

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Cooperative State Research,
Education, and Extension Service****Request for Proposals (RFP): Special
Research Grants Program, Potato
Research**

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

ACTION: Notice of request for proposals and request for input.

SUMMARY: The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) announces the availability of grant funds and requests proposals for the Special Research Grants Program, Potato Research for fiscal year (FY) 2000. Subject to the availability of funds, the anticipated amount available for support of this program in FY 2000 is \$1,300,000.

This notice sets out the objectives for these projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, the application procedures, and the set of instructions needed to apply for a Potato Research Project grant.

CSREES also is soliciting comments regarding this request for proposals from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next request for proposals for this program. Such comments will be used in meeting the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998, (AREERA).

DATES: All proposals must be received at USDA on or before April 3, 2000. Proposals not received on or before this date will not be considered for funding.

User comments are requested within six months from the issuance of the request for proposals (RFP). Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable (see Part VII. G.).

ADDRESSES: Proposals should be submitted to the following mailing address: Special Research Grants Program, Potato Research; c/o Proposal Services Unit; Office of Extramural Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2245; 1400 Independence Ave., SW; Washington DC 20250-2245.

The address for hand-delivered proposals or proposals submitted using an express mail or overnight courier service is: Special Research Grants Program, Potato Research; c/o Proposal Services Unit; Office of Extramural Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S.

Department of Agriculture; Room 303, Aerospace Center; 901 D Street, SW; Washington DC 20024. Telephone: (202) 401-5048.

Written user comments should be submitted by mail to: Policy and Program Liaison Staff; Office of Extramural Programs; USDA-CSREES; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: RFP-OEP@reeusda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving stakeholder input comments regarding this RFP, and not for requesting information or forms.)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. James Parochetti; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2220; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2220; telephone: (202) 401-4354; Internet: jparochetti@reeusda.gov.

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Part I—General Information*A. Legislative Authority*

The authority for this program is contained in section (c)(1)(B) of the Competitive, Special, and Facilities Research Grant Act, in section 2 of Pub. L. No. 89-106, as amended (7 U.S.C. 450i(c)(1)(B)). Only section 3400.1, Applicability of regulations, Subpart C, Peer and Merit Review Arranged by Grantees, and Subpart D, Annual Reports of the administrative regulations at 7 CFR part 3400 for Special Grants Programs awarded under the authority of section 2(c) of this Act (7 U.S.C. 450i(c)) apply to grants solicited and awarded under subsection 2(c)(1)(B).

In accordance with the statutory authority, grants awarded under this program will be for the purpose of facilitating or expanding ongoing State-Federal food and agricultural research programs that—(i) promote excellence in research on a regional and national level; (ii) promote the development of regional research centers; (iii) promote the research partnership between the Department of Agriculture, colleges and universities, research foundations, and State agricultural experiment stations for regional research efforts; and (iv) facilitate coordination and cooperation of research among States through regional research grants.

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 (CSREES) and any other officer or employee of the Department to whom the authority involved is delegated.

(2) *Authorized departmental officer (ADO)* 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 (AOR)* means the

president, director, or chief executive officer or other designated official 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) *Department or USDA* means the United States Department of Agriculture.

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

(7) *Peer review panel* means an assembled group of experts or consultants qualified by training and experience in particular scientific or technical fields to give expert advice on the scientific and technical merit of grant applications in those fields.

(8) *Principal Investigator/Project Director* means the single individual designated in the grant application and approved by the Secretary who is responsible for the direction and management of the project. Note that a proposal may have multiple secondary co-principal investigators/project directors but only one principal investigator/project director.

(9) *Prior approval* means written approval evidencing prior consent by an ADO as defined in (2) above.

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

(11) *Project period* means the total length of time that is approved by the Administrator for conducting the research project, as stated in the award document, during which Federal sponsorship begins and ends.

(12) *Scientific peer review* means an evaluation of a proposed project for technical quality and relevance to regional or national goals performed by experts with the scientific knowledge and technical skills to conduct the proposed research work. Peer reviewers may be selected from an applicant organization or from outside the organization, but shall not include principals, collaborators or others involved in the preparation of the application under review.

