



United States Department of the Interior



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To: AFOs

From: State Director

Subject: Update on How to Use the Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit Network

The Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU) network is a partnership among 13 Federal agencies and over 100 universities and other partner organizations that can be used by participating Federal agencies to obtain research, education, and technical assistance from the partner institutions. Seventeen Units have been established at strategic locations throughout the country to provide participating Federal agencies with research, education, and technical assistance on resource management issues in an ecosystem context. Portions of California overlap with the biogeographical boundaries of four CESUs: (1) [Californian](#), (2) [Desert Southwest](#), (3) [Great Basin](#), and (4) [Pacific Northwest](#). BLM is a member of all CESUs except the North Atlantic Coast CESU.

The University of California-Berkeley is the host university for the Californian CESU. All nine UC campuses are participating institutions. Six California State University campuses are also partner institutions: San Francisco State University, California State University Fresno, California State University Los Angeles, CalPoly San Luis Obispo, Humboldt State University, and California State University Chico. The cooperative agreement for the Californian CESU can be viewed at http://nature.berkeley.edu/cesu/documents/CA-CESU_agmt_w-signatures.pdf. For more information about the Californian CESU, click on <http://nature.berkeley.edu/cesu/>.

The host universities for the other CESUs that overlap portions of California or its adjacent waters are: University of Arizona (Desert Southwest CESU), University of Nevada-Reno (Great Basin CESU), University of Washington (Pacific Northwest CESU), and University of Hawaii-Manoa (Hawaii-Pacific Islands CESU).

Details about the CESU Network, including a Fact Sheet, Program Brochure, Briefing Statement, Strategic Plan, Slide Show, Map, Interagency MOU, list of Council Members, Answers to Frequently Asked Questions, and recent Annual Reports are available on the national CESU Home Page at <http://www.cesu.psu.edu/>.

The basic criteria for doing projects through the Californian, or any other, CESU are (1) that they involve research, technical assistance, or education and (2) that they are collaborative in nature.¹ CESU projects may address any physical, biological, social, or cultural resource issue. Participating universities have agreed to accept an indirect cost rate of 17.5%, as established by the national CESU agreement. Such indirect charges need to be incorporated in the total project cost and are non-negotiable.

It is important to note that all CESUs operate under a cooperative agreement. The laws and regulations governing cooperative agreements (and what is appropriate under them) are different from the laws and regulations governing grants and contracts. Regular grants and contracts cannot be funded through the Californian CESU or any other CESU.

If you would like to utilize any of the CESUs, keep in mind the following:

- The CESU host university and other university partners are linked to BLM and the other participating federal agencies through a cooperative agreement.
- Under the CESU cooperative agreement, project funds may be transferred from agencies to their university partners and partner institutions but not directly between the agencies.
- Substantial Federal involvement is required. Projects are collaborative in nature, not contractual. Cooperative agreements cannot be used to circumvent applicable Federal acquisition laws and regulations.
- BLM field offices are able to use any of the established CESUs (except the North Atlantic Coast CESU), not just the CESU closest to their administrative boundaries.
- Until notice is given to the contrary, all CESU projects must be posted on Grants.Gov.²

The procedures for BLM personnel to follow when initiating projects through the Californian CESU are outlined in Attachment 1. The key BLM contacts for Californian CESU projects are Traci Thaler (916-978-4529 Traci_Thaler@ca.blm.gov), who is the Grants Management Officer and Ed Lorentzen (916-978-4646 elorentz@ca.blm.gov), who is BLM's technical representative to the Californian CESU (CESU coordinator). In FY 2007, there were six new BLM projects or modifications to the master cooperative agreement (#BAA033001). A list of all BLM projects that have been, or are being, conducted pursuant to the Californian CESU cooperative agreement is shown in Attachment 2.

¹ Any project funded through a cooperative agreement, such as the Californian CESU Cooperative Agreement, must include substantial involvement by both parties. It cannot, for instance, simply involve the Federal agency providing funding for a project and then receiving a final report. There does not have to be substantial involvement throughout the duration of the project but there has to be such involvement at some stage. For instance, there might be collaboration on developing the study design, collecting data, interpreting data, writing the final report or articles for publication, organizing workshops, etc. There does not need to be collaboration on all project aspects, but there does need to be collaboration on at least one.

² In an e-mail message dated July 31, 2006, Mike Ferguson (Assistant Director, Business & Fiscal Resources) stated: "We are working with the Department to resolve our concerns regarding revisions to 505 Departmental Manual 2, Grants Administration, and the Sonderman memo of June 7, 2006. Helene Aarons, Dave Hunsaker, and John Haugh were designated to work with WO 850 to request an exception to "Grants.Gov" through the DOI to the OMB. One exception we are looking at is for all transactions less than \$25,000 because that is the threshold at which contracts are posted on FedBizOpps, the central Government Web site for posting contracting opportunities."

The approval time for projects undertaken through the Californian CESU has generally not been excessive – even considering the additional time required to comply with Grants.Gov. Although recent BLM budgets have been lean, and are likely to remain so in the future, there may be opportunities for doing projects through a CESU using partnership contributions or directed funding. For example, the Ukiah and Surprise Field Offices recently developed agreements for projects involving the Californian and Great Basin CESUs, respectively, using partnership or directed funding to obtain needed technical assistance. And the Wyoming State Office is using Department of Energy funds to support a research project being carried out through the Californian CESU by a UC Davis scientist.

