

# Specialty Crop Research Initiative

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## *FY 2008 Request for Applications*

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: August 14, 2008**

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**Please Note:** On July 24, 2008, pages of this RFA were revised “**ALL** applicants are required to provide appropriate matching documentation **in each application** (see Part IV (B) (5) (a) (1), for more specific information).” Revisions are in **red text**.

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**Please Note:** As of July 17, 2008, this Request for Applications is revised to correct the following definition pursuant to Section 10109 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Pub. L. 110-246), which amends Section 3(1) of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (Public Law 108-465; 7 U.S.C. 1621 note) by inserting “**horticulture and**” before “nursery” in the legislatively referenced definition of “Specialty Crops”. Please see paragraph 1 of the Please Read section on page 4 *and* Part VIII E. Definitions on page 41 of this announcement. Revisions are in **red text**.

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**U.S. Department of Agriculture**



**Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service**

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

**SPECIALTY CROP RESEARCH INITIATIVE**

**INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**

**CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE:** This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.309, Specialty Crop Research Initiative.

**DATES:** Applications must be received by Grants.gov by close of business (COB) on **August 14, 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 and Oversight 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](mailto: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 Specialty Crop Research Initiative RFA.

**\*\*\*\*\*Please Read\*\*\*\*\***

**Important Information Regarding Specialty Crop Research Initiative  
Policies and Procedures**

**\*\*\*\*\*Please Read\*\*\*\*\***

**Please Note: The Specialty Crop Research Initiative does not fund start-up businesses.**

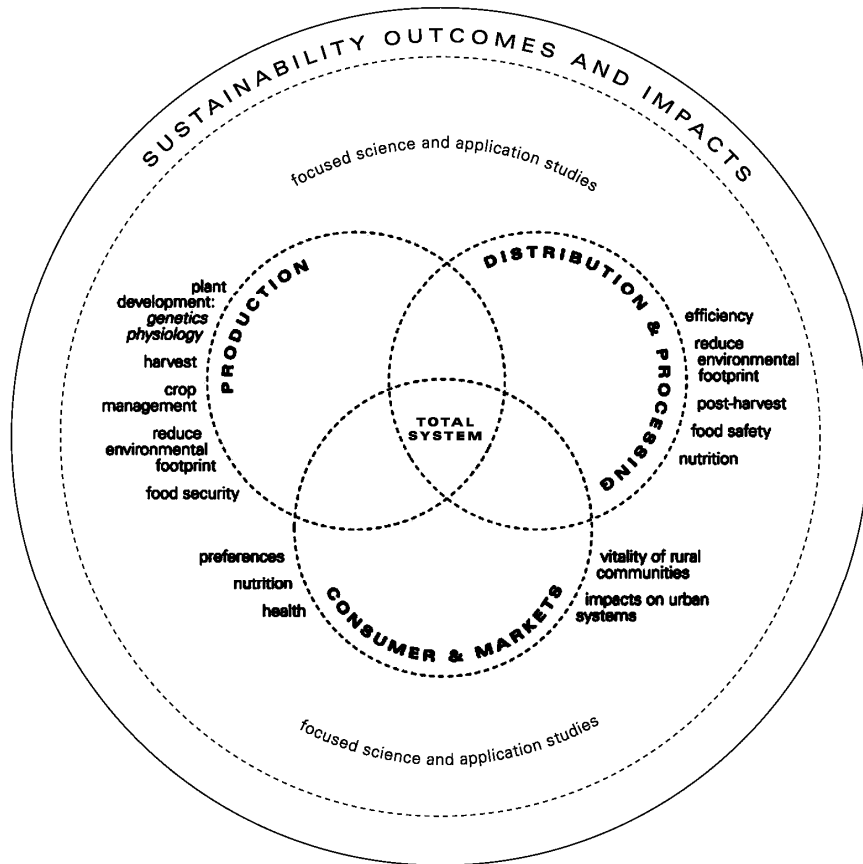
**All applications to the Specialty Crop Research Initiative must be submitted through grants.gov.**

**Notice of Intent to Submit an Application:** Prospective applicants are asked to email (**by Friday, July 18, 2008, if possible**) a notification of intent to submit a proposal. The notification of intent to submit is not required and does not enter into the review of a subsequent application. The information it contains will be used to help program staff plan the review and estimate the potential review workload. This email should include the following information:

- Descriptive (draft) title of proposed research;
- Name of the Project Director and institution name if applicable;
- Names of other potential co-Project Directors and their institutions, if applicable;
- Focus area(s) addressed;
- Likely type of proposal (Standard Research and Extension Projects, Coordinated Agricultural Projects, etc.); and
- **Subject line of email should read: Notification of intent to submit a proposal to SCRI.**

Emails should be sent to Tom Bewick at [tbewick@csrees.usda.gov](mailto:tbewick@csrees.usda.gov).

**Implementation of the Specialty Crop Research Initiative:** The Administration announced its farm bill recommendations on January 31, 2007. One of those recommendations was to create the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI). It is strongly encouraged that applicants propose a unique approach to solving challenges facing the specialty crop industries by focusing on entire primary systems, or on areas where two or more primary systems overlap. A graphic representation of this approach is found below.



Specialty crops are defined in law as fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and **horticulture and** nursery crops, including floriculture. *In toto*, these crops face many unique, but common, challenges. The SCRI seeks to address these challenges by funding systems-based, trans-disciplinary approaches. **PLEASE NOTE: For purposes of the SCRI, the term trans-disciplinary, is defined as a multi-discipline approach that brings biological and physical scientists together with economists and social scientists to address challenges in a holistic manner.** It is anticipated that successful applications will:

1. Engage stakeholders in collaborative ways to identify those priorities of greatest need;
2. Bring together multi-state, multi-institutional teams of biological, physical and social scientists to develop strategies and actions emphasizing **systems-based, trans-disciplinary** approaches for meeting the identified priorities;
3. Address priorities through research and extension;
4. Present plans for documenting the impacts of funded applications that include stakeholder involvement; and
5. Include explicit mechanisms to communicate results to producers and the public.

**New Recipients of CSREES Funding:** The eligibility requirements for the SCRI are quite broad (see Part III (A)). Successful applicants who have not received CSREES funding in the past will be required to provide detailed management information prior to the release of funds. Specific management information is required as part of the responsibility determination prior to

the award of a grant, and must be provided as part of the preaward process (see Part V (D) for more information).

