

Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship Grants Program

FY 2007 Request for Applications

EXTENDED APPLICATION DEADLINE: June 8, 2007



U.S. Department of Agriculture



Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service

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

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES NATIONAL NEEDS GRADUATE AND
POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP GRANTS PROGRAM**

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.210.

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on **June 8, 2007** (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time) through the **grants.gov portal**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) is requesting comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and will be used to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act (AREERA) of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). This section requires the Secretary to solicit and consider input on a current RFA from persons who conduct or use agricultural research, education and extension for use in formulating future RFAs for competitive programs. Written stakeholder comments on this RFA should be submitted in accordance with the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice.

Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by mail to: Policy, Oversight, and Funds Management Branch; Office of Extramural Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: RFP-OEP@csrees.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not to request information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship Grants Program RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: CSREES announces the availability of grant funds and requests applications for the Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship Grants Program (NNF) for fiscal year (FY) 2007 award cycle to provide traineeship programs to eligible institutions for meeting the national need to develop scientific and professional expertise in the food and agricultural sciences, through graduate level training programs. In FY 2007 CSREES is soliciting applications: (1) for Fellowships to train students for Master's and doctoral degrees in food, agricultural and natural resource sciences, and; (2) for Special International Study or Thesis/Dissertation Research Travel Allowances (IRTA) **for eligible USDA Fellows. Applicants should be institutions that confer a graduate degree in at least one of the Targeted Expertise Shortage Areas (TESA).** Awards are made to eligible colleges and universities. **Individuals are not eligible to apply for these grants to support**

their graduate education. CSREES anticipates the amount supporting this program for the FY 2007 award cycle to be \$3.5 million.

This notice identifies the objectives for NNF and IRTA projects, the eligibility criteria for project applicants and beneficiaries; the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for an NNF and IRTA grants. **Applicants should be institutions that confer a graduate degree in at least one of the Targeted Expertise Shortage Areas (TESA). For further information about TESAs, see part I.B. and all of part III of this announcement.** Awards are made to eligible colleges and universities.

Table of Contents

<u>PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>5</u>
A. Legislative Authority and Background.....	5
B. Purpose and Priorities	5
C. Program Area Description	7
<u>PART II—AWARD INFORMATION</u>	<u>9</u>
A. Available Funding.....	9
B. Types of Applications	9
C. Project Types.....	9
<u>PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION</u>	<u>11</u>
A. Eligible Applicants.....	11
B. Cost Sharing or Matching	11
<u>PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION</u>	<u>12</u>
A. Address to Request Application Package	12
B. Content and Form of Application Submission.....	13
C. Submission Dates and Times	20
D. Funding Restrictions	20
E. Other Submission Requirements	22
<u>PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS</u>	<u>22</u>
A. General.....	22
B. Evaluation Criteria	23
C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality.....	26
D. Organizational Management Information.....	26
<u>PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION</u>	<u>26</u>
A. General.....	26
B. Award Notice	27
C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.....	27
D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements	29
<u>PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT</u>	<u>30</u>
<u>PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION</u>	<u>30</u>
A. Access to Review Information.....	30
B. Use of Funds; Changes.....	30
C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards	31
D. Regulatory Information.....	32
E. Definitions	32
F. CSREES’ Grants.gov Implementation Plans.....	35
G. DUNS Number.....	35

PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

Legislative authority for this program is contained in section 1412. [Amendments to section 1417 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (99 Stat. 1548; 7 U.S.C. 3152)]. This program is subject to administrative provisions that can be found at 7 CFR 3402. USDA/CSREES administers this federal assistance grant program specifically designated for graduate degree programs and postgraduate training of the next generation of policy makers, researchers, and educators in the Food and Agricultural Sciences. USDA initiated the National Needs Graduate Fellowship (NNF) Grants Program in FY 1984. This program, functioning collaboratively with eligible higher education institutions, is developing intellectual capital to ensure the preeminence of U.S. food and agricultural systems.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The purpose of the NNF Grants Program is to train students for Master's and/or doctoral degrees and provide additional postdoctoral training for Fellows who have completed their doctoral degrees at colleges and universities that have demonstrable teaching and research competencies in the food and agricultural sciences. Fellowships and IRTA awards are specifically intended to support traineeship programs that encourage outstanding students to pursue and complete their degrees or obtain postdoctoral training in areas where there is a national need for the development of scientific and professional expertise in the food and agricultural sciences. Fellowships and IRTA awards invest in graduate training and relevant international experiential learning for a cadre of diverse individuals who demonstrate their potential to successfully complete graduate degree programs in disciplines relevant to the mission of the USDA.

For the FY 2007 award cycle CSREES intends to support graduate Fellowship training grants for both Master's and doctoral levels of study. Also, IRTA awards will provide support for **eligible USDA Fellows** to conduct thesis/dissertation research or to undertake studies at sites outside of the United States. IRTA awards for eligible USDA Fellows will **only** be available as provided for within this announcement. **Post-doctoral Fellowships will not be awarded** under this grant announcement. Future funding of post-doctoral Fellowships will be dependent on the availability of funds.

The objectives of the FY 2007 NNF program, working collaboratively with eligible institutions, are:

- 1) to provide award support for graduate training of students at the Master's level and the doctoral level, to matriculate workforce-ready and globally competitive personnel in the food and agricultural sciences;
- 2) to provide awards that will support training to fill nationally identified expertise shortage areas in the food and agricultural sciences;

- 3) to increase the number of outstanding students, including those from traditionally underrepresented groups, annually entering graduate training in higher education in the food and agricultural sciences;
- 4) to support graduate training to develop core competencies in National Needs fellows to meet the emerging market demands in the food and agricultural sciences; and
- 5) to support IRTAs securing enhanced training in food and agricultural sciences for eligible National Needs Fellows.

