

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Cooperative State Research,
Education, and Extension Service****Request Proposals (RFP): Community
Food Projects Program**

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

ACTION: Announcement of availability of
grant funds and request for proposals for
the Community Food Projects 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 for criteria
for projects and applicants, and the
application procedures. The legislation
also allows technical assistance under
the program. Therefore, the applicants
may request technical assistance as a
part of their proposal request in order to
subcontract to consultants or other
groups to provide assistance for
technical voids of the applying
organization.

This notice contains the set of
instructions needed to apply for a
Community Food Project grant. To
obtain application forms, please contact
Proposal Services, Grants Management
Branch; Office of Extramural Programs;
USDA/CSREES at (202) 401-5048.
When calling Proposal Services please
indicate that you are requesting forms
for the Community Food Projects
Program.

**APPLICATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED ON OR
BEFORE AUGUST 23, 1996.** Proposals
received after August 23, 1996, will not
be considered for funding.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr.
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Extension Service, U.S. Department of
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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,
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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 Agricultural Improvement
and Reform Act of 1996 (Pub. L. No.
104-127) (7 U.S.C. 2034) authorized a
new program of Federal grants to
support the development of community
food projects. These grants are intended
to help eligible private nonprofit entities
that need a one-time infusion of Federal
assistance to establish and carry out
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 of
Agriculture 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 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.

(7) "Department" or "USDA" means
the United State 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 program 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 panel" 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
(1) is operated primarily for scientific,
educational, service, charitable, or
similar purposes in the public interest;
(2) is not organized primarily for profit;
and (3) uses its net proceeds to
maintain, improve and/or expand its
operations.

(13) "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.

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

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

(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 of Agriculture to whom the authority involved may be delegated.

(18) "The 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.

C. Eligibility

Proposals may be submitted by private, nonprofit entities. Because the 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, applicants are encouraged to seek and create partnerships among public, private nonprofit, and private for-profit entities. However, no more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of an award may be subawarded to a for-profit organization or firm.

To be eligible for a grant, a private nonprofit applicant must meet three mandatory 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; and
- (3) demonstrate a willingness to share information with researchers, practitioners, and other interested parties.

Matching Funds. 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.

In addition to the mandatory requirements above, applicants are encouraged to address how projects will be designed to:

- (1) develop linkages between two or more sectors of the food system;
- (2) support the development of entrepreneurial projects;
- (3) develop innovative linkages between the for-profit and non-profit food sectors; or
- (4) encourage long-term planning activities and multi-system, interagency approaches.

Part II—Program Description

A. Purpose of the Program

Proposals are invited for competitive grant awards under the Community Food Projects Program for fiscal year 1996. The purpose of this grant program is to support the development of community food projects. Such projects must require a one-time infusion of Federal assistance to become self-sustaining and be designed to: (1) meet the food needs of low-income people; (2) increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and (3) promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues. This program is administered by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

B. Available Funds and Award Limitations

The total amount of funds available in fiscal year 1996 for support of this program which is approximately \$1,000,000.

Because the projects funded by this grant authority will be community-based and funded substantially by non-federal sources, it is expected that no one grant should command a significant portion of the total funds available for support of this program which is approximately \$1,000,000.

Because the projects funded by this grant authority will be community-based and funded substantially by non-federal sources, it is expected that no one grant should command a significant portion of the total funds available. 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. Awards will be made based on the merit of proposed projects with budgets that do not exceed \$200,000. 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 awardee non-profit organization will perform the substantive portion of 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 that is not currently within the applicant organization, funds for technical assistance may be included in the All Other Direct Costs section of the proposed budget. (See budget instructions included with the budget form.)

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. Applicants may submit only one proposal for the same project objectives.

Based on this guidance, USDA has concluded that no single grant shall exceed \$250,000 in any single year or more than \$500,000 over the life of the project.

A community food project may be supported by only a single grant under this program. If an applicant is interested in receiving a multi-year award, this must be proposed when the application is first submitted. For example, an applicant may want funding for a planning phase in the first year of the project and funding for an implementation phase in the subsequent year(s). The total funds required for all phases of the project must be specified in the initial proposal.

