NORTHERN PLAINS AREA
Policy Memorandum

DATE: October 12, 2001
SUBJECT: COMPETITIVE GRANTS PROPOSALS, Northern Plains Area
NUMBER: PM-01-004
EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately Until Replaced or Superseded

1. Purpose

The NPA encourages its scientists to submit competitive grant proposals of high quality and merit that support the mission of ARS, add value to the research program, and will supplement without detracting from the programs of the scientist and the Research Unit performing the work. The Area policy and procedures for approval of these proposals are outlined below.

2. Initial Package to the Area Office

All proposals for competitive grants must be forwarded to the Area Director for review and approval prior to submission to the granting organization or agency. Please refer to Policy and Procedure (P&P) 321.1, Acceptance of Non-Appropriated Funds to Conduct Research and Perform Services, and P&P 324.0, ARS Reimbursable and Trust Fund Agreements for ARS policy concerning these applications. In addition, the following procedures apply within the Northern Plains Area:

a. Complete the ARS-425, Approval Request to Use Outside Funds, in RMIS/ARIS.
b. Prepare the proposal/competitive grant application package by following the criteria/guidelines issued by the granting organization.
c. Seek objective review from a peer and make any modifications and revisions prior to submitting the proposal to the Area Director.
d. **At least one week prior** to the granting organization's due date for proposals, forward your proposal package to the Office of the Area Director. The competitive grant proposal package must include:
   - **Cover memo addressed to the Area Director through the RL, LD, CD indicating line management review and approval of the proposal.**
   - Copy of the ARS-425 form.
   - Draft Letter of Intent, budget pages, and any other pertinent information related to the grant proposal.
e. The Area Director is the Authorized Designated Agency Representative and is responsible for final approval of the proposal. After the AD signs the proposal, it will be returned to the scientist for submission to the granting organization.

3. Letter of Intent Instructions

a. If a Letter of Intent is required, please e-mail the draft Letter of Intent to Jim Quaratino for review, editing, and to expedite processing. **The Letter of Intent will be signed by the Area Director.**

4. Final Approved Package Submission to the Granting Organization

a. **If substantial modifications are made to the project proposal and/or budget after the initial submission to the Area Director, the proposal must be resubmitted to the Area Office for additional review and approval.**
b. The Research Unit will photocopy the appropriate number of copies and submit the final approved proposal package to the granting organization.

5. Funded Proposals

a. If the competitive grant proposal is funded, the Research Unit will add the ARS-416/417 to the approved ARS-425 already in RMIS/ARIS.
b. The Area Office will monitor RMIS/ARIS for approval and coordinate funded proposal packages received from the granting organization within the Area Office.

- **NOTE: Before the scientist initiates work under outside funding,** the ARS-416/417 must be submitted. The Area Budget & Fiscal Office cannot authorize release of the funds for the scientist's use until the 416/417 is approved by the National Program Staff through the RMIS/ARIS process. **Funds are not available for use until all ARS actions are completed by all parties to the agreement.**
- If the granting organization notifies the scientist the proposal has been accepted, but requests adjustments or modifications to any part of the proposal, **the requested changes must be sent to the Area Office for review and approval before agreeing to the granting organization's request.** (Example: funding proposed at a different level from the application package; modifications to the project description and/or budget).

6. Unfunded Proposals

After notification that a proposal will not be funded, the Research Unit is responsible for 'unfunding' the ARS-425 request in RMIS/ARIS.

7. Helpful Hints

The National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program advises applicants to:

- Identify the most appropriate program in which to apply for a grant.
- Obtain a copy of current year Program Description. **Note:** Each year descriptions are modified to reflect changes in different fields. Procedural changes will be listed on the first page, and are generally available in August. (http://www.reeusda.gov/nri or nricgp@reeusda.gov).
- Identify which program your idea will best fit, and if the objective is appropriate to that program.
- Know the priorities and basic guidelines. **Closely follow directions regarding format, application requirements, budgets, length of the proposal, etc.**
- Make note of the application submission deadline and allow adequate time to process the grant proposal application package through the Area Office for review and comment– **a minimum of one week prior to the deadline.**
- Write your hypothesis and summary so it "grabs" the reviewer's attention quickly.
- Proofread the proposal, work plan, budget and budget justification for accuracy. Make sure all portions of the proposal are in accord, and all components of the proposal have been received from co-PI's or sub-recipients and their organization (*i.e.,* Cooperator Letter of Intent, budget figures, work plans, etc.). **Make sure all components are included in the grant proposal package.**
- **Objective review of the science:** To improve the potential for approval by the granting organization, seek input from your RL, LD, CD or another scientist. Ask them to review your proposal for scientific merit.
- The IRS Tax Identification Number is requested in Block 9 of the CSREES cover page for NRI applications. The ID number for ARS is 72-0564834F.
- **Final proposal approval is required from the Area Director. All proposals must have the AD's signature before submission to the granting organization.**

8. Questions

- **Procedures:** Jim Quaratino, (970)229-5529 or jquaratino@npa.ars.usda.gov; Marcie Currie-Gross, (970)229-5522 or grosscm@npa.ars.usda.gov.
- **Funds availability:** Donna Navratil, NPA Budget & Fiscal Officer, (970)229-5510 or navratid@npa.ars.usda.gov.

W. H. Blackburn

Dr. W.H. Blackburn
Area Director
Northern Plains Area