

National Clean Plant Network (NCPN)

Funding Type: Cooperative Agreement or Interagency Agreement (for Federal Agency applicants)

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

Applications Due Date: Applications must be received by November 18, 2015

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number:

10.025, Plant and Animal Disease, Pest Control, and Animal Care

Eligible Applicants:

Land-Grant Universities
Non Land-Grant Colleges of Agriculture
State Agricultural Experiment Stations
State or Local Governments
Federal Agencies

Cost Sharing: Applicants are encouraged to indicate a cost share, match, or an enumeration of other funds available for program operations in addition to support requested from the Network.

Funding Opportunity Description: This program makes funding available for the National Clean Plant Network for Fiscal Year 2016 as provided under the Agricultural Act of 2014, commonly referred to as the Farm Bill of 2014, specifically Section 10007.

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

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

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

Alignment of the Program within the Farm Bill: This program aligns with the activities conducted under the Farm Bill, Section 10007 (Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program) and is part of the USDA Implementation Plan for that section of the Farm Bill.

Date to Post this Synopsis on the Grants.gov website: September 9, 2015



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Full Announcement

Request for Applications National Clean Plant Network

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

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

Announcement Type: Initial Announcement

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-GRANTS-090915-001

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

Key Dates: Applications must be received by November 18, 2015
Cooperative Agreements are anticipated to begin about July 1, 2016

Funding Opportunity Description: This program implements funding for Fiscal Year 2016 as provided under the Agriculture Act of 2014.

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

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

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

Eligibility: Land-Grant Universities, Non-Land-Grant Colleges of Agriculture, State Agricultural Experiment Stations, State Governments, and Federal Agencies. Funding priority

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will be given to applications that focus on specialty crops, with clear work plans for developing and maintaining a comprehensive, cohesive and efficient network.

Cost Sharing: Cost sharing is not required, but preferred. When possible, funding recipients should demonstrate stakeholder or other contributions to clean plant efforts to include 1) cost sharing or matching, 2) contributions such as revenue from the sales of plant materials and services, collection of fees or royalties, grants or gifts to the applicant which support the Network mission, or 3) quantifiable commitment of faculty or staff time, and quantifiable development of facilities and land for use in clean plant activities. Cooperator self-sufficiency is an important aspect of a healthy network and program cost-sharing, matching or an indication of other resources being directly applied to clean plant program operations are all good measures of such self-sufficiency.

Application and Submission: An Applicant may submit only one application and/or be a third party in an application submitted by another entity. If an Applicant is covered by more than one Network specialty crop governing body and is applying for support for activities that cross Network governing bodies, a single application should still be submitted for all of the proposed clean plant activity.

Applicants can apply through the Grants.gov website. Federal agencies applying for Network support should submit only the work plan and budget plan to the address listed below (see Part VIII. Agency Contacts)



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IMPORTANT - Special notes and changes for Fiscal Year 2016

Open and Closing Dates and the Pre-Proposal Review Process:

- Like last year, the Program will accept applications for 10 weeks; from September 9, 2015 – November 18, 2015 (*see Part IX, D.*).

E-mail Communication:

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

Program Priorities and Considerations:

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

Program Activities for Which NCPN Funding is Not Allowed:

- Clarifies items that generally are not funded as part of an NCPN application for support. (*Part I; G.*)

Pre-Proposal Review Process:

- The 10 week RFA open period for FY 2016 funding is partly to allow for sufficient time for applicants to engage effectively with stakeholders as part of the Network suggested pre-proposal review process (*see Part IV, D.*).

Business Plans or comparable Annual Entity Reports:

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

5-Year Program and Fiscal Plans:

- In addition to the Business Plans or comparable annual entity reports mentioned above, for FY 2016, each applicant is required to establish and include an appendix (3-5 pages maximum) to their application that explains in synopsis programmatically and fiscally where their program is now, how they anticipate their programmatic and fiscal needs to change annually for the next 5 years, and how they anticipate that NCPN might engage with them in this evolutionary process. (*see Part I, B.*)

Performance Indicators and Progress Reports:

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

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Program Self-Sufficiency and Long-Term Sustainability:

- NCPN encourages applicants to seek and secure program funding and income generating opportunities in addition to those funds requested from NCPN in order to more firmly plan for program self-sufficiency and long-term sustainability. Evidence of this effort is suggested in an application for NCPN support. (*see Part I; F. 10*).

Alignment with USDA, APHIS, PPQ and NCPN Program Strategies, Goals, and Objectives:

- Streamlines options for showing alignment with Departmental objectives to a few, relevant items. (*see Part I; D*)

Work Plan or Project Proposal – Page Limitations and Template:

- *NEW >>>* For FY 2016, applicants applying for support for more than one crop are anticipated to request such support under a single work plan. The applicant is anticipated to provide sufficient information covering requested support for each individual crop and differentiating the request among covered crops in cases where a single budgeted item covers more than one covered crop.
- *NEW >>>* For FY 2016, the 15 page proposal limitation is anticipated to cover applications for up to 2 crops under a single proposal. The proposal page limitation may be increased by up to 5 pages for each additional crop in excess of 2. However, no proposal may be greater than 25 pages, regardless of the number of covered crops.

