

**Plant Protection Act Section 7721
Frequently Asked Questions
July 2019**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) provides funding through the Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program (PPDMDPP) and the National Clean Plant Network (NCPN) Programs under the authority of the Plant Protection Act's Section 7721 (PPA 7721). These funds support Federal, state, tribal, and non-governmental efforts to prevent the introduction and spread of harmful plants, plant pests, diseases and pathogens, and to ensure the availability of a healthy supply of plants and plant products in the United States. The PPA 7721 authorizes \$75 million per year, with at least \$5 million of this funding going to the National Clean Plant Network (NCPN) each year. Since 2009, the Program (formerly Farm Bill Section 10007) has funded more than 2,346 projects and provided \$293.5 million in funding.

The following information addresses basic questions regarding the PPA 7721 suggestion submission and evaluation process. For more information, visit APHIS' PPA Section 7721 website at: www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/resources/ppa-projects

I. Requesting PPA 7721 Funding

How much funding is available in FY2020?

There will be \$62.5 million available in FY20 with at least \$5 million going to the NCPN.

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

To ensure its consistent and proper use per Congressional intent, PPA Section 7721 funding should not be used to:

- purchase vehicles,
- build new structures,
- pay the salaries* of permanent APHIS-PPQ staff, or
- develop IT applications, systems, etc.* that have not been previously approved by APHIS-PPQ.

* Requests for exceptions must be reviewed by the PPA 7721 Cross Functional Working Group (CFWG) and approved by the PPQ Deputy Administrator. In addition, requests to use PPA 7721 funding for IT projects must also be approved by the PPQ IT Governance Board.

Can States request PPA 7721 funding to fill gaps created when Federal pest program funding is reduced or eliminated?

The program is not intended to address fiscal challenges or shortfalls. 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 the requirements for PPA 7721 funding.

Will some States be automatically given more funding than others?

States that have frequent incursions of high consequence plant pests as a result of the number of international ports of entry in the State, the volume of international passenger and cargo entry into the State, the geographic location of the State, and a host range or climate that is conducive to pest establishment, are likely to receive additional consideration for funding. A State will not automatically be given a set amount of funding. All decisions regarding the distribution of funding, including decisions about continued funding of ongoing work will be made in a transparent manner using clearly communicated criteria.

II. Submitting a Suggestion

How do I submit a suggestion?

Suggestions must be submitted electronically using the PPA 7721 Metastorm application. The Suggestor must have an eAuthentication or a Metastorm BPM Server password to access the system. Suggestions submitted through other means will not be accepted. Instructions and self-guided tutorial for getting a password and submitting suggestions will be made available on APHIS' PPA 7721 website at: www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/resources/ppa-projects

What should be included in a suggestion?

In addition to basic information about the suggestion (such as suggestion title, budget estimate, and contact information for the individual submitting the suggestion), stakeholders should provide the following:

- How the suggestion aligns with PPA 7721 goals, objectives and strategies, as defined in the *FY2020 Implementation Plan*, which is posted on the APHIS' PPA 7721 website at: www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/resources/ppa-projects. The potential or expected impact and deliverables of the suggestion.
- The proposed technical approach.
- The roles and responsibilities of any cooperators or institutions likely to participate in carrying out the suggestion. *Note:* Federal entities are also required to include the percentage of total budget that would be provided to each non-Federal cooperator or participating institution.
- Relevant prior experience and accomplishments to date (specifically for renewing projects previously funded through Farm Bill Section 10007).

Stakeholders are strongly encouraged to discuss proposals with appropriate PPQ Program Managers and all cooperators prior to submitting proposals.

Who is eligible to submit a suggestion?

Federal and State agencies, non-profit organizations, tribes, colleges and universities are all eligible to submit a suggestion.

May a foreign entity submit a suggestion?

Foreign entities are not allowed to submit a suggestion; however, they may collaborate with a domestic entity who would submit 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 group suggestion and single entity suggestion?

If there will be multiple cooperators working together to accomplish a single project and APHIS will establish separate agreements with each cooperator, that suggestion is considered a “group suggestion.” In a group suggestion, only one cooperator needs to submit the suggestion for the group. The submitting cooperator needs to include the name and institution of each cooperator that will have a separate cooperative agreement with APHIS, each cooperator’s state, and the amount of funding that each cooperator (including the submitter) will receive. Funding for all cooperators listed must add up to the total budget requested.

If all of the funding will be transferred to one cooperator through a single agreement, that suggestion is considered a “single entity suggestion.” Any subsequent distribution of funds to sub-cooperators within the project would 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 cooperate or subcontract and include a breakdown of funds to be distributed in the “Contractual” budget category. This will help reviewers understand how funds will be allocated to carry out the project.

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

Suggestions that request continued funding for ongoing work will be reviewed and evaluated using the same criteria that will be applied to new suggestions. The fact that a suggestion received funding in prior years 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.

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.

I just established my FY2019 agreement with APHIS and I won't have an FY19 accomplishment report to submit with my FY2020 suggestion. What should I do?