Applications are being solicited for grants to support graduate Fellowship training stipends for NNF and/or IRTA for both Master's and doctoral levels of study in the following **Targeted Expertise Shortage Areas (TESA)**:

- 1) **Agricultural Genomics and Bioinformatics** – specifically in resources and applicability to the food, agricultural and natural resource sciences;
- 2) **Natural Resources and the Environment** – particularly in forest ecosystem health and restoration, wood and fiber engineering and applicability, and natural resource economics;
- 3) **Agricultural Systems Engineering** – specifically biobased products, bioenergy and food products engineering;
- 4) **Agricultural Management and Economics** – specifically in agricultural trade policy, resource economics, and economics of alternative energy;
- 5) **Food Science** – specifically in food safety and foods for health;
- 6) **Human Nutrition** – specifically in obesity, diet and exercise;
- 7) **Sciences for Agricultural Biosecurity** – particularly in animal pathology and food animal diagnostics and other areas impacting the security of the food systems; and
- 8) **Training in Sustainable Sciences** (integrative training in environmental, social and economic disciplines) for food, agricultural and environmental systems particularly in sustainable ecosystems and functional integrative natural resources management.

Institutions that have not previously applied are especially encouraged to do so. (See eligibility information in Part III of this RFA.) **Applicants should be institutions that confer a graduate degree in at least one of the TESAs listed above.** Awards are made to eligible colleges and universities. **Individuals are not eligible to apply for these grants to support their graduate education.**

Funding preference will be given to applications that propose to:

- 1) establish innovative frameworks for graduate training with collaborative research and technology transfer components that transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries in agriculture;
- 2) establish Master's degree programs where Fellows can pursue related summer research opportunities (especially at other colleges/universities, industry or federal agencies); or establish doctoral programs with teaching opportunities in related topics;
- 3) establish multidisciplinary graduate training programs in areas of: bio-security; food, agricultural and environmental sustainability; human nutrition and obesity;
- 4) increase the multicultural (economic, social, cultural, racial, ethnic, geographical, gender, traditionally underserved populations) diversity of the nation's scientific and professional expertise;
- 5) partner to provide exceptional graduate training in the food and agricultural sciences to develop human capital to participate in meeting the mission of the USDA and the strategic objectives of CSREES (http://www.csrees.usda.gov/about/strat_plan.html);
- 6) provide relevant leadership, teaching, research, management and international learning experiences for graduate training in such a way as to demonstrate the potential for USDA Fellows to become emerging knowledge experts in food and agricultural science disciplines;
- 7) develop performance measures for evaluating the overall effectiveness of the graduate training; to include identification of the core competencies that USDA National Needs Fellows will attain while developing expertise in the TESAs listed above.

C. Program Area Description

Under the FY 2007 program, CSREES intends to support Master's, and doctoral levels of study with NNF grants and the IRTA award, if applicable. **The Program Code is KK for all applications submitted under this announcement.**

Through the IRTA, CSREES offers to secure diversity in the human resource base by presenting opportunities for capable USDA Fellows to pursue experiential learning through research and travel awards that will contribute to the progress of the USDA Fellow toward an advanced degree during their graduate study; therefore, the proposed activities must contribute to the progress toward an advanced degree. IRTA recipients must be USDA Fellows, or current applicants. Fellowships and IRTA grants are provided to support current National Needs Graduate Fellows in order to allow them to conduct thesis/dissertation research or undertake studies outside the United States.

Applicants are encouraged to provide a five-year budget with a zero dollar budget for any year where support is not allocated. Applicants should factor into their application, a recruitment interval to meet the program requirements. No extensions beyond the five-year period are allowed. Institutions may, however, apply for new awards in any fiscal year(s) in which appropriated funds are available for this program. The title of *your application* should be different from the program code name. **The Program Code name is National Needs Graduate Fellowships Program.**

Beneficiary Eligibility for NNF – Fellowships may be held only by persons who meet the eligibility requirements below. Persons eligible to receive Fellowship stipend support must:

- 1) be citizens or nationals of the United States as defined in this announcement (see Part VIII, E., Definitions);
- 2) have strong interest, as judged by the institution, in pursuing a degree in a national targeted expertise shortage area and in preparing for a career as a food or agricultural or natural resources scientist or professional;
- 3) not have –
 - a) completed two semesters or equivalent hours (one (1) year) of full-time study as defined by the institution, or
 - b) passed candidacy/qualifying examinations, whichever is later; and
 - c) not have been enrolled previously in the academic program at the same degree level.

Beneficiary Eligibility for IRTA – At the time of travel under the IRTA grant award, USDA Fellows conducting research outside the United States must:

- 1) be supported under a USDA National Needs Graduate Fellowship grant;
- 2) have completed one academic year of full-time study, as defined by the institution under the fellowship appointment;
- 3) have formalized arrangements to study and/or conduct research in the foreign location(s);
- 4) have sufficient time remaining in the award to conduct the IRTA travel or research; and
- 5) have a completed CSREES Form 2010 – Fellowship Appointment Form with the funding agency (CSREES).

Fellows must be identified and Fellowships must be awarded within eighteen (18) months of the effective date of a grant. Institutions that fail to meet this deadline will be required to refund monies associated with unawarded Fellowships to CSREES.

Applicants may not request partial fellowships. A USDA Fellow at the Master’s degree level who maintains satisfactory progress is eligible to receive grant support for a maximum of **twenty-four (24) months** during a thirty-month period. A USDA Fellow at the doctoral degree level who maintains satisfactory progress is eligible to receive grant support for a maximum of **thirty-six (36) months** within a forty-two-month period.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

Grants may be awarded under this announcement. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. CSREES anticipates **\$3.5 million** will be available to fund awards in the FY 2007 funding cycle. NNF typically awards \$39,000 for each Master's level training [\$18,000 per year for two (2) years as student stipend] and \$76,500 for each doctoral level training [\$24,000 per year for three (3) years as student stipend]. For each level of student training, there is a \$1,500 per student per year cost-of-education allowance for the institution. For the IRTA awards there will be \$7,500 for doctoral level USDA Fellows and \$4,500 for IRTA Master's level USDA Fellows. At the Master's level training and IRTAs approximately \$1.2 million will be available for awards. There will be approximately \$2.3 million available for doctoral training including IRTAs.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2007, applications may be submitted to the NNF/IRTA Program as one of the following two types of requests:

1. **New application.** This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the NNF/IRTA Program. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.
2. **Resubmitted application.** This is an application that had previously been submitted to the NNF/IRTA Program but not funded. Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications. **PDs must respond to the previous review panel summary on no more than one page, titled “RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS REVIEW,” and must be submitted using the CSREES Supplemental Information Form.**

C. Project Types

A single application may propose funding under any single TESA for any of the Award Categories listed below, either singly or in any combination, **up to a maximum of \$252,000 per application.** Applicants may not request partial fellowships.