**Project Directors (PD) Workshop:** It is the intent of the Specialty Crop Research Initiative to require successful applicants, or a designee, to attend at least one PD Workshop during the term of their project. These workshops may be held in conjunction with another conference. Alternatively, the PD workshops may be held separate from any other meeting. For the purpose of budget development, applicants are required to request funds for attending at least one such workshop. The request for these funds should be clearly indicated in the budget narrative section of the application.

**Matching Requirement:** 100 percent non-federal match is legislatively required for this funding opportunity. **ALL** applicants will be required to provide appropriate matching documentation **in each application** (see Part IV (B) (5) (a) (1), for more specific information).

**Registration Requirement:** Before applying, you must complete the Grants.gov registration process which **can take as long as two weeks**. Please see Part IV (A) and the following Grants.Gov link for more information:  
[http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get\\_registered.jsp](http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp).

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** CSREES announces the availability of grant funds (approximately \$28.4 million) and requests applications for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) for fiscal year (FY) 2008 to solve critical United States specialty crop issues, priorities, or problems through the integration of research and extension activities that take systems-based, trans-disciplinary approaches. The intent of the SCRI is to promote collaboration, open communication, the exchange of information and the development of resources that accelerate application of scientific discovery and technology to solving needs of the various specialty crop industries. SCRI will give priority to projects that are multistate, multi-institutional, or trans-disciplinary (see Definitions; Part VIII (E); and include explicit mechanisms to communicate results to producers and the public.

The SCRI offers the following six project types in FY 2008. These project types are described in more detail in Part II(C).

1. **Standard Research and Extension Projects (SREPs)**
  - a. Project Period – Up to 4 years.
  - b. Budget – Federal funds up to \$1 million per project.
  - c. Purpose – To support targeted problem-solving efforts that would not otherwise qualify in scope for support under CAPs.
2. **Coordinated Agricultural Projects (CAPs)**
  - a. Project Period – 3 to 5 years.
  - b. Budget – Federal funds in the range of \$1 million to \$6 million per project.
  - c. Purpose – To address specific components of a primary system.
3. **Regional Partnerships for Innovation (RPIs)**
  - a. Project Period – 2 to 3 years.
  - b. Budget – Federal funds in the range of \$1 million to \$2 million per project.
  - c. Purpose – To form partnerships that provide the local or regional infrastructure needed to fully exploit future technology commercialization and adoption.
4. **Science Delivery Projects (SDPs)**
  - a. Project Period – 3 to 5 years.
  - b. Budget – Federal funds in the range of \$250,000 to \$4 million per project.
  - c. Purpose – To distill, synthesize, organize, package, and deliver components of the existing science base.
5. **eXtension Projects**
  - a. Project Period – 3 to 5 years.
  - b. Budget – Federal funds up to \$500,000 per project.
  - c. Purpose – To develop Communities of Practice (COP) proposals for the eXtension system and to support existing COPs.

**6. Research and Extension Planning Projects**

- a. Project Period – 1 year.
- b. Budget – Federal funds up to \$100,000 per project.
- c. Purpose – To provide assistance to applicants in the development of quality proposals.

This notice identifies the objectives for SCRI projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a SCRI grant.

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## **PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION**

### **A. Legislative Authority and Background**

The Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) is authorized by Section 7311 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, which added section 412 to the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (AREERA). Section 412 of AREERA establishes a specialty crop research and extension initiative to address the critical needs of the specialty crop industry by developing and disseminating science-based tools to address needs of specific crops and their regions.

### **B. Purpose and Priorities**

The purpose of the SCRI is to address the critical needs of the specialty crop industry (as defined in Part VIII (E)). SCRI projects must be designed to solve critical specialty crop agriculture issues, address priorities, and/or solve problems through multifunctional research and extension activities.

SCRI will give priority to projects that are multistate, multi-institutional, or trans-disciplinary; and include explicit mechanisms to communicate results to producers and the public. Project applications are strongly encouraged to include both research and extension with each component represented by one or more objectives within the proposal. Priority will be given to proposals that include research *and* extension. Projects must budget sufficient resources to carry out the proposed set of extension and research activities. Projects **must address** at least one of the five legislatively mandated focus areas described below and applications should describe the practical applications being sought. The intent of the SCRI is to promote collaboration, open communication, the exchange of information and the development of resources that accelerate application of scientific discovery and technology to solving needs of the various specialty crop industries. SCRI aims to reduce duplication of efforts and integrate activities among individuals, institutions, states, and regions. Therefore, applications should clearly articulate how a SCRI award will complement and/or link with existing programs or projects.

The SCRI has five legislatively mandated focus areas, each of which will receive at least 10 percent of the available funds. These focus areas are:

1. Research in plant breeding, genetics, and genomics to improve crop characteristics, such as:
  - a. product, taste, quality, and appearance;
  - b. environmental responses and tolerances;
  - c. nutrient management, including plant nutrient uptake efficiency;
  - d. pest and disease management, including resistance to pests and diseases resulting in reduced application management strategies; and
  - e. enhanced phytonutrient content.
2. Efforts to identify and address threats from pests and diseases, including threats to specialty crop pollinators;

3. Efforts to improve production efficiency, productivity, and profitability over the long term (including specialty crop policy and marketing);
4. New innovations and technology, including improved mechanization and technologies that delay or inhibit ripening; and
5. Methods to prevent, detect, monitor, control, and respond to potential food safety hazards in the production and processing of specialty crops, including fresh produce.

CSREES will address all of these focus areas by funding projects that emphasize **systems-based, trans-disciplinary** approaches. In addition, for the purposes of this program, CSREES interprets “new innovations and technology” to include, among other things, automation, robotics, sensor technology and precision agriculture for specialty crops.

**Please note: This program does not fund start up businesses.**

FY 2008 funds will be awarded to successful applicants under the six project types described in detail in Part II(C). CSREES intends to include another project type, Coordinated Systems Projects (CSPs), in future RFAs. CSPs will focus on whole-systems approaches to address issues for which there is the promise of some relatively short-term progress toward solutions.

## **PART II—AWARD INFORMATION**

### **A. Available Funding**

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. Approximately \$28.4 million will be available to fund applications in the SCRI for FY 2008. Budget limits and project periods are listed below.

### **B. Types of Applications**

In FY 2008, only new applications may be submitted to the SCRI. New applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

Awards will be made as standard grants which are instruments by which CSREES agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined project period without any statement of intention to provide additional support at a future date.

In future years or under certain circumstances, CSREES may determine that it will support continuation awards. CSREES is under no obligation to award a continuation grant and should CSREES decide to make such an award, the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) must make an affirmative decision to do so. A continuation grant is an instrument by which CSREES agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined project period with a statement of intention to provide additional support at a future date, provided that performance has been satisfactory, funds are available for this purpose, and continued support would be in the best interest of the Federal government and the public.

