

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE****Cooperative State Research,  
Education, and Extension Service****Special Research Grants Program,  
Food Safety Research, 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 Special Research Grants Program, Food Safety Research for fiscal year (FY) 1999. The amount available for support of this program in FY 1999 is approximately \$4,677,998.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) sets out the objectives for these projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, the application procedures, and the set of instructions needed to apply for a Food Safety Research Project grant.

By this notice, CSREES additionally solicits stakeholder input from any interested party regarding the FY 1999 Special Research Grants Program, Food Safety Research for use in the development of the next request for proposals for this program.

**DATES:** Proposals must be received on or before June 4, 1999. Proposals received after June 4, 1999, will not be considered for funding. 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:** To obtain a copy of this RFP and application materials, please contact 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; Telephone: (202) 401-5048. When contacting the Proposal Services Unit, please indicate that you are requesting application materials for the Special Research Grants Program, Food Safety Research. Application materials may also be requested via Internet by sending a message with your name, mailing address (not e-mail) and telephone number to psb@reusda.gov that states that you wish to receive a copy of the application materials for the Special Research Grants Program, Food

Safety Research. The materials will then be mailed to you (not e-mailed) as quickly as possible.

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@reusda.gov. In your comments, please indicate that you are responding to the FY 1999 Food Safety Research Program.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Dr. Anne Bertinuson; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2220; 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.; Washington, D.C. 20250-2220; telephone: (202) 401-6825; Internet: abertinuson@reusda.gov.

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**Stakeholder Input**

CSREES is soliciting comments regarding this solicitation of applications from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next request for proposals for the 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, 7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2). 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 request for proposals for an agricultural research program funded on a competitive basis.

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

**Part I—General Information***A. Legislative Authority*

The authority for this program is contained in section (c)(1)(A) of the Competitive, Special, and Facilities Research Grant Act, Section 2 of Pub. L. No. 89-106, as amended (7 U.S.C. 450i(c)(1)(A)). This Program is subject to the administrative provisions found in 7 CFR Part 3400 for the Special Research Grants Program which set forth procedures to be followed when submitting grant proposals, rules governing the evaluation of proposals, the awarding of grants, and post-award administration of such grants. However, where there are differences between this RFP and the administrative provisions, the RFP shall take precedence to the extent that the administrative provisions authorize such deviations. In accordance with the statutory authority, grants awarded under the Special Research Grants Program are for the purpose of conducting research to facilitate or expand promising breakthroughs in areas of the food and agricultural sciences of importance to the United States.

*B. Definitions*

For the purpose of awarding grants under this program, the following definitions are applicable in addition to the definitions identified in 7 CFR Part 3400.

(1) Authorized departmental officer means the Secretary or any employee of the Department who has the authority to issue or modify grant instruments on behalf of the Secretary.

(2) Authorized organizational representative means the president, director, or the chief executive officer of the applicant organization or the official, designated by the president, director, or chief executive officer of the applicant organization, who has the authority to commit the resources of the organization.

(3) Grant means the award by the Secretary of funds to a grantee to assist in meeting the costs of conducting, for

the benefit of the public, an identified project which is intended and designed to establish, discover, elucidate, or confirm information or the underlying mechanisms relating to a research program area identified in this program solicitation.

(4) Principal Investigator/Project Director means the single individual designated by the grantee in the grant application and approved by the Secretary who is responsible for the scientific and technical direction of the project.

(5) Prior approval means written approval evidencing prior consent by an authorized departmental officer as defined in (1) above.

(6) Secretary means the Secretary of Agriculture and any other officer or employee of the Department to whom the authority involved may be delegated.

#### C. Eligibility

Proposals may be submitted by State agricultural experiment stations, all colleges and universities, other research institutions and organizations, Federal agencies, private organizations or corporations, and individuals. Proposals must be directly related to conducting quantitative and/or qualitative science-based risk assessments of microbial hazards in ready-to-eat foods; the scientific basis for critical control points, critical limits, and process capability; or ensuring the safety of imported and domestic fruits and vegetables. 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).

#### D. Complementary Programs

Research focusing exclusively on epidemiological approaches for food safety will not be funded under this program. Research on epidemiological approaches for food safety should be directed to the National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program (NRICGP). To obtain a copy of the RFP for the NRICGP and application materials, please contact the Proposal Services Unit, Office of Extramural Programs, USDA/CSREES at (202) 401-5048. These materials 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 that states that you wish to receive a copy of the RFP and application materials for the Epidemiological Approaches to Food Safety FY 1999 Program. The materials will then be mailed to you (not e-mailed) as quickly as possible. The NRICGP deadline for these types of research proposals is April 5, 1999.