Award Category No. 1 -- **Master's Level Training – Funding at \$39,000** for each Fellow. This consists of a student stipend of \$18,000 per year for two years, plus \$1,500 per year cost-of-education allowance.

Award Category No. 2 --**Doctoral Level Training – Funding at \$76,500** for each Fellow. This consists of a student stipend of \$24,000 per year for three years, plus \$1,500 per year cost-of-education allowance.

Award Category No. 3 -- **Special International Study or Thesis/Dissertation Research Travel Allowances (IRTA) – One-time \$4,500 for an eligible USDA National Needs Master’s Fellow and one-time \$7,500 for an eligible USDA National Needs doctoral Fellow.**

There is no limit to the number of applications an eligible institution may submit; however, an institution may only receive support up to a maximum of **\$504,000 in awards**. This support may be provided through multiple grant awards.

Each application may request any combination of **Award Category No. 1 (Master’s), Award Category No. 2 (doctoral) or Award Category No. 3 (IRTA) funds, not to exceed \$252,000. A separate application must be submitted for each targeted expertise shortage area** (see Part I, B.) for which support is requested. CSREES reserves the right to fund fewer Fellows than requested in an application, and to partially fund fellowship and/or IRTA requests.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Pursuant to **section 1412,[Amendments to section 1417 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (99 Stat. 1548; 7 U.S.C. 3152)], and administrative provisions that can be found at 7 CFR 3402**, applications may be submitted by: (1) land-grant institutions, (2) colleges and universities having significant minority enrollments and a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food and agricultural sciences, and (3) other colleges and universities having a demonstrable capacity to carry out the teaching of food, and agricultural sciences. Research foundations maintained by an eligible college or university are eligible to submit graduate training proposals under this RFA.

Applicants should be institutions that confer a graduate degree in at least one of the Targeted Expertise Shortage Areas (TESA).

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

There are no matching requirements and matching resources will not be factored into the review process as evaluation criteria.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Address to Request Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to CSREES in response to this RFA.

Prior to preparing an application, it is suggested that the PD/PI first contact an Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grants.gov. If the organization is not prepared, the AOR should see http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp for steps for preparing to submit applications through Grants.gov.

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

1. Download and install PureEdge Viewer, a small, free program that provides access to the grant application. See http://www.grants.gov/resources/download_software.jsp#pureedge.
2. The application package must be obtained via Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov>, click on “Apply for Grants” in the left-hand column, click on “**Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Instructions**,” enter the funding opportunity number **USDA-CSREES-HEP-000526** in the appropriate box and click “Download Package.” From the search results, click “Download” to access the application package.

Contained within the application package is the “[CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov](#).” This Guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

If assistance is needed to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating PureEdge forms, using PureEdge with a Macintosh computer), refer to resources available on the Grants.gov Web site first (<http://grants.gov/>). Grants.gov assistance is also available as follows:

- Grants.gov customer support
Toll Free: 1-800-518-4726
Business Hours: M-F 7:00 am – 9 pm Eastern Standard Time
Email: support@grants.gov

See <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/electronic.html> for additional resources for applying electronically.

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Electronic applications should be prepared following Part V and VI of the document entitled “[A Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov.](#)” This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed in order to prepare an application in response to this RFA. If there is discrepancy between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., portable document format, i.e., PDF) in Part III section 3. of the Guide.

1. R&R Other Project Information Form

a) Project Summary/Abstract (Field 6. on the Form).

The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of the Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship Grants Program (NNF/IRTA). The summary should be approximately 250 words. The summary should provide a clear overview of the type of award – fellowship and/or IRTA project – succinctly providing information about its major features and a specific description of the activities to be undertaken.

The summary should focus on:

- identifying Targeted Expertise Shortage Area(s) being addressed;
- identifying the major academic program (discipline) being addressed;
- overall project goal(s) and supporting objectives;
- number and degree level (Master’s and doctoral) of Fellows to be supported under the application;
- number and degree level of IRTAs to be supported;
- plans to accomplish project goal(s) for national targeted expertise shortage area;
- relevance of the project to the program goals, and the USDA/CSREES Strategic Goals and Objectives http://www.csrees.usda.gov/about/strat_plan.html; and
- anticipated impact on the National Targeted Expertise Shortage Areas (TESAs).

The importance of a concise, informative Project Summary cannot be overemphasized. If the Project Summary does not specifically address relevance, merit, and broader impacts on the USDA Fellows’ research program for meeting the National TESAs, the proposal will not be reviewed.

The national targeted expertise shortage area(s) addressed by the application should be identified in the Project Summary. Applicants also should select one of the disciplines listed below that best describes the major academic program area addressed by the application. The tables that follow provide the TESAs for graduate training and the relevant disciplines under this solicitation. **The Project Summary must be submitted as a .PDF attachment.**

Targeted Expertise Shortage Area (TESA) FY 2007 Funding Cycle
Agricultural Genomics and Bioinformatics – specifically in resources and applicability to the food, agricultural and natural resource sciences
Natural Resources and the Environment – particularly in forest ecosystem health and restoration, wood and fiber engineering and applicability, and natural resource economics
Agricultural Systems Engineering – specifically biobased products, bioenergy and food products engineering
Agricultural Management and Economics – specifically in agricultural trade policy, resource economics, and economics of alternative energy
Food Science – specifically in food safety and foods for health
Human Nutrition – specifically in obesity, diet and exercise
Sciences for Agricultural Biosecurity – particularly in animal pathology and food animal diagnostics and other areas impacting the security of the food systems
Training in Sustainable Sciences (integrative training in environmental, social and economic disciplines) for food, agricultural and environmental systems particularly in sustainable ecosystems and functional integrative natural resources management

Relevant Discipline for FY 2007 Funding Cycle	Code
Animal Science	A
General/Basic Biotechnology, Biochemistry and Microbiology	B
Plant Sciences and Horticulture (includes Turf Grass/Weed Science/Plant Breeding)	P
Conservation and Renewable Natural Resources (includes any aspect of Forestry, Air Quality, Sustainable Agriculture)	C
Environmental Sciences/Management (includes Economics, Decision Management and Biometry)	L
Soil Sciences (includes Soil Quality; Processes)	D
Water Sciences/Resources (includes Water Quality)	W
Agricultural/Biological Engineering (includes Rangeland, Urban/Rural Technology)	E
Agricultural Marketing and Management (includes Agricultural Economics)	M
Food Science/Technology/Manufacturing/Safety	F
Human Nutrition (includes obesity and relevant to USDA Strategic Goals)	N
International Agriculture (includes Disciplines Related to Global Food and Agricultural Systems and Competitiveness)	I
Agricultural Social Sciences (includes Rural Sociology)	S
Veterinary Medicine (graduate degree training)	V
Interdisciplinary, Sustainable Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Social Sciences and Economics Graduate Degree Programs	G
Agricultural Biosecurity	X

b) Project Narrative (Field 7. on the Form).

