

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Cooperative State Research,
Education, and Extension Service****Food and Agricultural Sciences
National Needs Graduate Fellowship
Grants Program for Fiscal Year 1999:
Request for Proposals and Request for
Input**

AGENCY: Cooperative State Research,
Education, and Extension Service.

ACTION: Notice of request for proposals
and Request for Input.

SUMMARY: The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) announces the availability of grant funds and requests proposals for the Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate Fellowship Grants Program for Fiscal Years (FY's) 1999 and 2000, and for FY 1999 Supplemental Grants for Special International Study or Thesis/Dissertation Research Travel Allowances. Proposals are hereby requested from eligible institutions as identified herein for competitive consideration of National Needs Graduate Fellowship Grant awards. Additionally, CSREES seeks proposals from recipients of currently active Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Fellowship Grants for supplemental grants to support special international study or thesis/dissertation research experiences for current Fellows. By this notice CSREES additionally solicits stakeholder input from any interested party regarding the FY 1999 request for proposals for this program.

DATES: Proposals for Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate Fellowship Grants must be received on or before June 7, 1999. Proposals received after the closing date will not be considered for funding. Proposals for supplemental grants to support special international study or thesis/dissertation research experiences for current Fellows must be received by February 16, 2000. Comments regarding this request for proposals are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

ADDRESSES: Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by first-class mail to: Office of Extramural Programs; Competitive Research Grants and Awards Management; USDA-CSREES; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; Washington, D.C. 20250-2299, or via e-mail to: RFP-OEP@reeusda.gov. In your

comments, please include the name of the program and the fiscal year solicitation of applications to which you are responding.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Howard E. Sandberg, Ph.D., Higher Education Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2251; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; Washington, D.C. 20250-2251; telephone: (202) 720-2193; e-mail: hsandberg@reeusda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Table of Contents***Stakeholder Input*

Part I. Food and Agricultural Sciences
National Needs Graduate Fellowship Grants

Section A—General Information

1. Administrative Provisions
2. Legislative Authority
3. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance
4. Eligibility

Section B—Program Description

1. Purpose of the Program
2. Targeted National Need Areas
3. Degree Level Supported
4. Proposal Submission Limitations
5. Limitations on Number of Fellowships
6. Availability Funding
7. Stipend Level

Section C—How to Obtain Application
Materials

Section D—Submission of a Proposal

1. What to Submit
2. Where and When to Submit
3. Acknowledgment of Proposals
4. Intent to Submit a Proposal

Section E—Selection Process and Evaluation
Criteria

Part II. 1999 Special International Study or
Thesis/Dissertation Research Travel
Allowances

Section A—General Information

1. Administrative Provisions
2. Legislative Authority
3. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance
4. Announcement of Availability of Supplemental Grants
5. Eligibility

Section B—Program Description

1. Purpose of the Program
2. Available Funding
3. Travel Allowances

Section C—How to Obtain Application
Materials

Section D—Submission of a Proposal

1. What to Submit
2. Where and When to Submit
3. Acknowledgment of Proposals

Section E—Selection Process and Evaluation
Criteria**Stakeholder Input**

CSREES is soliciting comments regarding this request for proposals from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next request for proposals for this program. Such comments will be forwarded to the Secretary or his

designee for use in meeting the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (Pub. L. 105-185). This section requires the Secretary to solicit and consider input on a current request for proposals from persons who conduct or use agricultural research, education, or extension for use in formulating the next year's request for proposals.

In your comments, please include the name of the program and the fiscal year request for proposals to which you are responding. Comments are requested within six months from the issuance of the request for proposals. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

**Part I. Food and Agricultural Sciences
National Needs Graduate Fellowship
Grants***Section A—General Information*

1. Administrative Provisions

This Program is subject to the provisions found at 7 CFR Part 3402 for the Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate Fellowship Grants Program. These provisions set forth procedures to be followed when submitting grant proposals, rules governing the evaluation of proposals and the awarding of grants, and regulations relating to the post-award administration of grant projects.

2. Legislative Authority

The authority for this program is contained in Section 1417(b)(6) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended (NARETPA) (7 U.S.C. 3152(b)(6)). This program is subject to the provisions found at 7 CFR Part 3402.

