

*FY 2006 Implementation Plan for the*

# **State Agricultural Experiment Station**

## **Competitive Grants Program**

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**The Intent of this document is to be descriptive of the process and mechanism, not prescriptive as to what particular issues, disciplines or programs should be funded. This approach empowers the State Agricultural Experiment Station system to define the research agenda from the state and regional perspective. Much of the material in this document is designed to be easily folded into an RFA boilerplate.**

**SAES-CP Committee**



**U.S. Department of Agriculture**



**Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service**

Final draft.

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## **PART I-FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION**

### **A. Legislative Authority and Background**

The President's FY 2006 budget to Congress set aside approximately \$75 million for a competitive grants program to fund projects to State Agricultural Experiment Stations (SAES). Funding for the program was redirected from projects formerly funded by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) under Hatch Act, McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry, and Animal Health and Disease Programs.

This initiative provides opportunities to further improve our nation's agricultural experiment station system and strengthen the partnership between the Federal government and the agriculture research units of our Land-grant universities.

### **B. Purpose and Priorities**

Hatch Act, McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry, and Animal Health and Disease Programs address a wide range of agricultural problems and issues. While not specifically designed to replace these programs, this seeks to support projects that will:

- Provide support that addresses long-term research initiatives;
- Maintain a national network of agricultural experiment stations to support a broad spectrum of research capacity;
- Respond to stakeholder needs at the local, regional and national levels through a broad range of research;
- Fund issues and outcomes, which have been identified by stakeholder institutions, with allocations based upon institutional needs necessary to fulfill the outcomes of projects;
- Provide start-up funds to transition faculty to extramural independence;
- Enhance competitive capacity;
- Support high priority multi-state planning, coordination, and information exchange to effectively address research topics;
- Establish a mechanism that would support programs that can rapidly respond to emerging agriculture science issues;
- Provide a mechanism to develop support for issues presently addressed by National Research Support Projects (NRSPs);
- Provide continuity of on-going research programs and support a network for reporting research results and impacts; and
- Provide for innovation and development of research programs for emerging and time sensitive issues.

In order to meet the needs described above, eligible applicants are required to bring into play diverse programs to form State Agricultural Experiment Station (SAES) Agricultural Research Consortia (ARC). Such Consortia would pull together partners from other State Agricultural Experiment Stations, Land-grant institutions, and others. ARCs would provide a mechanism to support Rapid Response Activities, National Research Support Activities, Faculty and Research Enhancement Activities, Multi-State Research Activities, and other activities that address local, state and regional issues and needs, and complement the five USDA Strategic Goals and 13

CSREES Strategic Objectives. (See CSREES web site at: [http://www.csrees.usda.gov/about/strat\\_plan.html](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/about/strat_plan.html) for the complete text of the CSREES Strategic Plan.) [Also, the Goals and Objectives are listed in Section F on page 8 of this document for quick reference.]

### **C. Program Area Description**

Large, multi-institutional Consortium awards will be used to create Agricultural Research Consortia (ARC). ARC proposals will be evaluated based on their Project Plans that demonstrate relevancy, quality and performance.

An ARC may consist of one or several consortia members specializing in a research endeavor or scientific specialty. Maximum creativity and flexibility is encouraged in the development of research activities supported by ARCs. Examples of possible types of activities are described below.

#### **1. Rapid Response Activities**

An example of a type of activity that may become an important component of any SAES ARC is a Rapid Response Activity (RRA). ARCs would anticipate forming RRAs based on past experience. Such projects would respond to natural or ecological events such as floods, fires or droughts, and pest, plant and animal disease outbreaks. RRA teams could be formed quickly, when there is an immediate need to address a critical or emerging threat to the Nation's agriculture. RRAs should complement at least one of the USDA Strategic Goals and/or 13 CSREES Strategic Objectives.

#### **2. National Research Support Activities**

National Research Support Activities (NRSAs) focus on the development of enabling technologies, support activities (such as to collect, assemble, store, and distribute materials, resources and information), or the sharing of facilities needed to accomplish high priority research, but which is not of itself primarily research. NRSAs are created to conduct activities that enable other important research efforts. Ideally, an NRSA would facilitate a broad array of research activities. The primary purpose of NRSAs shall not be solely to conduct research as there are other available mechanisms for creating these types of projects including the Multi-State Research Activities and the National Research Activity (NRA) options. Currently, National Research Support Projects (NRSP) support NRSA-type activities. Examples of these activities might include: collection of data that are widely used by other research groups and efforts; development of databases; or development of critical technologies.

