

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Cooperative State Research,  
Education, and Extension ServiceRequest for Proposals (RFP):  
Community Food Projects Competitive  
Grants Program

**ACTION:** Announcement of availability of grant funds and request for proposals for the Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program.

**SUMMARY:** The Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 established new authority for a program of Federal grants to support the development of community food projects designed to meet the food needs of low-income people; increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues.

This notice sets out the objectives for these projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application procedures. Proposals are requested for (1) projects designed to increase food security in a community (termed Community Food Projects) and, (2) projects designed to provide training and technical assistance (T&TA) to entities that are, or might be interested in, developing community food security projects for funding (termed T&TA Projects). Applicants may request expert consultation as a part of their proposal request in order to subcontract to consultants or other groups to provide assistance for technical voids of the applicant organization.

This notice contains the entire set of instructions needed to apply for a Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program (CFPCGP) grant.

**DATES:** Applications must be received on or before June 6, 1997. Proposals received after June 6, 1997 will not be considered for funding.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Dr. Elizabeth Tuckermanty, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, STOP 2225, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-2225; telephone (202) 720-5997; Internet: etuckermanty@reeusda.gov; or Dr. Mark Bailey, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, STOP 2241, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-2241; telephone: (202) 401-1898; Internet: mbailey@reeusda.gov.

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## Part I—General Information

## A. Legislative Authority

Section 25 of the Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended by Section 401(h) of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (Pub. L. 104-127) (7 U.S.C. 2034), authorized a new program of Federal grants to support the development of community food projects; \$16 million is authorized over seven years (1996-2002). For fiscal year 1997, approximately \$2.5 million is available (\$2.5 million has been authorized in each subsequent year through fiscal year 2002). These grants are intended to assist eligible private nonprofit entities that need a one-time infusion of Federal dollars to establish and sustain multi-purpose community food projects.

## B. Definitions

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

(1) *Administrator* means the Administrator of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) and any other officer or employee of the Department to whom the authority involved may be delegated.

(2) *Authorized departmental officer* means the Secretary or any employee of the Department who has the authority to issue or modify grant instruments on behalf of the Secretary.

(3) *Authorized organizational representative* means the president, director, or chief executive officer of the applicant organization or the official, designated by the president or chief executive officer of the applicant organization, who has the authority to commit the resources of the organization.

(4) *Budget period* means the interval of time (usually 12 months) into which the project period is divided for budgetary and reporting purposes.

(5) *Cash contributions* means the applicant's cash outlay, including the outlay of money contributed to the applicant by non-Federal third parties.

(6) *Community Food Project* is a project that requires a one-time infusion of Federal assistance to become self-sustaining and is designed to: (i) meet the food needs of low-income people; (ii) increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and (iii) promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues. These activities help to increase food security in a community.

(7) *Department* or *USDA* means the United States Department of Agriculture.

(8) *Grant* means the award by the Secretary of funds to a private, non-profit entity to assist in meeting the costs of conducting, for the benefit of the public, an identified project which is intended and designed to accomplish the purpose of the CFPCGP as identified in these guidelines.

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

(10) *Matching* means that portion of project costs not borne by the Federal Government, including the value of in-kind contributions.

(11) *Peer review experts* means a group of experts qualified by training and experience in particular fields to give expert advice on the merit of grant applications in such fields, who evaluate eligible proposals submitted to this program in their personal area(s) of expertise.

(12) *Private non-profit entity* means any corporation, trust, association, cooperative or other organization which (i) is operated primarily for scientific, educational, service, charitable, or similar purposes in the public interest; (ii) is not organized primarily for profit; and (iii) uses its net proceeds to maintain, improve, and/or expand its operations. For this purpose, the term nonprofit organization excludes (i) colleges or universities or their research foundations or other nonprofit elements;

(ii) hospitals; (iii) State, local, and Federally recognized Indian tribal governments; and (iv) those corporations, because of their size and nature of operations, which can be considered to be similar to commercial concerns.

(13) *Prior approval* means written approval evidencing prior consent by an authorized departmental officer as defined in (2) above.

(14) *Project* means the particular activity within the scope of the program supported by a grant award.

(15) *Project director* means 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.

