

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Cooperative State Research,
Education, and Extension Service****Agricultural Telecommunications
Program; Fiscal Year 1996; Solicitation
of Proposals**

AGENCY: Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, USDA.

ACTION: Agricultural Telecommunications Program; Fiscal Year 1996; Solicitation of Proposals.

SUMMARY: The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service is soliciting proposals under the Agricultural Telecommunications Program. The Agricultural Telecommunications Program is authorized in the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990. It is anticipated that grants will be awarded competitively under the program in support of the following areas: (1) Program Delivery, (2) Innovative Program Development/Production, and (3) Capacity Building.

DATES: Proposals must be received by close of business August 23, 1996.

ADDRESSES: Proposals sent by First Class mail must be sent to the following address: Proposal Services Unit, Grants Management Branch, Office of Extramural Programs, Cooperative State, Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Ag Box 2245, Washington, DC 20250-2245, Telephone: (202) 401-5048.

Proposals that are delivered by Express mail, courier service, or by hand must be sent to the following address: Proposal Services Unit, Grants Management Branch, Office of Extramural Programs, Cooperative State, Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 303, Aerospace Center, 901 D Street SW., Washington, DC 20024, Telephone (202) 401-5048.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cathy Bridwell, 202-720-6084 for programmatic issues, or Winston Sherman, 202-401-5050 for administrative issues.

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Program Description**(a) Purpose**

Proposals are requested for the purpose of awarding competitive grants for fiscal year (FY) 1996 under the Agricultural Telecommunications Program (Program). Grants will be awarded to eligible institutions to assist in development and utilization of an agricultural communications network to facilitate and to strengthen agricultural extension, resident education and research, and domestic and international marketing of United States commodities and products through a partnership between eligible institutions and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The network will employ satellite and other telecommunications technology to disseminate and to share academic instruction, cooperative extension programming, agricultural research, and marketing information. The authority for this program is contained in Section 1673 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, Pub. L. No. 101-624 (7 U.S.C. 5926). The program is administered by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) of USDA.

(b) Available Funding

For fiscal year 1996, \$1,106,760 is available for the program. Grants under this program may provide funds for no more than 50 percent (50%) of the cost of a proposed project, unless otherwise determined by the Secretary in accordance with the provisions of Sec. 1673(g) of Pub. L. No. 101-624 (7 U.S.C. 5926(g)). For the purpose of determining the non-Federal share of such costs, consideration will be given to contributions in cash and in-kind, fairly evaluated, including, but not limited to premises, equipment and services. Project funds will be awarded for one fiscal year. Applicants may re compete

for additional funding, but projects will not be renewed.

(c) Eligibility

Proposals are invited from accredited institutions of higher education. Applicants must demonstrate that they participate in a network that distributes programs consistent with the following objectives: (1) Make optimal use of available resources for agricultural extension, resident education, and research by sharing resources between participating institutions; (2) improve the competitive position of United States agriculture in international markets by disseminating information to producers, processors, and researchers; (3) train students for careers in agriculture and food industries; (4) facilitate interaction among leading agricultural scientists; (5) enhance the ability of United States agriculture to respond to environmental and food safety concerns; and; (6) identify new uses for farm commodities and to increase the demand for United States agricultural products in both domestic and foreign markets.

Pursuant to Sec. 1673(e) of Pub. L. No. 101-624 (7 U.S.C. 5926(e)), preferential consideration will be given to applications that—

(i) are submitted by institutions affiliated with an established agricultural telecommunications network that distributes programs to a wide geographical area; or

(ii) demonstrate the need for such assistance, taking into consideration the relative needs of all applicants and the financial ability of the applicants to otherwise secure or create the telecommunications system.

These preferences will be factored into the evaluation of the Partnerships and Collaboration and Project Need Criteria, respectively.

In addition to the above, an applicant must qualify as a responsible applicant in order to be eligible for a grant under the program. To qualify as responsible, an applicant must meet the following standards:

(1) Adequate financial resources for performance, the necessary experience, organizational and technical qualifications, and facilities, or a firm commitment, arrangement, or ability to obtain the same (including any to be obtained through sub-agreement(s)/contract(s));

(2) Ability to comply with the proposed or required completion schedule for the project;

(3) Adequate financial management system and audit procedures that provide efficient and effective

accountability and control of all funds, property, and other assets;

(4) Satisfactory record of integrity, judgment, and performance, including, in particular, any prior performance under grants and contracts from the Federal Government;

(5) Otherwise be qualified and eligible to receive Federal assistance under the applicable laws and regulations; and

(d) Definitions

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

(1) *Administrative costs* means the total of direct and indirect costs as defined in 7 CFR 3015, USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, related to the operation of a project under this program;

(2) *Administrator* means the Administrator of CSREES and any other officer or employee of the Department to whom the authority to issue or modify grant instruments has been delegated.