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 a payment in cash or in kind, fairly evaluated, including facilities, equipment, or services. A grantee may provide for the non-Federal share of the funding through State government, local government, or private sources.

D. Scope of the Program

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 sector to community development, economic opportunity, and environmental enhancement.

Comprehensive solutions may include elements such as: (1) improved access to high quality, affordable food among low-income households; (2) support for local food systems, from urban gardening to local farms that provide high quality fresh foods, ideally with minimal adverse environmental impact; (3) expanded economic opportunities for community residents through local business or other economic development, improved employment opportunities, job training, youth apprenticeship, school-to-work transition, and the like. Any solution proposed must tie into community food needs.

Project goals should integrate multiple objectives into their design. The project 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. All goals and objectives should be directed at arriving at these three outcomes: (1) Low-income people's food needs are met; (2) increased self-reliance of communities in providing for their food needs; and (3) Responses are comprehensive addressing local food, farm, nutrition, environmental and economic issues.

Community food projects are intended to go beyond the models offered by emergency and Federal food assistance programs by creating the opportunity for all community members to gain better access to affordable food. Ideally these projects will seek solutions over the longer term rather than focusing on short-term food relief. They will seek comprehensive solutions to problems across all levels of the food system from farmer to consumer.

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 assets development projects related to community food needs. Relevant ongoing initiatives include the following:

(1) Farmers Markets. The Federal-State Market Improvement Program (FSMIP) administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)

provides \$1.2 million in matching grants to state governments for marketing projects that carry out the purposes of the Agriculture Marketing Act of 1946 (7 U.S.C. 1621-1627). AMS also provides technical assistance to farmers' and alternative markets through its Wholesale and Alternative Markets Branch.

(2) EZ/EC Presidential Initiative. The President and Vice President, along with the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Department of Housing and Urban Development have designated Empowerment Zones, Enterprise Communities, and Champion Communities in both urban and rural areas. These have been targeted for services by Federal departments, including USDA. These are economically disadvantaged areas and are likely to face community food needs.

(3) AmeriCorps. The AmeriCorps national service program is a potential source of members interested in working on community food projects.

(4) Food recovery—Gleaning workbook.

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 regional agriculture and strategies that improve the availability of high-quality locally-produced foods to low-income areas.

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 developments 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, the 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 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 community food projects 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 or other institutions. The process increases community awareness and commitment to local agriculture, while providing farmers a local market and consumers, and to expand the supply of and access to quality food.

* Implementing a comprehensive strategic plan for a lower-income neighborhood to increase residents' access to quality, affordable food through farmers' markets, community gardens, supermarkets, and other food programs related to access, such as transportation assistance, business development and 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 an 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 farms, 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 services entities.

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

To obtain application forms, please contact Proposal Services, Grants Management Branch; Office of Extramural Programs; USDA/CSREES at (202) 401-5048. When calling Proposal Services please indicate that you are requesting forms for the Community Food Projects Program.

1. Cover Page: Complete the "Application for Funding" Form in its Entirety

a. 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.

b. One 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.

c. 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 certification forms are included in this application package for informational purposes only. It is not necessary to submit the forms to USDA.

2. Table of Contents

For ease in locating information, each proposal must contain a detailed table of contents just after the proposal cover page. The Table of Contents should include page numbers for each component of the proposal. Pagination should begin immediately following the Table of Contents.

3. Project Summary

The proposal must contain a project summary of 250 words or less on a separate page. This page must include

the title of the project and the names of the primary project director(s) and the applicant organization, followed by the summary. The summary should be self-contained, and should describe the overall goals and relevance of the project. The summary should also contain a listing of all organizations involved in the project. The Project Summary should immediately follow the Table of Contents.

4. Project Narrative

The Project Narrative for a community food project must be prepared on only one side of the page using standard size (8½" × 11"; 21.6 cm × 27.9 cm) white paper, one inch margins, typed or word processed using no type smaller than 10 point font regardless of whether it is single or double spaced. The project narrative shall not exceed 10 pages. The community food project narrative must repeat and answer each of the following 10 questions:

a. What is the community to be served by the proposed project?

