

Part I—Information for the Community Outreach and Assistance Partnership Program

A. General Information

1. Authority

This program is authorized under section 522(d)(3)(F) of the Federal Crop Insurance Act (Act).

2. Background

RMA promotes and regulates sound risk management solutions to improve the economic stability of American agriculture. On behalf of FCIC, RMA does this by offering Federal crop insurance products through a network of private-sector partners, overseeing the 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 522(d)(3)(F) of the Act, which authorizes FCIC funding for risk management training and informational efforts for agricultural producers through the formation of partnerships with public and private organizations. With respect to such partnerships, a priority is to be given to producers of Priority Commodities (as specified in subsection 5 of this section).

3. Project Goal

The goal of this program is to ensure that “ * * * producers will be better able to use financial management, crop insurance, marketing contracts, and other existing and emerging risk management tools.”

4. Purpose

The purpose of the Community Outreach and Assistance Partnership Program is to ensure that women, limited resource, socially disadvantaged, and other traditionally underserved producers of priority commodities are provided information and training necessary to use financial management, crop insurance, marketing contracts, and other existing and emerging risk management tools.

Each partnership agreement awarded through this program will provide the applicant with funds, guidance, and the substantial involvement of RMA to carry out an outreach and assistance program for producers in a specific geographical area.

5. Definition of Priority Commodities

For purposes of this program, Priority Commodities are defined as:

- *Agricultural commodities covered by (7 U.S.C. 7333).* Commodities in this group are commercial crops that are not covered by catastrophic risk protection crop insurance, are used for food or fiber (except livestock), and specifically include, but are not limited to, floricultural, ornamental nursery, Christmas trees, turf grass sod, aquaculture (including ornamental fish), and industrial crops.

- *Specialty crops.* Commodities in this group may or may not be covered under a Federal crop insurance plan and include, but are not limited to, fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, syrups, honey, roots, herbs, and highly specialized varieties of traditional crops.

- *Underserved commodities.* This group includes: (a) commodities, including livestock and forage, that are covered by a Federal crop insurance plan but for which participation in an area is below the national average; and (b) commodities, including livestock, with inadequate crop insurance coverage produced by women, limited resource, socially disadvantaged, or beginning farmers and ranchers.

A project is considered as giving priority to Priority Commodities if the majority of the outreach and educational activities of the project are directed to producers of any of the three classes of commodities listed above or any combination of the three classes.

Part II—Eligibility/Funding

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants include educational institutions, community based organizations, associations of farmers, ranchers and other nonprofit organizations with demonstrated capabilities in developing and implementing risk management and other marketing options for priority commodities. Individuals are not eligible applicants. Applicants are encouraged to form partnerships with other entities that complement, enhance and/or increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the proposed project.

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. Non-financial Benefits

To be eligible, 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 accrue to the applicant and must include more than the ability to provide employment income to the applicant or for the applicant's employees or the community. 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).

3. 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.

4. Availability of Funds and Amounts

The amount of funds available in FY 2003 for support of partnership agreement awards under this program is up to approximately \$3.5 million. There is no commitment by USDA/RMA to fund any particular project or to make a specific number of awards. Applicants awarded a partnership agreement for an amount that is less than the amount requested will be required to modify their application to conform to the reduced amount before execution of the partnership agreement. No maximum or minimum funding levels have been established for individual projects or geographic locations. It is expected that the awards will be made approximately 60 days after the application deadline. All awards will be made and agreements completed no later than September 30, 2003.

Those applicants awarded partnership agreements require a match of ten (10) percent of the award amount. The applicant's contribution must be from non-federal funds and can be cash or in-kind.

Partnership agreement funds may not be used to:

1. Plan, repair, rehabilitate, acquire, or construct a building or facility including a processing facility;
2. To purchase, rent, or install fixed equipment;
3. Repair or maintain privately owned vehicles;
4. Pay for the preparation of the partnership application;
5. Fund political activities;
6. Pay costs incurred prior to receiving this partnership agreement;
7. Fund any activities prohibited in 7 CFR Parts 3015 and 3019, as applicable.