Indirect Costs ascribed to Agreements:

- *NEW >>>* The 2014 Farm Bill restricts indirect costs charged against a cooperative agreement under Section 10007 (including NCPN) to the lesser of 15% of the total Federal funds provided under the cooperative agreement or the indirect cost rate applicable to the recipient as established by law (Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate or NICRA). Farm Bill funds are not appropriated funds, but are a special funding opportunity provided by Congress. Therefore, the 10% 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% of the total agreement, the 15% cap for Farm Bill Section 10007 agreements applies. (*see Part V; B, VII*).

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Part I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. NCPN Background, Mission, and Vision

Background

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

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

Mission

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

Vision

The NCPN's regional centers of excellence are recognized leaders in the introduction of the highest quality, regionally adapted, true-to-type propagative plant materials that are free of targeted plant pathogens and pests, thus promoting a vigorous commercial environment and the opportunity for international trade while protecting the environment of North America. Translational research, education and extension initiatives are supported to maintain the network's high quality collections and strengthen its services. Industry, research and regulatory communities collaborate to ensure an abundant supply of healthy specialty crops. The economic, environmental and social sustainability of specialty crop industries and the improved economies of the communities that depend on these industries are the ultimate impacts of the NCPN's robust service delivery.

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B. USDA Approach to the National Clean Plant Network

USDA's goal is to create an effective, uniform, consistent, efficient, and highly self-sufficient network of clean plant centers serving the needs of specialty crop industry. We believe this goal can be achieved by adhering to these key principles.

- Coordination: Projects generally given priority by the NCPN are coordinated and harmonized by stakeholder-organized specialty crop governing bodies composed of clean plant centers, universities, industry representatives, government officials, and others. These bodies meet regularly including meetings with the NCPN National Governing Board, have elected members, and operate under a charter. These bodies help the NCPN establish priorities and harmonize proposals.
- Pre-Proposal Review Process: Considerable weight is accorded applications submitted through specialty crop clean plant network governing bodies that engage in an industry-driven pre-proposal review process for proposal relevance, harmonization, and prioritization of requested needs. To support this process, applicants are encouraged to include information in the form of an addendum indicating how their program fits and adds value to a respective specialty crop network including the other associated centers.
- Business Plans or Annual Entity Reports: Applicants seeking NCPN support that also have established business plans or issue annual entity reports for their operating units are requested to attach such documentation to their applications as an appendix. NCPN hopes to use this information to better understand the operating environment of each entity seeking NCPN support. High consideration is given to such attachments.
- 5 Year Program and Fiscal Plans: For FY 2016, each applicant is required to provide and include an appendix (3-5 pages maximum) to their application that explains, in synopsis, programmatically and fiscally where their program is now, how they anticipate their programmatic and fiscal needs to change annually for the next 5 years, and how they anticipate that NCPN might engage with them in this evolutionary process. If such a plan is not feasible for FY 2016, the applicant must indicate why, as an appendix, and what actions it proposes to take to ensure that such a plan will be forthcoming in the event of continued application for support in FY 2016 and beyond or if requesting an extension of time on an FY 2016 agreement with anticipation of seeking continued support in FY 2017 or beyond.
- Long-Term Needs: Priority is given to applicants seeking support for long-term clean plant center, program, and institutional capacity building.
- Short Term Needs: If funding is being sought for routine operational activities, applicants are given priority that provide for clear explanations as to why support for routine needs is being sought, how long and to what extent support for such needs is anticipated to continue, and any plans for seeking greater self-sufficiency in this arena.
- Industry Focus: Priority is given to clean plant centers that become part of the NCPN and conduct diagnostics and therapy on select specialty crops plant material requested by industry. Additionally, support is provided for the establishment and maintenance of this material in foundation/nuclear blocks.

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- Source and Ownership of Material: Plant material proposed for testing and therapy may be imported from foreign sources, submitted from existing domestic germplasm collections, or submitted to the network because it is suspected or known to be infected with a pathogen of concern. The material may be either public or proprietary.
- Methods Development: NCPN encourages the development of methods and technologies needed to support clean plant activities for diagnostics and therapy including equipment needed to support these activities as appropriate; including activities apply established methods regarding advanced technologies for plant pathogen diagnostics and associated therapeutics
- Performance Indicators and Progress Reports: NCPN is outcome-oriented and all applicants requesting support must develop and report on performance benchmarks, timelines, and indicate associated deliverables and the impact of those products on industry.
- Economic Studies: NCPN sees the long-term value in supporting economic studies that strive to help stakeholders better understand the impact of clean plants on NCPN-supported specialty crop industries.
- Diversified Streams of Funding: NCPN encourages applicants for funding to seek and secure program funding and income generating opportunities in addition to those funds requested from NCPN. In further recognition of the importance of this priority, applicants for NCPN support are encouraged to provide information regarding the following:
 - Business Plans or Annual Entity Report: Submission, as an addendum to their application, any Business Plan or Annual Entity Reports as may exist that is current and specific to their operating unit.
 - 5 Year Program and Fiscal Plans: If funding needs are anticipated to continue for several years, provision of information as part of their application regarding the applicant's long-term funding needs, categories of anticipated funding needs, and information on any plans for attaining greater self-sufficiency is also required.
- Education/Outreach: NCPN recognizes the importance of well-coordinated and targeted extension, outreach and education materials and activities needed to link the NCPN program concept, the clean plant centers, and their products with the ultimate recipients, especially, commercial nurseries and growers. The primary objective is to ensure that the industries are aware of the importance of promoting and using clean plant material, and of the purpose, products and services of the NCPN including its constituent cooperating centers. Consideration is given to support the development of education/outreach concepts and products being coordinated, proposed, and advanced under the banner of the NCPN Education/Outreach Working Group.
- Linkages to Allied Initiatives: NCPN understands that as a Federally funded program, its supported clean plant centers and programs play a vital role in linking allied initiatives with which they serve in continuum; programs such as the safeguarding nursery initiatives and other such related activities. Applicants that demonstrate service in support of these extended linkages may be accorded increased priority for support.

