

# Renewable Resources Extension Act – National Focus Fund Projects

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## *FY 2009 Request for Applications*

**PLEASE NOTE:**

**This RFA has been modified. Changes are noted in “RED.”  
Please refer to Page 3 for specific details.**

**APPLICATION DEADLINE: August 27, 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  
RENEWABLE RESOURCES EXTENSION ACT – NATIONAL FOCUS FUND  
PROJECTS**

**MODIFICATION TO PREVIOUS ANNOUNCEMENT**

**CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE:** This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under **10.500**.

**DATES:** Applications must be received by close of business (COB) on Thursday, **August 27, 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](mailto: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 **Renewable Resources Extension Act-National Focus Fund Projects (RREA-NFF) RFA**.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** CSREES announces the availability of grant funds and requests applications for the **Renewable Resources Extension Act-National Focus Fund Projects** for fiscal year (FY) 2009 to provide for expanded and comprehensive extension programs for forest and rangeland renewable resources programs at a national, regional, or multi-institutional level. The amount available for support of this program in FY 2009 is approximately **\$350,000**.

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

## **SUMMARY OF MODIFICATIONS:**

- **The application deadline has been changed to close of business (COB) on Thursday, August 27, 2009 (5:00 p.m. Eastern Time).**
- **Indirect costs, (maximum amount is 22% of total Federal funds awarded), may be included in project budgets.**
- **Ranking for the four (4) priority areas has been provided.**
- **The Forests and Climate Change CoP and the Forests and Climate Change National Conference have been listed as two (2) separate priorities. Further, the maximum award amounts have been modified.**
- **The Sustaining the Nation's Working Forests and Rangeland for Future Generations: A Strategic Plan for the Extension Forestry and Rangelands Programs will be awarded as a grant (not a Cooperative Agreement, as previously announced). Further, the maximum award will be \$130,000.**
- **The maximum award for Forest and Rangeland Ecosystems and Their Wildlife and Fisheries Resources has been reduced (from \$95,000 to \$85,000).**

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## **PART I—FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION**

### **A. Legislative Authority and Background**

The Renewable Resources Extension Act of 1978 (P.L. 95-306, 92 Stat. 349, 16 U.S.C. 1671 et seq.) provides for an expanded and comprehensive extension program for forest and rangeland renewable resources. The majority of the appropriated funds are distributed to eligible institutions based on a formula that considers the geographic extent, ecosystem productivity, economic contribution, and population for each state.

Since FY 2002, a small amount of these funds have been used to fund National Focus Fund Projects which have served to expand comprehensive extension programs for forest and rangeland renewable resources on a national, regional, or multi-institutional scale through better program coordination, innovative technologies, and extension models that can be easily duplicated.

### **B. Purpose and Priorities**

The purpose of the grant program is to provide funds for projects that:

- (1) Have national or regional relevancy;
- (2) Develop new and innovative projects that can be replicated at other institutions; or
- (3) Develop a strategic framework for the nationwide forest and rangeland resources extension program.

NFF priorities are those that have been identified in the FY 2005-2009 RREA Strategic Plan: [http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/nre/in\\_focus/forests\\_if\\_rea.html](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/nre/in_focus/forests_if_rea.html).

Applications are being solicited for the **RREA-NFF** under the following *priorities* (**NOTE: Listing below represents ranking of projects in order of priority for funding**):

#### **1. Forests and Climate Change [eXtension Community of Practice (CoP)]: **Maximum Award of \$100,000****

Climate change and its various effects represent one of the most serious threats to the health and sustainability of forest ecosystems. The effects of changing weather patterns are resulting in drought which in turn leads to damaging insect infestations, enormous amounts of standing and downed fuel, and catastrophic wildfire. Changing water regimes have been driven, in part, by changing climate. While some forest ecosystems may be able to adapt rapidly to climate change, the rate of change is expected to exceed the capacity of most forest resources to mitigate or adapt. Natural resource managers and forest landowners are faced with identifying and implementing various management strategies which will enable forests to either adapt or mitigate the effects of climate change so that ownership goals and objectives can remain viable. Because there are many unanswered questions and much existing but un-transferred information, an urgent need exists to develop and launch an eXtension Community of Practice (CoP) to serve

the Community of Interest of natural resource professionals and land managers (public and private).

A Community of Practice (CoP) is a virtual network of subject-matter content providers consisting of faculty, professional and para-professional staff, county educators, industry experts and government agency representatives who share knowledge or competence in a specific content area and who are willing to work together over an extended period of time. The CoP shares knowledge gained in the form of educational products, programs and electronic interactions with customers (Community of Interest). The CoP will organize and work in accordance with established eXtension CoP processes and procedures as described at [http://about.extension.org/wiki/RREA\\_CoP\\_Information](http://about.extension.org/wiki/RREA_CoP_Information) and utilize the established formats for the eXtension website. The CoP is a joint effort supported by funding from USDA Forest Service. Additional funds may be made available through other sources.