If you have opportunities to collaborate on projects that could be done through the Californian CESU, please contact BLM’s technical representative to the Californian CESU to discuss the proposed project. If the prospective Principal Investigators are affiliated with partner institutions of another CESU, the Californian CESU coordinator can help communicate your inquiry and expression of interest with BLM’s CESU coordinator for that CESU.

Questions regarding the steps outlined in Attachment 1, and the templates and standard forms referenced therein, should be directed to Traci Thaler (California-BLM’s Grants Management Officer) at 916-978-4529. General questions about the CESU network may be directed to Ed Lorentzen (BLM’s technical representative to the Californian CESU) at 916-978-4646 or to John Haugh (BLM’s alternate on the National CESU Council) at 202-452-5071.

Signed by:
James Wesley Abbott
Associate State Director

Authenticated by:
Richard A. Erickson
Records Management

Attachment

- 1 - Steps for Processing Projects through Grants.Gov under the Californian CESU Cooperative Agreement (2 pp.)
- 2 - Californian CESU Annual Report for FY 2007, California-BLM (1 p.)

Distribution

WO-210 (Attn: John Haugh)
NV-910 (Attn: Nora Devoe)
CA-920 (Attn: Leroy Mohorich)
CA-939 (Attn: Rick Hanks)
CA-944 (Attn: Julia Lang)

Steps for Processing Projects through Grants.Gov under the Cooperative Agreement for the Californian Cooperative Ecosystems Studies Unit (CESU)

1. Field office/State office/Washington office funding unit initiates project with a Statement of Programmatic Involvement (SPI), using the template provided. The Program Officer (lead for the funding unit) writes a short statement of work summarizing what the project entails and submits the statement of work and completed SPI to the Grants Management Officer (GMO). The GMO for California-BLM is Traci Thaler (916-978-4529 Traci_Thaler@ca.blm.gov).

2. The GMO reads the statement of work and SPI and decides whether the project is an agreement (agency substantially involved) or a contract and writes the Instrument Selection Determination (ISD). For projects over 100K, the GMO submits the SPI/ISD to the Washington Office, which communicates its approval or otherwise of the SPI/ISD to the GMO.

The GMO communicates the ISD decision to the Program Officer and supplies information as to the format for project specification. For projects that can be carried out under a CESU Cooperative Agreement, the GMO copies the ISD decision to the CESU Coordinator. The CESU Coordinator for the Californian CESU is Ed Lorentzen (916-978-4646 elorentz@ca.blm.gov).

3. The specifics of the project, what BLM wants, what BLM will provide, the amount of funding, what the cooperator is to provide and perform, how responses to the project posting will be evaluated, and any questions to which the cooperator must respond are drafted by the Program Officer on the template provided (OMB mandated standard format). The CESU Coordinator assists the Program Officer as needed.

The Program Officer submits the project specification to the GMO and CESU Coordinator for review. Edits are coordinated among the Program Officer, GMO, and CESU Coordinator.

4. The Program Officer ensures that a requisition is entered in IDEAS for the project and that the requisition amount matches the total funding identified in the project specification.

5. The GMO finalizes the project specification as a Request for Application (RFA). Chief of Contracting will review and approve the RFA and the GMO will post on Grants.Gov. Although CESU projects must be posted on Grants.Gov per current BLM policy, the following statement can be placed in the “other” category of the Grants.Gov posting, which limits eligibility to the CESU program: “This financial assistance opportunity is being issued under a Cooperative Ecosystem Studies Unit (CESU) program. CESUs are partnerships that provide research, technical assistance, and education.”

6. The Program Officer, GMO, CESU Coordinator and additional subject matter expert, if necessary, evaluate applications based on the criteria established in the solicitation and select recipient.

7. If changes are needed to the selected proposal, the Program Officer or CESU Coordinator will communicate with the Principal Investigator of the intended recipient to finalize the proposal. The CESU Coordinator forwards the final proposal to the GMO for review and approval.

8. The GMO communicates notice of award to recipient, awards the agreement via Form 1511, and upon executed return, obligates the funds, countersigns, and returns. The GMO reports the action in FAADS no later than 10 days after award.

The GMO finalizes all paperwork with the recipient, copies the Program Officer and CESU Coordinator on final project and budget forms. The Program Officer communicates and copies forms to the recipient's Principal Investigator.

9. The CESU Coordinator enters relevant information for the project into the appropriate CESU reporting database and copies the Host University with the signed agreement for the project.

10. The Program Officer monitors project activity, reviews requests for reimbursement or quarterly fund drawdowns in ASAP, whichever is applicable. The Program Officer advises the GMO and CESU Coordinator of any issues arising in performance of the project.

11. In the event that a CESU agreement is to be modified, the Program Officer and the cooperator agree on the desired action and forward Forms 1511-2, 424 and 424a if relevant to the CESU Coordinator. The CESU Coordinator reviews the documents and either (1) concurs with the content as presented, (2) requests edits from the Program Officer, or (3) disagrees with the proposed modification and states the reason(s) for disagreement to the Program Officer. The CESU Coordinator also communicates this review to the GMO. The GMO decides final wording and budget for the modification and copies the resulting 1511-2 and 424a to the CESU Coordinator and Program Officer.

12. The Program Officer notifies the GMO and CESU Coordinator of project completion, and certifies completion, receipt of deliverables, and final invoice. The GMO authorizes final payment and closes out the agreement. The GMO notifies the Program Officer and CESU Coordinator of closeout.