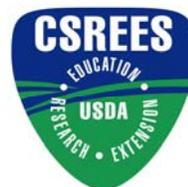


U.S. Department
of Agriculture

Cooperative State Research,
Education and Extension Service



Agriculture Risk Management Education Competitive Grants Program

Operational Guide for the Regional Risk Management Education Centers

February 8, 2007

Regional Risk Management Education Centers



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service

Version 07.4

Agriculture Risk Management Education Competitive Grants Program
Operational Guide for the Regional Risk Management Education Centers

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part I. Purpose, Procedures and Guiding Principles	4
A. Purpose	4
B. Procedures	4
C. Guiding Principles	4
D. Procedures for Modifying the Operational Guide	5
Part II. Rationale for the Risk Management Education Program	5
A. Rationale	5
B. Emphasis	5
C. Establishment and Operations of the RME Centers	5
D. Succession of Risk Management Education Regional Center Directors	6
Part III. Solicitation and Use of Stakeholder Input	7
A. Stakeholders Defined of the Advisory Council	7
B. Requesting Stakeholder Input	7
C. Disposition of Stakeholder Input	8
Part IV. Advisory Councils	8
A. Responsibilities of the Advisory Councils	8
B. Selection of Advisory Council Members	9
C. Membership Categories	9
D. Terms of Appointment	9
Part V. Request for Applications (RFA): Content and Distribution	10
A. Requests for Applications	10
B. Application, Progress Reporting and Final Report Submissions	10
C. Informing Eligible Parties	10
D. RFA Publication and Submission of Proposals	11
E. RFA and Important Dates	11
F. Risk Management Education Definitions	11
G. Risk Management Education Topic Areas	11
H. Risk Management Education Target Areas	12
I. Identification of Target Groups for Risk Management Education	12
J. Evaluation Criteria	13
K. Multi-Region Proposals	14
L. Funding Limits	15
M. Portfolio Approach	15

<u>Part VI. Reviewing, Evaluating, and Selecting Proposals for Funding</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>A. Responsibilities and Roles of the Center Directors during the Review and Evaluation of Proposals</u>	<u>16</u>
<u>B. Responsibilities and Roles of the Advisory Councils in Reviewing And Evaluating Proposals</u>	<u>19</u>
<u>Part VII. Final Ranking of Proposals</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>A. Re-Categorizing Proposals</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>B. Final Ranking of Proposals</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>C. Achieving Areas of Emphasis</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>D. Respecting Advisory Council Proposal Rankings</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>Part VIII. The Final Review Task – Budget Recommendations</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>A. Budget Recommendations: Advisory in Nature</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>B. Providing Sufficient Funds</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>Part IX. Appearances of Conflicts of Interest and Conflicts of Interest</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>A. Definitions</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>B. Handling Conflicts of Interest and/or Appearances of Conflicts of Interest</u>	<u>21</u>
<u>C. Identification of Conflicts of Interest or Appearances of Conflicts of Interest</u>	<u>22</u>
<u>Part X. Confidentiality</u>	<u>22</u>
<u>A. Content of Proposals</u>	<u>22</u>
<u>B. Discussions Pertaining to Proposals</u>	<u>22</u>
<u>C. Identification of Advisory Council Members and Other Reviewers</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>Part XI. Definitions</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>Appendix 1: Regional RME Center Request for Applications – Template</u>	<u>23</u>
<u>Appendix 2: Pre-Proposal/Full Proposal Evaluation Form</u>	<u>38</u>
<u>Appendix 3: Advisory Council Proposal Evaluation Summary – Template</u>	<u>40</u>

Agriculture Risk Management Education Competitive Grants Program
Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Operational Guide for the Regional Risk Management Education Centers

I. Purpose, Procedures and Guiding Principles

A. Purpose. The purpose of the Guide for the Regional Risk Management Education Centers (RME OP Guide) is to establish a common set of guiding principles, procedures and processes for use by the four regional Risk Management Education (RME) Centers in carrying out the RME Program. The goal for this RME OP Guide is to ensure that all proposals, applicants and awardees, regardless of region, are treated consistently. The procedures and processes contained in the Guide are based upon CSREES standards for conducting competitive programs that, when followed, provide a consistent basis by which proposals are reviewed, evaluated, and recommended for funding.

B. Review Procedures. A merit review procedure is used to review, evaluate, and identify projects for funding. It is important to note that while this document establishes a set of guiding principles, the details of the procedures may change over time as agreed to by the directors of the regional RME Centers and the responsible CSREES National Program Leader (NPL). The ultimate aim is to conduct a fair and unbiased evaluation of each proposal accepted for review, using a common set of evaluation criteria.

C. Guiding Principles. In order to ensure that the RME program is carried out in a consistent manner that achieves CSREES standards for a competitive grants program, four Guiding Principles provide the foundation for this Operational Guide. They are:

1. The primary guiding principle is that no Regional RME Center may impose a greater or lesser burden upon an applicant, proposal or awardee than any other center. This is to ensure that all participants in the program are treated in a consistent manner;
2. The solicitation for proposals and the review process of those proposals are conducted in a consistent, objective and unbiased manner, such that all proposals are treated the same with regard to one another;
3. The evaluation criteria used to judge the relative merits of proposals in any given year are the same for all Regional Centers and each criterion is applied with the same weight so as to achieve national and inter-regional consistency in how proposals are reviewed, evaluated and judged;
4. Priorities, areas of emphasis, and targeted groups are the purview of the Regional Centers as may be recommended by the respective regional Advisory Councils and stakeholders, and will be incorporated in each Center's RFA in the section entitled *Topic Areas of Emphasis, Priorities, and Project Types* (See Appendix I, page 23). However, all

funded projects should support one or more of the USDA/CSREES strategic goals and priorities (see www.csrees.usda.gov).

D. Procedures for Modifying the Operational Guide. The RME OP Guide was developed by the four RME Center Directors, the Directors of the Risk Management Education Electronic Support Center (RMEESC), and CSREES RME NPL (hereafter referred to as the parties). The contents thereof have been agreed to by the parties. Any changes to the RME OP Guide must be agreed to by a majority of the parties.

II. Rationale for the Risk Management Education Program

A. Rationale. The RME Program was initiated in 1996 and resulted from farmers, stakeholders and others from all segments of agriculture expressing the need for educational assistance for producers to help them mitigate risk. With the passage of the Agricultural Risk Protection Act 2000 (ARPA), the “Partnerships” for Risk Management Education were established and the Congress directed that \$5 million be made available to CSREES for this purpose. Congress mandated funding for RME in the ARPA for two reasons: first, the volatility and opportunities in agriculture dictated the need for ongoing agricultural risk management educational programs; second, the developments in the risk management thrust from 1996 to 2000 provided an impetus to build a broader risk management education program for the purpose of assisting agricultural producers and their families to make more informed risk management decisions. Title 7 U.S.C. Section 1524.3(A) states:

The Secretary, acting through CSREES shall establish a program under which competitive grants are made... for the purposes of educating agricultural producers about the full range of risk management activities... and other risk management strategies.

B. Emphasis. The CSREES Agricultural RME Program emphasizes farm financial management in its broadest conceptualization, and provides grants through four Regional RME Centers to public and private sector educators for the development of risk management education materials in an effort to enable agricultural producers and their families to more effectively mitigate, control and/or manage risk. The funding of educators through a competitive grants process is the investment of the RME Program. The returns to that investment are agricultural producers and families better able to manage risk.

C. Establishment and Operations of the RME Centers.

1. Establishment of the Regional RME Centers. In order to carry out the relevant and pertinent sections of ARPA, CSREES established four regional RME Centers and a fifth RMEESC to provide electronic support and enhanced archival capabilities to ensure public access to materials produced under the program. Regional RME Centers are selected by CSREES through a competitive grant process. The competition is open to any land grant institution or equivalent organization that can document its ability to manage a competitive grants program and that also agrees to provide awards under a “streamlining

agreement” with CSREES (see paragraph 2, below. As of September 15, 2006, these Centers and their directors are located at the following five land-grant universities:

a. The Northeast Center for Risk Management Education, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware; Dr. H. Don Tilmon, Director [htilmon@udel.edu]; 302.831.1325 or Ms. Susan Olson, sbolson@udel.edu, 302.831.6540];

b. The North Central Risk Management Education Center, University of Nebraska – Lincoln, Nebraska; Dr. H. Doug Jose, Director [hjose1@unl.edu]; 402.472.1749 or Ms. Beth Eberspacher, RME Coordinator, beberspacher3@unl.edu, 402.472.2039];

c. The Southern Region Risk Management Education Center, Texas A&M University-Stephenville, Texas; Dr. Kenneth R. Stokes, Director [k-stokes@tamu.edu, 254.968.4144, or Ms. Carol Faulkenberry, cfaulkenberry@tamu.edu, 254.968.4144];

d. The Western Center for Risk Management Education, Washington State University-Spokane, Washington; Dr. Jon Newkirk, Director [jnewkirk@wsu.edu, 253.445.4568], or Dennis Fiess, Deputy Director [dfiess@wsu.edu]; 509.477.2196] or Ms. Jo Ann Warner at warnerj@wsu.edu, 509.477.2168];

e. The Digital Center for Risk Management Education, University of Minnesota-St. Paul, Minnesota; Robert Craven, Director [rcraven@umn.edu, 612.625.6701] or Kevin Klair, Deputy Director [kklair@umn.edu, 612.625.6237].

