United States
Department of
Agriculture

Cooperative State
Research, Education,
and Extension Service

Program Solicitation

New Era Rural Technology Competitive Grants Program (RTP)

Fiscal Year 2009

Closing Date: July 20, 2009

RTP Program:
Telephone: 202-720-1973
Email: RTP@csrees.usda.gov

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (CFDA) 10.314

CSREES Funding Opportunity Number USDA-CSREES-RTP-002295

********** PLEASE READ **********

IMPORTANT ITEMS FOR THE USDA-CSREES RTP
Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 PROGRAM SOLICITATION

The New Era Rural Technology Competitive Grants Program (RTP) requires all applications be submitted electronically through Grants.gov. There are considerable online resources to help potential applicants with the new electronic forms and submission requirements. **Applicants are advised to submit early to the Grants.gov system.**

If your institution/organization is new to the electronic grant application process through Grants.gov, you will be required to complete several steps prior to submitting an application. There is a one-time registration process. It can take as much as two weeks to complete, so it is critical to begin as soon as possible. Click "Get Registered" on the Grants.gov left navigation bar (http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp) provides information on registering your institution/organization with Grants.gov and the steps necessary to apply for a grant. A quick reference guide listing these steps is available as a 4-page PDF document at the following website: http://www.grants.gov/section910/Grants.govRegistrationBrochure.pdf.

The Agency within USDA responsible for administering this grants program is the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES). CSREES has also developed documentation to help navigate the process. The central point for all information related to electronic application submission is www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/electronic. This site is updated frequently and it should be checked often for program-specific help concerning electronic submissions.

Helpful Submission Information	**Website Address**
Information pertaining to the transition to electronic submission can be found at the CSREES website.	www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/electronic This page will be updated frequently and should be checked for program-specific help.
Applications for this grants program should be submitted through the Grants.gov website.	To access the electronic application via Grants.gov, go to www.grants.gov, under the "Apply for Grants" heading on the left side of page and click on "Download a Grant Application Package." Enter the CFDA number 10.314 in the appropriate box to search by Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number.
The CSREES GRANTS.GOV Application Guide **provides guidance for completing the forms required by Grants.gov and CSREES. Used in conjunction with this RFA for the RTP grants program, this guide will assist applicants with most field-specific questions.**	Each applicant should use the CSREES document titled, "A Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov" also known as the "CSREES Application Guide," that is part of this RFA package located at Grants.gov. This document provides guidance for completing the required forms at Grants.gov. **Applicants should also reference the RFA for additional guidance not found in the application guide.**

- Applications must be received at Grants.gov by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time, on Deadline July 20, 2009. **Plan ahead. Do not wait until the last minute to submit your application.**

- Applicants who have problems with their submissions to Grants.gov are encouraged first to call the Grants.gov help desk to resolve any problems. Keep a record of any such correspondence.

For any questions related to preparing application content, contact:
Email: electronic@csrees.usda.gov
Phone: 202-401-5048, Business hours are M-F, 7:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. ET, excluding Federal holidays.

For any questions related to Grants.gov content, contact:
Email: support@grants.gov
Toll Free: 1-800-518-4726, Business hours are M-F, 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m. ET, excluding Federal holidays.

Part IV of this RFA provides additional information specific to the RTP program application submission. Applicants are advised to refer to this section to determine if specific information is required during the submission of the forms on Grants.gov. If directed by this RFA to provide information that is different from the CSREES Application Guide, the information in this RFA supersedes in all cases.

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the Guide. ANY PROPOSALS CONTAINING NON-PDF DOCUMENTS WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM CSREES REVIEW. Partial applications will be excluded from CSREES review. With documented prior approval, resubmitted applications will be accepted until close of business on the closing date in the RFA.

If you do not own PDF-generating software, Grants.gov provides online tools to assist applicants. On the Grants.gov Customer Support webpage (http://grants.gov/CustomerSupport) users will find a link to "Convert Documents to PDF" (http://grants.gov/assets/PDFConversion.pdf).

Applications for this grants program should include the following Contents of a CSREES-RTP Application Submitted via Grants.gov:

Document Title	Required	Instruction Source	Additional Instructions within this RFA
SF 424 (R&R) Cover Sheet	✓	CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide p. 16	RTP RFA Part IV. B.1., p.19
SF 424 (R&R) Project/Performance Site Location(s)	✓	CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide p. 23	RTP RFA Part IV. B.1., p.20
SF 424 (R&R) Other Project Information	✓	CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide p. 25	RTP RFA Part IV. B.2., p.20
SF 424 (R&R) Senior/Key Person (Expanded)	✓	CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide p. 30	RTP RFA Part IV. B.4., p.25
SF 424 Personal Data	✓	CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide p. 33	RTP RFA Part IV. B.5., p.25
SF 424 (R&R) Budget	✓	CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide p. 35	RTP RFA Part IV. B.6., p.25
SF 424 (R&R) Subaward Budget Attachment	Only if submitting a Joint Project Proposal	CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide p. 43 (Follow attachment guidelines)	RTP RFA Part IV. B.7., p.26
Supplemental Information	✓	CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide p. 45	RTP RFA Part IV. B.8., p.26

COOPERATIVE STATE RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND EXTENSION SERVICE; U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NEW ERA RURAL TECHNOLOGY COMPETITIVE GRANTS PROGRAM (RTP)

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under **10.314.**

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on July 20, 2009 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding. Stakeholder comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) (see below) are requested within six months from the issuance of this notice. Comments received after that date will be considered to the extent practicable.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) is requesting comments regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the program, if applicable, and will be used to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 [7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)]. This section requires the Secretary to solicit and consider input on a current RFA from persons who conduct or use agricultural research, education and extension for use in formulating future RFAs for competitive programs. Written stakeholder comments on this RFA should be submitted in accordance with the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice.

Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by mail to: Policy and Oversight Branch; Office of Extramural Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; USDA; STOP 2299; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2299; or via e-mail to: RFP-OEP@csrees.usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are responding to the New Era Rural Technology Competitive Grants Program RFA.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Agriculture-based renewable energy offers many rural areas a means of strengthening their economy while helping meet the nation's energy demands. Many rural communities have struggled for decades with the loss of jobs and income from restructuring in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. Rural community colleges and advanced technological centers promote access to educational programs and aid in workforce development that is vital to creating rural economies that are competitive in the global marketplace.

With this RFA, CSREES requests applications for the New Era Rural Technology Competitive Grants Program (RTP) for fiscal year (FY) 2009. RTP grants are for technology development, applied research, and/or training to develop an agriculture-based renewable energy workforce to

serve rural communities. Awards will stimulate and enable community colleges and advanced technological centers located in rural areas (Note: see definitions of these terms in Part VIII. E. to ensure eligibility) to provide technology development, applied research, and/or training necessary to produce graduates capable of strengthening the Nation's technical, scientific and professional workforce in the fields of bioenergy, pulp and paper manufacturing, and agriculture-based renewable energy resources.

CSREES anticipates the amount available for support of this program in FY 2009 will be approximately $750,000.

This notice identifies the purpose and priorities for RTP projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a RTP grant. CSREES additionally requests stakeholder input from any interested party for use in the development of the next RFA for this program.

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PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. Legislative Authority and Background

Section 1405 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act (NARETPA) of 1977, as amended (7 U.S.C. 3121) designates the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as the lead Federal agency for agriculture research, extension and teaching in the food and agricultural sciences. Section 1473E of NARETPA (7 U.S.C. 3319e), as amended, requires the establishment of a *New Era Rural Technology Competitive Grants Program* (RTP), which CSREES administers. RTP will make grants available to community college(s) and/or advanced technological center(s), located in a rural area, for technology development, applied research, and/or training. Under the RTP grants program, awards will support the fields of (i) bioenergy; (ii) pulp and paper manufacturing; and (iii) agriculture-based renewable energy resources, in order to help ensure workforce opportunities critical to rural communities.

