

Agriculture Risk Management Education Competitive Grants Program

FY 2009 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: August 10, 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**

Agriculture Risk Management Education Competitive Grants Program

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 10.500.

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on **August 10, 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 **Agriculture Risk Management Education Competitive Grants Program RFA**.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: CSREES announces the availability of grant funds and requests applications for the **Agriculture Risk Management Education Competitive Grants Program (RME)** for fiscal year (FY) 2009 to provide resources for regional risk management education centers for the purpose of developing and delivering agricultural risk management education materials to agricultural producers and their families in the United States and its territories that will assist them to better manage risk. This program will also provide a grant to an electronic support center to provide associated support to the regional centers. The amount available for support of this program in FY 2009 is approximately \$4,800,000. **Based on the FY 2009 competition, it is the intention of CSREES to renew awards in FY 2010 and FY 2011.**

This notice identifies the objectives for RME projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a RME grant. CSREES additionally requests stakeholder input from any interested party for use in the development of the next RFA for this program. Applicants should become familiar with the RME Operations Guide, Version 07.4 Guide for the Regional Risk Management Education Centers (RME OP Guide); (<http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/economics/pdfs/risk.pdf>).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION..... 5
 A. Legislative Authority and Background..... 5
 B. Purpose and Priorities..... 5
 C. Program Area Description 7

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION 14
 A. Available Funding 14
 B. Types of Applications..... 14
 C. Project Types 14

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION 17
 A. Eligible Applicants 17
 B. Cost Sharing or Matching 17

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION 18
 A. Electronic Application Package..... 18
 B. Content and Form of Application Submission 19
 C. Submission Dates and Times..... 20
 D. Funding Restrictions..... 21
 E. Other Submission Requirements 21

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS..... 22
 A. General..... 22
 B. Evaluation Criteria 22
 C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality..... 25
 D. Organizational Management Information..... 26

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION..... 27
 A. General..... 27
 B. Award Notice 27
 C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements..... 28
 D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements 29

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT..... 30

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION 34
 A. Access to Review Information..... 34
 B. Use of Funds; Changes..... 34
 C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards..... 32
 D. Regulatory Information..... 32
 E. Definitions 32

PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

Section 133 of the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000 (ARPA), (Pub. L. 106-224), amended the Federal Crop Insurance Act to add section 524(a)(3); [7 U.S.C. Section 1501 as amended by section 132(a) and section 524]; which requires the Secretary, acting through the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), to establish a competitive grants program for the purpose of educating agricultural producers about the full range of risk management activities. These activities include futures, options, agricultural trade options, crop insurance, cash forward contracting, debt reduction, production diversification, marketing plans and tactics, farm resources risk reduction, and other appropriate risk management strategies.

The RME program brings the existing knowledge base to bear on risk management issues faced by agricultural producers and expands the program throughout the Nation on a regional and multi-regional basis.

Section 524(a) of the Federal Crop Insurance Act, 7 U.S.C. 1524(a) was further amended by Section 12026 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, (FCEA)(Pub. L. 110-246), which requires that the Secretary place special emphasis on risk management strategies, education, and outreach specifically targeted at: (A) beginning farmers or ranchers; (B) legal immigrant farmers or ranchers that are attempting to become established producers in the United States; (C) socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers; (D) farmers or ranchers that (i) are preparing to retire; and (ii) are using transition strategies to help new farmers or ranchers get started; and (E) new or established farmers or ranchers that are converting production and marketing systems to pursue new markets.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The primary purpose of CSREES' RME Program is to provide U.S. agricultural producers and their families, as appropriate, with the knowledge, skills and tools needed to make informed risk management decisions for their operations, with the goal of enhancing farm profitability.

- 1) This RME Program will fund four regional (RME) centers nationwide; and an Electronic Risk Management Education Electronic Support Center (RMEESC):
 - a) Northeast Region RME
 - b) North Central Region RME
 - c) Southern Region RME
 - d) Western Region RME
 - e) Electronic Support Center RMEESC

The purpose of the four regional RME centers is to conduct regional and multi-regional based RME competitive grants programs in their respective regions for the purpose of funding agricultural risk management organizations and individuals that have the knowledge and

experience in developing various risk management curricula and delivering same to farmers and their families.