2. Regional Center Grant Operations – Streamlining Authority. Each regional RME Center administers a competitive grants program under a “Streamlining Agreement” with CSREES. Under this agreement, each center has the authority to approve funding recommendations made by their respective Advisory Councils and to process grant awards utilizing the procedures adopted by each respective host university, usually in the form of providing subcontracts to the applicant organizations or individuals. Under the streamlining agreement, each center is required to provide to CSREES an annual report listing its subcontract approvals (This report can be part of the Center’s renewal proposal or request for continued support. This report should include the following: Name of recipient organization; the amount of the award; the title of the project; the name and title of the Project Director; and the duration of the award. Additionally, each university, utilizing their processes, may grant no-cost extensions to the recipient organizations or individuals. Procedures utilized by the RME Centers and their respective host university must be in compliance with CSREES terms and conditions as well as Office of Management and Budget relevant and pertinent circulars.

D. Succession of Risk Management Education Regional Center Directors. Upon the relocation to another university or other organization, retirement, or death of a regional RME Center Director, the impacted center organization (Authorized representative) must consult with

the RME NPL to determine an appropriate course of action regarding the appointment of a new director and other possible alternatives.

III. Soliciting Stakeholder Input and Use of Stakeholder Input

A. Stakeholders Defined. ARPA defines stakeholders as partners who represent a wide range of public and private entities and professions, including but not limited to producers and their families; insurance companies that provide agricultural insurance products; public and private lending institutions, organizations and individuals that provide risk management education services and programs to producers and their families. Stakeholders may include insurance companies and insurance agents, commodity groups, business and tax consultants; commodity brokers, lending institutions and loan officers; organizations that provide services to producers for a membership fee such as farm and commodity organizations and other voluntary and interest groups that are organized to foster the wellbeing of producers and farm families; county-based extension educators and subject matter extension specialists; other governmental entities (such as USDA's Risk Management Agency, or other agencies that work directly with producers in assisting them in managing risk), and non-governmental organizations, public or private that either provide programs to and on behalf of producers, or are interested in risk management tools or risk mitigation strategies.

B. Requesting Stakeholder Input. Stakeholder input is important to ensure that the RME Program continues to address issues and concerns of importance to farmers and their families.

1. Requesting Stakeholder Input. Each year, the four regional RME Centers shall request stakeholder input through meetings with various groups of stakeholders; by mail or e-mail, telephone and or other forms of communication in their respective regions. This input will deal primarily with regional risk management education priorities, targeted audiences with particular risk management needs, or particular topics considered important by the contributing stakeholder(s) and the respective regional Advisory Council. These suggestions and recommendations will be considered for inclusion in the regional RME Center annual Request for Applications (RFA). The final selection of priorities and/or areas of emphasis shall be the responsibility and the decision of each RME Center Director, in consultation with their respective Advisory Councils.

2. RFA Input Solicitation Wording. Each center shall insert wording in their respective RFA to solicit input from stakeholders (See Appendix 1, page 23, Stakeholder Input). The solicitation of stakeholder input shall include but not be limited to the following wording:

Stakeholder Input: The [name of regional RME Center] is requesting comments, suggestions and/or recommendations regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the Risk Management Education Program. Such comments will be used to meet the requirements of section 103(c)(2) of the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act

of 1998 (7 U.S.C. 7613(c)(2)). This section requires the Secretary of Agriculture to solicit and consider input on a current RFA from persons who conduct or use agricultural research, education and extension for use in formulating future RFAs for competitive programs. Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by mail to: [Name of Center Director, Center Name, Center address, or via e-mail to: [Name of individual and e-mail address].

3. Input for Multi-Region Projects. The CSREES RME NPL and the five RME Center Directors shall carefully consider issues or topics derived from stakeholder input that are multi-regional in nature. The Directors and the NPL should develop a consensus regarding the incorporation of these topics or issues in one or several of the Region's RFAs.

C. Disposition of Stakeholder Input. When stakeholder input is received, each center shall maintain records as to how the stakeholder input is considered, used, or rejected such that upon inquiry, any stakeholder can be informed as to the use of their input. The consideration, use or rejection of stakeholder input shall be a transparent process. The RME Center Directors, working in concert with their respective Advisory Councils are the final authority regarding the acceptance or rejection of any specific comment, recommendation, or suggestion in the next regional RFAs. Ideally, any stakeholder who provides recommendations or suggestions regarding the RFA and other processes and procedures of each respective center should be informed as to whether their recommendations or suggestions were adopted, and if not, why not. Full documented records of all stakeholder input related actions, correspondence, and other communications should be kept on file for oversight purposes.

IV. Advisory Councils

A. Responsibilities of the Advisory Councils. The primary responsibilities of each regional RME Center's Advisory Council are to review and evaluate RME proposed projects, and to recommend to the Center Director which projects should be funded. Advisory Councils shall also be involved in providing and reviewing stakeholder input and determining what to recommend to the Center Director. In addition, Advisory Councils have great discretion in terms of making recommendations on myriad subjects regarding membership organizational representatives; setting regional priorities; articulating areas of emphasis, their duration and rationale; and changes in procedures and processes utilized by the Regional RME Centers, as long as they are consistent with this RME OP Guide. Priorities are established at the regional level primarily through the interaction of Advisory Councils, other stakeholders, and the Regional RME Center Director. However, it is the RME Center Directors who have final decision authority as to what to implement and not implement in terms of comments, suggestions or recommendations. The Regional RME Center Directors shall also note what recommendations were accepted or rejected, and why such that an inquiry may be answered in the timeliest and fullest manner possible. Full documented records of all Advisory Council related actions, correspondence, and other communications should be kept on file for oversight purposes.

B. Selection of Advisory Council Members. Advisory Council members are appointed by the Center Director. Each regional Advisory Council is composed of members who possess a broad range of experience and knowledge in agriculture and understand the risks that face producers. They are also knowledgeable on various risk management alternatives, and as a group are representative of those who are in need of risk management education in their respective regions. They are selected based on, but not limited to, the following criteria: a broad knowledge of agricultural production in the region; knowledge of alternative risk management strategies and tools; skills in some aspect of risk management analysis or planning; a committed interest in the delivery of risk management education programs to producers; and the experience, judgment and willingness to recommend for funding the most meritorious projects that will achieve the goals of the RME Program.

C. Membership Categories. Each Center Director, upon consultation with the CSREES RME NPL and their respective Advisory Councils, shall establish the membership categories of each council. Such categories may include but not necessarily be limited to: producers, commodity organizations, agricultural insurance agents or officers, agricultural producer organizations, extension service educators or specialists, organizations representing underserved organizations, etc. Advisory Councils may differ in size and composition; however, none shall have less than six members.

D. Terms of Appointment. Members of the Advisory Councils are appointed to serve no more than three consecutive years, on a staggered year basis. Hence, in any given year, 1/3 of the membership of the council will rotate in and rotate off. However there are two other scenarios that the Center Directors may wish to employ.

1. Scenario 1 - The Regional Center Directors may at their discretion incorporate a “training period” for new members and have them overlap those they are replacing for a year. In this way, there will be continuity in experience and process. Under this scenario, members would have full Advisory Council membership and responsibility, and would serve for four years.

2. Scenario 2 - The Regional Center Directors may at their discretion develop an “apprentice program” wherein new members “apprentice” for the year prior to them assuming full Advisory Council membership and commensurate responsibilities. During the apprentice year, such members will not be part of the evaluation effort, but will observe the process of evaluating proposals and gain experience in the operation of the Advisory Council. Under this scenario members would serve one year prior to assuming full membership and authority of an Advisory Council member.

V. Request for Applications (RFA) - Content and Distribution (See Appendix 1, RFA Template)

A. Requests for Applications. The Request for Applications (RFA) is the instrument Regional Centers use to solicit proposals that address RME program goals and objectives. In order to achieve consistency on a national basis, and to minimize confusion for applicants and proposal reviewers alike, each RME Regional Center will publish an annual RFA using the template contained in Appendix 1, *Risk Management Education Competitive Grants Program, Regional RME Center RFA Template*. Other than regional priorities or differences in targeted groups that each Center may identify as areas of regional emphasis (see Appendix 1, section *Topic Areas of Emphasis, Priorities, and Project Types*), there should be no other differences between Regional RME Center RFAs. Each Regional Center shall publish their respective RFA through the RMEESC. All four RFAs shall be published on or about November 1st each year. The Regional RME Center Directors may agree to a change in this approximate date so long as all (the four Regional Center Directors and the Digital Center Director) are in agreement with the change. The CSREES RME NPL will be informed immediately upon a change in publication dates.

B. Application, Progress Reporting and Final Report Submissions. All Pre-Proposals, Full Proposals, Progress Reports, and Final Reports shall be submitted electronically utilizing the on-line verification system developed and hosted by the RMEESC. No paper submissions shall be accepted by any region. (Dates for periodic Progress Reports and project Final Reports must be agreed upon by all RME Center Directors.)

C. Informing Eligible Parties: Each regional Center shall strive to inform all interested and potentially interested parties regarding the Extension RME Program.

1. Eligibility. Any individual public or private organization that can document its capability to develop and deliver risk management educational programs to agricultural producers and their families in at least one of the five risk management areas emphasized by this program is eligible to apply for an RME grant.

2. Informing Interested Parties. Each regional RME Center is responsible for informing all interested parties regarding the publication of their respective RFAs within, but not limited to, their geographical boundaries. All interested or potentially interested parties should be informed of the RFA using all appropriate means of communication (newsletters, websites, appropriate list serves, CSREES appropriate list serves, etc.) and be provided with instructions on how to apply for regional or multi-region RME grants. Relevant information should be provided, including, but not necessarily limited to, access to the regional RME Center RFA, application procedures, formats, due dates, evaluation criteria, etc. Newsletters, various and appropriate list serves, popular press, and other means are ways in which information on the RME Program may be delivered to interested parties. The goal is to ensure that each regional RME Center receives high quality project proposals such that the RME needs of producers and their families may be

successfully addressed. By having a large, broad applicant pool, this goal has a higher probability of achievement relative to having a smaller, less broad or restricted pool.

