

Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program – Integrated Organic and Water Quality Program

FY 2009 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: July 24, 2009



U.S. Department of Agriculture



Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service

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

INTEGRATED ORGANIC AND WATER QUALITY PROGRAM

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.303.

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on **July 24, 2009** (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) is requesting comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and will be used to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (7 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 and Oversight Branch; Office of Extramural Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: RFP-OEP@csrees.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program – Integrated Organic and Water Quality Program RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: CSREES announces the availability of grant funds and requests applications for the Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grants Program – Integrated Organic and Water Quality Program (IOWP) for fiscal year (FY) 2009 to solve critical organic agriculture issues, priorities, or problems through the integration of research, education, and extension activities in program areas and with the support of two programs which combine: (1) Organic Transitions Program (ORG); and (2) National Integrated Water Quality Program. The amount available for support of this program in FY 2009 is approximately \$2.5 million. CSREES intends to solicit IOWP projects to enhance water quality in organic systems for a 2 to 3 year period, and then evaluate what critical direction to take the Organic Transitions Program at that time.

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

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

Section 406 of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (AREERA) (7 U.S.C. 7626), as reauthorized by Section 7306 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (FCEA) (Pub. L. 110-246), authorized the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a competitive grants program that provides funding for integrated, multifunctional agricultural research, extension, and education activities. Subject to the availability of appropriations to carry out this program, the Secretary may award grants to colleges and universities [as defined by section 1404 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA) (7 U.S.C. 3103)], as amended, on a competitive basis for projects that address priorities in United States agriculture and involve integrated research, education, and extension activities, as determined by the Secretary in consultation with the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board (NAREEEAB).

Section 7129 of the FCEA amended section 406(b) of AREERA (7 U.S.C. 7626(b)), adding Hispanic-serving agricultural colleges and universities (HSACUs) as eligible entities for competitive funds awarded under this authority (see Part III. B. for more information).

CSREES will administer the IOWP by determining priorities in U.S. agriculture through Agency stakeholder input processes in consultation with the NAREEEAB. The RFA will be developed each fiscal year based on these established priorities and approaches to solving the critical agricultural issues. While the overall approach to solving critical agricultural issues, priorities, or problems will be through an integration of research, education, and extension activities within each individual program, component RFAs, depending on the priority addressed, may request applications that are research, education, or extension only, or a combination thereof.

B. Purpose and Priorities

This program is a joint effort between the National Integrated Water Quality Program (NIWQP) and the Organic Transition Program (ORG).

The goal of the NIWQP is to contribute to the improvement of the quality of our Nation's surface water and groundwater resources through research, education, and extension activities. Projects funded through this program will work to solve water resource problems by advancing and disseminating the knowledge base available to agricultural, rural, and urbanizing communities. Funded projects should lead to science-based decision making and management practices that improve the quality of the Nation's surface water and groundwater resources in agricultural, rural, and urbanizing watersheds.

The goal of the ORG Program is to support the development and implementation of research, extension and higher education programs to improve the competitiveness of organic livestock and crop producers, as well as those who are adopting organic practices. Projects should plan to deliver applied production information to producers and students. Fieldwork must be done on certified organic land or on land in transition to organic certification, as appropriate to project

goals and objectives. Refer to the USDA National Organic Program (<http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop>) for organic production standards.

The purpose of the IOWP is to explore the changes in water quality and/or water quantity associated with certified organic farming practices.

Applications are being solicited for the Integrated Organic and Water Quality Program under the following areas:

- (1) The impact of organic cropping systems on water quality and/or quantity.
- (2) The impact of organic animal production systems on water quality and/or quantity.
- (3) The impact of mixed use (crop and animal production systems) on water quality and/or quantity.

Integrated research, education, and extension projects (up to \$220,000 per year) are solicited for this program. Projects may be one (1) to three (3) years in duration.

Applicants are expected to describe stakeholder involvement in problem identification, planning, implementation and evaluation. Applications describing multi-state, multi-institutional, multidisciplinary, and multifunctional activities (and combinations thereof) will be given priority consideration. A single university may apply for a grant, but the university must demonstrate significant collaboration with various agencies or organizations within the host state. Applicants are strongly encouraged to assemble project teams that include those with expertise in research, education, extension, and evaluation. Applicants are also encouraged to describe how results at the farm and field scale can be transferred beyond the project scale.

