

Request for Proposals National Clean Plant Network

**United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)
Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ)**

Funding Opportunity Title: National Clean Plant Network (NCPN) Cooperative Agreements Program

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 10.025, Plant and Animal Disease, Pest Control, and Animal Care

Key Dates: Proposals must be received by October 6, 2017
Cooperative Agreements are anticipated to begin about July 1, 2018

Funding Opportunity Description: This program implements funding for Fiscal Year 2018 as provided under the Agriculture Act of 2014.

The National Clean Plant Network (NCPN) provides asexually propagated plant material free of targeted plant pathogens and pests to protect the environment and ensure the global competitiveness of US specialty crop producers.

Program priorities include: 1) establishing and supporting Network governance and related administrative activities; 2) promoting the introduction, diagnosis, treatment, establishment (in foundation blocks) and release of clean plant materials, both from foreign and domestic sources, for commercial development; 3) conducting methods development to accurately advance and test therapies, as well as establish guidelines and standards for certification maintenance; 4) developing partnerships with extension and outreach services (e.g. university and state departments of agriculture) to interact with commercial nurseries, industry associations and producers; and 5) developing and implementing best practices and quality control protocols.

Total Amount to be Awarded: Anticipated at about \$5,000,000 under Section 10007 of the Agriculture Act of 2014; commonly called the Farm Bill 2014.

Eligibility: Land-Grant Universities, Non-Land-Grant Colleges of Agriculture, State Agricultural Experiment Stations, State Governments, and Federal Agencies. Funding priority will be given to proposals that focus on specialty crops, with clear work plans for developing and maintaining a comprehensive, cohesive and efficient network.

Cost Sharing: Cost sharing is not required, but preferred because Network funding cannot be guaranteed on a yearly or individual basis. When possible, cooperators requesting Network funding should also seek other contributions to clean plant efforts to include: 1) cost sharing or

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matching; 2) contributions such as revenue from the sales of plant materials and services, collection of fees or royalties, grants or gifts to the applicant which support the Network's mission; or 3) quantifiable commitment of faculty or staff time, and quantifiable development of facilities and land for use in clean plant activities.

Proposal and Submission --- Important Change for FY 2018:

Moving entirely away from Grants.gov, applicants will now send proposals directly to NCPN managers by 1) submitting a proposal to the NCPN email box at NCPN@aphis.usda.gov or 2) by mailing a proposal to the address as referenced under Part VIII 'Agency Contacts' of this Request for Proposals. Your proposal should consist of a work plan and associated financial plan. In addition, there must be evidence that your pre-proposal was reviewed at the NCPN Tier 2 level (see section on pre-proposal review process below).

Applicants subsequently recommended by the NCPN Governing Board for funding consideration, as further validated in a USDA APHIS Farm Bill Spending Plan for NCPN for FY 2018, will then be sent a link to the ezFedGrants website to complete the proposal process.



IMPORTANT - Special notes and changes for Fiscal Year 2018

IMPORTANT CHANGE: The Initial Proposal Process:

- NCPN shall not be using Grants.gov for program funding proposals for FY 2018.
- Applicants can apply directly to NCPN by submitting a proposal to the NCPN email box at NCPN@aphis.usda.gov or by mailing a proposal to the address as referenced under Part VIII ‘Agency Contacts’ of this Request for Proposals.
- At the initial proposal stage, a proposal need only consist of a work plan and associated financial plan and evidence of submission of a pre-proposal for review and consideration under an NCPN Tier 2 ascribed review process as further described in the Request for Proposals.
- Applicants subsequently recommended by the NCPN Governing Board, as further validated in a USDA APHIS Farm Bill Spending Plan for NCPN for FY 2018, for funding consideration will then be sent a link to a USDA APHIS ascribed website called ‘ezFedGrants’ to conclude the proposal process.

Open and Closing Dates for Proposal Submissions:

- The Program will accept proposals for 12 weeks; from July 17, 2017 – October 6, 2017 (*see Part V, Section F.*).

E-mail Communication:

- Direct all e-mail communication to: NCPN@aphis.usda.gov

ezFedGrants:

- USDA APHIS recently adopted ezFedGrants as the method to finalize the proposal process for approved proposals.
- All applicants with proposals recommended by the NCPN Governing Board, as further validated in a USDA issued FY 2018 Spending Plan for NCPN, will be sent a link via email connecting them to the ezFedGrants management site for continuation and finalization of the proposal process. (*see Part V, Section C and Part VI, Section I.*)

Program Priorities and Considerations:

- Captured here are some key principles that underline the Network’s Cooperative Agreements program, including items or concepts given priority or prime consideration for NCPN program funding support. (*see Part I, Sections D and E.*)

Program Activities for Which Network Funding is Not Allowed:

- Clarifies items that generally are not funded as part of a Network proposal for support. (*see Part I, Section F.*)

Pre-Proposal Review Process:

- The 12 week RFA open period for FY 2018 funding is partly to allow for sufficient time for applicants to engage effectively with stakeholders as part of the Network suggested pre-proposal review process (*see Part IV, Sections C and D.*)

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Business Plans or comparable Annual Entity Reports:

- Applicants seeking Network support that also have established business plans or issue annual entity reports for their operating units are requested to attach such documentation to their proposals as an appendix. If such plans do not exist, applicants are encouraged to consider developing them. (*see Part I, Section B*).

Anticipated Accomplishments, Performance Indicators, and Progress Reports:

- The Network is outcome-oriented and all applicants requesting support must develop and report on performance benchmarks, timelines, and indicate associated deliverables and the impact of those products on industry. (*see Part V, Section D*).

Clean Plant Center Funding Diversification and Long-Term Sustainability:

- The Network encourages applicants to seek and secure diversified sources of program funding and income generating opportunities in addition to those funds requested from NCPN in order to more firmly plan for program long-term sustainability. Evidence of this effort is suggested in a proposal for Network support. (*see Part I Section D*).

Work Plan or Project Proposal; including Financial Plan:

- Template - For FY 2018, the Work Plan format is suggested to better obtain the information for funding decisions. Please read the instructions in Part V. below and complete the Work Plan in as succinct a manner as possible.
- For e-mail submission, a suggested Financial Plan template is also provided for applicant consideration in addition to the budget template included in the Work Plan.
- Multi-Crop Proposals - For FY 2018, applicants applying for support for more than one crop should request such support under a single work plan. Please provide sufficient information on each individual crop. In situations where a single budget item covers more than one crop, please prorate the request across all covered crops as appropriate.
- Page Limitations - For FY 2018, the 15 page proposal limitation is anticipated to cover proposals for support for a single crop. The proposal page limitation may be increased by up to 5 pages for each additional crop. However, no proposal may be greater than 30 pages, regardless of the number of covered crops. This page limitation does not include requested addenda.

Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) Technology:

- The Network's Governing Board supports the use of established NGS technologies for diagnostics for the purpose of therapeutics or to determine the pathogen status of plants intended as nuclear stock. *This support currently extends to conducting methods development studies that compare the efficacy of NGS against other diagnostic technologies but only to the extent that such studies are conducted for diagnostics on known pathogens of concern to industry. Network resources may not be used for comparison studies intending to pursue novel or unknown pathogens for academic purposes.*

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Indirect Costs ascribed to Agreements:

- The 2014 Farm Bill restricts indirect costs charged against a cooperative agreement under Section 10007 (including NCPN) to the lesser of 15% of the total Federal funds provided under the cooperative agreement or the indirect cost rate applicable to the recipient as established by law (Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate or NICRA).

