

Critical Issues: Emerging and New Plant and Animal Pests and Diseases

FY 2009 Request for Applications

Please Note: As of 3/9/2009 this RFA has been modified. Corrected language on page 8 can be found in **Bold Red Text**.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: April 3, 2009



U.S. Department of Agriculture



Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service

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

**CRITICAL ISSUES: EMERGING AND NEW PLANT AND ANIMAL PESTS AND
DISEASES**

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.200 (Special Research Grants).

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on **April 3, 2009 (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 USC 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. (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 Critical Issues: Emerging and New Plant and Animal Pests and Diseases RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: CSREES requests applications for the Critical Issues: Emerging and New Plant and Animal Pests and Diseases (Critical Issues) program for fiscal year (FY) 2009 to perform critical research activities related to time-critical, emerging plant pest and disease issues. The amount anticipated to be available in FY 2009 for support of this particular Critical Issues solicitation is approximately **\$370,000**. See Part II, C. for a description of the types of projects that are being solicited. The program is designed to provide one-time seed funding to help initiate work requiring immediate attention until other longer-term resources can be secured to address the issue. CSREES intends to solicit proposals several times during FY 2009 to address specific new or emerging issues.

For this particular solicitation, CSREES is requesting proposals that address specific aspects of the following issues:

- **Redbay ambrosia beetle and Laurel Wilt in avocados**
- **1000 cankers disease of walnut**
- **Uganda (Ug99) Strain of Wheat Stem Rust**

The issues included in this RFA have been identified through stakeholder input from university and federal scientists, producers and other constituents in the states where the problems either now occur, or are currently at risk. Research support from this program is necessary to address these issues at this time in order to avoid significant losses to American agriculture and the environment.

This notice identifies the objectives for Critical Issues projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a Critical Issues grant. CSREES additionally requests stakeholder input from any interested party for use in the development of the next RFA for this program.

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

The authority for this program is contained in Section 2(c)(1)(B) of the Competitive, Special, and Facilities Research Grant Act of August 4, 1965, Public Law No. 89-106, as amended (7 USC 450i (c)(1)(B)). This program supports critical research activities related to time-critical, emerging plant and animal pest and disease issues. The program is designed to provide one-time seed funding to help initiate work requiring immediate attention until other longer-term resources can be secured to address the issue.

B. Purpose and Priorities

CSREES requests applications for the Critical Issues program to perform critical research activities related to time-critical, emerging plant pest and disease issues. The program is designed to provide one-time seed funding to help initiate work requiring immediate attention until other longer-term resources can be secured to address the issue. *Priority will be given to proposals which demonstrate evidence of collaboration and communication with working groups and approved Multi-state research committees, however all eligible applicants are encouraged to apply.* CSREES intends to solicit proposals several times during FY 2009 to address specific new or emerging issues. For this particular solicitation, CSREES is requesting proposals that address specific aspects of the following issues:

- **Redbay ambrosia beetle and Laurel Wilt in avocados**
- **1000 cankers disease of walnut**
- **Uganda (Ug99) Strain of Wheat Stem Rust**

The amount of FY 2009 funds anticipated to be available for support of this particular Critical Issues solicitation is approximately \$370,000. See Part II, C. for a description of the types of projects that are being solicited.

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. It is anticipated that approximately \$370,000 of FY 2009 funds will be available to support Critical Issues proposals submitted in response to this solicitation for project periods of up to two years with the option for a one year no cost extension.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2009, applications may be submitted to the Critical Issues: Emerging and New Plant and Animal Pests and Diseases (Critical Issues) Program as the following type of request:

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

C. Project Types

1. Redbay ambrosia beetle and Laurel Wilt in avocados

Background

Since the first detection of the redbay ambrosia beetle in Georgia in 2002, this beetle and its associated fungus have caused substantial destruction to native redbay (*Persea borbonia*) in Georgia and South Carolina. During the spring of 2005, this pest was detected on redbay in Florida and has spread southward. The range of redbay trees from coastal Virginia to eastern Texas includes coastal areas of North and South Carolina, Georgia, southern Alabama Mississippi, parts of Louisiana, and all of Florida. This continuous range facilitates the spread of the redbay ambrosia beetle and laurel wilt fungus to commercial avocado production areas. Because the redbay ambrosia beetle and its associated fungus (the laurel wilt fungus; *Raffaelea laurelensis*) can cause whole tree death and because the redbay ambrosia beetle attacks healthy trees, this beetle-pathogen complex poses a threat to commercial avocado production in the U.S.