#### Part II—Program Description

##### A. Purpose and Scope of the Program

Proposals are invited for competitive grant awards under the Special Research Grants Program, Food Safety Research for FY 1999. The purpose of this grant program is to support problem-solving food safety research that addresses current and emerging National issues in food safety. The program for FY 1999 will focus on conducting qualitative and quantitative risk assessments of ready-to-eat foods; the scientific basis for critical control points, critical limits, and process capability in assuring food safety; and ensuring the safety of imported and domestic fruits and vegetables. Proposals that address the following issues are requested:

(1) proposals that conduct comprehensive, qualitative and/or quantitative science-based risk assessments related to microbial foodborne pathogens (e.g., *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Campylobacter jejuni*, *Cyclospora*, *Salmonella*, etc.) and/or their toxins associated with ready-to-eat foods, including those foods that are fresh, minimally processed or processed;

(2) proposals that address the scientific basis and models for establishing and validating critical control points, critical limits, and process capability related to control measures for significant foodborne microbial pathogens and/or their toxins in production, processing and distribution of foods; or

(3) proposals that address the safety of fresh and minimally processed imported and domestic fruits and vegetables that include: the development of safe and efficacious techniques to enhance or ensure microbiological safety; approaches that relate production, harvesting, handling, transportation, and distribution control measures to the prevention of microbial pathogen infection or cross-contamination; or development of procedures for sampling to accurately detect the presence of microbial pathogens and/or their toxins.

Research issue No. (1) relates to ready-to-eat foods, No. (2) relates to any food, and No. (3) is limited to fresh fruits and vegetables. Projects submitted for research issue No. (1) should be

primarily focused on conducting risk assessments; however, researchers may propose to generate supporting data for use in the proposed risk assessments, as appropriate. Risk assessment proposals should be multi-institutional and multi-disciplinary. Proposals that focus primarily on generating data in support of risk assessment should be submitted to the NRICGP on epidemiological approaches for food safety that is referenced above or submitted under one of the other two areas of this RFP.

All proposals are to describe how the research will be transferred for implementation. Thus, preference will be given to proposals that have partnerships with potential users of the information derived from the research.

##### B. Available Funds and Award Limitations

Funds will be awarded on a competitive basis to support research projects that address food safety research that focuses on conducting risk assessments on ready-to-eat foods; the scientific basis for critical control points, critical limits, and process capability; or ensuring the safety of imported and domestic fruits and vegetables. Matching funds are encouraged but not required. Under this program the Secretary may make grant awards for the support of research projects for up to three years. The total amount of funds available in FY 1999 for support of this program is approximately \$4,677,998. It is estimated that up to \$2 million will be available for grants relating to risk assessments of ready-to-eat foods and it is anticipated that up to \$600,000 will be granted for each award. Each proposal submitted in FY 1999 shall request funding for a period not to exceed two years. Funding for additional years will depend upon the availability of funds, progress toward objectives, and program priorities. FY 1999 awardees would need to recompile in future years for additional funding.

#### Part III—Preparation of a Proposal

##### A. Program Application Materials

Program application materials will be made available to interested entities upon request. These materials include information about the purpose of the program, how the program will be conducted, and the required contents of a proposal, as well as the forms needed to prepare and submit grant applications under the program. To obtain program application materials, please contact 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; Telephone: (202) 401-5048. When contacting the Proposal Services Unit, please indicate that you are requesting application materials for the Special Research Grants Program, Food Safety Research. Application materials 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 that states that you wish to receive a copy of the application materials for the Special Research Grants Program, Food Safety Research. The materials will then be mailed to you (not e-mailed) as quickly as possible.

### *B. Content of a Proposal*

#### (1) General

The proposal should follow these guidelines, enabling reviewers to more easily evaluate the merits of each proposal in a systematic, consistent fashion:

(a) The proposal should be prepared on only one side of the page using standard size (8½" × 11") white paper, one inch margins, typed or word processed using no type smaller than 12 point font, and single spaced. Use an easily readable font face (e.g., Geneva, Helvetica, CG Times).

(b) Each page of the proposal, including the Project Summary, budget pages, required forms, and any appendices, should be numbered sequentially in the upper right-hand corner.

(c) The proposal should be stapled in the upper left-hand corner. Do not bind. An original and 9 copies (10 total) must be submitted in one package, along with 20 copies of the "Project Summary" as a separate attachment.