(3) *Agricultural telecommunications* means those activities established to encourage development and utilization of an agricultural communications network employing satellite and other telecommunications technologies to disseminate and to share academic instruction, cooperative extension programming, agricultural research, and marketing information;

(4) *Awarding official* means the Administrator or any other officer or employee of the Department to whom the authority to issue or modify Agricultural Telecommunications grant instruments on behalf of the Department has been delegated.

(5) *Communications network* refers to television or cable television origination or distribution equipment, signal conversion equipment (including both modulators and demodulators), computer hardware and software, programs or terminals, or related devices, used to process and exchange data through a telecommunications system in which signals are generated, modified or prepared for transmission, or received, via telecommunications terminal equipment or via telecommunications transmission;

(6) *Delivery* means the transmission and reception of programs by facilities that transmit, receive, or carry data between telecommunications terminal equipment at each of a telecommunications terminal equipment at each end of a telecommunications circuit or path;

(7) *Facilities* includes microwave antennae, fiberoptic cables and repeaters, coaxial cables, communications satellite ground station

complexes, copper cable electronic equipment associated with telecommunications transmission;

(8) *Grant* means the assistance award by the Administrator to a grantee to develop agricultural telecommunications programs utilizing an agricultural telecommunications network;

(9) *Grantee* means the entity designated in the grant award document as the responsible legal entity to whom a grant is awarded;

(10) *Peer Review Panel* means a group of appropriate employees of the Federal Government qualified to give advice on the merit of grant applications submitted under this program;

(11) *Project* means the particular activity within the scope of the program as identified herein that is supported by a grant under this program;

(12) *Project Director* means the individual who is responsible for technical direction of the project, as designated by the grantee in the award proposal and approved by the Administrator;

(13) *Project Period* means the total time approved by the Administrator for conducting the proposed project as outlined in the approved Federal assistance proposal or the approved portions thereof.

(e) Application Categories

Applicants may submit proposals in any of the following program areas as specified in the authorization: (1) Program Delivery, (2) Innovative Program Development/Production, and (3) Capacity Building.

(1) Program Delivery

(A) Description

Applicants may submit a proposal in the Program Delivery Category requesting funding to operate an agricultural communications network, employing satellite and other telecommunications technology, to deliver Cooperative Extension programming, academic instruction, agricultural research and marketing information through partnership(s) between eligible institutions and the Department of Agriculture. The project goal(s) and objective(s) must be clearly stated in the proposal. Proposals in this category must clearly target a systematic approach to building an infrastructure to deliver programming at a distance.

Each proposal will be evaluated based on three broad principles: (1) Is there a real need for the project, (2) will the strategy identified meet the need, and (3) is the project sustainable.

Each proposal must document the need for the project, based on literature

review, case studies, audience analysis and/or needs assessment.

The project strategy should reflect an integrated approach to instructional design including subject-matter content, educational methodology and compatible production and delivery techniques. The approach as described must meet the need.

Evidence must be given that the project will be supported by the institution or by other groups or institutions who may wish to continue the project.

(B) Proposal Narrative

The narrative portion of the proposal must describe how the project meets the three broad principles identified above. It must not exceed 14 pages in length and no additional material or appendix will be considered. The narrative should contain the following sections:

(i) Principle One-Need

Project Need

Describe the background and situation leading to the need for the project. The project must be based on a need articulated by an audience or on a needs assessment. Describe the targeted audience(s) for whom the project will be designed including pertinent history identified in need, demographics, and expected impact on audience. If appropriate, describe the methodology and results of the needs assessment. Demonstrate the need for assistance under this program, including financial ability or inability to otherwise pursue the proposed program.

(ii) Principle Two-Strategy

(a) Partnerships and Collaboration

Describe partnerships and collaborations fostered through this project including expected impact and benefit to those involved such as learner, institution, agency, state, and nation. Partners are defined as all those who will collaborate on the Project. Submit evidence that partnerships are in place, and that those partners have a substantial role and interest in the project. Examples of role and interest might include joint risk-taking and shared benefits. Include information about any current affiliations with established agricultural telecommunications networks that distribute programs to a wide geographical area.