D. RFA Publication and Submission of Proposals. Each regional RME Center shall make their RFA available electronically through their own Center and through the RMEESC. In addition, all applicants to the RME Program shall submit electronic applications through the RMEESC.

E. RFA and Important Dates. Each regional RME Center shall publish and distribute their respective RFA annually and shall conduct review and evaluation of proposals in accordance with the following schedule (which may change slightly given when particular dates fall on weekends, holidays, etc.). In any case, all regional RFAs will be published in the RMEESC on the same date as agreed to by the RME Center Directors. Likewise, closing dates, review periods, award announcement dates, and the date upon which awards are released will all be the same, generally in keeping with the schedule as noted below:

On or about November 1:	RFA published
On or about December 15:	Pre-Proposal closing date (5:00PM in the region of the receiving center) for the reception of pre-proposals
On or about February 1:	Pre-proposal reviews completed and finalists are notified to submit full proposals
On or about March 1:	Closing date for the reception of full proposals(5:00PM in the region of the receiving center) for the reception of full proposals
Between March 1 – April 15	Multi-region projects reviewed by Composite Panel and recommendations conveyed to appropriate regional RME Centers
On or about April 15:	Award decisions announced
On or about July 1:	Awards released

F. Risk Management Education Definitions (See Part XI). The list of definitions that pertain to the RME Program and the application process will be available through the Digital Center for RME at the University of Minnesota. Each regional RME Center RFA shall have an explicit statement as to definitions and the website address where interested applicants may review and/or download them. The definitions shall be in a .PDF format. Applicants, potential applicants, and interested parties shall be directed to the appropriate URL address.

G. Risk Management Education *Topic* Areas. The CSREES RME Program addresses five risk management categories. They are: production risk, price or market risk, human resource risk, legal (including liability and environmental) risk, and financial risk (see RME definitions in the Ag Risk Library, where materials are cataloged under each of the five areas of risk

management).

H. Risk Management Education *Target Areas.* In addition to identifying the five risk management categories of the CSREES RME Program, the Regional Center Directors have also agreed on a number of risk management target areas. As part of the Advisory Council role and stakeholder input, each region may emphasize different target areas as deemed appropriate for their respective regions in any particular year. However, while the list of potential areas may change over time, currently they are as follows:

1. *Improved understanding regarding the use of:*

- Insurance products
- Product and enterprise diversification
- Market analysis and outlook
- Cash and futures pricing tools
- Marketing strategies, plans and marketing clubs
- Direct, wholesale and processing markets
- Contract production, branded or certified marketing, and value-added enterprises
- Financial records, analysis, and bench marking
- Capital and financial assets
- Credit
- Tools for managing legal liability
- Leases, contracts, and negotiating skills
- Plans and tools to address death, divorce, disability, and disease

2. *Improvement in:*

- Business and strategic planning
- Employee recruitment/management/retention
- Interpersonal/family/professional/landlord relationship skills
- Ability to manage changes in policy and regulation
- Understanding of the economic risks associated with new production technologies

I. Identification of Target Groups for Risk Management Education. All agricultural producers who are in need of risk management assistance are the ultimate customers of the RME Program. The RME Program provides funds on a competitive basis to eligible organizations and individuals to develop risk management educational curriculum and to deliver risk management training and education to producers and their families to better enable them to manage risk, or to make more informed decisions on the handling or mitigation of risk. Based upon stakeholder input and discussions with their individual RME Centers, respective Advisory Councils may identify one or more groups that are in greater relative need for RME tools and techniques. The Advisory Council(s) may decide the need is so great and not being currently addressed that they may wish to recommend to the RME Center Director that the RFA explicitly solicit project proposals designed primarily to assist a particularly needy group. The responsibility to include a specific targeted group(s) in the RME Regional Centers' respective RFAs rests with and is the decision of the Regional RME Center Director. Each Regional RME Center shall include in its

RFA its host university's civil rights statement.

J. Evaluation Criteria. The four Regional RME Center Advisory Councils and other reviewers will use the specified evaluation criteria to review proposals and to guide their recommendations for funding (see Appendix 2, Pre-Proposal/Full Proposal Evaluation Form). The CSREES RME Competitive Grants Program is designed to help producers better manage risk. Grants or investments are provided to applicants to enable them to develop materials, tools and techniques that, when provided to producers and their families, will achieve this end. Hence, the results that producers are able to achieve through receiving risk management education are the returns on the investment to the RME Program funds. As a result of this underlying philosophy, the most important evaluation criteria is whether, in the judgment of proposal reviewers, a proposal adequately describes the targeted results for producers. An application that does not identify the risk management results that participants will achieve has a limited chance of receiving funding. Strong emphasis will also be placed on results verification and producer demand for the projects being proposed. Relatively, the strength of collaboration incorporated within the proposals is also important to bring added expertise or access to producers. The two final evaluation criteria, while having less importance, deal with innovative approaches and wide application. The primary focus of the evaluation criteria will be on whether or not targeted results have been specified, and whether there is a relatively high probability that a project can deliver the targeted results. It should be noted that the evaluation categories apply to all full proposals; some criteria do not apply to pre-proposals as will be conveyed to the reviewers by the RME regional center directors. The evaluation criteria that will be used by the four regional RME Advisory Councils and other proposal reviewers are as follows:

1. Targeted Results (40 percent weight). The identification and documentation of targeted results for producers related to their risk management needs. The Targeted Results are those the participants in the proposed project will learn, achieve and apply, not the production of materials, holding of workshops or other program activities.

2. Results Verification (20 percent weight). Verification is simple yes or no evidence that producers will achieve the targeted results. Proposals must document how the project director and/or collaborators will verify whether or not the participants will have achieved their targeted results upon completion of the project. While a formal evaluation process is not required, reviewers will judge as to whether the proposal identifies how the project director will (a) know whether participants have learned, achieved and/or applied the risk management targets and (b) how and when they will measure or verify these results.

3. Producer Demand (20 percent weight). The reason(s) why producers will choose to participate in the proposed project is also key to receiving funding. One difference between the RME Program and other grants programs is that a reviewer must be convinced that there is a demand by producers for the type of project being proposed and a high probability that producers will participate in the project. The proposal must include clear evidence as to why producers or their families, depending on the nature of the project, will choose to participate. This evaluation criterion is based upon evidence that

there is clearly a need, expressed by producers, for the project being proposed, and on the assumption that a producer must also want to participate if they are to learn, achieve and apply the risk management strategies or tools being taught.

4. Collaborators (10 percent weight). Collaborators are outside people or organizations that can provide either technical expertise or access to producers. This can include partners, either individuals or groups in the public and/or private sectors, working through the joint efforts of existing networks or the formation of new educational networks. (This criterion will require reviewers to come to the conclusion that the proposal adequately indicates that the collaborators are really part of the project, and that their participation strengthens the project.)

5. Innovative Approaches (5 percent weight). Innovation may be of many types (e.g., approaches and methods that further contribute to the existing knowledge base, newly developed or designed materials and/or educational tools, etc.). A key part of the selection process is based upon whether the reviewers believe the proposed project will reach the target audience that is defined within the proposal. Innovation may also deal with the lack of time producers have, the marketing and delivery of the proposed project to potential participants, and techniques or tactics to convince producers and/or their families to participate in the project.

6. Wide Application (5 percent weight). Demonstration or description of how the proposed project or its inherent techniques and strategies developed and delivered might have wide application. Descriptions of program techniques might include adapting materials to specialized audiences, marketing and promotion techniques, eliciting high interest in basic risk management principles with new methodologies or other ideas that might make the project have wide application. A relevant question would be, “Will aspects of the proposed project contribute to others who may wish to borrow or adopt the processes and procedures being proposed? “

K. Multi-Region Proposals. In 2004, the national RME Competitive Grants Program was restructured and funds were redirected to the four Regional RME Centers and the RMEESC. As part of this redirection, Regional RME Centers shall provide for the development and submission of multi-region project proposals that include two or more regions. Multi-region proposals will be judged on the same basis as within region proposals using the standard evaluation criteria. With regard to administering the reception, distribution, and evaluation of multi-region proposals, the following rules shall apply:

1. Determining the Lead Entity. The first listed Project Director and his/her employing organization on the Proposal Cover Sheet (Form 424) will be considered the “lead” entity for purposes of this program and will be responsible for reporting progress of the project.

2. Management of Funds. Funds for the entire project will flow from the Regional RME Center where the lead organization is located and be directed to and through that lead organization.

3. Collaborator Budgets. When preparing proposed budgets, participating partners/collaborators will be required to estimate the share of funds required for work in each region where the multi-regional RME project is to be performed. The proposal budget should contain the separate individual regional budgets and reflect these budgets in the overall proposal budget. For example, a 2-region project proposal budget shall contain a budget for each region, and then a third budget that aggregates the figures.

4. Commitment of Funds. Each multi-region proposal will be reviewed and evaluated by each Advisory Council in the regions the proposal is designed to serve. No funds may be committed by any regional RME Center to support a multi-region project unless the Advisory Councils of all Regional RME Centers involved in the project mutually recommend the proposed project for funding.

L. Funding Limits. While there is no established funding limit for any proposal in any particular year, the following statement will be contained in each RFA in the appropriate place (s):

1. For Single Region Projects. Although there is no absolute upper or lower limit on funds for any single proposed project in any given year that is associated with one of the four regions, it is unlikely that any award will exceed \$50,000 per year.

2. For Multi-Region Projects. Although there is no absolute upper or lower limit on funds for any multi-regional project in any given year, it is unlikely that any award will exceed \$75,000 per year.