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Part I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. NCPN Background, Mission, and Vision

Background

In May 2008, H.R. 6124 Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, otherwise known as the Farm Bill of 2008, became law. The National Clean Plant Network (NCPN) was included in The Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill) Title X, Sec 10202. Beginning in Fiscal Year (FY) 2009, it authorized funding of \$20 million over 4 years (FY 2009-2012) to establish the Network for specialty crops to provide reliable sources of propagative material that are free of propagative-borne pathogens. This provision would establish a network of clean plant centers in the United States that would conduct diagnostic and pathogen elimination services and to establish foundation blocks (nuclear stock) to provide pathogen-tested plant materials to nurseries, growers and to state certification programs.

In February 2014, the Agriculture Act (commonly called the Farm Bill of 2014) H.R. 2642 became law. This statute, specifically Title X, Section 10007 paragraph (e) renews support of the NCPN as initially constituted under the Farm Bill 2008 and authorizes funding in the amount of not less than \$5,000,000 annually provided through USDA for support of the activities of NCPN.

Mission

NCPN provides high quality, asexually propagated plant material free of targeted plant pathogens and pests that cause economic loss to protect the environment and ensure the global competitiveness of specialty crop producers.

B. USDA Approach to the National Clean Plant Network (NCPN)

USDA's goal is to create an effective, efficient, and mostly self-sufficient network of clean plant centers serving the needs of specialty crop industry by adhering to the following principles.

- Coordination: Commodity-based governing bodies (commonly called NCPN Tier 2 governing bodies) a) are composed of clean plant centers, universities, industry representatives, government officials, and others, b) meet regularly, c) have elected members, and d) operate under a charter. These bodies identify projects, establish priorities and harmonize proposals.
- Pre-Proposal Review Process: Considerable weight is accorded proposals submitted through specialty crop clean plant network governing bodies that engage in an industry-driven pre-proposal review process for proposal relevance, harmonization, and prioritization of requested needs. To support this process, applicants are encouraged to include information in the form of an addendum indicating how their program fits and adds value to a respective specialty crop network including the other associated centers.

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- Business Plans or Annual Entity Reports: Applicants seeking Network support that also have established business plans, including multi-year program plans, or issue annual entity reports for their operating units are requested to attach such documentation to their proposals as an appendix. The Network hopes to use this information to better understand the operating environment of each entity seeking Network support. High consideration is given to such attachments.
- Long-Term Needs: Priority is given to applicants seeking support for long-term clean plant center, program, and institutional capacity building.
- Short Term Needs: If funding is being sought for routine operational activities, applicants are given priority that provide for clear explanations why support for routine needs is being sought, how long and to what extent support for such needs is anticipated to continue, and any plans for seeking greater self-sufficiency in this arena.
- Industry Focus: Priority is given to clean plant centers that become part of the Network and conduct diagnostics and therapy on select specialty crops plant material requested by industry. Additionally, support is provided for the establishment and maintenance of this material in foundation/nuclear blocks.
- Methods Development: The Network encourages the development of methods and technologies needed to support clean plant activities for diagnostics and therapy including equipment needed to support these activities as appropriate; including activities that apply established methods regarding advanced technologies for plant pathogen diagnostics and associated therapeutics
- Performance Indicators and Progress Reports: The Network is outcome-oriented and all applicants requesting support must develop and report on performance benchmarks, timelines, and indicate associated deliverables and the impact of those products on industry.
- Economic Studies: The Network sees the long-term value in supporting economic studies that strive to help stakeholders better understand the impact of clean plants on NCPN-supported specialty crop industries.
- Diversified Streams of Funding: The Network encourages applicants for funding to seek and secure program funding and income generating opportunities in addition to those funds requested from NCPN. In further recognition of the importance of this priority, applicants for NCPN support are encouraged to provide information regarding the following:
 - Business Plans or Annual Entity Report: Submission, as an addendum to their proposal, any Business Plan, including multi-year program plans, or Annual Entity Reports as may exist that is current and specific to their operating unit.
- Education/Outreach: The Network recognizes the importance of well-coordinated and targeted extension, outreach and education materials and activities needed to link the NCPN program concept, the clean plant centers, and their products with the ultimate recipients, especially, commercial nurseries and growers. The primary objective is to ensure that the industries are aware of the importance of promoting and using clean plant material, and of the purpose, products and services of the Network including its

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constituent cooperating centers. Consideration is given to support the development of education/outreach concepts and products being coordinated, proposed, and advanced under the banner of the Network's Education/Outreach Working Group.

Due to limited funding, first priority shall be given to the support of existing facilities with an established history of clean plant performance capable of conducting diagnostics, therapeutics and establishing foundation blocks with the intent of making clean plant material available to industry for immediate increase for crop production. Priority shall also be given to specialty crops that organize under the banner of the Network into appropriate governing bodies to network, coordinate, prioritize and harmonize their respective projects and associated needs and deliverables.

Because each project is intended to have significant input and involvement of Federal, State and other stakeholders, the instrument used for this program shall be the Cooperative Agreement except in the case of support to a Federal entity in which case the instrument of cooperation is an Interagency Agreement..

Funds allocated through the Agriculture Act of 2014 will be used to fund the projects in FY 2018. The funds are annual in nature, and they shall generally be available for only one year's needs subject to the decision of the Network's Governing Board. It is recognized that current funds may not be sufficient to fully support each project. Consequently, cost sharing is encouraged. Additionally, the Network may recommend program and funding modifications as appropriate, and may choose to offer funding for programs at less than the requested amount.

C. Alignment with USDA and NCPN Strategic Goals and Objectives:

Applicants should indicate that their intended project meets the USDA, APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) goal indicated below. Applicants must also indicate that at least one (1) NCPN goal is being satisfied but need not provide specific statements regarding how they are meeting any indicated USDA and NCPN Goal or Mission Area.

USDA, APHIS, Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Strategic Goal:

Source – USDA/APHISPPQ Strategic Plan FY for FY 2015-2019)

PPQ Program Goal #1 – Prevent the entry and spread of agricultural pests and diseases; specifically to “Strengthen PPQ's pest exclusion system”.

Alignment with NCPN Program Goals:

The FY 2018 Network Cooperative Agreements program will focus on five elements below. Proposals must clearly indicate which focus areas are being serviced and how they are being accomplished.

1. Governance and Structure – Support the work of Network program governance and administration.
2. Service Activities – Establish, maintain, and enhance a network of facilities for testing and providing therapy for nuclear stock of Network supported crops, including support for associated clean plant foundations
3. Methods Development – Operationalize diagnostic and therapeutic methodologies needed for the work of clean plant centers and programs.
4. Extension, Outreach, and Education – Develop Network and associated clean plant education, outreach, extension, and economics materials.
5. Quality Assurance and Quality Control – Develop clean plant program plans, standards, performance benchmarks, quality assurance/control initiatives, and advance programs through reviews and consultations.

D. Program Criteria

In order to submit an proposal to the Network’s Cooperative Agreements Program, an applicant must, at a minimum, meet the following criteria:

1. Specialty Crops:

- Program Focus – Any commodity proposed as a target for Network program funding must qualify as a ‘specialty crop’ as defined by the USDA (for the definition, see Section 3 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004; 7 U.S.C. 1621 note; Public Law 108-465). The term “specialty crop” means fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and nursery crops.

