

Guiding Principles for the State Agricultural Experiment Station Competitive Program

The State Agricultural Experiment Station Competitive Program Committee (SAES-CPC) has met weekly since March 31, 2005 to draft guiding principles on what the function, form and delivery mechanisms would look like should Congress direct CSREES to undertake this program. The SAES-CPC would like NPLs to comment on whether we have captured the important functions of the formula-funded research programs, are there new or different project types for delivering these functions, and what should the appropriate model look like for soliciting this program.

The committee discussed what functions the current formula-funded research programs provide and whether this program should continue to provide those functions. The following is a list of what the SAES-CPC has generated.

- Support long-term research that addresses long-term phenomena.
- Maintain a national network of agricultural experiment stations to support a broad spectrum of research capacity.
- Cover a broad range of research topics responsive to local and regional influences.
- Fund appropriate issues and outcomes, which have been identified by stakeholder institutions, with allocations based upon institutional needs necessary to fulfill the outcomes of projects.
- Respond to local stakeholder needs at the local, regional and national levels.
- Provide start-up funds to transition faculty to extramural independence
- Build competitive capacity.
- Support high priority multi-state planning, coordination, and information exchange to effectively address research topics.
- Establish a mechanism that would support programs that can rapidly respond to emerging science issues.
- Provide a mechanism to develop support for issues presently addressed by national research support projects (NRSPs).
- Encourage non-federal match for agricultural research.
- Provide continuity of mature research programs and a conduit for reporting research results.
- Provide for innovation and development of new research programs for emerging and emergency issues.

The committee has also discussed a number of project types to support important functions currently being delivered through research formula funds. A brief description of these project types follows.

1. **Multi-state research projects** – This project type would closely resemble the current multi-state research committees but would supply operating money in addition to some faculty salary to accomplish the research objectives. Anticipated funding level would be \$1.5-5.0 M per project for 3 to 5 years.

2. **Rapid response projects** – This project type would allow regional or local teams to respond quickly to eminent threats to agriculture. Like the center grants proposals would focus more on management structure and could be funded in phases as the proper protocols to deal with the pest or threat become better known. Anticipated funding level would be \$1.5-5.0 M per project for 3 to 5 years.
3. **National research support projects** – This project type would closely resemble the current national research support projects that provide support for important research support functions such as germplasm preservation or monitoring. Anticipated funding level would be \$500-2500 K per project for 3 to 5 years.
4. **Capacity building projects** – This project type would allow institutions to propose start-up packages for new scientists to build or increase capacity at an institution or to build competitiveness. Monies could support equipment, training, graduate student support, etc. Anticipated funding level would be \$100-500 K for up to 3 years.
5. **Center grants** – This project type would allow multi-institutional coordination of research across one or more CSREES research objectives. Center grants would also allow for multi-functionality across one or more project types (types 1-4). Proposals would focus more on management structure and could be funded in phases as the research objectives become more solidified. Anticipated funding level would be \$5.0-10.0 M per project for 3 to 5 years.

The committee has discussed a number of options for delivering the above project types through the SAES competitive program. Below are three models that could be used with the advantages and disadvantages of each. Each of the models would have an EPSCOR-like component to encourage smaller institutions as lead and participating institutions.

Model I – This model would have one RFA with each of the project types listed. A separate application would be required for each project type but Center grants would be limited to \$5.0 M.

- maximum flexibility for CSREES to support a wide range of activities
- would allow best chance for current system institutions to receive some funding
- easily scalable depending on funding
- least complex award management
- highest administrative overhead for CSREES
- least amount of flexibility for SAES administrators

Model II – This model would have one RFA with each of the project types listed. Applications could be made for any of the project types but Center grants could include one or more project types in support of the CSREES research objective up to the \$10.0 M maximum.

- moderate flexibility for CSREES to support a wide range of activities

- encourages multi-institutional administrative coordination
- moderately scalable depending on funding
- better opportunities for small to mid-size institutions to compete
- moderate administrative overhead for CSREES
- moderate award and post award management
- moderate flexibility for SAES administrators

Model III – This model would have one RFA with each of the functions listed. Applications would consist of Center grants with one or more functions in support of the CSREES research objectives up to the \$10.0 M maximum.

- least administrative overhead for CSREES
 - encourages multi-institutional administrative coordination
 - most flexibility for SAES administrators
 - least scalable
- small to mid-sized institutions would be less competitive
- least flexibility for CSREES to support a wide range of activities
 - most complex award and post award management

Here are some of the notes capturing items from our May 3, 2005, meeting of the SAES-CPC meeting. Please feel free to correct or expand these and share them with the Reply to All option on your e-mail. DDK

Sequence for the next level of input into the process.

Internal Input (prior to June 1, 2005):

- CSREES NPL and Program Specialist input meeting. Prior the meeting, share with the CSREES staff the functions that the SAES-CP RFA needs to address. That sharing would be followed by a listening session held within the Agency. The suggestion was made that small group discussions and input could be captured and the larger group could bring them together.
 - SAES Executive Director input in similar manner and within a similar time frame.
 - Prior to July 1, 2005, begin to work with OEP Policy Representatives to put together a boilerplate RFA for internal review.
 - Have available by mid-July a RFA for review by the Office of General Council.
- External Input (Possible Tele/Video Conference with each of the Regions):
- In early June, the functions that the SAES-CP RFA needs to address would be published in the Federal Register asking for written comment and listing the time and connection to the four Regional SAES listening sessions.
 - The Regional SAES Executive Director facilitates a discussions with SAES Directors and other interested parties in each region.

Beginning to a list of evaluation criteria for SAES-CP proposals.

- Clear definition of the proposal's areas of emphasis
- Relevance to the program objectives and how do they address CSREES goals.
- Demonstration of the grant subcontract management capability.
- Demonstration of stakeholder input solicitation contributed to proposal development.
- How stakeholder input will influence project management.
- Definition of benchmarks and proposed outcomes.
- Demonstration of multi-state and multi-functional engagement.
- Inclusion of EPSCOR state engagement in the proposal.
- Proposed methodology of the scientific peer paneling of proposed research projects.