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed twenty-five (25) pages of written text and up to five (5) additional pages for figures and tables. This maximum of thirty (30) pages has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. Prepare the application on only one side of the page using standard size (8 1/2" x 11") white paper, one-inch margins, using no type smaller than 12 point font, and in **double space** (no more than three lines per vertical inch). Acceptable fonts are Courier, Courier New or Arial, Geneva, Helvetica, Times New Roman. **Applications that do not conform to the preparation requirements will be returned unread. The Project Narrative and any Appendices must be submitted as a .PDF attachment.**

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

PLEASE NOTE: Appendices to the Project Narrative are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. The addition of appendices should not be used to circumvent the page limit. This portion of the application should describe how the proposed project offers unique opportunities for achieving the national objective of encouraging outstanding students to pursue and complete graduate degrees in an area of food and agricultural sciences where there is a national need for the development of scientific and professional expertise. The Project Narrative must include, and be organized into, the following four sections. A description of the information that must be included in each section is outlined below:

Section 1

- Discuss the quality of the institution's graduate students, the strength of its curriculum and instructional approaches, the availability of research training opportunities, and utilization of strategies for developing the leadership, management, critical thinking and problem-solving skills of students or unique mentoring experiences that may assist in preparing students for placement following graduation;
- Present evidence that the overall academic program recognizes and addresses current trends and future needs, and prepares students for the national targeted expertise shortage area of the application and successful careers in the food and agricultural sciences professional and scientific workplaces;
- Discuss current or planned programs at the institution designed to encourage outstanding graduate students, especially from traditionally underrepresented groups, to pursue and complete further graduate/professional studies to pipeline into the workforce filling areas of management and leadership in food and agricultural sciences disciplines.
- Identify the national targeted expertise shortage area (TESA) addressed by the application;
- Identify the Award Category(ies) – Master's, Doctoral, and/or IRTA – and the discipline addressed by the application;

- Demonstrate the likelihood that the proposed program of graduate study will result in the development of outstanding graduates to meet the future needs of a globally interconnected, technologically advanced, rapidly diversifying and consumer-driven food and agricultural industry;
- Substantiate clearly the quality graduate training and/or international experiential learning available through the institution's graduate teaching, research and experiential program(s) in the food and agricultural sciences in the discipline(s) for which Fellows are being recruited;

Supportive information should include: (1) student enrollment, retention and graduation rates by gender, racial groups, socio-economic groups, and ethnic groups for the past five years; (2) the mean standardized college entrance exam scores of students from traditionally underrepresented groups and of other students for the past five years; (3) placement of graduates during the past five years; and (4) the enrollment and graduation rates of students from traditionally underserved groups and first generation college students and/or past Fellows;

When applying for the IRTA type of award for a current USDA Fellow, the Project Narrative should include all of the following: (a) The anticipated, specific destination(s) and duration of the travel; (b) information about the objectives, timeline, expected outcomes and deliverables from the participating, eligible USDA Fellow(s); (c) the specific study or thesis/dissertation research activities (specific tasks) in which USDA Fellows will be engaged; (d) how the international experience will contribute to the USDA Fellow's program of study; (e) a budget narrative specifying and justifying the dollar amount requested for the travel; (f) identify contact personnel where Fellowship and/or IRTA activity will be undertaken and provide summary credentials of both the U.S. and international faculty or other professionals with whom the USDA Fellow will be working during the international experience and the nature of support to be provided to insure success of the Fellow's international experience; (g) a letter from the dean of the USDA Fellow's college or equivalent administrative unit supporting the USDA Fellow's travel request and certifying that the travel experience will not jeopardize the USDA Fellow's satisfactory progress toward degree completion; (h) a letter from the fellowships grant project director certifying the USDA Fellow's eligibility, the accuracy of the USDA Fellow's travel request, and the relevance of the travel to the USDA Fellow's advanced degree objectives; and (i) the criteria that will be used to evaluate success of the Fellowship and/or IRTA. In addition, a copy of an updated CSREES Form 2010 – Fellowship Appointment Form for any current USDA Fellow participating in the proposed Fellowships and/or IRTA opportunity should be placed immediately after the narrative text

USDA Fellows who are to participate in the Special International Study or Thesis/Dissertation Research Travel Allowances (IRTA) - Should the proposed IRTA be for to-be-recruited Fellows, the Project Director should provide: (a) anticipated objectives relating how the IRTA will contribute to the program of study; (b) the specifics outlined in Part IV, B.6, Section 1 the identity of the eligible USDA Fellows should be provided at least 150 days prior to travel. USDA Fellows selected to utilize IRTA funding should note that specific program evaluation and dissemination will include the following – the plans for: (1) an *Outcomes Report* to be

submitted to the USDA that describes accomplishments of the Fellow(s) after completing the IRTA - *this is not an activity report with a daily log of tasks*; and (2) disseminating impacts and achievements to a wide audience of educators and policy makers, in order to expand the pipeline of outstanding students interested in careers in the food and agricultural sciences.

