

**Risk Management
Education Division
(RMED)**

***Risk Management Education in
Targeted States Program***

**Request for Applications
Frequently Asked Questions**

Application Process

June 2011

What is a cooperative agreement?

A cooperative agreement is a Federal Assistance Award used when there will be substantial involvement with the awardee in order to meet the objectives of a program. Substantial involvement may include ongoing Agency participation in the project, very close collaboration with the awardee, and involvement in the review and approval of the successive stages of project activities.

How many types of program does the Risk Management Education Division (RMED) have?

RMED has the Risk Management Education in Targeted States Program.

What is the purpose of the Targeted States Program?

The purpose of the Targeted States Program (CDFR 10.458) is to deliver crop insurance education and information to U.S. agricultural producers in States that have been designated as historically underserved with respect to crop insurance. These states are Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming. This program provides funds to public and private organizations to carry out crop insurance education and informational efforts for agricultural producers to be able to understand:

- The kinds of risk addressed by crop insurance;
- The features of existing and emerging crop insurance products;
- The use of crop insurance in the management of risk;
- How the use of crop insurance can affect other risk management decisions, such as the use of marketing and financial tools;
- How to make informed decisions on crop insurance prior to the sales closing date deadline; and
- Recordkeeping requirements for crop insurance.

How do I obtain information about RME's programs?

You can obtain information via the Internet regarding RME's programs by logging on to RMA's Web site at: <http://www.rma.usda.gov/aboutrma/agreements/>.

Grants.gov is another location on the internet that allows prospective applicants to find and apply for funding opportunities throughout the Federal Government. Applicants can search for information in different topics and review posted synopses of grant opportunities from 26 Federal agencies, and apply for a Federal Assistance Award. Applicants can access Grants.gov at: <http://www.grants.gov/>.

How do I apply for RME cooperative agreement?

You must apply through Grants.gov by going to <http://www.grants.gov>

What does an application package include?

The application package includes:

- Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) - [PDF](#) | [Word](#)
- [OMB Instructions for Obtaining a DUNS Number](#)
- [OMB Standard Form LLL](#) - Disclosure of Lobbying Activities
- [AD-1047](#) – Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters – Primary Covered Transactions
- [AD-1049](#) – Certification Regarding Drug-Free Workplace

*Applications must be submitted through Grants.gov. You will find additional documents on this site.

How do I get an application package?

Individuals interested in applying for a cooperative agreement can download an application package from RMA public Web site at: <http://www.rma.usda.gov/aboutrma/agreements/>. Information can also be located through grants.gov and entering the respective Catalog For Domestic Assistance (CFDA) in the search field.

What are funding priorities or special emphasis topics?

For some programs, RMA publishes funding priorities or special emphasis topics in the Federal Register and Grants.gov to identify the activities that will be funded in a given year. Funding priorities or special emphasis topics are used as a way of focusing a competition on the areas for which the Administrator is particularly interested in receiving applications.

If you are considering submitting an application, be sure to read carefully all the material in the application package to identify any published priorities or special emphasis topics.

Whom do I contact if I have questions concerning the application?

RMA's application package contains detailed instructions on how to complete an application. However, if something is still not clear to you after reading the instructions, you can email the address listed in the application notice published in the Federal Register: rma.risk-ed@rma.usda.gov and Grants.gov notices.

What are indirect costs and the indirect cost rate?

Indirect costs are costs an organization incurs for common or joint objectives, which cannot be readily and specifically identified with a particular grant or cooperative partnership agreement project or other institutional activity.

All of RMA cooperative partnership agreement programs have a restricted indirect cost rate (10%) that stipulates the amount of indirect costs that can be charged to the cooperative agreement regardless of the rate that was negotiated with any other agency.

I'm trying to fill out the SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance. Where do I find the information for Blocks 8c, 11, 12, 13, and 19?

Block 8c, Organizational DUNS Numbers. Received from Dun & Bradstreet, provides a D-U-N-S Number, a unique nine digit identification number. Do not wait until the application deadline to request this number. Information can be obtained at the website <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/displayHomePage.do>

Block 11, Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (CFDA) and title. The CFDA Number and Title are listed at the beginning of each RFA in the Federal register notice.

Block 12, Funding Opportunity Number. If applying using paper applications, leave blank. If applying using grants.gov, this number is located at the beginning of the Grants.gov notice.

Block 13, Competition Identification Number. If applying using paper applications or Grants.gov, leave blank.

Block 19, The Application Subject to review by State under Executive Order 12372 Process. Each State has different requirements for applicants. Applicants should contact the State Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for Federal Executive Order 12372 within their state to determine whether the application is subject to the State intergovernmental review process. Visit this website for contact information: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>

How do I find out information about the Central Contract Registry (CCR)?

See: <http://www.ccr.gov/>

I do not lobby. Am I required to submit the OMB Standard Form LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities"?

Yes. Indicate N/A in blocks 10a and 10b.

How detailed should the budget summary be?

You must provide a budget narrative that relates to the information you provide on SF-424A, "Budget Information, Non-Construction Programs." This information will be used by the panel to compare the likely benefits of the project to its costs. It will also be used by agreement monitors to determine whether the funding requested by you is reasonable for the effectiveness of the project and allowable under Federal regulations.

