INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARING AND SUBMITTING SCMP APPLICATIONS

November 19, 2015

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OVERVIEW

The 2015 SCMP Request for Applications (RFA) contains the objectives for Specialty Crop Multi-state Program (SCMP) projects, the eligibility requirements for projects and applicants, and the instructions needed to apply for a SCMP grant. These INSTRUCTIONS provide additional information about preparing and submitting SCMP applications that was not fully covered in the RFA.

Multi-state partners are responsible for preparing SCMP proposals in accordance with the RFA and submitting them to a participating state department of agriculture (participating state). Participating states are responsible for accepting proposals from multi-state partners, screening them against the requirements outlined in the RFA, and submitting them to AMS via grants.gov. Applicants whose state is not on the list of participating states may still apply, but only through a participating state. Participating states are the only entities that can apply to AMS for SCMP funds.

DEADLINES

The deadline for multi-state partners to submit proposals to participating states is 11:59 pm Eastern time on December 15, 2015. The deadline for participating states to submit proposals to AMS via www.grants.gov is 11:59 pm Eastern time on January 14, 2016.

ASSISTING IN THE PREPARATION OF PROPOSALS

Participating states must not assist multi-state partners with their applications in terms of reviewing or evaluating content, or advising about the particulars of a proposal in the development stage.

The only exception to this is in the event a participating state is a multi-state partner on a project. In that case:

- It is allowable for the personnel, office, or sub-unit of a participating state who will serve as a multi-state partner in a project to develop a proposal in close consultation with their multi-state partner(s). Like any other applicant, they will use the RFA as their guidance document.

- If help is requested on such a proposal, state SCMP contacts should refer their state colleagues to the RFA. They should not assist in terms of reviewing or evaluating content, or advising about the particulars of the proposal in the development stage.

- If one or more persons other than, or in addition to, the state SCMP contact will be involved in the process of screening SCMP proposals, they also must not assist their state colleagues in terms of reviewing or evaluating content, or advising about the particulars of the proposal in the development stage.

- At all times, there must be clear separation of roles: the person(s) who will screen SCMP proposals and decide whether or not to submit them to AMS should not be the same person(s) who developed a SCMP proposal.

Participating states will refer multi-state partners with questions to the RFA and these INSTRUCTIONS. If questions arise that are not covered in the RFA or INSTRUCTIONS, participating states will forward them to AMS SCMP and receive a response that is shared with all participating states. This approach helps ensure an equitable and fair process for all.

FOOD SAFETY PROPOSALS

Note that applicants preparing proposals on the topic of Food Safety should review the additional guidance on this topic at the AMS SCMP website.

PROJECT START DATE

Applicants may specify a project start date in the summer or fall of 2016, however the actual start date will be determined at the time of award.

CLARIFICATION OF REGISTRATION WITH SAM AND DUNS NUMBER

Section 4.8 of the RFA contains other submission requirements. Participating states must be registered in SAM and have a DUNS number. All multi-state partners must have a DUNS number but do not have to register in SAM.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST AND REVISED REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must combine and submit the following items **in one .pdf file in the order they appear below. Applications should not exceed 10MB.** Please check with your participating state to see if they have a limit on the size of the file their email system can accept.

Section 4.2 of the RFA details the required components of the application as follows. Several of the components have been revised or expanded upon and are marked with an asterisk.

Narrative and Budget which consist of:

a) Cover Page *
b) Table of Contents
c) Abstract
d) Narrative (not to exceed 15 pages)
e) References, if applicable
f) Budget Spreadsheet and Budget Narrative **

Other Required Elements:

a) Personnel Qualifications
b) A Letter of Commitment from Each Partner
c) 3 Letters of Support from Stakeholders or Beneficiaries
d) Areas Affected by Project (attachment from Block 14 of the SF-424) ***

* Revised requirement: The Cover Page should include a Proposal Title of no more than 10 words, and the names and contact information of the project leader and other principle partners and the names and contact information of the financial offices who will be involved in the negotiation of the budget in the pre-award stage if the proposal is recommended for funding. Contact information for the participating state that submitted the proposal will be contained on the SF-424 when the participating state applies to grants.gov and therefore is not needed on the Cover Page.