All NRSAs must involve a national issue, relevant to and of use by most, if not all regions. These projects draw on the best minds and resources within and outside the State Agricultural Experiment Station system to address the issues. All activities must address an issue that has national significance. Where appropriate, linkages to similar international activities are encouraged.

Priority consideration will be given to ARCs that support NRSAs that address and meet one or more of the national priority areas identified by ESCOP. General consideration will be given to

assuring that a ARC supports a portfolio of NRSA activities that have sufficient diversity so as to make best use of limited funds.

### 3. Multi-State Research Activities

ARCs are encouraged to develop processes to evaluate, implement and deliver regional and national research initiatives through multi-State approaches. Projects selected by the ARC would support partners in other states that address high priority issues that complement USDA and CSREES Strategic Goals and Objectives.

Selected projects should support multi-State planning, coordination, and information exchange to effectively address high priority research topics and provide a mechanism to support issues presently addressed by National Research Support Projects.

### 4. Faculty and Research Enhancement Activities

Human resource development is crucial in maintaining the critical infrastructure of the agricultural researcher. Prioritization of the programmatic needs at the SAES level is expected to focus on long-term vision of both the continuing and the emerging science issues. The existing and the newly hired faculty members are expected to demonstrate an alignment to such prioritized disciplinary needs. Program needs and priorities must also be aligned for relevance to any of the USDA Strategic Goals and accompanying CSREES Strategic Objectives.

The ARCs must provide a mechanism to support projects for discipline-based programs or for programmatic faculty capacity building. Activities may include items related to new faculty start-up packages such as salary, equipment, specialized facilities (for example experimental animal facilities), technical support, graduate assistantships, etc. A mechanism for supporting applications requesting support for the faculty or programs at small and mid-sized academic institutions with limited institutional success in competitions for federal funding, and faculty at institutions in the USDA Experimental Program for Stimulating Competitive Research (EPSCoR) is encouraged. (See Definitions for EPSCoR States.)

### 5. Other Project Activities

ARCs may establish mechanisms to support other projects, not defined above. The need for such projects must be fully delineated and justified with respect to local, regional and national stakeholder needs, and meet one of the USDA/CSREES Strategic Goals and Objectives.

Consortia are encouraged to submit applications that effectively integrate two or more of the above activities and describe their efforts in detail in the Project Plan. (See Project Description.)

## **PART II—AWARD INFORMATION**

### **A. Available Funding**

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. CSREES anticipates that approximately \$75,000,000 will be available to fund applications in FY 2006.

CSREES has determined that the dollar amounts awarded to eligible institutions, or made available to eligible institutions and other organizations through sub-grants under ARC awards, may vary from institution to institution and from year to year, depending upon institutional capacity, project scope, and the level of involvement of each institution participating in grant activities.

### **B. Types of Applications**

In FY 2006, the SAES Competitive Grants program will only accept new applications for funding.

### **C. Project Type**

#### **1. Consortium Grant**

To facilitate inter-institutional cooperation and collaborative initiatives, two or more eligible, individual institutions (State Agricultural Experiment Stations), may form a consortium, or use an existing consortium of which they are members, and submit a Consortium Grant application under a consortium agreement. In such cases, one institution or fiscal agent is to be designated as the “lead institution.” The designated lead institution, fiscal agent, and Project Director (PD) (SAES Director), all situated on one campus or site, will receive the award on behalf of all the consortium members and will be responsible for managing the grant. Eligible consortium members and others may be sub-grantees of the primary award.

A Consortium Grant application must contain a separate Project Plan and a separate budget for each consortium member receiving funds as a sub-grantee, as well as an overall Project Plan and overall budget from the lead institution.

#### **2. Project Duration**

CSREES intends to fund Consortia awards for a period of three years.

#### **3. Number and Size of Grant Awards**

CSREES estimates that each award will range between \$5 and \$10 million. However, the number of grants awarded in FY 2006 will depend on the number of applications submitted, and the relative merit of the applications.

CSREES anticipates distributing funding (awards) in a manner consistent with its current funding portfolio. The chart below sets forth anticipated amounts of funding by each of its five strategic goals.

