

RBS and RUS, USDA

§ 4284.1008

users (processing and distribution companies and regional grocers), strategic alliances with entities having technical research capabilities and a focused delivery plan for reaching out to the producer community. It is also the policy of the Secretary, using the research and technical services of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, to assist the grantees in establishing Centers. This program is not intended to fund scientific research.

§ 4284.1003 Program administration.

The Agriculture Innovation Demonstration Center program is administered by Cooperative Services within the Agency.

§ 4284.1004 Definitions.

Board of Directors—The group of individuals that govern the Center.

Center—The Agriculture Innovation Center to be established and operated by the grantees. It may or may not be an independent legal entity, but it must be independently governed in accordance with the requirements of this subpart.

Producer Services—Services to be provided by the Centers to agricultural producers. Producer Services consist of the following types of services:

(1) Technical assistance, consisting of engineering services, applied research, Scale Production Assessments, and similar services, to enable the agricultural producers to establish businesses to produce Value-Added agricultural commodities or products;

(2) Assistance in marketing, market development and business planning, including advisory services with respect to leveraging capital assets; and

(3) Organizational, outreach and development assistance to increase the viability, growth and sustainability of businesses that produce Value-Added agricultural commodities or products.

Qualified Board of Directors—A Board of Directors that includes representatives from each of the following groups:

(1) The two general agricultural organizations with the greatest number of members in the State in which the Center is located;

(2) The State department of agriculture, or equivalent, of the State in which the Center is located; and

(3) Entities representing the four highest grossing commodities produced in the State in which the Center is located, as determined on the basis of annual gross cash sales.

Scale Production Assessments—Studies that analyze facilities, including processing facilities, for potential Value-added activities in order to determine the size that optimizes construction and other cost efficiencies.

§§ 4284.1005–4284.1006 [Reserved]

§ 4284.1007 Eligibility for grant assistance.

Non-profit and for-profit corporations, institutions of higher learning and other entities, including a consortium where a lead entity has been designated and agrees to act as funding agent, that meet the following requirements are eligible for grant assistance:

(a) The entity—

(1) Has provided services similar to those listed for Producer Services; or

(2) Demonstrates the capability of providing Producer Services;

(b) The application includes a plan that meets the requirements of § 4284.1010(c)(5)(iv) that also outlines—

(1) The support for the entity in the agricultural community;

(2) The technical and other expertise of the entity; and

(3) The goals of the entity for increasing and improving the ability of local agricultural producers to develop markets and processes for Value-Added agricultural commodities or products;

(c) The entity demonstrates that adequate resources (in cash or in kind) are available, or have been committed to be made available to the entity, to increase and improve the ability of local agricultural producers to develop markets and processes for Value-Added agricultural commodities or products; and

(d) The proposed Center has a Qualified Board of Directors.

§ 4284.1008 Use of grant funds.

Grant funds may be used to assist eligible recipients in establishing Centers that provide Producer Services and may only be used to support operations of the Center that directly relate to providing Producer Services. Grant

funds may be used for the following purposes, subject to the limitations set forth in § 4284.10:

- (a) Consulting services for legal, accounting and technical services to be used by the grantee in establishing and operating a Center;
- (b) Hiring of employees, at the discretion of the Qualified Board of Directors;
- (c) The making of matching grants to agricultural producers, individually not to exceed \$5,000, where the aggregate amount of all such matching grants made by the grantee does not exceed \$50,000;
- (d) Applied research;
- (e) Legal services; and
- (f) Such other related purposes as the Agency may announce in the RFP.

§ 4284.1009 Limitations on awards.

The maximum grant award for an agriculture innovation center shall be in an amount that does not exceed the lesser of \$1,000,000 or twice the dollar amount of the resources (in cash or in kind) that the eligible entity demonstrates are available, or have been committed to be made available, to the eligible entity.

§ 4284.1010 Application processing.

- (a) *Applications.* USDA will solicit applications on a competitive basis by publication of one or more Requests for Proposals (RFPs). Unless otherwise specified in the applicable RFP, applicants must file an original and one copy of the required forms and a proposal.
- (b) *Required forms.* The following forms must be completed, signed and submitted as part of the application package. Other OMB approved forms may be required. This will be published in the applicable RFP.
 - (1) "Application for Federal Assistance."
 - (2) "Budget Information—Non-Construction Programs."
 - (3) "Assurances—Non-Construction Programs."
- (c) *Proposal.* Each proposal must contain the following elements. Additional elements may be published in the applicable RFP.
 - (1) Title Page.
 - (2) Table of Contents.

- (3) *Executive Summary.* A summary of the proposal should briefly describe the project including goals, tasks to be completed and other relevant information that provides a general overview of the project and the amount requested.

- (4) *Eligibility.* A detailed discussion describing how the applicant meets the eligibility requirements.

- (5) *Proposal Narrative.* The narrative portion of the proposal must include, but is not limited to, the following:

- (i) *Project Title.* The title of the proposed project must be brief, not to exceed 75 characters, yet describe the essentials of the project.

- (ii) *Information Sheet.* A separate one page information sheet listing each of the evaluation criteria referenced in the RFP followed by the page numbers of all relevant material and documentation contained in the proposal that address or support the criteria.

- (iii) *Goals of the Project.* The first part of this section should list each Producer Service to be offered by the Center. The second part of this section should list one or more specific goals relating to increasing and improving the ability of identified local agricultural producers to develop a market or process for Value-Added agricultural commodities or products.

- (iv) *Work Plan.* Actions that must be taken in order for the Producer Services to be available from the Center. Each action listed should include a target date by which it will be completed. General start up tasks should be listed, followed by specific tasks listed for each Producer Service to be offered, as well as tasks associated with the start of operations. The tasks associated with the start of operations should include a focused marketing and delivery plan directed to the local agricultural producers that were identified in paragraph (c)(5)(iii) of this section. The actions to be taken should include steps for identifying customers, acquiring personnel and contracting for services to the Center, including arrangements for strategic alliances.

- (v) *Performance Evaluation Criteria.* Performance criteria suggested by the applicant for incorporation in the grant award in the event the proposal