(16) *Project period* means the period, as stated in the award document and modifications thereto, if any, during which Federal sponsorship begins and ends.

(17) *Secretary* means the Secretary of Agriculture and any other officer or employee of the Department to whom the authority involved may be delegated.

(18) *Third party in-kind contributions* means non-cash contributions of property or services provided by non-Federal third parties, including real property, equipment, supplies and other expendable property, directly benefiting and specifically identifiable to a funded project or program.

(19) *Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA) Project* is a project that requests a one-time infusion of Federal assistance (i) to help one or more community-based entities develop high-quality proposals for funding under the CFPCGP and/or (ii) to provide information, education, and skills training to applicants, potential applicants, and/or past and current grantees to meet the goals of a Community Food Project (as described in Item 6 above).

### C. Eligibility

Proposals may be submitted by private, nonprofit entities. Because proposals for Community Food Projects must promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues, applicants are encouraged to seek and create partnerships among public, private nonprofit, and private for-profit entities. However, no more than one-third of an award for Community Food Projects or T&TA Projects may be subawarded to a for-profit organization or firm.

To be eligible for a grant for a Community Food Project, a private

nonprofit applicant must meet four requirements:

- (1) have experience in the area of:
  - (a) community food work, particularly concerning small and medium-sized farms, including the provision of food to people in low-income communities and the development of new markets in low-income communities for agricultural producers; or
  - (b) job training and business development activities for food-related activities in low-income communities;
- (2) demonstrate competency to implement a project, provide fiscal accountability and oversight, collect data, and prepare reports and other appropriate documentation;
- (3) demonstrate a willingness to share information with researchers, practitioners, and other interested parties; and
- (4) directly carry out the proposed activities in the community. Entities that supply expertise and/or materials to communities or projects in which they are not an integral part are not eligible for awards.

To be eligible for a grant for a T&TA Project, a private nonprofit applicant must meet three requirements:

- (1) have experience and skills in providing education and training in community food security, assessing community food needs, coalition building, project development and evaluation, grant preparation and fund raising, and any other relevant component of training and technical assistance to be provided;
- (2) demonstrate competency to implement a project, provide fiscal accountability and oversight, collect data, and prepare reports and other appropriate documentation; and
- (3) demonstrate a willingness to share information with researchers, practitioners, and other interested parties.

The intent of the CFPCGP is to encourage and support community-based, grass-roots efforts that enhance food security. Applicants are strongly encouraged to link with academic experts and Cooperative Extension personnel in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of their projects. In addition, academic experts and Cooperative Extension personnel may wish to involve relevant community-based nonprofit organizations in developing proposals of mutual interest and serve as technical advisors to the applying entity.

Successful applicants must provide matching funds, either in cash or in-kind, amounting to at least 50 percent of the total cost of the project during the term of the grant award as provided by

section 25(e) of the Food Stamp Act of 1977.

## Part II—Program Description

### A. Purpose and Scope of the Program

Proposals are invited for competitive grant awards under the CFPCGP for fiscal year 1997. This program is administered by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The purpose of this program is to support the development of community food projects with a one-time infusion of Federal dollars to make such projects self-sustaining. Community Food Projects should be designed to: (i) Meet the food needs of low-income people; (ii) increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and (iii) promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues. T&TA Projects, under this program, should be designed to assist nonprofit community entities to develop programs that meet these goals.

Community food projects are intended to take a comprehensive approach to developing long-term solutions that help to ensure food security in communities by linking the food production and processing sectors to community development, economic opportunity, and environmental enhancement. Comprehensive solutions may include elements such as: (i) Improved access to high quality, affordable food among low-income households; (ii) expanded economic opportunities for community residents through local businesses or other economic development, improved employment opportunities, job training, youth apprenticeship, school-to-work transition, and the like, and (iii) support for local food systems, from urban gardening to local farms that provide high quality fresh foods, ideally with minimal adverse environmental impact. Any solution proposed must tie into community food needs.

Project goals should integrate multiple objectives into their design. Proposed projects should seek to address impacts beyond a specific goal such as increasing food produced or available for a specific group. Goals and objectives should integrate economic, social, and environmental impacts such as job training, employment opportunities, small business expansion, neighborhood revitalization, open space development, transportation assistance or other community enhancements.

