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(3) *Strengthening Awards*. Applicants that are eligible for any grant under this part may also be eligible for Equipment Grants, Research Career Enhancement Awards, Seed Grants, and Strengthening Standard Research Project Awards pursuant to Sections 2(b)(3) (D) and (F) of the Act of August 4, 1965, as amended, subject to the following limitations on such eligibility:

(i) *Equipment Grants*. The following organizations are ineligible to apply for Equipment grants:

(A) Institutions which are among the top 100 universities and colleges for receiving Federal funds for science and engineering research as specified in the annual program solicitation; or

(B) non-degree granting institutions.

(ii) *Research Career Enhancement Awards, Seed Grants, and Strengthening Standard Research Project Awards*. The following eligibility requirements apply to Research Career Enhancement Awards, Seed Grants, and Strengthening Standard Research Project Awards:

(A) The Project Director listed on the Application For Funding must be from a small or mid-sized institution that is not among the top 100 universities and colleges for receiving Federal funds for science and engineering research as specified in the annual program solicitation or must be from an institution located in a USDA-EPSCoR state.

(B) Every investigator listed on the Application For Funding must have an appointment at a degree granting institution.

[56 FR 57952, Nov. 14, 1991. Redesignated and amended at 60 FR 63368, 63369, Dec. 8, 1995; 71 FR 54896, Sept. 20, 2006]

§ 3411.4 How to apply for a grant.

(a) Program solicitations will be prepared and announced through publication on the government-wide funding opportunities Web site (<http://www.grants.gov>) as early as practicable each fiscal year. It will contain information sufficient to enable all eligible applicants to prepare competitive grant proposals and will be as complete as possible with respect to:

(1) Descriptions of the specific research areas and the categories of competitive grants to improve research capabilities that the Department pro-

poses to support during the fiscal year involved, including anticipated funds to be awarded;

(2) Eligibility requirements;

(3) Obtaining application kits;

(4) Deadline dates for receipt of proposal packages;

(5) Submission addresses;

(6) Number of copies to submit;

(7) Special requirements.

(b) *NRICGP Application Kit*. A NRICGP Application Kit will be made available to any potential grant applicant who requests a copy. This kit contains required forms, certifications, and instructions applicable to the submission of grant proposals.

(c) *Format for grant proposals*. Specific instructions regarding page length, type of print, size of paper, and order of assembly, etc., of proposals will be provided in the program solicitation. However, unless otherwise stated in the program solicitation, the following general format applies:

(1) *Application for Funding form*. All grant proposals submitted by eligible applicants should contain an Application for Funding form, which must be signed by the proposing principal investigator(s) and endorsed by the cognizant authorized organizational representative who possesses the necessary authority to commit the applicant's time and other relevant resources. Investigators who do not sign the cover sheet will not be listed on the grant document in the event an award is made. The title of the proposal must be brief (80-character maximum), yet represent the major thrust of the project. Because this title will be used to provide information to those who may not be familiar with the proposed project, highly technical words or phraseology should be avoided where possible. In addition, phrases such as "investigation of" or "research on" should not be used.

(2) *Project Summary*. Each proposal must contain a project summary. This summary is not intended for the general reader; consequently, it may contain technical language comprehensible by persons in disciplines relating to the food and agricultural sciences. The project summary should be a self-contained, specific description of the

activity to be undertaken and should focus on:

- (i) Overall project goal(s) and supporting objectives;
- (ii) Plans to accomplish project goal(s); and
- (iii) Relevance of the project to potential long-range improvements in and sustainability of United States agriculture or to one or more of the research purposes contained in §3411.15 of this part.

(3) *Project Description.* The specific aims of the project must be included in all proposals. The text of the project description may not exceed 18 single- or double-spaced pages and must contain the following components:

(i) *Introduction.* A clear statement of the long-term goal(s) and supporting objectives of the proposed project should preface the project description. The most significant published work in the field under consideration, including the work of key project personnel on the current application, should be reviewed. The current status of research in the particular field of sciences also should be described. All work cited, including that of key personnel, should be referenced.

(ii) *Progress Report.* If the proposal is a renewal of an existing project supported under this program (or its predecessor), include a clearly marked performance report describing results to date from the previous award. This section should contain the following information:

(A) A comparison of actual accomplishments with the goals established for the previous award;

(B) The reasons established goals were not met, if applicable; and

(C) A listing of any publications resulting from the award. Copies of reprints or preprints may be appended to the proposal if desired.

(iii) *Rationale and Significance.* Present concisely the rationale behind the proposed project. The objectives' specific relationship to potential long-range improvements in and sustainability of United States agriculture or relevance to one or more of the research purposes contained in §3411.15 of this part should be shown clearly. Any novel ideas or contributions that the

proposed project offers also should be discussed in this section.