This RFA will support research efforts directed toward the following areas:

- a. Management strategies for the vector.
 - Test potential repellents or protectants to prevent beetle attack of avocado trees.
 - Test currently registered pesticides for ambrosia beetle control.
 - Evaluate trap and kill systems as a management tool for redbay ambrosia beetles.
- b. Management strategies for the pathogen.
 - Assess susceptibility of avocado varieties to the laurel wilt fungus.
 - Determine efficacy and practicality of fungicides for control of the laurel wilt fungus.
 - Determine whether the laurel wilt fungus can be transmitted mechanically by pruning equipment.

Research will focus on experimentation addressing the above areas, either individually, in combination, or synergistically. This RFA requests seed grant proposals to initiate or continue high priority research directed toward an Integrated Pest Management approach for this beetle-vector complex.

Proposals directed at management strategies for the vector should address one or a combination of the following:

- a. Test effects of repellents/protectants for potential to prevent beetle attack.
- b. Test the effectiveness of currently registered pesticides for ambrosia beetle control.
- c. Evaluate trap and kill systems as a management tool for redbay ambrosia beetles.

Focus of work: *Conduct laboratory and field experiments to examine the level of protection possible through use of repellents, pesticide applications or the use of an ‘attract and kill’ strategy for vector management. Priority will be given to proposals which demonstrate evidence of collaboration and communication across disciplinary groups, however all eligible applicants are encouraged to apply. (CSREES anticipates funding one proposal of up to \$90,000). This research requires flexibility and adaptation in order to find solutions in a time-critical manner. Proposals must demonstrate experience in conducting time-critical research.*

Proposals directed at management strategies for the pathogen should address one or a combination of the following:

- a. Assess susceptibility of avocado varieties to the laurel wilt fungus.
- b. Determine efficacy of fungicides for control the laurel wilt fungus.
- c. Determine whether the laurel wilt fungus can be transmitted mechanically by pruning equipment.

Focus of work: *Conduct start-up laboratory and field experiments to assess **walnut** susceptibility to the pathogen, determine fungicide efficacy and risk of mechanical transmission through pruning or wounds. Priority will be given to proposals which demonstrate evidence of collaboration and communication across disciplinary groups, however all eligible applicants are encouraged to apply. (CSREES anticipates funding one proposal of up to \$90,000). This research requires flexibility and adaptation in order to find solutions in a time-critical manner. Proposals must demonstrate experience in conducting time-critical research.*

2. 1000 cankers disease of walnut

Background

Within the past decade, decline of black walnut (*Juglans nigra*) has been observed in several western states. Initial symptoms involve a yellowing and thinning of the upper crown, which progresses to include death of progressively larger branches. During the final stages large areas of foliage may rapidly wilt. Trees often are killed within three years after initial symptoms are noted. Tree mortality is the result of attack by the walnut twig beetle (*Pityophthorus juglandis*)

and subsequent canker development around beetle galleries caused by a fungus (*Geosmithia* sp.) carried by the beetle. A second fungus (*Fusarium solani*) is also associated with canker formation. This disease is termed 1000 cankers disease. Effective controls for thousand cankers disease have not yet been identified. Rapid detection and removal of infected trees currently remains the primary means of managing thousand cankers disease.

This RFA will support research efforts directed toward the following areas:

- a. Host susceptibility of *Juglans* and *Carya* species.
- b. Current and projected distribution of the vector and pathogen.
 - Mapping the current distribution of the vector and disease
 - Determining risk factors for 1000 cankers
 - Modeling spread of the disease
- c. Management strategies for the vector.
 - Assess detection methods, attractants and trap systems
 - Assess efficacy and practicality of registered pesticides for vector control
- d. Management strategies for the pathogen.
 - Assess susceptibility of walnut and related genera to the 1000 cankers fungus
 - Determine efficacy and practicality of fungicides for control of *Geosmithia*

Proposals directed at 1000 cankers disease of walnut should address one or more of the following:

- a. Develop detection methods for the beetle and pathogen.
- b. Establish a baseline map of the current distribution of the disease.
- c. Initiate studies to determine probable routes and possible strategies to mitigate the spread of the disease from current infestation sites.
- d. Evaluate susceptibility of *Juglans*, *Carya* and other nut trees to *Geosmithia* sp.
- e. Evaluate methods for control of the beetle and/or pathogen.