2. Program Focus:

- Program Operations - Network funding is targeted to programs that diagnose and treat against vegetatively-propagated, graft-transmissible plant pathogens, and establish ‘clean plant’ foundation/nuclear plantings, including those maintained by governments, land grant universities, or non-land-grant colleges of agriculture. Activities could include conducting clean plant methods development and engaging in the use of advanced technologies to assist in diagnostics and therapy.

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- Program Governance and Administration - Activities may also include forming and managing clean plant governing bodies and administering the Network and its activities at the specialty crop level, among crops, and nationally.
- Program Advanced Issues – Activities might include clean plant education/outreach initiatives including economic studies, the advancement of data management strategies, program quality management and clean plant network or center reviews, and strategic and business planning.

3. Eligible Applicants:

- Eligibility Requirement – Eligible applicants must be state government agencies, land grant universities, State Agricultural Experiment Stations, non-land grant colleges of agriculture, or Federal Government agencies.

4. Regulatory Requirements:

- Permits and Inspections – Eligible applicants intending to handle potentially infected plant materials shall possess the necessary Federal authorizations and inspections needed to safely possess, handle, maintain, and dispose of materials appropriately.

5. Meeting Program Goals:

- Network Goals – Proposals must clearly meet the stipulated USDA goal and at least one Network program goal as defined in this Request for Proposals.

E. Program Priorities

In addition to the Program Criteria stated above, following are priorities that the Network will consider in reviewing proposals for funding and in implementing its Cooperative Agreements program.

1. Quarantine Crops:

- Prohibited Articles – Priority is given to proposals supporting work on specialty crops that would be restricted in importation unless initially processed through a clean plant center capable of handling potentially infected plant materials. This priority focus does not preclude similar plant varieties from being submitted from domestic sources such as germplasm or other collections.

2. Specialty Crops in State Certification Programs:

- Nursery Clean Plant Support – Priority is given to the diagnostics and therapy for specialty crops where there is expressed interest from state governments to support state certification programs for nurseries or a reasonable possibility in the building of national certification standards.

3. Propagatively Transmitted Pathogens:

- Vegetative Propagation - Network program funding primarily targets propagatively-transmitted plant pathogens (graft-transmissible plant pathogens) found in specialty crops that are vegetatively propagated.

4. Existing Facilities:

- Governmental and University – Priority is given to existing governmental or university facilities experienced in appropriate facets of specialty crop pathogen clean plant activities with a demonstrated capacity to develop, manage, and distribute specialty crop clean plant material.

5. Established or Forming Clean Plant Network Tier 2 Governing Bodies:

- Applicant Proposal Support from Established Network Clean Plant Governing Bodies – Priority is given to proposals that are coordinated through Network sponsored, specialty crop-specific clean plant network governing bodies. This includes a process of having the proposal pre-reviewed by the appropriate governing body for networking, prioritization, harmonization, and coordination with other proposals submitted covering the same Network specialty crop grouping.
- Pre-Proposal Review Process – Pre-proposals that are reviewed by designated governing body working groups that specifically target proposal harmonization and prioritization shall be given high priority. Such working groups are recommended be at least 50% composed of affected industry members.
- Evidence of Coordination - Evidence of such coordination is required at least in the form of a letter of support from the appropriate Network Governing Body specific to the applicant's specialty crop focus area. Such evidence should be submitted by an applicants for support as an addendum to a proposal.
- Governing Bodies in Formation - In cases where a specialty crop does not yet have a Network recognized governing body, but where one is being formed, evidence of Network formation activities may be submitted.

6. Multiple Cooperators:

- Cooperator Networking – Priority is given to proposals that show clear program and funding coordination among two or more entities, networking, and involvement of other cooperators, including industry partners, universities, and governmental cooperators.

7. Meeting Industry Goals:

- Clean Plant Industry Goals – Priority is given to proposals that meet one or more industry group-established priorities covering clean plant programs as expressed by industry members participating in Network specialty crop governing bodies. Details are available by contacting the leadership of respective specialty crop governing bodies. Evidence of meeting industry goals is suggested in the form of specialty crop governing bodies establishing and utilizing a pre-proposal review group that is driven by industry representation of about 50% membership.

8. Education/Extension/Outreach:

- Education Products and Materials – Proposals are welcomed to develop concepts and products for Network extension, education and outreach with stakeholders, especially nurseries and growers. Stakeholder education should focus on informing stakeholders in the value of using clean plants and on orienting around Network program products and should show coordination of product or process with the Network’s Education/Outreach Working Group.

9. Economic Studies:

- Cost/Benefit Analyses and Other Related Work – Priority may be given to proposals requesting support to look at the economic impacts, costs, and benefits of developing and using clean plant material, especially with regard to such impacts on industry.

10. Program Support Diversification:

- Resource Independence – Priority may be given to applicants that indicate or otherwise show that, over time, they are working towards becoming increasingly diversified in their funding sources and being able to operate their clean plant program with decreasing, or minimal, or only periodic continued Federal financial support.

11. Benefits to Small Producers and Distributors

- Small to Mid-Sized, Local Agricultural Industries – Priority may be given to applicants that demonstrate how their proposal and associated products and deliverable make a positive impact on small to mid-sized, local agricultural industries.

12. Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) Technology

- The use of established NGS technologies for diagnostics for the purpose of therapeutics or to determine the pathogen status of plants intended as nuclear stock is allowed as a supported Network cost. This includes conducting methods development studies that compare the efficacy of NGS against other diagnostic technologies but only to the extent that such studies are conducted for known pathogens of concern to industry. Network resources may not be used for comparison studies intending to pursue novel or unknown pathogens for academic purposes.

F. Program Activities for which Network Funding is Not Allowed

- **Construction**; though the Network will consider minor, appropriate retrofitting of existing facilities to meet quarantine compliance regulations or otherwise support of the program mission.
- The Development and Support of State **Nursery Certification Programs**. Such support, however, is available through other parts of the Farm Bill, Section 10007.
- **DNA Fingerprinting**; the Network recognizes the importance of maintaining and verifying clonal plant identity; however, DNA fingerprinting efforts may not be supported through this RFA.

- **Basic Research;** though funding may be used for methods development when the outcome impacts immediate delivery of clean plants to users.
- Funding requests that are intended to **replace existing funding with public funds** resulting in the redirection of those funds from the applicant for the furtherance of activities supporting diagnostics, therapeutics, or the establishment of foundation plantings.
- **G-2 Foundation** support; the Network may, however, consider supporting foundations where plant material is cleaned at one location, but material is maintained locally elsewhere in G-1 'like' conditions for specialized service to local industry. This exception does not include blocks intended for general increase.
- **Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) Comparison Studies for the express pursuit of unknown or novel pathogens for purposes of academic study;** Network resources may not be used for comparison studies on novel or unknown pathogens, or for diagnostics to search for 'unknowns' as an academic pursuit. Such use of NGS is outside of the scope of this program.
- **Surveys;** Network resources may not be used for pathogen surveys in plant collections, nurseries, or other holdings, except in support of diagnostics conducted on plant material intended for submission to the Network for potential therapeutics and in clean plant foundations to help ensure for knowledge on the foundations pathogen status.