### **C. Project Types**

**1. Standard Research and Extension Projects (SREPs)** will support targeted problem-solving efforts that would not otherwise qualify in scope for support under Coordinated Agricultural Projects (CAPs). Beginning with stakeholder-identified concerns, projects should seek solutions that lead to measurable benefit to producers and consumers. Applications should bring together both research and extension components of the agricultural knowledge system around a problem area or activity. For each SREP award, there is an expectation that an advisory panel will be formed to inform the program throughout its life, including the identification and prioritization of research and extension objectives. Applications should detail the creation and functions of this panel. These grants will be used to provide support for projects that contribute to the overall sustainability of a component or primary system. SREP applications will have a project period of up to 4 years and include a budget for federal funds up to \$1 million.

**2. Coordinated Agricultural Projects (CAPs)** will be awarded to consortia or groups of qualified applicants *to address specific components of a primary system*, with the expectation that the project will make strong contributions to the sustainability of the system of which the component is a part. These projects would apply trans-disciplinary, multi-functional, and, where appropriate, multi-institutional approaches to provide viable solutions to the highest priority

stakeholder needs. An aim of a CAP award is to encourage maximum flexibility in applied research and extension. Applications will be evaluated based on how well their goals and objectives respond to current stakeholder needs. It is recognized however, that as an award's comprehensive approach unfolds, unexpected advances and promising leads, or unforeseen new national needs related to project goals and objectives, may be identified. CAP applications will have a project period of 3 to 5 years and include a budget for federal funds in the range of \$1 million to \$6 million.

CAP applications are expected to demonstrate coherent and complementary integrated activities with the ultimate goal of developing a strategy or solution that could be implemented for specialty crops. Applications are expected to take advantage of recent advances in biological, physical, and social and economic sciences and to translate basic discoveries and knowledge to practical applications.

A CAP must seek to bring together a multi-state, multi-institutional, and/or trans-disciplinary team to integrate scientific discoveries and technology with practical application; and provide complementary extension efforts to bring science-based information to relevant audiences that will allow them to make informed decisions. For each CAP award, there is an expectation that an advisory panel will be formed to inform the program throughout its life, including the identification and prioritization of research and/or extension objectives. Applications must detail the creation and functions of this panel.

CAP teams should be comprised of members working in discovery, learning, and engagement to conduct research and extension utilizing systems science and trans-disciplinary approaches on an emerging or priority area important to specialty crops. This integrated team would contain expertise in biological science disciplines, physical science and engineering disciplines, socio-economic sciences, extension, program evaluation, as appropriate, as well as expertise from principal stakeholders and partners. Partnerships with end user groups (*e.g.*, industry, processors, manufacturers, growers, technology providers) are strongly encouraged. The application should outline the potential of the CAP team, its structure, coordination and plan of implementation

As a result, there is an expectation that objectives may be redirected and/or new objectives may be developed with associated budget adjustments. To encourage flexibility, the program does not expect that all investigators associated with the proposed project will be supported throughout its duration. It is suggested that investigators involved in shorter-term, specific tasks be supported through a series of renewable subcontracts.

Applications must include, as an appendix, a budgeted project management plan and timeline to ensure efficient functioning of the CAP team. This plan should include an organizational chart, administrative timeline, a description of how the project will be governed, intellectual property management, and identification of short-, medium- and long-term metrics to be evaluated, what expectations are required from each team member, a mechanism whereby progress metrics can be evaluated for future budgetary allocations, and how the project will complement and/or link to existing programs or projects to include multi-disciplinary, multi-institutional, multi-state and trans-disciplinary collaborations. The plan must include a strategy to become self-supporting by

the end of the project period without assuming long-term SCRI support. (See Part IV(B)(2)(c) for attachment instructions.)

Applications must include, as an appendix, a budgeted plan and timeline for an advisory group of principal stakeholders and scientists relevant to the proposed research and extension projects (*e.g.*, include letters of commitment and rationale for their role) to assess and evaluate the quality, potential outcomes, and impacts, and how they could function effectively to support the goals and objectives of the CAP). See Part IV(B)(2)(c) for attachment instructions.

**3. Regional Partnerships for Innovation (RPI):** As new technologies emerge from the SCRI, there will be a need to help those products reach commercialization so that they become available for adoption by specialty crop industries. The Federal Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) programs help individual small businesses develop and prototype pre-commercial products and services. However, there often remains a gap in organizational and networking resources resulting in a lack of “support networks” that encourage regional economic development. Broad-based partnerships can provide the local or regional infrastructure needed to fully exploit future technology commercialization and adoption. These networks would be comprised of partnerships among universities, local governments, financial stakeholders, end-user industries, manufacturers, community organizations, etc. RPI awards will support the initial development of regional partnerships with the expectation that they would be self-supporting by the end of a grant’s project period. RPI applications will have a project period of 2 to 3 years and include a budget for federal funds in the range of \$1 million to \$2 million.

RPIs should serve one or more stakeholder industries, both seeking their participation and incorporating their input. It is expected that each funded partnership will operate within a delineated geographic extent and include participants appropriate to that geography and stated stakeholder communities. Participant roles and responsibilities will focus on particular partnership objectives and the anticipated outputs and outcomes for the project. For each RPI award, there is an expectation that an advisory panel will be formed to inform the program throughout its life, including the identification and prioritization of research and/or extension objectives. Applications must detail the creation and functions of this panel.

RPIs developed under this initiative should articulate how their approach can serve as a model for innovation by other industries and other locales. A continuity plan should also be included that describes how the RPI will continue beyond the period of CSREES funding.

**4. Science Delivery Projects (SDPs):** Stakeholders have identified that development and dissemination of science-based tools are key to their industries’ future successes. While many of the other project types in the SCRI will create new knowledge and apply it appropriately to aid specialty crop industries, there is an equally important need to distill, synthesize, organize, package, and deliver components of the existing science base. Effective science-based tools will rely on multiple disciplines (in a trans-disciplinary manner) and take advantage of new technologies to meet present and future industry challenges. SDPs are sought that would support applied research (making fundamental studies more applicable), development activities (creating appropriate tools and technologies), and extension programming (translating applied research for practical use and providing informal training in the use of new tools). Outreach and engagement

would comprise the first step in helping establish specific stakeholder needs for such tools. SDPs would emphasize projects that cross disciplinary boundaries and incorporate economic, social, and environmental exposure in a way that integrates those different perspectives within the tools that are disseminated. SDP applications will have a project period of 3 to 5 years and include a budget for federal funds up to \$4 million.

