

Concurrent Workshops

Getting Grants: Ten Things You Gotta Do To Get Money

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Foreword: The information presented in this presentation was prepared to assist those who have not had much experience and/or success in preparing and submitting proposals to various competitive programs, be they government sponsored, non-governmental organization sponsored, or other entities who may sponsor such programs. The presentation is generic in the sense that it lays out a number of principles, recommendations and "hints" that are based on common sense and over 20 years of experience in research, research administration, integrated program leadership and extension competitive programs. The hints and recommendations are useful regardless of the type of grant program being considered or sponsoring organization. It goes without saying that there is no guarantee of successfully submitting and receiving a grant if all the principles, hints and suggestions are followed, but at the same time, the information presented should not be cause for any proposal to be rejected. MRB

Ten Things You Gotta Do To Get Money:

The following recommendations provide a logical approach to organize one's activities and thoughts while going about the process of preparing a proposal for submission to a grant program.

1. Find the program right for you and your idea
2. Become a "student" of the RFA/ RFP/NOFA (Request for applications; Request for Proposals; Notice of Funds Availability)
3. Develop a calendar of key proposal preparation and submission events
4. Understand criteria used to evaluate

your proposal

5. Write the proposal logically and clearly
6. Develop a plan by which you will evaluate your project against expected outcomes
7. Prepare budget with strong justification-a budget narrative
8. Know about the review process and your reviewers
9. Fill out forms completely and correctly
10. Schedule enough time when you are "finished" for others to provide an honest and objective critique and for administrative requirements; Send to arrive on time

General Rules of the Game: Before getting into the things you need to do to get money, it is important that anyone contemplating preparing and submitting a proposal ensure that their idea incorporated the following before they begin preparing a proposal. Can you meet the following tests with regard to your proposal?

Is your idea **appropriate** to the program to which you wish to apply to?

Is your idea **relevant** to the purposes of the funding program?

Are you and your organization **eligible** to even apply (some programs are limited to particular target groups or organizations)?

Have you **obtained and read** program materials (if not, how will you answer these questions)?

Have in your mind an **exciting and informative** project description for the program manager and reviewers

Are you **aware** of what forms and other paperwork is required as part of your proposal?

Do you know what the **deadlines**

and time frames are of the program? Can you get everything done in time?

Do you feel **comfortable** calling the program manager or director with questions?

Finding the Right Program -- WHICH PROGRAM?

Many Federal and State agencies and other organizations may have an array of various programs? The National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Research Initiative have numerous programs they sponsor. The Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service also has a number of other programs that are not research based, such as the Community Food Projects Program, The agricultural risk Management education Program, the SARE Program, and others. The US Department of Agriculture with its many agencies has many funding opportunities. Does your idea fit the aim of the program you are thinking about applying to?

National Research Initiative (NRI-CSREES)

Federal-State Marketing

Improvement Program (FSMIP-AMS)

Capacity Building (CSREES Higher Education Programs)

Community Food Projects (CSREES)

Challenge Grants (CSREES Higher Education Programs)

Integrated Programs (CSREES-research, extension or combinations thereof)

Small Business Innovation Research Program (Government-wide, including CSREES)

Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (CSREES-often referred to as the "2501 Program")

Multicultural Scholars Program (CSREES-Higher Education Programs)

Agricultural Risk Management Education Program (CSREES and the Risk Management Agency, USDA)

Finding the Right Program for You and Your Idea

How do you find out about all of these programs?

Network - talk to friends, , colleagues, university folks- Ask them what they know about available funding programs and whether your idea fits

Examine some RFA's even if they are a year or two old...programs rarely change significantly year-to-year - Does your idea fit somewhere?

When you think you've found the right program for your idea or project, get the most recent Request for Applications

In the RFA - Check on eligibility...BUT not totally critical; doesn't matter who gets the grant as long as you get some bucks, right? Partnering goes a long way here and actually many programs have partnerships and collaborators as important parts of their evaluation criteria; If you or your organization are not eligible, then work with someone who is eligible

Outline main purposes of the program-determine where your idea fits in; Mainstream? Or is it on the fringe? This increases the challenges!

Find out where the abstracts of previously funded projects are...great source of information (most are now on line...somewhere)

Call the program contact and discuss your ideas relative to the program in which you think it fits If your idea is covered but does not appear mainstream, you've got a big challenge-competition is tough and tight, and being on the periphery of a central theme or major program goal does not help you

Eligibility-do not waist your time if you are not eligible? Your proposal will be sent back or trashed. Call the program contact if you are not

sure.