G. Program Merits

The proposal should offer merit relative to the implementation of the Network in several ways, including, but not limited to the points explained below.

- Determine and demonstrate practical relevance of the project to actual deliverables needed by nurseries and growers, especially regarding their need for rapid access to safe, clean plant material.
- Show adherence to the goals and priorities established by the Network and its stakeholders.
- Have been pre-reviewed and considered by the appropriate specialty crop clean plant network governing body for network relevance, coordination, prioritization, and harmonization. The Proposal should also indicate how the project is harmonized with others in the respective network and its relevance to advancing the interests of the network specifically and the Network in general.
- If a Network-focused specialty crop governing body is not yet formed, indicate what measures the Applicant plans to take, or the measures already being undertaken by others to help form such a body, including potential cooperators.
- Identify the issues or obstacles that are going to be addressed or evaluated in the project and a plan to offer solutions.



Part II. Award Information

A. Total Available Funds: Anticipated at about \$5,000,000. The actual amount to be made available is dependent on the actual amount of funding made available through USDA for the purposes of the Network including its Cooperative Agreements program.

B. Funding Uncertainties: NCPN Federal FY 2018 funding is from an annual funding source and only available in FY 2018. If during FY 2018 it is determined that the Network's funding is not available for obligation by USDA for the fiscal year, USDA is under no obligation to fund any proposals submitted under this Request for Proposals.

C. Competitive Process: The Network's Cooperative Agreement Program conducted under this Request for Proposals is a competitive process and the funding of any submitted proposals is at the discretion of USDA in consultation with the Network's Governing Board which forms its proposal review panel.

D. Anticipated Award Funding Amounts: Approximately \$10,000 - \$1,250,000

E. Anticipated Award Start Date: July 1, 2018

F. Period of Performance: Funding is awarded for a single year with the option to extend longer if USDA determines the request to be acceptable.

G. Type of Assistance Instrument: Cooperative Agreement

H. USDA/APHIS Role: USDA/APHIS/PPQ will administer the Cooperative Agreements on behalf of the Network's Federal Partners (e.g., Agricultural Research Service, the National Institute for Food and Agriculture, and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service). They will provide advice to the project coordinators, track funding, receive and review progress reports, offer comments and suggestions, track project performance, and meet with cooperators as often as necessary to ensure progress in accomplishing the goals of the project, identifying obstacles, and resolving concerns.



Part III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants: Land Grant Universities, Non Land-Grant Colleges of Agriculture, State Agricultural Experiment Stations, State Governments and Federal Government Agencies with preference given to institutions or agencies with existing and established facilities and capability to conduct plant pathogen molecular diagnostics, apply therapies, and establish and maintain foundation/nuclear blocks of clean plant material.

Priority shall be given to applicants that work through established Network governing bodies to prioritize components of their proposals and harmonize their proposals with others in their respective networks. Proposals must be submitted by authorized representatives of the institution or agency applying for assistance and the proposals must be in the format described in Part V.B.

Authorized representatives from institutions or agencies whose projects are considered for funding will be required to complete or adjust the proposal for Federal Assistance, including all associated forms required by USDA, and, if funded, sign a Cooperative Agreement.

B. Cost Sharing, Matching, or Enumeration of Contributions: It is preferred that projects have contributing funds, cost-shared by the applicant or in-kind contributions, including third-party in-kind contributions, or an enumeration of other funds available for program operations in addition to Network requested support. If funding needs are anticipated to continue for several years, provision of information as part of their proposal regarding the applicant's long-term funding needs, categories of anticipated funding needs, and information on any plans for attaining greater self-sufficiency is also required.



Part IV. Proposal and Work Plan Submission Process

A. Network Specialty Crop Governing Body Coordination Requirement: All applicants for funding under the Network's Cooperative Agreements program must show evidence that their proposals (including project proposals and work plans) have been submitted to an appropriate Network governing body for networking, prioritization, harmonization, and coordination with other proposals submitted covering the same crop. Evidence of such coordination is required at least in the form of a letter of support from the appropriate Network Governing Body specific to the applicant's specialty crop focus area. In cases where an applicant is requesting Network support for work on specialty crops covered by more than one Network governing body evidence of coordination and support from all relevant specialty crop clean plant networks must be provided with the proposal.

B. Electronic and Paper Proposal Submissions: All applicants must individually submit their respective work plans and associated budget plans directly to the National Clean Plant (NCPN) network at ncpn@aphis.usda.gov. An exception is where one or more institutions choose to

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apply for consideration as a sub-grantee to a principal applicant. In such a case however, work plans and budget submissions traceable down to individual sub-grantee institutions are encouraged.

All applicants, or sub-grantees if several entities submit work plans under a single proposal coordinated by a lead applicant, must still complete individual work plans including content similar (or essentially equivalent) to the format provided in this Request for Proposals.

Applicants also have the option of sending paper renditions of the work plans and financial plans to NCPN at the address in Part VIII 'Agency Contacts' of this Request for Proposals.

C. Proof of Proposal Coordination: At their discretion, Network governing bodies (Tier 2) may choose to submit all cooperator proposals under their review as a single package to the Agency Contacts listed below (Part VIII). The specialty crop governing bodies may also request that individual applicants directly submit their proposals electronically at ncpn@aphis.usda.gov or to the Agency Contacts listed below (Part VIII).

In situations where the Network governing body chooses to forward all proposals submitted to it for networking, prioritization, harmonization, and coordination, the governing body may provide a single letter documenting the consultative process with all included proposals.

In situations where the Network governing body suggests that individual applicants submit their proposals directly to USDA/APHIS, the Network governing body must provide the applicant with a letter documenting the consultative process. Applicants submitting their proposals directly to USDA/APHIS should include a copy of any information provided to them from Tier 2 governing bodies capturing the consultative process that was followed.

In cases affecting proposals where more than one Network governing body is relevant to an proposal, evidence of coordination and support by all relevant specialty crop clean plant networks must be submitted with the proposal. Such proposals may be coordinated and submitted to the Network by any relevant specialty crop clean plant network with necessary evidence of coordination and support by other such relevant bodies or as otherwise provided for in this Request for Proposals.

In cases where a specialty crop does not yet have an NCPN recognized governing body, but where one is being formed, evidence of network formation activities may be submitted by the applicants for NCPN Governing Board consideration.

D. Pre-Proposal Review and Prioritization – A Suggested Model: Based on past experiences, the Network's Governing Board makes the following recommendations:

- Pre-proposal review, harmonization, and component prioritization by an existing Network specialty crop governing body, especially a specifically designated, industry-centered working group, would receive a high priority for funding consideration.
- Such a group designated to review pre-proposals should be composed of about 50% industry with other affected stakeholders; or some other industry-driven process designed

to accomplish the same purpose. This recommended composition serves to ensure that industry stakeholders have involvement in the pre-proposal development process and subsequently provides the Network's Governing Board with a high degree of confidence in the specialty crop governing body pre-proposal decision-making process.

