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Signed in Washington, DC, on April 15, 2002.

Ross J. Davidson, Jr.,
Manager, Federal Crop Insurance Corporation.

[FR Doc. 02–9616 Filed 4–18–02; 8:45 am]
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insurance Act (7 U.S.C. 1522(d)(3)(F)).

A. Authority

Part I

—

General Information

A. Authority

This program is authorized under section 522(d)(3)(F) of the Federal Crop Insurance Act (7 U.S.C. 1522(d)(3)(F)).

B. Background

FCIC is committed to meeting the risk management needs of the nation’s farmers and ranchers. It does this by offering Federal crop insurance products through a network of private-sector partners, overseeing the creation of new products, seeking enhancements in existing products, ensuring the integrity of crop insurance programs, offering outreach programs aimed at equal access and participation of underserved communities, and providing risk management education and information.

FCIC’s educational mission was strengthened significantly with the enactment of section 522(d)(3)(F) of the Act. This section increases the funding for training and other informational efforts through the formation of partnerships with public and private organizations for the purpose of establishing risk management training and informational programs for agricultural producers. A priority is to be given to partnerships designed to reach producers of Targeted Commodities. An “agricultural commodity,” as used in this announcement, means wheat, cotton, fax, corn, dry beans, oats, barley, rye, tobacco, rice, peanuts, soybeans, sugar beets, sugar cane, tomatoes, grain sorghum, sunflowers, raisins, oranges, sweet corn, dry peas, freezing and canning peas, forage, apples, grapes, potatoes, timber and forests, nursery crops, citrus, and other fruits and vegetables, nuts, tame hay, native grass, aquacultural species (including, but not limited to, any species of finfish, mollusk, crustacean, or other aquatic invertebrate, amphibian, reptile, or aquatic plant propagated or reared in a controlled or selected environment), or any other agricultural commodity, excluding stored grain, determined by the Board of the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation, or any one or more of such commodities, as the context may indicate.

C. Project Goals

The goals of these educational projects if to provide farmers and ranchers with urgently needed training and information to be able to:

• Identify the risk management tools that are available for their commodities;

• Know where to obtain the risk management tools;

• Understand how each risk management tool operates; and

• Select the risk management tools that best meet the risk management needs.

D. Purpose

Each partnership agreement awarded through this program will provide the applicant with funds, guidance, and the substantial involvement of the Risk Management Agency (RMA) to carry out a risk management education program for the producers or commodities identified above. The purpose of this program: “to provide producers with training and informational opportunities so that the producers will be better able to use financial management, crop insurance, marketing contracts, and other existing and emerging risk management tools.”

The ideal time to reach producers with training and informational programs is after harvesting has ended and before spring plantings begin—roughly a period of November through March. Therefore, this announcement anticipates that training and informational activities directed towards producers will be planned mostly for the November 2002 through March 2003 period. However, it does not limit training and informational activities to this time period. To reach producers during the peak period, it is anticipated that project leaders will need sufficient lead-time to organize and schedule events, commit funds to reserve event facilities, gather materials,

raise awareness, and otherwise make the preparations needed to ensure producer participation. Most of all, project leaders need time to foster the cooperation and active support of organizations with close ties to local producers. The cooperation of such organizations is essential in influencing local producers to participate in the type of activities envisioned in this educational program.

Part II

—

Program Objectives and Requirements

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include State departments of agriculture, State land-grant universities, non-profit agricultural organizations, and other public or private organizations with the local experience needed to lead an educational program for farmers and ranchers in any area of the United States or Puerto Rico. Applicants must have demonstrated capabilities in developing and implementing risk management and marketing options for Targeted Commodities. Applicants must also be able to demonstrate that they will receive a non-financial benefit as a result of a partnership agreement. Non-financial benefits must be to the applicant, not the agricultural community, and must include more than the ability to provide employment. The applicant must demonstrate that performance under the partnership agreement will further the specific mission of the applicant (such as providing research or activities necessary for graduate or other students to complete their educational program) or increase the knowledge base of the farmers and ranchers that are served by the applicant and thereby decreasing the risk of loss to the applicant (such as applicants who provide goods or services to farmers or ranchers and would be adversely affected if the farmer or rancher did not have adequate risk protection).

B. Project Period

Each project will be funded for a period of up to one year for the activities described in this announcement.

C. Availability of Funds and Amounts

Approximately $2,000,000 is available in fiscal year 2002 to fund partnership agreements. The maximum for any partnership agreement award will be $100,000. It is expected that the awards will be made 30 days after application deadline.

To ensure that this program gives priority to the risk management training of those producers identified above and
such that the total amount of funding reduction in funds on a pro rata basis the maximum amount available, RMA may fund all other regions requested funding does not exceed the maximum amount available. If RMA funds may be provided to other regions proposals in a region such that the nearest $25,000.

Nevada, and Wyoming. The totals of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Utah, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Utah, Nevada, and Wyoming. The totals of both allocations are rounded to the nearest $25,000.