Describe the local food economy or food system, demographics, income, geographic characteristics of the area to be served and any other pertinent information.

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 that will be involved and any project history. Letters acknowledging the support of these organizations should be provided in the appendix to the proposal.

c. What are the goals or purposes to be achieved by the proposed community food project?

d. How will the goals be achieved? Provide a 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 for accomplishing major project objectives.

f. The legislation outlines three major outcomes of the Community Food Projects: (1) meet the food needs of low-income people, (2) increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs; and (3) promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm and nutrition issues. What measures will be used to assess project progress on the above 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 1) increase employment and the income of farmers (addresses outcome 2). 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.

g. What are the plans for achieving self-sustainability?

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

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

5. Key Personnel

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

6. 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 summary budget is required detailing the requested total support for the overall project period. 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.

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:

(a) 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: (1)

the name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) the dollar amount of the cash donation; and (5) a statement that the donor will pay the cash contribution during the grant period; and

(b) 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: (1) the name, address, and telephone number of the donor; (2) the name of the applicant organization; (3) the title of the project for which the donation is made; (4) a good faith estimate of the current fair market value of the in-kind contribution; and (5) 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.

7. 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 which is suitable for listing current and pending support.

8. Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act

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 the 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, 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.

9. 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 under this program 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 USDA once a grant has been recommended for funding.

Part IV—Submission of a Proposal

A. What to Submit

An original and 14 copies must be submitted. Each copy of each proposal must be stapled in the upper lefthand 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 on August 23, 1996. Proposals sent by First Class mail must be sent to the following address: Proposal Services, Grants Management Branch, Office of Extramural Programs, USDA/CSREES, Stop 2245, Washington, DC 20250-2245, Telephone: (202) 401-5048.

Note: Hand-delivered proposals or those delivered by overnight express service should be brought to the following address: Proposal Services, Grants Management Branch; Office of Extramural Programs; USDA/CSREES; Room 303, Aerospace Center; 901 D Street, S.W.; Washington, DC 20024. The telephone number is (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

Given the short period in which USDA has to process project proposals, proposals must be received on or before August 23, 1996. 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 his designee) for final approval.

Since the award process must be completed by September 30, 1996, 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 deemed necessary by USDA.

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 a review panel. 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 individual experts 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. It is anticipated that these experts 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 the panel members will be used to determine which proposal should be recommended to the Administrator (or his designee) for final funding decisions.

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 proposed principal 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; and 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 assuring that the total mix of funded projects best serves the public purpose.

B. Community Food Projects 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.4.) This area will

comprise approximately 30 percent of the weight during evaluation.

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 j. in Part III, item B.4.) Approximately 20 percent of the evaluation weight will be applied to this area.

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 principal 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 procedures; 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. Approximately 20 percent of the evaluation will be based on this area.

4. **Additional evaluation criteria.** This area will comprise approximately 30 percent of the total evaluation. These criteria will be considered relative to the extent the proposed work 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).

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. Verbatim copies of summary reviews, not including the identity of the reviewers, will be made available to respective project directors upon specific request.

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 practicable 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 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 recompetition for funds;
- f. Total amount of Department 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 their respective granting activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular grant.

4. Notice of Grant Award. 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.

5. 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. Changes in Project Plans:

a. The permissible changes by the grantee, project director(s), or other key project personnel in the approved research 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 for a final determination.

b. Changes in approved goals, or objectives, shall be requested by the grantee and approved in writing by the CSREES Authorized Departmental Officer 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 Department 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 Authorized Departmental Officer 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 Authorized Departmental Officer, 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 authorized departmental officer prior to instituting such changes if the revision will:

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

(2) 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

(3) 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, subpart A—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—USDA implementation of Governmentwide

Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Grants), as amended.

7 CFR Part 3018—USDA implementation of New Restrictions on Lobbying. Imposes new prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreement, 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;

29 U.S.C. 794, section 504—Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and 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 18th day of July 1996.

Colien Hefferan,

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

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