C. Program Area Description

We are interested in funding comparisons between certified organic farms and conventional farms of sediment delivery, nutrient use and transport, and overall water availability at the farm or field scale. Availability is defined here as the joint consideration of water quality and quantity. Projects are expected to combine physical measurements of soil and surface and/or groundwater conditions at the field or farm scale with modeling information generated at the same spatial and temporal scale. We expect projects to demonstrate (using field and modeling information) benefits or challenges to soil and water availability (quality and quantity) posed by implementing certified organic practices.

We are interested in projects that solve water resource issues at the field or farm scale using research, education, and extension activities. We encourage projects that explore the linkage between surface water and groundwater availability (quality and quantity). Successful projects must describe expected outcomes in terms of changes in knowledge, changes in behaviors, and changes in environmental conditions.

All projects must identify the cause of water resource degradation. All projects are expected to develop and implement an evaluation plan that captures project outcomes and demonstrates the impact of the project through measured improvements in water resources and/or measurable behavior change.

All PDs funded by the IOWP are expected to participate in the annual CSREES National Water Conference. Reasonable travel expenses to the CSREES National Water Conference may be claimed as part of the project budget.

The intent of the IOWP is to have field or farm scale projects funded by the program participate in, coordinate with, and share suitable information with the appropriate [Regional Water Resource](#) and [National Water Resource](#) programs. These interactions are intended to expand the geographic scope and impact of [NIWQP](#) Watershed Scale projects to a broader regional audience.

Selected projects, based upon their objectives, may be identified as particularly relevant to the [USDA Conservation Effects Assessment Project \(CEAP\)](#) Program. These projects may be asked to participate in CEAP activities and cooperate with CEAP investigators to promote effective conservation at the watershed scale.

Award recipients are expected to provide copies of annual reports and periodic updates to the CSREES National Program Leader for Water Quality (see Part VII Agency Contacts) and appropriate Regional Water Resource Project Directors (on an as needed basis).

Award recipients are expected to participate in [Regional Water Resource Project](#) meetings and will need to budget for them as appropriate for the funded project. In addition, award recipients are strongly encouraged to attend the annual [National Water Conference](#). Contact information for the Regional Project Directors will be provided to award recipients at the time of the award.

IOWP encourages projects that develop content suitable for delivery through eXtension (http://about.extension.org/mediawiki/files/5/51/EXECUTIVE_SUMMARY_-_March_14%2C_2006_-_YEAR_2.pdf). This content is for end users, as opposed to staff development, and must align with the eXtension Implementation Plan (available at <http://about.extension.org/wiki/Planning>). Funds may be used to contribute to existing Communities of Practice (COPs) (http://about.extension.org/wiki/Glossary_of_eXtension_Terms#Community_of_Practice_.28CoP.29:). Since the eOrganic Community of Practice already exists, applicants wishing to develop content on organic agriculture for eXtension must demonstrate coordination of effort with eOrganic. For information about the eOrganic Community of Practice, applicants interested in developing content concerning organic agriculture for eXtension should contact Alexandra Stone.

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PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

The IOWP will fund standard grants. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. Approximately \$2.5 million will be available to fund applications in FY 2009.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2009, applications may be submitted to the IOWP as a **New Application**. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the IOWP Program. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

C. Project Types

The IOWP will consider Integrated Research, Education and Extension projects with a project period of 1 to 3 years and a budget not to exceed \$220,000 per year.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Colleges and universities (as defined in section 1404 of NARETPA) (7 U.S.C. 3103) are eligible to submit applications for the IOWP. Section 1404 of NARETPA was amended by section 7101 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Public Law 110-246) to define Hispanic-serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities (HSACUs) (see Part III, B. and [7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Grant Programs--General Grant Administrative Provisions](#) for more information), and to include research foundations maintained by eligible colleges or universities.

