

Subpart D—Review and Evaluation of a Teaching Proposal

§ 3406.14 Proposal review—teaching.

The proposal evaluation process includes both internal staff review and merit evaluation by peer review panels comprised of scientists, educators, business representatives, and Government officials who are highly qualified to render expert advice in the areas supported. Peer review panels will be selected and structured to provide optimum expertise and objective judgment in the evaluation of proposals.

§ 3406.15 Evaluation criteria for teaching proposals.

The maximum score a teaching proposal can receive is 150 points. Unless otherwise stated in the annual solicitation published in the FEDERAL REGISTER, the peer review panel will consider the following criteria and weights to evaluate proposals submitted:

Evaluation criterion	Weight
(a) Potential for advancing the quality of education: This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will have a substantial impact upon and advance the quality of food and agricultural sciences higher education by strengthening institutional capacities through promoting education reform to meet clearly delineated needs.	
(1) Impact—Does the project address a targeted need area(s)? Is the problem or opportunity clearly documented? Does the project address a State, regional, national, or international problem or opportunity? Will the benefits to be derived from the project transcend the applicant institution or the grant period? Is it probable that other institutions will adapt this project for their own use? Can the project serve as a model for others?	15 points.
(2) Continuation plans—Are there plans for continuation or expansion of the project beyond USDA support with the use of institutional funds? Are there indications of external, non-Federal support? Are there realistic plans for making the project self-supporting?	10 points.
(3) Innovation—Are significant aspects of the project based on an innovative or a non-traditional approach toward solving a higher education problem or strengthening the quality of higher education in the food and agricultural sciences? If successful, is the project likely to lead to education reform?	10 points.

Evaluation criterion	Weight
(4) Products and results—Are the expected products and results of the project clearly defined and likely to be of high quality? Will project results be of an unusual or unique nature? Will the project contribute to a better understanding of or an improvement in the quality, distribution, or effectiveness of the Nation's food and agricultural scientific and professional expertise base, such as increasing the participation of women and minorities?	15 points.
(b) Overall approach and cooperative linkages: This criterion relates to the soundness of the proposed approach and the quality of the partnerships likely to evolve as a result of the project.	
(1) Proposed approach—Do the objectives and plan of operation appear to be sound and appropriate relative to the targeted need area(s) and the impact anticipated? Are the procedures managerially, educationally, and scientifically sound? Is the overall plan integrated with or does it expand upon other major efforts to improve the quality of food and agricultural sciences higher education? Does the timetable appear to be readily achievable?	15 points.
(2) Evaluation—Are the evaluation plans adequate and reasonable? Do they allow for continuous or frequent feedback during the life of the project? Are the individuals involved in project evaluation skilled in evaluation strategies and procedures? Can they provide an objective evaluation? Do evaluation plans facilitate the measurement of project progress and outcomes?	5 points.
(3) Dissemination—Does the proposed project include clearly outlined and realistic mechanisms that will lead to widespread dissemination of project results, including national electronic communication systems, publications, presentations at professional conferences, or use by faculty development or research/teaching skills workshops?	5 points.
(4) Partnerships and collaborative efforts—Does the project have significant potential for advancing cooperative ventures between the applicant institution and a USDA agency? Does the project workplan include an effective role for the cooperating USDA agency(s)? Will the project expand partnership ventures among disciplines at a university, between colleges and universities, or with the private sector? Will the project lead to long-term relationships or cooperative partnerships that are likely to enhance program quality or supplement resources available to food and agricultural sciences higher education?	15 points.
(c) Institutional capacity building:	

Evaluation criterion	Weight
<p>This criterion relates to the degree to which the project will strengthen the teaching capacity of the applicant institution. In the case of a joint project proposal, it relates to the degree to which the project will strengthen the teaching capacity of the applicant institution and that of any other institution assuming a major role in the conduct of the project.</p> <p>(1) Institutional enhancement—Will the project help the institution to: Expand the current faculty's expertise base; attract, hire, and retain outstanding teaching faculty; advance and strengthen the scholarly quality of the institution's academic programs; enrich the racial, ethnic, or gender diversity of the faculty and student body; recruit students with higher grade point averages, higher standardized test scores, and those who are more committed to graduation; become a center of excellence in a particular field of education and bring it greater academic recognition; attract outside resources for academic programs; maintain or acquire state-of-the-art scientific instrumentation or library collections for teaching; or provide more meaningful student experiential learning opportunities?</p> <p>(2) Institutional commitment—Is there evidence to substantiate that the institution attributes a high-priority to the project, that the project is linked to the achievement of the institution's long-term goals, that it will help satisfy the institution's high-priority objectives, or that the project is supported by the institution's strategic plans? Will the project have reasonable access to needed resources such as instructional instrumentation, facilities, computer services, library and other instruction support resources?</p>	15 points.
<p>(d) Personnel Resources: This criterion relates to the number and qualifications of the key persons who will carry out the project. Are designated project personnel qualified to carry out a successful project? Are there sufficient numbers of personnel associated with the project to achieve the stated objectives and the anticipated outcomes?</p>	10 points.
<p>(e) Budget and cost-effectiveness: This criterion relates to the extent to which the total budget adequately supports the project and is cost-effective.</p> <p>(1) Budget—Is the budget request justifiable? Are costs reasonable and necessary? Will the total budget be adequate to carry out project activities? Are the source(s) and amount(s) of non-Federal matching support clearly identified and appropriately documented? For a joint project proposal, is the shared budget explained clearly and in sufficient detail?</p>	10 points.

Evaluation criterion	Weight
<p>(2) Cost-effectiveness—Is the proposed project cost-effective? Does it demonstrate a creative use of limited resources, maximize educational value per dollar of USDA support, achieve economies of scale, leverage additional funds or have the potential to do so, focus expertise and activity on a targeted need area, or promote coalition building for current or future ventures?</p>	5 points.
<p>(f) Overall quality of proposal: This criterion relates to the degree to which the proposal complies with the application guidelines and is of high quality. Is the proposal enhanced by its adherence to instructions (table of contents, organization, pagination, margin and font size, the 20-page limitation, appendices, etc.); accuracy of forms; clarity of budget narrative; well prepared vitae for all key personnel associated with the project; and presentation (are ideas effectively presented, clearly articulated, and thoroughly explained, etc.)?</p>	5 points.

Subpart E—Preparation of a Research Proposal

§ 3406.16 Scope of a research proposal.

The research component of the program will support projects that address high-priority research initiatives in areas such as those illustrated in this section where there is a present or anticipated need for increased knowledge or capabilities or in which it is feasible for applicants to develop programs recognized for their excellence. Applicants are also encouraged to include in their proposals a library enhancement component related to the initiative(s) for which they have prepared their proposals.

(a) *Studies and experimentation in food and agricultural sciences.* (1) The purpose of this initiative is to advance the body of knowledge in those basic and applied natural and social sciences that comprise the food and agricultural sciences.

(2) Examples include, but are not limited to:

(i) Conduct plant or animal breeding programs to develop better crops, forests, or livestock (e.g., more disease resistant, more productive, yielding higher quality products).

(ii) Conceive, design, and evaluate new bioprocessing techniques for eliminating undesirable constituents from or adding desirable ones to food products.