- 2) The Regional RME Centers are expected to address the risk management needs of agricultural producers and their families particularly with regard to the following **FIVE (5) risk management categories:**
 1. **Production risk;**
 2. **Price or marketing risk;**
 3. **Human resource risk;**
 4. **Legal (including liability and environmental) risk; and**
 5. **Financial risk.**

- 3) The Regional RME Centers are expected to specifically target the risk management needs of producers and their families – particularly the needs of those agricultural producers in the following five (5) “Special Emphasis” areas:
 - (A) Beginning farmers or ranchers;
 - (B) Legal immigrant farmers or ranchers that are attempting to become established producers in the United States;
 - (C) Socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers;
 - (D) Farmers or ranchers that
 - (i) are preparing to retire; and
 - (ii) are using transition strategies to help new farmers or ranchers get started; and
 - (E) New or established farmers or ranchers that are converting production and marketing systems to pursue new markets.

The RME centers should become familiar with the RME OP Guide which can be obtained at (<http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/economics/pdfs/risk.pdf>.)

The purpose of the RMEESC is to provide supporting services to the four regional centers. Support to the four regional RME centers will include electronic, on-line submission of proposals to the four regional RME centers sub-awards competitive grants programs, provision of a results verification system that includes both progress report and final report templates for the sub-awards process, national communications planning and execution for the RME program, assistance in coordination of RME events and conferences as directed, and archival support for all materials and curriculum developed through the regional RME center sub-awards competitive grants programs.

Regionally based programs and multi-regional based programs should be flexible while addressing special needs as determined by: producers and other stakeholders, listening and focus groups, and other parties knowledgeable and interested in agricultural risk management. Special emphasis areas as defined by Congress shall be included in the focus of the RME Centers’ activities through 2012.

Priority will be given to RME Center applicants who can demonstrate ability and expertise working in support of producers who have limited exposure to risk management concepts, tools

and strategies, and who can demonstrate expertise in support of and commitment to working with producers who fall within the five special emphasis target areas. Priority will also be given to applicants who can demonstrate significant national expertise in one of the five identified areas of risk. Applicants are encouraged to recognize the risk management education needs of all producers, including traditionally underserved producers, regardless of the size or scale of operations, and of new and beginning farmers, as well as the other communities of producers identified in the “special emphasis” areas. Priority will also be given to those applicants with a demonstrated relationship with 1890 land grant and 1994 land grant institutions, Hispanic Serving Institutions and others delivering risk management-related education within their regions, as applicable.

C. Program Area Description

The Program Name is: **ARPA – Risk Management Education Partnerships** and the Program Code is: **OC** for all applications submitted under this announcement.

It is the intention of CSREES to make four regional RME awards and one RMEESC award for each fiscal year. Based on the FY 2009 competition, it is the intention of CSREES to renew awards in FY 2010 and FY 2011.

In the four regions of the United States (Northeast, North Central, Southern and Western) one award will be made to an RME Center in each region. A single award will be made to a RMEESC. Proposals should make clear that the applicant organization has the potential capacity to organize, coordinate, and lead centers of effort or substantial activity related to the subject matter of this RFA. Regional RME Center awardees are required to join with CSREES in a “streamlining agreement” whereas the grantee will receive, review and fund proposals and process awards under a competitive grants program protocol as a part of the Grant Award Terms and Conditions. There are specific compliance requirements under this agreement.

1. Regional RME Centers

The RME Program provides funding to four regional RME centers, one in each region, and an electronic center for RME that supports the four regional centers. Funding for the four regional centers is for the purpose of carrying out regionally based RME programs that address agricultural risk management needs. Risk management involves choosing among various risk management strategies and tools designed to reduce the financial effects of the uncertainties of weather, yields, prices, government policies, legal issues, global markets, human factors and other conditions that can cause wide swings in agricultural production based income. Risk management education is providing training that improves the ability of agricultural producers and their families to effectively manage the financial risks associated with agriculture production businesses.

The USDA, using stakeholder input, has placed a high priority on the Regional RME Centers as a means of meeting the specific risk management education needs that exist within regions. The Centers will assist the USDA and its other partners in conducting a national RME program to address national, multi-regional, regional, state and local needs. The Regional RME Centers

should address specific risk management education needs, diverse audiences, commodity and enterprise mixes, and other conditions that exist at the regional, state and local levels. Special emphasis communities of producers will be included in the target of the RME Centers' work, but are not the only target of the RME Centers' activities. Educational programs will cover the full range of risk management activities, including futures, options, agricultural trade options, crop insurance, cash forward contracting, debt reduction, production diversification, tactical and strategic marketing, farm resources risk reduction, financial management, legal issues management, human resources risk management and other appropriate risk management strategies, including risks associated with farm, ranch, forestland and rangeland ownership.