(b) Alternative Distance Learning Technologies

Describe alternative distance learning technologies including, but not limited to, internet, multimedia, audio/visual,

and other telecommunications technologies to be developed or employed in this project.

(c) Infrastructure

Describe a framework representing both the technological and human infrastructure for this project including, but not limited to, technical troubleshooting, scheduling and operation management, and learner and program support. Evidence of learner support includes, but is not limited to, facilitation of access, accommodation for diversity in special needs and learning styles, and recognition of need for alternative modes of program design and delivery.

(d) Innovation

Describe the innovative application of distance education/learning delivery identified in the project. Examples of innovation may include, but are not limited to, approaches in reaching audiences, methods of connectivity and/or interaction, use of existing resources with innovations in the teaching/learning transaction, and entrepreneurial approaches to distance education delivery.

(e) Outreach Plan

Describe a plan for informing others about positive and negative outcomes, results, lessons learned, innovative ideas, and research findings from the project.

(f) Evaluation Plan

Describe both formative and summative design for evaluating specific aspects of the project. These designs may include methods for evaluating the overall effectiveness of program in terms of teaching and learning, behavior change/problem-solving, immediate application, meeting learner needs, and/or potential for replication.

(iii) Principle Three-Sustainability

(a) Project Sustainability

Include strong evidence of the project's ability to continue and grow after receiving the funding. Examples may include replication by others; continued funding other than from this program, or opportunities for sale of products; and/or use of ideas and results of project by others.

(b) Cost/Benefit

Include a cost-benefit analysis of the proposed project, including comparison to other delivery methods, relative benefit to learner, and staffing costs versus benefits.

(2) Innovative Program Development/Production

(A) Description

Applicants submitting a proposal in the Innovative Program Development/Production Category must demonstrate an innovation to distance education programming. The innovation might be a new approach or a new approach to a traditional model of distance education. The project should contribute some aspect to the body of knowledge of distance education. Examples might include innovative approaches to entrepreneurship, evaluation, and the teaching/learning transaction.

Each proposal will be evaluated based on three broad principles: (1) Is there a real need for the project, (2) will the strategy identified meet the need, and (3) is the project sustainable.

Each proposal must document the need for the project, based on literature review, case studies, audience analysis and/or needs assessment.

The project strategy should reflect an integrated approach to instructional design including subject-matter content, educational methodology and compatible production and delivery techniques. The approach must meet the identified need.

Evidence must be given that the project will be supported by the institution or by other groups or institutions who may wish to continue the project.

(B) Project Narrative

The narrative portion of the proposal must describe how the project meets the three broad principles identified above. It must not exceed 15 pages in length and no additional material or appendix will be considered. The narrative should contain the following sections:

(i) Principle One-Need

(a) Project Need

Describe the background and situation leading to the need for the project. The project must be based on a need articulated by an audience or on a needs assessment. Describe the targeted audience(s) for whom the project will be designed including pertinent history identified in need, demographics, and expected impact on audience. If appropriate, describe the methodology and results of the needs assessment. Demonstrate the need for assistance under this program, including financial ability or inability to otherwise pursue the proposed program.

(b) Innovation

Describe the innovative application of distance education/learning identified in the project. Examples of innovation may include, but are not limited to, approaches in reaching audiences, methods of connectivity and/or interaction, use of existing resources with innovations in the teaching/learning transaction, and entrepreneurial approaches to distance education.

(ii) Principle Two-Strategy

(a) Instructional Methodology/Strategies

Explain the instructional/educational method or strategy to be implemented including appropriateness for audience and learning environment. Explanation should demonstrate knowledge of how people learn and/or interact in a mediated environment.

(b) Evaluation Plan

Describe both formative and summative design for evaluating specific aspects of the project. These designs may include methods for evaluating the overall effectiveness of program in terms of teaching and learning, behavior change/problem-solving, immediate application, meeting learner needs, and/or potential for replication.

(c) Outreach Plan

Describe a plan for informing others positive and negative outcomes, results, lessons learned, innovative ideas, and research findings from the project.

(d) Partnerships and Collaboration

Describe partnerships and collaborations fostered through this project including expected impact and benefit to those involved such as the learner, institution, agency, state, and nation. Partners are defined as all those who will collaborate on the project. Submit evidence that partnerships are in place, and that those partners have a substantial role and interest in the project. Examples of role and interest might include joint risktaking and shared benefits. Include information about any current affiliations with established agricultural telecommunications networks that distribute programs to a wide geographical area.

