

fiscal years 1997–98 is a summation, not to exceed three pages, of progress and results for all projects fully or partially funded by the RCDG program in those years. This summary should include the status of cooperative businesses organized and all eligible grant purpose activities listed under 7 CFR 4284.515. The summary should immediately follow the page described above in paragraph (c) documenting the location of evaluation criteria supporting material.

The National office will score applicants based on the grant selection criteria contained in 7 CFR part 4284, subpart F, and will select awardees subject to the availability of funds and the awardee's satisfactory submission of a formal application and related materials in accordance with subpart F. Entities submitting preapplications that are selected for award will be invited by the State office to submit a formal application prior to September 1, 1999. It is anticipated that grant awardees will be selected by September 1, 1999.

Dated: March 31, 1999.

Dayton Watkins,

Administrator, RBS.

[FR Doc. 99–8983 Filed 4–9–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410–XV–U

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Business–Cooperative Service

Request for Proposals: Fiscal Year 1999 Funding Opportunity for Research on Rural Cooperative Opportunities and Problems

AGENCY: Rural Business–Cooperative Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Rural Business–Cooperative Service (RBS) announces the availability of approximately \$1.0 million in competitive cooperative agreement funds allocated from FY 1999 appropriations. RBS hereby requests proposals from institutions of higher education or nonprofit organizations interested in applying for competitively awarded cooperative agreements for research related to agricultural and nonagricultural cooperatives serving rural communities. The intent of the funding is to encourage research on critical issues vital to the development and sustainability of cooperatives as a means of improving the quality of life in America's rural communities.

DATES: Cooperative agreement applications must be received on or before June 30, 1999. Proposals received

after June 30, 1999, will not be considered for funding.

ADDRESSES: Send Proposals and other required materials to Dr. Thomas H. Stafford, Director, Cooperative Marketing Division, Rural Business–Cooperative Service, USDA, Stop 3252, Room 4204, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250–3252. Telephone: (202)690–0368.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Thomas H. Stafford, Director, Cooperative Marketing Division, Rural Business–Cooperative Service, USDA, Stop 3252, Room 4204, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250–3252. Telephone: (202) 690–0368.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

General Information

This solicitation is issued pursuant to the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1999 making appropriations for programs administered by USDA's Rural Business–Cooperative Service (RBS) for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1999. The Rural Business–Cooperative Service (RBS) was established by the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994. The mission of RBS is to improve the quality of life in rural America by financing community facilities and businesses, providing technical assistance, and creating effective strategies for rural development. RBS has authority to enter into cooperative agreements pursuant to section 607(b)(4) of the Rural Development Act of 1972, as amended by section 759A of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996.

The primary objective of this funding is to encourage research through cooperative agreements on critical issues vital to the development and sustainability of user-owned cooperatives as a means of improving the quality of life in America's rural communities. Issue areas on which proposals should focus are:

- (1) Production cooperatives (including joint management of farm operations) as a tool for small farm operators, as recommended by the National Commission on Small Farms.
- (2) New generation cooperative equity management issues and their impact on the user-owned nature of the cooperative business.
- (3) Cooperative structure, conduct and performance in selected industries.
- (4) Can cooperatives compete for value-added markets?

(5) Governance and control issues in evolving cooperative structures and environments.

(6) The role of nonagricultural cooperatives in rural development.

(7) Evaluation of group action strategies, dispute resolution mechanisms, and justifiable terms available to contract growers and cooperatives in an increasingly industrialized agriculture.

(8) Assessment of farmer's markets organized as cooperatives. A cooperative agreement reflects a relationship between the United States Government and an eligible recipient where (1) The principal purpose of the relationship is the transfer of money, property, services, or anything of value to the eligible recipient to carry out research related to rural cooperatives; and (2) substantial involvement is anticipated between RBS acting for the United States Government, and the eligible recipient during the performance of the research in the agreement. A cooperative agreement is not a grant. Cooperative agreements are to be awarded on the basis of merit, quality, and relevance to advancing the purpose of federally supported rural development programs that increase economic opportunities in farming and rural communities.

All forms required to apply are available from the Cooperative Services Program web-site at www.usda.gov/rbs/coops/rrcop.htm, by calling (202) 690–0368, or faxing (202) 690–2723. Forms may also be requested via Internet by sending a message with your name, mailing address (not E-mail) and phone number to "thomas.stafford@usda.gov". When calling or e-mailing Cooperative Services, please indicate that you are requesting forms for Fiscal Year 1999 (FY 1999) Research on Rural Cooperative Opportunities and Problems (RRCOP). Forms will be mailed to you (not e-mailed or faxed) as quickly as possible. Forms are also usually available from the local university grants office.

Use of Funds

Funds may be used to pay up to 75 percent of the total cost for carrying out relevant projects. Applicants' contribution may be in cash or in-kind contribution and must be from nonfederal funds. Funds may not be used to: (1) Pay more than 75 percent of relevant project or administrative costs; (2) pay costs of preparing the application package; (3) fund political activities; or (4) pay costs incurred prior to the effective date of the cooperative agreement. Indirect costs may not exceed current negotiated rates. If no

rate has been negotiated, an indirect cost rate proposal must be submitted for approval.

