

RANGELAND RESEARCH PROGRAM

2009 Request for Applications

APPLICATION DEADLINE: July 7, 2009



U.S. Department of Agriculture



Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service

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

Rangeland Research Program

INITIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under **10.200**.

DATES: Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on **July 7, 2009** (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding. Comments regarding this request for applications (RFA) 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 **Rangeland Research Program RFA**.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: CSREES announces the availability of grant funds and requests applications for the **Rangeland Research Program** (RRP) for fiscal year (FY) 2009 to support rangeland research. The amount available for support of this program in FY 2009 is approximately **\$940,000**.

This notice identifies the objectives for RRP projects, the eligibility criteria for projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a RRP 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 1480 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended [7 USC 3333(a)(1)] which authorizes the Secretary, acting through the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), to establish a competitive grants program for rangeland research.

B. Purpose and Priorities

The goal of RRP is to contribute to the improvement of U.S. rangeland resources and the ecosystem services they provide by supporting the development of new and emerging rangeland science methodologies which specifically address the interrelationships between multiple disciplines.

The primary purpose of RRP is to provide U.S. agricultural producers, rural landowners, and land managers with integrated science strategies to make informed land management decisions with an emphasis on enhancing the restoration and sustainable integrity of U.S. rangelands. Past RFAs requested applications addressing three of eight broad categories. In FY 2009, RRP funds will support projects in the following focused **Emphasis Areas (address only ONE)**:

1. **Rangeland Restoration** – emphasis on evaluating the optimal combination of management methodologies and technologies that result in the *establishment*, after drastic disturbance, of functional plant communities providing the products and services desired from rangeland ecosystems. The focus should be placed on research integrated with outreach to restore degraded rangeland, enhance overall soil quality, increase biomass productivity, retain and enlarge wildlife habitat, and improve water and air quality.
2. **Cultural and Social Issues** – emphasis on research projects that improve our understanding of what it takes to achieve adoption of rangeland improvement practices and identification of the appropriate outreach and education strategies needed to achieve adoption – hereafter referred to as adoption-outreach.
3. **Rangeland Drought Management** – emphasis on integrated science strategies for drought preparedness and adaptation at the watershed level and evaluation of the potential impacts of climate change induced drought on rangeland watershed function.

Priority will be given to proposals that: effectively demonstrate the capacity to develop rangeland research programs which integrate multiple disciplines, are based on stakeholder input and include stakeholder involvement, and deliver the desired outcomes of both the purpose and goals of RRP.

C. Program Area Description

Agricultural producers, rural landowners, and land managers must employ science based strategies with the primary goal of enhancing the sustainable integrity of rangelands. Managing complex rangelands subject to today's demands for products and services requires integrated science strategies from several disciplines. Integration among sciences is required to address complex problems. Highly focused, traditional approaches have been proven insufficient to generate workable solutions to modern environmental issues. Rangeland research that informs appropriate, science-based decisions in rangeland management requires collaboration that inspires innovation. Rangeland research should employ a methodology that integrates approaches to discover, understand, and address phenomena that are too broad to be explained by standard disciplinary science.

Through these projects, we intend to: (a) increase public understanding and involvement in community decision-making for rangeland resources; and (b) facilitate development and application of recommendations and tools to improve public policy. RRP will support projects that facilitate the appropriate application of tools and techniques to strengthen awareness of the impacts of current and proposed land use activities on rangeland resources. We expect project outcomes and impacts to describe changes in knowledge, action, and conditions for targeted audiences. Rangeland research requires a collaborative effort of a multidisciplinary team of researchers. RRP encourages multidisciplinary teams that represent different types of eligible institutions. Successful applicants will document success with multidisciplinary research projects and with collaborative rangeland research efforts.

RRP is expected to be a system of research that can easily adapt to emerging concerns, changes in staff, and funding.