Research will focus on experimentation addressing the above areas, either individually, in combination, or synergistically. This RFA requests seed grant proposals to initiate or continue high priority research directed toward Integrated Pest Management approaches for this beetle-vector complex.

Focus of work: *Conduct start-up laboratory and field experiments to assess walnut susceptibility to the pathogen, determine fungicide efficacy and risk of mechanical transmission through pruning or wounds. Priority will be given to proposals which demonstrate evidence of collaboration and communication across disciplinary groups, however all applicants qualified to conduct the research are encouraged to apply. (CSREES anticipates funding one proposal of up to \$90,000). This research requires flexibility and adaptation in order to find solutions in a time-critical manner. Proposals must demonstrate experience in conducting time-critical research.*

3. Uganda (Ug99) Strain of Wheat Stem Rust

Background

Wheat stem rust is caused by *Puccinia graminis* f.sp. *tritici*. A new variant of that fungus, commonly known as Ug99, for the nation—Uganda—and the year in which its emergence was formally recognized, has been appearing in fields throughout East Africa. The Ug99 strain is a variant of the race ‘TTKS’ and additional variants within the ‘TTKS’ designation are emerging. The most important characteristic of all of the ‘TTKS’ strains is their ability to overcome resistance from the stem rust resistance gene Sr31, a key cog in the resistant wheat cultivars planted in the US. Since its initial identification ‘TTKS’ strains have spread to Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan and Yemen, with the potential to seriously damage wheat production. In monitored test plots of wheat, Ug99 reduced grain yields by as much as 71 percent. Without rapid response, ‘TTKS’ spread could lead to global crop epidemics within the next 15 years.

Growing world population has driven a demand for agricultural scientists to develop higher yielding grain varieties. However, wheat growers face a challenging threat to bountiful yields with the emergence of a new and virulent fungal pathogen. Stem rust stands poised to damage wheat yields globally, according to data released at the Global Rust Summit convened in Nairobi, Kenya to address this wheat disease. A new international effort, called the Global Rust Initiative (GRI) is an offshoot of the Nairobi summit. Projects in this program should complement GRI research.

Proposals directed at ‘TTKS’ (Ug99) strain of Wheat Stem Rust should address optimization of pesticide application technology for fungicide deposition.

Focus of work: *Validate application technology in current use to optimize fungicide deposition and management of stem rust and other cereal pathogens. Canopy penetration and coverage of various plant organs is integral to the work. Interaction of application technology with various fungicide chemical families could be a component of the research. Priority will be given to proposals which demonstrate collaborative work that involves working groups or approved Multi-state research committees such as NCERA 184, WERA 097 and the ipmPIPE; however, all eligible applicants are encouraged to apply. Model systems are allowable as a tool in this research. (CSREES anticipates funding one proposal of up to \$30,000). This research requires great flexibility and adaptation in order to find solutions in a time critical manner. Proposals must demonstrate experience in conducting time critical research.*

D. Scientific Peer Review

Subsection (c)(5) of the Competitive, Special, and Facilities Research Grant Act, as amended (7 USC 450i(c)(5)) requires applicants to conduct scientific peer review of their proposed research activities in accordance with regulations promulgated by the Secretary prior to the Secretary making a grant award under this authority. Regulations implementing this requirement are set forth in 7 CFR part 3400.20. The regulations impose the following requirements:

(1) Scientific peer review. Prior to the submission of a standard or continuation grant, any

proposed project shall have undergone a review arranged by the grantee. For research projects, such review must be a scientific peer review conducted in accordance with 7 CFR 3400.21.