<i>USDA/CSREES Strategic Goals</i>	<b>Percentage of funding</b>	<b>Approximate dollar amount</b>
<i>Strategic Goal 1: Enhance Economic Opportunities for Agricultural Producers</i>	45%	\$33,750,000
<i>Strategic Goal 2: Support Increased Economic Opportunities and Improved Quality of Life in Rural America</i>	5%	3,750,000
<i>Strategic Goal 3: Enhance Protection and Safety of the Nation's Agriculture and Food Supply</i>	25%	18,750,000
<i>Strategic Goal 4: Improve the Nation's Nutrition and Health</i>	5%	3,750,000
<i>Strategic Goal 5: Protect and Enhance the Nation's Natural Resource Base and Environment</i>	20%	15,000,000
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>\$75,000,000</b>

In addition, actual amounts awarded by CSREES under this program may differ from the amounts requested in an application submitted to the program, and revised budgets and revised Project Plans may be required by CSREES before an award is made.

### **PART III-ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

#### **A. Eligible Applicants**

Only applications submitted by State Agricultural Experiment Stations will be considered for funding under this program.

#### **B. Cost Sharing or Matching**

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

## **PART IV – APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

### **1-4. Reserved**

### **5. Project Description**

The Project Description must contain an overall Project Plan limited to ten, double-spaced pages of written text for the lead SAES institution. A Project Description, limited to ten, double-spaced pages for each consortium member receiving funds as a sub-grantee should also be submitted. Up to five additional pages for figures and tables are allowed for each consortium member receiving funds (lead institution and sub-grantees).

The Project Description must include all of the following:

- (a) a general statement of the Consortium’s long-range goals and how the proposed project supports those goals including statements regarding: the Consortium’s commitment to the project; engagement to stockholder driven needs; plans for continuation or expansion of the project or program beyond the current level and period of support being requested; and, institutional resources available to carry out the project and a statement regarding their adequacy;
- (b) clear, concise, complete objectives of the proposed project;
- (c) a detailed plan of operation giving an explanation of the methodologies and procedures that will be used to achieve the project objectives;
- (d) a management plan that provides the foundation for efficient functioning of the State Agricultural Experiment Station project participants and that includes the following: an organizational chart, including how project decisions will be determined; an administrative timeline for the overall project (by the consortia lead) and timelines for each consortia member delineating key project activities; a description of personnel who will conduct the projects, (SAES lead consortium Director and Project Director for each participating consortium member at a minimum) including an outline of who will be responsible for each activity. The plan must include participation of one or more SAES’s located in a USDA EPSCoR State. In addition, the applicant must set forth internal ARC peer review procedures that distinguish the relative merit of individual research proposals to assure that: (i) the most meritorious projects are funded by the lead institution and sub-contracting institutions; and, (ii) progress metrics can be evaluated for future budgetary allocations. Finally, applicants must set for a strategy to complement and/or link the SAES ARC to existing programs or projects supported by other funding sources.
- (e) the criteria and procedures to be used for tracking the progress and accomplishments of the project, including any data and methodologies that will be used to analyze the extent to which project objectives were met;
- (f) a list of expected products and outcomes, including partnerships and any plans for continuing the project beyond the period of USDA support; a definition of timeframes and the targets for annual measures to ensure long-term accomplishments and impacts; and, to improve

accountability, applicants are encouraged to include within one or more objectives an assessment of recent baseline data, and short, medium and long term targets.

(g) plans for disseminating anticipated products and outcomes resulting from the project including publications, presentations, compact diskettes, web pages, workshops, etc. The reporting should indicate how the accomplishments benefit the citizenry. The annual dissemination process should have a limited number of specific annual performance measures that can demonstrate progress toward achieving the long-term goals of the program. Applicants should define program benchmarks by indicating short-term, medium-term and long-term performance measures that focus on outcomes and that meaningfully reflect the purpose of the program. Applicants should state which measures are being addressed and indicate how those outcomes will affect (impact) the stakeholder community. The dissemination methodology should be program appropriate and the dissemination plan will depend on the target audience and the expected impact(s).

## **PART V – APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS**

### **[A. Reserved]**

### **B. Evaluation Criteria**

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

1. The proposed program addresses a high priority regional or national need.
2. The proposed program objectives are clearly stated and are aligned with one or more of the USDA/CSREES Strategic Goals.
3. Demonstration of how solicited stakeholder input and future input contributed or will contribute to specific proposal (activities) development.
4. Demonstration of multi-state and multi-functional engagement.
5. Inclusion of EPSCoR State engagement in the application.
6. A management plan that provides the foundation for efficient functioning of the State Agricultural Experiment Station project participants.
7. Defined benchmarks and a proposed strategy for outcome accountability, which includes stakeholder and partner participation.
8. Proposed research dissemination plan.

### **[C.-D. Reserved]**

## **E. Definitions**

Consortium Grant means an award to a Consortium of State Agricultural Experiment Stations and other organizations to carry out research activities congruent with and complementary to the five current USDA Strategic Goals or associated thirteen USDA/CSREES Strategic Objectives. (See below.)

