



United States
Department of
Agriculture



Cooperative State
Research, Education,
and Extension Service

Program Solicitation

Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge (SPEC) Grants Program

Fiscal Year 2008

Closing Date: January 11, 2008

SPEC Program:

Telephone: 202-720-1973

Email: SPEC@csrees.usda.gov

Internet:

<http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/educationchallengesecondaryhep.html>

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (CFDA)

10.226 Secondary Agriculture Education Grants

CSREES Funding Opportunity Number

USDA-CSREES-SAECP-001053

***** PLEASE READ *****

**IMPORTANT ITEMS FOR THE USDA-CSREES SPEC
Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 PROGRAM SOLICITATION**

The Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge (SPEC) Grants Program requires all applications be submitted electronically through [Grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). There are considerable online resources to help potential applicants with the new electronic forms and submission requirements.

If your institution is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov, you will be required to complete several steps prior to submitting an application. There is a one-time registration process. It can take as much as one month to complete, so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. “Get Registered” on the Grants.gov left navigation bar (http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp) provides information on registering your institution with Grants.gov and the steps necessary to apply for a grant. A quick reference guide listing these steps is available as a 4-page PDF document at the following website: <http://www.grants.gov/section910/Grants.govRegistrationBrochure.pdf>.

The Agency within USDA responsible for administering this grants program is the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES). CSREES has also developed documentation to help navigate the process. The central point for all information related to electronic application submission is www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/electronic. This site is updated frequently and it should be checked often for program-specific help concerning electronic submissions.

Helpful Submission Information	Website Address
Information pertaining to the transition to electronic submission can be found at the CSREES website.	www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/electronic This page will be updated frequently and should be checked for program-specific help.
Applications for this grants program should be submitted through the Grants.gov website.	To access the electronic application via Grants.gov, go to www.grants.gov , under the “Apply for Grants” heading on the left side of page and click on “Download a Grant Application Package.” Enter the CFDA number 10.226 in the appropriate box to search by Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number.
The CSREES GRANTS.GOV Application Guide provides guidance for completing the forms required by Grants.gov and CSREES. Used in conjunction with this RFA for the SPEC grants program, this guide will assist applicants with most field-specific questions.	Each applicant should use the CSREES document titled, “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov” also known as the “CSREES Application Guide,” that is part of this RFA package located at Grants.gov . This document provides guidance for completing the required forms at Grants.gov. Applicants should also reference the RFA for additional guidance not found in the application guide.

- Applications must be received at [Grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time, on January 11, 2008. **Plan ahead. Do not wait until the last minute to submit your application.**

- Applicants who have problems with their submissions to Grants.gov are encouraged first to call the Grants.gov help desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence.

For any questions related to preparing application content, contact:

Email: electronic@csrees.usda.gov

Phone: 202-401-5048, Business hours are M-F, 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. ET, excluding Federal holidays.

For any questions related to Grants.gov content, contact:

Email: support@grants.gov

Toll Free: 1-800-518-4726, Business hours are M-F, 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. ET, excluding Federal holidays.

Part IV of this RFA provides additional information specific to the SPEC program application submission. Applicants are advised to refer to this section to determine if specific information is required during the submission of the forms on Grants.gov. If directed by this RFA to provide information that is different from the CSREES Application Guide, the information in this RFA supersedes in all cases.

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the Guide. ANY PROPOSALS CONTAINING NON-PDF DOCUMENTS WILL BE RETURNED UNREAD. Partial applications will be returned unread. With documented prior approval, resubmitted applications will be accepted until close of business on the closing date in the RFA.

If you do not own PDF-generating software, Grants.gov provides online tools to assist applicants. Users will find a link to “Convert Documents to PDF” on <http://grants.gov/assets/PDFConversion.pdf>.

Applications for this grants program should include the following Contents of a CSREES-SPEC Application Submitted via Grants.gov:

Document Title	Required	Instruction Source	Additional Instructions within this RFA
SF 424 (R&R) Cover Sheet	✓	CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide p. 17	SPEC RFA Part IV. B.1., p.16
SF 424 (R&R) Other Project Information	✓	CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide p. 24	SPEC RFA Part IV. B.2., p.16
SF 424 (R&R) Senior/Key Person (Expanded)	✓	CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide p. 29	SPEC RFA Part IV. B.3., p.21
SF 424 (R&R) Budget Fed & Non-Fed	✓	CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide p. 36	SPEC RFA Part IV. B.5., p.21
SF 424 (R&R) Subaward Budget Attachment	Only if submitting a Joint Project Proposal	CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide p. 36 (Follow attachment guidelines)	SPEC RFA Part IV. B.6., p.24
Supplemental Information	✓	CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide p. 45	SPEC RFA Part IV. B.7., p.24

**COOPERATIVE STATE RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND EXTENSION SERVICE;
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**SECONDARY AND TWO-YEAR POSTSECONDARY AGRICULTURE EDUCATION
CHALLENGE GRANTS PROGRAM (SPEC)**

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.226, Secondary Agriculture Education Grants.

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on January 11, 2008 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) is requesting comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and will be used to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). This section requires the Secretary to solicit and consider input on a current RFA from persons who conduct or use agricultural research, education and extension for use in formulating future RFAs for competitive programs. Written stakeholder comments on this RFA should be submitted in accordance with the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice.

Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by mail to: Policy, Oversight, and Funds Management Branch; Office of Extramural Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: RFP-OEP@csrees.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge Grants Program RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: CSREES requests applications for the Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge Grants Program for fiscal year (FY) 2008 to promote and strengthen agriscience and agribusiness education. CSREES anticipates the amount available for support of this program in FY 2008 will be approximately \$1 million.

This notice identifies the purpose and priorities for Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge Grants Program projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge Grants Program grant. CSREES additionally requests stakeholder input from any interested party for use in the development of the next RFA for this program.

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PART I-FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

Section 1405 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended, (7 U.S.C. 3121) designates the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as the lead Federal agency for agriculture research, extension and teaching in the food and agricultural sciences. Authority for this program is contained in section 1417(j) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended (7 U.S.C. 3152(j)). In accordance with the statutory authority, subject to the availability of funds, the Secretary of Agriculture (USDA), who has delegated the authority to the Administrator of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), will award grants to: (a) promote and strengthen secondary education and 2-year postsecondary education in agriscience and agribusiness in order to help ensure the existence in the United States of a qualified workforce to serve the food and agricultural sciences system; and (b) promote complementary and synergistic linkages among secondary, 2-year postsecondary, and higher education programs in the food and agricultural sciences in order to attain excellence in education and to encourage more young Americans to pursue and complete a baccalaureate or higher degree in the food and agricultural sciences.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The purpose of the Secondary and Two-Year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge (SPEC) Grants Program is to promote and strengthen teaching programs in agriscience and agribusiness at secondary and 2-year postsecondary institutions by enhancing curricula, increasing faculty teaching competencies, promoting higher education to prepare students for scientific and professional careers, incorporating agriscience or agribusiness subject matter into other instructional programs, facilitating joint initiatives among other educational institutions, and by responding to identified State, regional, national or international educational needs.

