



November 8, 2012

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Research,
Education, and
Economics

National Institute
of Food and
Agriculture

1400 Independence
Avenue SW
Washington, DC
20250

To: Agricultural Experiment Station Directors
Cooperative Extensive Service Directors and Administrators

From: Sonny Ramaswamy, Director

Subject: Guidance for Plans of Work and Annual Reports: National Priorities & State Level Integration

This memo serves to alert you to two policy changes NIFA will be implementing in the present and following fiscal years:

- (1) Beginning with the FY 2014 – FY 2018 Plan of Work Update and 2012 Annual Report, due on April 1, 2013, NIFA will no longer require Plans of Work or Annual Reports to include the five National Priorities as planned programs. I recognize that considerable time and effort has been invested by many institutions to restructure their planned programs to meet previous guidance requiring the mandatory inclusion of the National Priorities; I hope, however, that this change in policy will foster greater flexibility in allowing institutions to align their programs more accurately with their actual research and extension activities. I'd like to emphasize that this policy change is not meant to imply diminished importance of the National Priority Areas. Rather, I encourage you to use it as an opportunity to rename and/or restructure programs that did not fit exactly into the construct of any of the priority areas while keeping those that are accurately named and structured under one or more of the five National Priorities.
- (2) In the current fiscal climate, I believe it is imperative, now more than ever, that NIFA and our partners make every possible effort to demonstrate effective partnership and leveraging in the use of federal grant dollars. Integrated Research and Extension planning and reporting is key to demonstrating such partnership. This is why, beginning with the FY 2015 – FY 2019 Plan of Work, due April 1, 2014, NIFA will require that all Plans of Work be integrated and submitted at the 'state level'. NIFA defines 'state level' as the combining of all 1862 and 1890 Land-Grant University Research and Extension entities within a single State or Insular Area. This policy change requires an official revision to the final Guidelines for State Plans of Work for the Agricultural Research and Extension Formula Funds [64 FR 19242–19248]. Thus, NIFA will publish a notice and request for comment on the Proposed Revised Guidelines in the Federal Register in FY 2013. We will continue to keep you informed as this policy change moves forward through the official approval process.

My staff in the Planning, Accountability, and Reporting Staff office will release further communications detailing how these two policy changes will affect the preparation and submission of your Plans and Annual Reports this year and in future years. If you have any questions, please email pow@nifa.usda.gov or call Katelyn Sellers at 202-401-5482.