Proposed projects should seek solutions rather than focusing on short-term food relief. They should seek comprehensive solutions to problems across all levels of the food system from producer to consumer. This point is emphasized because many proposals submitted in fiscal year 1996 were primarily for expanding applicant efforts in food relief and assistance or for connecting established or partially established programs (such as community gardens and farmers markets) with little evidence of strategic planning and participation by stakeholders in the proposed project design. Successful proposals must emphasize a food system and/or food security approach (i.e., an applicant must describe the large food-related picture in the community and the place of the proposed project within it). They must also show evidence of coalition building and substantial community linkages.

Applicants should be aware of several USDA policy themes and initiatives that have the potential to strengthen the impact and success of some community food projects. These include food recovery and gleaning excess food; connecting the urban consumer with the rural producer; aiding citizens in leaving public assistance and achieving self-sufficiency; and utilizing micro enterprise and/or development projects related to community food needs. Relevant ongoing initiatives include farmers markets; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development designated Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities, and Champion Communities; and the AmeriCorps national service program (a potential source of contributors for community food projects).

The community, not the individual per se, is the unit of analysis and medium for action. Many solutions to food access problems may come from beyond a community's own boundaries, since most food also comes from outside. In that context, wherever possible community food projects should support food systems based on strategies that improve the availability of high-quality locally-or regionally-produced foods to low-income people.

Community food projects are intended to bring together stakeholders from the distinct parts of the food system. Solutions to hunger and access to food should reflect a process that involves partnership building among the public, private nonprofit, and private for-profit sectors. Together, these parties can address issues such as the capacity of the community to produce food and support local growers; the

need for, and location of, grocery stores that market affordable, high quality food; transportation constraints; economic opportunities for residents to increase income, thereby increasing access to high quality nutritious food; community development issues; the environment; and so on.

Community food projects should not be designed to merely support individual food pantries, farmers markets, community gardens or other established projects. Rather, proposed community food projects should build on these experiences and encourage innovative long-term efforts. A successful project should be able to endure and outlive the one-time infusion of government and other matching funds. Community food projects should be designed to become self-supporting (or have a sustainable funding source) and expand or prove to be a replicable model.

The primary objectives of the CFPCGP are to increase the food self-reliance of communities; promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm and nutrition issues; develop innovative linkages between the for-profit and nonprofit food sectors; and encourage long-term planning activities and multi-system inter-agency approaches. The following are some examples of these objectives in practice:

- Developing a working link between a food bank and area farmers to market fresh produce to a community through community-supported agriculture. Community members provide the financial support while the project develops links to institutions such as restaurants, food pantries, schools, and other institutions. The process increases community awareness and commitment to local agriculture, while providing farmers a local market for consumers, and expands the supply of and access to high-quality food.

- Implementing a comprehensive strategic plan for a lower-income neighborhood to increase residents' access to high-quality, affordable food through farmers' markets, community gardens, supermarkets, and other food programs. Such a plan should include transportation assistance, business development, and/or neighborhood improvement. As with other sector planning, the community participates in identifying its food-related priorities and works with institutions through a collaborative interagency process to meet its objectives.

- Developing a system of community farm stands sponsored by neighborhood organizations and managed by youth that sell locally-grown produce in low-income communities. The project

provides skills training and/or jobs and aims to become self-supporting within a reasonable time. It increases participants' understanding of the food system, including food production and distribution, expands interest in good nutrition, and provides entrepreneurial training opportunities for young people.

- A local food policy council may develop and implement a plan that creates several new food ventures, including a new supermarket in a low-income neighborhood. The council serves as the planning and coordinating entity that brings together local farmers, for-profit food operators such as restaurants, processors, and retailers with low-income neighborhood development organizations and job training groups, emergency food providers, city hall, and other community service entities.

- Developing a comprehensive community response to job and food needs by creating job opportunities that respond to the needs of local businesses, building technical expertise that leads to well-paid jobs. It will be necessary to bring together resources that facilitate the development of work skills, work ethics, education completion and that respond to community food and nutrition needs.