In accordance with the statutory authority, subject to the availability of funds, the Secretary of Agriculture, who has delegated the authority to the Administrator of CSREES, may make competitive grants, for periods not to exceed five years, to land-grant colleges and universities, to colleges and universities having significant minority enrollments and a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food and agricultural sciences, and to other colleges and universities having a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food and agricultural sciences, to administer and conduct graduate fellowship programs to help meet the Nation's needs for development of scientific and professional expertise in the food and agricultural sciences. For this program, the term "food and agricultural sciences" means basic, applied, and

developmental research, extension, and teaching activities in food and fiber, agricultural, renewable natural resources, forestry, and physical and social sciences, including activities related to subject areas defined in section 1404(8) of NARETPA, 7 U.S.C. 3103(8).

3. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance

This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under No. 10.210, Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate Fellowship Grants.

4. Eligibility

Proposals may be submitted by institutions that confer a graduate degree in at least one area of the food and agricultural sciences targeted for national needs fellowships. For proposals involving more than one institution, all institutions must meet the eligibility requirement. Proposals may also be submitted by a research foundation maintained by an eligible college or university.

Section B—Program Description

1. Purpose of the Program

This program seeks to award grants to colleges and universities which have notable teaching and research competencies in the food and agricultural sciences. The grants are specifically intended to support fellowship programs that encourage outstanding students to pursue and complete a Ph.D. degree at such institutions in an area of the food and agricultural sciences for which there is a national need for the development of scientific and professional expertise.

2. Targeted National Need Areas

Food and agricultural sciences areas appropriate for fellowship grant applications are those in which shortages of expertise have been determined and targeted by CSREES for national needs graduate fellowship support. Beginning with FY 1997, CSREES supports six national need areas on a biennial basis and combines appropriations from two fiscal years into one competition to be held during odd-numbered years. The targeted national need areas to be supported for the combined FY 1999/2000 competition are: (1) Biotechnology—Animal; (2) Biotechnology—Plant; (3) Engineering—Food, Forest Products, or Agricultural; (4) Human Nutrition and/or Food Science; (5) Marketing or Management—Food, Forest Products, or Agribusiness; and (6) Water Science.

3. Degree Level Supported

In FY 1999/2000, only the doctoral level of study will be supported.

4. Proposal Submission Limitations

A doctoral degree-granting institution may only submit a maximum of six proposals, and no more than one proposal may be submitted in any one national need area.

5. Limitations on Number of Fellowships

For the FY 1999/2000 program, a proposal may request funding in only one national need area. A proposal may request a minimum of two fellowships and a maximum of four fellowships in the national need area for which funding is requested. While proposals must document institution willingness to recruit and train at least two, but not more than four, fellows in a national need area, CSREES may fund fewer fellows than requested in a proposal.

6. Available Funding

CSREES anticipates that approximately \$5,600,000 will be available for fellowship grants for the FY 1999/2000 combined competition, including \$2.8 million from FY 1999 appropriations and \$2.8 million in anticipated FY 2000 appropriations. Contingent on the availability of these funds, approximately \$933,000 will be allocated to each of the six national need areas. This program is highly competitive, and it is anticipated that available funding will support approximately 81 doctoral fellows through approximately seven grants in each of the six targeted areas. No-year funds drawn from expired fellowship grants with unspent funds remaining may be used to fund additional fellows. Please note that Congress has not yet enacted a Fiscal Year 2000 appropriations bill for the Department. Therefore, the \$5.6 million cited for FY 1999/2000 grants is only tentative and USDA is not bound by this estimate. If Congress appropriates other than the anticipated amount, the combined appropriated FYs 1999 and 2000 funds will be allocated equally among all six national need areas.

7. Stipend Level

Each institution funded will receive \$69,000 for each doctoral fellowship awarded. However, it is anticipated that total program funds available will not be evenly divisible by \$69,000. Therefore, one fellowship may be supported on a partial basis with a lesser amount of funds, or one fellowship may be supported fully by a combination of FY 1999/2000 funds and unspent funds

remaining from expired fellowship grants. Except in the case of a partially funded fellowship, fellowship monies must be used to: (1) support the same doctoral fellow for three years at \$22,000 per year; and (2) provide for an institution annual cost-of-education allowance of \$1,000, not to exceed a total of \$3,000 over the duration of the grant. Total funds awarded to an institution under the program in FY 1999/2000 shall not exceed \$648,000.

Section C—How to Obtain Application Materials

An Application Kit containing program application materials will be made available to eligible institutions upon request. These materials include the Administrative Provisions, Solicitation, forms, instructions, and other relevant information needed to prepare and submit grant proposals. Copies of the application kit may be requested from the Proposal Services Unit; Office of Extramural Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2245; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; Washington, D.C. 20250-2245. The telephone number is 202-401-5048. When contacting the Proposal Services Unit, please indicate that you are requesting forms for the FY 1999 National Needs Graduate Fellowship Grants Program.