The eXtension Project Team will provide communication and technology support services to the CoP. The RREA-NFF funds may be used to support organization and development of the CoP. The CoP is expected to become “eXtension Certified” during the first 18 months of the project period. Progress reports will be due every six (6) months for the purpose of monitoring progress toward certification. PROJECT PERIOD: 18 months.

## **2. Forests and Climate Change (National Conference): Maximum Award of \$120,000**

The rapidly advancing state of knowledge in climate change and forests and the critical need for the application of mitigation and adaptation practices on the ground necessitates the need for the research and outreach/technology transfer/science application communities to be effectively integrated to ensure that the best science is utilized and emerging needs from practioners are incorporated into research efforts. An award will be made to an applicant to plan, conduct and evaluate a national conference on forests and climate change. The purposes of the conference are: 1) transferring technology and new science findings to natural resource professionals and land mangers; 2) providing professional development/continuing education/in-service training; and 3) to provide a forum for natural resource professionals and land managers to convey their research needs to the science community and explore opportunities for partnerships between practioners and scientists. PROJECT PERIOD: 24 months.

## **3. A Strategic Plan for the Extension Forestry and Rangelands Programs (Sustaining the Nation’s Working Forests and Rangeland for Future Generations): Maximum Award of \$130,000**

The sustainability of the nation’s working forest and rangeland lands is dependent on an understanding and appreciation for the human, biological and economic conditions and stressors that affect these lands. The nation’s extension education programs have been instrumental in assisting a wide range of audiences in gaining new knowledge that has been utilized to adopt practices that provide benefits to humans while sustaining natural resources. In order to continue the positive impacts of the Cooperative Extension System on Americans who utilize the resources as wells as the ecosystems themselves, it is critical to have a system-wide vision and

plan for addressing current, emerging, and future issues. The purposes of this project are to develop:

- (1) A process and approach to foreseeing critical forest and rangeland resource issues that have not yet come to the forefront,
- (2) A 10-year vision for extension forest and rangeland programs for working lands,
- (3) A five-year strategic plan to address the most immediate and future issues facing forest and rangelands and the owners/managers by the Cooperative Extension System and key strategic partners,
- (4) Actionable strategies for utilizing traditional program delivery methods (e.g., field days, workshops, direct mailings) and developing and expanding the use of innovative program delivery methods that advance adoption and behavior change (e.g. peer-to-peer learning, collaborative learning networks, webcasts)
- (5) The program evaluation indicators and framework for the purpose of accountability to stakeholders.

The successful applicant will organize and lead a two-year process that involves local, state, regional, and national stakeholders from throughout the forestry and rangeland sectors, utilizing the most up-to-date and innovative visioning and strategic planning processes that are currently used in the business, non-profit and academic sectors. The required outcomes from this project are:

- One or more documents that describe the vision, strategies, desired end state, and the stakeholders involved in the process as well as the beneficiaries of the extension programs, and the program delivery and evaluation processes.
- A communication plan to inform the Cooperative Extension System and key strategic partners of the vision and the strategic plan. The target audience is: Extension Directors, Administrators, Program Leaders, Educators, Volunteers, and the leadership of key strategic partner organizations, agencies, and businesses.
- An implementation plan for acting on the strategic imperatives.
- A process and system for collecting and reporting program progress, accomplishments and impact data (quantitative and qualitative).

PROJECT PERIOD: 24 months

#### **4. Forest and Rangeland Ecosystems and Their Wildlife and Fisheries Resources: Maximum Award of \$85,000**

The well-being of many fish and wildlife populations, which provide important societal and environmental benefits, is strongly linked to stewardship of the habitats on private forest and rangelands. Inadequate habitat conservation results in decreased natural biodiversity, increased listings of endangered species, depletion of some wildlife and fish populations, and increased human-wildlife conflicts (including wildlife-borne diseases). Critical wildlife and fisheries

issues (in forest and rangeland ecosystems only) can best be addressed through partnerships among stakeholders (e.g., agencies, organizations, institutions, and professional societies). This project will develop and deliver a novel and innovative approach to conserving fish and wildlife resources on forests and rangelands that can serve as a model for other extension programs. Project innovation can be demonstrated through new and unique partnerships, audiences, topics and/or delivery methods. Regional relevance and partnerships must be demonstrated. Regional partners must participate either through direct delivery of extension programs, or in the transfer of the program approach and content beyond the initial project area. PROJECT PERIOD: 24 months.