The RTP was newly authorized by Section 7137 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (FCEA) (Pub. L. 110-246). The Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009 (Pub. L. 111-8) appropriates funds under Division A, Title I "*for a new era rural technology program*"; therefore, CSREES is soliciting applications to competitively award funds in FY 2009.

B. Purpose and Priorities

Purpose: The RTP will make grants available for technology development, applied research, and/or training, with a focus on rural communities, to aid in the development of a workforce for bioenergy, pulp and paper manufacturing, or agriculture-based renewable energy. **Please refer to Part VIII (E) of this RFA for definitions relevant to this program.**

Priorities: The RTP shall give preference to eligible entities working in partnership within rural communities:

- to improve information-sharing capacity;
- to maximize the ability to meet the requirements of this RFA;
- to address Evaluation Criteria found in Part V. B. of this RFA; and
- to address the following two RTP Program Goals:

    1. To increase the number of students encouraged to pursue and complete a 2-year postsecondary degree, or a certificate of completion, within an occupational focus of this grant program; and
    2. To assist rural communities by helping students achieve their career goals to develop a viable workforce for bioenergy, pulp and paper manufacturing, or agriculture-based renewable energy.

Applications must address the following items within specified sections of the 'SF 424 (R&R) Other Project Information' Form (Part IV, B.2.):

1. Identify and describe which specific bioenergy, pulp and paper manufacturing, or agriculture-based renewable energy workforce Project Issue this application will address;
2. Identify and describe at least one Technology Development, Applied Research, and/or Training Need Area (Part I, C.2.);
3. Within the project's Evaluation Plan (Part I, C.2.), discuss how project activities will advance the two Program Goals (see Priorities, above); and
4. Within the project's Dissemination Plan, document how the project accomplishments (products, results and impacts, etc.) will be published or otherwise disseminated to the broadest extent throughout the academic community (Part I, C.3.).

Note: The Project Issue and Technology Development, Applied Research, and/or Training Need Area descriptions must appear on the required Project Summary/Abstract on the SF 424 (R&R) Other Project Information' Form (Part IV, B.3. Field 6. Project Summary/Abstract).

C. Program Area Description

1. Technology Development, Applied Research, and/or Training Need Areas

Projects must focus on a Need Area listed below, and applications must demonstrate how the chosen Need Area will help achieve both of the RTP Program Goals from Part I, B. **Note: Your application must include an Evaluation Plan (Part IV, B. 3. Field 7, 2.d) for each Need Area you select. It indicates how you plan to measure success in completing the objectives within your chosen Need Area. Therefore, choose only Need Areas for which you can commit to develop a rigorous Evaluation Plan.**

Technology Development, Applied Research, and/or Training Need Areas for the RTP program are:

a. **Curricula Design and Materials Development**. This Need Area promotes developing new (or adapting existing) technology, applied research or curricula and related materials culminating in either an academic degree or certificate of completion to meet changes anticipated for specific bioenergy, pulp and paper manufacturing, or agriculture-based renewable energy workforce opportunities critical to rural communities.

   Projects addressing this Need Area must be innovative and improve the quality of technology, applied research or training instruction. Projects should update disciplinary content; develop students' analytical, interpersonal, leadership, communications, problem-solving, computational, occupational competency and decision-making skills and abilities; and should move away from fragmented, discipline-specific, lecture-oriented instruction and toward integrated, multidisciplinary, learner-centered instruction. Applicants are expected to demonstrate how the project will reach large audiences efficiently and effectively;

provide hands-on learning experiences; extend learning beyond the classroom; reinforce recent research on how to motivate students to learn, retain, apply, and transfer knowledge, skills, and competencies; and integrate and synthesize knowledge from several disciplines.

b. **Faculty Preparation and Enhancement for Teaching**. This Need Area prepares faculty to address emerging trends in student clientele (demographic composition, e.g., underrepresented or nontraditional students, and learning styles), to improve teaching competency (subject matter expertise and pedagogy), or to develop student recruitment and advising skills culminating in either an academic degree or certificate of completion to meet changes anticipated for specific bioenergy, pulp and paper manufacturing, or agriculture-based renewable energy workforce opportunities critical to rural communities.

   Projects addressing this Need Area must enable faculty to help students attain their career goals and to better address workplace needs. Activities may include helping faculty gain experience with recent developments or innovative technology relevant to their teaching responsibilities; work under the guidance and direction of experts who have substantial expertise in an area related to project goals; work with scientists or professionals in government, industry, or other colleges or universities to learn new applications in a field; expand competence with new methods of information delivery; or increase understanding of the special needs of non-traditional students or students from groups that are underrepresented in these occupational areas.

c. **Delivery Systems**. This Need Area encourages the development and use of alternative methods of delivering technology, applied research or instruction to help increase the number of graduates with either an academic degree or certificate of completion to meet changes anticipated for specific bioenergy, pulp and paper manufacturing, or agriculture-based renewable energy workforce opportunities critical to rural communities. Multi-institutional, regional, national or international collaborations are encouraged.

   Projects addressing this Need Area must demonstrate increases in technology, applied research or instructional quality, reductions in duplication of resources, or decreases in instructional expenses. Examples may include multi-institutional or interstate approaches to technology development, applied research and/or training development, faculty sharing, cross enrollments, joint degrees, regionalization of academic programs, regional and national workshops and symposia, and similar methodologies.

d. **Student Experiential Learning**. This Need Area encourages the development of new student learning opportunities to help students meet their career goals culminating in either an academic degree or certificate of completion to meet changes anticipated for specific bioenergy, pulp and paper manufacturing, or agriculture-based renewable energy workforce opportunities critical to rural communities. Approaches may include experiences where students are placed in team-oriented, problem-solving, decision-making situations in the context of real-world situations.

Experiential learning in applied research or field-based internships is also encouraged, but should be within specific occupations supported by this RFA and that serve rural communities.

Projects addressing this Need Area must: (1) demonstrate how the experience will help meet students' career goals or produce 'society-ready' graduates, (2) contain an evaluation process—involving both the faculty and/or employer or mentor—to assure that students meet project objectives, and (3) document that the field of science under consideration is experiencing a shortage of appropriately trained personnel, and how the project plans to address this deficiency.

Funds may be requested for materials/supplies to facilitate a student's broad exposure to applied research/field techniques and methodologies, reasonable travel expenses and per diem related to student educational experiences (e.g., field trips, data collection, and scientific meetings), and support for students (stipends) while working in research/field settings (including paid internships and practicums) directly supporting this funded project.

Requested funds are expected to primarily support stipends for students while they are working in applied research/field settings. Grant funds may not be used for tuition, room and board, fees, or student financial assistance (e.g., no scholarships, fellowships).

e. **Conference/Planning Grants**

Conference/Planning grants support strategic planning meetings necessary to establish and organize proposed technology development, applied research and/or training projects. Such meetings are held prior to the launch of a final technology development, applied research and/or training project, with the objective to bring together the required faculty, industry, professional association, community leaders, or other necessary participants from the targeted rural community to develop a formal plan to improve specific bioenergy, pulp and paper manufacturing, or agriculture-based renewable energy workforce opportunities critical to rural communities.

Individual conference/planning grants are not expected to exceed $10,000, and are not renewable. Funds requested for conference/planning grants generally provide for materials/supplies, facility rental, and/or reasonable travel expenses and per diem associated with required individuals' participation at such a session.

A conference/planning grant application may not be submitted in the same year for which a RTP application for the same project is also submitted. Indirect costs for conference/planning grants are not allowed. **See Part IV.D. – Funding restrictions for further specific details.**

Note: CSREES has determined that grant funds awarded under this authority to address any Need Area above may not be used for student tuition remission, room and board, academic fees or other financial assistance (e.g., no scholarships, fellowships). Further, funds may not

be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities (e.g., no greenhouses, laboratories, barns, or other structures). Promotional items (e.g., T-shirts and other give-a-ways) and food functions (e.g., cookouts or other social meal gatherings) are considered 'entertainment' expenses, and are also ***not allowed*** under this grants program. **Please refer to Part IV.D. – Funding Restrictions for further specific details.**

Stipends to support students' experiential learning activities are permitted. Stipends may be requested for materials or supplies to facilitate a student's broad exposure to research/field techniques and methodologies, as well as for reasonable travel expenses and per diem related to student educational experiences outside of the traditional classroom (e.g., field trips, data collection, and scientific meetings) directly supporting this funded project.