For the purposes of this program, the terms “college” and “university” mean 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 or any other higher degree is awarded; (4) is a public or other nonprofit institution; and (5) is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association. Applications also may be submitted by 1994 Land-Grant Institutions ([7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Grant Programs--General Grant Administrative Provisions](#)), HSACUs, and research foundations maintained by eligible colleges or universities. An applicant’s failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of an application deadline will preclude CSREES from reviewing an application and making an award.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply directly for funds, provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

B. Hispanic-serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities

Section 7101 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 amended section 1404 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (NARETPA) to add a new group of cooperating institutions, Hispanic-serving Agricultural Colleges and Universities (HSACUs). HSACUs are colleges and universities that qualify as Hispanic-serving Institutions (HSIs) and offer associate, bachelors, or other accredited degree programs in agriculture-related fields. HSACUs do not include 1862 land-grant institutions.

Eligibility under the IOWP

Pursuant to section 406 of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (AREERA), 7 U.S.C. 7626, Integrated Research, Education, and Extension Competitive Grant Program, all four (4) year HSIs are eligible to apply for a grant under the IOWP. Two (2) year HSIs, however, may be eligible to apply only upon a determination by CSREES that the institution offers an associate or other accredited degree programs in agriculture-related fields. To seek an eligibility determination for grants under this RFA, two (2) year HSIs may submit a one-page request to CSREES certifying that they are a Hispanic-serving institution, as defined in section 502 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1101a), and providing a justification

that they do offer associate or other accredited degree programs in agriculture-related fields. Eligibility determinations are valid for FY 2009 only and must be renewed every FY.

HSIs that seek a determination of eligibility may submit a request before the application due date to HSACU@csrees.usda.gov directly or as a PDF attachment to the SF-424-R&R application package submitted through Grants.gov.

Additional questions on HSACU eligibility can be addressed to Multicultural Alliances, Science and Education Resources Development (SERD), at HSACU@csrees.usda.gov, (202) 720-1254, or via fax (202) 720-2030.

C. Cost Sharing or Matching

If a grant provides a particular benefit to a specific agricultural commodity, the grant recipient is required to provide funds awarded on a dollar-for-dollar basis from non-Federal sources with cash and/or in-kind contributions. See Part IV, B. – R&R Budget for further details.

CSREES may waive the matching funds requirement for a grant if CSREES determines that: (a) the results of the project, while of particular benefit to a specific agricultural commodity, are likely to be applicable to agricultural commodities generally; or (b) the project involves a minor commodity, the project deals with scientifically important research, and the grant recipient is unable to satisfy the matching funds requirement.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Electronic Application Package

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

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

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

1. In order to access, complete and submit applications, applicants must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov. This software is essential to apply for CSREES Federal assistance awards. For basic system requirements and download instructions, please see http://www.grants.gov/help/download_software.jsp. To verify that you have a compatible version of Adobe Reader, Grants.gov established a test package that will assist you in making that determination. Grants.gov Adobe Versioning Test Package: <http://www.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp>.
2. The application package must be obtained via Grants.gov, go to <http://www.grants.gov>, click on “Apply for Grants” in the left-hand column, click on “**Step 1: Download a Grant Application Package and Instructions,**” enter the funding opportunity number **USDA-CSREES-ICGP-002403** in the appropriate box and click “Download Package.” From the search results, click “Download” to access the application package.

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

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

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

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

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

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the Guide. ANY PROPOSALS CONTAINING NON-PDF DOCUMENTS WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM CSREES REVIEW. Partial applications will be excluded from CSREES review. With documented prior approval, resubmitted applications will be accepted until close of business on the closing date in the RFA.

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

1. SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide.

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

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

3. R&R Other Project Information Form

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

- a. Field 6. Project Summary/Abstract. The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of **IOWP**.
- b. Field 7. Project Narrative.

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed **twenty (20)** pages of written text, figures and tables. This maximum (**20** pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

(a) Introduction: Include a clear statement of the long-term goal(s) and supporting objectives of the proposed activities. Summarize the body of knowledge or past activities which substantiate the need for the proposed project. Describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed activity, including the work of key project personnel. Include preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed project. In addition, include in-depth information on the following, when applicable:

- (1) Estimates of the magnitude of the issues and their relevance to stakeholders and to ongoing State-Federal food and agricultural research, education, and extension programs;
- (2) Description of the role stakeholders play in problem identification, planning, and implementation and evaluation as appropriate; and
- (3) Reasons for having the work performed at the proposing institution.