Deadline Dates: receive date vs. transmittal (postmark) date (most programs now use receipt dates). If your proposal is late without any mitigating circumstances, it will be sent back or trashed.

Indirect Costs - allowed? Limits?

Talk to your office of sponsored programs or call the program contact and discuss.

Is a Funding Match Required?

Critical...if a match is required and you have none, guess what?

Major Goal of Purpose(s) of the Program - will you be addressing it?

Become a "student" of the RFA

The Request for Applications (RFA; Notice of Funds Availability - NOFA; Request for Proposals - RFP) is the key document that provides all the information you need to develop, organize, and prepare your proposal. Most include a format outline as well as evaluation criteria.

You gotta understand the main purposes of the program BEFORE you begin your proposal - that is usually upfront in the RFA!

Does your idea fit within the main purposes?

Do not waste time applying to the wrong program...square pegs do not fit in round holes

Never hesitate to call the program contact-there is always a point of contact in every RFA; if the program contact says your idea fits, then it is up to you to properly represent that idea in your proposal

Once you are pretty sure your idea fits, then the fun begins, the drudgery, the toil, the work, the boredom, the challenge!!!!

The RFA holds the info you need to prepare a competitive proposal
Directions, outline, evaluation criteria, deadlines

Know the RFA forward and backward...if something is confusing, who do you call? The

program contact

Most RFAs contain directions as to how to prepare a proposal, often times including a topical outline
Use this topical outline also for your Table of Contents format
If no outline, look at the evaluation criteria, for these often give good hints as to what folks are looking for and their relative importance
By becoming a student of the RFA you become seeped with understanding the key components of the program - its goals and areas of emphasis
Your proposal will (better) reflect the key components in a logical, coherent way

Reviewers first read the proposal summary to see if the proposal fits within the program; so your project summary is one of the most important paragraph(s) you will write

A Calendar of Events is your Friend

A calendar can help you organize your work schedule. Note the following:

Deadlines ARE NOT MADE to be broken

A deadline is a deadline is a deadline-no flexibility here!

"Back plan" two-three weeks from the deadline noted in the RFA - that is when your proposal writing needs to be done

Establish a non-revocable "I am finished" deadlines for various sections of your proposal

Allow 2-3 weeks for review by calloused, insensitive experts who could care less whether they hurt your feelings; also allow time for administrative review at your university or organization

Develop a detailed outline of your proposal and establish time periods for each major section; crosscheck your outline with RFA instructions and evaluation criteria

If you hurry a proposal, reviewers will see this and will raise questions about your scheduling and organizational skills...if they raise

questions on these issues, they will not be kind

Criteria Used by Reviewers – Must Know

Nearly all RFAs contain the criteria by which proposals will be judged. It is imperative that you understand and are familiar with the criteria, and their weights if they are so noted.

RFA's ordinarily contain a section on the criteria that will be used by reviewers to evaluate your proposal; if you don't see such criteria, call the program contact. Understand these criteria BEFORE you begin preparing your proposal. Write them down; put them on mirrors, windows, desktops...get 'em down good-these are a major guide for you.

Criteria often come with "weights" or percentages, or some other means of measure.

Provides you with great understanding as to where you really need to put your efforts. Put yourself in the shoes of a reviewer, contemplating the evaluation criteria, and then reading your proposal.

Writing the Proposal – Logic and Clarity

Easy to say, hard to do. This is hard and difficult work. Every word counts; Each sentence counts.

Most Important 250 words (or other limitations as provided by the RFA you are working with) in the entire proposal: THE SUMMARY or ABSTRACT.

The summary or abstract captures the essence of your proposal – must be clear, concise, well articulated and logical – usually limited to half of what you "need" to write!

Write the summary after everything else is completed; make sure it does what you need it to do – EXCITE YOUR REVIEWERS!!!!

The summary is often the only item read by all reviewers.

The summary sets the tone for your proposal.

Organize the proposals around the RFA provided outline or evaluation criteria whichever is most logical. Reviewers will at least know you read the RFA (in some proposal evaluation panels or sessions, the author has heard reviewers wonder out loud as to whether the applicant had actually read the RFA).

Following the prescribed format makes reviewers happy and more generous: an easier to read proposal when compared to others gives the former a significant advantage (assuming of course the idea has relevance and legitimacy). Making reviewers work hard is like shooting one's own foot...and that hurts!