Application materials may also be requested via Internet by sending a message with your name, mailing address (not e-mail) and phone number to psb@reeusda.gov which states that you want to receive a copy of the application materials for the Fiscal Year 1999/2000 Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate Fellowship Grants Program. The materials will then be mailed to you (not e-mailed) as quickly as possible.

Section D—Submission of a Proposal

1. What to Submit

An original and seven (7) copies of a proposal must be submitted. Proposals should contain all requested information when submitted. Each proposal should be typed on 8½" x 11" white paper, double-spaced, and on one side of the page only. Please note that the text of the proposal should be prepared using a font no smaller than 12 point and one-inch margins. All copies of the proposal must be submitted in one package. Each copy of the proposal must be stapled securely in the upper left-hand corner (DO NOT BIND).

The proposal should be paginated and a Table of Contents should be included

preceding the proposal narrative. Applicants are cautioned to comply with the 20-page limitation for the narrative section of the proposal. Applicants also are cautioned to include summary faculty vitae through the use of Form CSREES-708.

2. Where and When to Submit

Hand-delivered proposals (brought in person by the applicant or through a courier service) must be received on or before June 7, 1999, at the following address: National Needs Graduate Fellowship Grants Program; c/o Proposal Services Unit; Office of Extramural Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; Room 303, Aerospace Center; 901 D Street, S.W.; Washington, D.C. 20024. The telephone number is (202) 401-5048. Proposals transmitted via facsimile (fax) machine will not be accepted.

Proposals submitted through the U.S. mail must be received on or before June 7, 1999. Proposals submitted through the U.S. mail should be sent to the following address: National Needs Graduate Fellowship Grants Program; c/o Proposal Services Unit; Office of Extramural Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2245; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; Washington, D.C. 20250-2245.

3. Acknowledgment of Proposals

The receipt of all proposals will be acknowledged in writing and via the Internet (e-mail). Therefore it is important to include your e-mail address on Form CSREES-712 when applicable. This acknowledgment will contain a proposal identification number. Once your proposal has been assigned a proposal number, please cite that number in future correspondence.

4. Intent to Submit a Proposal

Submission of an Intent to Submit a Proposal form (Form CSREES-706) is neither required nor requested for the FY 1999/2000 competition.

Section E—Selection Process and Evaluation Criteria

Section 223(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998, Public Law 105-185, amended section 1417 of NARETPA to require that certain priorities be given in awarding grants for teaching enhancement projects under section 1417(b) of NARETPA. This program is authorized under section 1417(b). CSREES considers all applications received in response to this

solicitation as teaching enhancement project applications. To implement the new priorities for proposals submitted for the FY 1999/2000 competition, the evaluation criteria used to evaluate proposals, as provided in the Administrative Provisions for this program (7 CFR 3402.19), have been modified to include new criteria for proposals demonstrating enhanced coordination among eligible institutions and focusing on innovative, multidisciplinary education programs, material, or curricula. The following criteria and weights will be used to evaluate proposals submitted for funding to the FY 1999/2000 competition:

(A) 30 points—The degree to which the proposal establishes clearly that the proposed program of graduate study will result in the development of outstanding scientific/professional expertise related to the national need area and will do so in a reasonable period of time.

(B) 10 points—The degree to which the proposal contains any special features such as a focus on innovative, multidisciplinary education programs, material, or curricula; enhanced coordination among institutions eligible for grants under the Food and Agricultural National Needs Fellowship Grant Program; an inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary, or cross-disciplinary approach, an unusual collateral specialization in a related discipline, experiential learning opportunities, unique mentoring programs, seminars, or a multi-university collaborative approach.

(C) 20 points—The degree to which the proposal substantiates clearly that the institution's faculty, facilities and equipment, instructional support resources, and other academic attributes are excellent for providing outstanding graduate study and research at the forefront of science and technology related to the chosen area of national need.

(D) 20 points—The degree to which the institution's plans and procedures for recruiting and selecting academically outstanding Fellows and for advising and guiding Fellows through a program of study reflect excellence as documented in the proposal.

(E) 10 points—The degree to which supplementary summary data substantiate program quality in the targeted need area.

(F) 10 points—The quality of the proposal as reflected by its substantive content, organization, clarity, and accuracy.