3. Changing Funding Levels. In order to change the amount or range of likely funding specified for single-region standard projects and for multi-region projects in the regional RME Center RFAs, the Regional RME Center Directors must mutually agree to such changes, and when such changes are made, this Operational Guide will be updated to reflect those changes.

M. Portfolio Approach. Working with stakeholders and the respective Advisory Councils, regional RME Centers will attempt to provide opportunities for funding various types of projects and various types of activities as noted in each Regional RME Center's RFA. No project, however, may be funded by any regional RME Center that is not expressly recommended for funding by that RME Center's Advisory Council. It is up to each RME Center's Advisory Council to determine whether the set of projects being recommended for funding reflects the evaluation criteria and also the various mix of projects, activities or areas of emphasis identified in each respective Center's RFA. The final recommendation of each RME Center's Advisory Council as to what projects should be funded and in what rank order shall be honored by that RME Center's Director.

VI. Reviewing, Evaluating and Selecting Proposals for Funding

Each RME Center will use the following procedures to review, evaluate, and select proposals for funding. The procedures and processes provide a consistent and defensible basis upon which funding decisions are made in the RME Competitive Grants Program.

A. Responsibilities and Roles of the Center Director During the Review and Evaluation of Proposals.

1. Role of the Regional RME Center Director. The Center Director is responsible for the timely, fair, and objective review of all proposals accepted, using a consistent review and evaluation process agreed to by all the RME Center Directors and the CSREES RME NPL. The RME Center Director (this also includes the Regional RME Center Staff) plays no direct role in the review and evaluation of proposals other than overseeing the process. The RME Center Director may introduce the proposals for discussion, however, the RME Center Director shall be completely neutral and unbiased and shall not impart his or her views regarding the merits of any proposal, or enter into discussions on a proposal with the respective Advisory Council. In the event the RME Center Director has an institutional conflict of interest, or an appearance of or real conflict of interest, he/she shall leave the room of the Advisory Council meeting, and prior to doing so, shall appoint a member of the Advisory Council to lead the discussion.

2. Distribution of Proposals. During the evaluation period, the RME Center Director ensures that proposals are conveyed or made available to members of the RME Center's Advisory Council, and other reviewers and that each reviewer has adequate time to provide a full and fair review for each proposal. The guiding principle is to ensure that each proposal is treated in a consistent and fair manner regardless of region. After the Advisory Council evaluation process, the RME Center Director ensures that applicants receive appropriate feedback and comments on their proposals, and processes the awards in as timely a manner as possible.

3. Center Director Receives Recommendations. It is the RME Center Advisory Council that makes recommendations for funding particular proposals to the respective RME Center Director. Therefore, neither the RME Center Director nor any Regional RME Center staff should be involved in the evaluation of proposals. This ensures that the Advisory Council and only the Advisory Council makes fair and unbiased award recommendations. The RME Center Director is an informed observer but is not involved in the evaluation of any proposal.

4. Proposal Review and Evaluation. The Regional RME Center Director will introduce each proposal in an unbiased and neutral manner using a concise statement as to who and what organization has submitted the proposal, what the general goals are, and any other pertinent and relative introductory information. After the proposal is introduced, the

Advisory Council members should make comments as to the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal. Advisory Councils may request from their RME Center Director a history of performance and/or timeliness of reporting if a previous award(s) has been granted. Once the discussions of the Advisory Council are completed, the Advisory Council shall initially place the proposal under one of four categories noted in Paragraph 8 below.

5. Advisory Council Pre and Full Proposal Evaluation Form. Appendix 2 provides the evaluation form that shall be used by the reviewers of pre-proposals and full proposals. This form provides a consistent formatted guide to Advisory Council members and others as they review assigned proposals. The Evaluation form consists of a number of questions for each evaluation criteria and provides YES/NO columns for the reviewer to track the criteria. Utilization of these evaluation forms reinforces what the RME Program emphasizes, and also provides Advisory Council members and other reviewers with a consistent framework on how to judge and structure review comments pertinent to any proposal.

6. Documenting Advisory Council Discussions.

a. Documenting Advisory Council Deliberations: The Regional RME Center Director shall designate a member of the Center Staff to take notes on the discussion on each proposal, taking care to capture the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal and any overall judgments as may be expressed by the Advisory Council members. There should be comments regarding strengths and weaknesses for each proposal in order to provide the applicant with feedback as to the relative strengths and weaknesses of his/her proposal in comparison with the others reviewed.

b. Providing Feedback to Applicants: Each applicant shall receive feedback on the relative merits of his/her proposal in the form of an Advisory Council Proposal Evaluation Summary (See Appendix 3) prepared by a designated staff member and approved by the RME Center Director. Any Advisory Council member of a particular center shall have the opportunity to review any Evaluation Summary of proposals reviewed by that center and provide any recommended changes to their RME Center Director. The Summary shall not include identification of who made what comments, nor should any reviewer's comments identify any other reviewer. It is important to note that the Advisory Council members composed individual reviews independently and prior to the discussions of the Advisory Council. It is only the "Advisory Council Summary" that captures the essence of the Advisory Council deliberations. The bottom line is to ensure that there is a strong rationale as to why one proposal is funded and not another. There needs to be full justification as to the recommendation and final judgment reached on each proposal. With such documentation, it will be obvious that the review process is neither arbitrary nor capricious, but is well defined, fair and objective.

7. Arraying Proposals in Rank Order. It is critical to the credibility of the RME Program, that the Center Director be able to articulate precisely why a proposal was funded or not funded. The use of the Evaluation Form found in Appendix 2, the Advisory Council Proposal Review Summary, and the array of all proposals under a ranking system contribute to the ability of the RME Center Director to articulate to an inquirer why one proposal was funded and another was not. Advisory Council members review proposals independently of each other, and then meet to reach a group consensus. To that end, once a proposal has been discussed, the Advisory Council must place the proposal within one of four evaluation categories (note: see Paragraph “e” below regarding evaluation categories for Pre-Proposals). They are as follows:

a. Must Fund: Proposals placed within this evaluation category are judged to have no discerning weakness and as a result “must be funded” before any other proposal placed in a lower category.

b. Should Fund: Proposals placed within this evaluation category may have a weakness or an indecipherable ambiguity but are judged very fundable. While these proposals are not as strong as those placed in the Must Fund category, they are nevertheless judged by the Advisory Council as definitely possessing the merit that justifies funding. Any proposal placed in this category must be fundable on the basis of the Advisory Council reaching a consensus judgment.

c. Could Fund: Proposals in this category have major deficiencies, but in the view of the Advisory Council, are still fundable, or aspects of the proposal are fundable. If the Advisory Council chooses to impose conditions, they may wish to place the proposal in this category even though the likelihood of funding is minimal. Proposals in this category could theoretically be funded, but they are clearly not as meritorious as those listed under the previous two categories. Usually, proposals that are placed in this category contain an excellent idea, but the proposal itself has a number of deficiencies, and as such results in this ranking. Quite often, because of the positive aspect(s) of parts of a proposal, the Advisory Council may suggest that the applicant correct the noted deficiencies and resubmit the proposal during a future solicitation period. For the most part, proposals ranked in this category are not funded.

d. Do Not Fund: Proposals placed in this category have weaknesses such that the Advisory Council believes they have no merit for funding. They have significant deficiencies conceptually and organizationally, such that the proposal would have to be totally rewritten to address the concerns of the Advisory Council reviews. Other proposals that are often placed in the “Do Not Fund” category are incomplete proposals and those that are inappropriate or do not adequately follow directions specified in the pertinent RFA. Proposals in this category are not fundable and should not be funded. Often such proposals have so little merit that

the Advisory Council would not recommend a rewrite and a re-submission.

e. Evaluation of Pre-Proposals: Rather than using the funding evaluations noted in paragraphs “a-d” above, the evaluation categories should be revised to use the word *consider* as opposed to the *fund*. Hence, Pre-Proposals should be designated as *Must Consider for full submission*, *Should Consider for full submission*, *Could Consider for full submission*, and *Do Not Consider for full submission*, but otherwise a-d should apply.

8. Identifying and Handling of Conflicts of Interest and Appearances of Conflicts of Interest (see Section IX below, *Appearances of Conflicts of Interest and Conflicts of Interests* for definitions and a more detailed discussion). The RME Center Director shall ensure that any Advisory Council member who has an appearance of a conflict of interest or an actual conflict of interest with a particular pre-proposal or proposal recuse himself/herself during the discussions of that proposal. It is also imperative that the RME Center Director ensures that each Advisory Council member is fully familiar with circumstances that constitute an appearance of conflict of interest, or an actual conflict of interest (see Section IX). No member of any Advisory Council may apply for an RME grant during his/her tenure on the Advisory Council and for a full year after rotating off the Advisory Council. (This is a standard requirement of panel membership conditions pertaining to CSREES review panels.)

B. Responsibilities and Roles of the Advisory Council in Reviewing and Evaluating Proposals. Advisory Councils have three major roles in the review and evaluation of proposals.

1. Reviewing Pre-Proposals and Proposals. A primary responsibility of the Advisory Council is the review of proposals and recommendation of proposals for funding to the Center Director. Each Advisory Council member should utilize the evaluation criteria as provided in this RME OP Guide, and noted in the RME Center’s RFA. The evaluation criteria provide a consistent and defensible basis on which to justify the final evaluation of each and every proposal. Utilizing the evaluation criteria in a consistent manner achieves the ultimate aim of the evaluation process, namely an open, objective, complete and consistent hearing on each proposal. It is highly recommended that Advisory Council members be provided copies of the evaluation forms to enhance consistency in the review and evaluation of pre-proposals and proposals.