In fiscal year 2008, the Specialty Crop Research Initiative anticipates funding two categories of applications within SDPs. In the first category, multi-institutional collaborations are encouraged that bring together two or more research or outreach entities. Those entities might include, but are not limited to: industry research organizations, 4-H, agricultural consultants, community colleges (and other two year institutions), vocational or technical schools, baccalaureate programs, extension and outreach providers, and graduate programs. These collaborations must focus on stakeholder identified needs, and either conduct applied research and development activities, or provide informal training for specialty crop producers, their employees, or advisors, or both. Informal training activities are intended to help participants gain new knowledge and expand scientific or technical skill sets for on-the-job application. To the extent possible, proposed project activities should engage both students and faculty in the research and outreach enterprises. *While the authorizing legislation places a higher priority on multi-state and multi-institutional projects, applications under this category will also be accepted from single institutions.* However, the ability to meet the programmatic goals as outlined above must be demonstrated.

The second category of SDP will involve multi-state or regional consortia with the goal of creating: (a) groups of participants who have the skills necessary to fulfill current and future workforce needs in the specialty crop industries, and (b) more efficient and effective delivery of applied research and development that reduces duplication of effort and costs. These consortia should involve two or more entities, as noted above. Consortia should develop agreements among the members that resolve issues related to intellectual property rights for developed tools and technologies. Additional agreements might also be needed to establish standards, certifications, etc., for science-based tools and trained participants. The same stakeholder needs requirement applies here, as above. Similarly, proposed projects should include an appropriate mix of applied research and development activities along with a suitable emphasis on extension and outreach efforts.

For both categories of SDPs, partnerships with specialty crop industry participants, from needs assessment through to delivery and evaluation, are strongly encouraged.

A budgeted plan and timeline must include approaches to evaluate the adoption and effectiveness of science-based tools that are developed and delivered. This should include both an assessment of methods used in training individuals in the use of developed tools, and efficacy of the tools/technologies in practice. The plan must also include opportunities, with measurable outcomes, for end-user groups traditionally under-represented in science delivery efforts and for small and medium-sized producers.

Recognizing that stakeholder-identified deficiencies currently exist for science-based tools in several areas, SCP applications are encouraged in the following areas for fiscal year 2008: (1) plant breeding, genetics, and genomics and (2) automation, robotics, sensor technology and

precision agriculture for specialty crops. Even though these particular biological and engineering areas are targeted in FY 2008, funded SDPs will place a strong emphasis on a systems science approach and will offer stakeholder tools that reflect trans-disciplinary science.

**5. eXtension Projects.** Groups of qualified individuals will receive grants to develop Communities of Practice (COP) proposals for the eXtension system. In addition to grants for COP establishment, grants could support existing COPs and would provide additional resources to ensure that information and technology transfer reaches potential adopters as quickly as possible. eXtension applications will have a project period of 3 to 5 years and include a budget for federal funds of up to \$500,000.

**Please see the following links for more information:**

**eXtension**

[http://about.extension.org/mediawiki/files/5/51/EXECUTIVE\\_SUMMARY\\_-\\_March\\_14%2C\\_2006\\_-\\_YEAR\\_2.pdf](http://about.extension.org/mediawiki/files/5/51/EXECUTIVE_SUMMARY_-_March_14%2C_2006_-_YEAR_2.pdf)

**eXtension Implementation Plan**

<http://about.extension.org/wiki/Planning>

**Communities of Practice**

[http://about.extension.org/wiki/Glossary\\_of\\_eXtension\\_Terms#Community\\_of\\_Practice\\_28CoP.29](http://about.extension.org/wiki/Glossary_of_eXtension_Terms#Community_of_Practice_28CoP.29)

**6. Research and Extension Planning Projects** are intended to provide assistance to applicants in the development of quality future proposals. Priority will be given to applicants who: (1) can demonstrate limited resources for submitting large grant applications, (2) articulate benefits accrued from formal planning activities, and (3) submit applications containing evidence of a high likelihood that quality future applications will be submitted for SCRI projects. Applications are encouraged for meetings that bring together scientists and others, including end-users and technology providers, to identify research and/or extension needs, update information, and advance understanding of specialty crop issues and problems. This information should be used to build teams that can develop applications to address the identified challenges using a systems-based, trans-disciplinary focus. These activities can take the form of workshops or symposia and may constitute an initial step in preparing a CAP application in subsequent FYs. Applicants should be careful to ensure that participants represent a broad range of expertise by detailing the types of participants who will be invited.

Research and Extension Planning Proposal awards of Federal funds will not exceed \$100,000, and are not renewable. It is expected that planning activities supported by this program will occur within 12 months of awards being issued. Applicants for Research and Extension Planning Proposals should be mindful that the 100 percent matching requirement also applies to these awards.

CSREES expects that applicants will consult with specialty crop producers, processors and/or consumers before developing project applications. Stakeholders should play an important role in developing project goals and objectives; in implementing the experimental or extension plan; and in evaluating and disseminating project results and outcomes. Farmers and others with little training or experience in developing and implementing research and outreach projects should consult with appropriate specialists. These specialists might include university scientists and Extension personnel or production consultants with scientific training. Projects must involve work that is necessary, both in terms of stakeholder preferences and the magnitude of the problem. An outcome-oriented plan for disseminating information derived from project work must be an integral part of the project.



## **PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

### **A. Eligible Applicants**

For the Specialty Crop Research Initiative, applications may be submitted by Federal agencies, national laboratories, colleges and universities, research institutions and organizations, private organizations or corporations, State agricultural experiment stations, individuals, or groups consisting of 2 or more of these entities.

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

### **B. Cost Sharing or Matching**

The recipient of a grant under the Specialty Crop Research Initiative must provide funds or in-kind support from non-Federal sources in an amount that is at least equal to the amount provided by the SCRI. There is no provision for waiver of this requirement (please see Part IV(B)(5)(a) for more information).

## PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

### A. Electronic 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](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](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-SCRI-001765** 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 am – 9 pm Eastern Standard Time  
Email: [support@grants.gov](mailto: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 the attachment requirements (e.g., portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide available with the Application Package at Grants.gov. **ANY PROPOSALS CONTAINING NON-PDF DOCUMENTS WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM CSREES REVIEW.** Partial applications will be excluded from consideration. With documented prior approval, resubmitted applications will be accepted until COB 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 “[PDF Conversion Programs](#)” on ([http://www.grants.gov/resources/download\\_software.jsp#pdf\\_conversion\\_programs](http://www.grants.gov/resources/download_software.jsp#pdf_conversion_programs)).