#### *B. Available Funds and Award Limitations*

The total amount of funds available in fiscal year 1997 for support of this program is approximately \$2,500,000. Up to 10% of available funds (approximately \$250,000) will be available for T&TA Projects, and the remainder for Community Food Projects. Applicants should request a budget commensurate with the project proposed. However, due to the effort required to properly evaluate proposals, USDA strongly urges that requests for support do not fall below \$10,000.

The intent of the authorizing legislation is that no one grant should command a significant portion of the total funds available and that many grants be awarded each year. Therefore, USDA has concluded that no single grant shall exceed \$100,000 in any single year or more than \$250,000 over the life of the project.

Applicants may request one, two, or three years of funding, but in all cases, USDA funding may not exceed three years for any one project. A Community Food Project or a T&TA Project may be supported by only a single grant under this program.

Awards will be made based on the merit of the proposed project with budgets considered only after the merits of the project have been determined.

USDA reserves the right to negotiate final budgets with successful applicants. It is intended that the grantee will perform the substantive effort on the project. No more than one-third of the award, as determined by budget expenditures, may be subawarded to for-profit organizations. For purposes of obtaining additional knowledge or expertise that is not currently within the applicant organization, funds for expert consultation may be included in the All Other Direct Costs section of the proposed budget.

### C. Matching Funds Requirement

The Federal share of the cost of establishing or carrying out a community food project that receives assistance under this program may not exceed 50 percent of the cost of the project during the term of the grant. Grantees may provide for the non-Federal share through cash and/or in kind contributions, fairly evaluated, including facilities, equipment, and services. A grantee may provide for the non-Federal share of the funding through State government, local government, or private sources.

## Part III—Preparation of a Proposal

### A. Program Application Materials

Program application materials will be made available to eligible entities upon request. These materials include information about the purpose of the program, how the program will be conducted, and the required contents of a proposal, as well as the forms needed to prepare and submit grant applications under the program.

### B. Content of a Proposal

#### (1) General

The proposal should follow these guidelines, enabling reviewers to more easily evaluate the merits of each proposal in a systematic, consistent fashion:

(a) The proposal should be prepared on only one side of the page using standard size (8½" × 11") white paper, one inch margins, typed or word processed using no type smaller than 12 point font, and single spaced. Use an easily readable font face (e.g., Geneva, Helvetica, CG Times).

(b) Each page of the proposal, beginning with the Project Summary and including any appendices, should be numbered sequentially in the top right corner.

(c) The proposal should be stapled in the upper left-hand corner. Do not bind. An original and 9 copies (10 total) must be submitted as one package, along with

20 copies of the "Project Summary" as a separate attachment.

#### (2) Cover Page

Complete Form CSREES-661, Application for Funding, in its entirety. This form is to be utilized as the Cover Page. In Block 14., note the total amount of Federal dollars being requested.

(a) Blocks 7., 13., 18., 19., 20., and 21. have been completed for you.

(b) In Block 8. enter *Community Food Project* or *T&TAP* if the proposal is a Training & Technical Assistance Project. Ignore all references to a program number.

(c) Note that providing a Social Security Number is voluntary, but is an integral part of the CSREES information system and will assist in the processing of the proposal.

(d) The original copy of the Application for Funding form must contain the pen-and-ink signatures of the project director(s) and authorized organizational representative for the applicant organization.

(e) Note that by signing the Application for Funding form, the applicant is providing the required certifications set forth in 7 CFR Part 3017, as amended, regarding Debarment and Suspension and Drug-Free Workplace, and 7 CFR Part 3018, regarding Lobbying. The three certification forms are included in this application package for informational purposes only. It is not necessary to sign and submit the forms to USDA as part of the proposal.

#### (3) Compliance With the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

As outlined in 7 CFR Part 3407 (the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service regulations implementing NEPA), the environmental data for any proposed project is to be provided to CSREES so that CSREES may determine whether any further action is needed. In some cases, however, the preparation of environmental data may not be required. Certain categories of actions are excluded from the requirements of NEPA.