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USDA plans to continue with implementation of the NCPN Cooperative Agreements Program in FY 2016. Because funding is limited, first priority shall be given to the support of existing facilities with an established history of clean plant performance capable of conducting diagnostics, therapeutics and establishing foundation blocks with the intent of making clean plant material available to industry for immediate increase for crop production. Priority shall also be given to specialty crops that organize under the banner of the NCPN into appropriate governing bodies to network, coordinate, prioritize and harmonize their respective projects and associated needs and deliverables.

Because each project is intended to have significant input and involvement of Federal, State and other stakeholders, the instrument used for this program shall be the Cooperative Agreement.

Funds allocated through the Agriculture Act of 2014 will be used to fund the projects in FY 2016. The funds are annual in nature, and they shall generally be available for only one year's needs subject to the decision of the NCPN Governing Board. It is recognized that current funds may not be sufficient to fully support each project. Consequently, cost sharing is encouraged. Additionally, NCPN may recommend program and funding modifications as appropriate, and may choose to offer funding for programs at less than the requested amount.

Cooperative Agreements will each support organizational activities, administration, operations, and other associated activities of the NCPN and associated specialty crops.

C. Funding History – A General Guidance:

Provided here is a synopsis of funding amounts historically provided by NCPN to each specialty crop currently in the network, 2009-2012 and 2014-2015; including funding levels that might serve as an initial benchmark for new crops proposing program entry. This is only general guidance based on historical funding and the NCPN Governing Board considers the requests of each year as new. This data however, may serve to help Tier 2 Governing Bodies and Applicants seeking NCPN support in developing both long-term program plan and immediate applications for support.

Data is provided in the form of a funding range as a percentage of the amount of funding that might be available to NCPN under its Cooperative Agreements program. NCPN is aware of the pitfalls associated with providing such benchmarks, but it is also aware of the value of such information regarding important NCPN concepts such as program planning, needs prioritization, and balancing requests based on historical funding availability.

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As such, for FY 2016, NCPN ventures the following benchmarks, as a percentage of annually available funds, as a general guidance only, based on NCPN's historical funding patterns of FY 2009-2012 and 2014-2015 as adjusted for funding anomalies.

- Fruit Trees – 20%-25%
- Grapes – 20%-25%
- Hops – 3%-5%
- Berries – 10%-15%
- Citrus – 20%-25%
- Sweetpotato – 8%-10%
- Roses – 5%-7%
- Education/Outreach/Economics - 2%-5%

It should be understood that an ultimate determination of funding amounts to specific applicants and associate specialty crop is finally determined by the applications themselves as counseled by demonstrated need when compared against all applicants seeking NCPN support and that the above guidance may not necessarily be reflective of the funding outcomes of FY 2016. In no case is NCPN implying an availability of funding in excess of that actually available to the program regardless of the historical percentage guidance provided here.

Additionally, the anticipate award funding amounts for any single application generally falls within the following funding range:

Approx. \$10,000 - \$1,250,000

Applicants seeking NCPN funding support are generally requested to ensure that their applications for support not exceed the maximum stated amount of the anticipated range. If the maximum range is exceeded, applicants are asked to provide for justification specific to their need to request support in excess of the anticipated range.

D. Alignment with USDA, APHIS, PPQ, and NCPN Strategic Goals and Objectives:

Applicants are requested to indicate which of the USDA, APHIS, PPQ, and NCPN goals and objectives are being addressed by activities proposed in their application for NCPN funding support. Applicants may indicate more than one goal or objective is being satisfied. All applicants must indicate that at least one (1) NCPN goal is being satisfied.

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

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USDA Strategic Goals: (Source: USDA Strategic Plan FY 2010-2015)

USDA Objective 4.4 - Protect Agricultural Health by Minimizing Major Diseases and Pest to Ensure Access to Safe, Plentiful, and Nutritious Food; specifically:

- Develop methods to address pests and diseases of concern, often working with universities, and provide diagnostic support to enhance pest and disease programs.

USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Goals and Objectives:

(Source – USDA/APHIS Strategic Plan FY 2014-2018)

APHIS Strategic Goal 3 – *Protect forests, urban landscapes, rangelands and other natural resources, as well as private lands from harmful pests and diseases; specifically:*

- Objective 3.1 – Reduce damage to valuable natural and agricultural resources caused by plant pests and diseases.

