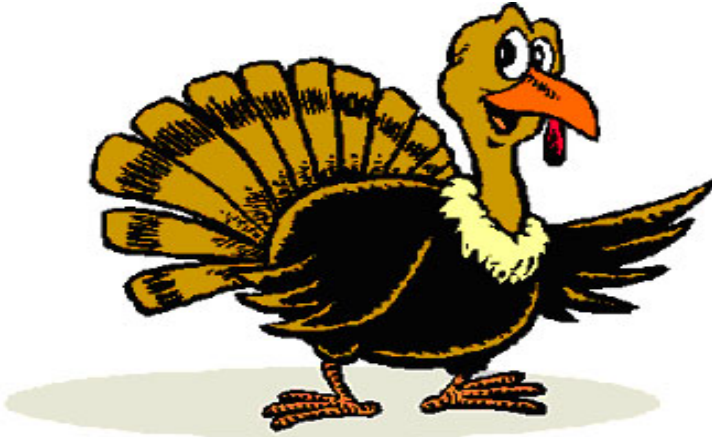




NERA News & Notes

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From the Office of the Executive Director



Happy Thanksgiving to Our NERA Directors and Their Staff !!!

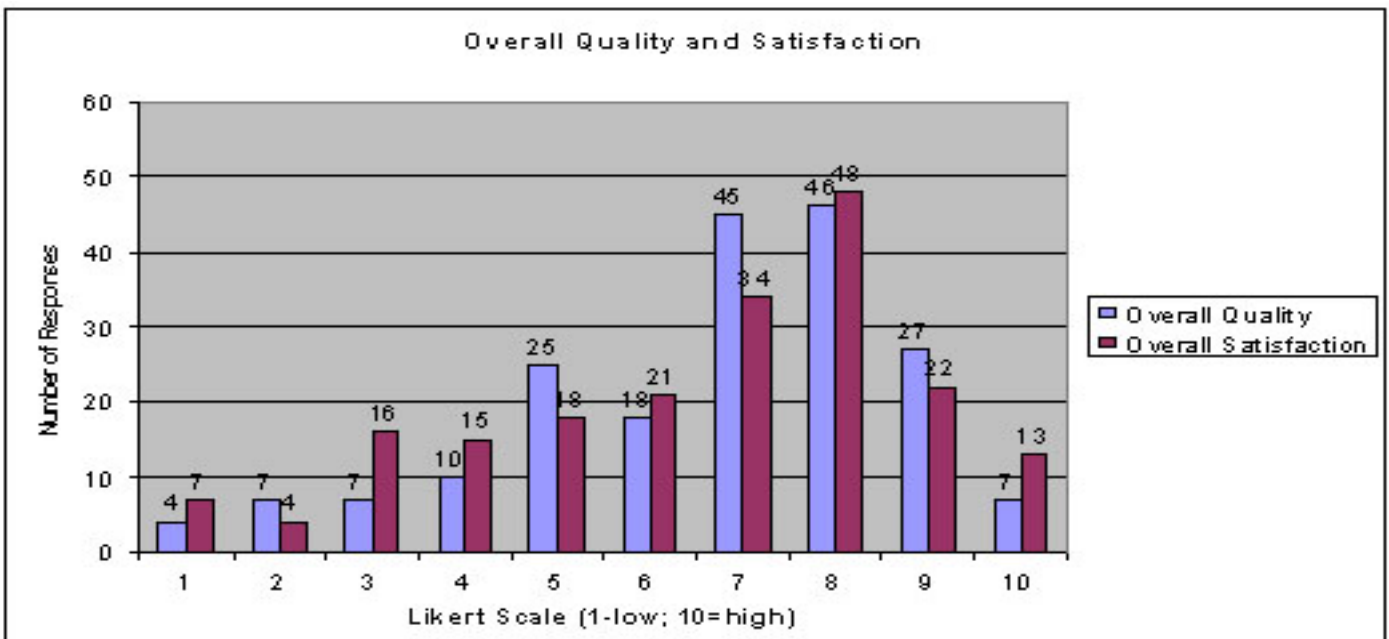
NIMSS Survey Results Taken from the Fall NCRA Newsletter

Over the summer, Nicole Nelson in the NCRA Office conducted a current user satisfaction survey of the National Information Management and

Support System (NIMSS) on behalf of the ESCOP NIMSS Oversight Committee and as an element of her Life Science Communications Masters' thesis.