In order for CSREES to determine whether any further action is needed with respect to NEPA, pertinent information regarding the possible environmental impacts of a particular project is necessary; therefore, Form CSREES-1234, NEPA Exclusions Form, must be included in the proposal indicating whether the applicant is of the opinion that the project falls within a categorical exclusion and the reasons therefor. If it is the applicant's opinion that the proposed project falls within

the categorical exclusions, the specific exclusion must be identified. Form CSREES-1234 and supporting documentation should be placed after Form CSREES-661, Application for Funding, in the proposal.

Even though a project may fall within the categorical exclusions, CSREES may determine that an Environmental Assessment or an Environmental Impact Statement is necessary for an activity. This will be the case if substantial controversy on environmental grounds exists or if other extraordinary conditions or circumstances are present which may cause such activity to have a significant environmental effect.

#### (4) Table of Contents

For ease in locating information, each proposal must contain a detailed table of contents just after the NEPA Exclusions Form. The Table of Contents should include page numbers for each component of the proposal. Page numbers, shown in the top right corner, should begin immediately following the Table of Contents.

#### (5) Project Summary

The proposal must contain a project summary of 250 words or less on a separate page. The summary must be self-contained and describe the overall goals and relevance of the project. The summary should also contain a listing of the major organizations participating in the project. The Project Summary should immediately follow the Table of Contents. In addition to the summary, this page must include the title of the project, the name of the applicant organization, the authorized organizational representative, and the project director(s) followed by the summary.

#### (6) Project Narrative

The Project Narrative shall not exceed 10 pages. It must repeat and answer each of the following 9 questions:

(a) FOR COMMUNITY FOOD PROJECTS: What is the community to be served by the proposed project?

Describe the local food economy or food system, demographics, income, and geographic characteristics of the area to be served and any other pertinent information, such as the community's assets and needs.

FOR T&TA PROJECTS: What types of communities are being targeted by the proposed project?

Provide a general description of the local food economies or food systems, demographics, incomes, and geographic characteristics of the areas to be served and any other pertinent information,

such as the assets and needs of the targeted communities.

(b) What organizations will be involved in carrying out the proposed project and which segments of the local food economy or system do they link?

Include a description of the relevant experience of the organizations, including the applicant organization, that will be involved and any project history. Letters acknowledging the support of these organizations are strongly encouraged and should be provided in the appendix to the proposal. Proposals should demonstrate extensive community linkages and coalitions.

(c) What are the goals or purposes to be achieved by the proposed project? List these goals and/or purposes.

(d) How will the goals be achieved?

Provide a systematic description of the approach by which the goals will be accomplished.

(e) What are the major milestones that will indicate progress toward achieving the project goals?

Provide a time line or description for accomplishing major project objectives.

(f) The legislation outlines three major outcomes of the CFPCGP: (i) Meet the food needs of low-income people; (ii) increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and (iii) promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm and nutrition issues. What measures will be used to assess project progress on each of these three outcomes? How will you assess performance on the outcomes?

For example, an applicant may propose to develop a farmers market in a low-income urban area, selling produce grown by farmers in the surrounding area, and employing staff from both the urban and rural communities. The goals may be to increase access to fresh produce by community residents (addresses outcome i) increase employment and the income of farmers (addresses outcome ii) and reduce the extent of poor nutrition among low-income residents (addresses outcome iii). Possible outcome measures are the change in the consumption of produce by customers, the number of jobs created by the market, and the change in income experienced by the farmers supplying the market.

Proposals should contain a strong evaluation component. Those with innovative evaluation strategies are especially encouraged. One desirable outcome of the CFPCGP is to learn more about what happens to make such projects succeed, only partially succeed, or fail. Therefore, proposals are

encouraged that include both process evaluations (developing and monitoring indicators of progress towards the objectives) and outcome evaluations (to determine whether the objectives were met). Applicants should seek the help of experts in evaluation design and implementation as appropriate.

(g) How does the proposed project address each of the following issues: (i) Develop innovative linkages and coalitions between two or more sectors of the food system; (ii) support entrepreneurial and job-training projects; and (iii) encourage long-term planning activities and multi-system, interagency approaches?

Provide a description of how each of these issues, as appropriate, will be addressed. Entrepreneurial projects should provide evidence (e.g., in the form of a market analysis or business plan) to demonstrate that it is likely to become self-sustaining and provide employees with important job skills.

(h) What are the plans for achieving self-sustainability?

