

creation of new risk management 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.

One of RMA's four strategic goals is to ensure that its customers are well informed as to the risk management solutions available. This educational goal is supported by section 524(a) of the Act. This section authorizes funding for the establishment of crop insurance educational and outreach efforts in States that have historically been underserved by Federal crop insurance program. In accordance with the Act, the Secretary of Agriculture determined that fifteen States met the criteria for "underserved" and they are Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming (collectively referred to as "Targeted States").

3. Project Goal

The goal of the Targeted States program is to ensure that farmers and ranchers in the Targeted States are sufficiently informed so as to take full advantage of existing and emerging crop insurance products.

4. Purpose

The purpose of the Targeted States program is to provide farmers and ranchers in Targeted States with education and information 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; and
- How the use of crop insurance can affect other risk management decisions, such as the use of marketing and financial tools.

Each cooperative agreement awarded through this program will provide the recipient with funds, guidance, and the substantial involvement of RMA to carry out a program to achieve this purpose in a Targeted State.

For some farms in Targeted States, existing crop insurance products are either not available or require enhancements to provide effective protection. The Act envisions new and enhanced insurance products that will meet the needs of these farmers and ranchers. Until these new products are available, producers would still benefit

from an educational program that provides an understanding of crop insurance and the basic skills required for making a sound crop insurance decision.

RMA envisions that most of the training and informational activities under these cooperative agreements will be conducted during the November 2003 through March 2004 period, which will be the best time to reach producers with educational programs in most areas. However, activities are not restricted to this time period because certain groups of producers might benefit from a different schedule of educational activities. RMA anticipates that, through these cooperative agreements, project leaders will have sufficient time to organize and schedule events, commit funds to reserve event facilities, gather materials, raise awareness, and otherwise make the preparations needed to ensure good producer participation in all planned educational activities. Most of all, RMA anticipates that project leaders will prepare by fostering the cooperation and active support of organizations with close ties to local producers. Support from such organizations is essential in influencing local producers to participate in the type of activities envisioned in this educational program.

Projects funded through this program are envisioned to include the participation of multiple and diverse partners within the specific Targeted State. Partners should include public and private agricultural organizations in the Targeted State with a stake in ensuring that agricultural producers have increased knowledge and skill in using crop insurance. RMA specifically encourages applicants to address the needs of beginning farmers and ranchers as an important element of the project.

B. Eligibility/Funding

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligibility applicants include State departments of agriculture, universities, non-profit agricultural organizations, and other public or private organizations with the capacity to lead a local program of crop insurance education for farmers and ranchers within a Targeted State. Individuals are eligible applicants. Applicants may apply to deliver education in more than one Targeted State, but a separate application must be submitted for each State. Applications for projects directed to producers outside of the Targeted States will not be considered for funding.

Although an applicant may be eligible to compete for an award based on its

status as an eligible entity, other factors may exclude an applicant from receiving Federal assistance under this program (e.g. debarment and suspension; a determination of non-performance on a prior contract, cooperative agreement, grant or partnership; a determination of a violation of applicable ethical standards).

2. Project Period

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

3. Availability of Funds and Amounts

Approximately \$4,250,000 is available in fiscal year 2003 to fund up to 15 projects, a maximum of one project for each of the Targeted States. It is expected that the awards will be made approximately 60 days after the application deadline. All awards will be made and agreements approved and signed no later than September 30, 2003. Partnership or cooperative agreement funds may not be used to:

- a. Plan, repair, rehabilitate, acquire, or construct a building or facility including a processing facility;
- b. To purchase, rent, or install fixed equipment;
- c. Repair or maintain privately owned vehicles.
- d. Pay for the preparation of the partnership or cooperative agreement application;
- e. Fund political activities;
- f. Pay costs incurred prior to receiving a partnership or cooperative agreement;
- g. Fund any activities prohibited in 7 CFR Parts 3015 and 3019, as applicable.

The approximate funding amount available for each Targeted State's project is as follows:

Maine	\$217,000
New Hampshire	171,000
Vermont	218,000
Connecticut	217,000
Rhode Island	156,000
Massachusetts	202,000
New York	565,000
New Jersey	258,000
Pennsylvania	687,000
Maryland	346,000
Delaware	249,000
West Virginia	202,000
Nevada	201,000
Utah	284,000
Wyoming	277,000
Total	4,250,000

These State funding amounts were determined by first allocating an equal amount of \$150,000 to each Targeted State. The remaining funds were allocated on a pro rata basis according