- The Network's Governing Board highly values the prioritization component of the pre-proposal stakeholder review. Specifically, review panel members should not prioritize individual proposals against each other, but rather look at specific aspects of individual pre-proposal content and highlight the important parts of each proposal assigning a ranking of 'high', 'medium', or 'low' priority to individual clean plant activities. In the event that NCPN funding is insufficient, this process of prioritization will provide the Network's Governing Board with crucial information "across all proposals" as to what the priority 'components' were for each of them.
- For proposals including an Education/Outreach component, the Network's Governing Board sees merit in coordinating this component of the proposal through the Network's Education/Outreach Working Group to ensure that the request aligns with the general direction of the Network collectively as manifested through the actions of the working group.
- Evidence of compliance with this process should be submitted by specialty crop clean plant governing bodies in support of pre-proposals submitted to them for consideration.



Part V. Proposal and Submission Information

A. E-Mail Proposals: Applicants should submit their work plans, financial plans, and any other associated documents to NCPN directly at NCPN@aphis.usda.gov . Specifically, for this initial proposal stage, applicants need only complete a work plan, an associated financial plan, and along with evidence of compliance with the Pre-Proposal Review Process as indicated in Part V of this Request for Proposals, submit material to NCPN as indicated.

B. Paper Proposals: Applicants has the option to apply for NCPN funding consideration by sending a paper copy of their work, financial plan, and associated documents to NCPN at the address listed in Part VIII 'Agency Contacts' of this Request for Proposals.

C. Continuing with a Proposal once a Work and Financial Plan is Approved by the NCPN Governing Board as further validated by USDA:

Applicants should use the Project Work Plan format and associated Financial Plan format as noted in Part D. below "Content and Form of Proposal Submission".

Since USDA APHIS has now dropped Grants.gov and adopted the ezFedGrants process to finalize proposals for NCPN funding, the other required proposal forms (SF-424, "Proposal for Federal Assistance", SF-424A, "Budget Information – Non Construction Programs", SF-424B, "Assurances – Non-construction Programs", and SF-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities") can be completed electronically at a later date and shall only be necessary at that stage where an

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applicant's work plan and financial plan has been recommended for funding by the NCPN Governing Board as further validated in a USDA APHIS Farm Bill Spending Plan for NCPN for FY 2018. At that point, USDA APHIS will provide a link to successful applicants for continued processing of their proposals using the 'ezFedGrants' process.

In the event that an applicant desires to obtain paper copies of the above-mentioned forms, they can be requested from the following address:

Mr. Dean Denham
USDA APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine
Science and Technology
Center for Plant Health Science and Technology
1730 Varsity Drive, Suite 400
Raleigh, NC 27606-2949
Phone: 919-855-7404
Fax: 919-855-7480
E-Mail: Dean.Denham@aphis.usda.gov

These required forms can also be found at:

https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/resources/forms/sa_forms_by_category/ct_grant_proposal_for_ms

D. Content and Form of Proposal Submission – Proposals / Work Plans

**National Clean Plant Network (NCPN)
Cooperative Agreement Program**

WORK PLAN FORMAT

Cover Page

Name of Project:
One or Two Sentence Project Description:
Principal Investigator:
Name of Entity:
Address:
City, State, Zip:
Office Phone:
Cell Phone:
Fax:
E-mail Address (Principal Investigator):

Name, Title, and Signature of the Official Authorized by the Institution/Agency to Apply for Federal Financial Assistance: _____

Date: _____

Please complete each section explained on the following pages and maintain the numbering format on your proposal. Section VI, “Proposal Review Information” provides more details on the information requested and how it will be used to evaluate proposals for funding.

Content – Work Plans (Proposals) should be brief, focused, and specific to the needs of the applicant as transposed against the mission of the National Clean Plant Network. After a brief explanation of applicant purpose, mission, and methods, the focus of the work plan should be on clarity surrounding the details and specifics of the particular requests of NCPN including clarity on anticipated ‘deliverables resulting from NCPN support.

Work Plan Length – Excluding the cover page, applicants shall not exceed 15 pages (font 11, single spaced) in Work Plan length for proposals covering a single crop. For each additional crop the Work Plan may be increased by 5 pages up to a maximum not to exceed 30 pages for 4 covered crops or more. This limitation does not include any Federal proposal forms or proposal cover letters or appendices.

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Appendices – Applicants may submit documents as Appendices in support of their Work Plan in addition to the Work Plan page limitation. However, any submitted Appendices over 20 pages total may be assessed at the discretion of NCPN. This limitation does not include any letters and support information regarding process compliance or any submitted program or unit Business Plans, or Annual Entity Reports.

Format - It is very important that applicants keep to the suggested format for visual consistency in proposals and proposals; with any non-format data such as spreadsheets, charts, or graphs being submitted as Appendices.

Work Plan Table of Contents - Applicants may also include a Work Plan “Table of Contents” (also excluded from the page maximum count for Work Plan length).

*Financial Spreadsheet Template – **Applicants are highly encouraged** to also submit their budget requests both in written form as part of the requested work plan and as an electronic Financial Plan spreadsheet. A spreadsheet template is available to applicants as a service to help formulate budget needs efficiently and to further help inform and facilitate the NCPN Governing Boards work in assessing the content of proposals. The spreadsheet template is available at the NCPN Federal website mentioned here:*

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/planthealth/section10007/ncpn>

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APHIS Agreement No: *(To be Completed by USDA for Successful Applicants)*
Other Identifying Numbers: *(Any Applicant Desired Program Identification Numbers)*

FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2018 WORK PLAN

Name and Location of the Party Applying for Support

Name of Project Being Supported

Provide a brief one or two sentence description of the proposed project for which funding is being sought.

Performance Period:

Suggested time from the beginning to the end of the agreement. The timeframe should not exceed 1 year.

Introduction and Background:

Briefly indicate what relevant need or problem within the applicant's mission area requires a solution in carrying out a public purpose of support or stimulation.

Alignment with the USDA and NCPN Strategic Goals and Objectives:

Refer to Part I. D. "Alignment with USDA and NCPN Strategic Goals and Objectives.

Applicants need not provide specific statements regarding how they are meeting any indicated USDA and NCPN Goal or Mission Area, however, proposals should provide sufficient and reasonable evidence that stated goals are being satisfied.

Stakeholder Participation and Industry Focus

A. Stakeholder Participation:

Provide a very brief indication of the organizations collaboratively involved with the applicant in activities carried out through this proposal and explain their involvement.

B. Industry Focus:

Indicate the industry or industries being served as a result of the products generated through this project. As applicable, also indicate the commodity, type, and number of deliverables intended for use either by nurseries or growers and the anticipated timeframe for producing and delivering, or otherwise making available, the agreed upon materials and products.

Project Goals and Objectives

List or explain what results or benefits will be derived from this effort. Note that these outcomes will be the major building blocks upon which the milestones in the next section are based.

Project Milestones

Milestones should list the major steps of achievement that successfully completes a Goal or Objective listed in the section above. Milestones should be associated with a specific timeframe.

Plan of Action

Provide a brief but comprehensive description of the program proposed for funding, including relevant program operation. This section can include scope of work and methodology/approach.

The focus of this section should largely be on ‘what’ is being done, ‘why’ it’s important, and the anticipated ‘outcomes’. Information on specific methodologies are encouraged to the extent that they are necessary to clarify ‘what’, ‘why’, and ‘outcomes’ or to better justify the request for resources.

Anticipated Accomplishments – IMPORTANT

List or indicate the specific intended accomplishments or performance measures that will be used to evaluate the success of the project and how each element will be measured. The anticipated accomplishments or ascribed performance measures should include ‘outcome’ based information and, if applicable, indicate the quantity and type of deliverables anticipated under this project as well as the impact of producing and providing those deliverables, including the impact on industry.