Describe why a one-time infusion of Federal funds will be sufficient for the proposed project.

(i) Additional information

Provide any additional information which supports the need for and usefulness of the project.

#### (7) Key Personnel

Identify the primary project director and the co-project director(s) and other key personnel required for this project. An organizational chart should be provided if available. What is their relevant experience? Include resumes or vitae that provide adequate information so that proposal reviewers can make an informed judgment as to their capabilities and experience.

#### (8) Budget

(a) Budget Form: Prepare the budget form in accordance with instructions provided with the form. A budget form is required for each year of requested support. In addition, a cumulative budget is required detailing the requested total support for the overall project period. (For example, for a 3-year project, the proposal would include 4 budget forms; one for each of the three years of the project and one cumulative budget for the full 3 years.) The budget form may be reproduced as needed by applicants. Funds may be requested under any of the categories listed on the form, provided that the item or service for which support is requested is allowable under the authorizing legislation, the applicable Federal cost principles, and these program guidelines, and can be justified as

necessary for the successful conduct of the proposed project.

In addition to the budget form, applicants should include remarks and budget item justifications on a separate page.

#### (b) Matching Funds

(1) Proposals must include written verification of commitments of matching support (including both cash and in-kind contributions) from third parties. Written verification means:

(i) For any third party cash contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each donation, signed by the authorized organizational representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (a) The name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (b) the name of the applicant organization; (c) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (d) the dollar amount of the cash donation; and (e) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period; and

(ii) For any third party in-kind contributions, a separate pledge agreement for each contribution, signed by the authorized organizational representatives of the donor organization and the applicant organization, which must include: (a) The name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (b) the name of the applicant organization; (c) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (d) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the in-kind contribution; and (e) a statement that the donor will make the contribution during the grant period.

(2) The sources and amount of all matching support from outside the applicant institution should be summarized on a separate page and placed in the proposal immediately following the budget form. All pledge agreements must be placed in the proposal immediately following the summary of matching support.

(3) Applicants should refer to OMB Circulars A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals and Other Non-profit Organizations, and A-122, Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations, for further guidance and other requirements relating to matching and allowable costs.

#### (9) Current and Pending Support

All proposals must list any other current public or private 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, Current and Pending Support, which is suitable for listing current and pending support. Note that the project being proposed should be included in the proposed section of the form.

#### **Part IV—Submission of a Proposal**

##### **A. What To Submit**

An original and 9 copies of the complete proposal must be submitted. Each copy of each proposal must be stapled in the upper left-hand corner. DO NOT BIND. In addition, submit 20 copies of the proposal's Project Summary. All copies of the proposal and Project Summary must be submitted in one package.

##### **B. Where and When To Submit**

Proposals must be received by June 6, 1997. Proposals sent by First Class mail must be sent to the following address: Proposal Services Unit, Grants Management Branch, Office of Extramural Programs, USDA/CSREES, STOP 2245, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20250-2245, Telephone: (202) 401-5048.

**Note:** Hand-delivered proposals or those delivered by an overnight express service such as Federal Express should be brought to the following address: Proposal Services Unit, Grants Management Branch, Office of Extramural Programs, USDA/CSREES, Room 303, Aerospace Center, 901 D Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20024, Telephone: (202) 401-5048.

##### **C. Acknowledgment of Proposals**

The receipt of all proposals will be acknowledged in writing and this acknowledgment will contain an identifying proposal number. Once your proposal has been assigned an identification number, please cite that number in future correspondence.

#### **Part V—Selection Process and Evaluation Criteria**

##### **A. Selection Process**

Proposals must be received on or before June 6, 1997. Applicants are highly encouraged to convey their completed proposals via over-night mail or delivery services to ensure timely receipt by the USDA. Proposals will be ranked relative to all those received, and ranking will be based primarily on technical merit and potential for sustainment. Those proposals recommended for an award will be conveyed to the Administrator (or designee) for final approval.

Since the award process must be completed by September 30, 1997, applicants should submit fully developed proposals that meet all the requirements set forth in this RFP and have fully developed budgets as well. However, USDA does retain the right to conduct discussions with applicants to resolve technical and/or budget issues as it deems necessary.