Successful RRP applications will:

- Clearly document the experience level of key personnel working within a collaborative, integrated rangeland research projects;
- Demonstrate the ability to participate in a comprehensive nationally coordinated effort that shares data, analysis of data, and derived conclusions;
- Involve novel or non-traditional partners (e.g., non-governmental organizations, public or private foundations, social scientists or psychologists) to move programs toward improved rangeland management and behavior change in stakeholders;
- Demonstrate capacity to conduct efficient and successful integrated rangeland research projects;
- Demonstrate ability to develop new scientific methodologies and innovations that transcend standard disciplinary science;
- Develop multidisciplinary research projects which result in an enhanced land and resource management knowledge base; and
- Conceptualize and implement research projects that support the purpose and goals of RRP:
 - Identify key knowledge gaps within the emphasis areas listed in Part I (B);
 - Provide solutions to eliminate these knowledge gaps; and

- Demonstrate the ability to provide information to better inform policy makers in developing the most equitable multi-state and/or regional strategies for rangeland enhancement for the long-term knowledge base.

Emphasis Area 1 - Rangeland Restoration:

Degraded rangeland ecosystems typically have reduced control over essential hydrologic and nutrient cycling processes once the biotic component is damaged. These rangelands contain low levels of soil carbon and reduced biomass production to increase carbon storage. Degradation can be the result of inappropriate management, especially during extended periods of drought. Degradation symptoms include sparse vegetation cover, dominance of undesirable species, low soil quality, or, in the extreme, accelerated soil surface erosion. Often degraded rangelands require amelioration of these physico-chemical limitations by improving soil surface protection, improving infiltration capacity, reducing erosion, and increasing the water and nutrient holding capacity. The recovery and maintenance of these processes are key to sustaining rangeland ecosystems. Maintaining the proper functioning of these processes will require vegetation development including establishment and persistence focused on the eventual accomplishment of management objectives.

In many arid and semi-arid rangelands, costs of restoration could far exceed the potential returns from livestock production, enhanced wildlife habitat or other ecosystem services. However, recent issues about catastrophic fire and reduction of fire return intervals have once again focused attention on appropriate rangeland restoration. Restoration difficulties include: 1) some restoration technologies are unreliable in environments where precipitation is unpredictable; 2) more mesic rangelands often are occupied by invasive species, which may be native or exotic; and 3) technologies for managing invasive species to increase biodiversity, increase carbon storage, reduce erosion, and lengthen fire return intervals on rangelands are expensive and require significant investment as well as careful post-treatment management.

Applicants for **Emphasis Area 1** MUST address the following:

- a) What are the key **hydrologic, geomorphic, and ecological conditions needed to restore** the structure and function of rangeland ecosystems impacted by disturbance (fire, invasive weeds, inappropriate grazing)?

AND

- b) How do **social, cultural, economic, and/or institutional factors hinder or promote implementation** of existing hydrologic, geomorphic, and ecological knowledge? Physical, biological AND social science expertise is required for **Emphasis Area 1**.

Emphasis Area 2 - Cultural and Social Issues:

Changing cultural and social values of water requires more than just “laying out the facts”. A lack of knowledge is only one of several barriers limiting progress towards behavioral change to protect or improve rangeland resources. Barriers can include:

- a lack of motivation, prerequisite knowledge, and skills required for a specific action,
- little expectation of success or impact,
- habit or routine,
- nonexistent supporting attitudes and public policy,
- community norms that result in inconsistent behaviors (behaving differently in public versus private settings),
- few mechanisms for social pressure,
- missing or unknown economic incentives, and
- inappropriate cultural models that block or inhibit the understanding of cause and effect.

For **Emphasis Area 2**, research projects are solicited that improve our understanding of what it takes to achieve adoption of rangeland resources protection and improvement practices and the appropriate outreach and education strategies needed to achieve adoption – hereafter referred to as adoption-outreach.