Suggested Quantifiable ‘Deliverables’ might include (but is not limited to) the following:

- *Number of Plant Introductions (New Accessions)*
- *Number of Tissue Culture Selections Created*
- *Disease Testing (Number of Tests)--- Elisa, PCR, herbaceous, other*
- *Number of Indexing Activities --- Buds, indicator plants, selections, other*
- *Field Diagnostics --- Number of assays*
- *Numbers of Accessions or Plants in Therapeutics --- Heat Therapy, other therapies*
- *Amount of Material Planted in Foundations*
- *Amount of Material Maintained in Established Foundations*
- *Number of New Releases, Imported and Domestic*
- *Number of Clean Plant Units Distributed*
- *Information on critical ‘Outcomes’ resulting from these Deliverables*

A document suggesting a performance report outline or template is available by contacting the NCPN Coordinator or the NCPN Administrative Support officer listed in Part VIII ‘Agency Contacts’ of this Request for Proposals.

Budget Plan

Provide budget details that reflect the expenditures for the project presented (or that will be presented) on Standard Form 424A and expand on the details either in the form of a descriptive budget narrative or as suggested below or in the form of an electronic spreadsheet as suggested elsewhere in this 'Request for Proposals':

Salaries* _____ \$ _____
 and Fringe (xx%) _____

* Applicants must specify type of personnel and number of positions and salary and number of hours devoted to NCPN. If more than one crop is being serviced, pro-rate the costs among the crop categories.

Equipment** _____

** Specify the type, number, and cost of each piece of equipment requested. If more than one crop is being serviced, pro-rate the costs among the crop categories.

Supplies _____

If more than one crop is being serviced, pro-rate the costs among the crop categories.

Travel*** _____

***Specifically indicate if travel is associated with servicing the diagnostics, therapeutics, and foundational needs of the project.

***Indicate separately if travel support is being sought directly to attend NCPN Governing Body meetings; specifying the crop being serviced. _____

***Indicate separately if travel support is being sought to service the Educational/Outreach needs of NCPN; specifying (if known) the events for which support is being sought. _____

Printing/Publications _____

Contracts and Other Services _____

Other Costs (must be specified) _____

Indirect**** _____

**** See additional information on indirect costs below

Total \$ _____

APHIS Share \$ _____

Cooperator's Share \$ _____

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Matching funds: Indicate any cost-sharing, matching contributions, or an enumeration of other funds available for program operations in addition to NCPN requested support here in budget fashion as above.

Note: In order to claim indirect costs a current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement must be in place and a copy provided to APHIS at the time of award.

******Indirect Costs – 15% limitation:** The 2014 Farm Bill restricts indirect costs charged against a cooperative agreement under Section 10007 (including NCPN) to **the lesser of 15% of the Total Federal Funds provided under the cooperative agreement** or the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement applicable to the recipient as established by law. This amount may also be calculated as approximately 17.647% of Total Direct Costs.*

The applicant must submit a copy of its fully executed current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, negotiated by its recognized Federal agency, when indirect costs are assessed in the budget.

Data

[To be included in all submitted work plans].

The U.S. Government shall have unrestricted access to and use of raw data, analyzed data, data sets and models, analytical methods, or other analytical tools, created by the Cooperator from said data and data sets. The U.S. Government shall also have unrestricted access to and use of biological, chemical, or physical Material and the data created from analysis by the Cooperator of said Material. Furthermore, and for the avoidance of doubt under the Bayh-Dole Act 37 U.S. Code 202(4), with respect to any invention in which the Cooperator or their institution elects rights, APHIS shall have a nonexclusive, nontransferable, irrevocable, paid-up license to practice or have practiced for on behalf of the United States any invention throughout the world and cannot be subject to a technology transfer charge.

Principal Investigator and Other Contact Information (Including APHIS/PPQ):

Institution Name:

Principal Investigator:

Provide the name and all contact information for the primary cooperator contact person(s).

Grants and Agreements Contact:

Provide the name and all contact information for the cooperator agreements/grants/budget contact person(s) needed to facilitate the agreement through the cooperator's process.

Other Persons Crucial to this Program:

Provide the name and all contact information for other persons crucial to this program needed to facilitate the agreement through the cooperator's process.

USDA, APHIS, PPQ – Program Contacts:

The NCPN 'Raleigh, NC' Office:

Mr. Erich S. Rudyj, Coordinator – NCPN Management Team
National Clean Plant Network (NCPN)
USDA, APHIS, PPQ, Science and Technology
National Clean Plant Network
1730 Varsity Drive, Suite 400, Room 435, Raleigh, NC 27606
Phone: (919) 855-7447
Fax: (919) 855-7480
E-Mail: Erich.S.Rudyj@aphis.usda.gov

The NCPN 'Riverdale, MD' Office :

Ms. Tammy Kolt, Administrative Support – NCPN Management Team
National Clean Plant Network (NCPN)
USDA, APHIS, PPQ, Plant Health Programs (PHP)
Quarantine Policy, Analysis and Support Staff
Accreditation, Certification, and Networking Services
4700 River Road – Unit 152, Riverdale, MD 20737
Phone: (301) 851-2160
Fax: (301) 734-5269
E-Mail: Tammy.Kolt@aphis.usda.gov



Work Plan Template – A template of the aforementioned work plan can be found at the NCPN Federal website mentioned here:

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/planthealth/section10007/ncpn>

Financial Plan Template - A template of the aforementioned electronic financial plan can be found at the NCPN Federal website mentioned here:

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/planthealth/section10007/ncpn>

E. Proposal Forms – Subsequent ezFedGrants Process:

The initial proposal to NCPN for funding recommendations, with a deadline to NCPN as indicated in Part V Section D below, need only include a work plan, a financial plan as indicated in this Request for Proposals as well as any appropriate support documentation such as information issued under authority of an NCPN Tier 2 Governing Board indicating participation in the recommended pre-proposal review process.

Applicant subsequently recommended by the NCPN Governing Board, as further captured in a USDA APHIS Farm Bill Spending Plan for NCPN for FY 2018, for further consideration will then be sent a link to the ezFedGrants website to conclude the proposal process.

F. Submission Dates and Times, including Other Relevant Dates:

- **RFA Open Period:** The Program will accept proposals for 12 weeks; from July 17, 2017 – October 6, 2017
- **Deadline for Submission of Proposals:** 11:59 pm (U.S. western time) October 6, 2017 for submission either to the NCPN email address at NCPN@aphis.usda.gov or by mail. If e-mailed, the package must be received by USDA/APHIS by the deadline. The e-mail address to use is: NCPN@aphis.usda.gov. If mailed with an appropriate carrier, the package must be postmarked by the deadline.
- **Submission:** Proposals should be submitted electronically to the e-mail address cited in this announcement or mailed with an appropriate carrier to the physical address cited in this announcement.
- **Evaluation and Selection:** The evaluation and selection of proposals is anticipated within 45 days of the proposal deadline. Following the selection process, all applicants will be notified whether their proposal will be funded. The evaluation committee reserves the right to suggest modifications to the proposal and associated budget.
- **Allocation of Funds:** Unless otherwise indicated, funds will be allocated for a 12-month period beginning on the date indicated in the Notice of Award.