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

C. Eligibility

Proposals may be submitted by State agricultural experiment stations, land-grant colleges and universities, research foundations established by land-grant colleges and universities, colleges and

universities receiving funds under the Act of October 10, 1962, as amended (16 U.S.C. 582a *et seq.*), and accredited schools or colleges of veterinary medicine. The proposals must be directly related to potato varietal development/testing. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, other factors may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal assistance under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension, a determination of non-responsibility based on submitted organizational management information, etc.).

Part II—Program Description

A. Purpose of the Program

Proposals are invited for competitive grant awards under the Special Research Grants Program, Potato Research for FY 2000. The purpose of this grant program is to support potato research that focuses on varietal development/testing. As used herein, varietal development/testing is research using traditional and biotechnological genetics to develop improved potato variety(ies). Aspects of evaluation, screening and testing must support or complement the development of improved varieties. This program is administered by CSREES of USDA.

B. Available Funds and Award Limitations

Funds will be awarded on a competitive basis to support regional research projects that are composed of potato research that focuses on varietal development/testing. For purposes of this program, regional research means research having application beyond the immediate State in which the awardee resides and performs the project. The anticipated amount of funds available in FY 2000 for support of this program is approximately \$1,300,000. Each proposal submitted in FY 2000 shall request funding for a period not to exceed one year. Funding for additional years will depend upon the availability of funds and progress toward objectives. FY 2000 awardees would need to re-compete in future years for additional funding.

Under this program, the Secretary may extend grant awards for the support of research projects for up to three years to further the program.

C. Applicant Peer Review Requirements

Subsection (c)(5) of the Competitive, Special, and Facilities Research Grant Act, as amended (7 U.S.C. 450i(c)(5)) requires applicants to conduct a scientific peer review of a proposed research project in accordance with

regulations promulgated by the Secretary prior to the Secretary making a grant award under this authority. Regulations implementing this requirement are set forth in 7 CFR 3400.20. The regulations impose the following requirements for scientific peer review by applicants of proposed research projects:

1. Credible and independent. Review arranged by the grantee must provide for a credible and independent assessment of the proposed project. A credible review is one that provides an appraisal of technical quality and relevance sufficient for an organizational representative to make an informed judgment as to whether the proposal is appropriate for submission for Federal support. To provide for an independent review, such review may include USDA employees, but should not be conducted solely by USDA employees.

2. Notice of completion and retention of records. A notice of completion of the review shall be conveyed in writing to CSREES either as part of the submitted proposal or prior to the issuance of an award, at the option of CSREES (see Part III. Q.). The written notice constitutes certification by the applicant that a review in compliance with these regulations has occurred. Applicants are not required to submit results of the review to CSREES; however, proper documentation of the review process and results should be retained by the applicant.

3. Renewal and supplemental grants. Review by the grantee is not automatically required for renewal or supplemental grants as defined in 7 CFR 3400.6. A subsequent grant award will require a new review if, according to CSREES, either the funded project has changed significantly, other scientific discoveries have affected the project, or the need for the project has changed. Note that a new review is necessary when applying for another standard or continuation grant after expiration of the grant term.

Part III—Content of a Proposal

All proposals must contain the following forms and narrative information to assist CSREES personnel during the review and award processes:

A. Application for Funding (Form CSREES-661)

Each copy of each grant proposal must contain an Application for Funding, (Form CSREES-661). One copy of the application, preferably the original, must contain the pen-and-ink signature(s) of the proposing principal investigator(s)/project director(s) and the AOR who possesses the necessary

authority to commit the organization's time and other relevant resources to the project. Any proposed principal investigator or co-principal investigator whose signature does not appear on Form CSREES-661 will not be listed on any resulting grant award. Complete both signature blocks located at the bottom of the Application for Funding form.

Form CSREES-661 serves as a source document for the CSREES grant database; it is therefore important that it be completed accurately. The following items are highlighted as having a high potential for errors or misinterpretations:

1. Title of Project (Block 6). The title of the project must be brief (80-character maximum), yet represent the major thrust of the effort being proposed. Project titles are read by a variety of nonscientific people; therefore, highly technical words or phraseology should be avoided where possible. In addition, introductory phrases such as "investigation of" or "research on" should not be used.