### **C. Program Area Description**

For FY 2009 funds will be available for support of the four (4) priorities described in Section B above. Applicants must not request more than **the indicated amount shown for each priority**. **NOTE: Applications for any of the four (4) priorities that exceed the maximum award as indicated in this section, will be excluded from CSREES review.**

## **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. For FY 2009 approximately **\$350,000** will be available to fund applications.

### **B. Types of Applications**

In FY 2009 applications may be submitted to the **RREA-NFF** Program as **New Applications**. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in Part V --- Application Review Requirements.

### C. Project Types

The following are CSREES funding estimates for FY 2009, number of awards anticipated, maximum annual project budgets, and acceptable project periods for the RREA-NFF program area.

#### Pilot Projects for National Focus Areas/Emergent Issues:

Priority	Funding Estimate FY 2009	Number of Awards Anticipated FY 2009	Maximum Project Budget	Acceptable Project Period
<b>1. Forests and Climate Change: (eXtension Community of Practice)</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>	<b>18 months</b>
<b>2. Forests and Climate Change: (National Conference)</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>	<b>24 months</b>
<b>3. A Strategic Plan for Forestry and Rangelands Extension Programs: (Sustaining the Nation's Working Forests and Rangeland for Future Generations)</b>	<b>\$130,000</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>\$130,000</b>	<b>24 months</b>
4. Forest and Rangeland Ecosystems and Their Wildlife and Fisheries Resources	\$85,000	1	\$85,000	24 months

At a minimum, Project Directors are expected to attend and present their projects and accomplishments as submitted papers to the appropriate Biennial Conference of the Association of Natural Resources Extension Professionals (ANREP). Additional conference presentations may also be utilized but not substituted for the ANREP Conference without approval to do so to the Program Contact. In addition to the ANREP meeting, Project Directors for the eXtension Community of Practice should budget for participation in an annual Forest Service meeting/conference. Reasonable travel and conference costs may be included in the Budget. Please refer to Part IV, B.6. for further instructions.

**The start date for all projects will be no later than September 15, 2009.**

## **PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

### **A. Eligible Applicants**

Applications may be submitted by 1862 and 1890 land-grant institutions.

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 preclude CSREES from making an award.

### **B. Cost Sharing or Matching**

CSREES does not require matching support for this program and matching resources will not be factored into 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 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](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](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-002343** 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](mailto: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 Project Summary must indicate which specific FY 2009 Project Type for which you are applying. The summary should also include the relevance of the project to the goals of **RREA-NFF**.

b. Field 7. Project Narrative – **PDF Attachment. 12-Page Limit.**

PLEASE NOTE: The Project Narrative shall not exceed 12 pages (all of which must be numbered sequentially) of written text, figures and tables, regardless of whether it is single or double spaced. Applications exceeding the applicable page limit will be excluded from CSREES review. This maximum (12 pages) has been established to ensure fair and equitable competition. Title the attachment “Project Narrative” in the document header and save file as “Project Narrative”.

**The Project Narrative must conform to the required sections for each priority area, and must be clearly labeled to include all of the sections listed below, as applicable. Incomplete applications, i.e. with missing sections, will be excluded from CSREES review.**

- (1) **Introduction.** The first sentence must specifically state the priority (from Part I, Section B) that the proposal addresses. The introduction should include a clear statement of the long-term goal(s) and supporting objectives of the proposed project. Justify the need for the project by identifying the target audience(s) and explaining their needs. Describe the applicant's expertise in the topic and in serving the target audience(s).
- (2) **Rationale and Significance.** Concisely present the rationale behind the proposed project. Discuss the potential long-range impacts of the project on the project. Any new or novel ideas that the proposed project offers should be discussed in this section. Demonstrate feasibility of the project through preliminary and current data
- (3) **Approach.** The activities proposed or problems being addressed must be clearly stated and the approaches being applied directly. Specifically, for all three priorities, this section must include:
  - A description of the activities proposed and the sequence in which the activities are to be performed;
  - Explanation as to how the project meets the expectation for innovativeness and regional relevance: How, when, and where the activities will be provided;
    - **For Priority 1: Forests and Climate Change (eXtension Community of Practice):**
      - CoP lead contact information including name, title, eXtension ID, address, e-mail, telephone numbers, and other contact details. The CoP lead contact must be a land grant faculty member or professional staff with an Extension appointment;
      - List of CoP Core Leadership Members, titles, institutions or business affiliation and e-mail addresses and a description of how the leadership team was formed. The list must include a university-based Administrative Advisor and a CSREES Liaison. It is strongly suggested that each proposed CoP identify a partnership with a Land Grant Communications unit that will work with the CoP on development and execution of a marketing plan for the CoP, plus have a representative on the CoP Leadership Team;
      - Description of the proposed CoP, including the plan to make the CoP national in scope and increase total CoP membership. Please include CoP leadership and management plan, anticipated number of face-to-face, audio and/or Web meetings planned and methods to achieve the CoP's continued productivity;
      - Description of the Community of Interest (CoI) to be served and methods the CoP will use to engage the CoI with educational products and programs; and
      - Scope of Work for the proposed CoP from September 15, 2009 through March 31, 2011. This Scope of Work must include:

