Children, Youth, and Families at Risk Grant Program
Summary of Stakeholder Listening Sessions
Prepared October 27, 2008

National Program staff from Families, 4-H, and Nutrition and staff from the Office of Extramural Programs, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), USDA, recently conducted stakeholder listening sessions with the Western, Northeastern, Southern, and North Central regions, as well as a session for the newly eligible 1890 Land-Grant Institutions. The sessions were held during the first two weeks of October to present changes that have been made to the CYFAR program as a result of the passage of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act (FCEA) of 2008. Seventy-four individuals logged onto the sessions which were conducted using Adobe connect. In some instances, more than one individual was sharing a log-in or virtual "seat".

Section 7403 of the FCEA amends section 3(d) of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 (7 U.S.C. 343(d)). Specifically, this new law states that "A college or university eligible to receive funds under the Act of August 30, 1890 (7 U.S.C. 321 et eq.), including Tuskegee University and West Virginia State University, may compete for and receive funds directly from the Secretary of Agriculture." This amendment means that the 1890 land-grant institutions are now eligible to compete for funds through the Children, Youth, and Families at Risk (CYFAR) program beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2009.

The CYFAR program has funded the following functional areas:

- Community-based project grants:
    o New Communities Project (NCP)
    o Sustainable Community Projects (SCP)
- CYFAR Liaisons
- CYFAR Annual Conference
- CYFERnet – Program, Technology, Evaluation

National Program staff are accepting stakeholder comments until October 28, 2008. Please send an e-mail to 4hhq@csrees.usda.gov with comments or questions. Please include "CYFAR Stakeholder Comment" in the subject line.

Below are changes presented during the listening sessions that are being made to the CYFAR program as a result of this legislation:

Community-Based Project Grants
- Current Sustainable Community Projects (SCP) will need to apply competitively to complete their remaining years beginning in FY 2009
- New Communities Projects (NCP) will close on their respective ending dates. NCPs may only apply for new SCPs. They may also request a no-cost extension to spend any remaining funds from their FY 2008 NCP projects.
- An RFA will be issued for SCPs on October 31, 2008, for FY 2009 funding. 1862 and 1890 institutions, including Tuskegee University and West Virginia State University will

be eligible to compete for SCPs. The University of the District of Columbia will also be eligible to compete for funding. Applications will be due December 16, 2008. Only one proposal will be accepted from each eligible institution. 1862 and 1890 institutions may collaborate and submit one proposal. There will need to be one lead institution.

CYFAR Liaisons
- The CYFAR liaisons' Cooperative Support Agreements expired on September 30, 2008.
- In FY 2009, there will be a competitive process to select and enter into cooperative agreements with the new liaisons, perhaps as many as 8.
- A separate RFA will be issued for liaisons by October 31, 2008 with applications due by December 11, 2008.

CYFAR Annual Conference
- The grants to the two institutions that currently manage the annual CYFAR conference will come to a close after the 2010 conference. There will be a competitive process to select the institutions that manage the annual conference in FY 2010.

CYFERnet Program, Technology, and Evaluation
- In FY 2009, there will be a competitive process which we anticipate will result in three cooperative agreements for the management of each of the three aspects of CYFERnet - Program, Technology and Evaluation.
- An RFA will be issued by October 31, 2008 and CYFERnet applications will be due by December 16, 2008.

Below is a summary of feedback that was received from listening session participants organized by the major questions that were asked during the stakeholder listening sessions:

- **Should smaller 1-year planning grants be offered?**

There was much discussion across the listening sessions about the idea of planning grants. This would be something new that CYFAR has not offered in the past. Many participants felt that planning grants should not be offered and that the funding should go directly to the longer-term, five-year SCP project grants. Significant resources are already devoted to planning for a five-year project grant so a planning grant, with no further guarantee of funding, did not make sense to many participants. This opinion was expressed across the regions.

Others felt that planning grants were a good idea, though some said that it would be better to have these connected to the five years of funding (e.g., year 1 would be a planning year with reduced funding), rather than have to compete first for the planning grant, then for the five-year grant. No matter how much planning takes place before the proposal is submitted, the first year of a five-year grant always involves some kind of planning. Participants from the 1890s institutions noted that the 1890s have always served at-risk audiences and already have established relationships in local communities. They have been focusing on critical issues in communities and have been going to places where other institutions have not.