In this situation, the cooperator should submit the FY18 accomplishments report (if this is a multi-year project) and/or a status report of activities completed to date (if any) under the FY20 agreement. The suggestion form will allow reports to be attached as well as including a narrative section to further outline status report of accomplishments.

III. Developing the FY2020 Spending Plan

What is the timeline for developing the FY2020 Spending Plan?

Currently, the proposed timeline for developing the FY2020 Spending Plan is:

- July 15, 2019, the FY20 open period begins
- August 23, 2019, the FY20 open period closes
- August 30, 2019, the FY20 evaluation process begins
- November 2019, the FY20 Draft Spending Plan is developed
- December 2019, Departmental Review
- February 2020 proposed FY2020 Spending Plan release

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

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

All PPA 7221 Goal Teams will use the same criteria to evaluate the strategic alignment, impact, feasibility, past performance, use of best practices, and innovation of each suggestion.

After all PPA 7721 Goal Teams complete their evaluations, the Teams will meet to discuss preliminary funding priorities in an effort to identify synergies across goal areas. 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. Because this is not a competitive grant program, APHIS has significant flexibility to create a recommended spending plan that addresses the goals of PPA 7721.

IV. Establishing Cooperative Agreements

Once the final Spending Plan is released, when will APHIS make funds available?

APHIS anticipates publishing the final FY2020 Spending Plan in February (2020), or sooner, if possible. Funds will be made available to cooperators shortly thereafter. Every effort will be made to provide funds to cooperators as quickly as possible, especially in those cases where ongoing work might suffer as a result of a lapsed agreement.

After the Spending Plan is released, when should cooperators submit their work plans and detailed financial plans?

Cooperators will be contacted by APHIS to initiate the process of establishing cooperative agreements. Cooperators that are renewing agreements may submit their fiscal year work and financial plans as soon as they are ready. Guidance for establishing overlapping or back-to-back agreements is provided in the responses to the questions below. Cooperators establishing new agreements are encouraged to submit their work and financial plans as soon as possible.

May states have overlapping agreements?

States may 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.

May 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 FY2020 work to begin, the effective start date of the FY2020 agreement can be in the future. The FY2020 agreement must be signed and work must begin on or before September 30, 2020. Please remember that funds received in FY2020 cannot be held for use in FY2021 even though the agreement's performance period is one year and may not end until sometime in 2021. Work of some nature (such as planning or procurement) must commence in FY2020.

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

The [Plant Protection Act](#) restricts indirect costs charged against a cooperative agreement under Section 7721 to be the lesser of 15 percent of the total Federal funds provided under the cooperative agreement or the indirect cost rate applicable to the recipient as established by law (this is the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate or NICRA).

PPA 7721 funds are not appropriated funds, but are a special funding opportunity provided by Congress. Therefore, the 10 percent cap on indirect costs as applied to the total direct cost of an agreement mandated for universities and other non-profit institutions under the Consolidated Appropriations Act does not apply. Rather, because the NICRA for universities is almost always higher than 15 percent of the total agreement, the 15 percent cap for PPA 7721 agreements applies.

Example: To calculate the maximum allowable Indirect Costs it is useful to know that 15 percent of the Total Agreement Amount is equal to 17.647 percent of Total Direct Costs.

If your budget was \$21,250 salaries and benefits, \$21,250 supplies, \$21,250 equipment and \$21,250 travel then:

Total Direct Costs = \$21,250 + \$21,250 + \$21,250 + \$21,250 = \$85,000

Indirect Costs = \$85,000 x 0.17647 = \$15,000 ✓

Total Award = \$85,000 (Direct Costs) + \$15,000 (Indirect Costs) = \$100,000

Math Check: Total Award = \$100,000; maximum Indirect Costs are 15 percent of Total Award, so 15% of \$100,000 = \$100,000 x 0.15 = \$15,000 ✓

In this Example, if the cooperator had a negotiated indirect cost rate (NICRA) of 40 percent of salaries and benefits, then:

40% of \$21,250 = \$21,250 x 0.4 or \$8,500.

Since \$8,500 is less than 15 percent of the Total Award (\$15,000), the lesser applies and the cooperator would be limited to Total Indirect Costs of \$8,500.

However if the budget were: \$50,000 salaries and benefits, 15,000 supplies, \$15,000 equipment and \$5,000 travel = \$85,000 Total Direct Costs then:

40 percent (NICRA) of \$50,000 (NICRA applied to salary and benefits) = \$50,000 x 0.4 = \$20,000

Since \$20,000 is greater than the 15 percent cap on Total Award (15% of \$100,000 or \$15,000), then the Indirect Costs for the agreement would be capped at \$15,000.

V. Requesting Feedback

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

Yes. To obtain feedback specific to a suggestion that wasn't included in the FY2020 Spending Plan, please send an email to ppa-project@usda.gov that includes your name, phone number, the title of your suggestion, and the suggestion number. A representative from the Goal Team that reviewed your suggestion will contact you. General information regarding PPA 7721 is available online at www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/resources/ppa-projects