Adoption-outreach requires an expansion of knowledge and behavior through a complex set of stages that might include moving from no knowledge of the issue or denial, through issue acceptance without commitment, critical reflection with careful planning, visible altering of behavior, and sustained behavior change. Adoption-outreach moves people towards changed behaviors by imparting appropriate and necessary knowledge to the audience or stakeholders. It also creates and implements a shared vision of the nature of the problem and helps stakeholders to recognize that the chosen solution is correct. Adoption-outreach builds a sense of community and individual entitlement towards the quality of rangeland resources. It reduces an individual's behaviors that inhibit action (e.g., denial, apathy, and delegation of blame), and it acknowledges the difficulty of implementation of practices.

Applicants for **Emphasis Area 2** MUST be able to demonstrate how rangeland resources protection and improvement will be achieved through:

- a) An implementation plan that surpasses simply delivering information;
- b) The set of options available for incentive programs;
- c) Integration of incentives and education; and
- d) Participation in the funded project by a stakeholder group.

Projects addressing **Emphasis Area 2** MUST address at least one of the following:

- (a) Identify outreach-educational activities that are most effective in achieving adoption among minority and limited resource farmers and ranchers. What novel solutions, unique to underserved and limited-resource stakeholders, can be developed to reduce ineffective and protracted delivery of current rangeland management technologies and practices to the rural and urbanizing environments?
- (b) Identify rangeland management issues and appropriate mechanisms to “articulate” rangeland management technologies and practices into urbanizing environments. How can we best take the lessons learned in rural rangeland watersheds and apply them to audiences in urbanizing watersheds (e.g., rangeland watersheds at the urban interface)?

(c) Develop an adoption-outreach program to promote drought preparedness on rangelands, or enhance ecosystem services while maintaining forage supplies for both wildlife and livestock. How can we effectively expand the knowledge base used by stakeholders, remove barriers to inaction, and promote a shared vision toward protecting or improving rangeland resources?

Emphasis Area 3 - Rangeland Drought Management:

Drought is a normal part of climate and a recurring event throughout the world. Since it is frequently widespread and can cover several regional climatic areas, inconsistent levels of drought severity can occur from one region to another. Effects of drought often accumulate slowly over a considerable period of time and may linger for years after its termination. Climatologists continue to struggle with recognizing the onset of drought and scientists and policy makers continue to debate the basis for declaring an end to a drought—referring to drought as a “creeping phenomenon”. Drought vulnerability can influence food security and the ability to meet the nutritional needs of a population, agricultural and environmental sustainability, and socioeconomic stability.

Drought often leads to serious losses in livestock production, impacts on watershed and ecosystem services, more frequent wildfires, decreases in surface and ground water supplies that in turn affect public water supplies, irrigation and water-based tourism. Generally, the common response to drought is reactive rather than proactive, often ineffective, and untimely. This type of response usually leads natural resource managers to increased dependency on government and other organizations, and creating greater vulnerability through disincentives to adopt best management practices. Shifting from crisis management to drought preparedness often is difficult because little institutional capacity exists in most settings to alter this paradigm.

Rangeland vegetation frequently faces the additional stress of defoliation during periods of drought, and while many species can survive either of these stresses alone, the combined effects frequently lead to plant death. Where plants are physiologically well adapted to survive drought conditions, decisions related to stocking density and defoliation frequency can determine the persistence and subsequent vigor of the plant community.

Planning for drought-sensitive and impacted areas, the role and impact of global change, alternative grazing management strategies, decision support for rangeland management, recognizing the “warning signs” of drought, real time analysis of drought conditions, forecasting “short-term” vs. “long-term” droughts, development of social and economic indicators and public acceptance of planning and behavior change are all critical parts of drought preparedness on rangelands. A key element of drought preparedness could be a strategic effort to promote behavioral adaptations that lessen our vulnerability to water shortage. There will always be uncertainty (imperfect knowledge) regarding inherent climatic variability. Planning for drought must, therefore, focus on things that the natural resource manager can do to reduce risk (uncertain consequences) associated with climatic variability.