2. Optimizing Time. To further ensure fairness, detailed discussion on budgets should occur during final discussions, after all the proposals have been evaluated and ranked. A detailed discussion of budgets during preliminary evaluation is discouraged. Merit, namely the targeted outcomes of the proposal, should be the primary evaluation criteria, and budgets should be judged as adequate, inadequate, or unreasonable.

3. Funding Full Proposals with Conditions. The Advisory Council may direct the

RME Center Director to fund proposals with certain conditions attached. The RME Center Director will ensure that the conditions, as set forth by the Advisory Council, are honored. If the RME Center Director cannot negotiate change in the project as approved by the Advisory Council, funding for the project should be denied.

VII. Final Ranking of Full Proposals

A. Re-Categorizing Proposals. After all proposals have been discussed and placed under the appropriate evaluation category, the Advisory Council needs to make final adjustments of proposals. The first step is to determine if any proposal(s) should be shifted from the initial evaluation category placement to another category. Often those proposals evaluated early in the process may have had less rigorous or more rigorous standards applied, so it is necessary, for the sake of fairness to ensure that the Advisory Council has the opportunity to move proposals to other categories after all have been discussed. Moving a proposal to another category requires consensus on the part of the Advisory Council members.

B. Final Ranking of Proposals. The Advisory Council members should rank order proposals in a number greater than that for which funds are available. This permits the RME Center Director some flexibility in those instances when an individual or organization decides not to accept a grant, or when an applicant has received funding for the project elsewhere. Including more proposals in the final rank order list than could be funded provides the RME Center Director the ability to continue down the ranked list as provided by the Advisory Council, and provides the rationale to fund “the next proposal.” If the Advisory Council does not rank those in the “Must Fund” category, all those in this category will in fact be tied for “first”. It is not necessary to rank proposals listed in the "Do Not Fund" category for they are not fundable in any case.

C. Achieving Areas of Emphasis. Once the Advisory Council agrees on the ranking of the proposals, the council may wish to discuss whether the list of proposals achieves the areas of emphasis as denoted in the respective RME Center’s RFA and fine tune the list being recommended for funding. This may require moving one or more proposals to achieve a “final” rank order listing of proposals.

D. Respecting Advisory Council Proposal Rankings. The RME Center Directors are honor-bound to respect the final ranking of proposals as set forth by their respective Advisory Council. Any changes proposed by the RME Center Director must first be presented to the Advisory Council members, who must agree to the change prior to the change being implemented.

VIII. The Final Review Task – Budget Recommendations

A. Budget Recommendations Are Advisory in Nature. Unlike the final ranking of proposals that the RME Center Director is honor-bound to respect, budget discussions are advisory in nature. The Director may adjust the final award amounts, but in no instance should a proposal be awarded a grant that exceeds the amount requested in the application. However, there may arise

a situation where two proposals are similar in nature, and it makes sense to increase the budget of one, if the two applicants agree to work together on one project instead of two. In those instances, an adjustment must first be recommended by the Advisory Council and then negotiated by the RME Center Director with the affected applicants.

B. Providing Sufficient Funds. The purpose of reviewing funding levels and budgets for proposals recommended for funding is to ensure that the funds provided are sufficient to accomplish the proposed work. Specific budgetary guidance may be provided to the RME Center Director by the Advisory Council so he/she has a firm basis on which to negotiate final funding amounts. Such guidance may be nothing more than indicating that the budget is fine as submitted.

IX. Appearances of Conflicts of Interest and Conflicts of Interest

A. Definitions

1. Conflict of Interest. A conflict of interest exists when the RME Center Director, RME Center staff, or an Advisory Council member has the potential of receiving either direct or indirect benefit related to the funding of a particular proposal. These benefits could be in the form of dollars, enhancement of reputation, or other more subtle type of benefits. Conflicts of interest are to be precluded.

2. Appearance of a Conflict of Interest. An appearance of a conflict of interest exists when it could reasonably be perceived that a conflict of interest exists. Perceptions of conflicts of interest are to be precluded to the maximum extent possible. Often, however, an appearance of a conflict of interest may not actually be recognized as such until the Advisory Council meets, and in those instances, they should be handled as noted in paragraph “B” below.

3. Institutional Conflicts of Interest. An Advisory Council member, RME Center Director or Center staff has institutional conflicts of interest when a proposal being discussed is from the same institution or organization as the Advisory Council member, the RME Center Director, or the Center staff. It should be noted, however, that individuals from an institution of higher education, when that institution is operated by a university system, does not have an institutional conflict of interest with proposals submitted by another university within that system. For example, a University of California-Berkeley extension agent would not necessarily have an institutional conflict of interest with a proposal submitted by someone from the University of California-Davis.

4. Other Appearances of Conflict of Interest. If any applicant has had an advisor or advisee role with any Advisory Council member, RME Center Director, or RME Center staff, or has had another role or relationship that could reasonably be considered to raise questions of objectivity and fairness, then an appearance of a conflict of interest exists.

B. Handling Conflicts of Interest and/or Appearances of Conflicts of Interest.

1. Initial Discussions in the Review, Evaluation and Recommendation of Pre-Proposals and Full Proposals. No Advisory Council member, RME Center Director, or Center staff member who has a conflict of interest or an appearance of a conflict of interest in a particular proposal shall be present during the Advisory Council discussions of that pre-proposal or proposal. In the event that the RME Center Director has a conflict of interest or an appearance thereof with a particular proposal (s), he/she shall designate another member of the Advisory Council to lead the discussion on that proposal(s).

2. Final Ranking and Budgetary Discussions of Full Proposals. During the final discussions when full proposals are being ranked and budgets discussed, those with conflicts of interest or appearances of conflicts of interest do not need to leave the room, but will remain silent during the discussions of the proposals with which they have a conflict.

3. Prohibition. Since members of the Advisory Council for each regional RME Center have as a primary responsibility the review, evaluation and recommendation to fund or not fund a proposal, no Advisory Council member shall be permitted to submit an application for funding while sitting as an Advisory Council member. For the most part, this will preclude Advisory Council members from having a conflict of interest or an appearance of a conflict of interest, which also will help preclude misperceptions pertaining to fairness and objectivity.

C. Identification of Conflicts of Interest or Appearances of Conflicts of Interest.

Perceptions of fairness and objectivity are the key to a credible and respected competitive review system. Appearance of conflicts of interest and/or actual conflicts of interest can result in real perceptions or misperceptions regarding fairness and objectivity. The worst scenario that can occur is a perception of unfairness, favoritism, and/or bias in the review and evaluation system. Therefore, it is exceedingly important to identify any conflicts of interest or appearances of conflicts of interests between a reviewer and a pre-proposal or proposal, and this should be done prior to the Pre-Proposals and Full Proposals being sent out for review, and certainly prior to the Advisory Council meeting when funding recommendations will be made.

X. Confidentiality

A. Content of Proposals. Until a proposal is funded, the material within the proposal remains the property of the applicant. For that reason, no Advisory Council member or any other reviewer assigned should discuss with any other party the contents of any proposal. Further, no member or reviewer shall use material contained within proposals without the express permission of the applicant. Advisory Council members are not permitted to contact the applicant directly; they must go through the RME Center Director, and only after the review process has been completed.

B. Discussions Pertaining to Proposals. It is imperative that what is discussed during the review process of pre-proposals and full proposals is not conveyed to any outside party. This is for both the protection of the applicant as well as the Advisory Council members. The idea is to ensure that there is no attribution of any comments to any one individual. Advisory Council members need to feel confident that their discussions will be held in confidence so that an atmosphere of open communication and discussion is established and maintained during the evaluation process.

C. Identification of Advisory Council Members and Outside Reviewers. The identity of Advisory Council members should be displayed on each RME Center's website, and considered to be public information. In those instances, however, when outside reviewers may be employed to review a proposal, the identification of those reviewers shall be considered confidential. Other Advisory Council members and other reviewers do not have the authority to identify them to any outside party.

XI. Definitions

The definitions associated with the CSREES RME Competitive Grants Program are found at the Digital Center for Risk Management Education as a separate "tab" at the Agricultural Risk Library (www.agrisk.umn.edu, click on "Funding & Projects"; click on "RME Resources").

Appendix 1: Regional Risk Management Education Center Request for Applications Template

Each regional RME Center shall use the template as found in Appendix 1 of this Guide. The only difference between the Regional RME Center RFAs will be the section titled “Risk Management Priorities, Topic Areas of Interest, Project Types and Targeted Groups” found on page 24. With the exception of this section, every other RFA section shall be identical. Utilizing this RFA framework helps bring consistency to the entire RME Competitive Grants Program regionally and nationally.

Name of Regional Center, Extension Risk Management Education Grants Program, **Year** Request for Applications (RFA). Pre-Proposal Opening Date: November **date, year**; Pre-Proposal Closing Date: December **date, year**.

OVERVIEW

Program Purpose

The **Name of Center** (**short name of Center**), in conjunction with (**list other Centers**), announces a funding opportunity for projects that help farm and ranch families succeed through targeted risk management strategies. The return sought on the investment of the grant awards is the improved ability of farm and ranch families to manage the risks associated with farming and ranching businesses. In addition to crop insurance, effective risk management involves selecting tools and approaches that reduce the financial effects of the uncertainties of weather, yields, prices, government policies, global markets and other factors that can cause wide swings in farm income or threaten economic viability.

The **short name of Center** will announce awards by April **date, year** for risk management education projects to begin on July **date, year** and to be completed on or before June 30, **year**. If your project is funded, we will offer whatever help we can give you to make the project a success. Our goal is to partner with you to create improved risk management education results for agricultural producers and their families.

Size of Awards

Grant awards normally will normally not exceed \$50,000 for single-region projects. Generally the range of awards for single region projects range from \$5000 to \$50,000, however there is no absolute upper or lower limit on the funds provided to a single project. The awards will reflect a mix of project sizes to meet our investment goal of a balanced portfolio. Funds awarded for multi-regional projects will normally not exceed \$75,000.