(iii) Principle Three-Sustainability
Project Sustainability

Include strong evidence of the project's ability to continue and grow after receiving the funding. Examples may include replication by others; continued funding other than from this

program, or opportunities for sale of products; and/or use of ideas and results of project by others.

(3) Capacity Building

(A) Description

Applicants submitting proposals in this category should target the development of capacity in the area of distance education at the university, state, regional, or national or international level. Proposals must include a detailed plan for assessing capacity or a plan for targeting need based on a completed needs assessment.

Each proposal will be evaluated based on three broad principles: (1) Is there a real need for the project, (2) will the strategy identified meet the need, and (3) in the project sustainable.

Each proposal must document the need for the project, based on literature review, case studies, audience analysis and needs assessment.

The project strategy should reflect an integrated approach to instructional design including subject-matter content, educational methodology and compatible production and delivery techniques. The approach described must meet the identified need.

Evidence must be given that the project will be supported by the institution or by other groups or institutions who may wish to continue the project.

(B) Project Narrative

The narrative portion of the proposal must describe how the project meets the three broad principles identified above. It must not exceed 15 pages in length and no additional material or appendix will be considered. The narrative should contain the following sections:

(i) Principle One-Need

Project Need

Describe the background and situation leading to the need for the project. The project must be based on a need articulated by an audience or on a needs assessment. Describe the targeted audiences(s) for which the project will be designed including pertinent history identified in need, demographics, and expected impact on audience. If appropriate, describe the methodology and results of the needs assessment. Applicants should describe how the capacity built will improve program production or program delivery. Demonstrate the need for assistance under this program, including financial ability or inability to otherwise pursue the proposed program.

(ii) Principle Two-Strategy

(a) Capacity Assessment

Include a detailed assessment of capacity or a fully developed plan for assessing capacity. Areas of consideration include, but are not limited to: faculty/staff development; support resources; production/technical capability; delivery capability; building learner capacity.

(b) Evaluation Plan

Describe both formative and summative design for evaluating specific aspects of the project. These designs may include methods for evaluating the overall effectiveness of program in terms of teaching and learning, behavior change/problem-solving, immediate application, meeting learner need, and/or potential for replication.

(c) Outreach Plan

Describe a plan for informing others about positive and negative outcomes, results, lessons learned, innovative ideas, research findings from the project.

(iii) Principle Three-Sustainability

(a) Sustainability

Include strong evidence of the project's ability to continue and grow after receiving the funding. Examples may include replication by others; continued funding other than from this program, or opportunities for sale of products; and/or use of ideas and results of project by others.

(b) Institutional Commitment

Discuss institutional commitment to the project. For example, substantiate that the institution(s) attributes a priority to the project; discuss how the project will contribute to the achievement of the institution's(s') long-term (five- to ten-year) goals; explain how the project will help satisfy the institution's(s') high priority objectives; or show how this project is linked to and supported by the institution's(s') strategic plan.

(c) Partnerships and Collaboration

Describe partnerships and collaborations fostered through this project including expected impact and benefit to those involved such as the learner, institution, agency, state, and nation. Partners are defined as all those who will collaborate on the project. Submit evidence that partnerships are in place, and that those partners have a substantial role and interest in the project. Examples of role and interest might include joint risk taking and

shared benefits. Include information about any current affiliations with established agricultural telecommunications networks that distribute programs to a wide geographical area.

(f) Proposal Review

All proposals received will be acknowledged. A preliminary review will be made for responsiveness to this solicitation; proposals that do not fall within the solicitation guidelines will be eliminated from competition. All remaining proposals will be reviewed by a peer review panel comprised of full-time Federal employees and will be evaluated against criteria included in the announcement.

(g) Evaluation Criteria

The maximum score a proposal can receive is 100 points. The peer review panel will be selected and organized to provide maximum expertise and objective judgment in the evaluation of proposals. In the event the number of proposals accepted outnumbered dollars available, proposals will be ranked and supported levels will be recommended by the panel(s) within the limitation of total funding available in FY 1996.

(1) Program Delivery

Evaluation Criteria and Weight

(A) Principle One-Need—40 Points Project Need

Did the proposal describe the background and situation leading to the need for the project? Is the project based on a need articulated by an audience, or on a needs assessment? Are the targeted audience(s) for whom the project will be designed described, including pertinent history identified in need, demographics, and expected impact on audience? If appropriate, are methodology and results of needs assessment described? Did the proposal demonstrate the need for assistance under this program, including a statement of financial ability or inability to otherwise pursue the proposed program and the impact of participation in this program on this ability?

