

## **BEGINNING FARMER AND RANCHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM SUMMARY OF PANEL MEMBER DUTIES**

### 1. Reviewing Proposals:

Proposals will be reviewed by four panelists (primary, secondary, tertiary, and reader). Each panelist is assigned a total of 17-20 proposals.

Written reviews are prepared by the Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary reviewers. Each panel member is assigned 4-6 proposals to review as primary, secondary, and tertiary reviewer. Overall, each panelist will write 13-16 reviews. Reviews, with the reviewers' names removed, will be sent to the applicant after the panel meeting. Please keep in mind that carefully written reviews, which are constructive and thoughtful, can be extremely helpful to the applicant. Typically, these types of reviews can require a full page or more of text.

Panelists who are Readers (indicated as Panelist Number 4 in assignments) should: (a) read the application and (b) participate in the discussion of the proposal. If the primary, secondary, and tertiary reviewers do not agree on the final ranking of the proposal, then the reader will have an important role in deciding the final ranking of the proposal.

Most proposals will be reviewed entirely in panel and not sent to *ad hoc* reviewers; however, panel manager or program leader may request use of ad hoc reviewers for proposals where they feel additional input is needed.

### 2. Reviews

Please see the Review Guidelines for preparing written reviews. Reviews are to be submitted through PRS. Guidelines for using PRS are available at: [http://prs.csrees.usda.gov/includes/creems\\_user\\_guide.pdf](http://prs.csrees.usda.gov/includes/creems_user_guide.pdf).

In addition to submitting your reviews through PRS at the following website, <http://prs.csrees.usda.gov/login.jsp>, we suggest that you complete the written portion of your review with a word processing program, copy and past your written review into the appropriate section of the PRS and save a back-up file of your review. You will be prompted to give a rating of the proposal (excellent, very good, etc.) but the rating should not be mentioned in the text of the review. Please try to submit all reviews by deadline date so you can view other reviews for your assigned proposals prior to the panel meeting.

### 3. Participation in the Panel Meeting:

During the panel meeting, the primary reviewer is responsible for leading the discussion of the proposal and for preparing the panel summary upon completion of the panel discussion. Discussion of individual proposals usually proceeds as follows:

- 1) The primary reviewer summarizes the proposed project and presents the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal.
- 2) The secondary reviewer summarizes his/her critique of the proposal and summarizes any *ad hoc* reviews.

- 3) The tertiary reviewer summarizes his/her critique of the proposal and contributes additional information if needed.
- 4) The reader states agreement or disagreement, and contributes additional information regarding the proposal.
- 5) Other panel members can (and should) comment on the proposal or the discussion of the proposal as required.
- 6) The four reviewers of the proposal determine an initial ranking of the proposal that is ultimately agreed upon by all panel members. Panelists are free to change their rating of the proposal from their original rating submitted on the written review, based on discussion during the panel meeting.
- 7) The primary reviewer prepares a written summary of the panel discussion to explain the final ranking and recommendations of the panel. This "panel summary" will include separate paragraphs of strengths, weaknesses and synthesis comments. It will be constructed as a supplement to written reviews to help the applicant understand the basis for the panel's final actions and any discrepancies among written reviews.  
The panel summary is written as a consensus of the panel's opinion of the proposal and should consider the comments provided by other panel members, and *ad hoc* reviewers when available, as well as input from all four panel reviewers. It must be completed before you leave the panel meeting. A template for writing the panel summaries will be provided to each panel member at the panel meeting.

#### 4. Confidentiality

The USDA receives proposals in confidence and is responsible for protecting the confidentiality of their contents. For this reason, we ask that you refrain from copying, quoting, or otherwise using materials from the proposals. We make every effort to protect the confidentiality of your review. The identity of other panel members is also to be held in confidence.

#### 5. Resubmissions

Resubmitted proposals are treated as if totally separate, independent submissions from earlier proposals. In other words, the current year's proposal is judged on its own merits. However, resubmissions are expected to acknowledge/address comments of prior reviewers. The Panel Summary for the prior-year submission will be provided to the panel reviewers before the start of the panel meeting.

#### 6. Applying to be a Reviewer

To be considered as a reviewer, applicants must send an e-mail message noting his/her organization name and area(s) of expertise (limit to 4 or 5 keywords) to [bfrdp@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:bfrdp@nifa.usda.gov).

More information is also available at: <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/reviews.html>