CSREES encourages the submission of innovative teaching improvement projects with the potential for regional or national impact to serve as models for other institutions.

By enhancing teaching, the SPEC Grants Program seeks to attain the following two Program Goals:

- to increase the number of students encouraged to pursue and complete a 2- or 4-year postsecondary degree in the food and agricultural sciences, and
- to help students achieve their career goals and to help meet workplace needs by increasing the quality of secondary and postsecondary instruction .

To achieve these Goals, applications must address all four of the following items within specified sections of the 'SF 424 (R&R) Other Project Information' Form (Part IV, B.2.):

1. Address one of the Program Categories (Part I, C.1.);
2. Identify and describe one Educational Strategy (Part I, C.2.);

3. Include the two SPEC Program Goals (above) in the project's Evaluation Plan (Part IV, B.2.Field 7.2.e.), and discuss the metrics that will be used to demonstrate that your project has advanced the two SPEC Program Goals; and
4. Document how project accomplishments (products, results and impacts, etc.) will be published or otherwise disseminated to the broadest extent throughout the academic community (Part IV, B.2.Field 7.2.f., Dissemination Plans).

C. Program Area Description

1. Program Categories

Your project must be a component of for-credit, academic coursework within one of the following:

- (a) **Secondary School:** Secondary education teaching improvement projects with a *primary focus on students or faculty within any of the academic grades 9 through 12*, in any of the subject matter areas (disciplines) identified in Part I, C.2.(b). These applications must be submitted by an eligible secondary school (**not the fiscal agent such as the school district, etc.; see Part III. A.**); or
- (b) **Junior or Community College:** Associate degree-level (2-year postsecondary) education teaching improvement projects *with a primary focus on students or faculty within community or junior colleges* in any of the subject matter areas (disciplines) identified in Part I, C.2.(b). These applications must be submitted by an eligible junior or community college (**not a fiscal agent; see Part III. A.**).

2. Educational Strategies

(a) In addition, your project must use one of the Educational Strategies (1-6) below to meet the two SPEC Program Goals.

Projects must be innovative and promote and strengthen agriscience or agribusiness education. Your project should have broad-based applicability beyond a single course or an individual instructor.

Projects are encouraged that include partnerships among several academic institutions to more efficiently deliver coordinated, academic instruction that reduces instructional duplication and costs. Equally valued are projects between an academic institution and employer(s) of that institution's graduates to better prepare students to meet increasingly more scientific, technical and professional work force needs. Successful projects may include regional curriculum development and sharing through electronic, shared faculty, or other means, as well as internships or mentored experiences between faculty and/or students and businesses and agencies. Academic instruction that can be coordinated by articulation agreements with the applicant and either community/junior colleges or 4-year postsecondary colleges and

universities, culminating in partnerships to increase academic program quality, are also strongly encouraged.

Successful projects should also have a positive impact on large numbers of students and on activities that achieve cost-effective economies of scale in meeting the two SPEC Program Goals.

- (1) Enhancing Agricultural Education Through Curriculum Improvements. The purpose of this initiative is to establish or improve existing curricula in agriscience or agribusiness. Emphasis may be on the development of stand-alone modules or courses of study, or on the integration of agriscience and/or agribusiness into other academic areas. Innovative instructional approaches or techniques to enhance student learning, including distance education and experiential learning, are encouraged.
- (2) Increasing Faculty Teaching Competencies. The purpose of this initiative is to improve teaching competencies, subject matter expertise (including knowledge of international cultures) and skills in advising students in agriscience and agribusiness areas. Developmental activities may include both formal training and informal continuing education. Note: Any teacher or student recipient (eligible participant) receiving Federal funds via this training Strategy must be a citizen or national of the United States, as defined in this RFA. Where eligibility is claimed under 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(22), documentary evidence from the Immigration and Naturalization Service as to such eligibility must be made available to CSREES upon request.
- (3) Expanding Career Opportunities. The purpose of this initiative is to encourage students to pursue higher education in order to prepare them for scientific and professional careers in the food and agricultural sciences. Examples of eligible projects may include career placement or higher education academic counseling activities with the expected outcome of encouraging graduates to pursue and complete a baccalaureate or higher degree in the food and agricultural sciences. Other eligible projects may expand students' career interests through mentoring or professional shadowing activities, internships or practicums, visiting lecturers or career fairs, summer agriscience and agribusiness camps including international learning experiences, or other similar experiential learning activities.
- (4) Integrating Agricultural Education into the Curriculum. The purpose of this initiative is to incorporate agriscience and agribusiness subject matter into the general instructional program (particularly classes in math, science, business, and consumer education) so that society gains a better understanding of food, health and environmental issues.
- (5) Facilitating Interaction with Other Academic Institutions. The purpose of this initiative is to promote linkages between secondary, 2-year postsecondary, and baccalaureate degree granting institutions to maximize the development and use of resources geared toward agriscience and agribusiness education. Emphasis between secondary and higher education may focus on, but is not limited to, the development and use of articulation

agreements, 2+2 or 2+2+2 arrangements, advanced placement credits, or the sharing of faculty and facilities. Partnerships, collaborative arrangements and shared resources between institutions (including course credit sharing arrangements) are encouraged.

- (6) Expanding Student and Workforce Diversity. The purpose of this initiative is to promote educational activities that have the potential to enhance agricultural literacy and increase the diversity of under-represented students seeking degrees in agriscience and agribusiness.

(b) Projects within any of the six Educational Strategies must have an academic focus within the broadly defined agriscience or agribusiness disciplines. See Part VIII, E., Definitions, “Food and agricultural sciences.”

(c) Stipends to support students’ experiential learning activities are permitted. Stipends may be requested for materials or supplies to facilitate a student’s broad exposure to research/field techniques and methodologies, as well as for reasonable travel expenses and per diem related to student educational experiences outside of the traditional classroom (e.g., field trips, data collection, and scientific meetings) directly supporting this funded project.

(d) Note: CSREES has determined that grant funds awarded under this authority to address any Strategy above may not be used for student tuition remission, room and board, academic fees or other financial assistance (scholarships, fellowships, etc.). Also, funds may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities (i.e., greenhouses, laboratories, barns, or other structures). Promotional items (e.g., T-shirts and other give-a-ways) and food functions (e.g., cookouts or other social meal gatherings) are considered ‘entertainment’ expenses, and are also ***not allowed*** under this grants program. Note: under Federal cost principles, these restricted items mentioned directly above cannot be part of an applicant’s contribution to meeting the matching funds requirement for this grants program.

