

2014 NERA Planning Grants Program

The Northeastern Regional Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors (NERA) announces the sixth round of its regional competitive planning grants program. These grants are to be used to organize Northeast researchers and Extension educators into teams to develop new mission-oriented, cross-disciplinary, multistate problem-solving programs. The programs are to be needs driven and include clearly defined research and outreach components. They must focus on new and promising research collaborations or integrated research and extension activities that bring together specialists in diverse fields to apply complementary approaches to work on an important well-defined problem. Proposals in support of programs that are forward looking/anticipatory are especially encouraged.

While we will not have a specific focus to this year's round of proposals, we ask that you keep in mind the AFRI priority areas and the four competitive funding initiatives mandated in the 2008 Farm Bill. The AFRI priority areas are:

- Keep American agriculture competitive while ending world hunger
- Improve nutrition and end child obesity
- Improve food safety for all Americans
- Secure America's energy future through renewable biofuels
- Mitigate and adapt agriculture to variations in climate

The four mandated funding initiatives are:

- Organic Agriculture Research & Extension
- Specialty Crops Research Initiative
- New Farmer and Rancher Development
- Biomass Research and Development

Proposals (not to exceed **three** single spaced pages) will be due on **December 6, 2013**. The NERA Multistate Activities Committee will review the proposals and make recommendations for funding to the NERA Directors. Final decisions will be made by December 20, 2013. Funding up to \$10,000 will be available to support transportation and meeting expenses to bring the team together. As the funds come from the NERA operational budget so they cannot be used to pay F&A., and we reimburse **only** the actual expenses. The funding will be available to the teams for a maximum of one year from the date of the award notification. The funds will be administered by the Office of the NERA Executive Director and can only be used to reimburse actual expenses. Unused funds will be returned to our pool for future planning grants.

Proposals for planning grants should include:

- Mission and goals of the proposed program
- Justification for the program relative to stakeholder needs and potential for sustained external funding
- Activities to be engaged in by team members towards a more complete definition of the program

- Timetable for completion of the planning activities and preparation of a competitive proposal
- Team members from two or more Northeastern State Agricultural Experiment Stations and an explanation of their roles on the team
- Team leader with a demonstrated track record of leading cross-disciplinary and/or multi-institutional collaborations
- Budget for planning activities not to exceed \$10,000

An expected outcome of a planning grant will be a proposal submitted to the National Institute for Food and Agriculture in response to the FY2014 or 2015 RFA's or other funding sources specified in the proposal. Grant recipients will be expected to provide a written report at the end of the grant period and subsequent periodic reports on the status of resulting proposals.

The specific criteria that will be used to evaluate proposals are:

- Addresses an important need in the region
- Stakeholder supported justification
- Consistent with goals of competitive funding programs of USDA, NSF, NIH, etc.
- Potential for sustained funding
- Clearly defined activities
- Integrated research and extension activities
- Realistic timetable
- Team members appropriate to proposed activities
- Team leaders with demonstrated track record
- Leveraged support
- Overall quality of proposal

In order to provide guidance and feedback from the previous rounds of grant proposals, the following are some of the reviewer comments on those proposals:

- Goals not well defined
- Not clear what specific major compelling issues will be addressed
- Priority not well established
- Needs not clearly justified by stakeholder support; did not identify specific clientele being served
- Good focus and vision of research and extension activities not well defined
- No specifics on what activities are being planned – what are the key approaches to be used
- Strategy of individual proposal development and then consolidation not clear
- Proposed collaboration not well described
- Deliverables not clear
- Potential for sustainable funding not clear

Please submit planning grant proposals by c.o.b. on **December 6, 2013** to Rubie Mize at rgmize@aesop.rutgers.edu.

Cooperative Extension Regional Scan for ECOP
Northeast Extension Directors (NEED)
October, 2014

Critical Issues

- The Northeast Extension Directors participated in the July 14-16, 2014 Joint Summer Meeting with the North Central Region in Madison, WI. Major topics included the Healthy Lifestyle initiative, water quality and creating a sustainable national funding model. Our joint meeting with NERA focused on the climate hub working relationships and the planning grant process.
- What started as a NE states response to the Affordable Care Act has become a multi-state, multi-region Extension team focused on Health Insurance Literacy. This initiative has moved through ECOP approval and is now a BAA initiative. Much of the summer Joint COPS meeting focused on how to evolve this concept into a national emphasis.
- NEED is focused this year on finishing what we have started. Ken LaValley (UNH) is leading an effort to develop a regional research agreement between institutions as a means to facilitate the process of submitting multi-state grant proposals. (This included a discussion on institutional indirect costs). The model that the Northeast is using is based an agreement of the Sea Grant Institutions in the Northeast. Mike O'Neill continues to lead an app development challenge to engage students in building Extension-related mobile apps. A focus on developing an international Extension training center is still in progress.
- Support for program evaluation is crucially needed in the Northeast states. Conversations have occurred on ways to work multi-state.

Other Items:

- Northeast Program Leaders continue to meet on a regular basis via phone conversations. The 4-H leaders met face-to-face in August. The FCS leaders meet on a monthly call. The ANR leaders meet as called by the chair. They met face-to-face in DC during the Centennial celebration.
- NEED in collaboration with NERA funded a joint planning grant process in 2013. Two \$4000 grants were designed to facilitate Extension and research faculty interacting and encouraging the submission of larger, multi-state grants. These planning grants focused on building the competitive advantage of the Northeast states regarding the food system. The focus was on new and promising integrated research and extension activities that bring together specialist from diverse fields. A required outcome is the submission of a proposal for NIFA funding.

Personnel Changes

- NEED hired a new Executive Director, Nancy H. Bull, former Extension associate director in Connecticut to fill Linda Kay Benning's position, who retired December 31, 2013.
- NEED said goodbye to long time Extension Director John Pike, New Hampshire.
- Rick Rhodes, Rhode Island will complete his term as chair of NEED; Dan Lerner, Vermont will assume this leadership role.

Future Meeting Dates

- NEED meets monthly on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 8:00 a.m. ET
- The 2015 Joint (NERA/NEED) Summer Meeting will be hosted by New Hampshire July 7-8, 2015.