(iv) *Experimental Plan.* The hypotheses or questions being asked and the methodology to be applied to the proposed project should be stated explicitly. Specifically, this section must include:

(A) A description of the investigations and/or experiments proposed and the sequence in which the investigations or experiments are to be performed;

(B) Techniques to be used in carrying out the proposed project, including the feasibility of the techniques;

(C) Results expected;

(D) Means by which experimental data will be analyzed or interpreted;

(E) Means of applying results or accomplishing technology transfer, where appropriate;

(F) Pitfalls that may be encountered;

(G) Limitations to proposed procedures; and

(H) A tentative schedule for conducting major steps involved in these investigations and/or experiments.

In describing the experimental plan, the applicant must explain fully any materials, procedures, situations, or activities that may be hazardous to personnel (whether or not they are directly related to a particular phase of the proposed project), along with an outline of precautions to be exercised to avoid or mitigate the effects of such hazards.

(4) *Facilities and equipment.* All facilities and major items of equipment that are available for use or assignment to the proposed project during the requested period of support should be described. In addition, requested items of nonexpendable equipment necessary to conduct and successfully conclude the proposed project should be listed (including dollar amounts), and, if funds are requested for their acquisition, justified on a separate sheet of paper and attached to the budget.

(5) *Collaborative arrangements.* If the nature of the proposed project requires collaboration or subcontractual arrangements with other research scientists, corporations, organizations, agencies, or entities, the applicant must identify the collaborator(s) and provide a full explanation of the nature

of the collaboration. Evidence (i.e., letters of intent) should be provided to assure peer reviewers that the collaborators involved have agreed to render this service. In addition, the proposal must indicate whether or not such collaborative arrangement(s) have the potential for conflicts of interest.

(6) *References to Project Descriptions.* All references cited should be complete, including titles, and should conform to an accepted journal format.

(7) *Personnel support.* To assist peer reviewers in assessing the competence and experience of the proposed project staff, all personnel who will be involved in the proposed project must be identified clearly. For each Project Director involved, and for all senior associates and other professional personnel who expect to work on the project, whether or not funds are sought for their support, the following should be included:

(i) An estimate of the time commitments necessary;

(ii) Curriculum vitae. The curriculum vitae should be limited to a presentation of academic and research credentials, e.g., educational, employment and professional history, and honors and awards. Unless pertinent to the project, to personal status, or to the status of the organization, meetings attended, seminars given, or personal data such as birth date, marital status, or community activities should not be included. The vitae shall be no more than two pages each in length, excluding publications listings; and

(iii) Publication List(s). A chronological list of all publications in refereed journals during the past five years, including those in press, must be provided for each professional project member for whom a curriculum vitae is provided. Also list other non-refereed technical publications that have relevance to the proposed project. 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.

(8) *Budget.* A detailed budget is required for each year of requested support. In addition, a summary budget is required detailing requested support for the overall project period. A copy of

the form which must be used for this purpose, along with instructions for completion, is included in the NRICGP Application Kit identified under §3411.4(b) of the part and may be reproduced as needed by applicants. Funds may be requested under any of the categories listed, provided that the item or service for which support is requested may be identified as necessary for successful conduct of the proposed project, is allowable under applicable Federal cost principles, and is not prohibited under any applicable Federal statute or regulation. It should be noted, for example, that section 2(b)(7) of the Act of August 4, 1965, as amended, prohibits the use of funds under this program for the renovation or refurbishment of research spaces, purchases or installation of fixed equipment in such spaces, or for the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of a building or facility. Also, section 2(b)(8) of the Act of August 4, 1965, as amended, requires that all grants, except equipment grants authorized by section 2(b)(3)(D) of the same Act, awarded under this part, shall be used without regard to matching funds or cost sharing. Equipment grants may not exceed 50 percent of the cost of the equipment to be acquired. Equipment grant funds also may not be used for installation, maintenance, warranty, or insurance expenses. Indirect costs are not permitted on equipment grants, conference grants, or postdoctoral fellowships. According to the limit included in the annual program solicitation, a postdoctoral fellowship applicant may request and receive a reasonable institutional allowance.

(9) *Research involving special considerations.* A number of situations encountered in the conduct of research require special information and supporting documentation before funding can be approved for the project. If any such situation is anticipated, the proposal must so indicate. It is expected that a significant number of proposals will involve the following:

(i) *Recombinant DNA and RNA molecules.* All key personnel identified in a proposal and all endorsing officials of a proposed performing entity are required to comply with the guidelines

established by the National Institutes of Health entitled, "Guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant DNA Molecules," as revised. The NRICGP Application Kit, identified above in §3411.4(b), contains forms which are suitable for such certification of compliance. In the event a project involving recombinant DNA and RNA molecules results in a grant award, a qualified Institutional Biosafety Committee must approve the research before CSREES funds will be released.

