

**Subpart A—Application for
Federal Assistance**

**§ 415.1 Competition in the awarding of
discretionary grants and coopera-
tive agreements.**

(a) *Standards for competition.* Except as provided in paragraph (d) of this section, awarding agencies shall enter into discretionary grants and cooperative agreements only after competition. An awarding agency's competitive award process shall adhere to the following standards:

(1) Potential applicants must be invited to submit proposals through publications such as the FEDERAL REGISTER, OMB-designated government-wide website as described in 2 CFR 200.204, professional trade journals, agency or program handbooks, the Assistance Listings, or any other appropriate means of solicitation. In so doing, awarding agencies should consider the broadest dissemination of project solicitations in order to reach the highest number of potential applicants.

(2) Proposals are to be evaluated objectively by independent reviewers in accordance with written criteria set forth by the awarding agency. Reviewers should make written comments, as appropriate, on each application. Independent reviewers may be from the private sector, another agency, or within the awarding agency, as long as they do not include anyone who has approval authority for the applications being reviewed or anyone who might appear to have a conflict of interest in the role of reviewer of applications. A conflict of interest might arise when the reviewer or the reviewer's immediate family members have been associated with the applicant or applicant organization within the past two years as an owner, partner, officer, director, employee, or consultant; has any financial interest in the applicant or applicant organization; or is negotiating for, or has any arrangement, concerning prospective employment.

(3) An unsolicited application, which is not unique and innovative, shall be competed under the project solicitation it comes closest to fitting. Awarding agency officials will determine the solicitation under which the applica-

tion is to be evaluated. When the awarding agency official decides that the unsolicited application does not fall under a recent, current, or planned solicitation, a noncompetitive award may be made, if appropriate to do so under the criteria of this section. Otherwise, the application should be returned to the applicant.

(b) *Project solicitations.* A project solicitation by the awarding agency shall include or reference the following, as appropriate:

(1) A description of the eligible activities which the awarding agency proposes to support and the program priorities;

(2) Eligible applicants;

(3) The dates and amounts of funds expected to be available for awards;

(4) Evaluation criteria and weights, if appropriate, assigned to each;

(5) Methods for evaluating and ranking applications;

(6) Name and address where proposals should be mailed or emailed and submission deadline(s);

(7) Any required forms and how to obtain them;

(8) Applicable cost principles and administrative requirements;

(9) Type of funding instrument intended to be used (grant or cooperative agreement); and

(10) The Assistance Listings number and title.

(c) *Approval of applications.* The final decision to award is at the discretion of the awarding/approving official in each agency. The awarding/approving official shall consider the ranking, comments, and recommendations from the independent review group, and any other pertinent information before deciding which applications to approve and their order of approval. Any appeals by applicants regarding the award decision shall be handled by the awarding agency using existing agency appeal procedures or good administrative practice and sound business judgment.

(d) *Exceptions.* The awarding/approving official may make a determination in writing that competition is not deemed appropriate for a particular transaction. Such determination shall be limited to transactions where it can

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be adequately justified that a non-competitive award is in the best interest of the Government and necessary to the accomplishment of the goals of the program. Reasons for considering non-competitive awards may include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- (1) Nonmonetary awards of property or services;
- (2) Awards of less than \$75,000;
- (3) Awards to fund continuing work already started under a previous award;
- (4) Awards which cannot be delayed due to an emergency or a substantial danger to health or safety;
- (5) Awards when it is impracticable to secure competition; or
- (6) Awards to fund unique and innovative unsolicited applications.

[79 FR 75982, Dec. 19, 2014, as amended at 85 FR 72912, Nov. 16, 2020]

Subpart B—Miscellaneous

§415.2 Acknowledgement of USDA Support on Publications and Audiovisuals.

(a) *Definitions.* (1) “Audiovisual” means a product containing visual imagery or sound or both. Examples of audiovisuals are motion pictures, live or prerecorded radio or television programs, slide shows, filmstrips, audio recordings, and multimedia presentations.

(2) “Production of an audiovisual” means any of the steps that lead to a finished audiovisual, including design, layout, script-writing, filming, editing, fabrication, sound recording or taping. The term does not include the placing of captions for the hearing impaired on films or videotapes not originally produced for use with the hearing impaired.

(3) “Publication” means a published book, periodical, pamphlet, brochure, flier, or similar item. It does not include any audiovisuals.

(b) *Publications.* Recipients shall have an acknowledgement of USDA awarding agency support placed on any publications written or published with grant support and, if feasible, on any publication reporting the results of, or describing, a grant-supported activity.

(c) *Audiovisuals.* Recipients shall have an acknowledgement of USDA awarding agency support placed on any audiovisual which is produced with grant support and which has a direct production cost to the recipient of over \$5,000. Unless the other provisions of the grant award make it apply, this requirement does not apply to:

(1) Audiovisuals produced as research instruments or for documenting experimentation or findings and not intended for presentation or distribution to the general public.

(2) [Reserved]

(d) *Waivers.* USDA awarding agencies may waive any requirement of this section.

Subpart C—Intergovernmental Review of Department of Agriculture Programs and Activities

§415.3 Purpose.

(a) The regulations in this part implement Executive Order 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs”, issued July 14, 1982, and amended on April 8, 1983. These regulations also implement applicable provisions of section 401 of the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act of 1968 and section 204 of the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966.

(b) These regulations are intended to foster an intergovernmental partnership and a strengthened Federalism by relying on State processes and on State, areawide, regional and local coordination for review of proposed Federal financial assistance and direct Federal development.

(c) The regulations are intended to aid the internal management of the Department, and are not intended to create any right or benefit enforceable at law by a party against the Department or its officers.

§415.4 Definitions.

As used in this part, the following definitions apply:

Department means the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Order means Executive Order 12372, issued July 14, 1982, and amended April