Note: A teacher or student recipient (eligible participant) receiving Federal funds via any Need Area above must be a citizen or national of the United States, as defined in this RFA. Where eligibility is claimed under 8 U.S.C. 1101(a) (22), documentary evidence from the Immigration and Naturalization Service as to such eligibility must be made available to CSREES upon request.

Where appropriate, the project should promote partnerships among several academic institutions, employers, professional organizations, and/or State or Federal agencies to more efficiently deliver coordinated, academic content that reduces instructional duplication and costs. Such projects may include regional or interstate curriculum development, faculty sharing, cross enrollments, joint degrees or similar, closely-related academic activities culminating in inter-institutional, academic program delivery, and/or multi-disciplinary approach to technology development, applied research, and/or training.

2. Evaluation Plan

The specific objectives of the funded project should be designed in a manner that allows progress to be measured and documented for future progress reports. Further, the Evaluation Plan (see Part IV, B.3. Field 7.2.d.) must also include a strategy for assessing how the project advances the two RTP Program Goals (Part I, B.). The following, suggested evaluation strategies are derived from the Department of Education's *Report of the Academic Competitiveness Council, May 2007*, Federal STEM Education, Undergraduate National Goals and Metrics recommendations:

- To demonstrate progress toward increasing the number of graduates, the following metric is suggested: first provide baseline data for the year preceding the grant award showing the number and/or percentage of students who declare and/or complete either an academic degree or certificate of completion to meet changes anticipated for the specific bioenergy, pulp and paper manufacturing, or agriculture-based renewable energy workforce opportunity within your unit; Second, provide similar data for the final year of the grant and include an assessment of the impact of the project on changes from the baseline data.

- To demonstrate progress toward increasing the quality of instruction, the following metric is suggested: first provide baseline data for the year preceding the grant award showing the current number and/or percentage of graduates who either graduate and pursue a vocation in the bioenergy, pulp and paper manufacturing, or agriculture-based renewable energy workforce occupation; Second, provide similar data for the final year of the grant and include an assessment of the impact of the project on changes from the baseline data.

For quantitative, baseline, student enrollment, degrees granted and employment data to make comparisons in meeting RTP Program Goals, applicants should reference the Food and Agricultural Education Information System (FAEIS) resource at: http://faeis.ahnrit.vt.edu/; the publication: *Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in the U.S. Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resources System 2005-2010* at: http://faeis.ahnrit.vt.edu/supplydemand/2005-2010/, or other, similar source(s).

3. Dissemination Plan

Include in the project's Dissemination Plan (see Part IV, B.3. Field 7.2.e.), a description of how the applicant plans to communicate project accomplishments (products, results and impacts, etc.) to the broadest extent throughout the academic community. This may include educational journals or other professional discipline publications, and presentations at regional or national conferences and workshops, including the RTP Project Director's Conference (see Part VI, D.1.).

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards. Approximately $750,000 will be available to fund applications in FY 2009.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2009, applications for the RTP may only be submitted only as a **New application**. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the RTP. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

C. Project Types

Applicants may submit applications for one of the following two project types.

1. Regular Project Proposal (Single Institution/Organization)

Applicants may request up to **$125,000** (total project period, not per year) for a Regular Project Proposal. In a Regular Project Proposal, the applicant executes the project without the requirement of sharing grant funds with other project partners.

2. Joint Project Proposal (Applicant plus One or more Partners)

Applicants may request up to **$300,000** (total project period, not per year) for a Joint Project Proposal. In a Joint Project Proposal, the applicant executes the project with assistance from at least one additional partner. The applicant must share grant funds with the additional partner(s). Please see explanation of required funds distribution percentage among partners in the definition of a Joint Project Proposal in Part VIII, E.

Note: Joint Projects must include both the SF 424 (R&R) Budget and the SF 424 (R&R) Subaward Budget Attachment Forms. The forms should clearly identify the total grant funding anticipated for the applicant and each partner to demonstrate the required sharing percentage. (See Part VIII,E. definition of joint project proposal.) All expenditures for the applicant and all partners should be further itemized in the Budget Justification. Funds **do not** have to be divided equally among project years.

3. Conference/Planning Grant

As described in Part I, C. 1.e., of this RFA, applicants may request up to **$10,000** (total conference, not per year) to facilitate strategic planning session(s) required of faculty, industry, professional association, community leaders, or other necessary participants from the targeted rural community, to develop a formal plan to improve specific bioenergy, pulp and paper manufacturing, or agriculture-based renewable energy workforce opportunities critical to rural

communities. A Conference/Planning grant application may not be submitted in the same year for which a RTP application for the same project is also submitted. Indirect costs for Conference/Planning grants are not allowed.

D. Project Duration

Project periods may range from eighteen (18) to thirty-six (36) months. Projects should conclude no sooner than eighteen (18) months after the award date to allow sufficient time to evaluate the results and report the impacts.

E. Number and Size of Grant Awards

The total number of grants awarded by this grant program will depend on the number and type of meritorious applications submitted in response to this RFA. There is no predetermined number of either Regular or Joint Project Proposals that may be awarded in any competition.

Based on the project scope and budget of all applications selected for awards, the actual, individual grant amounts awarded by CSREES under this program may differ from the funds requested by the applicant. In such cases, revised budgets and revised plans of work may be required by CSREES before an award is made.

F. Application Submission & Award Limitations

There is no limit on the number of applications that may be submitted by an Eligible Applicant. However, a successful applicant institution/organization will be awarded a maximum of two (2) grants per year under this program.

G. Funding Limitations per Institution

Contingent upon future funding, there are no limits on the total grant program funds that may be awarded to any one institution/organization in successive years of this competition. Successful award recipients may apply for additional awards in subsequent years either as a lead applicant or as a joint partner on a project.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Applications may be submitted by either: (1) public or private nonprofit community colleges, or (2) advanced technological centers, either of which **must**:

a. be located in a *rural area* (see definition in Part VIII, E.);
b. have been in existence as of June 18, 2008;
c. participate in agricultural or bioenergy research and applied research;
d. have a proven record of development and implementation of programs to meet the needs of students, educators, and business and industry to supply the agriculture-based, renewable energy or pulp and paper manufacturing fields with certified technicians, as determined by the Secretary; and
e. have the ability to leverage existing partnerships and occupational outreach and training programs for secondary schools, 4-year institutions, and relevant nonprofit organizations.

Failure to meet any eligibility criterion above by the time of an application deadline will preclude CSREES from reviewing the application and making an award.

Applicant institutions/organizations must demonstrate capacity for and a significant ongoing commitment to, the teaching of agriscience or agribusiness generally, and to the specific need and/or discipline(s) for which this grants program supports.

Award recipients may subcontract portions of the project to organizations not eligible to apply directly for funding, provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project.

In accordance with 7 CFR Part 3430, for community colleges, as defined in this RFA, applying as an Eligible Applicant, individual branches of a State university system or public system of higher education that are separately accredited by nationally recognized accrediting agencies or associations as degree granting institutions are treated as separate institutions, and are therefore eligible for RTP. Separate branches or campuses of a college not individually accredited as degree-granting institutions are not treated as separate institutions.

If an institution/organization cannot accept Federal funds directly, it must submit a letter stating that it will accept the award, but that funds must be administered through a fiscal agent organization. This agent must be identified in the letter from the applicant and the letter must be countersigned by an authorized representative of the fiscal agent organization. The letter should include the fiscal agent's point of contact, address, telephone number, fax number and e-mail address. Both the fiscal agent organization and the applicant school or institution/organization must submit complete management information (see Part V, D.). Nevertheless, the legal recipient of the award (as identified on the applicant's SF 424 (R&R) Cover Sheet) must be an eligible public or private nonprofit community college, or advanced technological center, as defined above. (Submission of fiscal agent information (above) is not requested at the time the RFA is submitted. However, the information will be required before an award is made.)