Each proposal will be evaluated in a two-part process. First, each proposal will be screened to ensure it meets the requirements as set forth in this RFP. Proposals that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by expert reviewers. Second, each proposal will be judged on its own merits. Proposals not meeting the requirements as set forth in this RFP will be returned without review.

A panel of individuals will evaluate the proposed projects. The individual panel members will be selected from among those recognized as specialists who are uniquely qualified by training and experience in their respective fields to render expert advice on the merit of proposals being reviewed. These panel members will be drawn from a number of areas, among them government, universities, and entities involved in community food organizations or institutions, and rural development. The individual views of reviewers will be used to determine which proposals will be recommended for funding.

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular proposal or to make a specific number of awards. USDA also may elect to fund several or none of the proposed approaches to the same topic area. Care will be taken to avoid actual and potential conflicts of interest among reviewers. Evaluations will be confidential to USDA staff members, peer reviewers, and the project director(s), to the extent permitted by law.

The members of the review panel will take into consideration evaluation criteria that includes, but is not limited

to, the following: The amount of available funding; geographic distribution of applications; balance and diversity among different approaches to community food needs; the quality of proposed internal project evaluations; and quantitative outcome measures and other considerations pertinent to ensuring that the total mix of funded projects best serves the public interest.

##### **B. Technical Evaluation Criteria**

###### **(1) Applicability and Merit**

The primary evaluation criteria will be based upon the merit of the proposed project in regard to its ability to meet the food needs of low-income people in the proposed community; increase the self-reliance of the proposed community for providing for its own food needs; and promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues. (Refer to Questions a. through e. in Part III, item B.(6))

###### **(2) Capacity To Become Self-Sustaining**

Applications will be evaluated based on an assessment of the project's ability for continuing to term and becoming self-sufficient once Federal funding ends. (Refer to Questions f. and h. in Part III, item B.(6)).

###### **(3) Organizational and Staff Qualifications and Experience**

Awards are provided to the non-profit organization. However, the working history of the organization and the experience of the authorized organizational representative and/or project director will be key evaluation criteria. Experience in the area of community food work, particularly if that work also involved small or medium-size farms; provision of food to people in low-income communities; the development of new markets for agricultural goods in low-income communities, particularly as a means to enhance income for agricultural producers; job training or business development for food-related activities in low-income communities; competency to implement the proposed project; ability to provide the appropriate financial/fiscal oversight; and the ability to collect data, prepare reports, and perform other necessary administrative functions.

###### **(4) Additional Evaluation Criteria**

These criteria will be considered relative to the extent the proposed project contributes to:

- (a) developing linkages between two or more sectors of the food system;
- (b) supporting the development of entrepreneurial projects;

(c) developing innovative linkages between the for-profit and nonprofit food sectors;

(d) encouraging long-term planning activities and multi-system, interagency approaches; and

(e) Incorporating linkages to one or more ongoing USDA themes or initiatives (such as, but not limited to, those described in the background section). (Refer to Question g. in Part III, item B.(6))

## Part VI—Supplementary Information

### A. Access to Peer Review Information

After final decisions have been announced, CSREES will, upon request, inform the project director of the reasons for its decision on a proposal. To the extent possible, verbatim copies of summary reviews, not including the identity of the reviewers, will be made available to project directors after the review process has been completed.

### B. Grant Awards

#### (1) General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of CSREES shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose proposals are judged most meritorious in the announced program areas under the evaluation criteria and procedures set forth in this request for proposals. The date specified by the Administrator as the effective date of the grant shall be no later than September 30 of the Federal fiscal year in which the project is approved for support and funds are appropriated for such purpose, unless otherwise permitted by law. It should be noted that the project need not be initiated on the grant effective date, but as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be attained within the funded project period. All funds granted by CSREES under this request for proposals shall be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are granted in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, the applicable Federal cost principles, and the Department's assistance regulations (part 3015, part 3016, and part 3019 of 7 CFR).

#### (2) Organizational Management Information

Specific management information relating to an applicant shall be submitted on a one-time basis as part of the responsibility determination prior to the award of a grant identified under this part if such information has not been provided previously under this or another program for which the

sponsoring agency is responsible. Copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling the requirements contained in this section will be provided by the sponsoring agency as part of the preaward process.