G. Intergovernmental Review – IMPORTANT:

At the time that applicants apply for Network funding support it is highly encouraged that they also initiate this process, if applicable in their State, as satisfactory compliance with the process can take up to 60 days for new projects and 30 days for continuation projects.

For FY 2018, the Intergovernmental Review Process (CFDA 10.025) under which NCPN falls, is subject to Executive Order 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs” in the States or Territories of: American Samoa, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Delaware, District of Columbia, Guam, Iowa (State Agencies only), Kentucky, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada (send SF-424 to NV for their records only), New Hampshire, North Dakota, Northern

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Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, Utah (State Agencies only), Virgin Islands, and West Virginia. Awards will not be made until this process has been completed in the applicable states. Names and addresses of States' Single Point of Contact (SPOC) are listed in the Office of Management and Budget's home page at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>. For those applicants that have this process in their state, submit your proposal to the SPOC simultaneously to submitting to APHIS. Failure to meet with this requirement will result in a rejection of your proposal. A copy of the SPOC waiver or approval letter will be required at the time the award is made.

H. Funding Restrictions:

Project funds must be obligated by the recipient within 12 months from the date the funds are made available by USDA APHIS (the date of approval on the Notice of Award) unless otherwise stated in the Notice of Award. Construction and other activities prohibited under this RFA are not authorized.

As part of the final proposal process, applicants must submit a copy of its fully executed current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, negotiated by its recognized Federal agency, when indirect costs are assessed in the budget. Eligible cooperator's assessment of indirect costs are limited to not more than 15% of total agreement costs or the proposal of their indirect cost rate agreement, or other Regulatory provisions, whichever is less.

I. ezFedGrants – An Explanation of the Continuing Process:

All applicants with work plans and associated financial plans submitted under this Request for Proposals and subsequently recommended by the NCPN Governing Board for funding, as further validated in a USDA APHIS Farm Bill Spending Plan for NCPN for FY 2018 for further consideration, will then be sent a link to the ezFedGrants website to conclude the proposal process.

USDA APHIS recently adopted ezFedGrants to finalize proposals recommended for NCPN funding. Applicants with finalized/approved proposals will be sent a link by NCPN to the ezFedGrants management site. Successful applicants cannot take any further action to process an agreement until the NCPN Governing Board has recommended a proposal for funding, as further validated in a USDA APHIS Farm Bill Spending Plan for NCPN for FY 2018 for further consideration. At that time, USDA will create an proposal 'opportunity' in the ezFedGrants system, and send a link to successful applicants and/or their designated agreements staff person for further processing.

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Prior to receiving an proposal specific link to ezFedGrants, applicants can take several preliminary steps to get prepared for the using the ezFedGrants proposal:

- Contact the applicant entities agreements staff who will be assisting the Principle Investigator and inform them of the need to use ezFedGrants and to obtain a level 2 e-authentication to access the system (https://www.nfc.usda.gov/FSS/Training/Online/ezFedGrants/Resources/JA-Request_eAuthentication_Level2.pdf)
- Visit the ezFedGrants '*Frequently Asked Questions*' for basic information about the system (https://nfc.usda.gov/FSS/Training/Online/ezFedGrants/Resources/FAQ-EP_Access_Permissions_Roles.pdf).



Part VI. Proposal Review Information

A. Criteria

1. Summary of Score Sheet: The summary below reflects the weightings that will be used to evaluate each proposal.

CATEGORY	Points	
	Sub Category	Total Category
<u>Goal Alignment</u>		25
A. Alignment with USDA and NCPN Mission and Goals	25	
<u>Stakeholder Participation and Focus</u>		75
A. List of Stakeholders Participating	25	
B. Industry Focus	50	
<u>Governing Bodies and Harmonization</u>		100
A. Established or Formative Specialty Crop Governing Bodies	50	
B. Harmonization and Prioritization by the Specialty Crop Network	50	
<u>Overall Merit of Project – Scope of Work and Methodology</u>		400
A. Introduction and Summary	25	
B. Purpose and Objectives	100	
C. Scope of Work, Methodology/Approach, and Expected Deliverables	250	
D. Communication Plan	25	
<u>Project Administration</u>		400
A. Budget	150	
B. Milestones/Time Tables and Performance Measures	150	
C. Business Plan/Annual Entity Reports and 5-Year Program/Fiscal Plans	100	
Total		1000

2. Explanation of Evaluation Relative to Information Requirements

The following provides an explanation on how the proposals will be evaluated and clarification of information to be provided by the applicant in preparing the proposal. The explanations reflect what information is to be supplied to receive a higher portion of the points possible for the category and are in the same sequence as the proposal form for ease of reference.

Goal Alignment (25)

A. Alignment with USDA and NCPN Mission and Goals (25)

Indicate which of the stated missions and goals are addressed by the project and provide a brief sentence or two indicating why. More inclusive, diverse projects will receive higher rating in this area.

Stakeholder Participation and Focus (75)

A. List of Stakeholders Participating (25)

Provide a summary of the stakeholders who will be involved; include only those who will have a significant role in the project. Broad participation of stakeholder groups will receive a higher rating in this area.

B. Industry Focus and Roles (50)

Realistically project the number of plant materials or other deliverables affecting nurseries and growers that will be included in the project. Also, indicate the number of non-industry participants who will have a role in the project. Broad industry participation is important. The applicant should explain the role of each industry affected by applicant activities. The majority of the scoring emphasis in this section pertains to the degree of involvement of various segments of the nurseries and growers and associated industry associations. Applicants should expand upon the roles of each participating industry segment.

Governing Bodies and Harmonization (100)

A. Established or Formative Specialty Crop Governing Bodies (50)

Indicate whether an NCPN-focused specialty crop governing body exists and its ability to coordinate proposals for Network consideration.

B. Proposal Harmonization and Prioritization by the Specialty Crop Network (50)

Indicate the degree to which the proposal has been coordinated within the applicable Network-focused specialty crop governing body and the extent to which it is harmonized within that network with any other clean plant initiatives.

Overall Merit of Project – Scope of Work and Methodology (500)

The merit and value of the project as it relates to the implementation of the Network is the most important section when evaluated for consideration. Thoroughly respond to each question/statement as listed in the Proposal.

A. Introduction and Summary (25)

Provide a brief overview of the project, highlighting its significance and how it will enhance the implementation of the Network.

B. Purpose and Objectives (100)

Clearly explain the objectives of the project.

C. Scope of Work, Methodology/Approach, and Expected Deliverables (350)

Clearly describe the scope of work of the project including a comprehensive description of the methodology/approach to be used and the products or services to be delivered, including amounts and times.

Note that the primary components of the Network include: 1) Network Governance, 2) Project Operations, 3) Methods Development, 4) Extension, Outreach, and Education, and 5) Quality Assurance and Quality Control.

Network Governance: Support shall be prioritized to those projects that seek to establish and administer (or otherwise operate under existing) specialty crop focused clean plant network governance bodies (including regional entities if appropriate). These bodies are stakeholder driven and must include clean plant centers to conduct diagnostics and therapeutics as well as industry stakeholders and other associated associations and governmental staff. One of the primary purposes of such specialty crop clean plant networks is to harmonize and coordinate individual project funding requests to ensure for maximum, complete coverage of national needs while reducing unnecessary overlap.