(ii) *Human subjects at risk.* Applicable regulations which implement the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects have been issued by the Department under 7 CFR part 1c, Protection of Human Subjects. Responsibility for safeguarding the rights and welfare of human subjects used in any proposed project supported with grant funds provided by the Department rests with the performing entity. The applicant must submit a statement certifying that the project plan has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Committee at the proposing organization or institution. The NRICGP Application Kit, identified above in §3411.4(b), contains a form which is suitable for such certification. In the event a project involving human subjects results in a grant award, funds will be released only after a qualified Institutional Committee has approved the project.

(iii) *Experimental vertebrate animal care.* The responsibility for the humane care and treatment of any experimental vertebrate animal, which has the same meaning as "animal" in section 2(g) of the Animal Welfare Act of 1966, as amended (7 U.S.C. 2132(g)), used in any project supported with NRICGP funds rests with the performing organization. In this regard, all key personnel associated with any supported project and all endorsing officials of the proposed performing entity are required to comply with 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 of Agriculture in 9 CFR parts 1, 2, 3, and 4. In this regard, the applicant must submit a statement certifying that the proposed project is in compliance with the aforementioned

regulations, and that the proposed project is either under review by or has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. The NRICGP Application Kit, identified above in §3411.4(b), contains a form which is suitable for such certification. In the event a project involving the use of living vertebrate animals results in a grant award, funds will be released only after a qualified Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee has approved the project.

(10) *Current and pending support.* All proposals must list any other current public or private research 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 the 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 or experts or consultants engaged 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 Grant Application Kit, identified above in §3411.4(b), contains a form which is suitable for listing current and pending support.

(11) *Additions to project description.* Each project description is expected by the Administrator, the members of peer review groups, and the relevant program staff to be complete. However, if the inclusions of additional information is necessary to ensure the equitable evaluation of the proposal (e.g., photographs which do not reproduce well, reprints, and other pertinent materials which are deemed to be unsuitable for inclusion in the text of the proposal), the number of copies submitted should match the number of copies of the application requested in the program solicitation. Each set of

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such materials must be identified with the name of the submitting organization, and the name(s) of the Project Director(s). Information may not be appended to a proposal to circumvent page limitations prescribed for the project description. Extraneous materials will not be used during the peer review process.

(12) *Organizational management information.* Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one-time basis prior to the award of a grant identified under 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 agency specified in this part once a grant has been recommended for funding.

(13) *National Environmental Policy Act.* As outlined in CSREES's implementing regulations of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) at 7 CFR part 3407, 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 or an Environmental Impact Statement or whether it can be excluded from this requirement on the basis of several categorical exclusions listed in 7 CFR part 3407. In this regard, the applicant should review the categories defined for exclusion to ascertain whether the proposed project may fall within one or more of the exclusions, and should indicate if it does so on the National Environmental Policy Act Exclusions Form provided in the NRICGP Application Kit.

(14) Even though the applicant considers that a proposed project may fall within a categorical exclusion, CSREES may determine that an Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement is necessary for a proposed project should substantial controversy on environmental grounds exist or if other extraordinary conditions or circumstances are present that may cause such activity

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to have a significant environmental effect.

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§ 3411.5 Evaluation and disposition of applications.

(a) *Evaluation.* All proposals received from eligible applicants and received in accordance with deadlines established in the annual program solicitation shall be evaluated by the Administrator through such officers, employees, and others as the Administrator determines are uniquely qualified in the areas represented by particular projects. To assist in equitably and objectively evaluating proposals and to obtain the best possible balance of viewpoints, the Administrator shall solicit the advice of peer scientists, *ad hoc* reviewers, and/or others who are recognized specialists in the areas covered by the applications received and whose general roles are defined in §§ 3411.2(j) and 3411.2(k). Specific evaluations will be based upon the criteria established in § 3411.15, unless CSREES determines that different criteria are necessary for the proper evaluation of proposals in one or more specific program areas, or for specific types of projects to be supported, and announces such criteria and their relative importance in the annual program solicitation. The overriding purpose of these evaluations is to provide information upon which the Administrator may make informed judgments in selecting proposals for ultimate support. Incomplete, unclear, or poorly organized applications will work to the detriment of applicants during the peer evaluation process. To ensure a comprehensive evaluation, all applications should be written with the care and thoroughness accorded papers for publication.

(b) *Disposition.* On the basis of the Administrator's evaluation of an application in accordance with paragraph (a) of this section, the Administrator will (1) approve support using currently available funds, (2) defer support due to lack of funds or a need for further evaluations, or (3) disapprove support for the proposed project in whole or in