If there are insufficient number of proposals in a region such that the requested funding does not hit the maximum amount available, the excess funds may be provided to other regions where the proposals received exceeds the maximum amount available. If RMA determines that certain proposals should be funded but the total requested funds under such proposals exceed the maximum amount available, RMA my request that each proposal accept a reduction in funds on a pro rata basis such that the total amount of funding requests does not exceed the maximum amount available.

Part III—Program Description

In conducting activities to achieve the purpose and goals of this program, the applicant will be responsible for the activities listed under paragraph A of this part. RMA will provide substantial technical assistance on the presentation and dissemination of Federal crop insurance information and will be specifically responsible for the activities listed under paragraph B.

A. Recipient Activities

The applicant will be required to perform the following activities:

1. Assemble a risk management curriculum for producers. This will include: (a) Gathering existing instructional materials that meet the local needs of agricultural producers of agricultural commodities; (b) identifying gaps in existing instructional materials; and (c) developing new materials or modifying existing instructional materials to fill existing gaps.

2. Develop and conduct a promotional program. This program will include activities using media, newsletters, publications, or other informational dissemination techniques that are designed to: (a) Raise awareness for risk management; (b) inform producers of the availability of risk management tools; and (c) inform producers of training and informational opportunities.

3. Deliver education and information to agribusiness professionals. This will include organizing and delivering training to those agribusiness professionals that have frequent opportunities to advise farmers of agricultural commodities and to those individuals that will directly train producers under this program.

4. Organize and deliver risk management training and informational opportunities developed in paragraph A of this part. RMA will provide substantial technical assistance on the presentation and dissemination of Federal crop insurance information and will be specifically responsible for the activities listed under paragraph B.

B. RMA Activities

RMA will be responsible for the following activities:

1. Collaborate on organization of a risk management curriculum developed by the applicant for producers of agricultural commodities. This will include: (a) Serving on curriculum development workgroups; (b) providing curriculum developers with fact sheets and other crop insurance publications from RMA; (c) advising the applicant on the materials available over the internet through the AgRisk Education Library; (d) advising the applicant on technical issues related to crop insurance instructional materials; (e) advising the applicant on the use of the standardized design and layout formats to be used on program materials; and (f) reviewing and approving in advance all educational materials for technical accuracy.

2. Collaborate on a promotional program for raising awareness for risk management and for informing producers of agricultural commodities of training and informational opportunities. This will include: (a) serving on workgroups that plan promotional programs; (b) advising the applicant on technical issues related to the presentation of crop insurance products in promotional materials; (c) participating, as appropriate, in media programs designed to raise general awareness or provide farmers with risk management education; and (d) reviewing and approving in advance all promotional plans, materials, and programs.

3. Collaborate on the organization and delivery of training to agribusiness leaders and producer trainers. This will include: (a) Advising the applicant on technical issues related to the delivery of crop insurance education and information to agribusiness professionals; (b) assisting the applicant in informing crop insurance professionals about agribusiness training plans and scheduled meetings; (c) participating in the presentation of training to agribusiness professionals; and (d) reviewing and approving in advance all agribusiness training plans.

4. Collaborate on the organization and delivery of risk management education to agricultural producers. This would
A. Program Application Materials

Program application materials under this announcement may be downloaded from the RMA website at: www.rma.usda.gov. Applicants may also request application materials from: Lydia Astorga, USDA–RMA–RME, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Stop 0808, (Portals Bldg., Suite 508), Washington, DC 20250–0808, phone: (202) 260–4728, fax: (202) 690–3605, e-mail: Lydia_Astorga@wdc.usda.gov.

B. Content of Applications

A complete and valid application package must include the following:

1. A completed and signed OMB Standard Form 424, “Application for Federal Assistance”.
2. A completed and signed OMB Standard Form 424–A, “Budget Information—Non-construction Programs”.
3. A written narrative (limited to 10 single-sided pages) that describes the educational project, the program delivery plan, the evaluation criteria to determine whether the program was successful, and provides reviewers with sufficient information to effectively evaluate the application under the criteria contained part V.
4. An Appendix containing any attachments that may support information in the narrative (Optional)

C. Submission of Applications

An original and two copies of the completed and signed application must be submitted in one package at the time of initial submission. All applications must be submitted by the deadline. Applications that do not meet all of the requirements in this announcement are considered as late applications. Late applications will not be considered in the current competition and will be returned to the applicant.

Applications submitted through express, overnight mail or another delivery service will be considered as meeting the announced deadline if they are received in the mailroom at the address stated above for express, overnight mail or another delivery service on or before the deadline. Applicants are cautioned that express, overnight mail or other delivery services do not always deliver as agreed. Applicants should take this into account because failure of such delivery services will not extend the deadline. The address must appear on the envelope or package containing the application with the note “Attention: Targeted Commodity Partnerships for Risk Management Education Program”.