Project Operations: The primary goal of the Network is to support and enhance a network of facilities needed to test and provide therapy for high value specialty crop clones and to establish mother/foundation blocks. The highest priority in the NCPN is placed on the provision of such material in agreed to amounts and time, and to make the material available to nurseries for increase and ultimate provision to growers. *Note: This is the highest priority in the NCPN program.*

Methods Development: Projects may be supported to develop or improve methods needed to test and provide therapy for infected plant material proposed for entry into the program. Support may also be considered for activities involving the development of standards and guidelines.

Extension, Outreach, and Education: Consideration is given to projects that, in working in collaboration with the Network's Education/Outreach Working Group,

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develop aspects of NCPN education, outreach, and education concepts and materials for nurseries and growers. This should include partnerships with and among land-grant and other university-based extension, outreach, and education services and should include interaction with commercial nurseries, industry associations, and growers. The focus should be on ensuring for the successful development of NCPN products and services.

Quality Assurance and Quality Control: Performance benchmarks and timelines are established for product deliverables and a plan is proposed for internal program reviews and quality controls.

D. Communication Plan (25)

The project should include an outreach component that supports communication between the project and nurseries, growers, and other stakeholders. Explain the networking infrastructure (producer organizations, extension, etc.) that will be utilized to achieve the outreach program. The Applicant should identify and describe how they intend to “deliver” the message and materials. Explain how the industry will gain a better understanding of the NCPN as a result of the project and how the project will be harmonized, coordinated, and communicated among stakeholders. Also, explain what sort of feedback shall be solicited and how the feedback will be shared with the Network’s Governing Body to improve future projects and communication efforts.

Project Administration (300)

A. Budget (150)

This section is to more thoroughly explain the budget information presented on the Budget Information Standard Form 424A. Budgets must include only those costs that are allocable and allowable per relevant OMB guidance available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/grants_circulars.html

B. Milestones/Time Tables and Performance Measures (150)

Establish and present milestones (key activities) with target dates for accomplishing each. The milestones must correlate to the project’s objectives and desired results.

The proposal must provide specific measurable objectives in the proposal, including initial implementation goals. This information will be a priority in the evaluation of the proposal. The specific performance measures will be used to evaluate the success of the project. Include how each element will be measured. It is critical for the proposal to have well defined performance measures.

C. Business Plans or Annual Entity Reports and 5-Year Program and Fiscal Plans: (100)

Applicants seeking Network support that also have established business plans or issue annual entity reports for their operating units are requested to attach such documentation to their proposals as an appendix. The Network hopes to use this information to better understand the operating environment of each entity seeking Network support.

Additionally, applicants should prepare and provide 5-Year Program and Fiscal Plans that explains, in synopsis, programmatically and fiscally where their program is now, how they anticipate their programmatic and fiscal needs to change annually for the next 5 years, and how they anticipate that the Network might engage with them in this evolutionary process. High consideration is given to such attachments.

Note: The duplication of projects with the same objectives should be prevented by the process in which program managers harmonize and coordinate their respective requests through the specialty crop clean plant network governing bodies.

B. Review and Selection Process

USDA/APHIS/PPQ in collaboration with USDA/ARS and USDA/NIFA as represented by the members of the Network's Core Working Group is responsible for the ultimate approval of projects that will be funded through cooperative agreements. They shall be assisted in their task by the members of the Network's Governing Board that shall form as the selection panel to participate in the evaluation and selection process of Network funding proposals. The panel composed wholly of Federal and State employees shall make the primary selection of projects for funding and shall submit their decisions to the Network's Core Working Group for final ratification. They may seek counsel from subject-matter experts as appropriate. The Network's Governing Board members are selected based on their knowledge of clean plant, germplasm, and plant health regulatory issues. Individuals on the panel will have no association with any project that is being reviewed. In the event of a real or perceived conflict of interest, a panel member shall recuse themselves as appropriate. USDA/APHIS/PPQ has final funding obligating authority in determining which projects are funding for this initiative.



Part VII. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notice

Proposals selected for funding will be notified by email, phone, or by mail after the selection and other USDA required processes are complete. Furtherance to finality of the proposal process in ezFedGrants will then be required. Subsequently, the signature of the authorized agent and APHIS' authorized official on all required paperwork will finalize the cooperative agreement.

E-Mail notification or a letter will be mailed to all other applicants not recommended for funding on approximately the same date the selected applicants are first notified.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Access privileges to national databases provided to cooperators by USDA APHIS will be given only to specific individuals specified in the agreements and must not be shared with any other individual, organization, company, or other entity. Animal health data specified under the agreement that are collected under the terms of the agreement are to be provided to APHIS in accordance with the data transfer protocols required by the national databases.

Successful applicants must comply with the requirements contained in the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements **for Federal Awards**", 2 CFR Part 200; Nonprocurement Debarment and Suspension" 2 CFR 417; "Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace", 2 CFR Part 421; "New Restrictions on Lobbying", 2 CFR Part 418; and Office of Management and Budget regulations governing "Controlling Paperwork Burdens on the Public", 5 CFR 1320.

C. Reporting

The Project Administrator will provide to the APHIS authorized representative **quarterly** accomplishment reports on program activities outlined in this proposal. The reports will be used by APHIS to verify compliance with provisions of this **Agreement**. These reports are due **no later than 30 days** after the end of each Federal fiscal quarter except the final report which is due **no later than 90 days** after the **Agreement** expires or terminates. Extensions of time to submit accomplishment reports are subject to the discretion of APHIS' authorized representative and, if allowed, shall be provided by the authorized representative in writing.

Accomplishment Report Template – A template of the aforementioned accomplishment report can be found at the NCPN Federal website mentioned here:

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/planthealth/section10007/ncpn>

The Project Administrator will provide to the APHIS authorized representative a properly certified **quarterly** Federal Financial Status Report, SF-425, **no later than 30 days** after the end of each Federal fiscal quarter and a final SF-425 **no later than 90 days** after the **Agreement** expires or terminates. Any requests for an extension of time to submit the SF-425 must be made

in writing to APHIS' authorized representative before expiration of the initial 30 or 90 day period allowed for submitting the report. Extensions of time to submit the SF-425 are subject to the discretion of APHIS' authorized representative and, if allowed, shall be provided by the authorized representative in writing.



Part VIII. Agency Contacts

***For questions of NCPN programmatic content, please contact:
(To submit a proposal by mail, use this address.)***

Mr. Erich S. Rudyj, Coordinator – NCPN Management Team
National Clean Plant Network (NCPN)
USDA, APHIS, PPQ, Science and Technology (ST)
National Clean Plant Network (NCPN)
1730 Varsity Drive, Suite 400, Raleigh, NC 27606
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Part IX. Other Information

If in FY 2018 the Federal budget contains funds for additional support to NCPN for Cooperative Agreements, NCPN may at its discretion follow requirements similar to this Request for Proposals (RFA) as modified or otherwise adjusted in distributing such funds. The Network may request that stakeholders provide feedback regarding this RFA for use in improving any future announcements.

USDA is neither obligated to make any award as a result of this Request for Proposals nor to make any changes to future announcements. Only the USDA APHIS Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) can bind the Government to expenditure of funds and this obligation of funds shall only occur in writing by authorized officials and under the approved USDA, APHIS Cooperative Agreement format.