Development and delivery of effective RME programs must take into account regional, state and local issues affecting producers as well as common RME components that exist across the Nation. The Centers should facilitate rapid feedback from producers and other stakeholders within the region, and tailor the RME program to meet specific and emerging needs.

Priorities for each Regional RME Center shall be developed on a regional basis through the interaction of stakeholder groups and the respective regional center advisory council. The Regional RME Centers are expected to address the risk management needs of producers and their families particularly with regard to the following five risk management categories: production risk, price or marketing risk, human resource risk, legal (including liability and environmental) risk, and financial risk. The risk management program should also be broad in scope to provide educational programs that address the needs of producers and their families with respect to managing other emerging risks. In addition, the host organization of the centers is required to adopt "streamlining" wherein the organization is granted the authority under a streamlining agreement to administer and manage an awards program conducted in accordance with the agreement stipulations.

Regional RME Centers will have primary responsibility for development and implementation of agricultural RME programs within and between their respective regions. Regional RME Centers will be the focus for building partnerships among public and private entities within their regions and across regional boundaries. The Centers will solicit and select regional and multi-regional projects through a sub-awards competitive grants process. Regional RME Centers are encouraged to solicit and consider stakeholder input in the selection of new sub-awards programs. The Centers should promote collaboration that includes the exchange of materials and information, open communication, and integration of activities around RME issues within and between the regions, as appropriate. Centers should bring together the expertise and knowledge needed to address RME issues, drawing from regional sources and/or multi-regional projects (functioning collectively and in coordination with RMEESC) to provide a broad national or specialized knowledge for a particular situation. Centers shall also adopt a means by which they will communicate regularly with and coordinate mutually beneficial activities with regional sustainable agriculture research and education programs and regional rural development center programs in their respective regions. Centers shall also adopt a means by which they will communicate regularly with and coordinate mutually beneficial activities with beginning farmer and rancher programs in their region, as appropriate and feasible.

The four Regional RME Centers will be the primary vehicle for delivering RME to agricultural producers, recognizing the special needs, special emphasis audiences, commodities, production and marketing conditions and other regional and multi-regional factors that must be considered in developing and delivering effective RME programs. They will be expected to verify activities and report program results on a continuing basis, utilizing the tools hosted by the RMEESC Center.

Applicants for the four Regional RME Centers should present plans that demonstrate their program and administrative capacity to solicit, select, and support a set of RME projects that address the RME priorities within their region, and to work with the other centers in determining the merits of inter-regional projects as well. These plans should indicate how RME coverage will be provided to all producers within their respective regions. Specific attention must be paid to the “special emphasis” communities of producers and a robust plan for identifying, addressing the needs, soliciting and receiving stakeholder input from, and utilizing stakeholder input from special emphasis communities of producers must be identified.

Priority will be given to applicants who can demonstrate ability and expertise working in support of producers who have limited exposure to risk management concepts, tools and strategies. Priority will be given to applicants who can demonstrate expertise in support of and commitment to working with producers who fall within the five special emphasis target areas. Priority will also be given to applicants who can demonstrate significant national expertise in one of the five identified areas of risk. Applicants are encouraged to recognize the risk management education needs of all producers, including traditionally underserved producers, regardless of the size or scale of operations, and of new and beginning farmers, as well as the other communities of producers identified in the “special emphasis” areas. Priority will also be given to those applicants with a demonstrated relationship with 1890 land grant and 1994 land-grant institutions, Hispanic-Serving Institutions and others delivering risk management-related education within their regions, as applicable.

Proposals for a Regional RME Center grant will be expected to meet the following objectives:

- 1) Provide regional RME program leadership and coordination, including a plan for reaching agricultural producers with RME programs, including meeting the needs of “special emphasis” producers. This includes developing and implementing mechanisms that identify agricultural RME needs that are specific to producers within the region (special emphasis and non-special emphasis producers). Applicants should recognize the importance of specialty and niche crops within the region and risks associated with production of specialty and niche crops. An emphasis should also be placed on the development and implementation of programs to reach producers with little or no prior exposure to RME.
- 2) Document capabilities of the key personnel included in the application in managing RME or related types of programs, by providing vitae. Demonstrate the willingness to enter into and abide by a streamlining agreement with CSREES (letter of commitment to streamlining agreement); and describe the proposed method or process by which projects will be monitored for progress and results verification.