Section 2

Describe in detail the on-going and future planned activities for: (1) recruitment and selection of Fellows; (2) academic advising, research training, career counseling, mentoring, pipelining to further graduate training or the workforce and student support services for Fellows; (3) where applicable, establish plans for advance preparations for experiential research and other learning activities so that there is likelihood that the activities will occur; (4) measuring performance outcomes; and (5) program evaluation and dissemination of impacts and results of the graduate training program management and student achievement to the funding agency and interested parties including the general citizenry. Include:

- Plans for the recruitment of outstanding Fellows, especially from traditionally underrepresented groups, including a brief justification for centering recruitment efforts on any particular group(s) and specific colleges and universities targeted for recruitment efforts with institutional letters of support, and the rationale for using proposed strategies and procedures;
- Strategies and procedures for recruiting and selecting students to participate in the Fellowship program, including selection criteria for choosing Fellows who are outstanding and deemed likely to pursue degrees in national targeted expertise shortage areas; identify the core competencies that each Fellow will be expected to attain; and describe plans designed to prepare Fellows for careers as food and agricultural scientists or professionals;
- Plans and procedures for assessing, monitoring, guiding, and sustaining Fellows' continued commitment and progress toward securing an education in preparation for a career that meets the need of national targeted expertise shortage areas in the food and agricultural sciences, including the nature of career counseling to be provided to Fellows;
- Plans for achieving a completion rate of greater than the institutional average for the specific graduate program of study. Completion rate is computed as number of Fellows graduated divided by number of Fellows recruited, expressed as a percentage;
- A description of the institution's mentoring and other support services and how they promote multicultural and/or first-generation college graduate student retention through graduation and pipelining to further graduate training or the workforce;
- Plans for ongoing evaluating of the graduate training project management and effectiveness, measuring program outcomes and impacts, pipelining, and tracking Fellows' accomplishments after graduation. The applicant should project a goal for tracking (e.g. expressed as a less than 10 percent "unable-to-contact" rate during the 36-

month post-graduation follow-up phase). As an example, the Unable-to-Track Rate is computed as the number of “unable-to-contact” graduated USDA Fellows divided by the number of graduated Fellows, expressed as a percentage. An escalating unable-to-contact rate is of considerable concern. This project evaluation plan should include the process that will be used to evaluate the project management for successful outcomes. Include a discussion of how evaluation findings would be used to modify and improve future opportunities for Fellows; and

- Plans for outcomes reporting, including experiential learning activities, of fellowship recipients; and disseminating project outcomes, impacts and achievements to funding agency, a wide audience of educators and policy makers.

Section 3

Substantiate clearly, with supporting documentation, that: (1) the facilities and equipment, instructional and research support resources and other attributes (e.g., professional ranking of department, other funding sources, CSREES program evaluation) are excellent for providing outstanding teaching and research at the forefront of science and technology related to the chosen discipline for the TESA(s); (2) fellowship recipients will be provided with curricula and experiential learning opportunities, including travel activities, that are germane to their course of study to prepare graduates to meet the national need; and (3) the institution is committed to supporting the Fellows’ education and research over and beyond the funds provided by USDA. Such support beyond the USDA funding should be documented with signed letters of support.

Section 4

Identify any innovative, special features of the proposed project that will be available **especially** to USDA Fellows, or required as a part of their degree programs. Such features may include: (1) an interdisciplinary, multi-disciplinary, or cross-disciplinary approach coupling research training with innovative training in ethics, leadership, management and policy; (2) a multi-university collaborative approach; (3) an emphasis on a collateral specialization or minor in a related discipline; (4) graduate research opportunities, internships, practicum, experiential learning opportunities, international research/educational experiences, and related work experiences; (5) graduate training using holistic concepts and analytical tools from a variety of disciplines to address sciences (environmental, social and economics) for sustainability to develop intellectual capital and create knowledgeable leaders and managers of food and agricultural sciences; (6) pipelining into other graduate or professional training and/or the workforce; (7) leadership and management experiences for the Fellows that enhance the skills of the emerging professional to contribute to areas of national targeted expertise shortage in the food and agricultural sciences; (8) acquisition of skills to analyze issues, propose solutions, assess values and conflicts arising from issues and solutions in a diverse and global workforce; (9) plans and procedures to measure and report performance outcomes and impacts; and (10) opportunities for realignment of fellowship program to achieve successful project outcomes.

References

All references to works cited should be complete, including titles and all co-authors, and should conform to an acceptable journal format. References are not considered in the page-limitation for the Project Narrative. **The References must be submitted as a .PDF attachment.**

Key Personnel

The biographical sketch for Key Personnel must be submitted as a .PDF attachment. Each vita may not exceed two (2) pages. The following should be included, as applicable:

- (a) The roles and responsibilities of each PD and/or collaborator should be clearly described;
- (b) Vitae of the PD and each co-PD, senior associate, 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. The vitae must include a presentation of academic and research credentials, as applicable; e.g., earned degrees, teaching experience, employment history, **number of graduate students successfully mentored**, professional activities, honors and awards, and grants received. A chronological list of **all** graduate students trained (with role identified as chair or committee member) during the past **four (4) years**, **all** publications in **refereed journals** during the past **four (4) years**, including those in press, must be provided for each project member for whom 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; and
- (c) Credentials of international or other personnel participating as mentors, trainers, advisors, teachers in directing the international travel experience or other training of the USDA Fellow, providing evidence for a scholarly experience that will enhance the graduate training. For to-be-recruited Fellows, this information should be submitted at least 150 days prior to the Fellows' participation in the IRTA.

2. **Budget**

Use the R&R Budget Form for the NNF/IRTA program. Prepare a budget for each year of requested support. In addition, a cumulative budget is required detailing the requested total support for the overall project period. Applicants are encouraged to provide a five-year budget with a zero dollar budget for any year where support is not allocated. No extensions beyond the five-year period are allowed.

On the R&R Budget Form Field E, the stipend is placed on Line 2, and the cost-of-education allowance should appear on the line designated "Other." The IRTA, if applicable, also appears in Field E on Line 3 of the R&R Budget Form.

A budget narrative is required. All costs should be fully explained and justified. **The Budget Narrative must be submitted as a .PDF attachment.**

Matching

There are no matching requirements and matching resources will not be factored into the review process as evaluation criteria.

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are unallowable. In lieu of indirect costs, institutions receive a \$1,500 per year cost-of-education (CoE) allowance for each Fellow supported by a Master's or Doctoral award. *The Project Director is required to use part of the CoE to attend at least one CSREES-sponsored Project Directors' Conference, held during the life of the grant.* In addition, institutions may use the cost-of-education allowance to defray program-related expenses including, but not limited to, student retention and mentoring programs, Fellow travel to attend professional meetings and/or to conduct research, laboratory fees and educational expenses (e.g., books and supplies). An institution may elect to apply the cost-of-education institutional allowance to a Fellow's tuition and fees; however, such is not required.