REMEMBER THIS:

You make reviewers work hard by not following directions and formats and that gives rise to one of many of Bailey's idioms: **The degree to which you make a reviewer work hard decreases the probability of success exponentially.**

Be logical in proposal construction. Your background description establishes the need for your project and that it fits the program.

The need can be readily identified with the purposes of the program...make sure you tell them that in the proposal – Be Explicit.

Follow Directions; Follow Directions – it is amazing how many proposals do NOT follow directions!

Have your proposal flow logically.

Goals

Objectives

Methodologies with associated timelines

Expected Outcomes and Impacts

Evaluation-how you will measure expected outcomes

Your proposal's mission is to make sure reviewers are convinced that:

The proposal **goal(s)** reflect major purposes of programs

That if you accomplish your stated **objectives**, you will attain the goal(s)

That if **methodology** is followed, objectives will be attained

That the **expected results** are directly related to overall goals and purposes of program

That you can do the job!

Reviewers must be convinced that:

The evaluation plan you present will keep you on track and will identify problems that are subject to solutions

That the probability of your project success is acceptable – reviews think the project can be successfully accomplished, thereby making it a contributor to the programs purposes and goals

That the proposal **NEEDS** to be FUNDED (relative to other proposals)

And another Bailey idiom:

If, through your proposal you create a reviewer champion(s), the probability of success increases exponentially!!!

The Budget and Narrative

Many proposal submitters have a hard time with this part of a proposal. Budgets vary by type of proposal, region of the country the proposal comes from, and myriad other variables and factors. The test usually followed is the "test of reasonableness!" Is your budget, given what you propose to do, and the people and supplies, travel, etc., included, is it reasonable? Many programs do not use budgets as an evaluation factor, but a poorly justified budget or an inadequate narrative raises questions that go far beyond the budget per se. So look at

previous funded projects...what did they get? Is your budget over that maximum specified in the RFA? Often your office of sponsored programs or the equivalent will have some sound advice!

Use the timelines to compute amount of time various people will spend in carrying out the project (person months, for example)

While usually not part of the evaluation, unreasonable budgets kill proposals for they create skeptics within reviewer ranks

Keep budgets within guidelines as provided in the RFA; budgets are judged on the degree of reasonableness given the proposed amount of work

Understand what you are allowed to spend on and what you are not allowed to spend on

Use the budget form provided and then provide detailed justification for each line item in a budget narrative; FOLLOW the budget line order found on the form (do not make reviewers work hard)

The Narrative, or justification, should spell out how you compute each line item.

Salary: hourly rate times number of hours times days; or on a monthly basis

Provide percentage of benefits if not computed in indirect costs

Make sure the numbers add up

Talk to program contact about summer salaries – are they allowed?

Put yourself in the shoes of a reviewer who has read about 25 proposals and their accompanying budgets

Understand the Review Process - Who are the Reviewers

In various competitive programs, proposals may be reviewed using many different techniques. CSREES' National Research Initiative, for example, as does the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health use peer

panels to review proposals. In programs where relatively few proposals are received, the program may use a system of merit reviews, in house with usually an independent, out-of-house reviewer or two. It is important to understand how your proposal will be reviewed.

Reviewers depending on programs are provided guidance on evaluating proposals using evaluation criteria as published in the RFA – most times, you have what the reviewers have

Reviewers discuss each proposal-strengths, weakness, qualifications, probability of success, etc.

Remember, you can fool some of the people some times, but you can't fool reviewers!!!!

Reviewers give individual scores and then when they meet as a group, they discuss the proposal and arrive at a "consensus score"

Reviewers are looking for proposals they can champion and those they can dismiss-make it hard for them to dismiss yours

By following directions found in the RFA, you help the reviewers review – they really like that!

Not following directions makes them work hard, they get angry, cheap, and unforgiving, mean and cranky!

Proposals in any given year are judged against all other proposals reviewed in the program in that year

For the most part, reviewers are people like you and me-always busy, no time for extras

They take on the additional burden of reviewing proposals gratis, thereby making great contributions to the professions

Your goal is to have your proposal make at least one reviewer champion, so think like one

For the most part (and I really mean most part) reviewers are fair and objective; in panel situations, they police each other

Dumb but Important Stuff: Filling out the Forms

Often a proposal will be accepted for review, but certain information is missing, or the forms are filled out incorrectly. When this happens, questions are raised that go far further than the form being reviewed. If the abstract or summary guidance says 250 words, and you provide 500 words, that is not looked on very positively!