(B) Principle Two-Strategy—40 Points

(i) Partnerships and Collaboration

Are partnerships and collaborations fostered through this project described, including expected impact and benefit to those involved such as learner, institution, agency, state, and nation? Is there evidence that partnerships are in place, and that those partners have a substantial role and interest in the project and are examples of role and

interest given, including joint risk taking and shared benefits? Is evidence provided of any current affiliations with established agricultural telecommunications networks that distribute programs to a wide geographical area?

(ii) Alternative Distance Learning Technologies

Does the proposal include a plan for the development and employment of alternative distance learning technologies including, but not limited to, internet, multimedia, audio/visual, and other telecommunications technologies?

(iii) Infrastructure

Does the proposal include a framework representing both the technological and human infrastructure including, but not limited to, technical trouble-shooting, scheduling and operation management, and learner and program support? Is there evidence of learner support including, but not limited to, facilitation of access, accommodation for diversity in special needs and learning styles, and recognition of need for alternative modes of program design and delivery?

(iv) Innovation

Does the proposal describe how the application of distance education/learning delivery identified in the project is innovative? Are examples provided that may include, but are not limited to, approaches in reaching audiences; methods of connectivity and/or interaction; use of existing resources with innovations in the teaching/learning transaction; entrepreneurial approaches to distance education delivery.

(v) Outreach Plan

Is there an outreach plan articulating an approach for informing others about positive and negative outcomes, results, lessons learned, innovative ideas, and research findings from the project?

(vi) Evaluation Plan

Are both formative and summative design for evaluating specific aspects of the project described? Do they include evaluating the overall effectiveness of program in terms of teaching and learning, behavior change/problem-solving, immediate application, meeting learner need, and/or potential for replication?

(C) Principle Three-Sustainability—20 Points

(i) Project Sustainability

Does the proposal present strong evidence of the project's ability to continue and grow after receiving the funding? Does this evidence include replication by others; continued funding other than from this program, or opportunities for sale of products; and/or use of ideas and results of project by others?

(ii) Cost/Benefit

Does the proposal include a cost-benefit analysis of the proposed project, including comparison to other delivery methods, relative benefit to learner, and staffing costs versus benefits?

(2) Innovative Program Development/Production

Evaluation Criteria and Weight

(A) Principle One-Need—30 Points

(i) Project Need

Does the proposal describe the background and situation leading to the need for the project? Is the project based on a need articulated by an audience, or on a needs assessment? Are the targeted audience(s) for whom the project will be designed described, including pertinent history identified in need, demographics, and expected impact on audience? If appropriate, are methodology and results of needs assessment described? Did the proposal demonstrate the need for assistance under this program, including a statement of financial ability or inability to otherwise pursue the proposed program and the impact of participation in this program on this ability?

(ii) Innovation

Does the proposal describe how the application of distance education/learning is innovative? Are examples provided that may include, but are not limited to, approaches in reaching audiences; methods of connectivity and/or interaction; use of existing resources with innovations in the teaching/learning transaction; entrepreneurial approaches to distance education?

(B) Principle Two-Strategy—50 Points

Does the proposal make the case that the strategy outlined will accomplish the goals and meet the need(s) identified in part one?

(i) Instructional Methodology/Strategies

Is the instructional/educational method or strategy to be implemented explained, including its appropriateness for the audience and learning

environment? Does the explanation demonstrate knowledge of how people learn and/or interact in a mediated environment?

(ii) Evaluation Plan

Are both formative and summative design for evaluating specific aspects of the project described? Do they include evaluating the overall effectiveness of program in terms of teaching and learning, behavior change/problem-solving, immediate application, meeting learner need, and/or potential for replication?

(iii) Outreach Plan

Does the outreach plan articulate an approach for informing others about positive and negative outcomes, results, lessons learned, innovative ideas, and research findings from the project?

(iv) Partnerships and Collaboration

Are partnerships and collaborations fostered through this project described, including expected impact and benefit to those involved such as learner, institution, agency, state, and nation? Is there evidence that partnerships are in place, and that those partners have a substantial role and interest in the project? Are examples of role and interest given such as joint risk taking and shared benefits? Is evidence provided of any current affiliations with established agricultural telecommunications networks that distribute programs to a wide geographical area?

