



NERA News & Notes

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From the Office of the Executive Director

Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) - Building EPSCoR State/ National Laboratory Partnerships

I came across the following grant opportunity this morning and am sharing with those who might have an interest. Please see the following web site for more detailed information. This does pertain to those states that qualify as EPSCoR. For those eligible, see below in the text. For the NE (De, ME, VT, WV) are eligible, but others might check if there are questions. I have checked with Dr. James Fischer at DOE and he assures me that EERE programs and labs qualify.

<http://www.science.doe.gov/grants/FAPN05-04.html>

Summary: The Office of Basic Energy Sciences (BES) of the Office of Science (SC), U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), in keeping with its energy-related mission to assist in strengthening the Nation's scientific research enterprise through the support of basic science, engineering, and mathematics, announces its interest in receiving grant applications for collaborative partnerships between academic or industrial researchers from states eligible for the DOE/EPSCoR program and researchers at DOE's National Laboratories, facilities, and centers. The purpose of the DOE/EPSCoR program is to enhance the capability of designated states to conduct nationally competitive energy-related research and to develop science and engineering manpower in energy-related areas to meet current and future needs. The purpose of this program notice is to initiate and promote partnering and collaborative relationships that build beneficial energy-related **research** programs with strong participation by students, postdoctoral fellows, and young faculty from EPSCoR states.

Dates: Potential applicants are required to submit a brief preapplication. All preapplications, referencing Program Notice DE-FG01-05ER05-04, must be received by April 12, 2005, (preapplications received after this date will not be considered). A response to the preapplications encouraging or discouraging a formal application will be communicated to the applicant within approximately six weeks of receipt.

To permit timely consideration for award in Fiscal Year 2006, formal applications submitted in response to this notice must be received by July 6, 2005, 4:30 p.m. Eastern Time, (formal applications received after this date will not be considered).

Addresses: All preapplications, referencing Program Notice DE-FG01-05ER05-04, should be addressed to Dr. Matesh N. Varma, and should be sent as PDF file attachments via e-mail to: EPSCoR@Science.doe.gov with "Program Notice DE-FG01-05ER05-04" and the Collaborating Laboratory in the subject line. No Fax or mail submission of preapplications will be considered.

After receiving notification from DOE concerning successful preapplications, applicants may prepare formal applications. No other formal applications will be considered.

For Further Information Contact: Dr. Matesh N. Varma, DOE/EPSCoR Program Manager, Division of Materials Sciences and Engineering, SC-132/ Germantown Building, Office of Science, U.S. Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20585-1290. Telephone: (301) 903-3209; Fax: (301) 903-9513; E-Mail: matesh.varma@science.doe.gov

Supplemental Information: To continue to enhance the competitiveness of states and territories identified for participation in the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR), DOE encourages the formation of partnerships between academic and

industrial researchers in EPSCoR states and the researchers at DOE's National Laboratories, facilities and centers in scientific areas supported by DOE's Office of Science. These collaborations should address areas of research of current interest to the Department. Undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and young faculty must be active members of the research team, and it is encouraged that these investigators spend a summer or significant time during the academic year at a National Laboratory, facility, or center. It is also encouraged that collaborating scientists from the National Laboratories visit collaborating EPSCoR state faculty for exchange of scientific ideas and fostering active collaboration. Subcontracting arrangements with DOE National Laboratories will not be permitted. DOE eligible states and territories for the EPSCoR program are: Alaska, Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, West Virginia, Wyoming, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and US Virgin Islands.

Program Funding

It is anticipated that approximately \$1,200,000 will be available in Fiscal Year 2006, for research that encourages and facilitates collaborative efforts between researchers from EPSCoR states and researchers at DOE's National Laboratories, facilities, and centers. Multiple-year funding of grant awards is expected subject to satisfactory progress of the research, the availability of funds, and evidence of substantial interactions between the EPSCoR researchers and the National Laboratory partner. Awards are expected to range up to a maximum of \$150,000 annually with terms up to three years. The number of awards and range of funding will depend on the number of applications received and selected for award. Minimum cost sharing in the amount of 10% of the DOE share of the total budget is required from non-federal sources; e.g., DOE \$150,000/year and Recipient \$15,000/year. All DOE/EPSCoR award funds will be provided to the recipient organization within the EPSCoR state for the purpose of supporting activities in the EPSCoR state and may include travel and lodging, faculty or student stipends, materials, services, and equipment.



Revised National Multistate and NRSP Guidelines

The newly revised National Multistate Guidelines and NRSP Guidelines are now posted in the NERA homepage. These revisions were adopted at the Experiment Station Section meeting in Oklahoma on September 27, 2004.

Also new to the NERA homepage is a direct link to egrants.gov, which will assist you in finding grant and contract opportunities at the federal level. Egrant.gov will allow you to set profiles for alerts for agency announcements. To keep up with federal opportunities, this is a must link.



NIMSS Update

The new NIMSS version was rolled out successfully during the week of August 9-13. The following week was used to debug and correct major problems. It was opened to the public on August 23rd.