#### (2) Cover Page

Each copy of each grant proposal must contain an "Application for Funding", Form CSREES-661. One copy of the application, preferably the original, must contain the pen-and-ink signature(s) of the proposing principal investigator(s)/project director(s)(PI/PD) and the authorized organizational representative who possesses the necessary authority to commit the organization's time and other relevant resources to the project. Any proposed PI/PD or co-PI/PD whose signature does not appear on Form CSREES-661 will not be listed on any resulting grant award. Complete both signature blocks located at the bottom of the "Application for Funding" form.

Form CSREES-661 serves as a source document for the CSREES grant database; it is therefore important that it be completed accurately. The following items are highlighted as having a high potential for errors or misinterpretations:

(a) Title of Project (Block 6). The title of the project must be brief (80-character maximum), yet represent the major thrust of the effort being proposed. Project titles are read by a variety of nonscientific people; therefore, highly technical words or phraseology should be avoided where possible. In addition, introductory phrases such as "investigation of" or "research on" should not be used.

(b) Program to Which You Are Applying (Block 7). "Special Research Grants Program, Food Safety Research" should be inserted in this block. You may ignore the reference to a **Federal Register** announcement.

(c) Program Area and Number (Block 8). The name of the program area, "Food Safety Research," should be inserted in this block. You should ignore references to the program number and the **Federal Register** announcement.

(d) Types of Award Request (Block 13). There are three types of proposals that may be submitted to this program: new proposals, renewal proposals, and resubmitted proposals. If the submitted proposal describes a project that has not been previously submitted to the Special Food Safety Research Grant Program, please check "New." If the proposal being submitted requests additional funding for a project beyond the period that was approved in an original or amended award, check "Renewal." Please indicate the prior USDA award number in the appropriate location in this block. Proposals for renewed funding will compete on the same basis with all other proposals submitted to the Program at the same time. These proposals must contain the same information as required for new applications, and additionally must contain a Progress Report. As discussed below the Progress Report must be included within the 15 pages of the Project Description. If the proposal was previously submitted to the Special Food Safety Research Grant Program but not funded, check "Resubmission." The resubmitted proposal should clearly indicate the changes that have been made in the proposed project. Proposals which appear to be resubmissions (regardless of the designation) are regarded as such by the Program and the panel, and compete on the same basis with all other proposals submitted to the Program at the same time. However, a clear statement acknowledging

comment of the previous review, indicating revisions, rebuttals, etc., can positively influence the review of the proposal. Therefore, for resubmitted proposals, as discussed below the investigator(s) must respond to the previous submission's panel summary on no more than one page, titled "RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS REVIEW" which is to be placed directly after the Project Summary. Failure to include a "RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS REVIEW" may negatively influence the review of a proposal.

(e) Principal Investigator(s)/Project Director(s) (Block 15). The designation of excessive numbers of co-PI/PD's creates problems during final review and award processes. Listing multiple co-PI/PD's, beyond those required for genuine collaboration, is therefore discouraged. Note that providing a Social Security Number is voluntary, but is an integral part of the CSREES information system and will assist in the processing of the proposal.

(f) Type of Performing Organization (Block 18). A check should be placed in the box beside the type of organization which actually will carry out the effort. For example, if the proposal is being submitted by an 1862 Land-Grant institution but the work will be performed in a department, laboratory, or other organizational unit of an agricultural experiment station, box "03" should be checked. If portions of the effort are to be performed in several departments, check the box that applies to the individual listed as PI/PD # 1 in Block 15.a.

(g) Other Possible Sponsors (Block 22). List the names or acronyms of all other public or private sponsors including other agencies within USDA and other programs funded by CSREES to whom your application has been or might be sent. In the event you decide to send your application to another organization or agency at a later date, you must inform the identified CSREES program manager as soon as practicable. Submitting your proposal to other potential sponsors will not prejudice its review by CSREES; however, duplicate support for the same project will not be provided.

#### (3) Table of Contents

For consistency and ease in locating information, each proposal must contain a detailed Table of Contents just after the Cover Page. The Table of Contents should include page numbers for each component of the proposal. Page numbers, shown in the upper right-hand corner, should begin with the first page of the Project Summary.

#### (4) Project Summary

The proposal must contain a Project Summary of 250 words or less on a separate page. The summary must be self-contained and describe the overall goals and relevance of the project. The summary should also contain a listing of the major organizations participating in the project. The Project Summary should immediately follow the Table of Contents. In addition to the summary, this page must include the title of the project, the name of the applicant organization, the authorized organizational representative, and the principal investigator(s)/project director(s), followed by the summary.