(C) Principle Three-Sustainability—20 Points

Project Sustainability

Does the proposal present strong evidence of the project's ability to continue and grow after receiving the funding? Does this evidence include replication by others; continued funding other than from this program, or opportunities for sale of products; and/or use of ideas and results of project by others?

(3) Capacity Building

Evaluation Criteria and Weight

(A) Principle One-Need—20 Points

Project Need

Did the proposal describe the background and situation leading to the need for the project? Is the project based on a need articulated by an audience, or on a needs assessment? Are the targeted audience(s) for whom the project will be designed described, including pertinent history identified in terms of need, demographics, and expected impact on audience? If appropriate, are the

methodology and results of needs assessment described? Did the applicant describe how the capability built will improve program production or program delivery? Did the proposal demonstrate the need for assistance under this program, including a statement of financial ability or inability to otherwise pursue the proposed program and the impact of participation in this program on this ability?

(B) Principle Two-Strategy—30 Points

(i) Capacity Assessment

Is a detailed assessment of capacity or a fully developed plan for assessing capacity included? Does the assessment include faculty/staff development; support resources; production/technical capability; delivery capability; building learner capacity?

(ii) Evaluation Plan

Are both formative and summative design for evaluating specific aspects of the project described? Do they include evaluating the overall effectiveness of program in terms of teaching and learning, behavior change/problem-solving, immediate application, meeting learner need, and/or potential for replication?

(iii) Outreach

Does the outreach plan articulate an approach for informing others about positive and negative outcomes, results, lessons learned, innovative ideas, and research findings from the project?

(C) Principle Three-Sustainability—50 Points

(i) Sustainability

Does the proposal present strong evidence of the project's ability to continue and grow after receiving the funding. Does this evidence include replication by others; continued funding other than from this program, or opportunities for sale of products; and/or use of ideas and results of project by others?

(ii) Institutional Commitment

Does the proposal discuss the institutional commitment to the project? Does the proposal substantiate that the institution(s) attributes a priority to the project; discuss how the project will contribute to the achievement of the institution(s)' long-term (five- to ten-year) goals; explain how the project will help satisfy the institution's(s') high priority objectives; or show how this project is linked to and supported by the institution's(s') strategic plan?

(iii) Partnerships and Collaboration

Are partnerships and collaborations fostered through this project described, including expected impact and benefit to those involved such as learner, institution, agency, state, and nation? Is there evidence that partnerships are in place, and that those partners have a substantial role and interest in the project? Are examples of role and interest given including joint risk taking and shared benefits? Is evidence provided by any current affiliations with established agricultural telecommunications networks that distribute programs to a wide geographical area?

How to Obtain Application Materials

Copies of this solicitation and the Application Submission Package, which contains required forms, certifications, and instructions for preparing and submitting project applications, may be obtained by contacting: Proposal Services Unit, Grants Management Branch, Office of Extramural Programs, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Ag Box 2245, Washington, DC 20250-2245, Telephone: (202) 401-5048.

Application materials may also be requested via Internet by sending a message with your name, mailing address (not e-mail) and telephone number to psb@reeusda.gov that states that you wish to receive a copy of the application materials for the FY 1996 Agricultural Telecommunications Program. The materials will then be mailed to you (not e-mailed) as quickly as possible.

Proposal Format

Members of the review committees and the staff expect each project description to be complete in itself and should address the described criteria. Proposals should adhere to the following format:

(a) Project Application (Form CFD-2101). All full proposals submitted by eligible applicants should contain a Project Application, Form CFD-2101, which must be signed by the proposed project director and endorsed by the cognizant Authorized Organizational Representative who possesses the necessary authority to commit the applicant's time and other relevant resources. The title of the proposal must be brief (80-character maximum), yet represent the major emphasis of the project. Because this title will be used to provide information to those who may not be familiar with the proposed project, highly technical words or

phraseology should be avoided where possible.

(b) Project Description. Each proposal must contain a clear and concise overview (abstract) of the project. The overview should describe the situation, targeted audience, purpose of project, program goal, methodology, and expected outcomes of the project. The abstract should not exceed 200 words.

(c) Application Category: Each proposal must state the category under which funds are requested and contain the required information described under section (e) of the Program Description Application Categories.

(d) Staffing Pattern and Procedure. Each proposal must describe the staff needed for project administration, instructional design/curriculum development, production, evaluation, and marketing/promotion. Narrative should demonstrate that the staffing and implementation procedure will result in an integrated approach involving content specialists, instructional designers, and quality production resources, and that the individual staff members proposed are qualified to perform these roles.