USDA, APHIS, Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ) Strategic Plan: Roadmap to 2015:

(Source – USDA/APHISPPQ Strategic Plan FY 2015)

PPQ Program Goal #1 – Optimize the effectiveness of PPQ’s Pest Exclusion/Prevention Activities; namely:

Objective 1.5 – Ensure competitiveness is specialty crop and small producers in the marketplace; specifically

- Actionable Strategy 1. Supply high quality asexually propagated plant material free of targeted plant pests through programs that include the National Clean Plant Network and secure ongoing funding mechanism beyond the Farm Bill funding.

Alignment with NCPN Program Goals

The following components of the NCPN are the focus of the FY 2015 NCPN Cooperative Agreements program. Applications must reflect which of the focus areas are being serviced and how they are being accomplished.

1. Governance and structure
 - 1.1. Support activities directly related to the work of the Governing Board for NCPN.

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- 1.2. Develop and implement a specialty crop-based management and governance structure through national governing bodies.
 - 1.3. Establish and maintain NCPN-related websites and databases.
 - 1.4. Organize, hold, or participate in NCPN or related meetings in support of the network.
 - 1.5. Develop administrative and record keeping assets, methods and service that will ensure the security, continuity and accuracy of NCPN activities, products and services.
2. Operations
 - 2.1 Establish, maintain and enhance a network of facilities and expertise for testing and providing therapy for publically available clones of specialty crops based on climatic suitability, current infrastructure and expertise, regional needs and disease safety standards, including the establishment and maintenance of foundation/nuclear blocks.
 - 2.2 Maintain collections in accordance with standards supported by NCPN.
 - 2.3 Provide foundation stock to industry, being encouraged to do so within prescribed state and federal certification schemes.
3. Methods Development
 - 3.1. Develop rapid, accurate testing techniques to assess plant material status and to meet the needs of regulators and the industry.
 - 3.2 Develop therapeutic methods for infected materials for effective and rapid elimination of pathogens from specialty crops for planting.
 - 3.3 Establish diagnostic guidelines and standards for different specialty crop species for certification maintenance.
4. Extension, Outreach, and Education
 - 4.1 Develop NCPN education, outreach, and education materials.
5. Quality Assurance and Quality Control
 - 5.1 Develop performance benchmarks and schedules of product deliverables and establish and implement plans for internal programs reviews and quality controls.

E. Program Criteria

In order to submit an application to the NCPN Cooperative Agreements Program, an applicant must, at a minimum, meet the following criteria.

1. Specialty Crops:

- Program Focus – Any commodity proposed as a target for NCPN program funding must qualify as a ‘specialty crop’ as defined by the USDA (for the definition, see Section 3 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004; 7 U.S.C. 1621 note; Public Law 108-465)

2. Program Pest Management Focus:

- Program Operations - NCPN funding is targeted to programs that diagnose and treat against vegetatively-propagated, graft-transmissible plant pathogens, and establish ‘clean plant’ foundation/nuclear plantings, including those maintained by governments, land grant universities, or non-land-grant colleges of agriculture.
- Program Governance, Research, Education, and Economics - Activities may also include forming and managing clean plant governing bodies, conducting clean plant research and methods development, developing clean plant extension, outreach and education materials and associated programs, and pursuing economic studies of NCPN and its impacts on industry.

3. Eligible Applicants:

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

4. Regulatory Requirements:

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

5. Meeting Program Goals:

- NCPN Goals – Application proposals must clearly meet one or more of the stipulated USDA goals and the NCPN program goals as defined in this RFA.

F. Program Priorities

In addition to the Program Criteria stated above, following are priorities that NCPN will consider in reviewing applications for funding and in implementing its Cooperative Agreements program. These Program Priorities shall be used by NCPN in its FY 2016 Request for Applications program to help ensure high quality standard in submitted applications.

1. Quarantine Crops:

- Highly Restricted Crops – Priority is given to applications supporting work on specialty crops that, if they were to be imported from foreign sources (unless otherwise allowed through another program), would be considered as being restricted in importation unless initially processed through a clean plant center capable of handling potentially infected plant materials, and submitting this material to plant pathogen diagnostics and therapy. This does not preclude similar plant varieties from being submitted from domestic sources such as germplasm or other collections.

2. Specialty Crops in State Certification Programs:

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

3. Propagatively Transmitted Pathogens:

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

4. Existing Facilities:

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

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

- Applicant Proposal Support from Established NCPN Clean Plant Governing Bodies – Priority is given to applications that are coordinated through NCPN-sponsored, specialty crop-specific clean plant network governing bodies. This includes a process of having the application pre-reviewed by the appropriate governing body for networking, prioritization, harmonization, and coordination with other proposals submitted covering the same NCPN specialty crop grouping.
- Pre-Proposal Review Process – Pre-proposals that are reviewed by designated governing body working groups that specifically target proposal harmonization and prioritization shall be given high priority. Such working groups are recommended be at least 50% composed of affected industry members.