- 3) Give attention to RME needs of special emphasis audiences including those identified in Section I.A. of this RFA; traditionally underserved producers, regardless of the size or scale of operations, and of new and beginning farmers. Identify specific types of risks, commodities and other conditions that exist within the region. Develop and/or acquire relevant materials and curricula, and provide updates on changes in crop insurance and other risk management programs in formats that effectively communicate with these audiences;
- 4) Utilize an entity, such as an advisory council or advisory board (only one entity per center is allowed) that represents the full diversity of stakeholders and will ensure that planning, identification of additional regional RME priorities, project selection and funding determined at the regional and multi-regional levels occur with a broad base of support consistent with stakeholder needs. Each advisory council, board or similar entity must include as ex-officio members, individuals representing the regional SARE entity and the regional Rural Development Center; and shall also include one member representative from an appropriate RMA Regional Office. Representatives from 1890 land-grant and 1994 land-grant institutions and Hispanic-Serving Institutions in the respective regions must also be included on the advisory council, board or similar entity.
- 5) Describe how the applicant would implement a competitive process to select regional and multi-regional projects for sub-awards and allocate funds. This process must be consistent with the requirements and protocols utilized by CSREES in conducting its competitive programs and must be consistent with the RME Operations Guide;
- 6) Promote partnering and actively engage with public and private entities within and between regions, as appropriate in carrying out RME programs;
- 7) Conduct regional training workshops on existing or emerging risk management topics, as needed. Conduct, coordinate and/or participate with farm financial management and trade adjustment assistance training of producers as needed and as appropriate. Coordinate all regional training workshops with the other regional RME Centers at all times;
- 8) Comply with the RME program results verification system that will be used to track funded projects and the archival system that will be used to provide project results to interested parties. Participate with other Regional RME Centers and the RMEESC to continually review and update the results verification system as needed and required to maintain system integrity;
- 9) Establish a regional communications plan that promotes the RME program within the region. Work with the RMEESC and the other Regional RME Centers to develop a coordinated effort which serves as a national communications plan for the RME program network. It should promote communication within and across regions and coordinate compliance with the national plan. Release all publications from the Regional RME

Center with approval by the RMEESC in compliance with a jointly development RME Centers National Communications Plan

- 10) Assist and provide funding as appropriate to coordinate and conduct all conferences by and through the coordinated national and/or regional RME programs. Plan and conduct, in coordination with RMEESC and the other regional RME programs, an annual conference that will be a broad-based risk management education event to educate providers of risk management education (train-the-trainer).

Proposed budgets for the Regional RME Center grants may include funding for the Center Director and support staff. Center Directors must be actively employed and engaged with the Host Institution and must demonstrate significant expertise in some area of risk management through their curriculum vitae.

Additional funding may be used to support Center activities including needs assessment, stakeholder input and guidance, regional competitive processes, and regional support of coordinated national training efforts, materials development and other necessary activities to enhance the delivery of risk mitigation tools to appropriate audiences and conferences as deemed necessary and appropriate by the Regional RME Centers' advisory councils, their respective Center Directors, and CSREES.

The RME program is designed to develop a competitive sub-award grants program that is regionally or multi-regionally based, producer focused, results based and, when possible, incorporates public and private partnerships. Any funded project must have verifiable results. The Regional RME Center Directors shall collaborate regarding sub-awards grants program management activities and release requests for applications in a coordinated, simultaneous manner. Regional RME Center Directors must ensure that the integrity of the competitive process is maintained at all times.

2. RME Electronic Support Center (RMEESC)

The USDA, using stakeholder input, has placed a high priority on an RMEESC as a means by which risk management education materials as currently exist or as developed as a result of the RME Program can be electronically stored or linked and as a means by which interested risk management educators and professionals and other interested parties may gain access to such materials. The RMEESC also should be a source of addressing risk management education technologies, both in development and delivery.

It is critical that the RMEESC has the wherewithal to communicate effectively and to work closely with the directors of the four Regional RME Centers. It is expected that the RMEESC will provide electronic support to the Regional RME Centers by receiving pre-proposals, proposals, annual progress reports, and final reports on an electronic basis, and be able to retransmit the pre-proposals and proposals to the various Regional RME Centers, as necessary. Applicants for the RMEESC should present plans and other information that demonstrate their program and administrative capacity to organize and operate such a center. Specific information regarding meeting the needs of underserved, disadvantaged, minority groups and other risk

management audiences, including special emphasis communities of producers, also should be addressed in terms of possible outreach and assistance efforts.