PART II-AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

CSREES anticipates approximately \$1 million will be available to fund applications in FY 2008, and has no commitment to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

B. Types of Applications

For this grants program, applications may only be submitted as one of the following types of requests:

(1) New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the SPEC Program. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

(2) Resubmission application. This is an application that had previously been submitted to the SPEC Program but not funded. Applicants must respond to the previous review panel summary (use SF 424 (R&R) Other Project Information, Field 11 on the Form). Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

C. Project Types

There is no limit on the number of applications that may be submitted. However, successful applicant institutions will only be awarded a maximum of two (2) grants per year under this program.

Project periods may range from eighteen (18) to twenty-four (24) months. Projects should conclude no sooner than eighteen (18) months after the award date to allow sufficient time to evaluate the results and report the impacts.

A grant recipient is required to match the Federal funds awarded on a dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources. See Part IV, B.5. SF 424 (R&R) Budget Fed & Non-Fed and Field K-Budget Justification, for details.

Applicants may submit either:

1. Regular Project Proposal (Single Institution)

Applicants may request up to \$35,000 (total, not per year) for a Regular Project Proposal. In a Regular Project Proposal, the applicant executes the project without the requirement of sharing grant funds with other project partners.

2. Joint Project Proposal (Applicant + One or more Partners)

Applicants may request up to \$50,000 (total, not per year) for a Joint Project Proposal. In a Joint Project Proposal, the applicant executes the project with assistance from at least one additional partner. The additional partner(s) must share grant funds (see explanation of required funds distribution percentage among partners in the definition of a Joint Project Proposal in Part VIII, E.).

Note: Joint Projects must include both the SF 424 (R&R) Budget Fed & Non-Fed and the SF 424 (R&R) Subaward Budget Attachment Forms. The forms should clearly identify the total grant funding anticipated for the applicant and each partner to demonstrate the required sharing percentage. All expenditures for the applicant and all partners should be further itemized in the Budget Justification. Funds **do not** have to be divided equally among project years.

PART III-ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may be submitted by public secondary schools or by public or private nonprofit junior and community colleges. A secondary school or a public or private nonprofit junior and community college must meet the definition of an Eligible Institution as stated in this RFA (see Part VIII, E., Definitions). An applicant's failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of an application deadline will result in CSREES returning the application without review or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude CSREES from making an award.

Applicant institutions must demonstrate capacity for and a significant ongoing commitment to, the teaching of agriscience or agribusiness generally, and to the specific need and/or discipline(s) for which a grant is requested.

Award recipients may subcontract portions of the project to organizations not eligible to apply, provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

For the purposes of this program, for secondary schools, each separate school in a school district that meets the definition of a public secondary school is eligible for SPEC Grants Program awards. For community or junior colleges, individual branches of a State university system or public system of higher education that are separately accredited as degree granting institutions are treated as separate institutions, and are therefore eligible for SPEC Grants Program awards. Separate branches or campuses of a college not individually accredited as degree-granting institutions are not treated as separate institutions. Accreditation must be by an agency or association recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

If an institution cannot accept Federal funds directly, it must submit a letter stating that it will accept the award, but that funds must be administered through a fiscal agent organization. This agent must be identified in the letter from the applicant and the letter must be countersigned by an authorized representative of the fiscal agent organization. The letter should include the fiscal agent's point of contact, address, telephone number, fax number and e-mail address. Both the fiscal agent organization and the applicant school or institution must submit complete management information (see Part V, D.). Nevertheless, the legal recipient of the award must be a public secondary school or public or private nonprofit junior or community college as defined above. (Submission of fiscal agent information (above) is not requested now, but will be required, before an award is made.)

Please note: Fiscal agents and school boards are not eligible as legal recipients of the award.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

A grant recipient is required to match the USDA funds awarded on a dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources. Matching funds are not required to come in any particular amount from any one source. However, all matching funds pledged in this application must be accompanied by documentation. Grant awards cannot be issued until ALL required matching has been

documented and verified. See Part IV, B.5. SF 424 (R&R) Budget Fed & Non-Fed and Field K-Budget Justification, for additional details.

PART IV-APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Address to Request Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to CSREES in response to this RFA.

Prior to preparing an application, it is suggested that the PD/PI first contact an Authorized Representative (AR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grant.gov. If the organization is not prepared, the AR should see http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp for steps for preparing to submit applications through Grants.gov.

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

1. Download and install PureEdge Viewer, a small, free program that provides access to the grant application. See http://www.grants.gov/resources/download_software.jsp#pureedge.
2. The application package must be obtained via Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov>, click on “Apply for Grants” in the left-hand column, click on “**Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Instructions**,” enter the funding opportunity number, USDA-CSREES-SAECP-001053, in the appropriate box and click “Download Package.” From the search results, click “Download” to access the application package.

Contained within the application package is the “[CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov](#).” This Guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

If assistance is needed to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating PureEdge forms, using PureEdge with a Macintosh computer), refer to resources available on the Grants.gov Web site first (<http://grants.gov>). Grants.gov assistance is also available as follows:

- Grants.gov customer support
Toll Free: 1-800-518-4726
Business Hours: M-F 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time
Email: support@grants.gov

See <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html> for additional resources for applying electronically.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Electronic applications should be prepared following Part V and VI of the document entitled “[A Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov](#).” This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is

additional information needed in order to prepare an application in response to this RFA. If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.

Note: Some forms will contain a field with instructions to attach additional information in a separate file. All such attachments must be in PDF file format. Consult the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide (Part III. 3.1) for how to attach files using the proper format.

1. SF 424 (R&R) Cover Sheet – (Required Form)

Complete all applicable fields. The following, additional information may be helpful:

Field 2. Applicant Identifier – This field is provided for the Applicant’s use if they have an internal tracking system they would like to use in tracking applications they have submitted. This field is not required.

Field 3. Date received by State and State Application Identifier – This is not applicable for SPEC applications; these fields do not need to be completed.

Field 5. Applicant Information – This must be the legal name of either the eligible High School or Community/Junior College applicant (See Part III. A, Eligible Applicant). If a fiscal agent will be involved (see Part III. A.), do not list that organization in this field. **Official correspondence will be directed to either the Project Director (Field 15) or the Authorized Representative (Field 19).**

Field 8. Type of Application – Only ‘New’ or ‘Resubmission’ applications are permitted.

Field 13. Proposed Project Start Date and End Date – A project’s duration should normally be at least 18 months (to allow time for assessment and evaluation) and no more than 24 months. Project Start Date should not occur before July 2008.

Field 16. Estimated Project Funding –

- a. **Total Estimated Project Funding** = Amount of Federal funds requested (See Part II. C. 1 or 2 for maximum award amounts permitted.)
- b. **Total Federal & Non-Federal Funds** = Federal funds + Matching Funds (Note: The Matching Requirement for this program is 1:1 (see Part III. B.), so the amount listed in field 16. b. must be at least double the amount listed in 16. a.)