Applicants for **Emphasis Area 3** MUST address at least one of the following:

- a) What drought management and policy tools designed to better integrate the economic and ecological aspects of drought, can be developed or appropriately applied to rangeland ecosystems?
- b) What mechanisms could be applied to effect behavior change to manage rangeland watersheds with a “drought mentality”?
- c) How can state and transition concepts provide a useful foundation for addressing the problem of defining drought-related degradation in a rangeland ecosystem?

All PDs funded in the Rangeland Research Program are expected to participate in the annual Project Director’s Meeting held at the Society for Range Management (SRM) annual meetings. Reasonable travel expenses may be requested as part of the project budget.

Award recipients are expected to provide copies of published and unpublished annual reports to the CSREES National Program Leader for Rangeland and Grassland Ecosystems (see Part VII Agency Contacts).

Support for eXtension:

RRP encourages projects that develop content suitable for delivery through eXtension (http://about.extension.org/mediawiki/files/5/51/EXECUTIVE_SUMMARY_-_March_14%2C_2006_-_YEAR_2.pdf). This content is for end users, as opposed to staff development, and must align with the eXtension Implementation Plan (available at <http://about.extension.org/wiki/Planning>). Funds may be used to contribute to existing Communities of Practice (COPs) (http://about.extension.org/wiki/Glossary_of_eXtension_Terms#Community_of_Practice_.28CoP.29;) or form new COPs that focus on Water Resources. For examples of developing COPs and guidance on forming COPs, see http://cop.extension.org/wiki/Main_Page).

Contribution to Rangeland Ecological Site Descriptions (ESDs) and State and Transition (S&T) Models:

In order to help focus their research, applicants who are likely to generate new knowledge that is relevant to the dynamics or management of grassland and/or shrubland are strongly encouraged to consult appropriate ESDs and the associated S&T conceptual models. These models are increasingly used by Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), the Department of Interior’s Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U. S. Forest Service (USFS) to guide the application of management practices. The appropriate ESDs can be identified using soil surveys together with on-site soil verification at your proposed study sites, or by contacting the NRCS State Rangeland Management Specialist. Further information is available at the following website: <http://usda-ars.nmsu.edu/esd/esdIntro.html>.

As appropriate, successful applicants are strongly encouraged to recommend changes to ESDs based on the results of their research to the NRCS team responsible for reviewing potential changes. Where S&T models do not exist, opportunities may exist to contribute to their development.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

Approximately \$940,000 is available to fund applications in FY 2009. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application or to make a specific number of awards.

B. Types of Applications

In FY 2009, applications may be submitted to the **Rangeland Research Program** as one of the following types of requests:

(1) New application. This is a project application that has not been previously submitted to the **RRP** Program. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V—Application Review Requirements.

(2) Resubmitted application. This is an application that had previously been submitted to the RPP Program but not funded. Project Directors (PDs) must respond to the previous review panel summary (see Response to Previous Review, Part IV, B.3.). Resubmitted applications must be received by the relevant due dates, will be evaluated in competition with other pending applications in appropriate area to which they are assigned, and will be reviewed according to the same evaluation criteria as new applications.

C. Project Types

For FY 2009, a proposal may request no less than \$350,000 and no more than \$500,000 for the total budget. Project periods may range from 1 to 3 years.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Pursuant to Section 1480 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended [7 USC 3333(a)(1)] applications may be submitted by land-grant colleges and universities, State agricultural experiment stations, and colleges, universities, and Federal laboratories having a demonstrable capacity in rangeland research, as determined by the Secretary.

Award recipients may subcontract to organizations not eligible to apply provided such organizations are necessary for the conduct of the project. An applicant's failure to meet an eligibility criterion by the time of an application deadline will result in CSREES returning the application without review or, even though an application may be reviewed, will preclude CSREES from making an award.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching

Pursuant to Section 1480 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 as amended [7 USC 3333(b)(1)], applicants are required to provide 50 percent matching funds from non-federal sources for all proposed Federal funds sought in the application. Non-federal matching contributions, such as cash and third party in kind, are accepted under this program as qualified by 7 USC 3015 and 7 USC 3019.

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 PD/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-OP-002303** 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 there is discrepancy 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

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 2. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide.