RMEESC proposals will be expected to demonstrate the ability to provide the following:

- 1) A coordinated national “one-stop” source of risk management education materials and information that can be accessed online. The online database needs to provide access or linkages to risk management education materials developed by Extension, land-grant universities throughout the U.S; to risk management education materials developed by projects funded through the four Regional RME Centers; and to other appropriate risk-related materials developed by nonprofit organizations, community based organizations and other providers of risk management education as identified;
- 2) An electronic accountability or verification system to verify results of RME projects funded by the four Regional RME Centers. This system will provide public access to reports and accomplishments of risk management education projects and activities funded by CSREES. The system should allow educators and non-profit organizations and other interested parties to learn from existing projects and build upon successful programs and materials;
- 3) Support the four Regional RME Centers with computer and programming technology issues, pre-proposal and proposal submissions, reporting requirements, results verification, and multi-regional coordination of RME programs and requests for applications for funding;
- 4) Collaboration with the four Regional RME Centers to identify and address coordinated national and regional risk management education priorities to ensure that RME funds and programs are accessible to both the public and private sectors and to institutions serving all special emphasis communities of producers; and coordinate a national RME communications plan and approach; and
- 5) Assist in coordination and conduct as necessary, in collaboration with the four Regional RME Centers, an annual conference that will be a broad-based risk management education event.

In summary, the RMEESC shall support the regional centers in the following ways: provide user-friendly electronic applications for pre-proposal and proposal receipt and subsequent electronic transmittal to the various regional centers; archival services for all RME materials produced through the regional centers’ grants, including a searchable database of all funded projects and the results of completed projects, automatic development of progress and final report templates based on funded project proposals so that results can be reported upon by timelines and targets and against objectives such that results may be verified. In addition, the RMEESC shall provide communication leadership and networking support to the regional RME centers through the development and maintenance of list serves for relevant organizations and customers and the development of a nationally coordinated RME communications plan.

CSREES encourages RME 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;) or form new COPs that focus on risk management related issues (for examples of developing COPs and guidance on forming COPs, see http://cop.extension.org/wiki/Main_Page e).

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

CSREES anticipates approximately \$4,800,000 will be available in FY 2009 and for each year thereafter through FY 2011 for support of five grant awards under this program. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or make a specific number of awards.

B. Types of Applications

It is the intention of CSREES to make awards for each fiscal year commencing in FY 2009 through FY 2011 based upon the FY 2009 competition. Therefore, **only new proposals are being solicited**, and they should contain a plan of work for each year, budget and budget narrative for each year, and a consolidated budget covering the entire period. The proposal cover page (See Part IV, this RFA, Application and Submission Information) should include the entire period covered by the proposal and the total amount being requested for the entire period of the grant proposal (e.g., FY 2009 – FY 2011 or three years). Note that yearly funding awards will be made on an annual basis contingent upon the availability of funds and satisfactory performance by the centers in the management and oversight of regional and multi-regional RME competitively funded projects.

RME project periods may range between one (1) and three (3) years. In FY 2010, CSREES plans to make continuation grants for an initial project period of one year to grantees who have requested funding for up to 3 years. A continuation grant is a grant instrument by which the Department agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined project period with a statement of intention to provide additional support at a future date, provided that grantee performance has been satisfactory, appropriations are available for this purpose, and continued support would be in the best interest of the Federal government and the public. If these three elements are met, CSREES plans to provide additional support in FYs 2010 and 2011. CSREES will provide applicants funded in FY 2009 with further instructions about submitting applications in FYs 2010 and 2011.

C. Project Types

Two types of grants will be made, one for each of the regional RME centers and one for a supporting electronics center (RMEESC) as noted below.

1. Regional Risk Management Education Centers

Four grants to four separate Regional RME Centers will be provided as a result of this FY 2009 competition: one each in the Northeast Region, North Central Region, Southern Region, and the Western Region. CSREES anticipates support in the amount of approximately \$4,500,000 to be distributed among the selected four RME centers. These centers are the delivery mechanisms for RME products and services. Each Regional RME Center will be supported in an amount up to and not exceeding \$1.175 million each year commencing in FY 2009 through FY 2011, at a level reflective of the activities proposed, and subject to the availability of funds. The amounts

submitted on the budgets requested by each Center should be indicative of the Center's proposed activities, including: the number of producers in the region, the number of public and private institutions and other partners involved, the types of agricultural risks that prevail, the range of commodities and specialty crops involved, the number of special emphasis producers in the region, and other relevant factors. The budget requests should be at levels reflective of the scope of the proposed activity, recognizing the program complexity and the numbers and characteristics of targeted producers. The amounts awarded may vary by region, as determined by the proposed activities.