Field 20. Pre-application – Not applicable to the SPEC program. No attachments needed.

2. SF 424 (R&R) Other Project Information – (Required Form)

Complete all applicable fields. Note: If a ‘Yes’ response is provided for Fields 1, 2, or 4.a, the applicant must provide the necessary assurances prior to an award being made.

Field 6. Project Summary/Abstract – (Required Attachment – Must be PDF format)

Include the following underlined text along with your responses:

- List the Project Title;

- List the Project Director (and any) Co-Project Director(s) (include institutional affiliation for each);
- List your project's Program Category: (see Part I, C.1.);
- List your project's Educational Strategy: (Part I, C.2.);
- List your project's *primary* Discipline/Subject Matter: (e.g., forestry, animal sciences, food safety, human nutrition, ...etc.);
- Joint Project Proposal: Yes or No? (Do you plan to share Federal grant funds with other partners? See 'Definitions', Part VIII. E.);
- Partners: If Joint Project Proposal, list all partner institutions/organizations that will share grant funding (Note: Each Partner so identified needs to have their budget information submitted on a separate subaward budget attachment);
- Total Funds Requested: (List total Federal funds requested for this application. If this project is a Joint Project Proposal, also list each partner's total funds requested next to the institution's name); and
- Summary Text - Provide a very concise (approx. 250 word) summary of your project to include:
 - Purpose: What is the major problem your project will address?
 - Audience: Who are the intended beneficiaries? Who will be impacted?
 - Products: What will be produced? and
 - Outcome/Impact: What is the intended result (consequence) of your project? Describe as the primary benefits to your audience. Note: outcomes/impacts should be measurable, and should be included in your project's assessment/evaluation plan to demonstrate you will assess whether or not these benefits were achieved.

Field 7. Project Narrative – (Required Attachment – Must be PDF format)

Include an application 'Table of Contents' page that lists all forms and attachments comprising this complete application. Use titles from the Application Submission Checklist found at the end of this section (Part IV) as a guideline.

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 15 pages of written text (excluding up to a maximum of 5 additional pages for supporting figures and tables). This maximum (20-page limit) ensures fair and equitable competition. Reviewers are instructed to not review material in excess of this limit.

The Project Narrative in this Field 7 attachment contains the major description of your project. It follows the SPEC program's Evaluation Criteria (Part V. B). Accordingly, please provide your responses in the following format:

(Note: To facilitate application review and evaluation, **include the following, underlined wording as headings in your attached Project Narrative**, followed by your response for each item.)

1. Potential for Advancing the Quality of Education; Significance of the Problem:

- a. Institutional Long-range Goals. Demonstrate how the institution attributes a high priority to the project, discuss how the project will contribute to the achievement of the

institution's long-term (five- to ten-year) goals, explain how the project will help satisfy the institution's high-priority objectives, or how the project is linked to and supported by the institution's strategic plan.

- b. Identification of Educational Problem and Project Impact. Clearly identify and explain how the proposed project will address your Educational Strategy described in Part I, C.2. Identify the anticipated project audience. Briefly explain the project's anticipated, overall impact on improving the quality of food and agricultural sciences education.
- c. Project Justification. Clearly state the specific instructional problem or opportunity to be addressed. Describe how and by whom the focus and scope of the project were determined. Summarize the body of knowledge justifying the need for the proposed project. Discuss how the project will be of value at the State, regional, national, or international level(s). Describe any ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed project for which previous funding was received under this program.
- d. Innovation. Describe the proposal's creative approach to improving the quality of food and agricultural sciences education, solving an education problem, or advancing educational equity.
- e. Multidisciplinary and/or Problem-based Focus. Indicate how the project is relevant to multiple disciplines in the food and agricultural sciences education, or with other academic curricula. Also, discuss whether the project may be adapted by, or serve as a model for, other institutions.

2. Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages:

- a. Objectives. Cite and discuss the specific project objectives to be accomplished.
- b. Plan of Operation and Methodology. Describe procedures for accomplishing the objectives of the project. Describe plans for management of the project to ensure its proper and efficient administration. Describe the way in which resources and personnel will be used to conduct the project.
- c. Timetable. Identify all important project milestones and dates as they relate to project start-up, execution, evaluation, dissemination, and closeout.
- d. Products, Results and Measurable Outcomes. Outline the expected products/results and their outcome (impact) on strengthening food and agricultural sciences education in the United States. (**Important Note: Make sure to differentiate among the three terms:** "Products" may be actual items or services acquired with funds, e.g., "...developed three, new Web-based courses"; "Results" are activities related to the products, e.g., "...additional course materials now available online to reinforce student learning during non-classroom hours"; and "Outcomes/Impacts" are the benefits to your audience. Outcomes/impacts are the consequences of your project and the most critical elements in your Evaluation Plan. They are a measure of the results by comparison to what might have happened in the absence of the funded project, e.g., "...an observed, overall increase in student learning based upon 8% higher average test scores of those students who both attended class and used the supplemental, Web-based course materials".)
- e. Evaluation Plans. State the methodologies to be used in assessing the accomplishment of stated products, results and measurable outcomes from the project. Discuss the strategies and metrics for evaluating progress toward meeting the two SPEC Program Goals identified in Part I, B. Describe any data to be collected and analyzed. Demonstrate how the

project will improve education. This section should clearly indicate how you plan to measure outcomes/impacts.

- f. Dissemination Plans. The application must document how project accomplishments (products, results and impacts...etc.) will be published or otherwise disseminated to the broadest extent throughout the academic community. Discuss the institution's commitment to disseminate project results and products. Identify target audiences and explain methods of communication. This section should clearly indicate how you plan to publicize your project's outcomes/impacts.
- g. Partnerships and Collaborative Efforts. Explain how the project will maximize partnership and collaborative efforts to strengthen food and agricultural sciences education (e.g., involvement of faculty in related disciplines at the same institution, joint projects with other educational institutions, or cooperative activities with business or industry). Also explain how it will stimulate academia, the States, or the private sector to join with the Federal partner in enhancing food and agricultural sciences education. Provide evidence, via letters from the parties involved in the partnership or collaborative arrangement.

3. Institutional Capability and Capacity Building:

- a. Institutional Commitment and Capability. Demonstrate that the program administration is committed to this project and has the capability to ensure its completion.
- b. Institutional Resources. Document that necessary institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials), and other appropriate resources, will be made available to the project. Demonstrate how the institutional resources to be made available to the project, when combined with the support requested from USDA, will be adequate to carry out the activities of the project.
- c. Academic Enhancement. Document how this project will improve and strengthen teaching at the institution (including any partner institutions). Discuss how the benefits to be derived from the project will transcend the applicant institution or the grant period.
- d. Continuation Plans. Discuss the likelihood of, or specific plans for, continuation or expansion of the project beyond the period of USDA support. For example, does the institution's long-range budget or academic plan provide for the realistic continuation or expansion of the initiative undertaken by this project after the grant period ends, are plans for eventual self-support built into the project, are plans being made to institutionalize the program if it meets with success, and are there indications of other continuing non-Federal support?