Available Funds and Award Limitations

The amount of funds available for cooperative agreements in FY 1999 is approximately \$1.0 million. Up to one-quarter of the total funds awarded will be allocated to research on nonagricultural cooperatives serving rural areas. Nonagricultural cooperatives include, but are not limited to housing, child care, health care, shared services, wholesale or retail consumer cooperatives, and credit unions. Agricultural cooperatives are user-owned and controlled businesses which purchase farm inputs, market farm products, or provide other services to their members. The actual number of cooperative agreements funded will depend on the quality of proposals received and the amount of funding requested. Maximum amount of Federal funds awarded for any one proposal will be \$100,000. In 1998, a typical award ranged from \$40,000 to \$80,000 with an average award of \$60,000.

Eligible Applicants

Proposals may be submitted by public or private colleges or universities, research foundations maintained by a college or university, or private nonprofit organizations. Under the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, an organization described in section 501(c)(4) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (26 U.S.C. 501(c)(4)) which engages in lobbying activities, is not eligible to apply.

Methods for Evaluating and Ranking Applications

Applications will be evaluated by a panel of RBS technical experts. Applications will be evaluated competitively and points awarded as specified in the Evaluation Criteria and Weights section of this notice. After assigning points upon those criteria, applications will be listed in rank order and presented, along with funding level recommendations, to the Administrator of RBS, who will make the final decision on awarding of agreements. Applications will then be funded in rank order until all available funds have been expended. RBS reserves the right to make selections out of rank order to provide for a geographic or subject matter distribution of funded projects. In addition, timely completion of past cooperative agreements with RBS may be considered in awarding funds. With respect to any approved proposal, the amount of funding and the project

period during which the project may be funded and will be completed, are subject to negotiation prior to finalization of the cooperative agreement.

Evaluation Criteria and Weights

RBS will initially determine whether the submitting organization is eligible and whether the application contains the information required by this notice. Prior to technical examination, each proposal will be reviewed for responsiveness to the funding solicitation. Proposals focusing on technical assistance, consulting, or problem solving for the benefit of a single cooperative are not encouraged. Submissions that do not fall within the guidelines as stated in the solicitation will be eliminated from the competition and will be returned to the applicant.

After this initial screening, RBS will use the following criteria to rate and rank proposals received in response to this notice of funding availability. The maximum number of points is 100. Failure to address any of the following criteria will disqualify the proposal.

- (1) **Relevance:** Focuses on an agricultural or nonagricultural cooperatives serving rural areas and demonstrates a clear relationship with the research topics contained in this notice (maximum 20 points);
- (2) **Demonstrates potential to contribute innovative ideas or solutions to identified problems or issues** (maximum 20 points);
- (3) **Shows capacity for broad applicability in facilitating new or improved cooperative development or new or improved cooperative approaches** (maximum 15 points);
- (4) **Outlines a sound plan of work and appropriate methodology to accomplish the stated objective of the research** (maximum 15 points);
- (5) **Adequately documents the need for and clearly defines the objectives of the research** (maximum 10 points);
- (6) **Demonstrates cost effectiveness** (maximum 10 points);
- (7) **Identifies qualified resources and personnel, including a demonstrated track-record of similar research** (maximum 10 points).

Deliverables

Upon completion of the project, recipients will deliver the results of the research to RBS, in the form of a document of publishable quality, accompanied by all applicable supporting data. Publishable documents include, but are not limited to, manuscripts, videotapes, or software, or other media, as may be identified in approved proposals. RBS retains

publishing rights to such documents, as well as rights to any raw or preliminary data collected as part of the project.

Content of a Proposal

A proposal should contain the following:

- (1) *Form SF-424*, "Application for Federal Assistance."
- (2) *Form SF-424A*, "Budget Information—Non-Construction Programs."
- (3) *Form SF-424B*, "Assurances—Non-Construction Programs."
- (4) *Form AD-1047*, "Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters."
- (5) *Form AD-1049*, "Certification Regarding Drug-Free Workplace Requirements."
- (6) *Table of Contents:* For ease of locating information, each proposal must contain a detailed Table of Contents immediately following the required forms. The Table of Contents should include page numbers for each component of the proposal. Pagination should begin immediately following the Table of Contents.
- (7) *Project Summary.* A summary of the Project Proposal, not to exceed one-page should include the following: title of the project; names of principal investigators and applicant organization; and a description of the overall goals and relevance of the project.
- (8) *Project Proposal:* The application must contain a narrative statement describing the nature of the proposed research. The Proposal must include at least the following:
 - (i) **Project Title.** The title of the proposed project must be brief, yet represent the major thrust of the project.
 - (ii) **Project Leaders.** List the names and contact information for the principal investigators. Minor collaborators or consultants should be so designated and not listed as principal investigators.
 - (iii) **Need for the Project.** A concisely worded rationale for the research must be presented. Included should be a summarization of the body of knowledge (literature review) which substantiates the need for the research. The need for the proposed research must be clearly and directly related to the facilitation of new or improved cooperative approaches.
 - (iv) **Objectives of the Project.** Discuss the specific objectives of the project and the impact of the research on end-users.
 - (v) **Procedures.** Discuss the hypotheses or questions being asked and the methodology or approach to be used in carrying out the proposed research and accomplishing the

objectives. A description of any subcontracting arrangements to be used in carrying out the project must be included.