Rubie Mize gave a presentation at the Experiment Station Section meeting in Oklahoma on Sept. 27 prior to the group approving the proposed NIMSS budget of \$32,500 for FY04-05. The proposed budget was unanimously approved. However, a proposal is on the table for NIMSS to be incorporated to NRSP-1, so directors do not be surprised if the NRSP-1 budget gets bumped up in the near future. This, hopefully, will eliminate NERA's hidden subsidies to cover NIMSS' upkeep.

The National Multistate Guidelines underwent major revision and one of the significant changes is acknowledging NIMSS as the central repository of all

records pertaining to multistate research projects. Specifically the national guidelines on page 12 states, “The process for record keeping for multistate research management shall be an electronic (paperless) management system identified as the National Information Management and Support System (NIMSS). NIMSS is a web application that allows the management of the Multistate Research Activities in a paperless environment. It is an information technology tool that facilitates the submission of proposals, reports and reviews online. NIMSS also serves as the central repository of records pertaining to multistate research projects and activities since September 2003. Information can be accessed anywhere, anytime at www.nimss.umd.edu. This link is also available on each region’s WWW homepage.”

Except for two stations, Rubie has trained all the station assistants in the Northeast region. These assistants now serve as the station system administrators. They have direct access to the NIMSS database to clean up their station as well as users’ records. The assistants can perform functions in NIMSS on behalf of the station directors and project advisors. In addition, Rubie trained assistants in seven stations in the Southern region: LA, TN, VA, GA, SC, AR and FL. Donna Pearce, system administrator for the South will continue the training for the remaining states in her region. Nikki Nelson handled the training in the North Central and Harriet Sykes in the Western region. Training of key users is an important component for the successful implementation of NIMSS Version 2. Users who are not familiar or have difficulty navigating through the new system can become frustrated and may not be able to utilize the system’s full functionality.

The National Multistate Coordinating Committee met in Colorado on October 6. One of the topics discussed in great detail is NIMSS. Work was divided among the four regions to review the major sections of NIMSS. Assignments were assigned as follows:

- Projects – North Central: Daryl Lund and Nikki Nelson
- Participants – West: Mike Harrington and Harriet Sykes
- Reports/Meetings – Northeast: Tom Fretz and Rubie Mize

- Reviews and Directory – South: Eric Young and Donna Pearce

We are just beginning to appreciate the added features and increased functionality of the new NIMSS version. Like anything new, it takes some getting used to. Additional features or modifications will be made as the teams above review their assigned sections. Watch out for the changes. If you like them, let us know. If you don’t, let us know too, but be sure to come up with suggestions. You users are our testers, so we’d welcome any suggestions. If you have any question about the new NIMSS, please send them to Rubie or Judy at nera@umd.edu or call 301-504-8655.



Agriculture as a Producer and Consumer of Energy – Farm Foundation Conference

This past June, the Farm Foundation hosted a conference by the above title, Agriculture as a Producer and Consumer of Energy, co-sponsored with USDA’s Office of Energy Policy and New Uses. The conference was designed to: 1) provide baseline material on energy use by agriculture for USDA staff responses to questions about economic impacts of energy or supply “shocks”, 2) provide comprehensive baseline information about agriculture as a producer of energy, 3) provide USDA with information to improve administration of energy-related programs, and 4) develop an agenda for future research for agricultural energy consumption and production, including barriers to technological advances, research needs, investment opportunities and economic (price) relationships. Research and data needs identified by conference participants included the following:

- Develop renewable fuels and increase energy efficiency on agricultural operations

- Evaluate technologies aimed at reducing the costs of producing renewable fuels
- Explore new uses for co-products and create more value-added opportunities for renewable fuels
- Examine the logistics of integrating renewable fuels into the current US petroleum distribution system
- Estimate the non-monetary value of renewable energy
- Analyze the role of other crops and imports of vegetable oil as feedstock for biodiesel
- Investigate the economic feasibility of bio-refining
- Complete a more integrated analysis of the amount of ethanol from grain, biodiesel and lignocellulosic biomass that would be supplied at various price levels and update this periodically
- Develop data needed to help evaluate energy use and develop energy-saving strategies for livestock facilities, dairies, nurseries and greenhouses.

A more detailed Executive Summary is available from the Farm Foundation www.farmfoundation.org/projects/03-35AgAsEnergyProducerAndConsumer.htm.

In addition, a book is being developed from the major conference presentations and cutting edge research presented at the conference to be published by CAB International. For more information, contact Steve Halbrook at the Farm Foundation (603-571-9393) or at steve@farmfoundation.org



DOE Biomass and Solar Energy Workshop at NREL

Many of you were aware, but unable to participate in the recent DOE/EERE Biomass and Solar Energy Workshop at DOE's NREL laboratory in Golden, Colorado this past August 3-4, 2004. You might, however

be interested in the presentations to obtain a better understanding of the activities conducted at this federal DOE lab, and to learn if there are opportunities for joint activities in the future.