4. Key Personnel: Discuss the adequacy and specific attributes and project responsibilities of each key person associated with the project. Also include the background and qualifications of those personnel who will be responsible for assessing project results and administering the project evaluation and reporting process.

5. Budget and Cost-effectiveness:

- a. Budget. In addition to the separate, required budget forms and budget justification, discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed project activities. Explain how such budget items as professional or technical staff time and salary, travel, equipment, etc., are necessary and reasonable to achieve project objectives. Justify that the total

budget, including funds requested from USDA and any matching support provided, are allocated adequately between the applicant and any collaborating institution(s), and will be appropriate to carry out the activities of the project. Provide a summary of sources and amounts of all third party matching support. If the application addresses more than one Educational Strategy (see Part I, C.2.), applicants should include estimates of the proportion of the funds requested from USDA that will support each respective area.

- b. Cost-effectiveness. Justify the project's cost-effectiveness. Show how the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes educational value for the dollar, achieves economies of scale, or leverages additional funds. For example, discuss how the project has the potential to generate a critical mass of expertise and activity focused on an Educational Strategy, or to promote coalition building that could lead to future ventures.

Field 8. Bibliography & Cited References - (Optional Attachment – Must be PDF format)

If needed, provide a complete list of all references cited in the application. **For each reference, provide the complete name for each author, the year of the publication, full title of the article, name of the journal or book published, volume, and the page numbers.** The references should be listed in alphabetical order using the last name of the first author.

Field 9. Facilities & Other Resources - (Optional Attachment Must be PDF format)

If needed, describe the types, location, and availability of instrumentation and physical facilities necessary to carry out the work proposed. **If special academic, private or government laboratories or facilities are being used, include a letter in the application from the authorized representative of the facility describing the proposed arrangements and availability.** This letter should be included as a part of Other Attachments, see Field 11 below.

Field 10. Equipment Documentation - (Optional Attachment Must be PDF format)

Equipment purchased (defined as in excess of \$5,000 for each item) must be fully justified under this section. Note: Equipment, as previously defined, is normally not funded in a SPEC grant. Other purchases (e.g., computers, laboratory materials,...etc.) are described, instead, in the Budget Justification section under the 'Materials and Supplies' line item.

Field 11. Other Attachments - (Must be PDF format)

- **Response to Previous Review - PDF Attachment. 1 Page Limit.** Title the attachment as 'Response to Previous Review' in the document header and save file as 'Response to Previous Review'. This requirement only applies to "Resubmitted Applications" as described under Part II, B., "Types of Applications". PDs must respond to the previous review panel summary on **no more than one page**, titled, "RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS REVIEW." If desired, additional comments may be included in the text of the Project Narrative, subject to the page limitations of that section.
- **Appendices to Project Narrative – PDF Attachment.** Title the attachment as 'Appendices' in the document header and save file as 'Appendices'. Appendices to the Project Narrative are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. The

addition of appendices should not be used to circumvent the text and/or figures and tables page limitations.

- **Collaborative Arrangements – PDF Attachment. No Page Limit.** Title the attachment as ‘Collaborative Arrangements’ in the document header and save file as ‘Collaborative Arrangement’. If it is necessary to enter into formal consulting or collaborative arrangements with others, such arrangements should be fully explained and justified. If the consultant(s) or collaborator(s) are known at the time of the application, a vitae or resume should be provided. In addition, evidence (e.g., letter of support) should be provided that the collaborators involved have agreed to render these services. The applicant also will be required to provide additional information on consultants and collaborators in the budget portion of the application.
- **Matching Funds Documentation – PDF Attachment.** This grants program requires applicants to match Federal funds awarded on a dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources. Signed letters from each source of matching funds are required, and should be attached in this Field #11. Recommended contents of these letters is described below in item #5, SF 424 (R&R) Budget Fed & Non-Fed, Field K, (b) Matching, under the ‘Written Verification’ section.

3. SF 424 (R&R) Senior/Key Person (Expanded) (Required Form)

Complete all applicable fields. Consult the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions. Remember to attach the required Biographical Sketch for at least the Project Director, as well as any additional individual who will receive Federal support from this project.

Also, **you must attach** ‘Current and Pending Support’ information (see CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide p. 30 & 31, item 4.3, for guidelines and information format) for each senior/key person identified above. **Note: Even if no other funding is currently reported under the ‘Active’ section of this attachment, you must still list information for this grant application under the ‘Pending’ section of this attachment for each senior/key person identified above.**

4. SF 424 (R&R) Personal Data (Optional Form)

Complete all applicable fields. Consult the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions.

5. SF 424 (R&R) Budget Fed & Non-Fed (Required Form)

This form (accompanied by the required Budget Justification attachment) contains the itemized listing and description of your project’s budget. Complete all applicable fields. Consult the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions. The following, additional information may be helpful:

Complete one SF 424 (R&R) Budget Fed & Non-Fed Form for each 12-month period, plus a cumulative budget form for the entire project. If your project involves partners with whom you plan to share Federal funds (Joint Project Proposal), make sure (a) you include a

subaward attachment for the applicant institution and each project partner (subaward/consortium), for each 12-month period and a cumulative budget form, and (b) your budget figures reflect the required budget sharing criteria (See 'Definitions', Part VIII. E, Joint Project Proposal).

Field H. Indirect Costs –

CSREES anticipates that indirect costs will be limited to 20 percent of total federal funds awarded (TFFA), therefore, when preparing budgets, applicants should limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of their institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 20 percent of TFFA. Another method of calculating the maximum allowable is 25 percent of the total direct costs. (See Part IV.D., below, "Funding Restrictions.")

If an institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate permits, the maximum allowed indirect cost of 20% may be claimed under the Federal portion of the award, or the maximum allowed indirect cost of 20% may be claimed as matching contributions (if no indirect costs are requested under the Federal portion). However, the maximum allowed indirect cost of 20% may not be claimed on both the Federal portion of the award and as matching contributions (Note: An institution may, as an example, request 10% of indirect costs on both the Federal portion of the award and as matching contributions. Or, an institution may request any other, similar percentage combination that, when combined, does not exceed the 20% maximum indirect cost allowed.) Nevertheless, the total combined percent of requested and contributed matching indirect costs cannot exceed 20%. This distribution of indirect costs would also apply to grantees whose official negotiated rate results in a lesser amount of indirect costs.