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- Evidence of Coordination - Evidence of such coordination is required at least in the form of a letter of support from the appropriate NCPN governing body specific to the applicant's specialty crop focus area.
- Governing Bodies in Formation - In cases where a specialty crop does not yet have an NCPN recognized governing body, but where one is being formed, evidence of network formation activities may be submitted.

6. Multiple Cooperators:

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

7. Meeting Industry Goals:

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

8. Education/Extension/Outreach:

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

9. Economic Studies:

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

10. Program Self-Sufficiency:

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

11. Benefits to Small Producers and Distributors

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

G. Program Activities for which NCPN Funding is Not Allowed

The NCPN Cooperative Agreements program shall not provide assistance for:

- Construction; though minor, appropriate retrofitting of existing facilities to meet quarantine compliance or otherwise in support of the mission of NCPN will be considered.
- The Development of State Nursery Certification Programs
- DNA Fingerprinting (Note: NCPN recognizes the importance of maintaining and verifying clonal plant identity, however, DNA fingerprinting efforts will not be supported in this RFA)
- Basic Research; though funding may be used for applied research/methods development when the outcome impacts immediate delivery of clean plants to users.
- Funding requests that are intended to replace existing funding with public funds resulting in the redirection of those funds from the applicant for the furtherance of activities supporting diagnostics, therapeutics, or the establishment of foundation plantings.
- G-2 Foundation support; however, NCPN may consider supporting foundations where plant material is cleaned at one location, but material is maintained locally elsewhere in G-1 ‘like’ conditions for specialized service to local industry. This does not however, include blocks intended for general increase.

H. Program Merits

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

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



Part II. Award Information

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

B. Funding Uncertainties: NCPN Federal FY 2016 funding is from an annual funding source. Currently, NCPN Cooperative Agreement program funding is only available in FY 2016. Additionally, if during FY 2016 it is determined that NCPN funding is not available for obligation by USDA for the fiscal year, USDA is under no obligation to fund any proposals submitted under this RFA.

C. Competitive Process: The NCPN Cooperative Agreement Program conducted under this RFA is a competitive process and the funding of any submitted proposals is at the discretion of USDA in consultation with NCPN's proposal review panel.

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

E. Anticipated Award Start Date: July 1, 2016

F. Period of Performance: 1 year on average with option to provide for an approved extension of an existing agreement if NCPN determines the request to be acceptable.

G. Type of Assistance Instrument: Cooperative Agreement

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



Part III. Eligibility Information

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

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

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

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



Part IV. Proposal and Work Plan Submission Process

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

B. Electronic and Paper Application Submissions: All applicants must individually submit their respective applications through [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov), or to the NCPN Administrative Contact on [pg. 38](https://www.usda.gov), or via email to ncpn@aphis.usda.gov. An exception is where one or more institutions choose to apply for consideration as a sub-grantee to a principal applicant. In such a case however, work plans and budget submissions traceable down to individual institutions are encouraged.

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

In cases where an applicant chooses only to submit an application via [Grants.gov](https://www.Grants.gov), they must still ensure that any consultation and coordination with an NCPN specialty crop governing body has

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captured their discussions in a letter submitted by the NCPN specialty crop governing body as an attachment to the grants.gov application package or to the address at the end of this announcement, documenting the consultative process and its results.

C. Proof of Application Coordination: At their discretion, NCPN specialty crop governing bodies (Tier 2) may choose to submit all cooperator applications under their review as a single package to the address on pg. 38 of this announcement. They may also request that individual applicants directly submit their applications electronically through www.grants.gov or to the address on pg. 38 of this announcement.

In situations where the NCPN specialty crop governing body chooses to forward all applications submitted to it for networking, prioritization, harmonization, and coordination, the governing body may provide a single letter documenting the consultative process with all included applications. In situations where the NCPN specialty crop governing body suggests that individual applicants submit their applications directly to APHIS, the NCPN specialty crop governing body must provide the applicant with a letter documenting the consultative process.

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

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

D. Pre-Proposal Review and Prioritization – A Suggested Model: Based on the experiences of the NCPN Cooperative Agreement FY 2009-2012 and 2014-2015 process, the NCPN Governing Board makes the following recommendation for continuance of an improved proposal review process in this FY 2016 NCPN Cooperative Agreements program.

The NCPN Governing Board indicates that pre-proposal review, harmonization, and component prioritization by an existing NCPN specialty crop governing body, especially a specifically designated, industry-centered working group, would receive a high priority for funding consideration. Such a group designated to review pre-proposals should be a largely composed of about 50% industry with other affected stakeholders; or some other industry-driven process designed to accomplish the same purpose. This serves to ensure that industry stakeholders have involvement in the pre-proposal development process and serves to provide the NCPN Governing Board with a high degree of confidence in the specialty crop governing body pre-proposal decision-making process, including proposal harmonization to help foster an efficient network system.

Additionally, the NCPN Governing Board, at its discretion, may seek further counsel from the NCPN Cross-Commodity Industry Leadership Team regarding their thoughts, as part of a

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proposal review process, on the content or merits of any application submitted to NCPN for funding consideration.