#### (5) Response to Previous Review (if resubmission)

For the content of this section, see the information on resubmitted proposals in Part III, B.(2)(d), Types of Proposals, of this RFP.

#### (6) Project Description

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Description shall not exceed 15 pages of written text and may not exceed a total of 20 pages including figures and tables. This maximum has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition.

(a) Objectives—Clear, concise, complete, and logically arranged statement(s) of specific aims of the proposed effort must be included in all proposals.

(b) Justification—This section should include in-depth information on the following, when applicable:

(i) estimates of the magnitude of the food safety problem and its relevance to ongoing National food and agricultural research programs;

(ii) importance of starting the work during the current fiscal year, and

(iii) reasons for having the work performed by the proposing institution.

(c) Literature Review—A summary of pertinent publications with emphasis of 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 the applicant institution. The citations themselves should be accurate, complete, and written in an acceptable journal format.

(d) Progress Report—If the proposal is for a renewal grant for an existing project supported under this program, include a clearly marked progress report describing results to date from the previous award. In addition, the progress report must be limited to three pages (within the project description 15 page limit) and should include: a comparison of actual accomplishments

with the goals established for the previous award; the reasons established goals were not met, if applicable; and a listing of publications resulting from the award. Copies of no more than two preprints or reprints may be appended to the proposal.

(e) Current Work—Current unpublished institutional activities “to date” in the program area under which the proposal is being submitted should be described.

(f) Research Methods—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.

(g) Cooperation and Institutional Units Involved—Cooperative, multi-institutional and multi-disciplinary applications are encouraged. Identify each institutional unit contributing to the project and designate the lead institution or institutional unit. When appropriate, the project should be coordinated with the efforts of other State and/or national programs. Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each institutional unit of the project team, if applicable.

(h) Equipment and Facilities—All facilities which are available for use or assignment to the project during the requested period of support should be reported and described briefly. Any potentially hazardous materials, procedures, situations, or activities, whether or not directly related to a particular phase of the effort, must be explained fully, along with an outline of the precautions to be exercised. Examples include work with toxic chemicals and experiments that may put human subjects or animals at risk.

All items of major instrumentation available for use or assignment to the proposed project should be itemized. In addition, items of nonexpendable equipment needed to conduct and bring the project to a successful conclusion should be listed, including dollar amounts and, if funds are requested for their acquisition, justified.

(i) Project Timetable—The proposal should outline all important phases as

a function of time, year by year, for the entire project, including periods beyond the grant funding period.

#### (7) Key Personnel

All senior personnel who are expected to be involved in the effort must be clearly identified. For each person, the following should be included:

(a) an estimate of the time commitment involved; and

(b) vitae of the principal investigator(s)/project director(s), senior associate(s), and other professional personnel. This section should include vitae of all key persons who are expected to work on the project, whether or not CSREES funds are sought for their support. The vitae should be limited to two (2) pages each in length, excluding publications listings. A chronological list of all publications in refereed journals during the past five (5) years, including those in press, must be provided for each professional project member for whom a curriculum vitae is provided. Also list only those non-refereed technical publications that have relevance to the proposed project. All authors should be listed in the same order as they appear on each paper cited, along with the title and complete reference as these usually appear in journals.

#### (8) Conflict-of-Interest List (Form CSREES-1233)

A separate Conflict-of-Interest List form (Form CSREES-1233) must be submitted for each investigator for whom a curriculum vitae is required (see above). This form is necessary to assist program staff in excluding from proposal review those individuals who have conflicts-of-interest with the project personnel in the grant proposal. The Program Manager must be informed of additional conflicts-of-interest that arise after the proposal has been submitted.

#### (9) Collaborative and/or Subcontractual Arrangements

If it will be necessary to enter into formal consulting or collaborative arrangements with other individuals or organizations, such arrangements should be fully explained and justified. In addition, evidence should be provided that the collaborators involved have agreed to render these services. A letter of intent from the individual or organization will satisfy this requirement.

All anticipated subcontractual arrangements should be explained and justified in this section. A proposed statement of work and a budget for each

arrangement involving the transfer of substantive programmatic work or the providing of financial assistance to a third party must be provided. Agreements between departments or other units of your own institution and minor arrangements with entities outside of your institution (e.g., requests for outside laboratory analyses) are excluded from this requirement.