Please note: Fiscal agents and school boards are not eligible as legal recipients of the award.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

CSREES does not require matching support for this program, and matching resources will not be a factor in the review process as evaluation criteria.

PART IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. Electronic Application Package

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov to CSREES in response to this RFA.

Prior to preparing an application, it is suggested that the Project Director (PD)/Principal Investigator (PI) first contact an Authorized Representative (AR) (also referred to as Authorized Organizational Representative or AOR) to determine if the organization is prepared to submit electronic applications through Grant.gov. If the organization is not prepared, the AR should see http://www.grants.gov/applicants/get_registered.jsp for steps for preparing to submit applications through Grants.gov.

The steps to access application materials are as follows:

1. In order to access, complete and submit applications, applicants must download and install a version of Adobe Reader compatible with Grants.gov. This software is essential to apply for CSREES Federal assistance awards. For basic system requirements and download instructions, please see http://www.grants.gov/help/download_software.jsp. To verify that you have a compatible version of Adobe Reader, Grants.gov established a test package that will assist you in making that determination. Grants.gov Adobe Versioning Test Package: http://www.grants.gov/applicants/AdobeVersioningTestOnly.jsp.

2. The application package must be obtained via Grants.gov, go to http://www.grants.gov, click on "Apply for Grants" in the left-hand column, click on "**Step 1:** Download a Grant Application Package and Instructions," enter the funding opportunity number **USDA-CSREES-RTP-002295** in the appropriate box and click "Download Package." From the search results, click "Download" to access the application package.

   Contained within the application package is the "CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide: A Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov." This Guide contains an introduction and general Grants.gov instructions, information about how to use a Grant Application Package in Grants.gov, and instructions on how to complete the application forms.

   If assistance is needed to access the application package (e.g., downloading or navigating Adobe forms), refer to resources available on the Grants.gov Web site first (http://grants.gov/). Grants.gov assistance is also available as follows:

   - Grants.gov customer support
     Toll Free: 1-800-518-4726
     Business Hours: Monday through Friday 7:00 am – 9:00 pm Eastern Standard Time
     Email: support@grants.gov

B. Content and Form of Application Submission

Electronic applications should be prepared following Part V and VI of the document entitled "A Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov." This guide is part of the corresponding application package (see Section A. of this Part). The following is **additional information** needed in order to prepare an application in response to this RFA. If a discrepancy exists between the two documents, the information contained in this RFA is overriding.

Note the attachment requirements (e.g., portable document format) in Part III section 3. of the Guide. ANY PROPOSALS CONTAINING NON-PDF DOCUMENTS WILL BE AT RISK OF BEING EXCLUDED FROM CSREES REVIEW. Partial applications will be excluded from CSREES review. With documented prior approval, resubmitted applications will be accepted until close of business on the closing date in the RFA.

If you do not own PDF-generating software, Grants.gov provides online tools to assist applicants. Users will find a link to "Convert Documents to PDF" on http://grants.gov/assets/PDFConversion.pdf.

1. SF 424 (R&R) Cover Sheet – (Required Form)
Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide. **Complete all applicable fields. The following, additional information may be helpful:**

Field 2. Applicant Identifier – This field is provided for the Applicant's use if they have an internal tracking system they would like to use in tracking applications they have submitted. This field is not required.

Field 3. Date received by State and **State Application Identifier** – This is not applicable for RTP applications; these fields do not need to be completed.

Field 5. Applicant Information – This must be the legal name of either the eligible Community College or Advanced Technological Center applicant (See Part III. A, Eligible Applicant). If a fiscal agent will be involved (see Part III. A.), do not list that organization in this field. **Official correspondence will be directed to either the Project Director (Field 15) or to the Authorized Representative (Field 19).**

Field 8. Type of Application – Only 'New' applications are permitted.

Field 13. Proposed Project Start Date and End Date – A project's duration should normally be at least 18 months (to allow time for assessment and evaluation) and no more than 36 months. Project Start Date should not occur before September 2009.

Field 16. Estimated Project Funding –

a. **Total Estimated Project Funding** = Amount of Federal funds requested (See Part II. C. 1 -3, for maximum award amounts permitted.)

Field 20. Pre-application – Not applicable to the RTP program. No attachments needed.

2. SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s) – (Required Form)
Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 3. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide.

3. SF 424 (R&R) Other Project Information – (Required Form)
Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 4. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide. **Complete all applicable fields.**
Note: If a 'Yes' response is provided for Fields 1, 2, or 4.a, the applicant must provide the necessary assurances prior to an award being made.

Field 6. Project Summary/Abstract – (Required Attachment. Must be PDF format)
Include the following underlined text along with your responses:

- List the Project Issue; (Include specific reference to either a bioenergy, pulp and paper manufacturing, or agriculture-based renewable energy occupational issue);
- List the Project Director (and any) Co-Project Director(s) (include institutional/organizational affiliation for each);
- List the project's Technology Development, Applied Research, and/or Training Need Area: (Part I, C.2.);
- Joint Project Proposal: Yes or No? (Do you plan to share Federal grant funds with other partners? See 'Definitions', Part VIII. E.);
- Partners: If Joint Project Proposal, list all partner institutions/organizations that will share grant funding (Note: Each Partner so identified needs to have their budget information submitted on a separate subaward budget attachment);
- Total Funds Requested: (List total Federal funds requested for this application. If this project is a Joint Project Proposal, also list each partner's total funds requested next to the institution/organization's name); and
- Summary Text - Provide a very concise (approx. 250 word) summary of the project to include:
  - Purpose: What is the major problem/opportunity the project will address? (Include specific reference to either a bioenergy, pulp and paper manufacturing, or agriculture-based renewable energy occupational issue)
  - Audience: Who are the intended beneficiaries? Who will be impacted?
  - Products: What will be produced? and
  - Outcome/Impact: What is the intended result (consequence) of the project? Describe as the primary benefits to your audience. Note: outcomes/impacts should be measurable, and should be included in the project's assessment/evaluation plan to demonstrate you will assess whether or not these benefits were achieved (See explanation of terms in Part IV, B. 3. Field 7. 2.d., below).

Field 7. Project Narrative – (Required Attachment. Must be PDF format)
PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 15 pages of written text (excluding up to a maximum of 5 additional pages for supporting figures and tables). This maximum (20-page limit) ensures fair and equitable competition. Reviewers are instructed to not review material in excess of this limit.

The Project Narrative in this Field 7 attachment contains the major description of the project. It follows the RTP program's Evaluation Criteria (Part V. B). Accordingly, please provide your responses in the following format:

Note: To facilitate application review and evaluation, **include the following, underlined wording as headings in the attached Project Narrative**, followed by your response for each item.

1. Potential for Advancing the Quality of Applied Research, and/or Training; Significance of the Problem:

a. Identification of Problem and Project Impact. Briefly state: (1) the specific technology development, applied research and/or training problem (or opportunity) to be addressed; (2) the anticipated project audience; and (3) the project's target objectives (what change in technology development, applied research, and/or training is proposed?) and its anticipated, overall *impact* on improving the quality of either a bioenergy, pulp and paper manufacturing, or agriculture-based renewable energy occupational issue (Note: The *impact* should be a change you can measure at the project's conclusion.). Clearly identify and explain how the proposed project will address the Need Area described in Part I.C.1.

b. Project Justification. Describe how and by whom the focus and scope of the project were determined. Summarize the body of knowledge justifying the need for the proposed project. Discuss how the project's Need Area (Part I.C.1) will be of value at the community, State, regional or national level(s), and where applicable, how it will advance improving science, technology, engineering, and mathematical (STEM) capabilities of students in rural communities. Describe any ongoing or recently completed, significant activities related to the proposed project for which previous funding was received under this program.

c. Institutional Long-range Goals. Demonstrate how the institution/organization attributes a high priority to the project; discuss how the project will contribute to the achievement of the institution/organization's long-term (five- to ten-year) goals; explain how the project will help satisfy the institution/organization's high-priority objectives, or how the project is linked to and supported by the institution/organization's strategic plan.

d. Innovation. Describe the proposal's creative approach to improving the quality of bioenergy, pulp and paper manufacturing, or agriculture-based renewable energy technology development, applied research and/or training, solving an occupational opportunity, or promoting programs that advance equal opportunity for all students.

e. Multidisciplinary and/or Problem-based Focus. Indicate how the project is relevant to multiple disciplines, or to solving rural community workforce issues, and how the project will enhance students' understanding of complex agricultural systems. Also, discuss whether the project may be adapted by, or serve as a model for, other institutions.

2. Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages:

a. Plan of Operation and Methodology. Describe procedures for accomplishing the objectives of the project. Describe plans for management of the project to ensure its proper and efficient administration. Describe the way in which resources and personnel will be used to conduct the project.

b. Timetable. Identify all important project milestones (performance targets that indicate when project goals will be met) and dates as they relate to project start-up, execution, evaluation, dissemination, and closeout.

c. Products, Results and Measurable Outcomes. Outline the expected products/results and their outcome (impact) on strengthening bioenergy, pulp and paper manufacturing, or agriculture-based renewable energy technology development in the United States. **Important Note: Make sure to differentiate among the three terms:** "Products" may be actual *items or services* acquired with funds, e.g., "…developed three, new Web-based courses"; "Results" are *accomplishments* related to the products, e.g., "...additional course materials now available online to reinforce student learning during non-classroom hours"; and "Outcomes/Impacts" are the *benefits* to your audience. Outcomes/impacts are the consequences of the project and the most critical elements in the Evaluation Plan. They are a measure of the results by comparison to what might have happened in the absence of the funded project, e.g., "…an observed, overall increase in student learning based upon 8% higher average test scores of those students who both attended class and used the supplemental, Web-based course materials".

d. Evaluation Plans. State the methodologies to be used in assessing the accomplishment of stated products, results and measurable outcomes from the project. Discuss the strategies and metrics for evaluating progress toward meeting the two RTP Program Goals identified in Part I, B. Describe any data to be collected and analyzed. Demonstrate how the project will improve technology development, applied research and/or training. This section should clearly indicate how you plan to measure outcomes/impacts.

e. Dissemination Plans. The application must document how project accomplishments (products, results and impacts, etc.) will be published or otherwise disseminated to the broadest extent throughout the academic community. Discuss the institution/organization's commitment to disseminate project results and products. Identify target audiences and explain methods of communication. This section should clearly indicate how you plan to publicize the project's outcomes/impacts.

f. Partnerships and Collaborative Efforts. Explain how the project will maximize partnership and collaborative efforts to strengthen technology development, applied research and/or training (e.g., involvement of faculty in related disciplines at the same institution, information-sharing capacity with other educational institution/organizations, or cooperative activities with business or industry). Also explain how it will stimulate academia, the States, or the private sector to join with

the Federal partner to enhance rural communities. Provide evidence, via letters from the parties involved in the partnership or collaborative arrangement.

3. Institution Capability and Capacity Building:
   a. Institution/organizational Commitment and Capability. Demonstrate that the program administration is committed to this project and has the capability to ensure its completion.

   b. Institution/organizational Resources. Document that necessary institution/organizational resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials), and other appropriate resources, will be made available to the project. Demonstrate how the institution/organizational resources to be made available to the project, when combined with the support requested from USDA, will be adequate to carry out the activities of the project.

   c. Academic Enhancement. Document how this project will improve and strengthen technology development, applied research and/or training at the institution (including any partner institution/organizations). Include how any project performance target(s) identified above (2.b., Timetable) will be incorporated into academic instruction at the institution. Discuss how the benefits to be derived from the project will transcend the applicant institution/organization or the grant period.

   d. Continuation Plans. Discuss the likelihood of, or specific plans for, continuation or expansion of the project beyond the period of USDA support. For example, does the institution/organization's long-range budget or academic plan provide for the realistic continuation or expansion of the initiative undertaken by this project after the grant period ends, are plans for eventual self-support built into the project, are plans being made to institutionalize the program if it meets with success, and are there indications of other continuing non-Federal support?

4. Key Personnel: Discuss the adequacy and specific attributes and project responsibilities of each key person associated with the project. Also include the background and qualifications of those personnel who will be responsible for assessing project results and administering the project evaluation and reporting process.

5. Budget and Cost-effectiveness:
   a. Budget. In addition to the separate, required budget forms and budget justification, discuss how the budget specifically supports the proposed project activities. Explain how such budget items as professional or technical staff time and salary, travel, equipment, etc., are necessary and reasonable to achieve project objectives. Justify that the total budget, including funds requested from USDA, are allocated adequately between the applicant and any collaborating institution/organization(s), and will be appropriate to carry out the activities of the project. If the application addresses more than one Need Area (see Part I. C.1.), applicants should include estimates of the proportion of the funds requested from USDA that will support each respective area.

b. Cost-effectiveness. Justify the project's cost-effectiveness. Show how the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes technology development, applied research, and/or training value for the dollar, achieves economies of scale, or leverages additional funds. For example, discuss how the project has the potential to generate a critical mass of expertise and activity focused on a Need Area, or to promote coalition building that could lead to future ventures.

Field 8. Bibliography & Cited References - (Optional Attachment. Must be PDF format)
If needed, provide a complete list of all references cited in the application. **For each reference, provide the complete name for each author, the year of the publication, full title of the article, name of the journal or book published volume, and the page numbers.** The references should be listed in alphabetical order using the last name of the first author.

Field 9. Facilities & Other Resources - (Optional Attachment. Must be PDF format)
If needed, describe the types, location, and availability of instrumentation and physical facilities necessary to carry out the work proposed. **If special academic, private or government laboratories or facilities are being used, include a letter in the application from the authorized representative of the facility describing the proposed arrangements and availability.** This letter should be included as a part of Other Attachments, see Field 11 below.

Field 10. Equipment Documentation - (Optional Attachment. Must be PDF format)
Equipment purchased (defined as in excess of $5,000 for each item) must be fully justified under this section. Note: Equipment, as previously defined, is normally not funded in a RTP grant. Other purchases (e.g., computers, laboratory materials) are described, instead, in the Budget Justification section under the 'Materials and Supplies' line item.

Field 11. Other Attachments - (Must be PDF format)

- **Appendices to Project Narrative – PDF Attachment. Title the attachment as 'Appendices'** in the document header and save file as 'Appendices'. Appendices to the Project Narrative are allowed if they are directly germane to the proposed project. The addition of appendices should not be used to circumvent the text and/or figures and tables page limitations.

- **Collaborative Arrangements – (PDF Attachment. No Page Limit**.) Title the attachment as 'Collaborative Arrangements' in the document header and save file as 'Collaborative Arrangement'. If it is necessary to enter into formal consulting or collaborative arrangements with others, such arrangements should be fully explained and justified. If the consultant(s) or collaborator(s) are known at the time of the application, a vitae or resume should be provided. In addition, evidence (e.g., letter of support signed by the AR of the consultant/collaborating organization) should be provided as evidence that the collaborators involved have agreed to render these services. The applicant also will be required to provide additional information on consultants and collaborators in the budget portion of the application.

For community college applicants only.

- **IRS 501(c)(3) Status – (PDF Attachment.)** Title the attachment as 'IRS 501 (c)(3) Status' in the document header and save file as 'IRS 501 (c)(3) Status'.

4. SF 424 (R&R) Senior/Key Person (Expanded) (Required Form)
Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 5. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide. **Complete all applicable fields.** Remember to attach the required Biographical Sketch for at least the Project Director, as well as any additional individual who will receive Federal support from this project.