Part II. 1999 Special International Study or Thesis/Dissertation Research Travel Allowances

Section A—General Information

1. Administrative Provisions

This Program is subject to the provisions found at 7 CFR Part 3402. These provisions set forth procedures to be followed when submitting grant proposals, rules governing the evaluation of proposals, the awarding of grants, and regulations relating to the post-award administration of such grants.

The Administrative Provisions (7 CFR part 3402) for this program specify that, based on the amount of funds appropriated in any fiscal year, CSREES will determine whether a new competition for special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowances will be held during that fiscal year, and publish that determination as part of the annual program announcement.

2. Legislative Authority

The authority for this program is contained in Section 1417(b)(6) of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended (NARETPA) (7 U.S.C. § 3152(b)(6)).

3. Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance

This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under No. 10.210.

4. Announcement of Availability of Supplemental Grants

CSREES has determined that a new competition for special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowances will be held during FY 1999, and hereby solicits proposals for competitive supplemental grants. In accordance with the Administrative Provisions for the Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate Fellowship Grants Program (7 CFR 3402.5(e)), CSREES will award supplemental grants, on a competitive basis, for special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowances.

5. Eligibility

Institutions eligible to receive supplemental grants are those that have active National Needs Graduate Fellowship Grants (awarded in FY 1998 or earlier). Eligibility for this opportunity is limited to any current Fellow with sufficient time to complete the international experience before the termination date of the fellowship grant under which he/she is supported.

Before the international study or thesis/dissertation research travel may commence, a Fellow must have completed one academic year of full-time study, as defined by the institution, under the fellowship appointment and arrangements must have been formalized for the Fellow to study and/or conduct research in the foreign location(s). All national need areas previously supported under the Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate Fellowships Grants Program are eligible for the supplementary grants for special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowances.

Section B—Program Description

1. Purpose of the Program

These supplementary grants provide support for a fellow to conduct special international study thesis/dissertation research or to undertake studies at a site outside of the United States primarily for the pursuit of activities that are not generally available within the United States.

2. Available Funding

Estimated funds for supplemental grants in FY 1999 are approximately \$60,000. These funds are obtained from no-year funds drawn from expired fellowship grants with unspent funds remaining. CSREES has determined that no FY 1999 appropriations will be targeted to supplemental grants supporting special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowances.

3. Travel Allowance

For each travel allowance, the institution may request up to \$5,000. Travel allowance monies may be used only to pay travel and living expenses for the Fellow while the Fellow is on the specific international assignment as proposed in the application for the special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowance. No limitation is placed on the number of applications an institution may submit. Awards will be made to the extent possible based on availability of funds. To the extent possible, all applications associated with one CSREES grant number should be submitted at the same time in order to facilitate the award of these supplemental grants and minimize accounting activity at the grantee institution.

Section C—How to Obtain Application Materials

An Application Kit containing program application materials will be

made available to eligible institutions upon request. These materials include the Administrative Provisions, Solicitation, forms, instructions, and other relevant information needed to prepare and submit a proposal. Copies of the Application Kit may be requested from the Proposal Services Unit; Office of Extramural Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2245; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; Washington, D.C. 20250-2245. The telephone number is 202-401-5048. When contacting the Proposal Services Unit, please indicate that you are requesting an Application Kit for the FY 1999 Special International Study or Thesis/Dissertation Research Supplemental Grant.

Application Kits may also be requested via Internet by sending a message with your name, mailing address (not e-mail) and telephone number to psb@reeusda.gov which states that you wish to receive a copy of the Application Kit for the FY 1999 Special International Study or Thesis/Dissertation Research Supplemental Grant. The materials will then be mailed to you (not e-mailed) as quickly as possible.

Section D—Submission of a Proposal

1. What to Submit

An original plus six copies of each application must be submitted. Proposals should contain all requested information when submitted. Each proposal should be typed on 8½" x 11" white paper, double-spaced, and on one side of the page only. Please note that the text of the proposal should be prepared using a font no smaller than 12 point and one-inch margins. Each copy of the application should be stapled securely in the upper left-hand corner (DO NOT BIND). All copies of the application must be submitted in one package. Applications transmitted via a facsimile (FAX) machine will not be accepted.

A separate application must be submitted by a fellowship grant project director at an eligible institution on behalf of each Fellow for which a special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowance is requested.