The specialty crop pre-proposal working group should also be engaged in a process of “prioritization.” The NCPN Governing Board finds this aspect of the pre-proposal stakeholder review process to be extremely useful. This process should not prioritize individual proposals against each other, but rather look at specific aspects of individual pre-proposal content and highlight the important parts of each proposal before the working group, ranking ‘components’ relative to importance and need for the whole of the specialty crop being considered. In the event that funding was insufficient, this process of prioritization will provide the NCPN Governing Board with crucial information “across all applications” as to what the priority ‘components’ were for each of them. The NCPN Governing Board sees this as a truly ‘harmonizing’ process, honoring the submissions of each potential applicant and suggesting which components of each proposal were key consideration priorities.

For proposals including an Education/Outreach component, the NCPN Governing Board sees merit in coordinating this component of the proposal through the NCPN Education/Outreach Working Group to ensure that the request aligns with the general direction of NCPN collectively as manifested through the actions of the working group.

Evidence of compliance with this process should be submitted by specialty crop clean plant governing bodies in support of pre-proposals submitted to them for consideration.



Part V. Application and Submission Information

A. On Line Applications: Applicants are encouraged to apply through Grants.gov, the SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, and SF-LLL (SF-LLL is required for Federal Assistance greater than \$100,000) can be filled out and submitted online. The Work Plan described in V.B., “Content and Form of Application Submission” should then be submitted as an attachment.

Address to Request Paper Application Package: (V.B. (below) “Content and Form of Application Submission” contains the Project Work Plan template which outlines the format applicants should follow when applying. Paper copies of the other required application forms (SF-424, “Application for Federal Assistance”, SF-424A, “Budget Information – Non Construction Programs”, SF-424B, “Assurances – Non-construction Programs”, and SF-LLL, “Disclosure of Lobbying Activities”) can be requested from the following address:

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

They can also be retrieved from the APHIS website at the following address:

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wps/portal/aphis/resources/forms>

(Click on Grant Application Forms)

B. Content and Form of Application Submission – Proposals / Work Plans

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

WORK PLAN FORMAT

Cover Page

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

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

Date: _____

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

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

Work Plan Length – Excluding the cover page, applicants shall not exceed 15 pages (font 11, single spaced) in Work Plan length for applications covering up to 2 crops. For each additional crop the Work Plan may be increased by 5 pages up to a maximum not to exceed 25 pages for 4 covered crops or more. This limitation does not include any Federal application forms or proposal cover letters.

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Appendices – Applicants may submit documents as Appendices in support of their Work Plan in addition to the Work Plan page limitation. However, any submitted Appendices over 20 pages total may be assessed at the discretion of NCPN. This limitation does not include any letters and support information regarding process compliance or any submitted program or unit Business Plans, Annual Entity Reports, or recommended 5-year Program and Fiscal Plans.

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

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

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

FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2016 WORK PLAN

Name and Location of the Party Applying for Support

Name of Project Being Supported

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

I. Public Purpose – Project Introduction and Program Need:

Provide an overview of the project and information to help others appreciate the value of the project.

II. Cooperative Interest of USDA in Collaborating Jointly with _____ in this Program:

Provide information about why you believe that USDA has an interest in collaborating jointly with the applicant in the proposed project. The response should focus on addressing the mission of APHIS and may also include the missions of ARS and NIFA.

III. Alignment with the USDA and NCPN Strategic Goals and Mission Areas:

Refer to Part I. C. “Alignment with the USDA Strategic Goals and Mission Areas” and Part I D. “Alignment with NCPN Program Components” and indicate all that apply. A brief paragraph explaining the selection(s) is also required.

IV. Stakeholder Participation and Industry Focus

A. Stakeholder Participation:

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

B. Industry Focus:

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

V. Specialty Crop Governing Bodies and Application Harmonization

Indicate the involvement of NCPN-focused specialty crop governing bodies in the process of having the application reviewed for networking, prioritization, harmonization, and coordination with other proposals submitted covering the same NCPN specialty crop grouping.

VI. Project Description

Provide a brief but comprehensive description of the program proposed for funding, including relevant program operation. This must include purpose, objectives, scope of work, methodology/approach, and expected deliverables. After a brief explanation of applicant purpose, mission, and methods, the focus of the work plan should be on clarity surrounding the details and specifics of the particular requests of NCPN including clarity on anticipated ‘deliverables resulting from NCPN support..

The project description should also indicate all of the “NCPN Program Components” (See Part I. D.) that are contained in the project and explain how the components shall be addressed. This includes specific aspects of NCPN governance, operations, research and methods development, outreach and education, and quality assurance and quality control.

