



## GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWING BIOTECHNOLOGY RISK ASSESSMENT GRANTS PROGRAM APPLICATIONS

**Program Information:** The entire Request for Applications, including eligibility requirements, definitions, review criteria, and award information is available at:  
[www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/biotechnologyriskassessment.html](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/biotechnologyriskassessment.html).

**Conflict of Interest:** You must disqualify yourself as a reviewer of an application if you have had one of the following relationships with the Project Director (PD) or other key personnel listed in the application: (1) have ever been a thesis or postdoctoral advisee/advisor; (2) have been a co-author on a publication within the past 3 years, including pending publications and submissions; (3) have been a collaborator on a project within the past 3 years, including current and planned collaborations; (4) for someone in your field, have had a consulting/financial arrangement or other conflict-of-interest in the past 3 years, including receiving compensation of any type (e.g., money, goods, or services); (5) are from the same institution, had previous employment with the institution within the past 12 months, or are being considered for employment at the institution; and (6) have a known family relationship such as a spouse, child, sibling, or parent, or other relationship, such as a close personal friendship, that you think might tend to affect your judgment or be seen as doing so by a reasonable person familiar with the relationship. If you encounter a situation about which you are uncertain, please bring it to the attention of the CSREES National Program Leader for a decision.

**Confidentiality:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture receives applications in confidence and is responsible for protecting the confidentiality of their submission and contents. For this reason, confidentiality must be maintained; therefore, DO NOT copy, quote, or otherwise use material from this application. If you believe that a colleague can make a substantial contribution to the review, consult with Daniel Jones ([djones@csrees.usda.gov](mailto:djones@csrees.usda.gov)) before disclosing either the contents of the application or the applicant's name. When you complete the review, please destroy all printed and electronic materials related to the application and maintain its confidentiality. If you are unable to review, please contact Daniel Jones ([djones@csrees.usda.gov](mailto:djones@csrees.usda.gov)), destroy all printed and electronic materials related to the application, and maintain its confidentiality.

**Proposal Page Limit:** The Project Narrative section may not exceed 18 single- or double-spaced pages of written text including figures and tables. Additions to the Project Narrative (Appendices) are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed research and are strictly limited to a total of two reprints and/or preprints. Reviewers are advised that, should these limits be exceeded, only text within the requirements need be read.

**Evaluation Criteria:** Your review comments will be a critical component of the panel's evaluation and ranking of the application(s). The review panel will consider the details of all comments received for each application. All reviews must be submitted electronically through the Peer Review System (PRS), which can be accessed through the following web site: <http://prs.csrees.usda.gov>. More information related to review submission via PRS is provided in an email sent to you by the National Program Leader. The evaluation criteria are listed beginning on the next page for various types of applications.

## **Criteria for Evaluating Research Applications**

1. Scientific merit of the proposal.
  - a. Conceptual adequacy of hypothesis;
  - b. Clarity and delineation of objectives;
  - c. Adequacy of the description of the undertaking and suitability and feasibility of methodology;
  - d. Demonstration of feasibility through preliminary data;
  - e. Probability of success of project;
  - f. Novelty, uniqueness and originality; and
  - g. Appropriateness to regulation of biotechnology and risk assessment.
2. Qualifications of proposed project personnel and adequacy of facilities.
  - a. Training and demonstrated awareness of previous and alternative approaches to the problem identified in the proposal, and performance record and/or potential for future accomplishments;
  - b. Time allocated for systematic attainment of objectives;
  - c. Institutional experience and competence in subject area; and
  - d. Adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation.
3. Relevance of project to solving biotechnology regulatory uncertainty for United States agriculture.
  - a. Scientific contribution of research in leading to important discoveries or significant breakthroughs in announced program areas; and
  - b. Relevance of the risk assessment research to agriculture and environmental regulations.

## **Criteria for Evaluating Conference Applications**

Applications that seek funding for conferences will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Relevance and timeliness of topics and selection of appropriate speakers;
2. General format of the conference, especially with regard to its appropriateness for fostering scientific exchange and/or public understanding;
3. Provisions for wide participation from the scientific and regulatory community and others, as appropriate;
4. Qualifications of organizing committee;
5. Appropriateness of budget request; and
6. Qualifications of project personnel.