Mail will be considered meeting the announced deadline if they are received on or before the deadline in the mailroom at the address stated above for mailed applications. Applicants are responsible for mailing applications well in advance, to ensure that applications are received on or before the deadline time and date. Applicants using the U.S. Postal Service should allow for the extra time for delivery due to the additional security measures that mail delivered to government offices in the Washington DC area now requires. RMA cannot accommodate transmissions of applications by facsimile or through other electronic media. Therefore, applications transmitted electronically will not be accepted regardless of the date or time of submission or the time of receipt.

D. Acknowledgement of Applications

Receipt of applications will be acknowledged by e-mail, whenever possible. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to provide e-mail addresses in their applications. If an e-mail address is not indicated on an application, receipt will be acknowledged by letter.

When received by RMA, applications will be assigned an identification number. This number will be communicated to applicants in the acknowledgement of receipt of applications. An applications identification number should be referenced in all correspondence regarding the application. If the applicant does not receive an acknowledgement within 15 days of the submission deadline, the applicant should contact Lydia Astorga at (202) 260–4728.

Part V—Review Process

A. General

Each application will be evaluated using a three-part process. First, each application will be screened by RMA personnel to ensure that it meets the requirements in this announcement and is worthy of review. Applicants must be affiliated with a state, regional or local government agency, a state, regional or local association, a state or local university, or a private entity that will use the funds to develop and deliver educational programs to producers. Each application will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Production Region
2. Education and Information
3. Support

Each application will be evaluated for its potential to achieve the goals of the program and the extent to which the program will be implemented effectively. Each application will be evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest score.

Second, a review panel will determine whether the producers to be provided with training and informational opportunities are producers of Targeted Commodities. All applications in a given region designated by the panel as producers of Targeted Commodities, will be awarded 10 bonus evaluation points. Bonus evaluation points will be added to a project’s merit evaluation points to determine an application’s total score. Third, the review panel will consider the merits of all applications that pass the initial screen. The panel for each application will be comprised of not less than three independent reviewers from USDA, other federal agencies, and other representatives of public and private organizations, as needed. The narrative, and any appendices, provided by each applicant will be used by the review panel to evaluate the merits of the project that is being proposed for funding. The panel will examine and rank all applications within each region’s grouping and award merit evaluation points based on the “Evaluation Criteria and Weights” contained in paragraph B. Each regional grouping will be evaluated, ranked, and scored independently.
Applications will be evaluated in each of the five criteria listed below and the top five applications for each region will be entered into a drawing.

1. Management—maximum 15 points

The applicant for funding must demonstrate their ability to implement sound and effective management practices and have the organizational skills, leadership, and experience in delivering services or programs that benefit the targeted producers will receive higher rankings than applicants that cannot demonstrate existing partnerships. Moreover, applicants with existing partnerships reaching a broader group of farmers and ranchers will be ranked higher than those with more limited partnerships.

2. Partnering—maximum 25 points

The applicant must demonstrate experience and capacity to partner with and gain the support of growers, organizations, agribusiness professionals, and agricultural leaders to carry out a local program of risk management education and information to the producers of agricultural commodities. Applicants that can demonstrate and document that partnerships commitments are in place for the express purpose of delivering the program in this announcement will receive higher rankings than applicants that cannot demonstrate existing partnerships.

3. Goals and Objectives—maximum 25 points

For each of the applicant’s responsibilities contained in part III, the applicant must demonstrate that he or she can establish specific goals, tasks, and timeframes that further the purpose of this program. Applicants will obtain a higher ranking to the extent that the goals envisioned for each task of the project are specific, measurable, time-framed, realistic, have specific time frames for completion, and relate directly to the required activities and program objectives described in this announcement.

4. Cost Effectiveness—maximum 20 points

The applicant must demonstrate that the direct and indirect risk management education benefits to farmers and ranchers in the State warrant the funding requested. Applicants will be ranked according to the extent to which they can effectively demonstrate that the quantity and quality of the risk management education and information received by producers during the project is maximized relative to the requested

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panelists will not be identified with the review of any particular application.

**Part VI—Additional Information**

**A. Access to Panel Review Information**

Copies of rating forms, not including the identity of reviewers, will be sent to the applicant after the review and awards process has been completed.

**B. Notification of Partnership Agreement Awards**

Following approval of the applications selected for funding, notice of project approval and authority to draw down funds will be made to the selected applicants in writing. Within the limit of funds available for such purpose, the awarding official of RMA shall enter into partnership agreements with those applicants whose applications are judged to be most meritorious under the procedures set forth in this announcement, which provides the amount of Federal funds for use in the project period, the terms and conditions of the award, and the time period for the project. The effective date of the partnership agreement shall be on the date the agreement is executed by both parties and it shall remain in effect for no more that one year. All funds provided to the applicant by FCIC must be expended solely for the purpose for which the funds are obligated in accordance with the approved application and budget, the regulations, the terms and conditions of the award, and the applicability of Federal cost principles. No commitment of Federal assistance beyond the project period is made or implied, as a result of any award resulting from this Notice.

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Manager, Federal Crop Insurance Corporation.

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