VII. Budget Plan

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

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

** Applicants must specify type and number of positions and exact salary and number of hours devoted to NCPN*

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<i>Equipment**</i>	
<i>** Specify the type, number, and cost of each piece of equipment requested</i>	
 <i>Supplies</i>	
<i>Travel (per diem X number of days)=</i>	
<i>Airfare X number of trips=</i>	
<i>Miscellaneous costs=</i>	
 <i>Meeting and Conferences Registration fees X number of conferences</i>	
 <i>Printing/Publications</i>	
<i>Contracts and Other Services</i>	
<i>Other Costs (must be specified)</i>	
<i>Indirect***</i>	
<i>*** See additional information on indirect costs below</i>	
<i>Total</i>	\$
 <i>APHIS Share</i>	\$
<i>Cooperator's Share</i>	\$

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

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

***Indirect Costs – 15% limitation: The 2014 Farm Bill restricts indirect costs charged against a cooperative agreement under Section 10007 (including NCPN) to the lesser of 15% of the total Federal funds provided under the cooperative agreement or the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement applicable to the recipient as established by law. The applicant must submit a copy of its fully executed current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, negotiated by its recognized Federal agency, when indirect costs are assessed in the budget.

Business Plans or comparable Annual Entity Reports: The NCPN Governing Board requests applicants for NCPN funding to submit a program or unit Business Plan or Annual Entity Reports along with their application for support to the extent that such a Business Plan or comparable report exists. Such information is useful to NCPN in further ascertaining how NCPN resourcing can best be optimized to support applicant needs.

Long-Term Funding Needs Projections: If funding needs are anticipated to continue for several years, provision of information as part of this application regarding the applicant's long-term

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funding needs, categories of anticipated funding needs, and information on any plans for attaining greater self-sufficiency is also suggested.

VIII. Milestones/Time Tables and Performance Measures

VERY IMPORTANT - Define and quantify the major milestones for the project and provide a target date for achieving each milestone. List the specific performance measures that will be used to evaluate the success of the project and how each element will be measured. The performance measures should be ‘outcome’ based and indicate the quantity and type of deliverables anticipated under this project as well as the impact of producing and providing those deliverables, including the impact on industry.

Suggested Quantifiable ‘Deliverables’ information might include the following:

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

A document suggesting a performance report outline or template is available by contacting the NCPN Coordinator or the NCPN Administrative Support officer listed on pg. 38 of this Request for Applications.

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

Institution Name:

Principal Investigator:

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

Grants and Agreements Contact:

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

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Other Persons Crucial to this Program:

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

USDA, APHIS, PPQ – Program Contacts:

Mr. Erich S. Rudyj, Coordinator – NCPN Management Team
National Clean Plant Network (NCPN)
USDA, APHIS, PPQ, Science and Technology
National Clean Plant Network
4700 River Road – Unit 152, Room 5C.03.41
Riverdale, MD 20737
Phone: (301) 851-2277
Fax: (301) 734-5269
E-Mail: Erich.S.Rudyj@aphis.usda.gov

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

C. Application Forms

The following forms must be submitted with the “Assessment and Initial Implementation Projects” Work Plan (above). Federal agencies only complete the workplan and budget plan.

- *Application for Federal Assistance: Standard Form (SF) 424*
- *Budget Information: SF 424A*
- *Assurance – Non-Construction Programs: SF 424B*
- *Disclosure of Lobbying Activities : SF-LLL*
- *Current Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement if indirect costs are assessed in the budget.*

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

- Deadline: 11:59 pm (US western time) November 18, 2015 for submission completion in Grants.gov. If e-mailed, the package must be received by USDA/APHIS by the deadline. The e-mail address to use is: ncpn@aphis.usda.gov. If mailed, the package must be postmarked by the deadline.
- Submission: Applications should be submitted electronically through Grants.gov or e-mailed or regular mailed to the address in Section VIII. of this announcement.
- Evaluation and Selection: The evaluation and selection of applications will be conducted within 30 days of the application deadline. Following the selection process, all applicants will be notified whether their application will be funded. The evaluation committee reserves the right to suggest modifications to the application and associated budget.
- Allocation of Funds: Unless otherwise indicated, funds will be allocated for a 12-month period beginning on the date indicated in the Notice of Award.

E. Intergovernmental Review - IMPORTANT

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

For FY 2014, CFDA 10.025 is subject to Executive Order 12372, “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs” in the States or Territories of: American Samoa, Arkansas, California, Delaware, District of Columbia, Guam, Iowa (State Agencies only), Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, Nevada (send SF-424 to NV for their records only), New Hampshire, North Dakota, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, Utah (State Agencies only), Virgin Islands, and West Virginia. Awards will not be made until this process has been completed in the applicable states. Names and addresses of States’ Single Point of Contact (SPOC) are listed in the Office of Management and Budget’s home page at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/spoc.html>. For those applicants that have this process in their state, submit your application to the SPOC simultaneously to submitting to APHIS. Failure to meet with this requirement will result in a rejection of your application. A copy of the SPOC waiver or approval letter will be required at the time the award is made.

F. Funding Restrictions

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

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

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budget. Eligible cooperator's assessment of indirect costs are limited to not more than 15% of total agreement costs or the application of their indirect cost rate agreement, whichever is less.

G. Other Submission Requirements

Applicants can apply to this funding opportunity through Grants.gov. First time Grants.gov users should go to the "Applicants" tab on the Grants.gov website and click "Apply for Grants." Carefully read and follow the steps listed in order to apply. Your organization will need to be registered with Central Contractor Registry (CCR). In order to register with the CCR, a requirement for registering with Grants.gov, your organization will need a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) Number. A DUNS number is a unique nine-character identification number provided by the commercial company, Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) at no cost. To investigate if your organization already has a DUNS number or to obtain a DUNS number, contact Dun & Bradstreet at 1-866-705-5711. Also, be sure to complete the Marketing Partner ID (MPIN) and Electronic Business Primary Point of Contact fields during the CCR registration process. These are mandatory fields that are required when submitting grant applications through Grants.gov.

