INSTRUCTIONS – CONTINUING PROJECTS

NOTE: The 2024 NSI Application Template has been formatted to meet Reviewer requirements. Therefore, do NOT change formatting (font size, section/page breaks, margins, etc.). Simply enter text into each cell according to the instructions for each section of the template below. The 2024 NSI Template MUST be used for FY24 Proposals. It should be submitted by the deadline (January 31, 2024) as a Word document (DO NOT send as a pdf). Proposals should be sent to Annette.fischer@usda.gov.

1) APPLICATION COVER PAGE

Please complete all form fields. Additional information regarding certain requirements that need to be adhered to for this section can be found below:

- **Research Plan Title** *(Limited to 148 characters including spaces) – once entered on cover page, title will auto-populate to the rest of the document.*
- **Principal Investigator** *(Name) – once entered on cover page, PI Name will auto-populate to the rest of the document.*
- **AOR Information –** *For cooperators at academic institutions, the Authorized Organizational Representative at your Office of Sponsored Research or Sponsored Research Services should be listed. For AOR Organization, provide the exact name of the institute/organization as it is registered in the System for Award Management (SAM system per the applicable DUNS/UEI number). Addresses MUST include Street, City, State and Zip +4. The AOR DUNS/UIE number and expiration date should be entered as registered within the SAM.*
- **Year of Funding Request –** Select the applicable funding year if this is a continuing agreement.
- **ARS Agreement Number –** Enter ARS Agreement number as per REE-451 page 1 on original agreement.
- **Cooperator's Contribution** – (Note that this applies only to non-Federal PIs or cooperators.) The Cooperator's contribution must be no less than 20% of the funded amount of the agreement, of which half of the 20% must be in direct costs. Resource contribution of the Cooperator shall consist of a sufficient amount of itemized direct costs to substantiate a true stake in the project as determined by the ADO (Authorized Departmental Officer). The Cooperator's contribution must be maintained at 20% of the Federal funding throughout the life of the Cooperative Agreement. (Bulletin 04-154, Subpart B, Section 23.b [1]). Note also that indirect costs (in most cases) or tuition remission are not allowable, although the cooperator's 20% contribution can include tuition remission if your institution allows it.
- **Unobligated Balance of Federal Funds** – Enter current unspent funding amount on existing agreement.

2) RESEARCH PLAN

a) PROJECT SUMMARY

Each plan of work must contain a Project Summary page, which lists the names and institutions of all principal and co-investigators.

The summary is not intended for the general reader; consequently, it may contain technical language relating to Sclerotinia research. This section is considered part of the plan of work and is confidential.

The project summary should include a specific description of the activity to be undertaken, and focus on the following:

- *Overall project goal(s) and supporting objectives;*
- *Plans to accomplish project goal(s); and*
- *Relevance of the project to the goals and priority research needs of the Sclerotinia Initiative.*

b) PROJECT PROGRESS TO DATE

Each plan of work that is a continuing project and is seeking support beyond year 1 must contain a progress report. This information will be used in the preparation of the Sclerotinia Initiative Annual Report, by the Scientific Review Panel, and by the Steering Committee in assessing annual and multi-year accomplishments of projects.

The "Project Progress to Date" should provide the following:

- **Project title** together with the names and institutions of all principal and co-investigators;
- **Specific objective(s)** or question(s) investigated (these should be copied unchanged from the previous plan of work) along with the following for each:
  - **Past Year Accomplishments** – Description of what was accomplished over the past year of the current project;
  - **Cumulative Project Accomplishments** – Description of what was accomplished over the duration of the full breadth of the current project;
  - **NSI Priority** – Provide the applicable priority (priorities) that relate to each specific objective (Priorities are listed in the Call for Proposals document).
- **Impact and/or Deliverables**: Please provide a description of the achieved impact and/or deliverables to the specific NSI research areas listed below (over the total project duration):
  - Germplasm Resources and Translational Genomics
  - Pathogen Biology and Mechanisms of Resistance
  - Disease Management and Crop Production

c) PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The written text of the Project Description may not exceed 5 (single spaced) pages and the entire Project Description may not exceed a total of 10 pages including figures and tables. Format using Times New Roman 12 point font with 1 inch margins. **Plans of work exceeding the page limits will not be considered for review.**

This section should include:

- **Introduction -** A clear statement of the goal(s) and supporting objective(s) or research questions of the project should be included. The most significant published work in the field under consideration, including the work of key project personnel on the current plan, should be summarized. The current status of research in this field of science should also be described. Preliminary data pertinent to the planned research should be included in this section. All work cited, including that of key personnel, should be referenced.
- **Rationale and Significance** - Concisely present the rationale behind the planned research. The specific relationship to the Initiative's stated research area(s) (see CALL FOR PROPOSALS), broad research objective(s), prioritized research needs (i.e., priority areas; see CALL FOR PROPOSALS), and ongoing research should be included. If applicable, please indicate if the research proposed could lead to successful acquisition of grant funds from other agencies.
- **Research Methods -** Specifically, this section must include:
  - The hypothesis(es) or question(s) being asked;
  - A description of the investigations and/or experiments proposed;
  - Techniques and methodologies to be used, including the feasibility of the techniques (preliminary data can be included here);
  - Results expected;
  - Means by which experimental data will be analyzed or interpreted;
  - Limitations to proposed procedures and pitfalls that may be encountered;
  - Any contingency plans.
- **Timeline –** Indicate expected timeline for completing components of the proposed work.
- **Figures & Tables -** If applicable, please enter figures & tables here.