Each application must include an "Application for Funding," Form CSREES-661, and a "Budget," Form CSREES-55. To provide the office of Higher Education Programs (HEP) with sufficient information upon which to evaluate the merits of the requests for a special international study or thesis/

dissertation research travel allowance, each application for a supplemental grant must contain a narrative which provides the following: (1) the specific destination(s) and duration of the travel; (2) the specific study or thesis/dissertation research activities in which the Fellow will be engaged; (3) how the international experience will contribute to the Fellow's program of study; (4) a budget narrative specifying and justifying the dollar amount requested for the travel; (5) summary credentials of both the U.S. and international faculty or other professionals with whom the Fellow will be working during the international experience (summary credentials must not exceed three pages per person; "Summary Vita—Teaching Proposal," Form CSREES-708, may be used for this purpose); (6) a letter from the dean of the Fellow's college or equivalent administrative unit supporting the Fellow's travel request and certifying that the travel experience will not jeopardize the Fellow's satisfactory progress toward degree completion; and (7) a letter from the fellowship grant project director certifying the Fellow's eligibility, the accuracy of the Fellow's travel request, and the relevance of the travel to the Fellow's advanced degree objectives.

The narrative portion of the application must not exceed 10 pages, excluding the summary vita/vitae.

2. Where and When to Submit

Applications for the special international study or thesis/dissertation research travel allowance supplemental grants may be submitted at any time prior to February 16, 2000. However, to allow time for CSREES to process the applications, proposals should be submitted at least three months prior to the proposed beginning date of the international research project. Applicants are urged to submit their proposals early.

(Note: Proposals for these special supplemental awards should not be submitted as part of the application for a FY 1999/2000 Graduate Fellowship grant.)

Hand-delivered proposals (brought in person by the applicant or through a courier service) must be received on or before February 16, 2000, at the following address: Special International Study or Thesis/Dissertation Research Supplemental Grant; c/o Proposal Services Unit; Office of Extramural Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; Room 303, Aerospace Center; 901 D Street, S.W.; Washington, D.C. 20024. The phone

number is 202-401-5048. Proposals transmitted via a facsimile (fax) machine will not be accepted.

Proposals submitted through the U.S. mail must be received on or before February 16, 2000. Proposals submitted through the U.S. mail should be sent to the following address: Special International Study or Thesis/ Dissertation Research Supplemental Grant; c/o Proposal Services Unit; Office of Extramural Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2245; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; Washington, D.C. 20250-2245.

3. Acknowledgment of Proposals

The receipt of all proposals will be acknowledged in writing and via the Internet (e-mail). Therefore it is important to include your e-mail address on Form CSREES-712 when applicable. This acknowledgment will contain a proposal identification number. Once your proposal has been assigned a proposal number, please cite that number in future correspondence.

Section E—Selection Process and Evaluation Criteria

Applications for the special international travel allowances will be evaluated as they are received until available funds for the supplemental

grants are exhausted. Upon receipt of an application, CSREES staff will first determine the eligibility of the Fellow for whom the application was submitted for an international travel experience. Eligible and complete requests then will be reviewed, using the criteria and weights indicated below, by professional staff from USDA or other Federal agencies, as appropriate. Proposals judged to be worthy of funding will be eligible for supplemental awards. Since awards for supplemental grants will be made as reviews are completed, there is no assurance funds will be available late in the application period for every acceptable proposal.

The evaluation criteria for special international study or thesis/ dissertation research travel allowance applications are indicated below. The points are provided as a guide to the relative importance of each criterion, but all criteria must be addressed satisfactorily.

a. Destination and duration—the degree to which the destination and duration of the travel experience is appropriate for enhancing the Fellow's academic program—10 points.

b. Travel experience activities—the degree to which the specific international experiences contribute to the Fellow's program of study—30 points.

c. Advance preparations—the degree to which the proposed study or research activities are well-planned, including the likelihood that these activities will come to fruition and that the participation of identified personnel will materialize—20 points.

d. Budget—the degree to which the budget for the international experience is justified—10 points.

e. Personnel—the degree to which the personnel, both U.S. and international, involved with the travel experience have the appropriate credentials and experience to direct the Fellow's international experience, and the likelihood that their participation as mentors, trainers, advisors, or teachers will contribute to the educational value of the travel experiences—20 points.

f. Supporting documentation—the degree to which letters from the dean of the college (or equivalent administrative unit) and the fellowship grant project director support the application—10 points.

Done at Washington, D.C., this 11th day of March 1999.

Colien Hefferan,

Acting Administrator, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service.
[FR Doc. 99-6487 Filed 3-16-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-22-P