1. Projected number of published Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) (minimum of 100);
  2. Plans to develop a protocol for "Ask the Expert" answers;
  3. Curriculum outline for content;
  4. Projected number of basic information pages (minimum of 250);
  5. An evaluation plan for determining the success of the project activities.
- Applicants should provide an outline and timeline for indicating how the CoP is expected to become “eXtension Certified” during the first 18 months of the project period. The anticipated date of CoP certification and inclusion in eXtension public site (public release) should be stated.
  - Additional resources that will be available to this proposed CoP at the recipient institution, including but not limited to: information technology hardware, software and staff; sufficient office space; communications technologies such as webinar video and audio; and other resources that the recipient will provide. This section should also describe the plans for sustaining the CoP after the project period has ended.
  - **For Priority 2: Forests and Climate Change (National Conference):**
    - Provide a detailed description of the approach for planning, publicizing and conducting a national conference on forests and climate change for the purpose of transferring new technology and science findings, providing professional development for the target audience, and identifying research needs of natural resource professionals and land managers;
    - An evaluation plan for determining the outputs and outcomes of the conference; and
    - A detailed timeline.
  - **For Priority 3: A Strategic Plan for the Extension Forestry and Rangelands Programs (Sustaining the Nation’s Working Forests and Rangelands for Future Generations):**
    - Demonstrate knowledge of current strategic planning models and processes that are being used in the business and non-profit sectors;
    - Describe the process/model to be used in the proposed project and detailed justification as to its applicability;
    - Describe, if applicable, the experience and expertise of any entity outside the applicant’s extension organization that may be utilized in the strategic planning process and justification for its selection;
    - Describe the approach to be used to gather input from local, state, regional and national level stakeholders and how the information will be utilized in determining future directions for the extension forest and rangeland resources program;

- Clearly describe how the expected outcomes will be achieved; and
  - A detailed timeline.
- **For Priority 4: Forest and Rangeland Ecosystems and Their Wildlife and Fisheries Resources**
    - An Extension Program Logic Model with all components;
    - A full explanation of materials, procedures, or activities that will be undertaken to enhance the potential for replication beyond the project area (Letters of Commitment for Project Replication in other locations, states, or region must be submitted as Appendices and will not be included in the 12-page limit for the Project Narrative);
    - A detailed timeline of the proposed project; and
    - An evaluation plan for determining the success of the project.

#### **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.

**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.** Also, **you must attach** ‘Current and Pending Support’ information (see CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide p. 31 & 32, item 5.3, for guidelines and a suggested 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.**

#### **6. R&R Budget**

Information related to the questions on this form is dealt with in detail in Part V, 7. of the CSREES Grants.gov Application Guide.

At a minimum, Project Directors are expected to attend and present their projects and accomplishments as submitted papers to the appropriate Biennial Conference of the Association of Natural Resources Extension Professionals (ANREP). Additional conference presentations may also be utilized, but not substituted for the ANREP Conference without approval to do so to the Program Contact. In addition to the ANREP meeting, Project Directors for the eXtension Community of Practice should budget for participation in an annual Forest Service meeting/conference. Reasonable costs may be included in the budget.

#### **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 “**Renewable Resource**” and the program code (“**ME**”).

b. Field 8. Conflict of Interest List. A conflict of interest list is required for 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 Thursday, **August 27, 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. **Once the application has been assigned a proposal number, this number should be cited on all future correspondence.**

### **D. Funding Restrictions**

**Section 7132 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act amended section 1462 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C. 3310), increasing the limit on recovery of indirect costs from 20 percent to 22 percent of total Federal funds provided under the award. Therefore, the recovery of indirect costs on awards made by CSREES under this program area may not exceed the lesser of the institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 22 percent of total Federal funds awarded.**