3. CSREES Supplemental Information Form

- a) Program Code (Field 2. on the Form). Enter the **Program Code name** as **National Needs Graduate Fellowships Program** and the **Program Code** as **KK**.
- b) Conflict of Interest List (Field 4. on the Form).
Conflicts of Interest for Key Personnel must be submitted. Provide the full names of the individuals in the following categories: (a) all co-authors on publications within the past four years, including pending publications and submissions; (b) all collaborators on projects within the past four years, including current and planned collaborations; (c) all thesis or postdoctoral advisees/advisors within the past four years; and (d) all persons in your field with whom you have had a consulting or financial arrangement within the past four years, who stand to gain by seeing the project funded. This form is necessary to assist program staff in excluding from application review those individuals who have conflicts of interest with the personnel in the grant application. The program contact must be informed of any additional conflicts of interest that arise after the application is submitted.

2. Submission Dates and Times

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide.

Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on **June 8, 2007** (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time) through the **grants.gov portal**. Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

The receipt of all applications will be acknowledged by e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received a confirmation message from CSREES within 30 days of submission of the application, please contact the Program Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in (for competitive programs) the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel or (for non-competitive programs) a delay in the issuance of an award. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

3. Funding Restrictions

NNF stipend funds for fellowship must be used to: (1) support the same Fellow at the Master's degree level who maintains satisfactory progress is eligible to receive grant support for a maximum of **twenty-four (24) months** during a thirty-month period, and/or (2) support the same Fellow at the doctoral degree level who maintains satisfactory progress is eligible to receive grant support for a maximum of **thirty-six (36) months** within a forty-two-month period. Institutions must use a minimum stipend of \$18,000 per year for Master's Fellows and \$24,000 per year for Doctoral Fellows.

If funds remain as a result of USDA Fellows completing their studies early (less than twenty-four months for a Master's degree or less than thirty-six months for a doctoral degree) or Fellowships being terminated prematurely, such funds may be used, within the time remaining on the award, to support: (1) pursuit of a doctoral degree in a TESA in the food and agricultural sciences by a Master's degree level Fellow at the grantee institution, or (2) a Replacement Fellow. The tenure of such a Replacement Fellow is limited to whatever time is remaining on the grant before it expires; however, an institution may not appoint a Replacement Fellow unless there is time for the student to complete at least one semester/quarter of study before the expiration date of the grant. Replacement Fellows must meet all of the eligibility criteria and other requirements established for Fellow selection and are subject to the same provisions as other Fellows during their tenure in the program. Replacement Fellows are entitled, during their tenure, to the same benefits that other Fellows receive from the grant award and National Needs Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship Grants Program. Institutions may, but are not required to, continue a replacement Fellow's tuition and other benefits beyond the expiration date of the grant using institutional or other funds. A Fellow may not be simultaneously supported under multiple National Needs Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship Grants Program awards.

Remaining funds cannot be used to increase annual Fellowship stipends provided to existing Fellows. If less than one semester/quarter remains on the award, the grantee must refund unexpended monies to CSREES.

Should a USDA Fellow require additional time beyond the grant period to complete his or her degree, it is expected that the grantee will consider alternatives to continue supporting the Fellow through other means.

It is the intent of this program that USDA Fellows pursue full-time uninterrupted study. However, USDA Fellows are permitted, at the discretion of their institutions, to accept additional

supplemental employment that would positively contribute to their training (e.g., research or teaching assistantships), if tuition waivers are included as compensation.

4. Other Submission Requirements

The applicant should follow the submission requirements noted in the document entitled “A Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov.”

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

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

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

B. Evaluation Criteria

1. *Applications for Graduate Training*

The evaluation criteria below will be used in reviewing all applications submitted in response to this RFA, **except** those only requesting funds for IRTA grants for current USDA Fellows:

a) Potential for Advancing the Quality of Education (30 Points)

This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the proposed program of graduate study (training) will result in the development of outstanding graduates to meet the future needs of a globally interconnected, technologically advanced, rapidly diversifying and consumer driven food and agricultural industry. Elements include: quality of the chosen academic program to prepare experts in the national targeted expertise shortage area, current and future demand for graduates in chosen discipline(s), strength of the curriculum, instructional approaches, identification of the core competencies that each Fellow will be expected to attain, strategies for

developing critical thinking and problem solving skills and prior success in or potential for graduating Fellows.

b) Proposed Approach

(25 Points)

- i) **Recruitment and selection:** The applicant's strategies and procedures for identifying and recruiting outstanding students who are committed to careers in food and agricultural sciences and for pipelining into further graduate training or professions to increase the multicultural diversity of the workforce.
- ii) **Academic advising, career counseling, mentoring, and student support services:** The applicant's plans and procedures for assessing, monitoring, guiding, and sustaining a Fellow's continued commitment, and securing progress toward an education in preparation for a career in the food and agricultural sciences, and for providing appropriate career counseling, mentoring, support services, and pipelining Fellows to further professional opportunities.
- iii) **Program evaluation and dissemination:** The adequacy and reasonableness of the applicant's plans, as reflected in the proposal, for (1) evaluating project management; (2) determining overall effectiveness of the **graduate training** in Areas of National Targeted Expertise Shortage to prepare Fellows for careers as food and agricultural scientists or professionals; (3) tracking Fellows' accomplishments after graduation, (3) performance outcomes measurement, and (4) disseminating project outcomes and achievements to a wide audience of educators and policy makers, in order to expand the pipeline of outstanding students interested in careers in food and agricultural sciences into future training or workforce opportunities.

c) Institutional Commitment and Resources

(20 Points)

The degree to which the proposal substantiates clearly: (1) that the facilities and equipment, instructional support resources and other academic attributes are excellent for providing outstanding teaching and research at the forefront of science and technology related to the chosen discipline; and (2) the commitment to support the Fellows education and research over and beyond the funds provided by USDA.

d) Key Personnel

(15 Points)

The qualifications and roles of key staff assigned to the project, particularly the project director and faculty or staff having the most frequent or influential contacts with Fellows. Elements include such attributes as competence and/or experience in graduating post-baccalaureate students, research, teaching, community service, working with diverse cultural groups, students at risk of not completing their degree programs, and leading similar projects.

e) Innovation

(10 points)

The degree to which the proposal describes (see **Part IV, B. b, Section 4**) any innovative, special features of the academic program(s) that will be available *especially* to Fellows or required as a part of their degree program(s), including: an interdisciplinary, multi-disciplinary, or cross-disciplinary approach; a focus on innovative, multi-disciplinary education programs, material, or curricula; a multi-university collaborative approach; an emphasis on a collateral specialization or minor in a related discipline; research opportunities, internships, practicum, experiential learning opportunities, developing leadership, management, critical thinking and problem solving skills that may integrally incorporate science and values for sustainability in food and agricultural sciences, international research/educational training, and related work experiences to effectively matriculate Fellows who meet the needs of the targeted expertise shortage areas.