Despite the lengthiness of the survey, we appreciate those of you who took the time to respond. Your feedback has been very useful. Results of the survey were fairly positive:

- Respondents told us that NIMSS met their personal system requirements with a median of 7 on a scale of 1-10 (10=high).
- Respondents told us that NIMSS works properly for the most part with a median of 7 on a scale of 1-10 (10=often).
- Respondents experienced a fairly low amount of glitches in the system with a median of 4 on a scale of 1-10 (10=often).
- As far as user-friendliness and overall usefulness, respondents gave NIMSS the median scores of 7 and 8, respectfully, on a scale of 1-10 (10=high).



- NIMSS scored high as well regarding overall quality and satisfaction. Respondents gave the system medians of 7 on both aspects on a scale of 1-10 (10=high).
- The three most important functions to NIMSS users were the project search, participant/Appendix E search, and the project homepage functions.
- The three most unclear functions for NIMSS users are the Appendix E submission, project review, and the CSREES official letter functions.
- Overall, NIMSS users told us that NIMSS exceeded their original expectations, with a median score of 7 (10=high).
- Compared to the previous version of the system, respondents said that the newest NIMSS version is an improvement with a median of 8 (10=better).
- Users said that for the most part, they will not be hesitant to use the system the next time they need it. The score was a low median of 3 (10=very hesitant to use it).

Of course, those of you who took the survey will recognize that there were many more questions than these. We will be analyzing the data in the next few months to determine how we can better mold the system to fit the needs of our users.

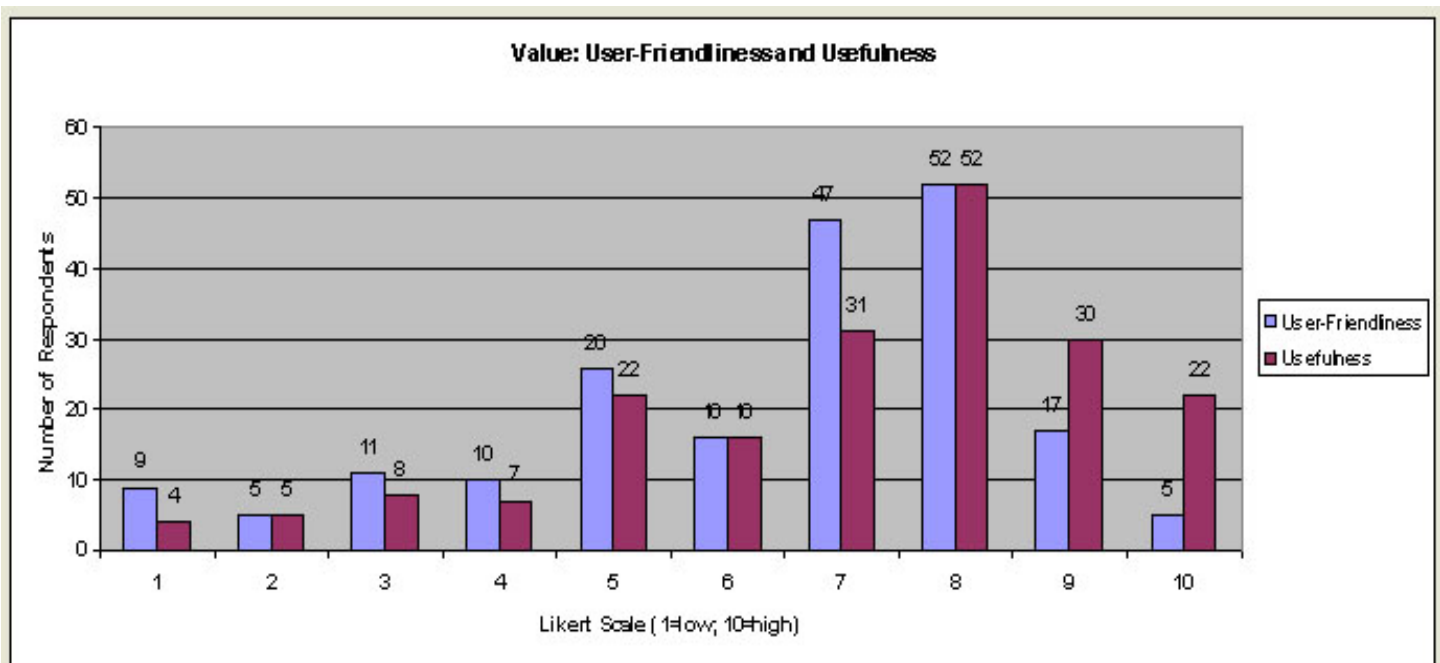
Finally, respondents provided useful feedback in their open responses as well. For instance, many

stressed that more training is needed. The system administrators understand this need and will do all we can to accommodate our respective regional users.