If you expect to enter into subcontractual arrangements, please note that the provisions contained in 7 CFR Part 3019, USDA Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations, and the general provisions contained in 7 CFR 3015.205, USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, flow down to subrecipients. In addition, required clauses from 7 CFR 3019.40 through 3019.48 ("Procurement Standards") and Appendix A ("Contract Provisions") should be included in final contractual documents, and it is necessary for the subawardee to make a certification relating to debarment/suspension.

#### (10) Certifications

Note that by signing the Form CSREES-661 the applicant is providing the required certifications set forth in 7 CFR Part 3017, as amended, regarding Debarment and Suspension and Drug-Free Workplace, and 7 CFR Part 3018, regarding Lobbying. The certification forms are included in the application package for informational purposes only. These forms should not be submitted with your proposal since by signing the Form CSREES-661 your organization is providing the required certifications. If the project will involve a subcontractor or consultant, the subcontractor/consultant should submit a Form AD-1048 to the grantee organization for retention in their records. This form should not be submitted to USDA.

#### (11) Appendices to the Project Description

Appendices to the Project Description are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed research and are limited to a total of two of the following: reprints (papers that have been published in peer-reviewed journals) and preprints (manuscripts in press for a peer-reviewed journal). Preprints must be accompanied by the letter of acceptance from the publishing journal.

#### (12) Budget

Prepare the budget form (Form CSREES-55) in accordance with instructions provided. A budget form is

required for each year of requested support. In addition, a cumulative budget is required detailing the requested total support for the overall project period. (For example, for a two-year project, the proposal would include three budget forms; one for each of the two years of the project and one cumulative budget for the full two years.) The budget form may be reproduced as needed by applicants. Funds may be requested under any of the categories listed on the form, provided that the item or service for which support is requested is allowable under the authorizing legislation, the applicable Federal cost principles and these program guidelines, and can be justified as necessary for the successful conduct of the proposed project. Applicants must also include a budget narrative to explain and justify their budgets. The following guidelines should be used in developing your proposal budget(s):

(a) Salaries and Wages. Salaries and wages are allowable charges and may be requested for personnel who will be working on the project in proportion to the time such personnel will devote to the project. If salary funds are requested, the number of Senior and Other Personnel and the number of CSREES Funded Work Months must be shown in the spaces provided. Grant funds may not be used to augment the total salary or rate of salary of project personnel or to reimburse them for time in addition to a regular full-time salary covering the same general period of employment.

Salary funds requested must be consistent with the normal policies of the institution.

(b) Fringe Benefits. Funds may be requested for fringe benefit costs if the usual accounting practices of your institution provide that institutional contributions to employee benefits (social security, retirement, etc.) be treated as direct costs. Fringe benefit costs may be included only for those personnel whose salaries are charged as a direct cost to the project.

(c) Nonexpendable Equipment. Nonexpendable equipment means tangible nonexpendable personal property including exempt property charged directly to the award having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit. (However, institutions may establish lower limits.) As such, items of necessary instrumentation or other nonexpendable equipment should be listed individually by description and estimated cost in the budget narrative. This applies to revised budgets as well, as the equipment item(s) and amount(s) may change.

**Note:** For projects awarded under the authority of subsection (c)(1)(A) of the Competitive, Special, and Facilities Research Grant Act, 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.

(d) Materials and Supplies. The types of expendable materials and supplies which are required to carry out the project should be indicated in general terms with estimated costs in the budget narrative.

(e) Travel. The type and extent of travel and its relationship to project objectives should be described briefly and justified. For both domestic and foreign travel, provide the purpose, the destination, method of travel, number of persons traveling, number of days, and estimated cost for each trip in the budget narrative. Airfare allowances normally will not exceed round-trip jet economy air accommodations. U.S. flag carriers must be used when available. See 7 CFR Part 3015.205(b)(4) for further guidance.

(f) Publication Costs/Page Charges. Anticipated costs of preparing and publishing results of the research being proposed (including page charges, necessary illustrations, and the cost of a reasonable number of coverless reprints) may be estimated and charged against the grant.

(g) Computer (ADPE) Costs. Reimbursement for the costs of using specialized facilities (such as a university- or department-controlled computer mainframe or data processing center) may be requested if such services are required for completion of the work.

(h) All Other Direct Costs. Anticipated direct project charges not included in other budget categories must be itemized with estimated costs and justified in the budget narrative. This applies to revised budgets as well, as the item(s) and dollar amount(s) may change. Examples may include space rental at remote locations, subcontractual costs, charges for consulting services, telephone, facsimile, shipping costs, and fees for necessary laboratory analyses. You are encouraged to consult the "Instructions for Completing Form CSREES-55, Budget," of the Application Kit for detailed guidance relating to this budget category. Form AD-1048 must be completed by any subcontractors or consultants and retained by the grantee.