(vi) Time Table. A tentative schedule for conducting the major steps of the research must be included.

(vii) Expected Output. Describe how the results will be presented and disseminated. Include who will be responsible for any published output.

(viii) Coordination and Management Plan. Describe how the project will be coordinated among various participants and the nature of the collaborations. Describe plans for management of the project to ensure its proper and efficient administration. Describe scope of RBS involvement in the project.

(9) *Personnel Support*. To assist reviewers in assessing the competence and experience of proposed principal investigators, the following must be included for each:

- (i) estimated time commitment to the project;
- (ii) a one-page curriculum-vitae;
- (iii) a chronological list of all publications during the past five years.

What to Submit

An original and two copies must be submitted in one package.

When and Where To Submit

Proposals must be received by close of business on June 30, 1999. Proposals must be sent to Dr. Thomas H. Stafford, Director, Cooperative Marketing Division, Rural Business-Cooperative Service, USDA, Stop 3252, Room 4204, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250-3252.

Other Federal Statutes and Regulations That Apply

Several other Federal statutes and regulations apply to proposals considered for review and to cooperative agreements awarded. These include but are not limited to:

- 7 CFR part 15, subpart A—Nondiscrimination in Federally-Assisted Programs of the Department of Agriculture—Effectuation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- 7 CFR part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations.
- 7 CFR part 3017—Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants)
- 7 CFR part 3018—New Restrictions on Lobbying
- 7 CFR part 3019—Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education,

Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations

7 CFR part 3051—Audits of Institutions of Higher Education and Other Nonprofit Institutions

7 CFR part 3052—Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations

Paperwork Reduction Act

Under the provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. chapter 35), the collection of information requirements contained in this Notice have been approved under OMB control number 0570-0028.

Dated: April 1, 1999.

Dayton J. Watkins,

Administrator, Rural Business-Cooperative Service.

[FR Doc. 99-8974 Filed 4-9-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-XY-U

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Bureau of the Census

Applicant Background Questionnaire

ACTION: Proposed collection; comment request.

SUMMARY: The Department of Commerce, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, invites the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing information collections, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, Public Law 104-13 (44 U.S.C. 3506(c)(2)(A)).

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before June 11, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Linda Engelmeier, Departmental Forms Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 5033, 14th and Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20230.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection instrument(s) and instructions should be directed to Dayna Jacobs, Bureau of the Census, Field Division, SFC-2, Room 1408, Washington, DC 20233-5700, 301-457-4899.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Abstract

The Applicant Background Questionnaire is completed on a voluntary basis by applicants for temporary (Schedule A) positions with the Bureau of the Census at the time of

application and testing. Temporary positions normally last 8-12 weeks, and applicants must meet the minimum qualifications of a written test. The expected number of applicants for temporary Census Bureau jobs is increasing significantly because of our efforts to hire over 800,000 enumerators for Census 2000. The questions on the Applicant Background Questionnaire are of a sensitive nature relating to race and national origin as well as medical disabilities. This information is useful in determining whether we have a representative sample of the community from which we are hiring. This allows the Bureau of the Census to adjust recruiting efforts quickly and to employ local applicants for indigenous hiring. Background information provided by applicants will not be used in applicant screening or selection and will not be available to the selecting official.

The Applicant Background Questionnaire asks the minimum number of questions to obtain the necessary information. Individuals complete the form only once and the Bureau of the Census does not obtain similar information from applicants prior to employment. The confidentiality of information contained on the BC-1431 will be maintained according to the Privacy Act. The questionnaire contains the Privacy Act statement.

II. Method of Collection

Individuals complete the BC-1431 only once. Based on past experience, the BC-1431 on average takes about 2.5 minutes to complete. The paper form is completed by the applicant at the time of testing.

III. Data

OMB Number: 0607-0494.

Form Number: BC-1431.

Type of Review: Regular Submission.

Affected Public: Decennial Census Job Applicants.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 3,200,000.

Estimated Time Per Response: 2.5 minutes.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 133,333.

Estimated Total Annual Cost: There is no cost to respondents except for their time.

Respondent's Obligation: Voluntary. Legal Authority: P.L. 92-261, Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972 P.L. 94-311, Publication of Economic and Social Statistics for Americans of Spanish Origin or Descent 43 FR 38297, Information of Impact (Section 4) 5 U.S.C. 7201, Antidiscrimination Policy, Minority Recruitment Program.