### **SCRI Proposals**

#### **1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide.

#### **2. R&R Other Project Information Form**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 3. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide.

**a. Field 6 - Project Summary/Abstract.** The Project Summary may not exceed **250 words** on one page, and should clearly indicate the appropriate project type (as described in Part II (C)). The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of the SCRI. The importance of a concise, informative Project Summary cannot be overemphasized. This word and page limitation applies regardless of whether figures or tables are included. Applications exceeding the applicable limitation will be at risk of being excluded from review. These maximums have been established to ensure fair and equitable competition.

**b. Field 7 - Project Narrative.** PLEASE NOTE: the Project Narrative section may not exceed a total of 25 single- or double-spaced pages, including figures and tables. The Introduction may not exceed 5 pages, and the rest of the Project Narrative may not exceed 20 pages. **Research and Extension Planning narratives may not exceed 15 single- or double-spaced pages, including figures and tables.** These SCRI page limitations apply regardless of whether figures or tables are included. All pages,

including those with figures and tables, should be numbered sequentially. Applications exceeding the applicable page limitation will be at risk of being excluded from review. These maximums have been established to ensure fair and equitable competition.

**The Project Narrative must include all of the following:**

(i) Introduction.

List the following:

1. Program Staff – include name, title, affiliation, address, and e-mail for PD(s), CoPD(s) and Key Personnel.
2. Provide a clear statement of the long-term goal(s), the critical need(s) of specialty crop industries being addressed, and supporting outreach objectives or research questions.
3. Describe the legislatively mandated focus areas being addressed, and provide an estimate of the percentage of funds dedicated to each (sum of percentages should equal 100 percent).
4. Describe how stakeholders were engaged to identify project goals and objectives, and as appropriate how stakeholder involvement will continue.
5. Summarize the body of knowledge or other past activities that substantiate the need for the proposed project.
6. Describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed project including the work of key project personnel. Applications should also demonstrate how duplication of effort with similar activities by others will be avoided.
7. Preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed work should be included in this section. All works cited should be referenced and attached at Field 8 on the Form, Bibliography & Reference Cited. Refer to Part V, 3.8 of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide.

(ii) Rationale and Significance. Concisely present the rationale behind the proposed research and/or extension. The specific relationship of the project's objectives to one or more of the SCRI focus areas should be shown clearly. These purposes and focus areas are described under Part I, B, Purpose and Priorities. Any novel ideas or contributions that the proposed project offers should also be discussed in this section.

(iii) Approach. The activities proposed or problems being addressed must be clearly stated and the approaches being applied clearly described. Specifically, this section must include:

1. A description of the activities proposed, key personnel or institution roles in those activities, and the sequence in which the activities are to be performed;
2. Methods to be used in carrying out the proposed project, including the feasibility of the methods (clearly describe the systems thinking used in the project methodology and the contribution of trans-disciplinary approaches);
3. Expected outcomes, including how the project expects to contribute to long-term profitability and sustainability of specialty crops;
4. Means by which results will be analyzed, assessed, or interpreted;
5. How results or products will be used;

6. Outreach plan: including, where appropriate, science-based tools disseminated, participants involved in delivery, and how impacts will be measured;
7. Pitfalls that may be encountered;
8. Limitations to proposed procedures; and
9. A full explanation of any materials, procedures, situations, or activities related to the project that may be hazardous to personnel, along with an outline or precautions to be exercised to avoid or mitigate the effects of such hazards.

**c. Field 11 - Other Attachments – PDF**

Depending on the type of application, other attachments are required. Please see the description of each project type in Part II(C) for both specific and general information that may be attached here.

- i. **Appendices to Project Description.** Appendices to the Project Description 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.** For example the CAP project type requires specific information which should be attached in Field 11 in PDF format, as described below:

*CAP applications must include, as an appendix, a budgeted plan and timeline for an advisory group of principal stakeholders and scientists relevant to the proposed research and extension projects (e.g., include letters of commitment and rationale for their role) to assess and evaluate the quality, potential outcomes, and impacts, and how they could function effectively to support the goals and objectives of the specific project type within SCRI.*

**3. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 4. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide.

**4. R&R Personal Data** – As noted in Part V, 5., the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award. **PLEASE DO NOT PROVIDE THE SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER OF PROJECT DIRECTOR / PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR.**

**5. SF 424 R&R Budget Fed & Nonfed**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 6. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide. This form (accompanied by the required Budget Justification attachment (see Field K on the Form)) contains the itemized listing and description of your project’s budget. Applicants must 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.

- a. **Matching.** Applications shall include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and fair market value of in-kind contributions) from third

parties (non-federal sources) in an amount at least equal to the amount awarded by the Federal government. Written verification means:

For any third party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each donation, signed by the authorized representative 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.

The sources and the amount of all matching support from outside the applicant organization shall be summarized on a separate page and placed in the application as a part of the Budget Justification attachment (see Field K on the Form SF 424 (R&R) Budget Fed & Non-Fed). All pledge agreements must be included as a PDF attachment.

The value of applicant contributions to the project shall be established in accordance with the applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circulars A-21, Cost Principles for Educational Institutions; A-87, Cost Principles for State, Local, and Tribal Governments; A-122, Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations; 2 CFR Part 215, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-110); and the cost principles in the Federal Acquisition Regulation at 48 CFR 31.2 for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

**b. Project Directors' Workshop.** It is the intent of the Specialty Crop Research Initiative to require successful applicants or a designee to attend at least one Project Directors' Workshop during the term of their project. For the purposes of budget development, applicants are required to request funds for attending at least one such workshop. The request for these funds should be clearly indicated in the budget narrative section of the application.

## **6. Supplemental Information Form**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part VI, 1. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide.

**a. Field 2. Program Code.** Enter the program code name (i.e., enter "Specialty Crop Research Initiative") and the program code (i.e., enter "SCRI").

**b. Field 3. Type of Applicant.** Enter the type of Applicant/Organization.

**c. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List.** A conflict of interest list is required under this program.

## Research and Extension Planning Projects

Potential Research and Extension Planning applicants are strongly advised to consult the appropriate Agency Contact (see Part VII) before preparing their application. **PLEASE NOTE: To submit a Research and Extension Planning Project, follow the guidelines for all SCRI Applications (Part IV, B., 1-7., above), noting the following differences in sections (2) and (5) for Research and Extension Planning applications:**

### **2. R&R Other Project Information Form**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 3. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide.