(i) Indirect Costs. Section 711 of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for FY

1999, Sec. 101(a) of Pub. L. No. 105-277, limits indirect costs for this program to 14 percent of total Federal funds provided under each award. Therefore, the recovery of indirect costs under this program may not exceed the lesser of the grantee institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 14 percent of total Federal funds awarded (TFFA). If no rate has been negotiated, a reasonable dollar amount (equivalent to or less than 14 percent of total Federal funds requested) in lieu of indirect costs may be requested, subject to approval by USDA.

(j) Cost-sharing. Cost-sharing is encouraged; however, cost-sharing is not required nor will it be a direct factor in the awarding of any grant.

#### (13) Current and Pending Support

All proposals must list any other current public or private support (including in-house support) to which key personnel identified in the proposal have committed portions of their time, whether or not salary support for person(s) involved is included in the budget. Analogous information must be provided for any pending proposals that are being considered by, or that will be submitted in the near future to, other possible sponsors, including other USDA programs or agencies.

Concurrent submission of identical or similar proposals to the possible sponsors will not prejudice proposal review or evaluation by the Administrator for this purpose. However, a proposal that duplicates or overlaps substantially with a proposal already reviewed and funded (or that will be funded) by another organization or agency will not be funded under this program. The application material includes Form CSREES-663, "Current and Pending Support," which should be used for listing current and pending support. Note that the project being proposed should be included in the pending section of the form.

#### (14) Compliance With the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

As outlined in 7 CFR Part 3407 (the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service regulations implementing NEPA), the environmental data for any proposed project is to be provided to CSREES so that CSREES may determine whether any further action is needed. In some cases the preparation of environmental data may not be required. Certain categories of actions are excluded from the requirements of NEPA.

In order for CSREES to determine whether any further action is needed with respect to NEPA, pertinent

information regarding the possible environmental impacts of a particular project is necessary; therefore, Form CSREES-1234, "NEPA Exclusions Form," must be included in the proposal indicating whether the applicant is of the opinion that the project falls within a categorical exclusion and the reasons therefore. If it is the applicant's opinion that the proposed project falls within the categorical exclusions, the specific exclusion must be identified. Form CSREES-1234 and supporting documentation should be placed after Form CSREES-661, "Application for Funding," in the proposal.

Even though a project may fall within the categorical exclusions, CSREES may determine that an Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement is necessary for an activity. This will be the case if substantial controversy on environmental grounds exists or if other extraordinary conditions or circumstances are present which may cause such activity to have a significant environmental effect.

#### (15) Assurance Statement(s) (Form CSREES-662)

A number of situations encountered in the conduct of projects require special assurance, supporting documentation, etc., before funding can be approved for the project. In addition to any other situation that may exist with regard to a particular project, it is expected that some applications submitted in response to these guidelines will include the following:

(a) Recombinant DNA or RNA Research. As stated in 7 CFR 3015.205(b)(3), all key personnel identified in the proposal and all endorsing officials of the proposing organization are required to comply with the guidelines established by the National Institutes of Health entitled, "Guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant DNA Molecules," as revised. If your project proposes to use recombinant DNA or RNA techniques, the application must so indicate by checking the "yes" box in Block 19 of Form CSREES-661 and by completing Section A of Form CSREES-662. For applicable proposals recommended for funding, Institutional Biosafety Committee approval is required before CSREES funds will be released.

(b) Animal Care. Responsibility for the humane care and treatment of live vertebrate animals used in any grant project supported with funds provided by CSREES rests with the performing organization. Where a project involves the use of living vertebrate animals for experimental purposes, all key project

personnel and all endorsing officials of the proposing organization are required to comply with the applicable provisions of the Animal Welfare Act of 1996, as amended (7 U.S.C. 2131 *et seq.*) and the regulations promulgated thereunder by the Secretary in 9 CFR Parts 1, 2, 3, and 4 pertaining to the care, handling, and treatment of these animals. If your project will involve these animals or activities, you must check the "yes" box in Block 20 of Form CSREES-661 and complete Section B of Form CSREES-662. In the event a project involving the use of live vertebrate animals results in a grant award, funds will be released only after the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee has approved the project.