For each budget category on SF-424A, provide a detailed breakdown of all costs. Include explanations of any cost that may appear to be excessive. Salaries of project personnel should be requested in proportion to the effort that these personnel devote to the project.

What are performance measures?

RMA is moving toward creating a performance-orientated application process that focuses on selecting applications that are structured to meet program performance measures and to yield

data that will demonstrate achievement of program outcomes. All cooperative partnership agreement projects selected for funding must show accountability for the federal dollars they receive. To determine project outcomes, RMA requires applicants to use one or more performance measures, which demonstrate evidence of progress in achieving project objectives. In addressing selection criteria, applicants must provide the measures required for the project convincing evidence that the proposed approaches are appropriate to yielding the intended data. Successful applicants will be required to submit results of the project to the National AgRisk Education Library (<http://www.agrisk.umn.edu/>) for posting.

An applicant's proposed designs for collecting and analyzing data on performance measures and targets must align with the reporting requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

Congress enacted the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 to minimize the burden that the Government imposes on the public and to improve the quality and use of Federal information.

What happens if I miss the application deadline?

If the application is received late, the application will be rejected.

What if there are technical problems with Grants.gov on the application deadline date?
If you are prevented from electronically submitting your application on the application deadline because of technical problems with the Grants.gov system, RMA will not extend the deadline. When using Grants.gov to apply, RMA strongly recommends that you submit the online application at least two weeks prior to the application date.

What if I find an error or realize I have omitted something in my application after the deadline?

In order to assure fairness to all applicants, RMA does not allow an applicant to submit additional materials after the deadline.

What happens to an application once RMA receives it?

Electronic applications submitted via Grants.gov will receive a Grants.gov tracking number upon submission, which is displayed on the on-screen confirmation message and sent via e-mail to the applicant. Once Grants.gov validates the application successfully, RMA will automatically pull the application and assign an identification number that will be sent to the applicant via e-mail.

How is my application reviewed?

Applications will be evaluated using a two-part process. First, each application will be screened by RMA personnel to ensure that it meets the requirements in this announcement. All required forms must be received by the closing date. Applications that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or are incomplete will not receive further consideration during the next process.

Second, applications that meet announcement requirements will be considered by a review panel that will meet to discuss the merits of each application.

What could cause my application to not be reviewed by the review panel?

Announcement requirements include these reasons for an application to be rejected:

- Applications that request Federal funding of more than the maximum award amount;
- Single applications proposing to conduct educational activities in more than one RMA Region or Targeted State;
- Applicants that do not contain substantial involvement by RMA;
- Applications from ineligible or excluded persons;
- Applications that do not address the required awardee tasks;
- Applicants that do not demonstrate a non-financial benefit;
- Incomplete applications; and
- Applications received after the deadline date and time.

What happens if my application is not eligible?

If an application does not meet the eligibility criteria for the program it addresses, RMA notifies the person who signed the application that the application is not eligible and will not be considered. The notification will not be sent until the awards are publicly announced. The notification from RMA explains the reason(s) the application was not reviewed in the competition.

How does the review panel consider my application for funding?

For the majority of RMA's cooperative agreement competitions, program offices use application reviewers from within RMA, other federal agencies, and outside the federal government who have expertise in the subject area(s) of the applications being considered. Each reviewer reads and scores a group of assigned applications. After the reviewers score the applications, the RMED staff complete an internal review to ensure that the reviewers' scoring sheets are correctly completed and that the application meets all the requirements of the program.

What criteria do reviewers use to score my application?

Reviewers score each application against the selection criteria stated in the application notice. In reviewing applications, reviewers are not permitted to use additional criteria or consider any other information that is not in the application.

Does a high score guarantee funding?

No. Even if an application ranks high it may not be funded. In some instances, because of the large number of high quality applications that were under a competition and because of the limited funds that Congress appropriates for a program, RMA may be unable to fund all of them. In addition, high-scoring applications may not be funded because a program may establish a geographic distribution requirement that limits the number of grants awarded to

specific regions of the country. Some applications also may not be funded because of an applicant's poor performance in the past on other federal projects.

Keep in mind that a project is not guaranteed funding until an official Agreement has been signed by the authorized RMA official and mailed to the applicant.

How long does it take RMA to decide on my application?

Although the time varies from program to program, it takes approximately 4-6 weeks from the time RMA receives a new application to the time an award is made. RMA must carefully follow its procedures, as well as requirements established by Congress, in reviewing applications and awarding grants. We must assure that the review and award process is fair to all applicants.

How do I learn that my application has been selected?

An RMED staff person will contact the prospective awardee to inform the individual or organization of the award. An application is not considered funded until RMA sends an applicant a signed Agreement.

Is an application always funded for the entire amount requested?

No. In some cases the application reviewers or program staff determines that certain proposed activities in the application are unnecessary. In others, the program staff will determine that the amounts requested for particular items are excessive and will reduce them. Funding levels may also be restricted based on the amount of funds appropriated for a particular fiscal year for a program and the number of the applications to be funded.

Notice: RMED will provide one-hour teleconferences on June 21, 22, and 23 at 10:00 am and at 1:00 pm to provide information and answer questions sent to the RME mailbox noted previously in this document. Please contact Leonard Randolph at: 202-260-4726 to reserve a space in one of the teleconferences.