2. Program to Which You Are Applying (Block 7). "Special Research Grants Program, Potato Research" should be inserted in this block. You may ignore the reference to a **Federal Register** announcement.

3. Program Area and Number (Block 8). The name of the program area, "Potato Research," should be inserted in this block. You should ignore references to the program number and the **Federal Register** announcement.

4. Type of Request (Block 13). If the project being proposed is a renewal of a grant that has been supported under the same program at any time during the previous five fiscal years, it is important that you show the latest grant number assigned to the project by CSREES.

5. Principal Investigator(s)/Project Director(s) (Block 15). The designation of excessive numbers of co-principal investigators creates problems during final review and award processes. Listing multiple co-principal investigators, beyond those required for genuine collaboration, is therefore discouraged.

6. Type of Performing Organization (Block 18). A check should be placed in the box beside the type of organization which actually will carry out the effort. For example, if the proposal is being submitted by an 1862 Land-Grant institution but the work will be performed in a department, laboratory, or other organizational unit of an agricultural experiment station, box "03" should be checked. If portions of the effort are to be performed in several departments, check the box that applies

to the individual listed as PI/PD #1 in Block 15.a.

7. Other Possible Sponsors (Block 22). List the names or acronyms of all other public or private sponsors including other agencies within USDA and other programs funded by CSREES to whom your application has been or might be sent. In the event you decide to send your application to another organization or agency at a later date, you must inform the identified CSREES program manager as soon as practicable. Submitting your proposal to other potential sponsors will not prejudice its review by CSREES; however, duplicate support for the same project will not be provided.

B. Table of Contents

For consistency and ease of locating information, each proposal submitted should contain a Table of Contents.

C. Objectives

Clear, concise, complete, and logically arranged statement(s) of the specific aims of the proposed effort must be included in all proposals. For renewal applications, a restatement of the objectives outlined in the active grant also should be provided.

D. Progress Report

If the proposal is a renewal of an existing project supported under the same program, include a clearly identified summary progress report describing the results to date. The progress report should contain the following information:

1. A comparison of actual accomplishments with the goals established for the active grant;
2. The reasons for slippage if established goals were not met; and
3. Other pertinent information, including, when appropriate, cost analysis and explanation of cost overruns or unexpectedly high unit costs.

E. Procedures

The procedures or methodology to be applied to the proposed effort should be explicitly stated. This section should include but not necessarily be limited to:

1. A description of the proposed investigations and/or experiments in the sequence in which it is planned to carry them out;
2. Techniques to be employed, including their feasibility;
3. Kinds of results expected;
4. Means by which data will be analyzed or interpreted;
5. Pitfalls which might be encountered; and

6. Limitations to proposed procedures.

F. Justification

This section should include in-depth information on the following, when applicable:

1. Estimates of the magnitude of the problem and its relevance to ongoing State-Federal food and agricultural research programs;
2. Importance of starting the work during the current fiscal year; and
3. Reasons for having the work performed by the proposing institution.

G. Cooperation and Institutional Units Involved

Cooperative and multi-state applications are encouraged. Identify each institutional unit contributing to the project. Identify each State in a multiple-state proposal and designate the lead State. When appropriate, the project should be coordinated with the efforts of other State and/or national programs. Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each institutional unit of the project team, if applicable.

H. Literature Review

A summary of pertinent publications with emphasis on their relationship to the effort being proposed should be provided and should include all important and recent publications from other institutions, as well as those from the applicant institution. The citations themselves should be accurate, complete, and written in an acceptable journal format.

I. Current Work

Current unpublished institutional activities to date in the program area under which the proposal is being submitted should be described.

J. Facilities and Equipment

All facilities which are available for use or assignment to the project during the requested period of support should be reported and described briefly. Any potentially hazardous materials, procedures, situations, or activities, whether or not directly related to a particular phase of the effort, must be explained fully, along with an outline of precautions to be exercised. Examples include work with toxic chemicals and experiments that may put human subjects or animals at risk.

All items of major instrumentation available for use or assignment to the proposed project also should be itemized. In addition, items of nonexpendable equipment needed to conduct and bring the project to a successful conclusion should be listed,

including dollar amounts and, if funds are requested for their acquisition, justified.