(c) Protection of Human Subjects. Responsibility for safeguarding the rights and welfare of human subjects used in any grant project supported with funds provided by CSREES rests with the performing organization. Guidance on this issue is contained in the National Research Act, Pub. L. 93-348, as amended, and implementing regulations established by the Department under 7 CFR Part 1c. If you propose to use human subjects for experimental purposes in your project, you should check the "yes" box in Block 21 of Form CSREES-661 and complete Section C of Form CSREES-662. In the event a project involving human subjects results in a grant award, funds will be released only after the appropriate Institutional Review Board has approved the project.

#### (16) Applicant Peer Review Requirements

Subsection (c)(5) of the Competitive, Special, and Facilities Research Grant Act (7 U.S.C. § 450i(c)), as amended by section 212 of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 ("1998 Act"), Pub. L. 105-185, requires applicants to conduct a scientific peer review of a proposed research project in accordance with regulations promulgated by the Secretary prior to the Secretary making a grant award under this authority. Regulations implementing this requirement currently are the subject of a proposed rule making (64 FR 14347, March 24, 1999). The statute requires promulgation of a final rule prior to award of a grant under this program. The proposed rule would impose the following requirements for scientific peer review by applicants of proposed research projects:

1. Credible and independent. 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.

2. Notice of completion and retention of records. A notice of completion of the review shall be conveyed in writing to CSREES either as part of the submitted proposal or prior to the issuance of an award, at the option of CSREES. 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.

3. Renewal and supplemental grants. Review by the grantee is not automatically required for renewal or supplemental grants as defined in 7 CFR 3400.6. A subsequent grant award will require a new review if, according to CSREES, either the funded project has changed significantly, other scientific discoveries have affected the project, or the need for the project has changed. Note that a new review is necessary when applying for another standard or continuation grant after expiration of the grant term.

4. Scientific Peer Review. Scientific peer review is an evaluation of a proposed project for technical quality and relevance to regional or national goals performed by experts with the scientific knowledge and technical skills to conduct the proposed research work. Peer reviewers may be selected from an applicant organization or from outside the organization, but shall not include principal or co-principal investigators, collaborators or others involved in the preparation of the application under review.

Because of the nature of the rule making process, these requirements are subject to change based upon the comments received. Applicants whose proposals are recommended for funding must comply with the review requirements as promulgated in the final rule as a condition precedent to receiving an award under this RFP.

#### **Part IV—Submission of a Proposal**

##### **A. What To Submit**

An original and nine copies of the complete proposal must be submitted. Each copy of the proposal must be stapled in the upper left-hand corner.

DO NOT BIND. In addition, submit 20 copies of the proposal's Project Summary. All copies of the proposal and Project Summary must be submitted in one package.

##### **B. Where and When To Submit**

Proposals must be received on or before June 4, 1999. Proposals may be sent by First Class mail, but applicants are strongly encouraged to send their proposal by certified mail and obtain a receipt to document the mailing. Proposals sent via the U.S. Postal Service must be sent to the following address: Special Grants Program—Food Safety Research; c/o Proposal Services Unit; Office of Extramural Programs; USDA/CSREES; STOP 2245; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2245; Telephone: (202) 401-5048.

**Note:** Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit their completed proposals via overnight mail or delivery services to ensure timely receipt by the USDA and to obtain a receipt to document dispatch of the proposal. Facsimile (FAX) copies will not be accepted.

Hand-delivered proposals or those delivered by an overnight express or courier service should be brought to the following address: Special Grants Program—Food Safety Research; c/o Proposal Services Unit; Office of Extramural Programs; USDA/CSREES; Room 303; Aerospace Center; 901 D Street, SW; Washington, DC 20024; Telephone: (202) 401-5048.

##### **C. 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.

#### **Part V—Selection Process and Evaluation Criteria**

##### **A. Selection Process**

Applicants should submit fully developed proposals that meet all the requirements set forth in this request for proposals.

Each proposal will be evaluated in a two-part process. First, each proposal will be screened to ensure that it meets the requirements as set forth in this request for proposals. Second, proposals that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a peer review panel.

The individual peer panel members will be selected from those persons recognized as specialists who are uniquely qualified by training and

experience in their respective fields to render expert advice on the merit of the proposals being reviewed. The individual views of the panel members will be used by CSREES staff to determine which proposals should be recommended to the Administrator (or his designee) for final funding decisions.

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular proposal or to make a specific number of awards. Care will be taken to avoid actual and potential conflicts of interest among reviewers. Evaluations will be confidential to USDA staff members, peer panel reviewers, and the proposed principal investigator(s)/project director(s), to the extent permitted by law.