Also, survey respondents mentioned that information needs to be kept up-to-date in the system. As Administrative Advisors, you have probably seen the reminders sent either electronically by NIMSS or manually by our office. **PLEASE HELP YOUR COMMITTEES KEEP PROJECT INFORMATION CURRENT.** People are taking notice.

Finally, encourage your committee members themselves to input as much information into the system as possible. The only way people will become familiar with the system is to use it on a regular basis. As AAs, if you need to provide editing access to your participants, sign into NIMSS and go to Reports/Meetings > Assign Editor.

As always, feel free to contact your regional system administrators with any concerns or questions. Although the survey responses were positive, we are always willing to do more to improve the user-friendliness of the system. The only way we know what does and doesn't work is for you to keep us posted.



Multistate Projects Approved in 2005

These are the new and replacement projects approved this year:

NE1024 - Whole Farm Dairy and Beef Systems for Environmental Quality

NE1025 - Biology, Ecology and Management of Emerging Pests of Annual Bluegrass on Golf Courses

NECC1008 - Improving sweet corn: genetics and management

NECC1009 - Multidisciplinary Evaluation of Tree Fruit Cultivars

NECC1010 - Use of Residuals in Agriculture in the Northeast



Multistate Projects that Terminated in 2005

Here are the multistate projects that terminated as of September 30, 2005:

Note to Advisors: Please make sure that termination reports are submitted. The report for the last annual meeting of the technical committee can be submitted as your project's termination report provided that accomplishments and impacts reported are for the full duration of the project.

NE124 - Genetic Manipulation of Sweet Corn Quality and Stress Resistance (new project: NECC1008)

NE132 - Environmental and Economic Impacts of Nutrient Management on Dairy Forage Systems (new project: NE1024)

NE183 - Multi-disciplinary Evaluation of New Apple Cultivars (new project: NECC1009)

NE187 - Best Management Practices for Turf Systems in the East (new project: NE1025)

NE503 - Development of an Improved Management Program for the Internal Lepidoptera Pest Complex Attacking Apples in the Northeastern United States

NE1001 - Application of Sewage Biosolids to Agricultural Soils in the Northeast: Long-term Impacts and Benefit Uses (replaced by NECC1010)

NEC1001 - Land Use Management



Multistate Projects that will Terminate in 2006 and Their Current Status

NE167 – Family Business Viability in Economically Vulnerable Communities
A new proposal *NC_TEMPNE167: Family Firms and Policy*, was submitted to the North Central region and is currently undergoing review. NE167 will terminate as scheduled.

NE1000 – Improved Weed Control Through Residue Management and Crop Rotation
A new proposal, *NE_temp1141: Weed Management Strategies for Sustainable Cropping Systems*, is currently undergoing peer review.

NE1005 - Management of Wildlife Damage in Suburban and Rural Landscapes

NE1006 - Eradication, Containment and/or Management of Plum Pox Disease (Sharka).
The project will terminate as scheduled. Interested scientists were encouraged by the advisor to join WERA-0020- Virus and Virus Like Diseases of Fruit trees, Small fruits and Grapevines, to be actively involved in the rewriting of their new project.

NECC63 - Research Committee on Commodity Promotion

A Request to Write a Proposal has been submitted and was approved on October 2005.

The future of the following coordinating committees that are scheduled to terminate on Sept. 2006 will be discussed at the MAC and NERA meetings in the spring:

NEC1000 - The Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development

NEC1004 - The Northeastern Regional Aquaculture Center

NEC1005 - The Northeast Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE)

NEERA1000 - Northeast Pasture Research and Extension Consortium

NEREAP3 - The Northeast Regional Center for Integrated Pest Management (NE IPM)



Timeline for Getting Proposals Approved in 2006

1. The Request to Write a Proposal should have been submitted and approved by now. If not, it's not too late. The next deadline to submit requests for MAC's consideration is **March 6, 2006**.
2. After the Request to Write a Proposal is approved, your technical committee will have until **June 16, 2006** to submit a full proposal that has been **peer-reviewed** by at least three reviewers, and the Appendix E submitted by all the prospective participants. The technical committee should have also submitted their reaction to the peer reviews, and have addressed the

concerns raised as well as modifications suggested by the reviewers.