K. Project Timetable

The proposal should outline all important phases as a function of time, year by year, for the entire project, including periods beyond the grant funding period.

L. Personnel Support

All senior personnel who are expected to be involved in the effort must be clearly identified. For each person, the following should be included:

1. An estimate of the time commitment involved;
2. Vitae of the principal investigator(s), senior associate(s), and other professional personnel. This section should include vitae of all key persons who are expected to work on the project, whether or not CSREES funds are sought for their support. Each vita should be limited to two (2) pages each in length, excluding publications listings; and
3. A chronological listing of the most representative publications during the past five years. This listing must be provided for each professional project member for whom a vita appears. Authors should be listed in the same order as they appear on each paper cited, along with the title and complete reference as these usually appear in journals.

M. Collaborative and/or Subcontractual Arrangements

If it will be necessary to enter into formal consulting or collaborative arrangements with other individuals or organizations, such arrangements should be fully explained and justified. For purposes of proposal development, informal day-to-day contacts between key project personnel and outside experts are not considered to be collaborative arrangements and thus do not need to be detailed.

All anticipated subcontractual arrangements should be explained and justified in this section. A proposed statement of work, a budget, and a budget narrative for each arrangement involving the transfer of substantive programmatic work or the providing of financial assistance to a third party must be provided. Agreements between departments or other units of your own institution and minor arrangements with entities outside of your institution (e.g., requests for outside laboratory analyses) are excluded from this requirement.

If you expect to enter into subcontractual arrangements, please note that the provisions contained in 7 CFR part 3019, USDA Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations, and the general provisions contained in 7 CFR part 3015.205, USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, flow down to subrecipients. In addition, required clauses from 7 CFR part 3019 Sections 40–48 (Procurement Standards) and Appendix A (Contract Provisions) should be included in final contractual documents, and it is necessary for the subawardee to make a certification relating to debarment/suspension. This latter requirement is explained further under subsection Q. of these guidelines.

N. Budget (Form CSREES–55)

Each proposal must contain a detailed budget (Form CSREES–55) for up to 12 months of support. Funds may be requested under any of the categories listed on the budget form, provided that the item or service for which support is sought is allowable under the enabling legislation and the applicable Federal cost principles and can be identified as necessary and reasonable for the successful conduct of the project.

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

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. Salary funds requested must be consistent with the normal policies of the institution and with OMB Circular No. A–21, Cost Principles for Educational Institutions. Administrative and Clerical salaries are normally classified as indirect costs. (See Item 9. below.) However, if requested under A.2.e., they must be fully justified.

Note: In accordance with Section 1473 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended, 7 U.S.C. 3319, tuition remission is not an allowable cost under Section 2(c)(1)(B) projects, and no funds will be approved for this purpose.

2. Fringe Benefits. Funds may be requested for fringe benefit costs if the usual accounting practices of your institution provide that institutional 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. See OMB Circular No. A–21, Cost Principles for Educational Institutions, for further guidance in this area.

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. However, consistent with recipient policy, lower limits may be established. As such, items of necessary instrumentation or other nonexpendable equipment should be listed individually by description and estimated cost. This applies to revised budgets as well, as the equipment item(s) and amount(s) may change.

Note: For projects awarded under the authority of Sec. 2(c)(1)(B), no funds will be awarded for the renovation or refurbishment of research spaces; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such spaces; or for the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of a building or facility.

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 specified. Funds may be requested for field work or for travel to professional meetings. In the budget narrative, for both domestic and foreign travel, provide the purpose, the destination, method of travel, number of persons traveling, number of days, and estimated cost for each trip. If details of each trip are not known at the time of proposal submission, provide the basis for determining the amount requested.

Travel and subsistence should be in accordance with organizational policy. Irrespective of the organizational policy, allowances for airfare will not normally exceed round trip jet economy air accommodations. Please note that 7 CFR Part 3015.205 is applicable to air travel.

