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

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

Since 2009, USDA has supported more than 4,000 projects and provided over $600 million in funding through the Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program and the National Clean Plant Network. Collectively, these projects allow USDA and its partners to quickly detect and rapidly respond to invasive pests and diseases. They also help our country maintain the infrastructure necessary to make sure that disease-free, certified planting materials are available to U.S. specialty crop producers.

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

I.   Requesting PPA 7721 Funding

How much funding is available?
There will be approximately $63 million available for Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program projects, and with at least $5 million going to the National Clean Plant Network.

Are there any limitations on how PPA 7721 funding can be used?
To ensure its consistent and proper use per Congressional intent, funding should not be used to:
   ➢ purchase vehicles (lease, vehicle fuel, and routine maintenance are allowed),
   ➢ build new structures,
   ➢ pay the salaries of permanent Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service-Plant Protection and Quarantine (APHIS-PPQ) staff, or
   ➢ develop IT applications, systems, etc.* that have not been previously approved by APHIS-PPQ.
*Requests for special exception to this policy must be reviewed by the PPA 7721 Team 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.

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.

Please review the document, Guidance for Completing and Submitting a PPA 7721 Suggestion, on the APHIS website: www.aphis.usda.gov/ppa-projects for step-by-step instructions on submitting a suggestion using the PPA 7721 Metastorm application.

What should be included in a suggestion?
In addition to basic information about the suggestion (suggestion title, budget estimate, contact information, etc.), stakeholders should provide the following:

➢ How the suggestion aligns with PPA 7721 goals, objectives and strategies, defined in the *PPA 7721 Implementation Plan*, which is posted on the APHIS website at: www.aphis.usda.gov/ppa-projects
➢ The potential or expected impact and deliverables of the suggestion.
➢ The proposed technical approach.
➢ The roles and responsibilities of any cooperators participating project activities.
  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 PPA 7721).

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 submits a suggestion. The suggestion should describe why it is necessary to engage foreign collaborators to accomplish proposed activities.

Can stakeholders submit more than one suggestion?
There is no limit to the number of suggestions an individual or entity can submit.

What is the difference between a 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 applied to new suggestions. A suggestion receiving prior year funding does not guarantee renewed funding.

Do suggestions have to focus on specialty crops?
Suggestions should focus on specialty crops; however, the program will consider unexplored opportunities or emerging pest threats outside the specialty crop arena in all goal areas.

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.

Can States request funding for programs that are facing reduced funding or defunding at the Federal level?
The program is not intended to specifically address fiscal challenges. While a cooperator could request funding that meets a need generated by a reduction or loss in funding to a particular program, that suggestion must still meet the requirements for PPA 7721.

I just established my agreement and I won't have an accomplishment report to submit with my new suggestion. What should I do?
The cooperator should submit the accomplishments report (if this is a multi-year project) and/or a status report of activities completed to date under the 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.   Cooperative Agreements

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 FY19 work to begin, the effective start date of the FY19 agreement can be in the future. The FY19 agreement must be signed and work must begin on or before September 30, 2019. Please remember that funds received in FY19 cannot be held for use in FY20 even though the agreement's performance period is one year and may not end until sometime in 2020. Work of some nature (such as planning or procurement) must commence in FY19.

What is the percentage of allowable overhead a cooperator may charge?
PPA 7721 restricts indirect costs charged against a cooperative agreement to be the lesser of 15% of the total Federal funds provided under the cooperative agreement or the indirect cost rate applicable to the recipient as established by law (this is the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate or NICRA).

IV.   Evaluating Suggestions

How will the review process work and what criteria will be used to evaluate suggestions?
Suggestions will be reviewed by Goal Teams that 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 7721 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 the PPA 7721.

V.   Questions/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 PPA 7721 Spending Plan, please send an email to ppa-projects@usda.gov which includes your name, the title of your suggestion, and the suggestion number. A representative from the PPA 7721Team will respond. General information regarding the PPA 7721 program is available online at www.aphis.usda.gov/ppa-projects

VI.   National Clean Plant Network (NCPN)

How can I apply for NCPN program support?
NCPN issues its Request for Proposals (RFP) annually at about the same time as suggestions are sought for Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program projects. This RFP is independent of the Plant Pest and Disease Management and Disaster Prevention Program projects suggestions process. Applications for support can be made directly to the USDA/APHIS/PPQ/NCPN program as per instructions in its RFP.