(e) Personnel Support. To assist peer reviewers in assessing the competence and experience of the proposed project staff, key personnel who will be involved in the proposed project must be identified clearly. For each project director involved, and for all senior associates and other professional personnel who expect to work on the project, whether or not funds are sought for their support, the following should be included:

(1) An estimate of the time commitments necessary;

(2) Curriculum vitae. The curriculum vitae should be limited to a presentation of academic and research credentials, e.g., educational, employment and professional history, and honors and awards. Unless pertinent to the project, to personal status, or the status of the organization—meetings attended, seminars given, or personal data such as birth date, marital status, or community activities should not be included. The vitae shall be no more than two pages each in length, excluding the publication lists. The Department reserves the option of not forwarding for further consideration a proposal in which each vitae exceeds the two-page limit; and

(3) Publication List(s). A chronological list of the most representative publications during the past five years, including those in press, must be provided for each professional project member for whom a curriculum vitae is provided. Authors should be

listed in the same order as they appear on each paper cited, along with the title and complete reference as these items usually appear in journals.

(f) Budget. A detailed budget is required. A copy of the form which must be used for this purpose, Form CFD-2102, along with instructions for completion, is included in the Application Submission Package and may be reproduced as needed by applicants. Funds may be requested under any of the categories listed, provided that the item or service for which support is requested may be identified as necessary for successful conduct of the proposed project, is allowable under applicable Federal cost principles, and is not prohibited under any applicable Federal statute. While some funds are available for the acquisition and installation of telecommunications transmission facilities, applicants are cautioned that no more than 10 percent (10%) of the funds available may be awarded for that purpose. As stated under section (b) of the Program Description Available Funding, for each grant the Federal funds provided may be for no more than 50 percent of the cost of the proposed project unless otherwise determined by the Secretary.

Applicants' budgets shall specify the total cost of the proposed program, the amount of assistance requested for the proposed program, and other sources of funding that will be used for the proposed program. Each applicant also must attach to its budget an analysis of the costs and benefits of purchasing (or leasing) different types of facilities, equipment, components, hardware and software, and other items.

(g) Current and Pending Support. All proposals must list any other current public or private research support (including in-house support) to which key personnel identified in the proposal have committed portions of their time, whether or not salary support for person(s) involved is included in the budget. Analogous information must be provided for any pending proposals that are being considered by, or that will be submitted in the near future to, other possible sponsors, including other USDA programs or agencies. Concurrent submission of identical or similar proposals to the possible sponsors will not prejudice proposal review or evaluation by the Administrator for this purpose. However, a proposal that duplicates or overlaps substantially with a proposal already reviewed and funded (or that will be funded) by another organization or agency will not be funded under this program. The application material includes Form

CSREES-663 which is suitable for listing current and pending support.

(h) Organizational Management Information. Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one-time basis prior to the award of a grant for this Program if such information has not been provided previously under this or another program for which the sponsoring agency is responsible. The Department will contact an applicant to request organizational management information once a proposal has been recommended for funding.

Compliance With the National Environment Policy Act (NEPA)

As outlined in 7 CFR Part 3407 (the CSREES regulations implementing NEPA), environmental data or documentation for any proposed project is to be provided to CSREES in order to assist CSREES in carrying out its responsibilities under NEPA. In some cases, however, the preparation of environmental data or documentation may not be required. Certain categories of actions are excluded from the requirements of NEPA. The applicant shall review the following categorical exclusions and determine if the proposed project may fall within one or more of the exclusions.

(1) Department of Agriculture Categorical Exclusions (7 CFR 1b.3).

(i) Policy development, planning and implementation which are related to routine activities such as personnel, organizational changes, or similar administrative functions;

(ii) Activities which deal solely with the funding of programs, such as program budget proposals, disbursements, and transfer or reprogramming of funds;

(iii) Inventories, research activities, and studies, such as resource inventories and routine data collection when such actions are clearly limited in context and intensity;

(iv) Educational and informational programs and activities;

(v) Civil and criminal law enforcement and investigative activities;

(vi) Activities which are advisory and consultative to other agencies and public private entities; and

(vii) Activities related to trade representation and market development activities abroad.

(2) CSREES Categorical Exclusions (7 CFR 3407.6).