Field K. Budget Justification – (Required Attachment – Must be PDF format)

(a) Provide a Budget Justification that reflects each 12-month period, plus a cumulative budget justification for the entire project. If your project involves partners with whom you plan to share Federal funds (Joint Project Proposal), make sure the attachment reflects information (a) for the applicant institution as well as each project partner (subaward/consortium), for each 12-month period plus a cumulative column total for the entire project, and (b) your budget figures reflect the required budget sharing criteria (See 'Definitions', Part VIII. E, Joint Project Proposal).

The Budget Justification should follow a standard spreadsheet format ('Budget Line Item' = row; 'Budget Year' and 'Cumulative Project' = columns) including a detailed, itemized breakdown of each of the line item categories reported on the SF 424 (R&R) Budget Fed & Non-Fed form. This Budget Justification attachment provides a more detailed, itemized breakdown for each budget line item reported on the SF 424 (R&R) Budget Fed & Non-Fed form (i.e., itemize your complete list of 'Materials and Supplies' showing per unit costs and number of units to be purchased, etc.). Include a description for each requested budget line item found on the (R&R) Budget Fed & Non-Fed form (i.e., total budget amount reported on the SF 424 (R&R) Budget Fed & Non-Fed form should equal the total budget amount reported on the Budget Justification attachment).

(b) Matching: Note: A grant recipient is required to match the Federal funds awarded on a dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources. See instructions directly above, Field H, for restrictions on how to report indirect costs as matching contributions. A budget justification with the same level of detail as required for Federal funds is also required for matching funds.

Cash and non-cash contributions from the institution and any third parties should be identified.

The sources and amount of all matching support from outside the applicant institution should be summarized on a separate page and attached in the SF 424 (R&R) Other Project Information, Field 11. In addition, each source of non-Federal matching funds must be accompanied by written verification of commitment of matching support (i.e., a signed letter from the AR of the source of matching funds; including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Include each of these signed matching letters, as well, as attachments in Field #11 of the SF 424 (R&R) Other Project Information form.

Written verification means:

For any third party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each donation submitted on Donor Organization letterhead and signed by the AR of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) The name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) the dollar amount of the cash donation; and (5) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period.

For any third party in-kind contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each contribution submitted on Donor Organization letterhead and signed by the AR of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) The name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the third party in-kind contribution; and (5) a statement that the donor will make the contribution during the grant period.

If the contribution is to be split between cash and in-kind, the exact dollar amount for each category must be clearly stated. The letter should also clearly state the budget categories that the contributed dollars should be applied to and clearly state the individual items of in-kind contributions. Any cost sharing commitments specified in the application will be referenced and included as a condition of an award resulting from this announcement.

The value of applicant contributions to the project shall be established in accordance with applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circulars A-87, Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments, or A-21, Cost Principles for Educational Institutions, for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

Note: Funding from sources prohibited by this grants program cannot be used as an institution's matching contributions (i.e., Funding Restrictions for this grants program prohibit the use of Federal grant funds for tuition remission or to acquire or repair a building or facility (e.g., a greenhouse). Therefore, non-Federal, matching funds for tuition remission or that acquire or repair a building or facility to support this project is not permitted as matching contributions.)

6. SF 424 (R&R) Subaward Budget Attachment (Only required if submitting a Joint Project Proposal)

7. Supplemental Information (Required Form)

Complete all applicable fields. Consult the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions.

Field 2. Program Code -

For the 'Program Code Name' field, enter:

"Secondary and Two-year Postsecondary Agriculture Education Challenge Grants Program."

For the 'Program Code' field, enter:

"OW" if you are submitting an application from an eligible secondary school, or,

"UV" if you are submitting an application from an eligible junior or community college.

Field 8. Conflict of Interest List - (Required Attachment – Must be PDF format)

See format in CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide, Section VI, 1.8, p.46, for instructions. Include this one-page attachment even if your responses to the questions are "N.A."

Application Submission Checklist

The following checklist contains suggested guidelines to verify prior to application submission:

- Have all attachments been submitted in the portable document format (PDF)?** PDF attachments will only be accepted. See Part III of the CSREES Application Guide.
 - Do all submitted PDF documents have one-inch margins and are typed or word processed using no type smaller than 12 point regardless of line spacing? Are all PDF documents numbered sequentially on each page of the attachment? Are all page limitations for a given attachment followed? Submitted applications that do not meet these requirements for PDF attachments will be returned without review.
- Have all six components of the SF 424 Research and Related (R&R) Application Package been completed? Did you use the "Check Package for Errors" feature of the PureEdge viewer (see section 1.8 of the CSREES Application Guide)?**
 - SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet
 - SF 424 R&R Other Project Information
 - SF 424 R&R Senior/Key Person (Expanded)
 - SF 424 R&R Budget Fed & Non-Fed
 - SF 424 R&R Subaward Budget Attachment (Only if submitting a Joint Project Proposal)

- Supplemental Information Form

◆ **SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet**

- Have all required fields been completed? Field 5 must contain the name of the eligible high school or community/junior college.

◆ **SF 424 R&R Other Project Information**

- Have the fields describing project potential or actual environmental impact been properly completed?
- Project Summary/Abstract**
 - Has the Project Summary PDF been attached to this form in Field 6?
 - Does this section adhere to the format and page limitations?
- Project Narrative**
 - Has the Project Narrative PDF been attached to this form in Field 7?
 - Are responses provided for all underlined text in the RFA for this section (Field 7, 1-5)?
 - Do responses clearly distinguish between project Products, Results and Outcomes/Impacts (Field 7, 2.d.)?
 - Does this section adhere to the format and page limitations?
- Bibliography & References Cited (Optional)**
 - Has the Bibliography & References Cited PDF been attached to this form in Field 8?
 - Are all references cited and are all citations referenced?
 - Do all citations contain a title, the names of all authors, and are they in accepted journal format?
- Facilities & Other Resources (Optional)**
 - Attach as PDF file in Field 9, but only if needed.
- Equipment (Optional)**
 - Attach as PDF file in Field 10, but only if needed.
 - Remember, 'Equipment' is defined as having a value of over \$5,000 for each item. Most equipment purchased for these projects is actually reported, instead, as 'Materials and Supplies' on the R&R Budget Form.
- Response to Previous Review (for resubmissions and resubmitted applications)**
 - Has the Response to Previous Review PDF been attached to this form in Field 11?
 - Has the application been clearly and meaningfully revised and are the revisions briefly described?
 - Are comments from the previous review addressed?
- Collaborative Arrangements**
 - Has the Collaborative Arrangements PDF been attached to this form in Field 11?
- Appendices to Project Narrative**
 - Has the Appendices to Project Narrative PDF been attached to this form in Field 11?
- Matching Funds Documentation**
 - Has each signed letter to verify matching support been attached to this form in Field 11?

◆ **SF 424 R&R Senior/Key Person Profile**

- Biographical Sketch**
 - Has the biographical sketch (vitae) PDF for the PD, senior associate, and other professional personnel been attached?

