

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**Cooperative State Research,
Education, and Extension Service****Agricultural Telecommunications
Program**

AGENCY: Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, Department of Agriculture.

ACTION: Notice.

SUBJECT: Agricultural Telecommunications Program; Fiscal Year 1995; Request for Proposals; Application Guidelines.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Barbara A. White, 202-720-3029 for program information, or Margaret Bell, Cooperative Funds Division, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, USDA, 202-401-4314, for fiscal or budget information.

Program Description*(a) Purpose*

Proposals are requested for the purpose of awarding competitive grants for fiscal year 1995 under the Agricultural Telecommunications Program. Grants will be awarded to eligible institutions to assist in development and utilization of an agricultural communications network to facilitate and to strengthen agricultural extension, resident education and research, and domestic and international marketing of United States commodities and products through a partnership between eligible institutions and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The network will employ satellite and other telecommunications technology to disseminate and to share academic instruction, cooperative extension programming, agricultural research, and marketing information. The authority for this program is contained in section 1673 of the Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990, Pub. L. 101-624. The program is administered by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) of USDA.

(b) Available Funding

For fiscal year 1995, \$1.221 million is available for the program. Grants under this program may provide funds for no more than 50 percent (50%) of the cost of a proposed project, unless otherwise determined by the Secretary. For the purpose of determining the non-Federal share of such costs, consideration will be given to contributions in cash and in-kind, fairly evaluated, including, but not

limited to premises, equipment and services.

(c) Eligibility

Proposals are invited from accredited institutions of higher education. Applicants must demonstrate that they participate in a network that distributes programs consistent with the following objectives: (1) Make optimal use of available resources for agricultural extension, resident education, and research by sharing resources between participating institutions; (2) improve the competitive position of United States agriculture in international markets by disseminating information to producers, processors, and researchers; (3) train students for careers in agriculture and food industries; (4) facilitate interaction among leading agricultural scientists; (5) enhance the ability of United States agriculture to respond to environmental and food safety concerns; and; (6) identify new uses for farm commodities and to increase the demand for United States agricultural products in both domestic and foreign markets.

In addition to the above, an applicant must qualify as a responsible applicant in order to be eligible for a grant under the program. To qualify as responsible, an applicant must meet the following standards:

(1) Adequate financial resources for performance, the necessary experience, organizational and technical qualifications, and facilities, or a firm commitment, arrangement, or ability to obtain the same (including any to be obtained through sub-agreement(s)/contract(s));

(2) Ability to comply with the proposed or required completion schedule for the project;

(3) Adequate financial management system and audit procedures that provide efficient and effective accountability and control of all funds, property, and other assets;

(4) Satisfactory record of integrity, judgment, and performance, including, in particular, any prior performance under grants and contracts from the Federal Government; and

(5) Otherwise be qualified and eligible to receive Federal assistance under the applicable laws and regulations.

(d) Definitions

For the purpose of awarding funding under this program, the following definitions are applicable:

(1) "Administrative costs" means the total of direct and indirect costs as defined in 7 CFR part 3015, USDA Uniform Federal Assistance

Regulations, related to the operation of a project under this program;

(2) "Administrator" means the Administrator of CSREES and any other officer or employee of the Department to whom the authority to issue or modify grant instruments has been delegated.

(3) "Agricultural telecommunications" means those activities established to encourage development and utilization of an agricultural communications network employing satellite and other telecommunications technologies to disseminate and to share academic instruction, cooperative extension programming, agricultural research, and marketing information;

(4) "Awarding official" means the Administrator, CSREES, or any other officer or employee of the Department to whom the authority to issue or modify Agricultural Telecommunications grant instruments on behalf of the Department has been delegated.

(5) "Communications network" refers to television or cable television origination or distribution equipment, signal conversion equipment (including both modulators and demodulators), computer hardware and software, programs or terminals, or related devices, used to process and exchange data through a telecommunications system in which signals are generated, modified or prepared for transmission, or received, via telecommunications terminal equipment or via telecommunications transmission;

(6) "Delivery" means the transmission and reception of programs by facilities that transmit, receive, or carry data between telecommunications terminal equipment at each end of a telecommunications circuit or path;

(7) "Facilities" includes microwave antennae, fiberoptic cables and repeaters, coaxial cables, communications satellite ground station complexes, copper cable electronic equipment associated with telecommunications transmission;

(8) "Grant" means the assistance award by the Administrator to a grantee to develop agricultural telecommunications programs utilizing an agricultural telecommunications network;

(9) "Grantee" means the entity designated in the grant award document as the responsible legal entity to whom a grant is awarded;

(10) "Peer Review Panel" means a group of appropriate employees of the Federal Government qualified to give advice on the merit of grant applications submitted under this program;

(11) "Project" means the particular activity within the scope of the program