Eligibility

Organizations eligible and encouraged to apply for grants are private and public groups, organizations and institutions including land grant colleges and universities, cooperative extension, other colleges and universities, and other qualified public and private entities in the

region with a demonstrated capacity to develop and deliver educational programs for agricultural producers and their families. These entities include farm organizations, commodity groups, lenders, consultants, marketers, and risk management service providers such as crop insurance agents. Collaboration between the public and private sectors is strongly encouraged.

This program encourages applications that help socially disadvantaged farmers learn about risk management strategies and tools that can be applied to their farm businesses. Organizations that provide risk management education and assistance to underserved producers are eligible and encouraged to submit applications.

The short name of Center serves listing of States/Territories in the Region.

STAKEHOLDER INPUT

The [name of Regional Risk Management Education Center] welcomes comments, suggestions and/or recommendations regarding this RFA from any interested party. These comments will be considered in the development of the next RFA for the Extension Risk Management Education Grants Program. Written stakeholder comments should be submitted by mail to: [name of Center Director, Center Name, Center address], or via e-mail to: [name of individual and e-mail address].

RISK MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES, TOPIC AREAS OF INTEREST, PROJECT TYPES AND TARGETED GROUPS

While the ultimate clientele for this program is producers and their families, within that context regional needs have been identified which require additional emphasis. Therefore, this RME RFA solicits proposals which address the following:

Risk Management Priorities

List priorities that your Regional RME Center wishes to encourage. The format for this section is established by each regional RME Center as they deem most appropriate. Nothing in this section shall contradict or supersede information provided in any other part of this RFA template.

Risk Management Topic Areas

A Regional Center may not wish to designate separate topic areas. However, those that do could include such things as noted in the North Central RFA - value-added enterprises, risks associated with diversifying one's business operation, etc. Another example of a topic area or area of emphasis could be the following taken from a previous Western Center RFA. "The choices that farm and ranch families have for the use of their time (in addition to the built-in time demands of their business) have increased dramatically in recent years. The Center is interested in proposals that address how effective education and training activities for farm and ranch families can be made available and utilized within their time limitations". This is

the call of the Center Directors after consultation with their respective Advisory Councils and stakeholders.

Risk Management Project Types

This section shall be used to describe the various types of projects the Regional Center may wish to fund and may change as determined by the Center Director. For example, all Centers have “unrestricted” or standard projects, while some have a couple of additional types, such as the Northeast Center’s County/Regional grants.

Risk Management Groups for Emphasis

If a particular RME Center denotes a specific group, ensure that it is defined in the definition list on the Agriculture Risk Management Library.

INVESTMENT CRITERIA

Please read the following information carefully. This RFA gives clear instructions on results-based grant awards. Additional information on the results-based process is provided on the www.agrisk.umn.edu website. Closely following the principles and directions of results-based grant making will improve your chances for success. Proposals that fail to follow these principles and directions will be excluded from consideration.

Projects Must Be Results-Based

Awards will be made to projects that clearly identify risk management results for the participants and that have a well thought out approach for achieving those results. Risk Management Targets (explained in the following section) are the risk management results you believe the participants of your project will achieve. It is important to understand this concept because our application selection process focuses on the probability that the participants in your project will learn, achieve and apply the targeted results you propose. The context and principles of our results-based process are described in detail in this RFA. Other Proposal Resources, found on the www.agrisk.umn.edu website, include an educational video stream on results-based grant making, a step-by-step full application tutorial, and a PowerPoint presentation on what producers gain through a results-based approach. Applicants who take the time to understand results-based grant making have a far greater chance of success in receiving funds from the *short name of RME Center.*

Risk Management Targets

Targeted Results for your participants are the key focus of project selection. Targets are specific, measurable and verifiable risk management results that participants will learn, achieve and apply within 6 months to a year after completion of your project. The terms “target” and “result” can be thought of as interchangeable. Examples of targeted results are: (1) A producer completed a business plan as a result of participating in a your project; (2) A producer identified a new market as a result of participating in your project; and (3) An extended family developed a succession plan as a result of participating in your project. The RME RFA requires that you

identify how many of your project participants will achieve the targeted results that you have proposed. Do not confuse the actions your project team takes or materials they develop with targeted results for producers.

Risk Management Areas

There are a number of different risk management areas covered by this program. The targeted results must fall within one or more of the Risk Management Areas listed below. Our application for pre-proposals and full proposals asks you to select from the list of risk management areas that your Targeted Results will fit into. It is important to be specific and realistic when selecting your risk management areas. If you are unable to identify one of these areas addressed by your proposed project, please contact **name of contact, telephone number and e-mail address** at the **short name of RME Center**. You may also wish to recommend as a stakeholder that the particular risk management area you are interested in be added to the existing list in future RFAs (see previous Stakeholder section). The following Risk Management Areas help define projects that will be successful in the **short name of RME Center's** results-based grant making process.

Improved understanding relative to the use of:

- Insurance products
- Product and enterprise diversification
- Market analysis and outlook
- Cash and futures pricing tools
- Marketing strategies, plans, and clubs
- Direct, wholesale, and processing markets
- Contract production, branded or certified marketing, and value-added enterprises
- Financial records, analysis, and bench marking
- Capital and financial assets
- Credit
- Tools for managing legal liability
- Leases, contracts, and negotiating skills
- Plans and tools to address succession, estate planning, health, and well-being

Improvement in:

- Business and strategic planning
- Employee recruitment/management/retention
- Interpersonal/family/professional/landlord relationship skills
- Ability to manage changes in policy and regulation
- Understanding of the economic risks associated with new production technologies

Risk Management Education Defined:

To put the investment criteria in context, you should understand our definition of Risk Management Education. Risk is an important aspect of the farming business. Risk Management involves choosing among alternatives that reduce the financial effects of the uncertainties of weather, yields, prices, government policies, global markets, and other factors that can cause wide swings in farm income. Risk Management Education, within the context of the enabling

legislation for the Extension Risk Management Education Program, is defined as training that improves the ability of agricultural producers and their families to effectively manage risks. Five general risk categories associated with farm and ranch businesses are described below. These are more broadly defined than the Risk Management Areas explained in the section above. All of our Risk Management Areas would fall within one of these five risk categories.

Production Risk – Production risk derives from the uncertain natural growth processes of crops and livestock. Weather, disease, pests, and other factors affect both the quantity and quality of commodities produced.

Price or Market Risk – Price or market risk refers to uncertainty about the prices producers will receive for commodities or the prices they must pay for inputs. The nature of price risk varies significantly from commodity to commodity.

Financial Risk – Financial risk results when the farm business borrows money and creates an obligation to repay debt. Rising interest rates, the prospect of loans being called by lenders, and restricted credit availability are also aspects of financial risk.

Institutional/Legal Risk – Institutional or legal risk results from uncertainties surrounding government actions. Tax laws, regulations for chemical use, rules for animal waste disposal, and the level of price or income support payments are examples of government decisions that can have a major impact on the farm business.

Human/Personal Risk – Human or personal risk refers to factors such as succession, disability, estate problems, wellness, or human relationships that impact the viability of the farm (i.e., divorce, sibling rivalry, and intergenerational issues). Labor relations or labor supply are another area of human risk that can impact the financial well-being of the farm or ranch business.

Portfolio Approach

In selecting projects for funding, the *short name of RME Center* seeks to invest in a balanced portfolio of Risk Management Education projects that represent:

- Diversity in terms of different types of producers to be served
- Diversity in terms of risk management tools and strategies to be taught
- Diversity in terms of the organizations that receive support
- An array of public-private partnerships that will strengthen project results and continuity
- An approach that recognizes the importance of the family to farm/ranch businesses
- A geographical balance of funded projects in the region

MULTI-REGION PROJECTS

All four regional Extension Risk Management Education Centers welcome RME project proposals that cross regional boundaries (for information on the boundaries see <http://www.agrisk.umn.edu/RME/>). Organizations and individuals interested in performing educational programs in partnership with entities in other regions are encouraged to do so under this program. The involvement of two or more regions will constitute a multi-region project

proposal. It is important to note that the same results-based evaluation criteria apply to multi-region project proposals as they do to proposals conducted within a region. The same online application system used for project proposals conducted within a region will accept multi-region proposals.

Multi-Region Project Rules:

Lead Entity and Project Director Designation - The applicant institution or organization will be considered the lead entity and the project director from that entity shall sign the proposal cover page as the project director. The lead entity/project director will be responsible for the entire project in terms of project management, subcontracting, funds oversight, meeting project time schedules, and reporting progress and the final report. Funding for the entire project will flow from the RME Regional Center in the region wherein the lead organization is located and will be directed to that organization.

Budget and Budget Narrative - When preparing proposed budgets, the budget and the supporting budget narrative need to include the distribution of funds among the participating institutions/organizations and against the specific tasks to be carried out by each region as noted in the proposal. Each participating entity needs to provide a budget on the R&R application budget form and a supporting budget narrative. It is recognized that multi-region projects may incur additional needs for funds as a result of increased coordination, communication, and perhaps some travel costs. The budget narrative needs to fully explain and justify these increased costs. It is unlikely that any award amount for a multi-region project will be above \$75,000. The final amount provided will be based upon the budget justification, the recommendations of the reviewers, and negotiations between the Regional RME Center Director and the Project Director.

Project Co-Directors - The project co-directors of a multi-region project in the other institution(s)/organization(s) shall be identified and the institution/organization in which they are employed. It is preferable that these other project directors sign the Proposal Cover Page as project co-directors. In those instances when circumstances preclude the project co-directors signing the Proposal Cover Page, a letter of commitment needs to be submitted and signed by each project co-director(s) and must specify the tasks and the estimated costs associated therewith, and those tasks and figures should be the same as specified in the proposal work plan, the budget, and fully specified in the budget narrative.