There were fewer participants who believed that the planning grants should be separate from the full five-year grants. These might be especially important for former NCP projects and new

institutions. These opinions were also expressed across the regions. Another possibility that was mentioned is that planning grant or seed grants could be provided to those full five-year proposals that were "promising" but were ranked lower and not subsequently funded.

- **Is it better to offer fewer total grants and keep the total amount the same (up to $140,000) or offer a larger number of grants for less money?**

Most participants felt that the grant amounts should not be lowered as the funding is barely sufficient to support the projects. One participant noted that the level of accountability is the same for small and large grants so it would be better to have fewer, but larger grants. Fewer numbers of participants thought there should be more awards offered, but for smaller amounts of money. This was particularly important for a participant from a smaller state. Another participant noted that planning grants should be provided to the New Communities Projects which are ending.

There was a discussion in some of the listening sessions about the period of time that grants should be offered. Many participants noted that the philosophy of CYFAR is to build local collaborations and create sustainable programs. Some felt that grants should be for at least five years but they should end at this time to allow others to compete for funds. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to break into the field. It would be very difficult to hire people for just a year and at the same time, create a sense of trust and plans for sustainability. It would also be a blow to the programs because the collaborators would take a serious hit. Another participant commented that additional funding for the state portion of the grant would be helpful.

- **How should the role of the CYFAR liaison be changed, if at all? Should we have a CYFAR liaison who is responsible specifically for capacity building?**

One participant shared that the CYFAR liaison role should be multi-year and should not be competed every year. Another participant noted that the liaison role should be more clearly communicated. Other participants commented that it would be helpful to have a liaison specifically responsible for capacity building as this would help to ensure that all institutions are on a "level playing field." Another participant recommended linking new project directors with more experienced directors as mentors.

Below are questions that were asked frequently across all of the listening sessions with answers:

1. **Will CYFERnet be funded as a multi-year grant?**
   Yes, that is the plan for CYFERnet.
2. **For proposals that include projects that had already received CYFAR funding (e.g., were in year 2 of a five year cycle), will the awards be based on prior annual reports or the quality of their proposals?**
   This is an area for further stakeholder input-please send an e-mail to 4hhq@csrees.usda.gov
3. **For proposals submitted in December, will new community sites need to be selected if you already have a CYFAR project?**
   No.

4. **Once new grants are funded, will project directors need to submit a continuation application or a full application?**

A continuation application.

5. **Will the 1994 colleges also be eligible to compete directly for funding?**

Not at this time. The legislation does not require this.

6. **Will states still cycle in and out of eligibility for competition and sit one year out of competition?**

This is open for stakeholder input. Please send an e-mail to 4hhq@csrees.usda.gov

7. **Can grants only be funded up to 4 years with a 5th, no-cost extension year?**

This is the way most grants are funded through CSREES to avoid having unspent funds at the end of the grant. However, CYFAR has been able to fund five-year grants through the careful monitoring of grant expenditures.

8. **Is there any support available for the communities supported by the current NCP states that have had only four years of support?**

They can apply for new SCP funding or a no-cost extension for next year.

9. **Will institutions that partner together receive larger grants?**

This is an area for further stakeholder input-please send an e-mail to 4hhq@csrees.usda.gov

10. **Are community partners required to provide matching funds?**

No, they aren't.

11. **What will be the yearly amount for the institutions? Is this going to be the same as in the past? ($134,000)**

We are considering offering up to $100,000 for year 1 and up to $140,000 per year for years 2-5. This is an area for stakeholder input. Please send an e-mail to 4hhq@csrees.usda.gov

12. **If a state only has an 1862 and no 1890 institution, would it be competing with states that have multiple institutions per state?**

Yes, but proposals will be by institution, not state. We will accept a maximum of one proposal per institution.

13. **Who will be selected for the various review panels (CYFAR SCP Projects, CYFAR Liaisons, CYFERnet)?**

We will have a call to all institutions for potential peer reviewers for the three review panels we will need in FY 2009.

14. **Will the allowable state portion/community portions change for the new applications?**

This is open for stakeholder input. Please send an e-mail to 4hhq@csrees.usda.gov

15. **Will there still be a 10% requirement for evaluation?**

This is open for stakeholder input. Please send an e-mail to 4hhq@csrees.usda.gov

16. **What role will evidence-based programming play in the RFA?**

This is open for stakeholder input. Please send an e-mail to 4hhq@csrees.usda.gov