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 applies to revised budgets as well, as the item(s) and dollar amount(s) may change. Examples may include space rental at remote locations, subcontractual costs, charges for consulting services, telephone, facsimile, e-mail, shipping costs, and fees for necessary laboratory analyses. 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. Pursuant to Section 1473 of the National Agriculture Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended, 7 U.S.C. 3319, indirect costs are not allowable costs under Section 2(c)(1)(B) projects, and no funds will be approved for this purpose. Further, costs that are a part of an institution's indirect cost pool (e.g., administrative or clerical salaries) may not be reclassified as direct costs for the purpose of making them allowable.

10. Cost-sharing. Cost-sharing is encouraged; however, cost-sharing is not required nor will it be a direct factor in the awarding of any grant.

O. Budget Narrative

All budget categories for which support is requested, must be individually listed (with costs) and justified on a separate sheet of paper and placed immediately behind the Budget Form.

P. Current and Pending Support (Form CSREES-663)

All proposals must contain Form CSREES-663 listing this proposal and any other current or pending support to which key project personnel have committed or are expected to commit portions of their time, whether or not salary support for the person(s) involved is included in the budget for each project. This proposal should be identified in the pending section of this form.

Q. Assurance Statement(s) (Form CSREES-662)

A number of situations encountered in the conduct of projects require special assurance, 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 include 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 signatory 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 (Assurance Statement(s)). 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 and all signatory 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 established 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.

R. Peer Review Certification

By signing the Application for Funding form, the AOR of the applicant institution is providing the required certification that the full proposal has received a credible and independent peer review arranged by the institution (see Part II. C.).

S. Other Certifications

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 certification forms are included in this application package for informational purposes only. These forms should not be submitted with your proposal since by signing the Form CSREES-661 your organization is providing the required certifications.

If the project will involve a subcontractor or consultant, the subcontractor/consultant should submit a Form AD-1048 to the grantee organization for retention in their records. This form should not be submitted to USDA.

T. Compliance With the National Environmental Policy Act

As outlined in 7 CFR part 3407 (CSREES's implementing regulations of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*)), environmental data or documentation for the proposed project is to be provided to CSREES in order to assist CSREES in carrying out its responsibilities under NEPA. These responsibilities include determining whether the project requires an Environmental Assessment (EA) or an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or whether it can be excluded from this requirement on the basis of several categorical exclusions listed in 7 CFR 3407.6. To assist CSREES in this determination, the applicant should review the categories defined for exclusion to ascertain whether the

proposed project may fall within one of the exclusions.

Form CSREES-1234, NEPA Exclusions Form (copy in Application Kit), indicating the applicant's opinion of whether or not the project falls within one or more categorical exclusions, along with supporting documentation, must be included in the proposal. The information submitted in association with NEPA compliance should be identified in the Table of Contents as "NEPA Considerations" and Form CSREES-1234 and supporting documentation should be placed after the Form CSREES-661, Application for Funding, in the proposal.

Even though the applicant considers that a proposed project may fall within a categorical exclusion, CSREES may determine that an EA or an EIS is necessary for an activity if substantial controversy on environmental grounds exists or if other extraordinary conditions or circumstances are present that may cause such activity to have a significant environmental effect.

U. Additions to Project Description

Each project description is expected to be complete in itself. However, in those instances in which the inclusion of additional information is necessary, the number of copies submitted should match the number of copies of the application requested in Part V.A. below. Each set of such materials must be identified with the title of the project and the name(s) of the principal investigator(s)/project director(s) as they appear on the "Application for Funding." Examples of additional materials include photographs that do not reproduce well, reprints, and other pertinent materials which are deemed to be unsuitable for inclusion in the body of the proposal.

Part IV—How To Obtain Application Materials

Copies of this request for proposals and the Application Kit may be obtained by writing to the address or calling the telephone number which follows: Proposal Services Unit, Office of Extramural Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2245; 1400 Independence Ave., SW; Washington DC 20250-2245; Telephone: (202) 401-5048. When contacting the Proposal Services Unit, please indicate that you are requesting forms for the Special Research Grants Program, Potato Research.

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 which states that you want a copy of the application materials for the FY 2000 Special Research Grants Program, Potato Research. The materials will then be mailed to you (not e-mailed) as quickly as possible.