Also, **you must attach** 'Current and Pending Support' information (see CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide p. 30 & 31, item 4.3, for guidelines and information format) for each senior/key person identified above. **Note: Even if no other funding is currently reported under the 'Active' section of this attachment, you must still list information for this grant application under the 'Pending' section of this attachment for each senior/key person identified above.**

5. SF 424 (R&R) Personal Data (Required Form)
As noted in Part V, 6. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide, the submission of this information is voluntary and is not a precondition of award. If completing the information, **do not enter any data in the field requesting the social security number.**

6. SF 424 (R&R) Budget (Required Form)
Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide. This form (accompanied by the required Budget Justification attachment) contains the itemized listing and description of the project's budget. Complete all applicable fields. Consult the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions. The following, additional information may be helpful:

Complete one SF 424 (R&R) Budget for each 12-month period, plus a cumulative budget form for the entire project. If the project involves partners with whom you plan to share Federal funds (Joint Project Proposal), make sure (a) you include a subaward attachment for the applicant institution/organization and each project partner (subaward/consortium), for each 12-month period and a cumulative budget form, and (b) the budget figures reflect the required budget sharing criteria (See 'Definitions', Part VIII. E, Joint Project Proposal).

Field H. Indirect Costs:

Pursuant to Section 7132 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246), indirect costs are limited to 22 percent of the total Federal funds provided under each award. Therefore, when preparing budgets, applicants should limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of their institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 22 percent of total Federal funds awarded.

Indirect costs for Conference/Planning grants (Part II, C.3.) are not allowed.

SPECIAL NOTE: If your organization/institution does not have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement, a reasonable dollar amount in lieu of indirect costs may be requested, which will be subject to approval by USDA. In the latter case, **IF** an application is recommended for funding, an indirect cost rate proposal must be submitted to support the amount of indirect costs requested. CSREES will request an indirect cost rate proposal and provide instructions, as necessary. An applicant may elect not to charge indirect costs and, instead, use all grant funds for direct costs. If indirect costs are not charged, the phrase "None requested" should be written in the appropriate space. Based upon information provided, a "billing rate" may be established for this award only.

Field K. Budget Justification – (Required Attachment. Must be PDF format)
Provide a Budget Justification that reflects each 12-month period, plus a cumulative budget justification for the entire project. If the project involves partners with whom you plan to share Federal funds (Joint Project Proposal), make sure the attachment reflects information (a) for the applicant institution/organization as well as each project partner (subaward/consortium), for each 12-month period plus a cumulative column total for the entire project, and (b) the budget figures reflect the required budget sharing criteria (See 'Definitions', Part VIII. E, Joint Project Proposal). Letters of consent or collaboration or other evidence should be provided to show that collaborators have agreed to participate (Other Attachment, Field 11).

The Budget Justification should follow a standard spreadsheet format ('Budget Line Item' = row; 'Budget Year' and 'Cumulative Project' = columns) including a detailed, itemized breakdown of each of the line item categories reported on the SF 424 (R&R) Budget form. This Budget Justification attachment provides a more detailed, itemized breakdown for each budget line item reported on the SF 424 (R&R) Budget form (i.e., itemize the complete list of 'Materials and Supplies' showing per unit costs and number of units to be purchased, etc.). Include a description for each requested budget line item found on the (R&R) Budget form (i.e., total budget amount reported on the SF 424 (R&R) Budget form should equal the total budget amount reported on the Budget Justification attachment).

7. SF 424 (R&R) Subaward Budget Attachment (Only required if submitting a Joint Project Proposal)

8. Supplemental Information (Required Form)
Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part VI, 1. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide. **Complete all applicable fields.** Consult the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide for instructions.

Field 2. Program Code -
For the 'Program Code Name' field, enter: "New Era Rural Technology Program"
For the 'Program Code' field, enter: "RTP".

Field 8. Conflict of Interest List - (Required Attachment. Must be PDF format)
See format in CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide, Section VI, 1.8, p.46, for instructions. Include this one-page attachment even if your responses to the questions are "N.A.".

C. Submission Dates and Times

Instructions for submitting an application are included in Part IV, Section 1.9 of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide.

Applications must be received by Grants.gov by COB on July 20, 2009 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

The receipt of all applications will be acknowledged by e-mail. Therefore, applicants are strongly encouraged to provide accurate e-mail addresses, where designated, on the SF-424 R&R Application for Federal Assistance.

If the AR has not received a confirmation message from CSREES within 15 days of submission of the application, please contact the Agency Contact identified in Part VII of the applicable RFA and request the proposal number assigned to the application. **Failure to do so may result in the application not being considered for funding by the peer review panel. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

D. Funding Restrictions

Consistent with other competitive grant programs, CSREES has determined that grant funds awarded under this authority may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research, education, or extension space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

Tuition remission (e.g., scholarships, fellowships) is not allowed.

Pursuant to Section 7132 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-246), indirect costs are limited to 22 percent of the total Federal funds provided under each award. Therefore, when preparing budgets, applicants should limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of their institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 22 percent of total Federal funds awarded.

Indirect costs for Conference/Planning grants (Part II. C.3.) are not allowed.

E. Other Submission Requirements

The applicant should follow the submission requirements noted in the document entitled "A Guide for Preparation and Submission of CSREES Applications via Grants.gov," located at www.Grants.gov.

PART V—APPLICATION REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

A. General

Each application will be evaluated in a 2-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. Second, applications that meet these requirements will be technically evaluated by a review panel.

Reviewers will be selected based upon training and experience in relevant scientific, extension, or education fields, taking into account the following factors: (a) the level of relevant formal scientific, technical education, or extension experience of the individual, as well as the extent to which an individual is engaged in relevant research, education, or extension activities; (b) the need to include as reviewers experts from various areas of specialization within relevant scientific, education, or extension fields; (c) the need to include as reviewers other experts (e.g., producers, range or forest managers/operators, and consumers) who can assess relevance of the applications to targeted audiences and to program needs; (d) the need to include as reviewers experts from a variety of organizational types (e.g., colleges, universities, industry, state and Federal agencies, private profit and non-profit organizations) and geographic locations; (e) the need to maintain a balanced composition of reviewers with regard to minority and female representation and an equitable age distribution; and (f) the need to include reviewers who can judge the effective usefulness to producers and the general public of each application.

B. Evaluation Criteria

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

1. **Potential for Advancing Quality of Technology Development, Applied Research, and/or Training/Significance of the Problem (30 points).**
   This criterion is used to assess the likelihood that the project will have an impact upon and advance the quality of technological development, applied research or training by strengthening institution/organizational capacities to meet clearly delineated needs. Elements considered include institution/organizational long-range goals, identification of a problem or opportunity to be addressed, justification for the project, innovation, advancing educational equity, multidisciplinary and/or problem-based focus, and potential for adoption by other institution/organizations.

2. **Proposed Approach and Cooperative Linkages (25 points).**
   This criterion relates to the soundness of the proposed approach including objectives, methodology, plan of operation, information-sharing capacity, timetable, expected products and results, evaluation, and dissemination plans. Emphasis is placed on the quality of technology development, applied research, and/or training support provided to the applicant institution/organization through its partnerships and collaborative initiatives, and on the potential cooperative linkages likely to evolve as a result of this project.

3. **Institution Organization Capability and Capacity Building (20 points).**
   This criterion relates to the institution/organization's capability to perform the project and the degree to which the project will strengthen its teaching or research capacity. Elements include the institution/organization's commitment to the project, the adequacy of institution/organizational resources (administrative, facilities, equipment, and/or materials) available to carry out the project, potential for academic or research enhancement, and plans for project continuation or expansion beyond the period of USDA support.

4. **Key Personnel (15 points).**
   This criterion relates to the adequacy of the number and qualifications of key persons who will develop and carry out the project, and the qualifications of project personnel who will provide for the assessment of project results and impacts and the dissemination of these findings.

5. **Budget and Cost-Effectiveness (10 points).**
   This criterion relates to the extent to which the total budget adequately supports the project and is cost effective. Elements considered include the necessity and reasonableness of costs to carry out project activities and achieve project objectives; the appropriateness of budget allocations between the applicant and any collaborating institution/organization(s); the adequacy of time committed to the project by key project personnel; and the degree to which the project maximizes the use of limited resources, optimizes educational value for the dollar, achieves economies of scale, leverages additional funds, and focuses expertise and activity on high-priority technology development, applied research, and/or training need areas.

C. Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that may impact review or evaluation. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, the academic and administrative autonomy of an institution shall be determined by reference to the current Higher Education Directory, published by Higher Education Publications, Inc., 6400 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 648, Falls Church, Virginia 22042. Phone: (703) 532-2300. Web site: http://www.hepinc.com.

Names of submitting institution/organizations and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential throughout the entire review process. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released to applicants.

D. 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 RFA, if such information has not been provided previously under this or another CSREES program. (**Note:** ***This management information will also be required from designated Fiscal Agents, if applicable.***) CSREES will provide copies of forms recommended for use in fulfilling these

requirements as part of the preaward process. Although an applicant may be eligible based on its status as one of these entities, there are factors which may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal financial and nonfinancial assistance and benefits under this program (e.g., debarment or suspension of an individual involved or a determination that an applicant is not responsible based on submitted organizational management information).

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of CSREES shall make grants to those responsible, eligible applicants whose applications are judged most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this RFA. The date specified by the awarding official of CSREES 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 RFA 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 (2 CFR 215, 2 CFR 220 and 2 CFR 230), and the Department's assistance regulations (parts 3015, 3019 and 3430 of 7 CFR).

B. Award Notice

The award document will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the following:

(1) Legal name and address of performing organization or institution to whom the Administrator has issued an award under the terms of this request for applications;

(2) Title of project;

(3) Name(s) and institution/organization(s) of PDs chosen to direct and control approved activities;

(4) Identifying award number assigned by the Department;

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

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

(7) Legal authority(ies) under which the award is issued;

(8) Appropriate Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number;

(9) Applicable award terms and conditions (see http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/awards/awardterms.html to view CSREES award terms and conditions);

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

(11) Other information or provisions deemed necessary by CSREES to carry out its respective awarding activities or to accomplish the purpose of a particular award.

C. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications 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 331 and 9 CFR Part 121—USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002.

7 CFR Part 3015—USDA Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, implementing OMB directives (i.e., OMB Circular Nos. A-21 and A-122 (2 CFR Parts 220 and 230), and incorporating provisions of 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308 (formerly the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act of 1977, Pub. L. No. 95-224), as well as general policy requirements applicable to recipients of Departmental financial assistance.

7 CFR Part 3017—USDA implementation of Governmentwide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and Governmentwide Requirements for Drug Free Workplace (Grants).

7 CFR Part 3018—USDA implementation of 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 Other Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Nonprofit Organizations (2 CFR Part 215).

7 CFR Part 3021— USDA implementation of Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-free Workplace (Financial Assistance).

7 CFR Part 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A 133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Nonprofit Organizations.

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

7 CFR Part 3430—CSREES Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Federal Assistance Programs—General Award Administrative Provisions and Program-specific Administrative Provisions for the Specialty Crop Research Initiative.

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).

D. Expected Program Outputs and Reporting Requirements

1. Project Directors Conference

During the tenure of a grant, Project Director(s) may be invited to attend at least one national Project Directors meeting, if offered, in Washington, DC, or any other announced location. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss project and grant management, opportunities for collaborative efforts, future directions for education reform, and opportunities to enhance dissemination of exemplary end products/results. Reasonable travel expenses to attend this meeting may be included in the proposal's travel expenses.

2. Annual Performance Report

An Annual Performance Report must be submitted within 90 days after the completion of the first year of the project, and annually thereafter during the life of the grant. Generally, the Annual Performance Reports should include a summary of the overall progress toward project objectives, current problems or unusual developments, the next year's activities, and any other information that is pertinent to the ongoing project or which may be specified in the terms and conditions of the award. Annual Performance Reports are to be submitted through the CRIS system described in paragraph 4., below.

3. Final Performance Report

A Final Performance Report must be submitted within 90 days after the expiration date of the project. The expiration date is specified in the award documents and modifications thereto, if any. Generally, the Final Performance Report should be a summary of the completed project, including: a review of project objectives and accomplishments; a description of any products and outcomes resulting from the project; activities undertaken to disseminate products and outcomes; partnerships and collaborative ventures that resulted from the project; future initiatives that are planned as a result of the project; the impact of the project on the Project Director(s), students, the departments, the institution, and the food and agricultural sciences higher education system; and data on project personnel and beneficiaries. The report must document how project accomplishments (products, results and impacts, etc.) have been published or otherwise disseminated to the broadest extent throughout the academic community. The Final Performance Report should be accompanied by samples or copies of any products or publications resulting from or developed by the project. The Final Performance Report also must contain any other information which may be specified in the terms and conditions of the award. The Final

Performance Report is to be submitted through the CRIS system described in paragraph 4., below.

4. Current Research Information System (CRIS) Reports

Grantees are required to submit initial project information and annual and summary reports to CSREES' Current Research Information System (CRIS). The CRIS database contains narrative project information, progress/impact statements, and final technical reports that are made available to the public. For applications recommended for funding, instructions on preparing and submitting project documentation will be provided to the applicant by the agency contact. **Documentation must be submitted to CRIS before CSREES funds will be released.** Project reports will be requested by the CRIS office when required. For more information about CRIS, visit http://cris.csrees.usda.gov.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Mr. P. Gregory Smith; National Education Program Leader; Higher Education Programs; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; STOP 2251; 1400 Independence Ave, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2251; Telephone: (202) 720-1973; Fax: (202) 720-2030; E-mail: RTP@csrees.usda.gov.

PART VIII—OTHER INFORMATION

A. Access To Review Information

Copies of reviews, not including the identity of reviewers, and a summary of the panel comments will be sent to the applicant PD after the review process has been completed.

B. Use of Funds; Changes

1. Delegation of Fiscal Responsibility

Unless the terms and conditions of the award state otherwise, the awardee may not in whole or in part delegate or transfer to another person, institution, or organization the responsibility for use or expenditure of award funds.

2. Changes in Project Plans

a. The permissible changes by the awardee, PD(s), or other key project personnel in the approved project shall be limited to changes in methodology, techniques, or other similar aspects of the project to expedite achievement of the project's approved goals. If the awardee or the PD(s) is uncertain as to whether a change complies with this provision, the question must be referred to the Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) for a final determination. The ADO is the signatory of the award document, not the program contact.

b. Changes in approved goals or objectives shall be requested by the awardee and approved in writing by the 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 awardee and approved in writing by the ADO 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 awardee and approved in writing by the ADO prior to effecting such transfers, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of the award.

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, but in no case shall the total project period exceed five years. Any extension of time shall be conditioned upon prior request by the awardee and approval in writing by the ADO, unless prescribed otherwise in the terms and conditions of award.

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

involve transfers or expenditures of amounts requiring prior approval as set forth in the applicable Federal cost principles, Departmental regulations, or award.

C. Confidential Aspects of Applications and Awards

When an application results in an award, it becomes a part of the record of CSREES transactions, available to the public upon specific request. Information that the Secretary determines to be of a confidential, privileged, or proprietary nature will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application. The original copy of an application that does not result in an award will be retained by the Agency for a period of one year. Other copies will be destroyed. Such an application will be released only with the consent of the applicant or to the extent required by law. An application may be withdrawn at any time prior to the final action thereon.

D. Regulatory Information

For the reasons set forth in the final Rule related Notice to 7 CFR part 3015, subpart V (48 FR 29114, June 24, 1983), this program is excluded from the scope of Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials. 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 Document No. 0524-0039.

E. Definitions

Please refer to 7 CFR 3430, Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Federal Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions, for the applicable definitions for this CSREES grant program.

For the purpose of the RTP, the following additional definitions apply:

Advanced Technological Center refers to an institution that provides students with technology-based education and training, preparing them to work as technicians or at the semi-professional level, and aiding in the development of an agriculture-based renewable energy workforce. For this program, such Centers must be located within a rural area.