Fill out all the required forms completely...if you have questions who do you call????? The program contact!!!

When the form asks for telephone numbers, provide the telephone numbers and not FAX numbers and vice versa

Make sure email addresses are complete; exceedingly important in the e-GOV/e-GRANTS world!

The amount requested on the Coversheet should be the amount you computed for your total budget; Make sure the numbers are the same and consistent throughout your proposal

Make sure you as Project Director sign the Proposal Cover Page

Make sure the Authorized Organizational Representative (he or she who can approve expenditures) signs as well

Make sure the Summary Page (or equivalent) is filled out completely

The Summary is the most important words you will write as part of the proposal

Again, if have questions, call the National Program Leader or the program contact

Critique and Submission

Most proposals that receive in-house critical reviews are often those that fare the best when evaluated. Most of us have experienced the situation where we become "too close" to that which we are doing, and fail to see some pretty stupid stuff...stuff that the conscientious reviewer will invariably see. SO:

Make sure you allow time for an in-house critique before submission

Send it to someone who is not your good friend...someone WHO:

talks frankly, bluntly and clearly; You do not want someone who beats around the bush
has little sympathy for you or your ego
is smart, crafty and wise
Is insensitive to your sensitivities
has had success in obtaining grants in the past

Incorporate relevant critique comments as appropriate
eGOV/eGRANTS proposal system will be implemented by all government agencies in the relatively near future; make sure you submit proposal using correct media (paper? Electronically?)
DO NOT MISS the DEADLINE-and make sure you understand when that is
If an "Act of God" occurs resulting in you being unable to make the deadline, call the program contact immediately; you must document the circumstances if you are to receive an extension

Final Proposal Preparation Words

Some final words...

Always assume luck is on your side for luck never hurts
If at first you don't succeed, don't take it personally; be persistent and try and try again
If have any questions, who do you call???? The program contact, of course!

Leveraging Your Grant Dollars

When resources are constrained, which they most often are, it makes sense to leverage any grant dollars you may receive. One project in one program can lead to another project in another program. The proposal that can show some leveraging of funds, when compared to an equal quality proposal without leveraged funds, usually wins the tie-breaker. Often, your proposal discusses an idea that may have application in other

programs. So learn the differences, and submitted another proposal to that program. Do not send the same proposal to two different programs without informing both programs that you have done so. This should not prejudice either proposal but not informing both programs can pose great problems in the future. Most funding agencies are precluded from fund the same proposal that has or is being funded by another agency or program. The following may prove useful as you go about the process of developing, writing, and submitting a proposal:

Learn the details of as many programs as you can – do not limit yourself to one agency or one program, per se

One program may fund an initial study or project that leads to funding a continued project by another program

If find two similar programs in one or more agencies, use your basic idea and develop two related but not duplicate proposals and submit to both programs...make sure you tell each program what you are doing. Proposals are judged similar relative to the similarity of their objectives. Different objectives basically mean different proposals

Be an entrepreneur...market you're your idea or proposals to other programs

Call and discuss basic ideas with the program contact – the key is to find out whether your idea is main stream

Work the program contact hard – pump for hints for success; ask specific questions relative to your proposal or similar, previously submitted proposals

Partner with those who have similar projects, thoughts, or ideas
Use collaborations to bring in missing expertise – adds credibility to proposal (get specific letters of commitment; make sure it is part of your budget and budget narrative)

Be persistent...in most competitive programs, funding is not available to fund all the proposal that reviewers recommend funding; hence you may have a very good proposal but because of limited funds, your proposal ends up falling below the funding loan. Use the reviewer comments to improve your proposal and resubmit during the next solicitation period. Do not limit yourself to just one source of funding; go after multiple sources!

Pester non-governmental organizations – Ford, Kellogg, Aspen, and other foundations/grant-making entities with your thoughts and ideas Use results of one study to bolster the need for an additional study Documented outcomes and impacts of those outcomes from previous grants provide your best credibility; if just starting, make sure reviewers know that (your vitae)

Evaluating Your Small Farm Educational Program

Paula B. Ford
Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kansas

At the end of this workshop you will:

Understand why evaluation is important.
Know some basic evaluation terms.
Identify program records that might be critical to evaluation.
Identify the types of questions you want answered in your evaluation and appropriate instruments for answering those questions.
Know where you can get additional information and resources on evaluation.

You want me to do what?