Current and Pending Support

- Has the current and pending support PDF for all PD(s) been attached?
- Have all current and pending projects been listed and summarized, including this application?

◆ **SF 424 R&R Budget Fed & Non-Fed**

Have all fields been completed?

Budget Justification

- Has the Budget Justification PDF been attached to this form in Field K?
- Are budget items individually justified?
- For multi-institutional applications, has a budget justification been included for each institution involved?

◆ **Supplemental Information Form**

- Does Field 2 indicate the Program Code Name and Program Code to which you are applying?
- Have you included the required **Conflict of Interest List** (PDF) attachment? (See format in CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide, Section VI, 1.8, p.46, for instructions.) Include this one-page attachment even if your responses to the questions are “N.A.”.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide.

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by COB on January 11, 2008 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

The receipt of all applications will be acknowledged by e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received a confirmation message from CSREES within 30 days of submission of the application, please contact the Agency Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

CSREES has determined that grant funds awarded under this authority may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

Tuition remission not allowed.

For FY 2007, sections 101 (a) and (c) of the Revised Continuing Appropriation Resolutions, 2007 (Pub. L. 110-5), limited indirect costs to 20 percent of the total Federal funds provided under each award. Therefore, when preparing budgets, applicants should limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of their institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 20 percent of total Federal funds awarded. Another method of assessing the maximum allowable indirect cost is to calculate 25 percent of the total direct costs. If no rate has been negotiated, a reasonable dollar amount (equivalent to or less than 20 percent of total Federal funds requested) in lieu of indirect costs may be requested, subject to approval by USDA. This same indirect cost limitation applies to subcontracts. Please note that if the FY 2008 Appropriations Act contains a different indirect cost limitation CSREES will contact each successful applicant to apply the correct rate prior to the award of a grant.

E. Other Submission Requirements

The applicant should follow the submission requirements noted in the document entitled “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov.”

PART V-APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

Each application will be evaluated in a 2-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) The level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

B. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria and weights below will be used in reviewing applications submitted in response to this RFA:

1. Potential for Advancing Quality of Education/Significance of the Problem (30 points).

This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will have an impact upon and advance the quality of food and agricultural sciences by strengthening institutional capacities to meet clearly delineated needs. Elements considered include institutional long-range goals, identification of a problem or opportunity to be addressed, justification for the project, innovation, advancing educational equity, multidisciplinary and/or problem-based focus, and potential for adoption by other institutions.

2. Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages (25 points).

This criterion relates to the soundness of the proposed approach including objectives, methodology, plan of operation, timetable, expected products and results, evaluation, and dissemination plans. Emphasis is placed on the quality of educational or research support provided to the applicant institution through its partnerships and collaborative initiatives, and on the potential cooperative linkages likely to evolve as a result of this project.

3. Institutional Capability and Capacity Building (20 points).

This criterion relates to the institution's capability to perform the project and the degree to which the project will strengthen its teaching or research capacity. Elements include the institution's commitment to the project, the adequacy of institutional resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials) available to carry out the project, potential for academic or research enhancement, and plans for project continuation or expansion beyond the period of USDA support.

4. Key Personnel (15 points).

This criterion relates to the adequacy of the number and qualifications of key persons who will develop and carry out the project, and the qualifications of project personnel who will provide for the assessment of project results and impacts and the dissemination of these findings.

5. Budget and Cost-Effectiveness (10 points).

This criterion relates to the extent to which the total budget adequately supports the project and is cost effective. Elements considered include the necessity and reasonableness of costs to carry out project activities and achieve project objectives; the appropriateness of budget allocations between the applicant and any collaborating institution(s); the adequacy of time committed to the project by key project personnel; and the degree to which the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes educational value for the dollar, achieves economies of scale, leverages additional funds, and focuses expertise and activity on high-priority educational or research need areas.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution shall be determined by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 6400 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 648, Falls Church, Virginia 22042. Phone: (703) 532-2300. Web site: <http://www.hepinc.com>.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

D. 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 RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another CSREES program.

(Note: *This management information will also be required from designated Fiscal Agents.*)
CSREES will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the preaward process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

PART VI-AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of CSREES shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the awarding official of CSREES 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 RFA 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 and 3019 of 7 CFR).

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the following:

- (1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the Administrator has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;
- (2) Title of project;
- (3) Name(s) and institution(s) of PDs chosen to direct and control approved activities;
- (4) Identifying award number assigned by the Department;
- (5) Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring recompetition for funds;
- (6) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Administrator during the project period;
- (7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;
- (8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;
- (9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html> to view CSREES award terms and conditions);

(10) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the award; and

(11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by CSREES to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to:

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A--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 331 and 9 CFR Part 121 – USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015--USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21 and A-122 now codified at 2 CFR Parts 220 and 230) 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 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).

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

1. Project Directors Conference

During the tenure of a grant, Project Director(s) may be invited to attend at least one national Project Directors meeting, if offered, in Washington, D.C., or any other announced location. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss project and grant management, opportunities for collaborative efforts, future directions for education reform, and opportunities to enhance dissemination of exemplary end products/results. Reasonable travel expenses to attend this meeting may be included in your proposal's travel expenses.

2. Annual Performance Report

An Annual Performance Report must be submitted to the USDA program contact person within 90 days after the completion of the first year of the project, and annually thereafter during the life of the grant. Generally, the Annual Performance Reports should include a summary of the overall progress toward project objectives, current problems or unusual developments, the next year's activities, and any other information that is pertinent to the ongoing project or which may be specified in the terms and conditions of the award. Annual Performance Reports are to be submitted through the CRIS system described in paragraph 4., below.

3. Final Performance Report

A Final Performance Report must be submitted to the USDA program contact person within 90 days after the expiration date of the project. The expiration date is specified in the award documents and modifications thereto, if any. Generally, the Final Performance Report should be a summary of the completed project, including: a review of project objectives and accomplishments; a description of any products and outcomes resulting from the project; activities undertaken to disseminate products and outcomes; partnerships and collaborative ventures that resulted from the project; future initiatives that are planned as a result of the project; the impact of the project on the Project Director(s), students, the departments, the institution, and the food and agricultural sciences higher education system; and data on project personnel and beneficiaries. The report must document how project accomplishments (products, results and impacts...etc.) have been published or otherwise disseminated to the broadest extent throughout the academic community. The Final Performance Report should be accompanied by samples or copies of any products or publications resulting from or developed by the project. The Final Performance Report also must contain any other information which may be specified in the

terms and conditions of the award. The Final Performance Report is to be submitted through the CRIS system described in paragraph 4., below.

4. Current Research Information System (CRIS) Reports

Grantees are required to submit initial project information and annual and summary reports to CSREES' Current Research Information System (CRIS). The CRIS database contains narrative project information, progress/impact statements, and final technical reports that are made available to the public. For applications recommended for funding, instructions on preparing and submission of project documentation will be provided to the applicant by the agency contact. Documentation must be submitted to CRIS before CSREES funds will be released. Project reports will be requested by the CRIS office when required. For more information about CRIS, visit <http://cris.csrees.usda.gov>.