3. If the proposal is recommended for approval by MAC and approved by NERA, it will be transmitted to CSREES for official approval right after the NERA meeting on **July 11, 2006**. The approved project will start officially on **October 1, 2006**.
4. If the proposal is returned by MAC for further revision, the next deadline for the fall meeting will be on **September 1, 2006**. This is cutting it too close to the termination date of September 30, 2006. Failure to get your proposal approved in this round will result to a termination of the project without a replacement or new project. Some scientists continue their involvement onto the new project, so a break in the transition may also result to a break in funding. If this happens, be sure to have an alternative.

If you have questions about this timeline, and need assistance in using NIMSS, please contact Rubie Mize at rgmize@umd.edu or 301-504-8655.



Knowledge Areas (KAs) Vs. Research Problem Areas (RPAs)

Starting with the next round of Plan of Work, the RPAs will be known as KAs. NIMSS will be revised in the appropriate sections to reflect this. The codes remain the same, except for the addition of the following five new categories:

- 136** Conservation of Biological Diversity
- 141** Air Resource Protection and Management
- 704** Nutrition and Hunger in the Population
- 724** Healthy Lifestyle
- 806** Youth Development

Why Were the RPAs changed to KAs?

In case you are curious like we were on why this happened, here is a very concise explanation we got from Dennis Unglesbee at CSREES-CRIS.

The change from *Research Problem Areas (RPA)* to *Knowledge Areas (KA)* has resulted from a recommendation to CSREES executives after a significant amount of effort was devoted to evaluation of the existing three tier classification documented in the *Manual of Classification for Agricultural and Forestry Research*, version VI, in use since 1998. A CSREES evaluation committee with input from various groups and individuals throughout the system, made recommendations to Gary Cunningham, Associate Administrator for CSREES, that *Knowledge Areas* be adopted in place of the *Research Problem Areas*. Gary Cunningham reviewed the draft *KAs* with the partner institutions during the past year before directing that the *KAs* be adopted for first tier classification of all research, education, and extension activities. The *KAs* are the foundation classification for the new Plan of Work application being implemented this year as part of the CSREES One Solution Initiative. The Plan of Work release was the driving influence in making the decision to transition from *RPA* to *KA* in CRIS at this time.

The *version VII Knowledge Area (KA)* classifications incorporate all of the version VI *Research Problem Areas (RPA)* in the same form and structure. There are five additional categories in the *KAs* that did not exist in the *RPAs*. The five new categories include: **136** Conservation of Biological Diversity; **141** Air Resource Protection and Management; **704** Nutrition and Hunger in the Population; **724** Healthy Lifestyle; and **806** Youth Development. Additional modifications involved changes in descriptive material under existing *RPAs* in converting to *KAs* for clarification of the types of work efforts to include or exclude in a category. The modifications to *RPAs* were made to better accommodate the broadened scope of work classified by these categories as CSREES pursues classifications for all administered research, education, and extension programs. The second tier (*Subject of Investigation*) and third tier (*Field of Science*) are currently under review for possible

modifications similar to the *RPAs* for the same reasons.

The decision to adopt the *Knowledge Area* name change was part of One Solution efforts to make the classification labels less research focused and more generic for all activities to be categorized. Since all *RPA* values/categories existing under version VI are carried forward to version VII there is continuity from Version VI to Version VII so there is no set of 'Old *RPAs*' resulting from this modification. The transition is nearly complete in the CRIS program. CRIS Forms will be changed to reflect *KA* in place of *RPA*. The transition in CRIS required essentially no reprogramming only additions of the new categories to the existing authority table to allow the new codes to be entered. Additionally, cosmetic changes were made to external labels to show *Knowledge Area* instead of *Research Problem Area* as well as updating literal descriptions.

No changes to existing *RPA* classifications are required. For the stations and other cooperators there is no requirement to make changes in the classification assignments since all existing *RPAs* are included in the *KAs*. *RPA* codes in use can continue to be used for *KAs* on both new and existing programs. It is recommended that directors, program managers, project leaders, etc. review the version VII classifications to determine if any of their programs are appropriate for any of the new categories, but no changes are required.



Mark Your Calendars!!!

- February 28, 2006: Eighth Annual Food and Agricultural Science and Education Exhibition/ Reception on Capitol Hill, Rayburn House Office Building Cafeteria, Washington, DC
- March 28-29, 2006: NERA Meeting at the Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel, State College, PA
- July 9-11, 2006: Northeast Joint Session at the Ramada Inn, Geneva, NY