(2) Credible and independent review. A review arranged by the grantee must provide for a credible and independent assessment of the proposed project. A credible review is one that provides an appraisal of technical quality and relevance sufficient for an organizational representative to make an informed judgment as to whether the proposal is appropriate for submission for Federal support. To provide for an independent review, such review may include USDA employees, but should not be conducted solely by USDA employees.

(3) Notice of completion and retention of records. A notice of completion of the review shall be conveyed in writing to CSREES as part of the Other Attachments (Field 11. of the R&R Other Project Information Form)(See Part IV, B,1,c,(ii)). The written notice constitutes certification by the applicant that a review in compliance with these regulations has occurred. Applicants are not required to submit results of the review to CSREES; however, proper documentation of the review process and results should be retained by the applicant. **Please note: award funds cannot be released until the Scientific Peer Review Certification is received.**

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may be submitted by State agricultural experiment stations, land-grant colleges and universities, research foundations established by land-grant colleges and universities, colleges and universities receiving funds under the Act of October 10, 1962 (16 USC 582a et seq.) McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Research Act, and accredited schools or colleges of veterinary medicine for the purpose of facilitating or expanding ongoing State-Federal food and agricultural research programs that:

- (i) promote excellence in research on a regional and national level;
- (ii) promote the development of regional research centers;
- (iii) promote the research partnership between the Department of Agriculture, colleges and universities, research foundations, and State agricultural experiment stations for regional research efforts; and
- (iv) facilitate coordination and cooperation of research among States through regional research grants.

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 not accepting the application, or even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude CSREES from making an award.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

Pursuant to section 2(c)(3) of Public Law No. 89-106, CSREES does not require matching support for this program and matching resources will not be factored into the review process as evaluation criteria, nor will they affect relevance rankings.

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)(also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grant.gov. If the organization is not prepared, the AR should see http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp for steps for preparing to submit applications through Grants.gov.

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

1. In order to access, complete and submit applications, applicants must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov. This software is essential to apply for CSREES Federal assistance awards. For basic system requirements and download instructions, please see http://www.grants.gov/help/download_software.jsp. To verify that you have a compatible version of Adobe Reader, Grants.gov established a test package that will assist you in making that determination. Grants.gov Adobe Versioning Test Package: <http://www.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp>.
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-OP-002099** 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 Adobe forms), 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: Monday through Friday 7:00 am – 9:00 pm Eastern Time
Email: support@grants.gov

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 Guide. ANY PROPOSALS CONTAINING NON-PDF DOCUMENTS WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM CSREES REVIEW. Partial applications will be excluded from CSREES review. With documented prior approval, resubmitted applications will be accepted until close of business on the closing date in the RFA.

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

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. SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)

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

3. R&R Other Project Information Form

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

a. Field 6. Project Summary/Abstract. The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of the Critical Issues program and describe the impact of proposed research activities related to the time-critical, emerging plant and/or animal pest and disease issues as described in Part II(C) of this announcement.

b. Field 7. Project Narrative.

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed fifteen pages of written text including figures and tables regardless of whether it is single or double spaced. This maximum has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

1) Objectives. Clear, concise, complete, and logically arranged statement(s) of the specific aims of the proposed effort to the segment of the time critical research activities contained in the proposal must be included in all applications.

(2) Procedures. The procedures or methodology to be applied to the proposed effort should be explicitly stated. This section should include but not necessarily be limited to: (i) a description of the proposed investigations and/or experiments in the sequence in which it is planned to carry them out; (ii) techniques to be employed, including their feasibility; (iii) kinds of results expected; (iv) means by which data will be analyzed or interpreted; (v) pitfalls which might be encountered; and (vi) limitations to proposed procedures.

(3) Justification. This section should include in-depth information on the following, when applicable: (i) estimates of the magnitude of the problem and its relevance to ongoing State-Federal food and agricultural research programs; (ii) importance of starting the work during the current FY; and (iii) reasons for having the work performed by the proposing institution; (iv) demonstrated evidence of collaborative work that involves working groups or approved Multi-state research committees, or similar activities, as appropriate; (v) demonstrated capacity to conduct research requiring flexibility and adaptation in order to find solutions in a time-critical manner.