Evaluation is a systematic way to answer questions that you (and others) have about project participation, quality, satisfaction, and outcomes.

Why is evaluation important?

Are we reaching our target audience?
Are we meeting the needs of our participants?
What can we do to improve our educational programs?
Do our educational programs have a real impact on people's lives. If so, what is that impact?

Where to begin?

What are you going to evaluate? Is it an event? A series of events? A product?
Who will use the evaluation? You? Stakeholders? Funders?
Why are you evaluating?

Evaluation is about information. What information is going to be collected?

Who?

When?

How?

What?

Common types of evaluation information

Participant profiles and program record information
Participant needs and assets
Participant reactions to teaching, facilities, logistics
Changes in knowledge, attitude or skills
Changes in behaviors and practices
Longer term changes

Participant profiles and program record information

Participant name and contact information
Age, gender, race, ethnic origin
Employment
Household status
Location of residence
Education
Income Levels
Type of operation

Important things to consider when asking for participant information

Work with your Institutional Review Board
Age at most recent birthday, years of schooling completed, # in household, gender
Race/ethnic origin – More than one category can be checked
Residence – Zip code or county (in town or country)

Sensitive questions are often best asked in categories

Approximate gross value of farm

sales? Approximate family income last year?
Size of operation? Acreage? Animal units?
Type of operation? Single family? Partnership, Family-held corporation?
Off-farm employment? Number of full time employees?

Participant program records

Attendance – all or part of program?
Where did they learn about program?
How far did they travel?
Previous participation in extension programs?

Participant needs and resources

Can be asked prior to, during and after program.
Identified through survey, case studies, interviews, focus groups, or other instrument.
Can also be asked multiple times.

Participant reactions

Can be collected multiple ways
How will you use the information?
Short versus long-term reactions
Reactions to methods, teaching, logistics, etc. Post-event surveys should be specific and only given if results will be used.
Keep it short, sweet and as unbiased as possible.
Remember information is point in time.
Protect anonymity.
Test your surveys prior to use.
Use the feedback you receive.

Examples of specific participant response questions

How useful did you find this workshop? (Likert scale 1-5)
Rate the content, organization, and materials used in workshop.
Evaluate the quality of the presentations.
Rate the logistics, meals, facilities, etc.
How much would you pay for this

workshop?

Participant KASA changes

KASA – Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, Aspirations
KASA changes occur in participants.
Can be collected in a number of ways
How will information be used?
Short vs. long-term changes

Measuring KASA change

Pre/post testing often used in more formal programs.
Pre/post self-assessments often used in less formal programs.
Retrospective post-then-pre often more effective
Other means to measure KASA change – case studies, interviews, diaries, document review

Post-then-Pre evaluation / retrospective pre/post

Can be more accurate if participants have limited knowledge to respond accurately in pretest.
Administered at end of program, asks participants to assess specific knowledge, attitude, and skills prior to and after event.
Can be used to estimate future change

Measuring KASA change

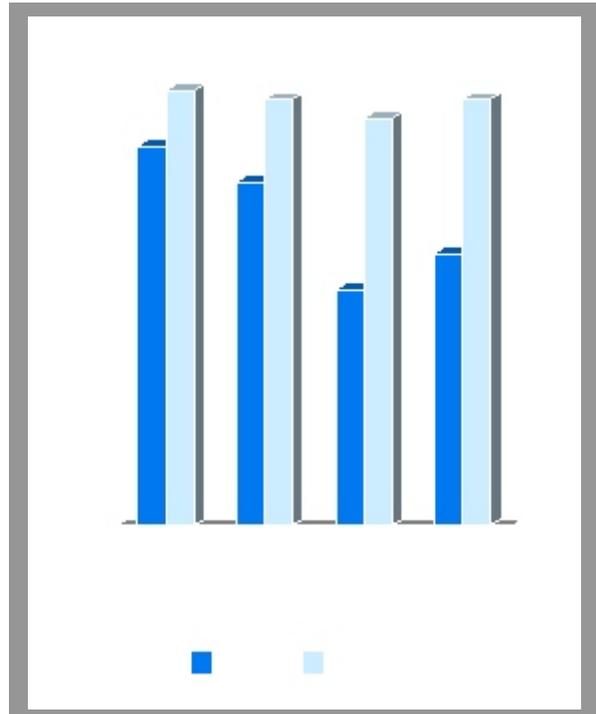
Critical to identify specific educational outcomes – changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, and aspirations prior to the event.
KASA outcomes can be placed into content categories.
Include some mechanism for measuring unexpected KASA.