(b) Objectives: Include clear, concise, complete, and logically arranged statement(s) of specific aims of the proposed effort in all proposals including the suitability of scale and transferability of project results or developed materials beyond the project scale. Projects must include specific objectives for each function: research, education, and extension (as appropriate); include evidence of necessary involvement from interdisciplinary teams; and demonstrate the extent to which partnerships with other institutions (Federal, State, other) are developed.

(c) Methods: Explicitly state the procedures or methods to be applied to the proposed effort. Include, but do not necessarily limit to:

- (1) Description of how stakeholder involvement will be solicited and utilized in the project;
- (2) Description of the proposed project activities in the sequence in which it is planned to carry them out;
- (3) Techniques and methodology to be employed, including their feasibility and rationale for their use in this project;
- (4) Kinds of results expected within a reasonable time frame;
- (5) Means by which extension and education activities will be monitored and evaluated (as appropriate);
- (6) Means by which data will be analyzed and interpreted;
- (7) Details of plans to communicate results to stakeholders and the public;
- (8) Pitfalls that might be encountered; and
- (9) Limitations to proposed procedures.
- (10) Suitability of scale and transferability of project results or developed materials beyond the project scale.

(d) Project Timetable: Outline all important phases as a function of time, year by year, for the entire project, including periods beyond the grant funding period. Include specific, measurable accomplishments for each year of **IOWP** funding.

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

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

Also, **you must attach** ‘Current and Pending Support’ information (see CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide p. 31 & 32, item 5.3, for guidelines and a suggested format) for each senior/key person identified above. **Note: Even if no other funding is currently reported under the ‘Active’ section of this attachment, you must still list information for this grant application under the ‘Pending’ section of this attachment for each senior/key person identified above.**

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

6. R&R Budget

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

Matching.

If an applicant concludes that matching funds are not required as specified under Part III, B., a justification should be included in the Budget Narrative. CSREES will consider this justification when ascertaining final matching requirements or determining if required matching can be waived. CSREES retains the right to make final determinations regarding matching requirements.

The sources and the amount of all matching support from outside the applicant institution should be summarized on a separate page and placed in the application immediately following the Budget Narrative. All pledge agreements must be placed in the application immediately following the summary of matching support.

For those grants where matching funds are required as specified under Part III, B., applications should include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Written verification means:

For any **third party cash contributions**, a separate pledge agreement for each donation, signed by the authorized organizational representative of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) the dollar amount of the cash donation; and (5) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period.

For any **third party in-kind contributions**, a separate pledge agreement for each contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the third party in-

kind contribution; and (5) a statement that the donor will make the contribution during the grant period.

The value of applicant contributions to the project shall be established in accordance with the applicable cost principles. Applicants should refer to OMB Circular A-21, Cost Principles for Educational Institutions, for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

7. Supplemental Information Form

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part VI, 1. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide.

a. Field 2. Program Code. Enter the appropriate program area code name and the program area code exactly as it appears in the table below. Note that the Program Area Code is case-sensitive. Do not include spaces in the Program Area Code. This data field is used to electronically route your proposal to the correct program.

Program Area Code Name	Program Area Code
Integrated Organic and Water Quality Program	110.D

b. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List - (Required Attachment – Must be PDF format)

See format in CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide, Section VI, 1.8, p.46, for instructions. Include this one-page attachment even if your responses to the questions are “N.A.”.

C. Submission Dates and Times

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

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by COB on July 24, 2009 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. Correspondence regarding submitted applications will be sent using e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received correspondence **from CSREES** regarding a submitted application within 15 days of the established deadline, please contact the Program Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

CSREES has determined that grant funds awarded under this authority may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or

installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

Section 7132 of FCEA amended NARETPA [7 U.S.C. 3310(a)] to limit indirect costs to 22 percent of the total Federal funds provided under each award. Therefore, when preparing budgets, applicants should limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of their institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 22 percent of total Federal funds awarded. If no rate has been established the applicant may indicate "None—will negotiate" and a reasonable dollar amount for indirect costs may be requested, which will be subject to approval by USDA. In the latter case, if a proposal is recommended for funding, an indirect cost rate proposal must be submitted prior to award to support the amount of indirect costs requested. CSREES will request an indirect cost rate proposal and provide instructions, as necessary. An applicant may elect not to charge indirect costs and, instead, use all grant funds for direct costs. If indirect costs are not charged, the phrase "None requested" should be written in this space.

