Summary of AFRI Workshop Las Vegas, March 9-10, 2009

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AFRI background

- Agriculture and Food Research Initiative
  - Combines elements of NRI and IFAFS
  - RFP: **http://www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/rfas/pdfs/09_afri.pdf**
  - Some application dates in the RFP have changed since the Program Announcement
  - All Presentations (Webinar) Available at:
    http://www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/integrated/integrated_resources.html

Major Points

- AFRI takes "integrated" very seriously
  - Must have 2 or 3 functions: research, education, extension
  - No more than 2/3 of the budget on any one function
- USDA looking for <u>stakeholder driven</u> projects
- Start with desired outcomes, and work backward
- Logic model is crucial
- Use the National Project Leader – it's their job to help you
- Take care in writing the project summary – it's the only thing most reviewers read, so be concise and broadly compelling
- Indirect cost is capped at 22%

THE major point....

- **READ THE RFA!**

Integrated Program Characteristics

- Research, extension, and education components complement one another and are truly necessary for the ultimate success of the project

- Think of the components as a continuum, rather than a line…create opportunities for extension to inform research and vice versa – and demonstrate that process in your proposal

- Deal breaker: tacking on a few factsheets as extension or a workshop as education

Stakeholder Input

- Clearly identify the stakeholder community and their involvement in the project, including they aided in development of the project objectives
    - Tip: Highlight institutional capacity of stakeholder groups, project partners as a way to demonstrate your unique strengths
- Include letters of support when appropriate
- Address the funding program's evaluation criteria as stated in the RFA

Logic models

- Applications must provide the elements of a logic model (activities, outputs, and outcomes)

- Narrative form or Logic Model Chart acceptible

- Applications must contain objectives for each function (research, education, and/or extension) included in the project

- Lots of resources on logic models:
    – http://www.csrees.usda.gov/funding/integrated/integrated_logic_model.html

Logic model objectives

- Construct a clear picture for reviewers with consistent language across disciplines: literally, get everyone on the same page

- Clearly demonstrate "if-then" relationships

- Provide a snapshot of the flow of your Project
    - activities (inputs)
    - Outputs (products and programs)
    - Outcomes (changes in behavior, circumstances)

- Note: multiple logic models might be appropriate – use your judgment

Outputs vs. Outcomes

- Know the difference between outputs and outcomes – fact sheets, reports, etc. are outputs, learning and behavior change are outcomes
- Outputs in logic model
    - Outline Audience, Activities, Products
- Outcomes in logic model
    - Detail desired Achievements or Attainments
    - Short Term, Intermediate, Long Term

Outcomes

- Outcomes
  - Short Term
    - Learning
    - Awareness/Knowledge/Attitudes/Skills

  - Intermediate
    - Action
    - Behavior Change/Practice/Decisions

  - Long Term
    - Impact on Conditions
    - Social/Economic/Civic/Environmental

  - *note: some long term outcomes won't happen in the time horizon for your grant, but demonstrate that they logically flow from the shorter-term ones

General tips

- Very important to address the program goals and the priorities <u>explicitly</u>.

- In order to integrate successfully, find a good match between academic (scholarly) questions and stakeholder questions, and focus on those

- Developing interdisciplinary projects take MUCH more time - Estimate how much time you think it will take and multiply by THREE.

Other tips

- Helps to LEVERAGE with organizations that already are performing training. look for partners to perform education activities outside of the regular setting of universities

- Remember objectives (outcomes in logic models) should be stated as *SMART*: specific, measurable, achievable, result-oriented, and time certain

- State or address how "public good" or "public benefit" will be gained

Other Tips, continued

- Proposals should be more CONVERSATIONAL and persuasive than academic papers. For example do not over-emphasize the citations... too many citations to make a point just give the idea of insecurity. Use only the critical ones.

- Use space appropriately. Don't cram it. Use headers, figures, etc. to make easily readable. Don't leave blank pages

- If you are going to re-submit, the FIRST re-submission is the critical one because the idea is still new and you can use panel suggestions to improve it. ALWAYS follow up denials with specific questions on how you can improve for a resubmission

eXtension

- If eXtension is mentioned in RFA, good idea to explore the possibility to include it

- Two ways to integrate your project with eXtension:
    - (1) Become a new Community of Practice (CoP),or
    - (2) Enhance an existing CoP

- In either case, panel will be expecting a letter of acknowledge from eXtension administration

- In either case, budget should also be considered for eXtension

Summary

- Read the RFA
- Think <u>outcomes</u> and <u>stakeholder interests</u> from the outset
- Choose partners that complement you and your aim for a fully integrated project
- Take extra care in project summary, logic model
- Allow extra time – integrated projects take much more time to develop

Other potential avenues

- Post-Doctoral Fellowship Grants
  - Limited to $125,000 for a two-year duration and are not renewable
  - Funds for salary support, other expenditures (*e.g.,*supplies, travel, and publication) are allowed
- New Investigator Grants
  - <5 years postgraduate, career-track experience and has not received competitively awarded Federal research funds
- Even if it is not stated in specific RFAs, conference grants (usually lower than $10,000) are available for any program area in AFRI and don't require letter of intent