- a. **Field 6 - Project Summary/Abstract.** State the objectives of the conference, symposium, or workshop, as well as the proposed location and probable inclusive date(s) of the activity.
  
- b. **Field 7 - Project Narrative.** The Project Narrative is limited to 15 pages. Describe the planning activity proposed, including:
  - i. A justification for the meeting (see Part IIC);
  - ii. Recent meetings on the same subject with dates and locations;
  - iii. Names and organizational affiliations of the chair and other members of the organizing committee;
  - iv. A proposed program (or agenda) for the activity, including a listing of scheduled participants and their institutional affiliations (see Part IIC); and
  - v. The method of announcement or invitation that will be used.

### **5. SF 424 (R&R) Budget Fed & Non-Fed**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 6. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide. This form (accompanied by the required Budget Justification attachment (see Field K on the Form)) contains the itemized listing and description of your project's budget. Applicants must complete one SF 424 (R&R) Budget Fed & Non-Fed Form for the 12-month period.

The budget for the planning activity may include an appropriate amount for transportation and subsistence costs for participants and for other related costs. Planning awards are not expected to exceed \$100,000 and are not renewable. Include an itemized breakdown of all support requested in the Budget Justification (Field K. of the R&R Budget).

## 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 **August 14, 2008 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time)**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

Correspondence regarding submitted applications will be sent using 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 correspondence **from CSREES** regarding a submitted application within 15 days of submission of the application, please contact the Program Contact identified in Part VII of this 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

### 1. Indirect Costs

Section 7132 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, amended the National Agriculture Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3310(a)), limiting indirect costs to 22 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 22 percent of total Federal funds awarded. If no rate has been established the applicant may indicate "None—will negotiate" and a reasonable dollar amount for indirect costs may be requested, which will be subject to approval by USDA. In the latter case, if a proposal is recommended for funding, an indirect cost rate proposal must be submitted prior to award to support the amount of indirect costs requested. CSREES will request an indirect cost rate proposal and provide instructions, as necessary. An applicant may elect not to charge indirect costs and, instead, use all grant funds for direct costs. If indirect costs are not charged, the phrase "None requested" should be written in this space.

The maximum allowed indirect cost of 22 percent may be claimed under the Federal portion of the award, or the maximum allowed indirect cost of 22 percent may be claimed as matching contributions (if no indirect costs are requested). However, the maximum allowed indirect cost of 22 percent may not be claimed on both the Federal portion of the award and as matching contributions (Note: An awardee may, as an example, request 11 percent of indirect costs on both the Federal portion of the award and as matching contributions. Or, an awardee may request any other, similar percentage combination that, when combined, does not exceed the 22 percent



maximum indirect cost allowed.) Nevertheless, the total combined percent of requested and contributed matching indirect costs cannot exceed 22 percent.

## **2. Construction and Renovation**

Funds made available under SCRI shall not be used for the construction of a new building or facility or the acquisition, expansion, remodeling, or alteration of an existing building or facility (including site grading and improvement, and architect fees).

## **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 two-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.

Section 7301 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, amended section 103(a) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (AREERA) (7 U.S.C. 7613(a)) by stating that Peer and Merit review procedures *shall not* take the offer or availability of matching funds into consideration. Therefore, while matching is required under SCRI, it will not be included in the Peer and Merit Review (see Part III (B) for more information).

Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific and/or extension 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 or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, farm 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 below will be used in reviewing applications submitted in response to this RFA and the specific Project Types described in Part II (C):

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#### **Criteria for Standard Research and Extension Projects**

##### **1. Proposal Relevance (50 points):**

- (a) Documented need (10 points). Application includes documentation substantiating that project is directed to current or likely future potential problems/challenges in specialty crop agriculture;
- (b) Stakeholder involvement (10 points). Application includes information on how stakeholders were selected and how their input was solicited and incorporated;
- (c) Outreach plan (10 points). Application includes a detailed outreach plan that includes project benefits and a description of how impacts will be measured,

including the likelihood that the project will provide solutions that lead to measurable benefits to producers and consumers;

- (d) Demonstrated understanding and application of a whole system(s) perspective with the potential for the project to contribute to long-term profitability and sustainability of specialty crop production, processing or marketing systems (10 points); and
- (e) Documentation that the project applies a trans-disciplinary approach to address economic, environmental **and** social aspects of specialty crop sustainability (10 points).

## **2. Proposal Quality (50 points):**

- (a) Conceptual adequacy – Application clearly states objectives which are potentially attainable within project time, scope and budget (10 points);
- (b) Design – The application’s methodology and analytical approach are appropriate to project objectives, and effectively combines research and extension activities (15 points);
- (c) Involvement of appropriate, relevant expertise (5 points);
- (d) Experience of Senior/Key project personnel (5 points);
- (e) Appropriateness of budget (5 points);
- (f) Feasibility, probability of success, including the likelihood that the project will contribute to the overall sustainability of a component or primary system (5 points); and
- (g) Adherence to guidelines (5 points).

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## **Criteria for Coordinated Agricultural Projects**

### **1. Proposal Relevance (50 points):**

- (a) Documented need (10 points). Application includes documentation substantiating that project is directed to current or likely future potential problems/challenges in specialty crop agriculture;
- (b) Stakeholder involvement (10 points). Application includes information on how stakeholders were selected and how their input was solicited and incorporated;
- (c) Outreach plan (10 points). Application includes a detailed outreach plan that includes project benefits and a description of how impacts will be measured;

- (d) Demonstrated understanding and application of a whole system(s) perspective with the potential for the project to contribute to long-term profitability and sustainability of specialty crop production, processing or marketing systems (10 points); and
- (e) Documentation that the project applies a trans-disciplinary approach to address economic, environmental **and** social aspects of specialty crop sustainability (10 points).

## **2. Proposal Quality (50 points):**

- (a) Conceptual adequacy (10 points). Application clearly states objectives which are potentially attainable within project time, scope and budget, including how well the application addresses one or more legislatively mandated focus areas as described in Part I(B);
- (b) Design (15 points). The application's methodology and analytical approach are appropriate to project objectives, a continuity plan addresses future long-term plans for the proposed activities, and effectively combines research and extension activities;
- (c) Involvement of appropriate, relevant expertise (5 points);
- (d) Experience of Senior/Key project personnel (5 points);
- (e) Appropriateness of budget (5 points);
- (f) Feasibility, probability of success (5 points); and
- (g) Adherence to guidelines (5 points).