E. Other Submission Requirements

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

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

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

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

1. Technical merit of all aspects of the application, including research, education, and extension components, as appropriate.

- (a) Degree of integration of research, education and extension;
- (b) Extent to which proposed work addresses identified stakeholder needs and water resource issues of concern;
- (c) Suitability and feasibility of methodology for conducting work;
- (d) Reasonability of time allocated for attainment of objectives;
- (e) Qualifications of key project personnel;
- (f) Institutional experience and competence in proposed area of work;
- (g) Adequacy of available support personnel, equipment, and facilities; and
- (h) Quality of monitoring and evaluation plans;

2. Relevance of proposed project to IOWP purpose (see Part I, B.).

- (a) Adequate description of the cause of water resource degradation;
- (b) Suitability of scale and transferability of project results or developed materials beyond the project scale;
- (c) Evidence of necessary involvement from interdisciplinary teams;
- (d) Extent to which partnerships with other institutions (Federal, State, other) are developed;
- (e) Extent to which stakeholders/end users were/will be involved in problem identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation;
- (f) Probability of success of the project;

- (g) Extent to which potential impact(s) can/will be documented; and
- (h) Likelihood that project will fill knowledge gaps that are critical to the development of practices and programs that improve the quality of the Nation's water resources;

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 (codified at 2 CFR 215, 2 CFR 220 and 2 CFR 230), and the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015, 3019 and 3430 of 7 CFR).

B. Award Notice

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

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

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

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

2 CFR Part 215 – Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations (OMB Circular A-110).

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

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

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

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

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

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

7 CFR Part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21 and A-122 (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 (2 CFR Part 215).

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.

7 CFR 3430—Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Grant Programs--General Grant Administrative Provisions.

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

Annually, each grantee must submit a one (1) to two (2) page technical Summary of Work to the CSREES National Program Leader for Water Quality (see Part VII - Agency Contacts) and to the appropriate Regional Water Resource Project Leader (see Part I, C. for more information). Once a project is complete, the grantee is required to submit a Final Technical Report to the CSREES National Program Leader for Water Quality and to the appropriate Regional Water Resource Project Director. The Final Technical Report should summarize all work conducted and detail outcomes, accomplishments, and outputs of funded work. This report should not exceed 15 single-spaced, typed pages. PDs also must participate in annual CSREES National Water Conferences where project results and outcomes are presented and discussed.

Grantees are required to submit annual and summary evaluation reports via 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.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACTS

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Dr. Michael P. O'Neill; National Program Leader for Water Quality; Natural Resources and Environment Unit; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2210; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2210; Telephone: (202) 205-5952; Fax: (202) 401-1706; E-mail: moneill@csrees.usda.gov, Dr. Tom Bewick; National Program Leader; Plant and Animal Systems; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; USDA; STOP 2220; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2220; telephone: (202) 401-3356; fax: (202) 401-4888; e-mail: tbewick@csrees.usda.gov, Mr. Bruce Mertz, Program Specialist, Natural Resources and Environment Unit; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2210; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2210; Telephone: (202) 401-4601; Fax: (202) 401-1706; E-mail: bmertz@csrees.usda.gov, or Ms. Elizabeth Ley, Program Specialist, Plant and Animal Systems; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; USDA; STOP 2220; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2220; telephone: (202) 401-3356; fax: (202) 401-6195; e-mail: eley@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

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

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

Total integrated, multifunctional research, education, and extension approach means that the combination of grants (although the individual grants may involve only research, education, or extension activities or a combination thereof) awarded under the fiscal year's program components will work together to address the priorities in United States agriculture as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture in consultation with the Advisory Board, that involve integrated research, extension, and education activities.

Urbanizing means areas of agricultural and rural watersheds that are experiencing rapidly increasing land development pressure including but not limited to development for low, medium, and high density housing, industrial and commercial sites, and the infrastructure (roads, highways, utilities, etc.) needed to support this increased land development.