Please note: The DUNS and CCR requirements described above are applicable to all applicants whether you choose to apply through Grants.gov or submit a paper application package.

Applications must be received through Grants.gov, or postmarked or emailed by 11:59 PM U.S. western time on the closing date indicated above in Part V., Section D. "Submission Dates and Times, including Other Relevant Dates".



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Part VI. Application Review Information

A. Criteria

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

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

2. Explanation of Evaluation Relative to Information Requirements

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

Goal Alignment (25)

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

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

Stakeholder Participation and Focus (75)

A. List of Stakeholders Participating (25)

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

B. Industry Focus and Roles (50)

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

Governing Bodies and Harmonization (100)

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

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

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

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

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

The merit and value of the project as it relates to the implementation of the NCPN is the most important section when evaluated for consideration. Thoroughly respond to each question/statement as listed in the Application, beginning on page 25 of this announcement.

A. Introduction and Summary (25)

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

B. Purpose and Objectives (100)

Clearly explain the objectives of the project.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Extension, Outreach, and Education: Consideration is given to projects that, in working in collaboration with the NCPN Education/Outreach Working Group, develop aspects of NCPN education, outreach, and education concepts and materials for nurseries and growers. This should include partnerships with and among land-grant and other university-based extension, outreach, and education services and should include interaction with commercial nurseries, industry associations, and growers. The focus should be on ensuring for the successful development of NCPN products and services.

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

D. Communication Plan (25)

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

Project Administration (300)

A. Budget (150)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

B. Review and Selection Process

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



Part VII. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notice

Applications selected for funding will be notified by email or phone after the selection and other USDA required processes are complete (approximately the week of December 28, 2015). The signature of the authorized agent and APHIS' authorized official on all required paperwork will finalize the cooperative agreement. A letter will be mailed to all other applicants not

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recommended for funding on approximately the same date the selected applicants are first notified.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

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

Successful applicants must comply with the requirements contained in the United States Department of Agriculture “Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations”, 7 CFR 3015; "Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments", 7 CFR 3016; Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and other Non-Profit Organizations, 7 CFR 3019; (Note: these regulations are being consolidated under 2 CFR Part 200) in addition to "Nonprocurement Debarment and Suspension ", 2 CFR Part 417; “Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace”, 2 CFR Part 421; "New Restrictions on Lobbying," 7 CFR 3018 ; and Office of Management and Budget regulations governing "Controlling Paperwork Burdens on the Public", 5 CFR 1320.

C. Reporting

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

See page 28 for a suggestion on a reporting template and select information suggested as part of a report.

The Project Administrator will provide to the APHIS authorized representative a properly certified **quarterly** Federal Financial Status Report, SF-425, **no later than 30 days** after the end of each Federal fiscal quarter and a final SF-425 **no later than 90 days** after the **Agreement** expires or terminates. Any requests for an extension of time to submit the SF-425 must be made in writing to APHIS’ authorized representative before expiration of the initial 30 or 90 day period allowed for submitting the report. Extensions of time to submit the SF-425 are subject to the discretion of APHIS’ authorized representative and, if allowed, shall be provided by the authorized representative in writing.



Part VIII. Agency Contacts

For questions of NCPN programmatic content, please contact:

Mr. Erich S. Rudyj, Coordinator – NCPN Management Team
National Clean Plant Network (NCPN)
USDA, APHIS, PPQ, Science and Technology (ST)
National Clean Plant Network (NCPN)
4700 River Road, Room 5C.03.41
Riverdale, MD 20737
Phone: (301) 851-2277
Fax: (301) 734-5269
E-Mail: NCPN@aphis.usda.gov

For NCPN administrative questions, please contact:

(To submit an application by mail, use this address.)

Ms. Tammy Kolt, Administrative Support – NCPN Management Team
National Clean Plant Network
USDA, APHIS, PPQ, Plant Health Programs (PHP)
Quarantine Policy, Analysis and Support Staff
Accreditation, Certification, and Networking Services
4700 River Road, Room 5C.03.41
Riverdale, MD 20737
Phone: (301) 851-2160
Fax: (301) 734-5269
E-Mail: NCPN@aphis.usda.gov or

For Cooperative Agreement application and administrative questions, please contact:

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



Part IX. Other Information

If in FY 2016 the Federal Budget contains funds for additional support to NCPN for Cooperative Agreements, they will follow requirements similar to this RFA as modified or otherwise adjusted. NCPN may request that stakeholders provide feedback regarding this RFA for use in improving any future announcements.

The USDA is not obligated to make any award as a result of this announcement nor to make any changes to future announcements. Only the APHIS Authorized Departmental Officer (ADO) can bind the Government to expenditure of funds and this obligation of funds shall only occur in writing by authorized officials and under the approved USDA, APHIS Cooperative Agreement format.

