



Plant Protection Act Section 7721 Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) allocates \$75 million to support projects under the Plant Protection Act, Section 7721 (PPA 7721) program to strengthen the nation's infrastructure for pest detection and surveillance, identification, threat mitigation, safeguarding the nursery production system, and to respond to plant pest emergencies.

Since 2009, USDA has supported more than 5,170 projects and provided over \$809 million in funding through the Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program (PPDMDPP) and the National Clean Plant Network (NCPN). Collectively, these projects allow USDA and its partners to quickly detect and rapidly respond to invasive pests and diseases. These projects also help our country maintain the infrastructure necessary to make sure that disease-free, certified planting materials are available to U.S. specialty crop producers.

Learn more about the Plant Protection Act, Section 7721 on the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) website: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppa-projects>

Requesting PPA 7721 Funding

How much funding is available?

There is approximately \$63 million available for PPDMDPP projects, and at least \$7.5 million available for the NCPN. APHIS will set aside up to \$4 million in Plant Protection Act Section 7721 funding to support Tribes, Tribal organizations and universities as well as other minority-affiliated organizations.

Are there any limitations on how PPA 7721 funding can be used?

To ensure consistent and proper use per Congressional intent, funding should not be used to:

- purchase vehicles (lease, vehicle fuel, and routine maintenance are allowed),
- build new structures,
- pay the salaries of permanent Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service-Plant Protection and Quarantine (APHIS-PPQ) staff,
- develop or maintain IT applications and systems that require long-term funding, are duplicative of other PPQ initiatives or PPA 7721 funded projects, or contain personally identified information.

Can PPA funding cover tuition?

Yes, but it must be proportionate to the time spent on the project. For example, a student spending 20% of their time on the project should only receive 20% of the tuition through this funding. PPA is annual funding and therefore, funding is not guaranteed beyond the one-year funding cycle.

Submitting a Suggestion

How do I submit a suggestion?

Suggestions must be submitted electronically using the [PPA 7721 ServiceNow application](#). Suggesters must have an eAuthentication password to access the system. Suggestions submitted through other means will not be accepted.

Please review the document, *Plant Protection Act 7721 (PPA 7721) Suggestion Submission Guidance*, on the [APHIS PPA 7721 website](#), for step-by-step instructions on submitting a suggestion using the PPA 7721 ServiceNow application.

ServiceNow is a new platform, replacing Metastorm. How will this change the suggestion process?

ServiceNow will provide a more intuitive, user-friendly experience for suggesters. A single-stage login will take users directly to the start of the PPA 7721 suggestion process. Suggesters are encouraged to have all suggestion information prepared and ready to enter prior to beginning the submission process in ServiceNow. A suggestion must be completed in one sitting - partially completed suggestions cannot be saved within ServiceNow. The information required for each suggestion will remain the same, as will the survey template for Goal 1S suggestions, and the budget template for all other goal areas, as will the need to attach narrative reports.

What should be included in a suggestion?

In addition to basic information about the suggestion (suggestion title, budget estimate, contact information, etc.), suggesters should provide the following:

- Description of the suggestion's alignment with PPA 7721 goals, objectives, and strategies, defined in the FY 24 *PPA 7721 Implementation Plan*, which is posted on the [APHIS PPA 7721 website](#).
- Potential or expected impact and deliverables
- Major milestones
- Proposed technical approach
- Roles and responsibilities, as well as budget allocations of any cooperators who will receive funding or are participating in suggestion activities
 - *Note:* Federal entities are also required to include the percentage of the total budget that would be provided to each non-Federal cooperator or participating institution
- Relevant prior experience and accomplishments to date (specifically when reapplying for suggestions previously funded through PPA 7721).

Suggesters are strongly encouraged to discuss suggestions with appropriate PPQ Program Managers or State Plant Health Officials and all cooperators prior to submitting suggestions.

PPA 7721 suggestions should be designed for a one-year project, with clear deliverables to be achieved within that timeframe.

What is the percentage of allowable overhead a cooperator can charge?

As established by law (Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate or NICRA), PPA 7721 restricts indirect costs charged against a cooperative agreement to be the lesser of:

- 15% of the total Federal funds provided under the cooperative agreement
- or
- the indirect cost rate applicable to the recipient.

Who is eligible to submit a suggestion?

Federal and state agencies, non-profit organizations, tribes, colleges, and universities are all eligible to submit suggestions.

May a foreign entity submit a suggestion?

Foreign entities are not allowed to submit a suggestion; however, they may collaborate with a domestic entity that submits a suggestion. The suggestion should describe why it is necessary to engage foreign collaborators to accomplish proposed activities.

Can stakeholders submit more than one suggestion?

There is no limit to the number of suggestions an individual or entity can submit.

What is the difference between a single entity suggestion and a group suggestion?

Single Entity Suggestion: If all funding will be provided to one cooperator through a single agreement, that suggestion is considered a “single entity suggestion.” Any distribution of funds to subcontractors within the suggestion are to be managed by the cooperator, not APHIS. Although not required for a single entity suggestion, you may want to list the entities with whom you will subcontract and include a breakdown of funds to be distributed in the budget template under the “Contractual” budget category. If you have collaborators or partners who assist but are not receiving any funds, do not list them. Do not list contractual entities on the cooperator section of the application. This will help reviewers understand how funds will be allocated to carry out the suggestion.