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## **Criteria for Regional Partnerships for Innovation**

### **1. Proposal Relevance (50 points):**

- (a) Documented need (10 points). Application includes documentation substantiating that project is directed to current or likely future potential problems/challenges in specialty crop agriculture;
- (b) Stakeholder involvement (10 points). Application includes information on how stakeholders were selected and how their input was solicited and incorporated;
- (c) Outreach plan (10 points). Application includes a detailed outreach plan that includes project benefits and a description of how impacts will be measured;

- (d) Demonstrated understanding and application of a whole system(s) perspective with the potential for the project to contribute to long-term profitability and sustainability of specialty crop production, processing or marketing systems (10 points); and
- (e) Documentation that the project applies a trans-disciplinary approach to address economic, environmental **and** social aspects of specialty crop sustainability (10 points).

## **2. Proposal Quality (50 points):**

- (a) Conceptual adequacy (10 points). Application clearly states objectives which are potentially attainable within project time, scope and budget;
- (b) Design (15 points). The application's methodology and analytical approach are appropriate to project objectives, including the likelihood that the proposed project approach will serve as a model for innovation by other industries and other locales;
- (c) Involvement of appropriate, relevant expertise (5 points);
- (d) Experience of Senior/Key project personnel (5 points);
- (e) Appropriateness of budget (5 points);
- (f) Feasibility, probability that proposed project will successfully create the initial development of regional partnerships that encourage regional economic development (5 points); and
- (g) Adherence to guidelines (5 points).

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## **Criteria for Science Delivery Projects**

### **1. Proposal Relevance (50 points)**

- (a) Documented need (10 points). Application includes documentation substantiating that the project is directed to address current or likely future needs of specialty crop agriculture that can be met through the use of science-based tools;
- (b) Stakeholder involvement (10 points). Application includes information on how stakeholders were selected and how their input was solicited and incorporated;
- (c) Evaluation plan (10 points). Demonstrates a process to evaluate successes of proposed project activities (including both tool/technology adoption and effectiveness) in taking advantage of new technologies to meet present and future industry challenges and to provide recommendations for building on successes with future projects;

- (d) Demonstrated understanding and application of a whole system(s) perspective (10 points); and
- (e) Documentation that the project applies a trans-disciplinary approach to address economic, environmental **and** social aspects of specialty crop sustainability to help ensure that science delivery efforts will have long-term success (10 points).

## **2. Proposal Quality (50 points):**

- (a) Conceptual adequacy (10 points). Application clearly states objectives which are potentially attainable within project time, scope and budget;
- (b) Design (15 points). The application's methodology and analytical approach are appropriate to project objectives, and must emphasize the combination of applied research and development with extension and outreach;
- (c) Involvement of appropriate, relevant expertise (5 points);
- (d) Experience of Senior/Key project personnel (5 points);
- (e) Appropriateness of budget (5 points);
- (f) Feasibility, probability of success, including the likelihood that the proposed project will result in the development, delivery, and adoption of effective science-based tools for the specialty crop industries (5 points); and
- (g) Adherence to guidelines (5 points).

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## **Criteria for eXtension Projects**

### **1. Proposal Relevance (50 points):**

- (a) Documented need (10 points). Application includes documentation substantiating that project is directed to current or likely future potential problems/challenges in specialty crop agriculture;
- (b) Stakeholder involvement (10 points). Application includes information on how stakeholders were selected and how their input was solicited and incorporated;
- (c) Outreach plan (10 points). Application includes a detailed outreach plan that includes project benefits and a description of how impacts will be measured;
- (d) Demonstrated understanding and application of a whole system(s) perspective with the potential for the project to contribute to long-term profitability and sustainability of specialty crop production, processing or marketing systems (10 points); and

- (e) Documentation that the project applies a trans-disciplinary approach to address economic, environmental **and** social aspects of specialty crop sustainability (10 points).

## **2. Proposal Quality (50 points):**

- (a) Conceptual adequacy (10 points). Application clearly states objectives which are potentially attainable within project time, scope and budget;
- (b) Design (15 points). The application's methodology and analytical approach are appropriate to project objectives;
- (c) Involvement of appropriate, relevant expertise (5 points);
- (d) Experience of Senior/Key project personnel (5 points);
- (e) Appropriateness of budget (5 points);
- (f) Feasibility, probability of success, including the likelihood that the project will successfully develop or contribute to existing Communities of Practice that lead to measurable benefit to producers and consumers (5 points); and
- (g) Adherence to guidelines (5 points).

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## **Criteria for Research and Extension Planning Projects**

### **1. Proposal Relevance (50 points):**

- (a) Documented need (10 points). Application includes documentation substantiating that project is directed to current or likely future potential problems/challenges in specialty crop agriculture. Demonstrate specific need for planning activity (e.g., limited resources for submitting large grant applications and potential benefits accrued from formal planning activities);
- (b) Stakeholder involvement (10 points). Application includes information on how stakeholders will participate in the activity, including a listing of key participants who will be invited and their affiliations;
- (c) Outcome plan (10 points). Clear evidence of a high likelihood that quality future applications will be submitted for SCRI projects;
- (d) Demonstrated understanding and application of a whole system(s) perspective with the potential for the project to contribute to long-term profitability and sustainability of specialty crop production, processing or marketing systems (10 points); and

- (e) Documentation that the project applies a trans-disciplinary approach to address economic, environmental **and** social aspects of specialty crop sustainability (10 points).

**2. Proposal Quality (50 points):**

- (a) Conceptual adequacy and design (25 points). Application clearly states objectives and includes a preliminary agenda that addresses those objectives;
  - (b) Involvement of appropriate, relevant expertise in planning activity committees, speakers, and attendees (5 points);
  - (c) Experience of Senior/Key project personnel (5 points);
  - (d) Appropriateness of budget (5 points);
  - (e) Feasibility, likelihood that the effort will result in a future grant application to the SCRI (5 points); and
  - (f) Adherence to guidelines (5 points).
-



### **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, with updates on an as needed 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. 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 available 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).

**Support of Long-Term Projects:** Section 7311 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 authorizes CSREES to fund SCRI grants up to 10 years. Historically CSREES has complied with Section 1472 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 USC 3318c) which states that the Secretary may enter into contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements, for periods not to exceed five years. Given that the 10 year grant provision found in Section 7311 is a new authorization for which no policies or procedures have been developed, CSREES will not make use of this authority until fiscal year 2009.