2. Applications for Special International Study or Thesis/Dissertation Research Travel Allowances (IRTA)

The following criteria will be used **to review applications requesting only IRTA for current USDA Fellows. For FY 2007 applications that propose funding for IRTA experiences in future years, the following criteria will be used to evaluate the merit of the IRTA activity.**

a) Potential for Advancing the Quality of Education (30 Points)

This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the proposed international/research learning experience for the eligible graduate Fellow(s) will contribute to training and will result in the development of outstanding graduates to meet the future needs of a globally interconnected, technologically advanced, rapidly diversifying and consumer driven food and agricultural industry. Elements include: quality of the chosen travel/research activity to enhance the graduate training program of the Fellow; and destination and duration - the degree to which the destination and duration of the travel experience is appropriate for enhancing the USDA Fellow's academic program.

b) Proposed Approach (40 Points)

- (1) **Advanced preparation** – 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 based on: (1) the clarity of the learning objectives; (2) the planned activity(ies); (3) established and documented evidence of availability of facilities and personnel at host institution; and (4) the completeness of arrangements for the travel and the stay.
- (2) **Academic advising, career counseling, mentoring, and student support services** – the applicant's plans and procedures for assessing, monitoring, guiding, and sustaining a Fellow's progress in the research/international experiential activities toward securing a positive impact on the academic program of the

Fellow(s); strategies for application of critical thinking and problem solving skills in Fellows.

- (3) **Program evaluation and dissemination** – the plans for (1) an *Outcomes Report* to be submitted to the USDA that describes accomplishments of the Fellow(s) after completing the IRTA - ***this is not an activity report with a daily log of tasks;*** and (2) disseminating impacts and achievements to a wide audience of educators and policy makers, in order to expand the pipeline of outstanding students interested in careers in food and agricultural sciences.

c) Institutional Commitment and Resources (10 Points)

The degree to which the proposal substantiates clearly: (1) that the facilities and equipment, instructional/learning support resources and other academic attributes are excellent for providing outstanding international/research experiential learning opportunities at the forefront of science and technology related to the academic program of the Fellow(s); and (2) the documented commitment (**letters**) to support the Fellow(s) in the educational value of the international research experience.

d) Key Personnel (10 Points)

The degree to which the personnel, both U.S. and international, involved with the research and/or travel experience have the appropriate credentials and experience to direct the USDA 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.

e) Innovation (10 points)

The degree to which the proposal describes any innovative, special features of the international and/or research experiential activities that will focus on: (1) innovative approaches to generating a new body of knowledge that strengthens the academic program of the Fellow(s), and; (2) an emphasis on learning and understanding global influences and competitiveness in a fast-evolving sphere.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution shall be determined by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 6400 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 648, Falls Church, Virginia 22042. Phone: (703) 532-2300. Web site: <http://www.hepinc.com>.

Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

D. Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one time basis, with updates on an as needed basis, as part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another CSREES program. CSREES will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these requirements as part of the preaward process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of CSREES shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the awarding official of CSREES as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by CSREES under this RFA shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015 and 3019 of 7 CFR).

B. Award Notice

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

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

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

7 CFR Part 1, subpart A—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

7 CFR Part 3—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-129 regarding debt collection.

7 CFR Part 15, subpart A—USDA implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

7 CFR Part 331 and 9 CFR Part 121—USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21 and A-122, now codified at 2 CFR Parts 220 and 230) and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3017—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and 7 CFR Part 3021—Governmentwide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace (Grants).

7 CFR Part 3018—USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

7 CFR Part 3019—USDA implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non profit Organizations.

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

29 U.S.C. 794 (section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973) and 7 CFR Part 15b (USDA implementation of statute) —prohibiting discrimination based upon physical or mental handicap in Federally assisted programs.

35 U.S.C. 200 et seq. —Bayh Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

1. Documentation of Progress on Funded Projects

Pursuant to 7 C.F.R Part 3402.23, Project Directors will be required to:

- (a) Project Directors are required to complete and submit a Fellowships/Scholarships Entry Form, Form CSREES-2010, and an Annual Progress Report for each Fellow supported. This information must also be provided for replacement Fellows appointed under the program. Annual Progress Reports are used to assess the continuing progress of Fellows through their graduate programs of study and institutional adherence to program guidelines.
- (b) Project Directors must also complete and submit a Fellowships/Scholarships Exit Form, Annual Performance and Exit Reports Form CSREES-2010, as soon as a Fellow either (1) graduates; (2) is officially terminated from the Fellowship or the academic program due to unsatisfactory academic progress or disciplinary action; or (3) voluntarily withdraws from the Fellowship or academic program. If a Fellow has not completed all degree requirements at the end of the five-year award duration, CSREES may request a preliminary Fellowships/Scholarships Exit Form (Annual Performance and Exit Reports Form CSREES-2010 found at http://www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/pdfs/natl_needs.pdf). In such a case, a final Fellowships/Scholarships Exit Form would be required at a later date. When CSREES has accepted a final Fellowships/Scholarships Exit Form for each Fellow supported by a grant, the grantee has satisfied the requirement of a final performance report for the grant. Additional follow-up reports to track Fellows' career patterns also may be requested.

Grantees are also required to submit annual and summary evaluation reports via the CSREES Current Research Information System (CRIS). CRIS is an electronic, Web-based inventory system that facilitates both grantee submissions of project outcomes and public access to information on Federally funded projects. This information should include performance metrics. For additional information on the contents of CRIS reports see Part VII for agency contact details.

2. IRTA Outcomes Report

An Outcomes Report must be submitted to the USDA program contact personnel within 90 days of completion of the IRTA. This report is prepared by the USDA Fellow and submitted through the Project Director of the active Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship Grant Program award. ***This is not an activity report with a daily log of tasks.*** The Outcomes Report describes accomplishments and may include images.

3. Impacts

An impact assessment should be included in the Annual Performance and Exit Reports (CSREES Form 2010) that includes a summary of the overall progress toward project objectives, current problems or unusual developments, the next year's activities, and any other information that is pertinent to the ongoing project/concluding project or which may be specified in the terms and conditions of the award.