Reviewing Multi-Region Project Proposals - Multi-region project proposals will be evaluated using the same evaluation criteria as used in evaluating single-region proposals. However, there are differences in the review process. First, the proposal will be reviewed by each of the regional RME Center review panels in whose regions the risk management educational activities are to take place. The regional review panels will make a recommendation as to whether they would be interested in funding the proposal either in its entirety, partially, or with the expectation that another involved Regional RME Center may fund an appropriate portion. Once the multi-region projects that are recommended for funding by the various Regional RME Center Advisory Councils/review panels are identified, a separate review panel, composed of representatives of

each of the Regional RME Center review panels will be formed, which will be referred to as the Composite Review Panel. The CSREES RME National Program Leader (NPL) manages the Composite Review Panel. The Panel will discuss each multi-region proposal forwarded for their consideration by the Regional RME Centers. The Composite Review Panel will make a recommendation to fund or not to fund. If the Panel cannot come to an agreement on a funding recommendation, those Regional RME Center Advisory Councils originally recommending funding may so choose to recommend funding the entire project or portions of the proposed project as they deem appropriate. However, for any Regional RME Center to provide funds to a proposed multi-region project, their respective Advisory Council/review panel must recommend funding for the project.

Designation of the Responsible Regional RME Center - The Regional RME Center in the region in which the applicant institution and project director is employed, will be the responsible Center for overseeing the proposed project. That RME Center will be the processing entity for the award, will provide funding oversight, and will be responsible for the project director submitting progress reports in accordance with the respective regional RFAs. All funds to the project director's institution/organization will be from the controlling Regional RME Center, unless jointly funded by another RME Center. The recipient institution/organization will be responsible for developing and carrying out the appropriate subcontracts to the other participating institutions/organizations and other responsibilities as noted above.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Applicants must indicate the collaborators they will use to strengthen their project. A project will not be considered for funding unless it identifies meaningful collaborators. Collaborators are outside people and organizations from both the public and private sectors that will provide technical expertise and/or access to producers. Collaborators need only to be identified in the Pre-Proposal. Letters of commitment from Team Members and Collaborators or their organizations are required as part of the Full Proposal. Electronic conveyance of letters of commitment is permissible only if they are conveyed in PDF format on the letterhead of the institution or organization of the collaborator providing the letter. Collaborator letters of commitment shall be sent directly to the (***short name of RME Center***). Collaborator letters must be received on or before the date on which Full Proposals are due.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

The following evaluation criteria will guide our selection of projects. Because we believe the results producers achieve are the return on investment of our funds, the highest priority will be placed on Targeted Results for participants. The most weight will be placed upon whether a project can deliver the targeted results. An application that does not identify the risk management results that participants will achieve has a limited chance of success. Strong emphasis will also be placed on Results Verification, Producer Demand, and Collaborators. Although we are interested in the criteria that deal with innovative approaches and wide application, our primary focus will be on whether or not a project can deliver the targeted results.

Successful proposals will address the following criteria by showing the direct connection between what you propose to do and how these activities will lead to Targeted Results for participants. The evaluation criteria are listed in the order of their importance, with the first one being the most important.

Targeted Results (40 percent weight). The identification and documentation of targeted results for producers related to their risk management needs. The Targeted Results are those the participants in the proposed project will learn, achieve and apply, not the production of materials, holding of workshops or other program activities.

Results Verification (20 percent weight). Verification is simple yes or no evidence that producers will achieve the targeted results. Proposals must document how the project director and/or collaborators will verify whether or not the participants will have achieved their targeted results upon completion of the project. While a formal evaluation process is not required, reviewers will judge as to whether the proposal identifies how the project director will (a) know whether participants have learned, achieved and/or applied the risk management targets and (b) how and when they will measure or verify these results.

Producer Demand (20 percent weight). The reason(s) why producers will choose to participate in the proposed project is also key to receiving funding. One difference between the RME Program and other grants programs is that a reviewer must be convinced that there is a demand by producers for the risk management topic being proposed and a high probability that producers will participate in the project. The proposal must include clear evidence as to why producers or their families, depending on the nature of the project, will choose to participate. This evaluation criterion is based upon evidence that there is clearly a need, expressed by producers, for the project being proposed, and on the assumption that a producer must also want to participate if they are to learn, achieve and apply the risk management strategies or tools being taught.

Collaborators (10 percent weight). Collaborators are outside people or organizations that can provide either technical expertise or access to producers. This may include partners, either individuals or groups, in the public and/or private sectors, working through the joint efforts of existing networks or the formation of new educational networks. (This criterion will require reviewers to come to the conclusion that the proposal adequately indicates that the collaborators are really part of the project, and that their participation strengthens the project.)

Innovative Approaches (5 percent weight). Innovation may be of many types. For example, approaches and methods that further contribute to the existing knowledge base, materials and/or tools available are one. A key part of the selection process is based upon whether the reviewers believe the proposed project will reach the target audience that is defined within the proposal. Innovation may also deal with the lack of time producers have, the marketing and delivery of the proposed project to potential participants, and techniques or tactics to convince producers and/or their families to participate in the project.

Wide Application (5 percent weight). Demonstration or description of how the proposed project or its inherent techniques and strategies developed and delivered might have wide application. Descriptions of program techniques might include adapting materials to specialized audiences, marketing and promotion techniques, eliciting high interest in basic risk management principles with new methodologies or other ideas that might make the project have wide application if others were to pick up on the idea or processes involved. Will aspects of the proposed project contribute to others who may wish to borrow or adopt the processes and procedures being proposed?

HOW TO APPLY

Online Application Website

The Pre-Proposal application (and later Full Proposal application, if requested) must be submitted online through the *short name of RME Center's* website (**HYPERLINK** <http://address of Regional RME Center here>). Detailed information on the application process is also provided on the www.agrisk.umn.edu website. If you are unable to complete the application online, please call the *short name of RME Center* at (*telephone number of the noted Regional Center*) or e-mail us at **HYPERLINK**.

Grant Application Process

There are **two stages** in the RME Program grant application process, which are described below.

Stage One: Submit Pre-Proposal – Pre-Proposals are due by 5 pm (Time Zone) on December (Date, Year).

Pre-Proposal Defined - The Pre-Proposal is a short application that must be completed online. All questions in the online Pre-Proposal form must be addressed within the specified word counts. In your Pre-Proposal, clearly identify the Risk Management Targets you want your participants to learn, achieve and apply. Then clearly identify the participants, and why they will choose to participate in your project.

Targets - Targets are specific, measurable and verifiable risk management results that participants will learn, achieve and apply 6 months to one year after completion of your project. While curriculum, materials, or the activities of your team or project are important, most of the emphasis must be placed upon the targeted results for producers. You must also be able to identify how you will verify these targeted results, both during the project and within six months to a year after completion of the project.

Pre-Proposal Content - We are looking for Pre-Proposals that express clarity and conviction. Rhetoric or extraneous details should be avoided. The Pre-Proposal should provide a clear but brief description of how your project will work to produce specific targeted results for your participants. There needs to be a clear connection between what you propose to do and the targeted results for the participants. The Pre-Proposal is not graded on writing skill or

complexity; however, it does need to stay within the prescribed word limits. IMPORTANT: If you exceed the word count limitations as specified in the application instructions, excess words may not be considered by the reviewers. If you are selected to submit a Full Proposal, the information in your Pre-Proposal will become part of your Full Proposal.

Selection Process – Conceptually, it is important to keep in mind that the selection process centers first on whether the applicant has clearly identified the risk management results the participants will learn, achieve and apply. At the Pre-Proposal stage, the remainder of the application should provide a sense to the panel that project participants can achieve the targeted results by participating in the project. At the Full Proposal stage, the remainder of the application, with its additional detail, must provide sufficient information so that the panel can make an informed decision as to whether or not the agricultural producers will achieve the risk management results proposed because they have participated in the project.

*Please note that Collaborator/Team letters, the Proposal Cover Page, and the Budget form are **not** required for Pre-Proposals.*

Information Required for the Online Pre-Proposal:

- Risk Management Areas – Targets must fall within one or more of the identified Risk Management Areas. Risk Management Areas are listed in this RFA on page number here. Risk management targets are the most important evaluation criteria.
- Targets – List the specific measurable and verifiable risk management targets that you want your participants in the project to learn, achieve and apply (Targeted Results). Make sure there is a logical connection between what you provide in the project summary and these Targets.
- Describe Participants – Describe project participants (your target audience) and explain why they would want/choose to participate in your project. This is an important consideration in the evaluation of your proposal, and must be summarized in 400 words or less.
- Brief Description of Project – This short summary (150 words or less) needs to convince the Reviewers that you have a well thought out project and should include your risk management subject area, method(s), target audience, number of workshops, classes, etc., and the results you expect your producers to achieve.
- Team Leader, Team Members and Project Collaborators - List the Team Leader, Team Members, and Project Collaborators by name and organization, including phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and each listed person’s role in the project.
- Total Amount Requested - List total amount requested (detailed budgets are not required for the pre-proposal application).

Submitting Your Pre-Proposal:

1. Registration Information - To register, go to the short name of RME Center's website (hyperlink or web mail address of Regional RME Center and specify what to click on)
2. Project Number and Password - After you submit the online registration information, you will be e-mailed a *Project Number* and the *Password* you previously selected.
3. Pre-Proposal Log In – Go back to the Verification System (via the short name of RME Center's website) and log in using your new *Project Number* and *Password*. Then follow the instructions for completing the Pre-Proposal.