The Regional RME Centers are expected to conduct projects within their region and multi-regional projects with other Centers. These projects are to be solicited and selected for funding by the RME Center through a sub-award competitive process that parallels the competitive process utilized by CSREES, is specifically approved by CSREES National Program Leader and other relevant personnel, and is contained within the Operational Guide for RME Centers. It is anticipated that the Centers will support special projects for training, coordination and communication networks, including outreach and assistance to disadvantaged or underserved customers, and other clientele groups with particular risk management education needs that are developed, with stakeholder input, and conducted by or on behalf of the Centers, and with specific prior approval by CSREES.

2. Risk Management Education Electronic Support Center (RMEESC)

CSREES anticipates available funding for one grant in the amount of approximately \$400,000 each year for FYs 2009-2011 to an RMEESC that will provide electronic and digital support to the four Regional RME Centers. The RMEESC will serve as a national source for RME information and will have linkages to other sites that also have such information. Access to these materials must be made available to risk management educators, extension specialists and other interested parties, including the general public. Educational materials and other information pertinent to the Regional RME Centers will be stored or at least linked by the RMEESC. The RMEESC also will provide electronic receipt of pre-proposals, proposals, progress reports, and final reports in a consistent format agreed to by the RME Center Directors and the RMEESC Director.

The RMEESC also is expected to address special issues that foster nationwide exchanges of RME information and materials, enhance verification and reporting of results, and promote coordination across regional programs while avoiding duplication of efforts. Proposals that develop or build on existing information materials, enhance delivery through digital networks that provide national access by public and private sector participants, and offer innovative or expanded approaches are encouraged. The RMEESC also shall keep abreast of new and emerging technologies that could enhance center efficiencies and value to RME experts across the United States. In coordination with the four Regional RME Center Directors, and with approval by CSREES, the RMEESC will support special projects for training, coordination, and communication networks, including outreach and assistance to disadvantaged or underserved customers and other clientele groups with particular risk management education needs, as may be appropriate and necessary. The RMEESC will also lead the national communications efforts of all four regional RME Centers and the RMEESC.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may be submitted by qualified public and private entities. This includes all colleges and universities, Federal, State, and local agencies, nonprofit and for-profit private organizations or corporations, and other entities. Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. An applicant's failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of an application deadline will result in CSREES returning the application without review or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude CSREES from making an award.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

CSREES does not require matching or cost sharing support for this program, and matching resources will not be factored into the review process as evaluation criteria.

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. **Applicants are advised to apply through Grants.gov as early as possible in advance of the deadline for applications in order to avoid problems in submittal or delay in acceptance through the Grants.gov system.**

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-ARPA-002424** 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 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) 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 RME.

b. Field 7. Project Narrative.

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 20 pages of written text regardless of whether it is single or double spaced. There will be no allowance of additional pages for figures and tables. This maximum 20 pages has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must **clearly address the objectives and demonstrate the abilities outlined in Part I, C. as appropriate.**

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.

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 program code name (i.e., enter “**ARPA – Risk Management Education Partnerships**”) and the program code (i.e., enter “**OC**”).

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 **August 10, 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 (for the Small Business Innovation Research program (SBIR) the Program Contacts are specified under subsection 1.5 of the SBIR Program Solicitation) 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.

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.

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. Proposals for Regional RME Centers will be evaluated based on the criteria described below.

- a. Focused Development and Delivery of Relevant RME Programs to Agricultural Producers - 40 points*

Focus on Producers

Factors include demonstrated understanding of agricultural RME needs including use of feedback mechanisms that identify emerging needs of producers and indicate program relevance and effectiveness. How does your organization gain information from producers that identify current and emerging RME needs? It is important to note the role of the advisory councils/board in such an effort. Also, to the extent possible reviewers must clearly have an idea of the submitting entities particular expertise and experience in the area of focus on producers.

Programs Targeted to Agricultural Risk Management Education Needs

Identify how RME programming will address multi-regional, regional, state, and local risk management issues. Recognize the risk management education needs of all producers, including traditionally underserved producers, regardless of the size or scale of operations, and of each of the five “special emphasis” communities of producers, including new and beginning farmers,

and the types of agricultural risks associated with specialty crops and climatic conditions. Innovative approaches that address RME issues are welcomed. Explain the applicant's specific experiences with special emphasis producer communities and what is the applicant's specific plan for greater inclusion of special emphasis producer communities' risk education needs.

Use of RME Materials Appropriate for Regional Educational Needs

Factors to be considered will include ready access to existing RME materials that apply to regional risk management issues and the ability to develop additional materials as needed. How will you provide access to the materials developed as part of the grants you will be awarding?

b. Management Capacity to Develop and Maintain a Regional Risk Management Education Center with Networks to deliver RME Programs - 30 points

Use of a Competitive Process to Select Sub-Award Projects at the Regional Level

Clearly identify regional RME needs and link them to RME identified regional and national objectives. How will the RME Center Advisory Council select proposals for funding? What process will be employed to competitively determine the selection of proposals for funding?