4. Evaluation of Program

Grantees should be aware that CSREES may, as a part of its own program evaluation activities, carry out in-depth evaluations of assisted activities through independent third parties. Thus, grantees should be prepared to cooperate with evaluators retained by CSREES to analyze both the institutional context and the impact of any supported project.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact: Dr. Audrey A. Trotman; National Program Leader, Higher Education Graduate Fellowships, Science and Education Resources Development Unit; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture; Stop 2251; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2251; telephone: 202-720-1973; fax: 202-720-2030; e-mail: NNF@CSREES.USDA.GOV.

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access to Review Information

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, the awardee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

2. Changes in Project Plans

- a) The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision,

the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.

- b) Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.
- c) Changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such changes.
- d) Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.
- e) The project period may be extended by CSREES without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project, but in no case shall the total project period exceed five years. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the awardee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of award.
- f) Changes in Approved Budget: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, changes in an approved budget must be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes if the revision will involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of CSREES transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of three years. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

D. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of the Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB Document No. 0524-0039.

E. Definitions

For the purpose of this program, the following definitions are applicable:

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

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

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

Citizen or national of the United States means (1) A citizen or native resident of a State, the District of Columbia, or any Insular Area; or, (2) a person defined in the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. 1101(a)(22), who, though not a citizen of the United States, owes permanent allegiance to the United States.

College or university means an educational institution in any State which (1) admits as regular students only persons having a certificate of graduation from a school providing secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such a certificate, (2) is legally authorized within such State to provide a program of education beyond secondary education, (3) provides an educational program for which a bachelor's degree is awarded, (4) is a public or other nonprofit institution, and (5) is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association.

Department or USDA means the United States Department of Agriculture.

First generation means an individual neither of whose parents completed a baccalaureate degree, or in the case of any individual who regularly resided with and received support from only one parent, an individual whose only such parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree.

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 in the broadest sense of these terms, including but not limited to, activities concerned with the production, processing, marketing, distribution, conservation,

consumption, research, and development of food and agriculturally related products and services, and inclusive of programs in agriculture, natural resources, aquaculture, forestry, veterinary medicine, family and consumer sciences, rural economic, community, or business development, and closely allied disciplines.

Graduate degree means a Master's or doctoral degree.

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

Insular Area means the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Republic of Palau, and the Virgin Islands of the United States.

Land-grant colleges and universities means those institutions eligible to receive funds under the Act of July 2, 1862 (12 Stat. 503-505, as amended; 7 U.S.C. 301-305, 307 and 308), including the land grant institutions in the Insular Areas or the Act of August 30, 1890 (26 Stat. 417-419, as amended 7 U.S.C. 321-326 and 328), including Tuskegee University, West Virginia State University, and 1994 Land Grant Institutions per the Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994.

Matching or Cost-sharing means that portion of project costs not borne by the Federal Government, including the value of third party in-kind or cash contributions.

Minority means Alaskan Native, American Indian, Asian-American, Black (African-American), Hispanic American, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, or any other group underrepresented in undergraduate and first professional degree study in the food and agricultural sciences as indicated in standard statistical references, or as documented on a case-by-case basis by national survey data submitted to and accepted by the Secretary.

Multi-institutional means a request for funding for a single academic program or an interdisciplinary program involving two or more institutions in a graduate training program.

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

Prior approval means written approval evidencing prior consent by an authorized departmental officer as defined in this section.

Project means the particular activity within the scope of one or more of the targeted need areas identified in the annual program solicitation supported by a grant awarded under this program.

Project director means the single individual, designated by the grantee in the grant application and approved by the Secretary, who is responsible for the management and technical direction of the project.

Project period means the period during which Federal sponsorship begins and ends, as stated in the award document and any modifications thereto.

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

State means any one of the fifty States, any Insular Area as defined in this announcement, and the District of Columbia.

Traditionally underrepresented in the food and agricultural sciences means groups that have been historically, and are currently, underrepresented among recipients of undergraduate and first professional degrees in the food and agricultural sciences.

Teaching means formal classroom instruction, laboratory instruction, and practicum experience in the food and agricultural sciences and matters related thereto (such as faculty development, student recruitment and services, curriculum development, instructional materials and equipment, and innovative teaching methodologies) conducted by colleges and universities offering associate, baccalaureate, or higher degrees.

Underrepresented means proportionate representation as measured by degree recipients that is less than the proportionate representation in the general population--(i) As indicated by (A) The most current edition of the Department of Education's Digest of Education Statistics; (B) The National Research Council's Doctorate Recipients from United States Universities; or (C) Other standard statistical references, as documented by national survey data submitted to and accepted by the Secretary on a case-by-case basis.

F. CSREES' Grants.gov Implementation Plans

CSREES is continuing to develop its capacity to exchange proposal and grant data electronically with its grantees through [Grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) and to process, review, and award proposals and grants electronically.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2006, CSREES offered an electronic application option for select grant programs and partnered with five institutions to use Grants.gov Apply. CSREES utilized the SF-424 R&R (Research and Related) forms package (see 70 FR 9656, published in the Federal Register on February 28, 2005) along with CSREES Agency-specific forms and instructions to receive the electronic applications. These pilot activities were successful and provided lessons for applicants and CSREES.

As a result, for the FY 2007 (October 1, 2006-September 30, 2007) cycle, CSREES is requiring electronic submission through Grants.gov. Please visit <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/fy07changes.html> for information about FY 2007 submission requirements by program. For more information about CSREES' Grants.gov plans, including important announcements, program implementation, and detailed requirements, see the CSREES' web site, http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/other_links/egov/egov.html. The information on these web sites will be updated as appropriate. It is suggested that the sites be visited periodically for important updates.

G. DUNS Number

A Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number is a unique nine-digit sequence recognized as the universal standard for identifying and keeping track of over 70 million businesses worldwide. A Federal Register notice of final policy issuance (68 FR 38402) requires a DUNS number in every application (i.e., hard copy and electronic) for a grant or cooperative agreement (except applications from individuals) submitted on or after October 1, 2003. Therefore, project directors should contact an AOR to obtain the DUNS number or have the AOR begin the steps needed to obtain one.

For information about how to obtain a DUNS number go to <http://www.grants.gov/RequestaDUNS>. Please note that the registration may take up to 14 business days to complete.