5. Other Reports

Grantees should be aware that CSREES may, as a part of its own program evaluation activities, carry out in-depth evaluations of assisted activities. Thus, grantees should be prepared to cooperate with CSREES personnel, or persons retained by CSREES, in evaluating the institutional context and the impact of any supported project. Grantees may be asked to provide general information on any students and faculty supported, in whole or in part, by a grant awarded under this program; information that may be requested includes, but is not limited to, standardized academic achievement test scores, grade point average, academic standing, career patterns, age, race/ethnicity, gender, citizenship, and disability.

PART VII-AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Mr. P. Gregory Smith; National Program Leader; Higher Education Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; STOP 2251; 1400 Independence Ave, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2251; Telephone: (202) 720-1973; Fax: (202) 720-2030; E-mail: SPEC@csrees.usda.gov.

PART VIII-OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access To Review Information

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, the awardee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

2. Changes in Project Plans

a. The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is 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. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.

b. Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the awardee 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 awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes.

d. Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

e. Changes in Project Period: The project period may be extended by CSREES without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed five years. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the awardee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of award.

f. Changes in Approved Budget: Changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee 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, Departmental regulations, or award.

C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of CSREES transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of one year. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

D. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, 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 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

E. Definitions

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

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.

Authorized representative means the official who has the authority to commit the resources of the institution.

Budget period means the interval of time (usually 12 months) into which the project period is divided for budgetary and reporting purposes.

Cash contributions means the applicant's cash outlay, including the outlay of money contributed to the applicant by non-Federal third parties.

Citizen or national of the United States means (1) a citizen or native resident of a State, the District of Columbia, or any Insular Area; or, (2) a person defined in the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(22), who, though not a citizen of the United States, owes permanent allegiance to the United States. Where eligibility is claimed solely on the basis of permanent allegiance, documentary evidence from the Immigration and Naturalization Service as to such eligibility must be made available to CSREES upon request.

Department or USDA means the United States Department of Agriculture.

Educational Strategy means the specific area(s) of educational focus identified in the solicitation for applications and addressed by the applicant's proposal. Educational Strategies are derived from statutory language authorizing the grants program and specific Educational Strategies are targeted for funding support in the Request for Applications.

Eligible institution means a public, secondary school or junior or community college, as defined in this RFA, that meets eligibility criteria of this program.

Eligible participant means an individual who is a citizen or national of the United States, as defined in this section.

Food and agricultural sciences (agriscience and agribusiness) means basic, applied, and developmental research, extension, and teaching activities in the food and fiber, agricultural, renewable natural resources, forestry, and physical and social sciences, in the broadest sense of these terms, including but not limited to, activities concerned with the production, processing, marketing, distribution, conservation, utilization of food and agricultural products and services, and inclusive of programs in agriculture, natural resources, aquaculture, forestry, veterinary medicine, home economics, rural human ecology, and closely allied disciplines.

Fiscal agent means a third party designated by the an authorized representative of an eligible institution which would receive and assume financial stewardship of federal grant funds and perform other activities as specified in the agreement between it and the eligible institution.

Grantee means the eligible institution designated in the grant award document as the responsible legal entity to which a grant is awarded.

Insular Area means the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Virgin Islands of the United States.

Joint project proposal means a application for a project: (1) which will involve the applicant institution working in cooperation with **one or more** other entities not legally affiliated with the applicant institution, including other schools, colleges, universities, community colleges, junior colleges, units of State government, private sector organizations, or a consortium of institutions; and (2) where the applicant institution and each cooperating entity will assume a significant role in the conduct of the proposed project. To demonstrate a substantial involvement with the project, **the applicant institution submitting a joint project proposal must retain at least 30 percent but not more than 70 percent of the awarded funds, and no cooperating entity may receive less than 10 percent of awarded funds.** Only the applicant institution must meet the definition of an eligible institution as specified in this RFA; other entities participating in a joint project proposal are not required to meet the definition of an eligible institution.

Junior or community college means an institution of higher education that: (1) admits as regular students persons who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance in the State in which the institution is located and who have the ability to benefit from the training offered by the institution; (2) does not provide an educational program for which the institution awards a bachelor's degree (or an equivalent degree); and (3) (i) provides an educational program of not less than 2 years in duration that is acceptable for full credit toward such a degree; or (ii) offers a 2-year program in engineering, mathematics, or the physical or biological sciences, designed to prepare a student to work as a technician or at the semiprofessional level in engineering, scientific, or other technological fields requiring the understanding and application of basic engineering, scientific, or mathematical principles of knowledge (20 U.S.C. 1101a(a)(6)).

Matching or Cost-sharing means that portion of allowable project costs not borne by the Federal Government, including the value of third party, in-kind contributions.

Nonprofit, as applied to a school, junior or community college, agency, organization, or institution, means a school, junior or community college, agency, organization, or institution owned and operated by one or more nonprofit corporations or associations, no part of the net earnings of which inures, or may lawfully inure, to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.

Outcomes means specific, measurable project results and benefits that, when assessed and reported, indicate the project's plan of operation has been achieved.

Peer reviewers means experts or consultants qualified by training and experience to give expert advice on the scientific and technical merit of grant applications or the relevance of those applications to one or more of the proposal evaluation criteria. Peer reviewers may be ad hoc or convened as a panel.

Plan of Operation means a detailed, step-by-step description of how the applicant intends to accomplish the project's outcomes. At a minimum, the plan should include a timetable indicating how outcomes are achieved, a description of resources to be used or acquired, and the responsibilities expected of all project personnel.

Prior approval means written approval evidencing prior consent by an authorized departmental officer as defined in this section.

Project means the particular activity within the scope of the program supported by a grant awarded under this program.

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.

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

Regular project proposal means a application for a project: (1) where the applicant institution will be the sole entity involved in the execution of the project; or (2) which will involve the applicant institution and one or more other entities, but where the involvement of the other entity(ies) does not meet the requirements for a joint proposal as defined in this section.

Secondary school means a nonprofit institutional day or residential school that provides secondary education, as determined under State law, except that such term does not include any education beyond grade 12 (Section 14101(25) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 8801(25))).

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

State means any one of the fifty States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the Virgin Islands of the United States, and the District of Columbia.

Teaching means formal classroom and/or laboratory instruction, or practicum experience in the food and agricultural sciences and matters related thereto (such as faculty development, student recruitment and services, curriculum development, instructional materials and equipment, and innovative teaching methodologies) conducted by eligible educational institutions.

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 benefiting and specifically identifiable to a funded project or program.

United States means the several States, the territories and possessions of the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, the Virgin Islands of the United States, and the District of Columbia.