Based on previous experience, the following categories of CSREES actions are excluded because they have been found to have limited scope and intensity and to have no significant

individual or cumulative impacts on the quality of human environment:

(i) The following categories of research programs or projects limited in size and magnitude with only short-term effects on the environment:

(A) Research conducted within any laboratory, greenhouse, or other contained facility where research practices and safeguards prevent environmental impacts;

(B) Surveys, inventories, and similar studies that have limited context and minimal intensity in terms of changes in the environment; and

(C) Testing outside of the laboratory, such as in small isolated field plots, which involves the routine use of familiar chemicals or biological materials.

(ii) Routine renovation, rehabilitation, or revitalization of physical facilities, including the acquisition and installation of equipment, where such activity is limited in scope and intensity.

In order for CSREES to determine whether any further action is needed with respect to NEPA (e.g., preparation of an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS)), pertinent information regarding the possible environmental impacts of a proposed project is necessary; therefore, the National Environmental Policy Act Exclusions Form (Form CSREES-1234) provided with the application materials must be included in the proposal indicating whether the applicant is of the opinion that the project falls within one or more of the categorical exclusions listed above.

Even though a project may fall within the categorical exclusions, CSREES may determine that an EA or an EIS is necessary for a proposed project should substantial controversy on environmental grounds exist or if other extraordinary conditions or circumstances are present that may cause a project to have a significant environmental effect.

Proposal Disposition

When the peer review panel has completed its deliberations, the USDA program coordinator, based on the recommendations of the peer review panel, will recommend to the awarding official that the project be (a) approved for support from currently available funds or (b) declined due to insufficient funds or unfavorable review.

USDA reserves the right to negotiate with the Project Director and/or the submitting entity regarding project revisions (e.g., reductions in scope of work), funding level, or period of

support prior to recommending any project for funding.

A proposal may be withdrawn at any time before a final funding decision is made. One copy of each proposal that is not selected for funding (including those that are withdrawn) will be retained by USDA for one year and remaining copies will be destroyed.

Proposal Submission

(a) What to Submit

An original and eight copies of the proposal must be submitted. Each copy of each proposal must be stapled securely in the upper left hand corner (Do Not Bind). All copies of the proposal must be submitted in one package.

(b) Where and When to Submit

Proposals must be received by close of business August 23, 1996.

Proposals sent by First Class mail must be sent to the following address: Proposal Services Unit, Grants Management Branch, Office of Extramural Programs, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Ag Box 2245, Washington, D.C. 20250-2245, Telephone: (202) 401-5048.

Proposals that are delivered by Express mail, courier service, or by hand must be submitted to the following address (not that the zip code differs from that shown above): Proposal Services Unit, Grants Management Branch, Office of Extramural Programs, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Room 303, Aerospace Center, 901 D Street SW, Washington, DC 20024, Telephone: (202) 401-5048.

Supplementary Information

(a) Federal Assistance Awards

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official shall make awards to those responsible, eligible applicants whose proposals are judged most meritorious under the

evaluation criteria and procedures set forth in these application guidelines.

The date specified by the awarding official as the beginning of the project period shall be not later than September 30, 1996.

All funds awarded under the Program shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are awarded in accordance with the approved application and budget, the terms and conditions of any resulting award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations (7 CFR Parts 3015 and 3019).

(b) Obligation of the Federal Government

Neither the approval of any application nor the award of any Federal assistance commits or obligates the United States in any way to provide further support of a project or any portion thereof.

(c) Applicable Federal Statutes and Regulations That Apply

Federal statutes and regulations that apply to Federal assistance proposals considered for review or grants awarded under the Program include, but are not limited to, the following:

7 CFR part 1.1—USDA Implementation of the Freedom of Information Act;

7 CFR part 1b—USDA Implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act;

7 CFR part 3—USDA Implementation of OMB Circular A-129 regarding debt collection;

7 CFR part 15, Subpart A—USDA Implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;

7 CFR part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., Circular Nos. A-110, A-21, and A-122) and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly, the Federal Grant the Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to

recipients of Departmental financial assistance;

7 CFR part 3016—USDA Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments;

7 CFR part 3017, as amended—USDA Implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants);

7 CFR part 3018—USDA Implementation of New 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 Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations implementing OMB Circular A-110;

7 CFR part 3051—Audits of Institutions of Higher Education and Other Nonprofit Institutions, implementing OMB Circular A-133, regarding audits of institutions of higher education and other nonprofit institutions.

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

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).

Done at Washington, D.C., on this 17 day of June 1996.

B.H. Robinson,

Administrator, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service.

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