2. SF 424 R&R Project/Performance Site Location(s)

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. R&R Other Project Information 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.

- a. Field 6. Project Summary/Abstract. The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of RRP.
- b. Field 7. Project Narrative.

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 20 pages of written text and up to 5 additional pages for figures and tables. This maximum (25 pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. The Project Narrative must include all of the following:

- i) Introduction. A clear statement of the long-term goal(s) and supporting objectives or research questions of the proposed project should be included. Summarize the body of knowledge or other past activities that substantiate the need for the proposed project. Describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed project including the work of key project personnel. Preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed research should be included in this section. In addition, this section should include in-depth information on the following:

- a. Estimates of the magnitude of the issues and their relevance to stakeholders and to ongoing State-Federal rangeland research programs;
- b. Role of the stakeholders in problem identification, planning, and implementation and evaluation; and
- c. Reasons for having the work performed at the proposing institution.

ii) Objectives. Clear, concise, and logically arranged statements of specific aims of the proposed effort.

iii) Rationale and Significance. Describe the rationale behind the proposed research. Document priority-setting processes and stakeholder involvement. Describe how the applications' goals and priorities relate to potential long-range restoration, improvement, and sustainability of U.S. rangelands. Novel ideas or contributions that the proposed project offers should also be discussed in this section.

iv) Methods and Approach. The activities proposed or problems being addressed must be clearly stated and the approaches being applied clearly described. Specifically, this section must include:

- A description of the activities proposed and the sequence in which the activities are to be performed;
- Methods to be used in carrying out the proposed project, including the feasibility of the methods and rationale for their use in the project;
- Expected outcomes;
- Means by which results will be analyzed, assessed, or interpreted;
- Uses for results or products;
- Pitfalls that might be encountered; and
- Mechanisms for reporting research accomplishments and technological interface for disseminating information.

v) Project Timetable. The proposal should outline all important phases as a function of time, year by year, for the entire project, including periods beyond the grant funding period.

vi) Response to Previous Review. This requirement applies to ALL "Resubmitted Applications" as described under Part II, B., "Types of Applications." PDs must respond to the previous review panel summary on no more than one page, titled "RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS REVIEW." The addition of response to previous review is not counted against the text and/or figures and tables page limitations.

c. Other Attachments (Field 11. on the Form).

i) Cooperation and Institutional Units Involved. Cooperative, multi-institutional and multidisciplinary applications are encouraged. Where applicable, identify each institutional unit contributing to the project and designate the lead institution or institutional unit. Clearly define the programmatic roles, responsibilities and budget for each institutional partner.

4. R&R Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded)

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 5. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide.

Current and Pending Support – Each application must contain a complete listing of all active (current) projects. The listing must include the name of the project, source of funding (sponsor), the total amount of funding, and the effective and expiration date(s) of the project(s). As a separate listing, submit analogous information for all *proposed* or *pending* projects. **Please note that the project herein should be included as the first item listed in the current and pending support sections.**

5. R&R Personal Data – 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. R&R Budget Fed and Non-Fed

This form (accompanied by the required Budget Justification attachment) contains the itemized listing and description of your project's budget. Complete all applicable fields. Consult the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide (Part V, 7.) for specific instructions. The following, additional information may be helpful:

Complete one SF 424 (R&R) Budget Fed and Non-Fed Form for each 12-month period, plus a cumulative budget for the entire project. If your project involves subawards and/or consortia with whom you plan to share Federal funds, make sure (a) you include a budget form for the applicant institution and an R&R subaward attachment form for each project partner (subaward/consortium), for each 12-month period, and (b) your budget figures reflect the required budget sharing criteria.

7. Supplemental Information 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.

- a. Field 2. Program Code. Enter the program code name (i.e., enter “**Rangeland Research Program**”) and the program code (i.e., enter “**VK**”).
- b. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List. A conflict of interest list is required under this program.

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 7, 2009** (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time). Applications received after this deadline will normally not be considered for funding.