Access to the presentations can be found at the following url:

<http://www.nrel.gov/docs/gen/fy04/36831.pdf>



The following was excerpted from Volume 1(10): 2004 of the publication ACTION, produced by the Agricultural Marketing Research Center at Iowa State University. Given that we have seen and talked about the valued-added agriculture at our summer joint meeting, I found this to be quite appropriate to those discussions and to the continuing interest and concern in the region for creating a value-added dimension to the region's agriculture as we, and many others, try to redefine the new rural America, create jobs and economic viability, and at the same time retain open space while preventing sprawl.

Using Value-added Agriculture to Create a New Rural America

How can we stoke the fire of economic development in rural areas? How can we take advantage of the passion and entrepreneurial spirit that built rural America? Value-added agriculture can be a key component of rural economic development, fostering job growth, economic vitality, and local wealth creation. Most rural communities have a strong agricultural production component that has historically contributed to the local economy. Value-added agriculture includes efforts to increase the value of these commodities and to do so before they exit the local area.

Value-added agriculture capitalizes on the consumer shift from mass markets to a market of mass niches, where goods and products are tailored for specific needs.

Although use of the term ‘value-added agriculture’ varies, an accepted version defines it as the process of converting agriculture outputs into products of greater value; increasing the economic value of an agricultural commodity through changes in genetics, processing or diversification; or the process of increasing the consumer appeal of an agricultural commodity.

Today, we see a huge variety of market-driven ideas emerging that are either triggered by or nurtured by small, passionate groups at the local level. These local groups may include farmers, local businesses and leaders who have a common interest in the vitality of an area. Many of these stakeholders are developing businesses that contribute different attributes to the food, fiber and energy industries and that provide customers with new products and services.

Finding the market is important, but getting products to that market – and making a profit – is how these successful value-added agriculture initiatives move from a dream to reality. Often, the goal is to retain control of commodities through further processing and to gain more direct access to markets. The opportunity for success is primarily about using that control to change the market value of what local producers have to sell.

A new way of thinking

The essence of value-added agriculture is about changing the vision for agriculture and rural America. Technology plays a role, markets are key and all ventures take money, but it is ultimately about people developing a new vision for agriculture and their communities. In the end, it is great leadership and great ‘followership’ that makes the difference for successful ventures. Value-added agriculture is a great motor for building that community wealth measure of “social capital.” When these deals work, they make the greatest examples of the whole exceeding the sum of its parts.

But like many things, this movement is more evolutionary than revolutionary. Participants are learning and adjusting their efforts as they observe the successes and failures of others. Programs and expert assistance are evolving, too. Confidence and the willingness to take risks remain vital components in tapping the power of cooperation

and common goals. And for inspiration, there are significant successes; a few of which are detailed below.

Ethanol production

Ethanol production, from corn, grain sorghum or other bio-stock, is a recent and significant farmer-owned, value-added agriculture business sector. Over 10 percent of the U.S. corn crop is used in ethanol production. More than 30 percent of the gasoline in the United States is blended with ethanol – typically at 10 percent – to produce a fuel that emits less air pollution and helps lessen U.S. dependence on foreign oil. Thousands of farmers have invested in ethanol plants, profiting from the plants’ proceeds as well as ensuring a reliable market for their crops. At the end of 2003, 32 of the 72 ethanol plants across the U.S. were farmer-owned. Taken as a whole, farmer-owned ethanol plants represent the single largest source of ethanol, comprising 40 percent of U.S. production.

Beef supply chain with processing

Cattle producers in Kansas and surrounding states formed a cooperative in 1996 called U. S. Premium Beef (USPB). USPB is an integrated system in which farmers and ranchers receive information about the cattle supplied to USPB and have partial ownership in the processing. By producer and processor working together, producers can make changes to their cattle production if needed; consumers receive the product they asked for; and producers are able to participate in the profits. Today, less than 10 years later, USPB is the fourth largest beef processing entity in the United States, in a field of big competitive giants which includes Tyson, Cargill and Con Agra.

Not a guaranteed success story

Despite the stories above, value-added agriculture is not a guaranteed success strategy. The same keys to success that apply to all businesses apply to value-added agricultural ventures: good management and a good governance structure, a solid marketing plan, a plan for protecting a market once it is created (e.g. trade-marketing) and a strategy for growing the marketplace for the product. Anyone who gets involved in value-

added business development – whether producers, economic developers, investors, bankers or professional consultants – need to recognize that these enterprises often take more time, energy, emotion and money to get going than originally thought.

And it may be easy to overlook the impact of value-added agricultural startups. The direct job creation may be small, or the physical plant may not be large and impressive. But the activity is there, generated by and in the local community, where the dollars start and where the dollars spend much time. Community leaders benefit from acknowledging the possibilities of these new enterprises because of their potential to build on themselves. Sometimes, the key to success is in linking production to processing or marketing in unique ways or with unique products. Sometimes the nuance is in the process itself, by creating better food safety or “story” attributes for customers. Sometimes value is found through providing services, or through marketplace relationships. Regardless of how value is added to agricultural products, local stakeholders who think creatively usually are surprised to find more possibilities available than first imagined.

By Mary Holz-Clause, Co-director, AgMRC, Iowa State University. Originally published in Economic Development America, Summer 2004

<http://www.usda.gov/nass>