** 8% indirect cost cap - The RFA did not discuss in detail the particulars relating to the apportionment of the 8% indirect cost. For applications that make the cut after the panel review is complete at AMS Headquarters, the participating state that submitted the application and the multi-state partners will have to negotiate about how to divide up the 8%. Therefore, the budget in the original proposal is subject to change. AMS will approve the final budget after the negotiations and prior to final award selection.

Sub-grants and sub-contracts – The participating state of an awarded proposal is the grant recipient and will sign the agreement with AMS to administer the project. It will be up to the

participating state and the multi-state partners to determine the contractual arrangements needed to get the work done. Some states may have more leeway than others with regard to such contracts. To facilitate those discussions, applicants should prepare a budget spreadsheet and budget narrative that shows and describes the budget components for each partner and entity that will do the work.

*** Revised requirement: The participating state will need to know the areas affected by the project in order to complete Block 14 of the SF-424 when applying via grants.gov. Because multi-state partners will not apply via grants.gov, they will not have access to Block 14. Instead, it is the responsibility of the multi-state partners to attach this information to the application they submit to the participating state. Areas affected by the project should be identified, as appropriate, for example, "entire U.S.;" two or more states (name them); or specific areas of multiple states such as "the cranberry-growing regions of New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin." If, as in the last example, the project will affect specific areas of multiple states, it is acceptable to include a map at the end of the proposal if the overall application does not exceed the 10 MB size limit.

SUBMITTING PROPOSALS TO PARTICIPATING STATES

Applicants must select one participating State department of agriculture to work with. Submission of the same application to multiple participating states is not allowed.

Multi-state applicants must email their applications directly to the SCMP state contact listed at the AMS SCMP website. That is the only way applications will be accepted. Hard copy applications will not be accepted. Walk-in applications will not be accepted. Although some participating states have grants management systems to accept applications in other grant, those systems will not be used for SCMP.

REVISING A SUBMITTED PROPOSAL

AMS strongly encourages multi-state partners to carefully review their proposals for completeness and accuracy before submitting them to the participating states. However, if after submitting an application to a participating state, the multi-state partners notice an error or omission and want to revise their proposal, it is acceptable to do so before the December 15 deadline. In that event, the entire proposal must be resubmitted, not just the revised page(s). It is not the responsibility of the participating states to piece together revised proposals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT OF AN APPLICATION

Participating states will notify multi-state partners within 48 hours of the receipt of their application.

GROUNDS FOR NOT ACCEPTING AN APPLICATION FOR SCREENING

Applications will not be accepted for screening by the participating state if the application is submitted after the deadline of 11:59 pm Eastern time on December 15, 2015.

GROUNDS FOR NOT SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION TO AMS

Participating states will not begin screening applications until after the December 15 deadline. Participating states will submit to AMS only the applications that meet all of the following requirements.

- The proposal fits into at least one of the project category types outlined in section 1.3 of the RFA: Food safety; Plant pests and disease; Research; Crop-specific projects addressing common issues; or Marketing and Promotion.

- The proposal meets the definition of a multi-state project outlined in section 1.4.1 of the RFA.

- The application contains all required components as outlined in section 4.3 of the RFA and in the APPLICATION CHECKLIST AND REVISED REQUIREMENTS of these INSTRUCTIONS.

- The request for funds is between $250,000 and $1 million.

If a participating state has any question about whether or not an application meets these requirements, or has any other questions or concerns about the application, the SCMP state contact will discuss the issue with AMS SCMP. AMS will make the final decision whether or not the application meets the RFA requirements.

INFORMING APPLICANTS OF THE STATUS OF THEIR APPLICATIONS

Once the multi-state partners receive confirmation their application has been received by the participating state, there will be no further communications until Tuesday, January 19, 2016. On that date, the participating states will inform all applicants about the status of their applications. Multi-state partners whose applications met all of the requirements of the 2015 RFA will be informed that their proposals were submitted to AMS via www.grants.gov by the application deadline. Multi-state partners whose applications did not meet one or more requirements of the 2015 RFA will be contacted and informed why their application was not submitted to AMS.