Development of a Regional RME Delivery Network and Coordination with the National RME Delivery Network

These networks (regional and national) should ensure that public and private entities involved in the regional RME Program participate in an institutional/organizational framework, coordinate delivery of RME programs to agricultural producers, within and between regions, as appropriate.

Expertise and Institutional/Organizational Support

Center staff should possess adequate training, experience and the capacity to develop, manage, and oversee regional RME programs (including experience developing, managing and overseeing similar programs), conduct training as appropriate, and participate in national coordination activities. Institutional/organizational support including facilities should be noted as well. Status of Project Director must be noted; specifically, the full or part-time status of the Project Director, his or her relationship to the applying entity, prior knowledge of and experience in risk management education-related activities, and related pertinent information is required.

c. Verification of Program Impacts - 15 points

Definition of Performance Targets

Performance targets should be closely related to program objectives and expected outcomes, and should focus on change in the knowledge and behavior of program participants. How will your organization keep track of projects and whether the grantees have met the objectives they set out to accomplish? How will the organization ensure compliance with identified performance targets by sub-grantees? What are the identified performance targets for the regional RME Center and how will these targets be met in the short and long-term?

Regular and Accurate Reporting of RME Program Activities and Impacts

The process described should include the formation of accountability and reporting systems integrated with program objectives, identify focus on results and identify use for semi-annual,

annual, and/or requested reporting at regional and national levels. The means by which you expect to archive final reports also should be addressed.

- d. *Effective Regional Communication Networks and Linkage to a National Network - 15 points*

Capacity to Provide Effective RME Communication at Intra- and Inter-regional Levels

This includes use of media outlets and the distribution of regional RME materials that have nationwide application. What is the specific Regional RME Centers' communication plan within the region; what is the specific Regional RME Centers' communication plan; how will the Regional RME Center coordinate with other RME Centers and the RMEESC in a national communications plan for the RME program?

Participation in National Conferences and Workshops

This activity should promote program coordination and sharing of materials. Are there national conferences or symposia that have relevance to RME? What will be the Regional RME Center's involvement with other organizations? What is the applicant's experience in participation with and/or coordination of national conferences and/or workshops?

2. Proposals for the Risk Management Education Electronic Support Center (RMEESC) will be evaluated based on the criteria described below.

- a. *Management Capacity to Develop and Maintain a Risk Management Electronic Support Center - 35 points*

Documentation as to Organizational Effectiveness in Designing and Operating an Electronic Support Center

Relate the experience your organization and key staff have in designing and operating an electronic support center or the equivalent. Relate how operational priorities will be established and how coordination will take place with the four Regional RME Center Directors.

- b. *Provide electronic support to the Regional Risk Management Education Centers - 35 points*

Provide Electronic Support to the Regional RME Centers

Generally describe how proposals, awards and projects will be tracked. Is there a particular proposed format available? What system requirements will there be? Describe the system resources your organization possesses.

Public Access to the System

Describe how the system will provide public access to reports and accomplishments of RME projects and activities funded by the Regional RME Centers. How will the system report and make information content available to the public, e.g., educators, professionals, non-profit organizations, and other interested parties?

Technology Support

Clearly describe how your organization will provide technology support to the four Regional RME Centers. How will your organization resolve technology issues, support pre-proposal and proposal submission and reporting requirements, coordinate multi-regional proposals and requests for applications for funding?

- c. Provide a national source for access to RME materials, and promoting and coordinating risk management education – 30 points*

Compilation of Materials and Linkages & Coordination of National Communications Effort

Identify the specific plans and/or approach your organization will use to design and execute a national communications plan for and with the Regional RME Center programs. Demonstrate an ability to compile and organize information produced through the grant programs of the Regional RME Centers and other programs that exist throughout the Nation. It is important that the RME Program have the means by which such information can be organized, archived, or linked in such a manner that interested parties involved in RME have the opportunity to access such information readily.

Relationship with the Land-grant System and Other Education Providers

There is a great deal of relevant RME data produced under projects conducted throughout the land-grant university system. The applicant organization should be able to demonstrate a familiarity with such projects and the educational materials being produced. It is important that the reviewers understand the system you would invoke, how to gain access to the information when it is developed, and how best to provide access to such information. Please identify how the RMEESC will extract and provide public access to relevant RME data and information produced throughout the land-grant university system and through other non-land grant university systems, and/or federal or state, public or private organizations, should they be available.