What to do with KASA information

Summarize changes in table
Graph using Excel
Test significance of difference using statistical paired sample t-test or Mann-Whitney test
Test at different times

Presenting KASA change

Knowledge area	Pre	Post
Sources of N	4.2	4.8
Factors associated with N availability	3.8	4.7
Calculating N loss	2.6	4.5
N balance equation	3.0	4.7



Behavioral outcomes

Behavior outcomes are changes that occur in the program participants. Anticipated behavioral changes can be measured immediately after program, real changes require time. Behavioral changes best measured by combining self-assessment with other forms of measurement

Examples of behavioral outcomes

Participants will:
 Identify learning outcomes for at least one small farm educational program they conduct in next year.
 Conduct a retrospective KASA test at 3 and 6 months after event to see whether learning outcomes were achieved by participants.
 Analyze and present information to Advisory Group

Measuring behaviors

Identifying specific behavioral outcomes associated with project? Be specific – what will people do, when will they do it and how long will they do it?

Other ways to measure behavioral changes

Interviews
 Case studies
 Monitor use of resources
 Changes in related measures – For instance, changes in demands for more information
 Photos, videos, diaries
 Observation

Evaluation resources

Ask other educators.
 Work with stakeholders on evaluation.
 Don't be afraid to ask new things in different ways.

Funding Opportunities

Bruce Pleasant
USDA Rural Development
Raleigh, NC

Rural Cooperative-Business Service Programs

- Business & Industry Loan Guarantees
- Intermediary Relending Program
- Specialty Lender programs
- Cooperative Services
- Value-Added Producer Grants
- Rural Cooperative Development Grants

Value-Added Producer Grants

Designed to help Agricultural Producers, including cooperatives, to enter into value-added activities to accelerate the pace of the transformation of the nation's agricultural economy into one focused on producer-owned, value-added business.

What is Value-Added?

Incremental value realized by a producer as the result of:

- Change in physical state in a commodity
- Differentiated production or marketing
- Product segregation
- Production of farm-based or ranch-based renewable energy

Eligible Applicants

- Independent Producers
- Farmer or Rancher Cooperatives
- Agricultural Groups
- Majority-Controlled producer-based business ventures

Eligible Purposes

- Planning Activities (i.e. feasibility studies, business plans, marketing plans)
- Working Capital Expenses for processing and marketing value-added products (i.e. inventory, salaries, and office supplies)

What VAPG Grants Cannot Do

- Bricks and Mortar
- Purchase, rent or install fixed equipment
- Pay for production-related expenses
- Pay cost incurred prior to application
- Pay cost of preparing application

Grant Amount Maximums (FY 2005)

- Planning Grant: \$100,000
- Working Capital: \$150,000
- Requires cash/in-kind matches equal to requested amount

2004 NC VAPG Recipients

- Red Gate Farms: Obtained a \$50,000 grant for working capital to market processed natural pork products
- Yadkin Valley Winegrowers Association: Awarded a \$250,000 grant for working capital to operate a retail wine store at the Charlotte-Douglas Airport

2005 NC VAPG Recipients

- CL Henderson Produce: \$29,600
- Old North State Winegrowers Co-op: \$150,000

Old North State Winery

- 38 Charter members
- Sells Grapes to Cooperative owned winery
- Product is marketed through retail and wholesale outlets.
- Members are assured market for grapes
- Value-Added product increases returns to members

Rural Cooperative Development Grants

Rural Cooperative Development Grants are made for establishing operating centers for cooperative development for the primary purpose of improving the economic condition of rural areas through the development of new cooperatives and improving the operations of new cooperatives.

Eligible Applicants

Non-Profit Corporations
Institutions of Higher Education
Grants may not be made to public bodies

FY 2005 Funding for RCDG

\$7.3 Million funded 27 applications in 22 states
Maximum Award : \$300,000
25% matching requirement by applicant or third party in form of cash or in-kind

Eligible Uses of Funds

Applied Research, feasibility, environmental & other studies

Collection, interpretation & dissemination of principals, facts, and technical knowledge
Training and Instruction
Providing loans and grants for purpose of cooperative development
Providing technical assistance, research services and advisory services

Ineligible Uses of RCDG Funds

Bricks and Mortar
Purchase or installation of fixed equipment
Cost of preparing an application
Costs incurred prior to date of grant approval
Operating costs of cooperatives

Contact for More Information

USDA Rural Development
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