Consortium means two or more institutions that have entered into a cooperative arrangement for the purpose of pursuing common objectives.

Eligible institution means State Agricultural Experiment Station.

Faculty and research enhancement activity means an activity, award or sub-award for the accretion of faculty, staff, equipment, training programs, etc. to increase the research capacity and build research competitiveness.

Food and agricultural sciences means basic, applied, and developmental research, extension, and teaching activities in the food, agricultural, renewable natural resources, forestry, and physical and social sciences, in the broadest sense of these terms, including but not limited to, activities concerned with the production, processing, marketing, distribution, conservation, utilization, consumption, research, and development of food and agriculturally related products and services, and inclusive of programs in agriculture, natural resources, aquaculture, forestry, veterinary medicine, home economics, rural human ecology, rural economic, community, or business development, and closely allied disciplines.

Multi-State research activity means an award in support of a project that addresses one or more targeted research areas or specific subject matter/emphasis areas identified by the applicant and congruent with and complementary to the five current USDA Strategic Goals and associated thirteen USDA/CSREES Strategic Objectives.

National research support activities are awards in support of important research support functions.

Project Plan means a detailed, step-by-step description of how the applicant intends to accomplish the project's objectives. At a minimum, the Project Plan should include a time line of major activities to be undertaken, descriptions of protocols and procedures to be followed, an explanation of how resources will be acquired and used, and an outline of the qualifications and responsibilities of all key project personnel.

Project director means the State Agricultural Experiment Station Director who is the single individual designated by the grantee in the grant application and approved by the Secretary who is responsible for the direction and management of the project.

Rapid response activity is a type of award where regional or local teams are established on a short term basis to respond quickly to new and eminent threats to agriculture, e.g. the emergence of a foreign pest.

Research means any systematic study directed toward new or fuller knowledge and understanding of the subject studied.

Research activity means a scientific investigation or inquiry that results in the generation of knowledge.

State means any of the fifty States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of Northern Marianas, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, the Virgin Islands of the United States, and the District of Columbia.

USDA EPSCoR State means those States that have had a funding level from CSREES' National Research Initiative (NRI) no higher than the 38th percentile of all States, based on total funding for a three year period (excluding NRI strengthening set-aside funds). For FY 2005, the following States fall into this category: Alabama, Alaska, American Samoa, Arkansas, Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Kentucky, Maine, Mississippi, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Northern Mariana Islands, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Dakota, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, Vermont, the Virgin Islands of the United States, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

#### USDA Strategic Goals and CSREES Strategic Objectives (2004-2009)

##### *Strategic Goal 1: Enhance Economic Opportunities for Agricultural Producers*

Objective 1.1: Provide information, knowledge, and education to help expand markets and reduce trade barriers

Objective 1.2: Support international economic development and trade capacity building

Objective 1.3: Provide science-based knowledge and technologies to generate new or improved high-quality products and processes to expand markets for the agricultural sector

Objective 1.4: Provide science-based information, knowledge, and education to facilitate risk management by farmers and ranchers

Objective 1.5: Contribute science-based information, analysis, and education to promote the efficiency of agricultural production systems

##### *Strategic Goal 2: Support Increased Economic Opportunities and Improved Quality of Life in Rural America*

Objective 2.1: Expand economic opportunities in rural America by bringing scientific insights into economic and business decision making

Objective 2.2: Provide science-based technology, products, and information to facilitate informed decisions affecting the quality of life in rural areas

##### *Strategic Goal 3: Enhance Protection and Safety of the Nation's Agriculture and Food Supply*

Objective 3.1: Reduce the incidence of food borne illnesses and contaminants through science-based knowledge and education

Objective 3.2: Develop and deliver science-based information and technologies to reduce the number and severity of agricultural pest and disease outbreaks

##### *Strategic Goal 4: Improve the Nation's Nutrition and Health*

Objective 4.1: Improve human health by better understanding the nutrient requirements of individuals and the nutritional value of foods

Objective 4.2: Promote healthier food choices and lifestyles

*Strategic Goal 5: Protect and Enhance the Nation's Natural Resource Base and Environment*

Objective 5.1: Provide science-based knowledge and education to improve the management of forests and rangelands

Objective 5.2: Provide science-based knowledge and education to improve the management of soil, air, and water resources to support production and enhance the environment.

The complete text of the CSREES Strategic Plan is at:

[http://www.csrees.usda.gov/about/strat\\_plan.html](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/about/strat_plan.html).