Correspondence regarding submitted applications will be sent using 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 correspondence from CSREES regarding a submitted application within 15 days of the established deadline, please contact the Program 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 or a delay in the issuance of an award. Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.

D. Funding Restrictions

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.

Pursuant to Section 1473 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended, 7 U.S.C. 3319, indirect costs and tuition remission are not allowable and no funds will be approved for this purpose.

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.”

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 below will be used in reviewing applications submitted in response to this RFA:

General criteria to be used to award applications: Total Value 50%

1. Relevancy of the application to the goals and purpose of RRP: Value 25%
 - Demonstrated ability to develop new scientific methodologies and innovations that transcend standard disciplinary science;
 - Relevancy to integrated rangeland science discipline and to specific goals, purpose, and priorities of RRP;
 - Quality of stakeholder process(es) by which priorities were identified;
 - Evidence of stakeholder involvement in development of proposed research;
 - Level of involvement of stakeholders and social science aspects in the conduct of research; and
 - Demonstrated capability to implement a technology transfer component.
2. Coordination component of the application: Value 25%
 - Documented experience in nationally coordinated rangeland research projects involving a national priority setting process; and
 - Well defined proposal timelines and budget to complete project with effective results.

Specific criteria to be used to award applications: Value 50% Total

1. Scientific Merit of the Application for Research: Value 25%

- Novelty, innovation, uniqueness, and originality;
- Clarity and delineation of objectives;
- Adequacy of the description of the undertaking and suitability and feasibility of methodology;
- Demonstration of feasibility through preliminary and current data; and
- Probability of success of project.

2. Qualifications of Project Personnel, Adequacy of Facilities, and Project Management Capability: Value 25%

- Qualifications of applicant (PD and team) to conduct the proposed project, including performance record and potential for future accomplishments;
- Collaboration component involving partnerships among Federal agencies, research participants and stakeholders; and
- Documented experience with collaborative, comprehensive rangeland research.

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 institutions 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, with updates on an as needed 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. 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 (codified at 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(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 7 CFR Part 3021—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 3052—USDA implementation of OMB Circular No. A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-profit Organizations.

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

7 CFR 3430—Competitive and Noncompetitive Non-formula Federal Assistance Programs--
General Award Administrative Provisions.

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

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>.

Additional annual reports may be requested to provide timely information for the Secretary of
Agriculture and Congress. The NPL will request additional reports as needed.

PART VII—AGENCY CONTACTS

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Dr. James P. Dobrowolski, National Program Leader for Rangeland and Grassland Ecosystems – Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) Unit; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2215; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2215; telephone: (202) 401-5016; fax: (202) 401-1706; e-mail: jdobrowolski@csrees.usda.gov; or Bruce Mertz, Program Specialist -- Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) Unit; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2215; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2215; telephone: (202) 401-4601; fax: (202) 401-1706; e-mail: bmertz@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. 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: Unless stated otherwise in the terms and conditions of award, 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 three years. 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 the 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 Grant Programs-- General Grant Administrative Provisions, for the applicable definitions for this CSREES grant program.

In addition, the following definitions specifically apply to this RFA:

Adoption-outreach is the expansion of knowledge and behavior through a complex set of stages that might include moving from no knowledge of the issues or denial, through issue acceptance without commitment, critical reflection with careful planning, visible altering of behavior, and sustained behavior change.

Limited resource farmers and ranchers have direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than the current indexed value in each of the previous 2 years; and who has a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four, or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous 2 years. An entity or joint operation can be a Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher if all individual members independently qualify.

Range embraces rangelands and also many forest lands which support an understory or periodic cover of herbaceous or shrubby vegetation amenable to certain range management principles or practices.

Rangeland is land on which the native vegetation (climax or natural potential) is predominantly grasses, grass-like plants, forbs or shrubs suitable for grazing or browsing use. Rangelands include natural grassland, savannas, most deserts, tundra, alpine plant communities, coastal marshes, wet meadows and introduced plant communities managed like rangeland.