Applied Research means a process to uncover practical ways in which new knowledge can be advanced to benefit individuals and society. Specific to this program, applied research will address a specific, practical State, regional, or community opportunity in a bioenergy, pulp and paper manufacturing, or agriculture-based renewable energy occupation that is (1) supported by both community and employer needs, and (2) provided by, or otherwise under the oversight of, an eligible applicant (see Part III. A). *Applied research* is often linked with research and development efforts to market products or services to address a specific issue.

Bioenergy means biomass used in the production of energy (electricity; liquid, solid, and gaseous fuels; and heat).

Biomass means any organic matter that is available on a renewable or recurring basis, including agricultural crops and trees, wood and wood wastes and residues, plants (including aquatic plants), grasses, residues, fibers, and animal wastes, municipal wastes, and other waste materials.

Community College means an institution of higher education that: (1) admits as regular students persons who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance in the State in which the institution is located and who have the ability to benefit from the training offered by the institution; (2) does not provide an educational program for which the institution awards a bachelor's degree (or an equivalent degree); and (3) (i) provides an educational program of not less than 2 years in duration that is acceptable for full credit toward such a degree; or (ii) offers a 2-year program in engineering, mathematics, or the physical or biological sciences, designed to prepare a student to work as a technician or at the semiprofessional level in engineering, scientific, or other technological fields requiring the understanding and application of basic engineering, scientific, or mathematical principles of knowledge (20 U.S.C. 1101a(a)(6)). For this grants program, such Community Colleges must be located within a rural area.

Eligible institution/organization means a community college, or an advanced technological center, **as defined in this RFA**, that meets eligibility criteria of this program, and is located in a rural area.

Eligible participant means an individual who is a citizen or national of the United States, as defined in 7 CFR 3430.2.

Fiscal agent means a third party designated by the an authorized representative of an eligible institution/organization which would receive and assume financial stewardship of federal grant funds and perform other activities as specified in the agreement between it and the eligible institution/organization.

Joint project proposal means an application for a project: (1) which will involve the applicant institution/organization working in cooperation with **one or more** other entities not legally affiliated with the applicant institution/organization, including other schools, colleges, universities, community colleges, units of State government, private sector organizations, or a consortium of institutions; and (2) where the applicant institution/organization and each cooperating entity will assume a significant role in the conduct of the proposed project. To demonstrate a substantial involvement with the project, **the applicant institution/organization submitting a joint project proposal must retain at least 30 percent but not more than 70 percent of the awarded funds, and no cooperating entity may receive less than 10 percent of awarded funds.** Only the applicant institution/organization must meet the definition of an eligible institution/organization as specified in this RFA; other entities participating in a joint project proposal are not required to meet the definition of an eligible institution/organization.Outcomes means specific, measurable project results and benefits that, when assessed and reported, indicate the project’s plan of operation has been achieved.

Plan of Operation means a detailed, step-by-step description of how the applicant intends to accomplish the project's outcomes. At a minimum, the plan should include a timetable indicating how outcomes are achieved, a description of resources to be used or acquired, and the responsibilities expected of all project personnel.

Regular project proposal means an application for a project: (1) where the applicant institution/organization will be the sole entity involved in the execution of the project; or (2) which will involve the applicant institution/organization and one or more other entities, but where the involvement of the other entity(ies) does not meet the requirements for a joint proposal as defined in this section.

Rural Area means any locality that has a population of 50,000 inhabitants or less, and is generally characterized as having fewer than 1,000 inhabitants per square mile (U.S. Census Bureau).

Teaching means formal classroom and/or laboratory instruction, or practicum experience in the food and agricultural sciences and matters related thereto (such as faculty development, student recruitment and services, curriculum development, instructional materials and equipment, and innovative teaching methodologies) conducted by eligible educational institutions.

Technology Development means the practical application of knowledge to address specific State, regional, or community opportunities in the bioenergy, pulp and paper manufacturing, or agriculture-based renewable energy occupations. Note: In general, *technology* is more than the development of a single product, but is instead a system of related products, procedures and services to ensure a systems approach to address a specific issue.

Training means the planned and systematic acquisition of practical knowledge, skills or competencies required for a trade, occupation or profession delivered by formal classroom instruction, laboratory instruction, or practicum experience.

F. Application Submission Checklist

- ☐ **Have all attachments been submitted in the portable document format (PDF)?** PDF attachments will only be accepted. See Part III of the CSREES Application Guide.
  - Do all submitted PDF documents have one-inch margins and are typed or word processed using no type smaller than 12 point regardless of line spacing? Are all PDF documents numbered sequentially on each page of the attachment? Are all page limitations for a given attachment followed? Submitted applications that do not meet these requirements for PDF attachments will be returned without review.

- ☐ Have all eight (8) components of the SF 424 Research and Related (R&R) Application Package been completed? Did you use the "Check Package for Errors" feature of the PureEdge viewer (see section 1.8 of the CSREES Application Guide)?

  - ☐ SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet
  - ☐ SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)
  - ☐ SF 424 R&R Other Project Information
  - ☐ SF 424 R&R Senior/Key Person (Expanded)
  - ☐ SF 424 R&R Personal Data
  - ☐ SF 424 R&R Budget
  - ☐ SF 424 R&R Subaward Budget Attachment (Only if submitting a Joint Project Proposal)
  - ☐ Supplemental Information Form

SF 424 R&R Cover Sheet

☐ Have all required fields been completed? Field 5 must contain the name of the eligible community college or advanced technological center.

SF 424 R& R Project/Performance Site Location

☐ Have all required fields (highlighted in yellow) been completed?

SF 424 R&R Other Project Information

☐ Have the fields describing project potential or actual environmental impact been properly completed?

☐ **Project Summary/Abstract**

- Has the Project Summary PDF been attached to this form in Field 6?
- Does this section adhere to the format and page limitations?

☐ **Project Narrative**

- Has the Project Narrative PDF been attached to this form in Field 7?
- Are responses provided for all underlined text in the RFA for this section (Field 7, 1-5)?
- Do responses clearly distinguish between project Products, Results and Outcomes/Impacts (Field 7, 2.c.)?
- Does this section adhere to the format and page limitations?

☐ **Bibliography & References Cited (Optional)**

- Has the Bibliography & References Cited PDF been attached to this form in Field 8?
- Are all references cited and are all citations referenced?
- Do all citations contain a title, the names of all authors, and are they in accepted journal format?

- ☐ **Facilities & Other Resources (Optional)**
  - Attach as PDF file in Field 9, but only if needed.

- ☐ **Equipment (Optional)**
  - Attach as PDF file in Field 10, but only if needed.
  - Remember, 'Equipment' is defined as having a value of over $5,000 for each item. Most equipment purchased for these projects is actually reported, instead, as 'Materials and Supplies' on the R&R Budget Form.

- ☐ **Collaborative Arrangements**
  - Has the Collaborative Arrangements PDF been attached to this form in Field 11?

- ☐ **Appendices to Project Narrative**
  - Has the Appendices to Project Narrative PDF been attached to this form in Field 11?

SF 424 R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

- ☐ **Biographical Sketch**
  - Has the biographical sketch (vitae) PDF for the PD, senior associate, and other professional personnel been attached?

- ☐ **Current and Pending Support**
  - Has the current and pending support PDF for all PD(s) been attached?
  - Have all current and pending projects been listed and summarized, including this application?

SF 424 R&R Personal Data - DO NOT PROVIDE THE SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER OF THE PROJECT DIRECTOR/PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR.

- ☐ Have all fields been completed except for the social security number?

SF 424 R&R Budget

- ☐ Have all fields been completed?
- ☐ **Budget Justification**
  - Has the Budget Justification PDF been attached to this form in Field K?
  - Are budget items individually justified?
  - For multi-institution/organizational applications, has a budget justification been included for each institution/organization involved?

Supplemental Information Form

- ☐ Does Field 2 indicate the Program Code Name and Program Code to which you are applying?
- ☐ Have you included the required **Conflict of Interest List** (PDF) attachment? (See format in CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide, Section VI, 1.8, p.46, for instructions.) Include this one-page attachment even if your responses to the questions are "N.A.".