d) REFERENCES TO PROJECT DESCRIPTION

All references cited should be complete and conform to an accepted journal format. The references will not be counted toward the five-page text limit.

e) FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

This section should include:
- **Facilities & Major Items of Equipment** – All relevant facilities and major items that are available for use or assignment to the proposed project during the requested period of support should be described.
- **Non-expendable equipment** – All items necessary to conduct and successfully complete the project should be listed (including dollar amounts).

f) COLLABORATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

If the project requires collaboration or sub-contractual arrangements with other research scientists, corporations, organizations, agencies, or entities, the PI must identify the collaborator(s) and provide a full explanation of the nature of the collaboration.

g) CURRICULUM VITAE

To assist reviewers in assessing the qualifications and experience of personnel who expect to work on the project in a significant fashion (e.g., expectation of co-authorship on ensuing publications) a CV with recent publications should be provided, not to exceed 3 pages in total length per investigator (PI, Co-PI and/or Collaborators).
- The CV should be limited to a presentation of academic and research credentials, e.g. educational, employment and professional history and honors and awards. Unless pertinent to the project, do not include meetings attended, seminars given, or personal data.
- A list of all publications in refereed journals during the past five years, including those in press, should be provided for each project member for whom a CV is provided. List only those non-refereed technical publications that have relevance to the proposed project.

h) CURRENT & PENDING SUPPORT FORM (CREES-663)

All plans of work must contain a completed Current and Pending Support Form (CSREES-663) listing other current public or private support to which key personnel identified in the plan have committed portions of their time. Analogous information must be provided for any pending proposals that are being considered by, or that will be submitted in the near future, to other possible sponsors including other USDA Programs or agencies.

i) PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR LETTER OF INTENT

For academic PI's, the letter should be signed off on by your institution's sponsored programs office of VP of research office.

j) COLLABORATIVE LETTERS OF INTENT

Each Collaborator should provide a letter of intent, confirming their willingness to participate in the project and to identify their contribution to particular project objective(s).

k) COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT BUDGET FORM (REE-454)

Please complete the Cooperative Agreement Budget Form (REE-454) columns titled "ARS to Reimburse" and "Cooperator Contributions". Annual budgets are also required if submitting a multi-year plan. You must use the REE-454 version dated November 2018 (11-18) at the bottom of the budget page.

Funding will be provided as either Non-Assistance Cooperative Agreements (NACA) to cooperating non-ARS institutions (overhead cannot be included) or direct fund transfers to ARS participants. No funds will be provided for PI or Co-PI salaries.

A PI is defined as the lead scientist(s) on the project who is a full time employee of USDA-ARS or a cooperating institution. Postdoctoral associates, graduate students, undergraduate students, and technical support staff are not considered Principal Investigators.

Additionally, funds provided through Non-Assistance Cooperative Agreements cannot be used for purchase of non-expendable items of greater than $5,000 in value. Sclerotinia Initiative funds will be approved for travel only to domestic Sclerotinia related meetings and workshops, and for Sclerotinia research activities. **Travel expenses are for cooperative PI's to present research and are not for undergraduates, graduates, student hourly's etc. Post-doc travel to meetings can be supported, but only to discuss NSI research and foreign travel is not allowed.**

The Cooperator's contribution must be no less than 20% of the funded amount of the agreement, of which half of the 20% must be in direct costs. Resource contribution of the Cooperator shall consist of a sufficient amount of itemized direct costs to substantiate a true stake in the projects as determined by the ADO. The Cooperator's contribution must be maintained at 20% of the Federal funding throughout the life of the Cooperative Agreements. (Bulletin 04-154, Subpart B, Section 23.b[1]).

For questions regarding Non-Assistance Cooperative Agreements, please contact Stephen Fedorkowicz, USDA-ARS, Ft. Collins, CO; 970-492-7024; Stephen.fedorkowicz@usda.gov

l) BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

Include justification for each of the budget items (this section not to exceed 2 pages).

m) SYNOPSIS

A page with title and a one paragraph synopsis of the plan of work should be attached after the budget justification. This will be a non-confidential document that would become part of a database of research created as a result of the National Sclerotinia Initiative. **It should be written for a general audience.**

3) SUMMARY & NACA INFORMATION

This information is required for ARS administrative staff to enter agreement information into the ARIS system. Please ensure information listed below for each item is adhered to:

- **Objective:** *(Limited to 3200 characters including spaces.)*
- **Approach:** *(Limited to 3200 characters including spaces.)*
- **Statement of Mutual Interest:** *(Please provide information in red, all other data in this section is canned language required in the NACA and should not be altered).*
- **Cooperator Agrees to:** *(Canned language, should not be altered).*
- **ARS Agrees to:** *(Canned language, should not be altered; however, see item 2 if applicable. Otherwise, remove Item 2 in this section).*

4) APPLICATION CHECKLIST

This is a required section to help ensure you complete all the components of the application. Please answer YES or NO, as appropriate.