(4) Literature Review. A summary of pertinent publications with emphasis on their relationship to the effort being proposed should be provided and should include all important and recent publications from other institutions, as well as those from your institution. The citations themselves should be accurate, complete, and written in an acceptable journal format.

(5) Current Work. Current unpublished institutional activities to date related to the priorities as specified in Part I of this request for applications should be described.

(6) Project Timetable. The application should outline all important phases as a function of time for the entire project period.

4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 5. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide.

5. R&R Personal Data – As noted in Part V, 6. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award. If completing the information, **do not enter any data in the field requesting the social security number.**

6. R&R Budget

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide.

7. 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 “**Critical Issues: Emerging and New Plant and Animal Pests and Diseases**” and the program code “**NI**”.

b. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List. A conflict of interest list is required for this program.

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 **April 3, 2009 (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 the established deadline, please contact the Program Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

1. Indirect Costs

Pursuant to Section 1473 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended, 7 USC 3319, **indirect costs are not allowable costs under Section 2(c)(1)(B) Special Grant projects**, and no funds will be approved for this purpose. Further, costs that are a part of the institution's indirect cost pool, (e.g., administrative or clerical salaries), may not be reclassified as direct costs for the purpose of making them allowable.

2. Building Construction or Renovation

No funds will be awarded for the renovation or refurbishment of research spaces; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such spaces; or for the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of a building or facility.

3. Tuition Remission

In accordance with Section 1473 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 USC 3319), as amended, tuition remission is not an allowable cost under Section 2(c)(1)(B) projects, and no funds will be approved for this purpose.

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.”

An application may be submitted only once to CSREES. The submission of duplicate or substantially similar applications concurrently for review by more than one program will result in the application being excluded from review.

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

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

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

B. Evaluation Criteria

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

1. Overall scientific and technical quality of the application (15 points);
2. Scientific and technical quality of the procedures (10 points);
3. Feasibility of attaining time sensitive objectives (20 points);
4. Relevance and importance of the proposed research to achieving specific objectives in the targeted areas of this solicitation (as described in Part II, C.) (30 points);
5. Professional training and experience of key project personnel (including current and previous collaborative research related to the proposal) (10 points);
6. Adequacy of facilities and equipment (10 points); and
7. Appropriateness of budget request to attaining project objectives (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 appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by CSREES under this RFA shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles (now codified at 2 CFR 215, 2 CFR 220 and 2 CFR 230), and the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015, 3019 and 3430 of 7 CFR).

B. Award Notice

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

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

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

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

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).

2 CFR Part 220 – Cost Principles for Educational Institutions (OMB Circular A-21).

2 CFR Part 230 – Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-122).

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 USC 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3017—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and 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 3400 – (Subparts C and D) Special Research Grants Program Administrative Provisions.

7 CFR Part 3407—CSREES procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

7 CFR Part 3430 – CSREES Competitive and Noncompetitive Nonformula Grant Programs—General Grant Administrative Provisions.

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

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Dr. Rick Meyer, National Program Leader for Entomology; Plant and Animal Systems Unit; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; USDA; STOP 2220; 1400 Independence Ave., SW; Washington, DC 20250-2220; telephone: (202) 401-4891; fax: (202) 401-4888; e-mail: hmeyer@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 three 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 USC chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

E. Definitions

Please refer to [7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Grant Programs-- General Grant Administrative Provisions](#), for the applicable definitions for this CSREES grant program.

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:

- ◆ **Are you eligible to apply for the funding offered in the RFA?** Eligibility information for each funding opportunity is stated in Part III, Eligibility Information, of each RFA.
- ◆ **Are you applying to the correct funding opportunity associated with the RFA?** Field 1 of the CSREES Supplemental Information Form will pre-populate to indicate the program to which you are applying.
- ◆ **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? Are all PDF documents numbered sequentially on each page of the attachment? Are all page limitations for a given attachment followed?**
- ◆ **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?

Project Narrative

- Has the Project Narrative PDF been attached to this form in Field 7?
- Is the project fully described?
- Does this section adhere to the format and page limitations?

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

- 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

- 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?

? R&R Personal Data

- As noted in Part V, 5., the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award. If completing the information, do not enter any data in the field requesting the social security number.**

? R&R Budget

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

? 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?