Group Suggestion: If there will be multiple cooperators working together to accomplish a specific project and APHIS will establish separate agreements with each cooperator receiving funds, that suggestion is considered a “group suggestion.” A cooperator is someone that is receiving funding from APHIS. In a group suggestion, only one cooperator needs to submit the suggestion for the group. The submitting cooperator needs to include the following information in their suggestion:

1. name each cooperator receiving funding;
2. each cooperator’s state; and
3. amount of funding that each cooperator (including the submitter) will receive. Funding for all cooperators listed must add up to the total budget requested. Funding for a cooperator should only include requests for more than \$0.

Do suggestions that propose to continue ongoing work have preferred status?

No. Suggestions that request continued funding for ongoing work will be reviewed and evaluated using the same criteria applied to new suggestions. A suggestion receiving prior-year funding does not guarantee renewed funding.

Do suggestions have to focus on specialty crops?

Suggestions should focus on specialty crops; however, the program will consider unexplored opportunities or emerging pest threats outside the specialty crop arena in all goal areas. For more information: refer to [USDA Definition of Specialty Crop](#)

Do suggestions have to focus on PPQ quarantine pests?

Suggestions that address pests that could potentially threaten U.S. agriculture will be considered even if those pests are not listed as PPQ quarantine pests. The importance of the pest risk should be detailed in the suggestion, regardless of its quarantine status.

Can States request funding for programs that are facing reduced funding or defunding at the Federal level?

The program is not intended to specifically address fiscal challenges. While a cooperator could request funding that meets a need generated by a reduction or loss in funding to a particular program, that suggestion must still meet all the requirements for PPA 7721.

My agreement from the previous year hasn't started and I won't have an accomplishment report to submit with my new suggestion. What should I do?

If the cooperator does not have an accomplishment report yet, they should submit a status report of activities completed to date and identify the accomplishments they hope to achieve by meeting the objectives of their suggestion under the agreement.

Evaluating Suggestions

How will the review process work and what criteria will be used to evaluate suggestions?

Suggestions will be reviewed by Goal Teams that encompass representatives from APHIS, the National Plant Board, other federal agencies, tribal nation representatives, the Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance, and the research community.

All PPA 7721 Goal Teams will evaluate the strategic alignment, impact, feasibility, past performance, use of best practices, and innovation of each suggestion. The Goal Teams will work to ensure that the recommended Spending Plan addresses critical needs and opportunities to strengthen prevention, detection, and/or mitigation efforts.

How and when will I know if my suggestion was funded?

PPA 7721 funding decisions are announced through the annual Spending Plan, released tentatively no earlier than March. The PPA 7721 Spending Plan will be published on the PPA 7721 website, and the broadcast will come through the [APHIS Stakeholder Registry](#). Ensure you are signed up for the PPA 7721 Topics (found under Plant Health Information > Plant Health in the US (Domestic) > Pest Management > Plant Protection Act Section 7721 Information) to receive notifications regarding the Open Period and Spending Plan announcements.

Cooperative Agreements

Is PPA 7721 funding awarded as a grant?

No. PPA 7721 funding is paid through interagency agreements and cooperative agreements. **Grants and Cooperative Agreements** are similar in that they are both used when the purpose is to transfer funds or property as a public support or stimulation. The difference is that **substantial involvement** is included in cooperative agreements. Recipients of federal funding through cooperative agreements can expect APHIS to collaborate, participate in designing the work and financial plan, as well as intervene, if needed, in the project being funded.

Can states have overlapping agreements?

States can have overlapping agreements, but only if the work to be performed under the current fiscal year agreement is different from that occurring under the previous fiscal year agreement. New fiscal year funding cannot be used to finish previous fiscal year work. In addition, cooperators with overlapping agreements must submit to APHIS separate reports and requests for payment for each agreement.

Can states structure agreements so that they run back-to-back?

Yes. In those situations where the work funded by a prior year agreement must be completed for FY24 work to begin, the effective start date of the FY24 agreement can be in the future. The FY24 agreement must be signed, and work must begin on or before September 30, 2024. Please remember that funds

received in FY24 cannot be held for use in FY25 even though the agreement's performance period is one year and may not end until sometime in 2025. Work of some nature (such as planning or procurement) must commence in FY24.

Feedback on Suggestions

Is it possible to get feedback on my suggestion if it wasn't included in the Spending Plan?

Yes. To obtain feedback on a suggestion that wasn't included in the PPA 7721 Spending Plan, send an email to the PPA 7721 Team at ppa-projects@usda.gov. Include the title of your suggestion, goal area, and the suggestion number in your request. Please allow up to 7 business day for a response to these requests.

National Clean Plant Network (NCPN)

How can I apply for NCPN program support?

NCPN issues its Request for Proposals (RFP) annually at the same time as suggestions are sought for PPDMDPP. NCPN's RFP is independent of the PPDMDPP suggestion process. Applications for support can be made directly to the NCPN program per the RFP instructions. General information regarding the NCPN program is available online at <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/plant-health/ncpn>.