Part V—Submission of a Proposal

A. What To Submit

An original and 18 copies of each grant proposal must be submitted. Proposals should contain all requested information when submitted. Each proposal should be typed on 8 1/2" x 11" white paper, single-spaced, and on one side of the page only. Please note that the text of the proposal should be prepared using no type smaller than 12 point font size and one-inch margins. It would be helpful if the name of the submitting institution were typed at the top of each page for easy identification in the event the proposal becomes disassembled while being reviewed. Staple each copy of the proposal in the upper left-hand corner. Please do not bind copies of the proposal.

B. Where and When To Submit

Proposals must be received on or before April 3, 2000, and submitted to the following mailing address: Special Research Grants Program, Potato Research; c/o Proposal Services Unit; Office of Extramural Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2245; 1400 Independence Ave., SW; 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: Special Research Grants Program, Potato Research; c/o Proposal Services Unit, Office of Extramural Programs; CSREES/USDA; Room 303, Aerospace Center; 901 D Street, SW; Washington, DC 20024. The telephone number is (202) 401-5048.

C. Acknowledgment of Proposals

The receipt of all proposals will be acknowledged in writing or via the Internet (e-mail). Therefore, it is important to include your e-mail address on Form CSREES-712 when applicable. This acknowledgment will contain a proposal identification number. Once your proposal has been assigned a proposal number, please cite that number in future correspondence.

Part VI—CSREES Selection Process and Evaluation Criteria

A. Selection Process

Applicants should submit fully developed proposals that meet all the

requirements set forth in this request for proposals.

Each proposal will be evaluated in a two-part process. First, each proposal will be screened to ensure that it meets the requirements as set forth in this request for proposals. Second, proposals that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a scientific peer review panel.

The individual panel members will be selected from among those persons recognized as specialists who are uniquely qualified by training and experience in their respective fields to render expert advice on the merit of the proposals being reviewed. The individual views of the panel members will be used to determine which proposals should be recommended to the Administrator (or his designee) for final funding decisions.

There is no commitment by CSREES to fund any particular proposal or to make a specific number of awards. Care will be taken to avoid actual and potential conflicts of interest among reviewers. Evaluations will be confidential to CSREES staff members, peer reviewers, and the proposed principal investigator(s), to the extent permitted by law.

B. Evaluation Criteria

1. Overall scientific and technical quality of the proposal—10 points.
2. Scientific and technical quality of the approach—10 points.
3. Relevance and importance of proposed research to solution of specific areas of inquiry, and application of expected results for States beyond the State in which the grantee resides and will perform the work—30 points.
4. Feasibility of attaining objectives; adequacy of professional training and experience, facilities and equipment; the cooperation and involvement of multiple institutions or states—50 points.

Part VII—Supplementary Information

A. Access to CSREES Scientific Peer Review Information

After final decisions have been announced, CSREES will, upon request, inform the principal investigator of the reasons for its decision on a proposal.

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 area 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. 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, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's assistance regulations (Parts 3015 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 if such information has not been provided previously under this or another program for which the sponsoring agency, CSREES, is responsible. Copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling the requirements contained in this section will be provided by CSREES as part of the pre-award process.

3. Grant Award Document: 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 this program;
- b. Title of Project;
- c. Name(s) and address(es) of principal investigator(s) chosen to direct and control approved activities;
- d. Grant identification 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 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.

5. 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 any guarantee of additional support at a future date.

c. Use of Funds; Changes

Unless otherwise stipulated in the terms and conditions of the grant award, the following provisions apply:

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, principal investigator(s), or other key project personnel in the approved research 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 principal investigator(s) are uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the 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. 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 1.1—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—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—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 Nonprofit 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 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and 7 CFR Part 15d (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 CSREES'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 CSREES 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. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule-related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29115, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, as amended (44 U.S.C.

chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0022.

G. Stakeholder Input

CSREES is soliciting comments regarding this solicitation of applications from any interested party. In your comments, please include the name of the program and the fiscal year of the request for proposals to which you are responding. These comments will be considered in the development

of the next request for proposals for the program. Such comments will be used in meeting the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of AREERA, 7 U.S.C. 7613(c). Comments should be submitted as provided for in the **ADDRESSES** and **DATES** portions of this Notice.

Done at Washington, D.C., this 28th day of February, 2000.

Charles W. Laughlin,

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

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