Dear Colleagues

I am happy to report that completion of the State level component of the Nutrition Education Evaluation and Reporting System (NEERS5) is on schedule. Beta testing is in the final phases and we hope to be able to provide you with CD's containing the state level software by the end of March. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we've worked through delays in completing this component of the NEERS5 development plan.   I would also like to formally recognize and thank the University of Georgia for partnering with us on this project, especially Gail Hanula, who has managed the implementation of the contract with the software developers and kept the project on target for completion.

CSREES has a strong and continuing commitment to reporting – the EFNEP reported data is utilized in a variety of ways at the local, state and national levels. At the national level, the EFNEP data helps us to:

- Demonstrate Accountability for funds- It is particularly important for 1890's and territories to be drawing down funding, implementing programs and reporting so we continue to have strong justification for the $100,000 base programs across the system.
- Respond to Congressional Questions
- Justify Budget Requests
- Prepare National Impact Reports
- Support CSREES Program Reviews
- Meet OMB requirements –- EFNEP has a performance measure we are accountable to report on every year - % of program participants which have a positive improvement in diet

Development of the State level software has led to additional questions and hard decisions by the Agency about how to best address EFNEP reporting taking a long-term view. During this past year we have been engaged in a number of discussions with information technology experts at CSREES, in University settings and with private contractors regarding the current reporting system. As a result of these conversations, it has become increasingly clear that our system, based on the distribution of CDs that must work with individual computer platform operating systems, is rapidly becoming obsolete, For instance, the new program CDs you receive at the end of the month will not be compatible with the Microsoft VISTA operating platform, so it is with some feeling of urgency that we need to move in a new direction to bring our systems up to the industry standards in technology to be able to maintain excellence in our evaluation efforts.

Based on these discussions, we have determined that it is time to make a change toward a platform independent, web-based, dynamic reporting system, that will be much easier to access and maintain, where updates can be sent directly over the web, and one that aligns with the overall direction that the Agency is currently taking for planning, reporting, and accountability.   Examples: Survey Monkey, IRS online tax filing.

Consequently, once the state level software (SRS5) is completed, no additional funds will be dedicated by CSREES to the current NEERS5 system, which means that the system, such as we have now, will need to carry us through the foreseeable future as a new reporting system is developed. We have worked closely with the software development company to assure that this current NEERS5 system would be functional into the future without further change. We are excited about this new version of the software which includes updated items to make it more user-friendly and comprehensive such as:

- Verifying addresses and creating mapping coordinates while protecting client identity which allow strategic reporting by congressional district and metropolitan statistical area;
- Providing a new foods database and client impact reports matching the MyPyramid food groupings and quantities consumed chart, as well as physical activity measures; and
- Providing enrollment data for youth groups to match new National 4-H Headquarters requirements.

Two points of particular note for you are that there will be:
- No further updates made to the county reporting system (CRS5) software. We recognize that there are some bugs in the system, but we do not currently have access to the code to modify the CRS5 software and there would be significant time and costs associated with locating and/or reconstructing the code.

- Secondly, although we are not developing the federal component of NEERS5 program, we will still collect state-level data and conduct statistical analyses to provide a national picture of what is being accomplished.

We do want to recognize the hard work that the NEERS5 Committees have done over the past few years.
1. The <u>Dietary Quality Committee</u> has been working hard to revise the Nutrition Related output reports. These reports will be used to inform the new system. They have also advocated for updating the RDA tables which we were able to do in SRS5 – Stephanie will address the specifics during her session tomorrow.
2. The <u>Youth Committee</u> made huge strides toward standardizing and improving youth evaluation. Although we are unable to deploy a Youth Question Development system as we had

originally hoped, you can still make use of the questions available on the Wisconsin Site (http://www.uwex.edu/ces/wnep/ncyouth/) and report them into CRS5 using the four existing youth impact indicators

3. The Training and Beta Testing Committees have been instrumental in helping us deliver NEERS5 and the related user manuals to you. Their rigorous testing and attention to detail has set a high standard of excellence for us to maintain as we move forward.

- Over the Past Year you have sent us suggestions and recommendations for improvements and changes to CRS5. These have helped us to make improvements to SRS5.

Where are we proposing to go in the future?

- There are three parallel processes that will need to come into convergence in the near future:
- The CSREES Agency is currently developing a comprehensive evaluation and reporting system for the entire agency utilizing outcomes-based objectives. The EFNEP reporting system will need to be integrated into this Agency system.
- Secondly, the multistate research project (NC 211) on EFNEP evaluation methods and processes will result in proposals to conduct research that identifies the most effective methods for evaluation of this program and these results will be integrated into the EFNEP evaluation system in the future.
- And lastly, CSREES and State-based EFNEP programs and stakeholders need to come together to work on the evolving EFNEP reporting system so that needs of all partners are taken into consideration.

To this end, I would like to announce that CSREES will be following up this conference, with the establishment of a task force of stakeholder participants, who will meet to define the parameters of what needs to be done and develop an implementation plan for the evolving EFNEP reporting system. CSREES has a strong commitment to ongoing EFNEP evaluation and since we do feel a sense of urgency regarding this issue, we anticipate a relatively tight timeline with the implementation plan in place by June 1.

To summarize:

- The development of a new, platform independent, web-based system will build upon the pioneering work associated with NEERS5; and the past work of committees will continue to inform the process as we move forward with development of the new system.

As we look forward with excitement to the completion and distribution of the state level software, we realize that NEERS5 has served a very useful purpose these past years and it will continue to be the base from which we move forward. We also realize that we are now approaching a critical fork in the road, in which we need to move in a new direction, one that we believe will better align with where the Agency is moving with respect to data collection/aggregation, with current technology, and with program management strategies.

Thank you.