



Understanding the Review Process



Grantsmanship
Workshop



Overview of the Competitive Grant Proposal Process



Application Process

Review Process

Award Administration Process



Application Process

Request for Applications (RFA)

Posted to the CSREES website

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Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service



CSREES advances knowledge for agriculture, the environment, human health and well-being, and communities through national program leadership and federal assistance.

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- Plants & Plant Products
- Technology & Engineering

In the News

More



CSREES funds study on how workplace climate affects breast-feeding habits



CSREES awards \$10 million to sequence the swine genome



Partners Video Magazine highlights CSREES' National Research Initiative



Successful transition to organic production shows planning works

Funding Opportunities

- National Research Initiative
- Small Business Innovation Research
- More...
- Request for Applications (RFAs)
- Grant Application Forms

More Quick Links

- Local Extension Office
- Jobs and Opportunities
- State and National Partners
- CSREES Staff Directory
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- Budget Information

Application Process

Project Directors (PD)

Develop proposal in compliance with:

Specific program goals and priorities

Guidelines provided in RFA

Published Deadlines

Review Process

Understanding the review process for your *specific program* helps in preparation of a more competitive proposal

Review process is designed to be fair, effective, and unbiased

Review Process

Peer-reviewed competitive programs

Review by peers and other experts - provide written and/or verbal evaluations

Understand the review process for insight into your reviewers

Review Process



Evaluation factors are program-dependent and very important

Understand evaluation criteria before writing the proposal

Evaluation criteria are stated in the RFA

Review Process

CSREES Proposal Review

- Role of National Program Leader and Panel Manager
- Ground-rules for Review
- Evaluation Criteria
- Confidentiality
- Conflicts of Interest (COI)

Panel Manager

Active, established, scientist

Part-time USDA employee (1-2 years)

Duties and responsibilities:

- With NPL, selects panelists
- With NPL, assigns reviewers to proposals
- Chairs the panel meeting
- Assists NPL with budget decisions

Role of NPL and Panel Manager

Study proposals

Assign proposals for peer-review

3 panelists – 1^o, 2^o, and 3^o (or 'reader')

4 external *ad hoc* reviewers (optional)

Role of NPL and Panel Manager

Recruit panel members

Expertise and experience to cover portfolio of applications

Diverse representation

Organize and conduct review panel

Role of NPL and Panel Manager

Post-panel responsibilities

Award administration

Feedback and consultation on declined proposals

Reporting success stories and highlights

Program education and promotion

Panel Member Selection



Active in Research, Education, or Extension

Balanced to represent breadth of proposals and applicants:

- Discipline
- Geography
- Institution Type
- Professional Rank
- Women & Minorities

Continuity: experience in the review process

Panel Member Selection



To be considered as a potential reviewer, please send an e-mail message with your contact information and area(s) of scientific or technical expertise to:

newreviewer@csrees.usda.gov



Role of Panelists



Review 15-20 proposals

Provide constructive and unbiased evaluation

Protect confidentiality

Avoid Conflicts of Interest

Ground Rules

Confidentiality

Conflict of Interest

Evaluation Criteria

Process and Protocols

Confidentiality

Proposal Content and Identity

Reviewer Identity

Reviews (shared with PD only)

Panel Proceedings

Conflicts of Interest

Advisors and Advisees (lifetime)

Collaborators and Co-authors (3 years)

Institutional

Anyone who stands to materially profit from an award decision

Conflicts of Interest

Applies to NPL, Panel Manager, Panelists, and *ad hoc* Reviewers

May not participate in any aspect of evaluation

May not participate in decisions regarding budget, project scope, or project duration



Evaluation Criteria

Always described in the RFA

Differ across programs

May differ *within* program by project type

Used by reviewers to evaluate your proposal

Stated criteria are given equal weight unless otherwise noted in the RFA

Example NRI Evaluation Criteria

Merit of the Application for Science Research,
Education, and/or Extension

Qualifications of Project Personnel, Adequacy of
Facility, and Project Management

Project Relevance

Example NRI Evaluation Criteria

Merit of the Application

Project objectives and outcomes are clearly described, adequate, and appropriate

Proposed approach is innovative, original, and feasible

Expected results and outcomes are stated, measurable, and achievable

Example NRI Evaluation Criteria

Merit of the Application

Research should fill knowledge gaps that are critical to the development of practices and programs

Education should strengthen institutional capacity and curricula and train the next generation of scientist and educators

Extension should lead to measurable changes in learning, actions, or conditions in an audience

Example NRI Evaluation Criteria

Project Personnel, Facilities, & Management

Key personnel have sufficient expertise and roles are clearly defined

Evidence of institutional capacity and competence, including personnel and facilities

Clearly articulated management plan, including timeline, maintenance of collaborations, and communication strategy

Budget allocates sufficient resources

Example NRI Evaluation Criteria

Proposal Relevance

Addresses program priority; functions are integrated and necessary

Addresses stakeholder needs

Stakeholder play active role project direction, outcomes, and communication with audience

Example NRI Evaluation Criteria

Proposal Relevance

Evaluation plan is suitable and feasible

For extension and education activities:

curricula products will sustain education/
extension functions beyond project life

curricula shares information based on
knowledge and conclusions from a broad
range of research initiatives

Review Process

Reviewers prepare written reviews

- Use evaluation criteria
- Address strengths and weaknesses
- Make suggestions for improvement

Reviewers provide summary rating

- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

During the Review Panel

Project types are reviewed and ranked separately

For example: in the NRI, integrated projects are reviewed and ranked as a group, and separate from research projects

During the Review Panel

Primary reviewer summarized proposal

Primary, secondary, and reader provide evaluation and critique in order

When used, *ad hoc* reviews are summarized

Ratings available to all panelists (except those with COI)

During the Review Panel

Panel discussion

Consensus and categorizing

- Outstanding
- High Priority
- Medium Priority
- Low Priority
- Do Not Fund

Prepare panel summary

During the Review Panel

Many panels re-rank proposals on the final day of panel

Re-visit categories

Numerical ranking - usually only proposals ranked in top ~25%

Review Process

Contact NPL if you do not receive an e-mail within 4 weeks of the deadline date acknowledging receipt of your proposal

Keep program updated of changes in address, phone number, status of other pending proposals, and COI status

Wait for notification of funding decision

Panel Summary



POSITIVE Aspects

NEGATIVE Aspects

SYNTHESIS



Awards

Phone call

Return of:

- Written Reviews
- Panel summary
- Relative ranking (categorical ranking)

Complete award paperwork

Declined Proposals

E-mail and/or letter from National Program Leader

Return of:

- Written Reviews
- Panel summary
- Relative ranking