##### **B. Evaluation Criteria**

In accordance with the provisions of 7 CFR 3400.5, the evaluation factors below will be used in lieu of those contained in 7 CFR 3400.15 in reviewing applications submitted in response to this request for proposals:

(1) Scientific merit of the proposal (represents 50% of the evaluation).

- Conceptual adequacy of the hypothesis or approach as related to the program objectives;
- Clarity and delineation of proposed project objectives as related to National issues and objectives;
- Adequacy of the description of the proposed work;
- Suitability and feasibility of the methodology for conducting the work;
- Probability of success of the project; and
- Novelty, uniqueness, and originality.

(2) Qualifications of the proposed project personnel, partnerships and adequacy of the facilities (represents 25% of the evaluation).

- Training and demonstrated awareness of previous alternative approaches to relevant objective(s) listed in the Request for Proposals and performance record and/or potential for future accomplishments;
- Partnerships with other disciplines and institutions;
- Time allocated for systematic attainment of objectives;
- Institutional experience and competence in the identified area of work; and
- Adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation.

(3) Adoption or transfer of technology strategies (represents 25% of the evaluation).

- Established or documented linkage with industry partner(s); and

- Clear and effective plan for educational outreach and technology transfer to end users.

## Part VI—Additional Information:

### A. Access to Peer Review Information

Copies of summary reviews, not including the identity of the reviewers, will be sent to all applicant PI/PD's automatically, after the review process has been completed.

### B. Grant Awards

#### (1) General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the Administrator shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose proposals are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this request for proposals. The date specified by the Administrator 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 request for proposals 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, 3016, and 3019 of 7 CFR).

#### (2) Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one-time basis as part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this part if such information has not been provided previously under this or another program for which the sponsoring agency is responsible. Copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling the requirements contained in this section will be provided by the sponsoring agency as part of the preaward process.

#### (3) Grant Award Document and Notice of Grant Award

The grant award document shall include at a minimum the following:

- (a) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the Administrator has awarded a

grant under the terms of this request for proposals;

- (b) Title of project;

- (c) Name(s) and address(es) of PI/PD's chosen to direct and control approved activities;

- (d) Identifying grant number assigned by the Department;

- (e) Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring recompetition for funds;

- (f) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Administrator during the project period;

- (g) Legal authority(ies) under which the grant is awarded;

- (h) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the grant award; and

- (i) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by CSREES to carry out its respective granting activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular grant.

The notice of grant award, in the form of a letter, will be prepared and will provide pertinent instructions or information to the grantee that is not included in the grant award document.

CSREES will award standard grants to carry out this program. A standard grant is a funding mechanism whereby CSREES agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined time period without additional support at a future date.

### C. Use of Funds; Changes

#### (1) Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

The grantee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of grant funds.

#### (2) Reporting Requirements

The grantee must prepare an annual report that details all significant activities towards achieving the goals and objectives of the project. The narrative should be succinct and be no longer than five pages, using 12-point font, single-spaced type. A budget summary should be attached to this report, which will provide an overview of all monies spent during the reporting period.

#### (3) Changes in Project Plans

- (a) The permissible changes by the grantee, PI/PD, or other key project personnel in the approved project grant shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the grantee and/or the PI/PD's are 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.

- (b) Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the grantee 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 grantee and approved in writing by the awarding official of CSREES 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 grantee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the grant.

- (e) Changes in Project Period: The project period may be extended by CSREES without additional financial support, for such additional period(s), within the statutory limitation, as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the grantee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of a grant.

- (f) Changes in Approved Budget: Changes in an approved budget must be requested by the grantee 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 in the grant award.

### D. Other Federal Statutes and Regulations That Apply

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

- 7 CFR Part 1—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.
- 7 CFR Part 3, as amended—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 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e.,

Circular Nos. A-21 and A-122) and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 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 3016, as amended—Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments.

7 CFR Part 3017—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and 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 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 Institutions.

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).

#### *E. Confidential Aspects of Proposals and Awards*

When a proposal results in a grant, it becomes a part of the record of the Agency's transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a privileged nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as privileged should be clearly marked as such and sent in a

separate statement, two copies of which should accompany the proposal.

The original copy of a proposal that does not result in a grant will be retained by the Agency for a period of one year. Other copies will be destroyed. Such a proposal will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. A proposal may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

#### *F. Regulatory Information*

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule-related Notice to 7 CFR Part 3015, subpart V, 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. 0524-0022.

Done at Washington, D.C., on this 30th day of March, 1999.

**K. Jane Coulter,**

*Acting Administrator, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service.*  
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