#### (3) Grant Award Document and Notice of Grant Award

The grant award document shall include at a minimum the following:

(a) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the Administrator has awarded a grant under the terms of this request for proposals;

(b) Title of project;

(c) Name(s) and address(es) of project director(s) chosen to direct and control approved activities;

(d) Identifying grant number assigned by the Department;

(e) Project period, specifying the amount of time the Department intends to support the project without requiring recompensation for funds;

(f) Total amount of Departmental financial assistance approved by the Administrator during the project period;

(g) Legal authority(ies) under which the grant is awarded;

(h) Approved budget plan for categorizing allocable project funds to accomplish the stated purpose of the grant award; and

(i) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by CSREES to carry out its respective granting activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular grant.

The notice of grant award, in the form of a letter, will be prepared and will provide pertinent instructions or information to the grantee that is not included in the grant award document.

CSREES will award standard grants to carry out this program. A standard grant is a funding mechanism whereby CSREES agrees to support a specified level of effort for a predetermined time period without additional support at a future date.

### C. Use of Funds; Changes

#### (1) Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

The grantee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of grant funds.

#### (2) Reporting Requirements

The grantee will be expected to prepare an annual report that details all significant activities towards achieving the goals and objectives of the project. The narrative should be succinct and be no longer than five pages, using 12-

point, single-spaced type. A budget summary should be attached to this report, which will provide an overview of all monies spent during the reporting period.

#### (3) Changes in Project Plans

(a) The permissible changes by the grantee, project director(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project grant shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the grantee and/or the project director(s) are uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the CSREES Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination.

(b) Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by the CSREES ADO prior to effecting such changes. In no event shall requests for such changes be approved which are outside the scope of the original approved project.

(c) Changes in approved project leadership or the replacement or reassignment of other key project personnel shall be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by the awarding official of CSREES prior to effecting such changes.

(d) Transfers of actual performance of the substantive programmatic work in whole or in part and provisions for payment of funds, whether or not Federal funds are involved, shall be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers.

(e) Changes in Project Period: The project period may be extended by CSREES without additional financial support, for such additional period(s) as the ADO determines may be necessary to complete or fulfill the purposes of an approved project. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the grantee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of a grant.

(f) Changes in Approved Budget: Changes in an approved budget must be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to instituting such changes if the revision will:

(i) Involve transfers of amounts budgeted for indirect costs to absorb an increase in direct costs;

(ii) Involve transfers of amounts budgeted for direct costs to accommodate changes in indirect cost rates negotiated during a budget period

and not approved when a grant was awarded; or

(iii) Involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or in the grant award.

*D. Other Federal Statutes and Regulations that Apply*

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

7 CFR Part 1.1—USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act.

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

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

7 CFR Part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., Circular Nos. A-21 and A-122) and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and 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—Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments.

7 CFR Part 3017, as amended by 61 **Federal Register** 250, January 4, 1996—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 implementation of OMB Circular A-110, Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations.

7 CFR Part 3051—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133 regarding audits of institutions of higher education and other nonprofit institutions.

7 CFR Part 3407—CSREES procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended.

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

35 U.S.C. 200 *et seq.*—Bayh-Dole Act, controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in 37 CFR Part 401).

*E. Confidential Aspects of Proposals and Awards*

When a proposal results in a grant, it becomes a part of the record of the

Agency's transactions, available to the public upon specific request.

Information that the Secretary determines to be of a privileged nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as privileged should be clearly marked as such and sent in a separate statement, two copies of which should accompany the proposal. The original copy of a proposal that does not result in a grant will be retained by the Agency for a period of one year. Other copies will be destroyed. Such a proposal will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. A proposal may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

*F. Evaluation of Program*

Section 25(h) of the Food Stamp Act of 1997, as amended, requires USDA to provide for an evaluation of the success of community food projects supported under this authority. All grantees shall be expected to assist the USDA by providing relevant information on their respective projects. Applicants are also encouraged to plan for their own internal self-assessments and evaluations to measure the effectiveness of each project.

Done at Washington, D.C., this 21st day of March 1997.

**B.H. Robinson,**

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

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