### **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:

#### **For Priority 1: Forests and Climate Change (eXtension Community of Practice):**

1. (15 pts) Qualifications of Project Personnel
  - The degree to which the key personnel have sufficient experience to lead the proposed project; and
  - The identification of appropriate Core Leadership Members, including a university-based Administrative Advisor and a CSREES Liaison who will provide timely and relevant information about eXtension processes and procedures; and all pertinent contact information for the leadership team
2. (20 pts) Description and Operation of the Community of Practice
  - The adequacy of the plan to make the CoP national in scope and to increase total CoP membership; and
  - A management plan for the CoP that describes the approach to organizing and managing the Community of Practice.
3. (20 pts) Description of the Community of Interest
  - Identification of the appropriate Community of Interest to be served by the CoP and justification for its selection; and
  - Adequacy of plans to engage the CoI with the educational products and programs
4. (30 pts) Scope of Work

- Covers the timeframe of September 1, 2009 through August 31, 2011;
  - Adequacy of the scope of work to accomplish the project objectives of developing and launching the content on eXtension.org and planning and conducting a national conference on forests and climate change for natural resource professionals and land managers.
  - The degree to which the scope of work can be accomplished in the given time period; and
  - Contains sufficient detail to accomplish all work products.
5. (10 pts) Resources – Description of additional resources available to this proposed CoP
  6. (5 pts) CoP Sustainability – Adequate description of plans for sustaining the CoP after the funding period.

**For the following Priorities:**

**Priority 2: Forests and Climate Change (National Conference); Priority 3: Sustaining the Nation’s Working Forests and Rangeland for Future Generations (A Strategic Plan for the Extension Forestry and Rangelands Programs); and Priority 4: Forest and Rangeland Ecosystems and Their Wildlife and Fisheries Resources:**

1. (35 pts.) Project Merit
  - Proposed objectives and outcomes are clearly described, adequate and appropriate;
  - Proposed approach, procedures, or methodologies are innovative, original, clearly defined and feasible; and
  - Expected outcomes are clearly stated, measurable and achievable.
2. (35 pts.) Project Relevance
  - Adequacy of proposal response to items required in the Project Narrative;
  - Stakeholders and partners play an active role in setting project direction;
  - Planning and implementing methods for evaluating success of project activities and documenting potential impact against measurable short and mid-term outcomes; and
  - Demonstration of feasibility through preliminary and current data.
3. (30pts.) Qualifications of Project Personnel, Adequacy of Facilities, and Project Management
  - Roles of key personnel are clearly defined;
  - Key personnel have exemplary expertise to complete the proposed project;
  - Project personnel have extensive, documented experience in developing, leading, managing and evaluating extension programs; and
  - Evidence of institutional capacity, competence and experience in the proposed area of work is provided.

**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 pre-award 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 3 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 re-competition 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 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 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>.

Annually, each grantee must submit a CRIS AD-421 Progress Report (OMB No. 0524-0042) and a one-page “popular” accomplishment report, prepared in Word or PDF format. The format and guidelines regarding the content of the popular report will be provided by the RREA Program Managers to the Project Directors of funded projects.

Additionally, when the project is complete, the grantee is required to submit a Final Technical Report to the CSREES National Program Leaders, Renewable Resources Extension Act. The Final Technical Report should summarize all work conducted and detail the outcomes, accomplishments and outputs of the funded project. This report should not exceed 15 single-spaced, typed pages.

At a minimum, Project Directors are expected to attend and present their projects and accomplishments as submitted papers to the appropriate Biennial Conference of the Association of Natural Resources Extension Professionals (ANREP). Additional conference presentations may also be utilized, but not substituted for the ANREP Conference without submitting a specific request to do so to the Program Contact.

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

## **PART VII—AGENCY CONTACTS**

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact Dr. Eric R. Norland, National Program Leader, Forest Resource Management; Natural Resources and Environment Unit: telephone: (202) 401-5971; E-mail: [enorland@csrees.usda.gov](mailto:enorland@csrees.usda.gov) or Dr. James Dobrowolski, National Program Leader, Rangeland and Grassland Ecosystems; Natural Resources and Environment Unit; Telephone: (202) 401-5016; E-mail: [jdobrowolski@csrees.usda.gov](mailto:jdobrowolski@csrees.usda.gov). The fax number for both contacts is: (202) 401-1706.

Mailing Address for the contacts: Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture; STOP 2210; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-2210

## **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 Federal Assistance Programs--General Award Administrative Provisions, for the applicable definitions for this CSREES grant program.

For the purpose of this program, the following additional definitions are applicable:

Popular Report means a one (1) page synopsis of program accomplishments written for the general public. It contains the institutions' logos, photographs of program activities, quotations from program participants, and contact information for the Project Director. The report is submitted in Word or pdf format to the RREA Program Managers.

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.