ii) 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: (a) The name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (b) the name of the applicant organization; (c) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (d) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the third party in-kind contribution; and (e) 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) The value of applicant contributions to the project shall be established in accordance with applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circulars A-110,

Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals and Other Non-profit Organizations, and A-122, Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations, for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

(9) Current and Pending Support

All proposals must list any 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 other 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. The application material includes Form CSREES-663, Current and Pending Support, which is suitable for listing current and pending support. Note that the project being proposed should be included in the proposed section of the form.

(10) 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 most cases, based on previously funded projects, the preparation of environmental data is not usually 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 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. This will be the case 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. However, this rarely occurs.

Part IV—Submission of a Proposal

A. What To Submit

An original and nine copies of the complete proposal must be submitted. Each copy of the proposal must be stapled in the upper left-hand corner. DO NOT BIND. In addition, submit 20 copies of the proposal's Project Summary. All copies of the proposal and Project Summary must be submitted in one package.

B. Where and When To Submit

Proposals must be received by June 4, 1999. Proposals that are hand-delivered, delivered by courier, or sent via overnight delivery services must be sent or delivered to:

Community Food Projects
Competitive Grants Program c/o
Proposal Services Unit,
Office of Extramural Programs,
USDA/CSREES, Room 303, Aerospace
Center, 901 D Street, SW, Washington,
DC 20024, Telephone: (202) 401-5048.

Note: Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit their completed proposals via overnight mail or delivery services to ensure timely receipt by the USDA.

Proposals sent via the U.S. Postal Service must be sent to the following address: Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program, c/o Proposal Services Unit, Office of Extramural Programs, USDA/CSREES, STOP 2245, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-2245, Telephone: (202) 401-5048.

C. Acknowledgment of Proposals

The receipt of all proposals will be acknowledged in writing and by e-mail, therefore applicants are encouraged to provide e-mail addresses, where designated, on the Form CSREES-661. The 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

Proposals must be received on or before June 4, 1999. Since the award process must be completed by September 30, 1999, applicants should submit fully developed proposals that meet all the requirements set forth in this RFP and have fully developed budgets as well. However, USDA does retain the right to conduct discussions with applicants to resolve technical and/or budget issues as it deems necessary.

Each proposal will be evaluated in a two-part process. First, each proposal will be screened to ensure it meets the basic eligibility requirements as set forth in this RFP. Proposals not meeting the requirements as set forth in this RFP will be returned without review. Second, each proposal that meets the eligibility requirements will be evaluated and judged on its merits by expert reviewers.

A number of individual experts will review and evaluate each proposal that is accepted for review basing their evaluation on the stated criteria. The reviewers will be selected from among those recognized as uniquely qualified by training and experience in their respective fields to render expert advice on the merit of proposals being reviewed. These reviewers will be drawn from a number of areas, among them government, universities, and other pertinent entities involved primarily in community food security organizations or activities. The views of the individual reviewers will be used by CSREES to determine which proposals will be recommended to the Administrator for funding.

Proposals will be ranked relative to all those received, and ranking will be based on how well the applicant answered the eight questions in the Project Narrative, the potential for achieving project goals and objectives, the extent to which appropriate community organizations are involved, and whether, in the judgment of the reviewers, the project will become self-sustaining. Final approval for those proposals recommended for an award will be made by the agency Administrator (or designee).

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular proposal or to make a specific number of awards. Care will be taken to avoid actual, potential, and/or the appearance of conflicts of interest among reviewers. Evaluations will be

confidential to USDA staff members, expert reviewers, and the project director(s), to the extent permitted by law.

B. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation of proposals will be based on the following criteria, weighted relative to each other, and assigned a point value, as noted in the parentheses following each criteria discussion.

(1) The degree to which the proposed project addresses the three statutory objectives of the CFPCGP, namely (i) meet the food needs of low-income people; (ii) increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and (iii) promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues (25 points);

(2) The food security problem(s) being discussed, including an informative description of the community, its characteristics, assets, and needs (10 points);

(3) The goals and purposes of the project and how these goals will be achieved. The Secretary, in accordance with the legislation authorizing this program, will give preference to proposed projects that include one or more of the following goals, which will be given equal weight: (i) Developing linkages between two or more sectors of the food system; (ii) supporting the development of entrepreneurial activities as part of the proposed project; (iii) developing innovative linkages between the for-profit and nonprofit food sectors; and (iv) encouraging long-term planning activities and multi-system, interagency approaches (25 points);

(4) A discussion of the organizations, including the applicant entity, to be involved in the proposed project, highlighting their relevant experience and extent of support. The extent to which an applicant private, nonprofit organization can demonstrate a history of commitment to and direct involvement in food security projects in low income communities or in communities with low income groups is an important evaluation element. The qualifications of staff involved with the proposed project and/or organizational leadership should reflect the expertise necessary to carry out the proposed activities or similar types of activities. Experience in and connections with the community will be considered as important as academic or professional credentials in this regard (15 points);

(5) The viability of plans for achieving self-sufficiency with a one-time infusion of federal funds (15 points);

(6) The strength of the proposed project's evaluation component (8 points); and

(7) The time line for accomplishing project goals and objectives (2 points).

Part VI—Supplementary Information

A. Access To Review Information

Copies of summary reviews will be sent to all applicant project directors automatically, as soon as possible after the review process has been completed. The identity of the individual expert reviewers will not be provided.

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 under the 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 practical 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, the regulations, 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 as part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this part if such information has not been provided previously under this or another program for which the sponsoring agency is responsible. 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 recompetition 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.

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.

CSREES will award standard grants to carry out this program. A standard grant is a funding mechanism whereby CSREES agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined time period without additional support at a future date.

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) Performance Reporting Requirements

The grantee must prepare an annual report that details all significant activities towards achieving the goals and objectives of the project. The narrative should be succinct and be no longer than five pages, using 12-point, single-spaced type.

(3) 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 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 awarding official of CSREES prior to effecting such changes.

(d) 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 involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles or the Departmental regulations, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of a grant.

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—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.
- 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. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR part 3016—Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments.

7 CFR part 3017—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants).

7 CFR part 3018—USDA implementation of 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 Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR part 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-profit Organizations.

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

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.

F. Evaluation of Program

Section 25(h) of the Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended, requires USDA to provide for an evaluation of the success of community food projects supported under this authority. All grantees shall be expected to assist USDA by providing relevant information on their respective projects.

Applicants need to plan for their own internal self-assessments and evaluations to measure the effectiveness of each project.

G. Stakeholder Input

CSREES has determined that this program is not an agricultural research, extension, or education program for the purposes of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 ("1998 Act"), 7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2). Therefore, CSREES is not required by statute to solicit stakeholder input regarding this RFP. CSREES, however, always welcomes constructive comments from interested parties regarding an RFP or particular program. Such comments for this program may be sent to the contact listed in the preamble of this notice.

Done at Washington, DC, this 14th day of April 1999.

Colien Hefferan,

Acting Administrator, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service.
[FR Doc. 99-9820 Filed 4-19-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-22-P