### 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, **not to exceed five years**;
- (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 (Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977), 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 7 CFR Part 3021—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**

Grantees are required to submit annual and summary progress reports via CSREES' Current Research Information System (CRIS). CRIS is an electronic, Web-based inventory system that facilitates both grantee submissions of project outcomes and public access to information on Federally-funded projects.

## **PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT**

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

Tom Bewick; National Program Leader; Plant and Animal Systems; Cooperative State Research Education, and Extension Service; USDA; STOP 2220; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-2220; telephone: (202) 401-3356; fax: (202) 401-4888; e-mail: [tbewick@csrees.usda.gov](mailto:tbewick@csrees.usda.gov),

**OR**

Daniel Schmoldt; National Program Leader; Plant and Animal Systems; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; USDA; STOP 2220; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-2220; telephone: (202) 720-4807; fax: (202) 401-5179; e-mail: [dschmoldt@csrees.usda.gov](mailto:dschmoldt@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. 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 ten 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: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, 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 three years. 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 awarding grants under this program, the following definitions are applicable:

Administrator means the Administrator of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) and any other officer or employee of the Department to whom the authority involved is delegated.

Authorized departmental officer (ADO) 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 president, director, or chief executive officer or other designated official of the applicant organization who has the authority to commit the resources of the organization.

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 applicants cash outlay, including the outlay of money contributed to the applicant by non-Federal third parties.

Continuation grant is an instrument by which CSREES agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined project period with a statement of intention to provide additional

support at a future date, provided that performance has been satisfactory, funds are available for this purpose, and continued support would be in the best interest of the Federal government and the public.

Department or USDA means the United States Department of Agriculture.

Extension activity means an act or process that delivers science-based knowledge and informal educational programs to people, enabling them to make practical decisions.

Grant means the award by the Authorized Departmental Officer of funds to an eligible recipient for the purpose of conducting the identified project.

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

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

Multifunctional research and extension activities are those in which research results are communicated via extension activities to stakeholders and the public in a coordinated manner during the life of a single project.

Peer review means an evaluation of a proposed project for scientific or technical quality and relevance performed by experts with the scientific knowledge and technical skills to conduct the proposed work or to give expert advice on the merits of a proposal.

Primary System for specialty crops means the total production system, the processing and distribution system and the consumer and marketing system.

Prior approval means written approval evidencing prior consent by an authorized departmental officer as defined above.

Project means the particular activity within the scope of the program supported by a grant award.

Project director means the single individual designated 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, during which Federal sponsorship begins and ends.

Research activity means a scientific investigation or inquiry that results in the generation of knowledge.

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



Specialty crop means fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and **horticulture and** nursery crops (including floriculture).

Standard grant is an instrument by which CSREES agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined project period without any statement of intention to provide additional support at a future date.

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 benefitting and specifically identifiable to a funded project or program.

Trans-disciplinary means a multi-discipline approach that brings biological and physical scientists together with economists and social scientists to address challenges in a holistic manner.

## Electronic Application Checklist

Only electronic applications may be submitted to CSREES via Grants.gov unless indicated otherwise in the specific program Request for Applications (RFA). All applications submitted to CSREES must contain the applicable elements outlined in these guidelines. The following checklist has been prepared to assist in ensuring that the application is complete prior to submission:

- ◆ **Have you followed the guidelines for filling out your electronic application provided in the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide, which is posted along with the electronic SF 424 R&R application package on Grants.gov?** Electronic applications should be prepared according to this guide and the specific program RFA. This guide is part of the corresponding electronic application package for the specific program to which you are applying.
- ◆ **Has your institution properly registered with Grants.gov to enable you to submit an application?** Those who wish to submit an application to CSREES should first contact their Authorized Representative (AR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit applications through Grants.gov. See <http://www.grants.gov/GetStarted> for steps for preparing to submit applications through Grants.gov.
- ◆ **Have all attachments been submitted in the portable document format (PDF)?** CSREES will only accept PDF attachments. See Part III of the CSREES Grants.gov 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 proposals that do not meet these requirements for PDF attachments will not be accepted.
- ◆ **Did you use the “Check Package for Errors” feature (see section 1.8 of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide)?**
- ◆ **Have all required components of the SF 424 Research and Related (R&R) Application Package posted under the funding opportunity on Grants.gov been completed?**

◆ **SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet**

- Have all required fields (highlighted in yellow) been completed?

◆ **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?
- Are the names and affiliated organizations of all Project Directors listed at the top of the page in addition to the title of the project?
- Does this section adhere to the format and page limitations?
- Did you use the suggested Project Summary/Abstract Template found at:  
[www.csrees.usda.gov/home/faq\\_apply.html#abstract?](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/home/faq_apply.html#abstract?)

Project Narrative

- Has the Project Narrative PDF been attached to this form in Field 7?
- Is the project fully described?

Bibliography & References Cited

- 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)

- Has the Facilities & Other Resources PDF been attached to this form in Field 9?
- Has a description of your facilities, sufficient to indicate that you will be able to carry out this project, been given?

Equipment (Optional)

- Has the Equipment PDF been attached to this form in Field 10?
- Is the description of your equipment sufficient to indicate that you will be able to carry out this project?

❖ **R&R Senior/Key Person Profile**

Biographical Sketch

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

Current and Pending Support

- Has the current and pending support PDF for key personnel been attached?
- Have all current and pending projects been listed and summarized, **including this proposal**?
- Did you use the suggested Current and Pending Support Template found at: [www.csrees.usda.gov/home/faq\\_apply.html#current?](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/home/faq_apply.html#current?)

❖ **R&R Personal Data (Optional)**

- Have all fields been completed (except Social Security Number Field)?

❖ **SF 424 (R&R) Budget Fed & Non-Fed**

- Have all fields been completed for each PD and co-PD(s)?
- Are annual and summary budgets included? For multi-institution applications, has a subaward budget been included for each institution involved?

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 subaward budget justification been included for each institution involved?
- Have matching requirements been addressed?

◆ **CSREES Supplemental Information Form**

- Has Field 1 been pre-populated?
- Does Field 2 indicate the Program Code Name and Program Code to which you are applying?

Conflict of Interest List

- Has the Conflict of Interest List PDF been attached to this form in Field 8?
- Has a Conflict of Interest List been provided for all individuals who have submitted a Biographical Sketch?
- Does the Conflict of Interest list include the four categories as appropriate?
- Did you use the suggested Conflict of Interest Template found at:  
[www.csrees.usda.gov/home/faq\\_apply.html#coi?](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/home/faq_apply.html#coi?)