Coordination/Sponsoring Risk Management Conferences

It is important that the RMEESC be fully engaged with the four Regional RME Centers in the coordination of various risk management conferences, symposium, etc. What experience has your organization had in coordinating various management conferences, symposia or similar events? Describe your organization's capabilities to coordinate and sponsor risk management or other relevant or related conferences.

Program Coordination and Training of Extension Educators and Others in New Risk Management Tools and Strategies

As technology changes and advances, so do the tools available for agricultural risk mitigation. Describe how your organization would go about the task of promoting program coordination and the training of Extension educators and others on new and emerging risk management tools and strategies. Describe previous relevant efforts in this regard.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the merit review 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 within academic institutions, 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 merit review evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. While the names of the panelists who review project proposals are considered public information, comments and reviews shall not be attributable to any specific reviewer.

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 (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 Government-wide 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 3021—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-free Workplace (Financial Assistance).

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

Awardees are required to submit initial project information and annual and summary reports to CSREES' Current Research Information System (CRIS). The CRIS database contains narrative project information, progress/impact statements, and final technical reports that are made available to the public. For applications recommended for funding, instructions on preparing and submission of project documentation will be provided to the applicant by the Agency Contact. **Documentation must be submitted to CRIS before CSREES funds will be released.** Project reports will be requested by the CRIS office when required. For more information about CRIS, visit <http://cris.csrees.usda.gov>.

Funded projects will be expected to verify program accomplishments. Accomplishments can include expanded awareness of the importance of risk management and greater knowledge of risk management tools and strategies among program participants. Evidence of actual or intended beneficial changes in their risk management behavior is particularly desirable, in addition to documentation of producer involvement in program activities. The evidence is expected to include participant's assessment of the value of program materials and instruction, and suggestions for addition or deletion of topics and instructional materials.

Under the streamlining agreement, successful applicants must submit reports (annual and on an as needed basis) that relate the following information: Number of awards made in the most recent year; the names of the institutions, organizations or individuals that received grants in the most recent year; the names of the project directors; the titles of the funded projects; and the amount of the awards provided in the most recent year. Reports must also include the types of verifiable results for which sub-grantees are responsible, the outcomes associated with those grants, and cumulative results as appropriate. In addition, the annual report shall contain a list of incomplete awards, identification of efforts made to secure completion, and steps which will be taken to conclude pending awards.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Janie S. Hipp, J.D., LL.M., National Program Leader for Risk Management Education; Economic and Community Systems Unit; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2215; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2215; Telephone: (202) 720-3605; (202) 720-6071; E-mail: jhipp@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:

Agricultural Risk Management means the informed use, as appropriate, of the full range of agricultural risk management activities, including futures, options, agricultural trade options, crop insurance, cash forward contracting, debt reduction, production diversification, farm resources risk reduction and other risk management strategies, by agricultural producers. It includes those risks encountered in the production, marketing, financial, legal, and human resource(s) aspects of farm and ranch operations.

Beginning Farmer and Rancher means a person that has not operated a farm or ranch; or has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 years (as defined by section 7405(a) of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 [7 U.S.C. 3319f(a)]).

National RME Program means the requirement for each regional center to conduct its programs in coordination with RMEESC and the other three RME Centers (i.e., to function as a national RME program), not as four separate, isolated centers.

Producers means individuals, families, or other entities in the U.S. engaged in the business of agricultural production and marketing before the farm gate.

Qualified Public and Private Entities means public or private groups, organizations, or institutions that have established and demonstrated capacities to conduct projects that accomplish the purposes of the program as designated in these guidelines.

Regions means (1) the Northeast region consisting of the 12 Northeast States and the District of Columbia (ME, VT, NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, PA, DE, MD, and WV); (2) the Southern Region consisting of 13 States plus Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (VA, NC, SC, KY, TN, GA, FL, AL, MS, LA, TX, AR, and OK); the North Central Region consisting of 12 States (OH, MI, IN, IL, MO, KS, IA, WI, MN, NE, SD, and ND); and the Western Region consisting of 12 States and the American Territories in the Pacific (HI, AK, WA, OR, CA, ID, NV, UT, AZ, MT, WY, CO, and NM).

Socially disadvantaged beginning farmer or rancher means a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group (i.e., a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities) [7 U.S.C. 2003(e)].

Socially disadvantaged group means a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender prejudice because of their identity as members of a group without regard to their individual qualities. [7 U.S.C. 2003(e)].