Attaining Help:

The Pre-Proposal online application contains help (click on a question mark) that provides useful suggestions and explanations of terms. The [Proposal Tutorial](#) also contains expanded information and defines terms you will need to understand in order to complete the application.

Stage Two: Submit Full Proposal Application (if chosen). Full Proposals from finalists are due by 5 PM TZ, Month, Date, Year.

Invitation to Submit a Full Proposal - The short name of Center will notify applicants by Month, date and year if they have been selected as finalists, and will request that they submit a Full Proposal. Information will be provided at that time about the full application process. Pre-Proposal information will automatically be included in the Full Proposal and will not have to be re-entered. You will be able to edit and make changes to your Pre-Proposal information in your Full Proposal.

Online Application Process - The Full Proposal document must be submitted online by Day, Month, date & year at 5 PM TZ. All other requested materials (including the signed Proposal Cover Page, the Budget form, and the Team and Collaborator commitment letters), must arrive as electronic PDF copies at the short name of RME Center and city and State by the same closing time (Day, Month, date & year at 5:00 PM TZ). The Proposal Cover Page and Budget form are contained within the online application system.

Letters of Commitment - Letters of commitment from Team Members and Collaborators or their organizations are required for projects chosen to submit a Full Proposal.

Purchasing of Curriculum - Note: Projects that propose to use a purchased curriculum must identify the title, cost, and source of the curriculum and identify specifically how the project proposes to pay for the curriculum. The budget narrative must identify if any short name of RME Center funds will be used to pay for trainer certification fees. The applicant will need to identify how or whether participants will be asked to pay a fee to help offset the cost of that curriculum. If the applicant has used the curriculum previously, the applicant should be prepared to provide evidence, if asked, of the past success of the curriculum, including participant response.

FINAL REVIEW OF FULL PROPOSALS

Follow-up Telephone Call – A Possibility

After the full proposals are reviewed by the respective Regional RME Center Advisory Councils, the RME Center Directors may contact proposal finalists to clarify any issues raised during the review process. In addition, the RME Center Directors, at the request of the Advisory Councils, may contact individuals who know about you and your past leadership experience to see if they think you are likely to be successful with your proposed project. It is possible that ***short name of Center*** staff may also contact your collaborators or team members. A collaborator whom you have identified and/or who is not familiar with your project will jeopardize your success in receiving funds. Remember that Project Team and Collaborator letters of commitment are due by the ***Day, Month, Year and Time*** that Full Proposal are due.

Notification of Awards

Awardees will be notified by ***Month, date & year***. The Awards process will then be conducted in an expedient manner not to exceed (***insert #Days here***) days.

Reporting Requirements and Other Information for Grant Awardees

Reporting System - All reporting is online and is submitted through the RME Results Verification System, the same system where Pre-Proposal and Full Proposal applications are entered. It is a simple and straight-forward system, with sections of the Full Proposal already available online for project managers to report against. The final report on each project is a public document and will be made available for viewing through the National Agricultural Risk Management Education Library.

Progress Reports - Grantees will be contractually required to submit three progress reports on their project — by October 1, February 1, and May 1 of the project year. If desired, additional progress reports may be submitted. If a project is given 18 months or 2 years to complete program delivery, the same number of reports is required each year.

Final Report - Upon project completion, awardees must also make a final report on the achievement of participants reaching the Risk Management Targets identified in the application. The final report is due within 90 days of the completion date of the project.

Provision of Materials Developed as a Result of the Project - Digital copies of all project marketing and program materials will be uploaded to the Risk Management Education Results Verification System website for posting in the National Agricultural Risk Management Education Library.

Final Payment - Final payment (or up to 15 percent of project costs) will be withheld until all reporting requirements are met.

APPLICANT ASSISTANCE

Contact Us for Help

It is strongly recommended that applicants download and carefully read all [Proposal Resources](#). We encourage you to contact us if you have questions. If you would like more information about any of our concepts, principles, or directions for the grant application process, or if you have questions regarding your specific Pre-Proposal or Full Proposal, please contact:

Contact Name

Formal or Full name of Center

Name of University Extension

Address, city, state and zip code

Voice: (area code & telephone number)

Fax: (Area code & telephone number)

HYPERLINK **Regional Center hyperlink**

URL: HYPERLINK **http:// Regional Center hyperlink/website address**

Key Deadline and Announcement Dates

Closing date for Pre-Proposal submission:	5 PM <u>regional TZ, month, date & year</u>
Finalists are selected and invited to submit a Full Proposal application:	<u>month, date & year</u>
Finalists' Full Proposals with required materials are due:	5 PM, <u>regional TZ, Month, date & year</u>
Award decisions are announced:	<u>month, date & year</u>
Awards are finalized:	<u>Month, date & year</u>

IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Do Not Miss the Deadline

Applications received after the posted deadlines will not be accepted for review and will be returned to the applicant. However, in the event of an extraordinary circumstance not under the control of the applicant (such as a blizzard, hurricane, tornado, or other natural or man-made disaster) that results in the shutdown of the submitting organization, or results in courier or mail service delays, on a case-by-case basis a determination will be made by each respective RME Center as to whether to accept a late proposal for review. The provision of supporting evidence is the responsibility of the applicant organization and/or Project Director.

Definitions

Definitions for terms used in this RFA, and in the supporting documents required for Full Proposal applications, are available on the RME Results Verification System website (*provide hyperlink/web address to risk management education library and definitions tab*).

RME Materials

Applicants seeking additional information on risk management for agricultural producers can find a wide range of materials at the National Ag Risk Education Library website (<http://www.agrisk.umn.edu>).

Another useful resource in the General Risk section of the library is the USDA-RMA/CSREES publication, *An Introduction to Risk in Agriculture* by Alan Baquet, Ruth Hambleton and Doug Jose (<http://act.fcic.usda.gov/pubs/1997/riskmgmt.pdf>).

Legislative Background

Section 133 of the Agricultural Risk Protection Act of 2000, Pub. L.106-224 requires USDA CSREES to establish a program under which competitive grants are made to qualified public and private entities for the purpose of educating agricultural producers about the full range of risk management activities.

USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) established four Regional Centers to address the educational needs within their regions. *Name of University* Extension was selected on a competitive basis to host the *short name of Center* for the *name of appropriate region* and serves *list the names of the states in the appropriate region*.

Insert civil rights statement of University here.

**Appendix 2: Pre-Proposal/Full Proposal Evaluation Form
Risk Management Education (RME) Competitive Grants Program**

Application Evaluation Form

Name of Regional RME Center: _____ Funding Year: _____

Pre-Proposal: _____ Full Proposal: _____

Proposal Number: _____

Proposal Name:

Project Director: _____ Amount Requested: _____

Applicant Organization: _____

Name of Advisory Council Member or Reviewer: _____

Evaluation Criteria	YES	NO
----------------------------	------------	-----------

1. **Targeted Results (40% weight):** The identification and documentation of targeted results for producers related to their risk management needs.

- | | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| a. Do the risk management results fall within the 5 risk areas identified in the RFA? | ___ | ___ |
| b. Does the proposed project clearly identify the risk management results to be achieved by the participants? | ___ | ___ |
| c. Are the proposed risk management results a priority for the investment of RME Center funds? | ___ | ___ |
| d. Are the proposed risk management results important for the intended audience? | ___ | ___ |
| e. Is there a high level of probability that the proposed project will achieve the proposed results? (full proposals only) | ___ | ___ |

2. **Results Verification (20% weight):** Specification of how results will be measured and verified, and that risk management behavior will be improved.

- | | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| a. Are the results verifiable? | ___ | ___ |
| b. Does the proposal show how the targets will be verified and measured? | ___ | ___ |
| c. Is there a high probability the verification plan can be accomplished? (full proposals only) | ___ | ___ |

Appendix 3: Advisory Council Proposal Evaluation Summary – Template.

The “Advisory Council Summary” contains the synopsis of the Advisory Council’s collective view on each proposal, and is provided as feedback. These summaries are prepared under the direction of the RME Center Director for the purpose of providing the rationale for funding or not funding a proposal. It is further recommended that any evaluation comments prepared by the Advisory Council members be worded to ensure that no council member can be identified with his or her comments.

The format of the Advisory Council Summary is relatively straightforward: Strengths of the Proposal; Weaknesses of the Proposal; and Synthesis Comments (which should capture the essence of the conclusions reached by the Advisory Council). It is important to note that the Summary represents the collective view of the Advisory Council on each proposal, and may at times differ significantly from one or more Advisory Council member’s individual evaluations.

Whatever Advisory Council evaluation paradigm is decided upon, it is very useful to applicants to have an indication as to where their proposal stood relative to the others reviewed. Thus, it is strongly recommended that at the bottom of the Advisory Council Summary, the following be noted: Number of proposals reviewed, percentage of proposals in each evaluation category, and the category in which the applicant’s proposal was ranked.

There will be proposals that the Advisory Council will not recommend for funding, but which nevertheless have enough merit that the Advisory Council may wish to encourage a revision and resubmission in a subsequent year. This should be explicitly articulated in the summary with a statement such as: “The Advisory Council encourages the applicant to consider the evaluation comments on his/her proposal and to resubmit the proposal in accordance with the language of the next RFA”.

Appendix 3: Advisory Council Proposal Evaluation Summary Template (continued)

Name of Regional RME Center

Advisory Council Proposal Evaluation Summary

Proposal Number: _____

Name of Applicant: _____

Submitting Organization: _____

Strengths of the Proposal:

Weaknesses of the proposal:

Synthesis Comments, Recommendations or Suggestions:

The rating your proposal received and the percentages of proposals falling in the various categories are noted below. The total number of full proposals reviewed: _____

Must Fund _____ % so rated Should Fund _____ % so rated

Could Fund _____ % so rated Do Not Fund _____ % so rated