CSREES Administrator's Report to the Partnership

Spring 2004

The mission of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) is to advance knowledge for agriculture, the environment, human health and well-being, and communities.

USDA United States Department of Agriculture

April 2004

Advancing Knowledge for the Food and Agricultural System

Celebrating a Decade of Discovery

In Spring 1994, staffs across the U.S. Department of Agriculture were engaged in a comprehensive effort to streamline operations. Begun under Secretary Edward Madigan several years earlier, the goal was to reduce administrative layers and costs and improve service to the public. Working toward the same goal, Secretary Mike Espy decided to cut by half the number of agencies in the Department. Espy also wanted to realign the political leadership to emphasize the fundamental missions of the Department, including Farm Programs and Foreign Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment, Marketing and Regulatory Programs, Rural Development, Food and Consumer Services, Food Safety, and, of course, Research and Education. Initial plans called for one unified research and education agency, the Agricultural Research and Education Services (ARES), which would consolidate the intramural research and information programs of the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and the National Agricultural Library (NAL) with the extramural programs of the Cooperative State Research Service (CSRS) and the Extension Service (ES). In addition to reducing "front office" costs, ARES would be serviced by a consolidated administrative and financial management staff and have unified information, budget, and civil rights staffs.

Congress had other ideas about how to streamline research and education programs, electing to make the NAL part of ARS, merge CSRS and ES into one extramural support organization, and combine the administrative management services of those organizations with those of the Economic Research Service and the National Agricultural Statistics Service. All six previous entities would become the four agencies comprising the Research, Education, and Economics mission area of the Department. Through Congressional action taking effect in October of 1994, USDA comprised 7 mission areas and 17 agencies.

In the ensuing decade, CSREES has defined and promoted the advantages of linking extramural research, education, and extension support for agriculture and broadly related fields. We began by identifying the underlying functions and values of our organization--providing leadership to help create a science and education system through promoting collaboration and communication among institutions and throughout the organization and creating and sustaining effective systems for Federal assistance. We value partnerships; fairness and efficiency in operations; quality assurance through peer and merit review; stakeholder input to program direction and design; integration of research, education, and extension where it contributes to problem solving; and creativity and openness to new approaches to achieving our goals and those of our partners.

With a firmly entrenched mission to advance knowledge for agriculture, the environment, human health and well-being, and communities, we now seek ways to assure that agriculture is a knowledge-based, global enterprise fueled by the creativity

of science and educators. One central challenge in that effort is working to ensure that the public knows the value and excitement of scientific discovery in the food and agricultural system. The richest grounds for discovery are at the boundaries of science where ideas and approaches can collide to spark solutions to problems.

We are investing at the intersection of biological and behavioral science to better understand consumer food choices; in fundamental molecular and cellular processes across plants, animals, microbial organisms, even humans, to better understand biological phenomena such as bacterial resistance, or stress amelioration; to link and apply breakthroughs in nanotechnology to develop sensors and tools needed to maintain environmental quality or detect a biological threat to agricultural production and distribution; at the nexus of economic and environmental systems to ensure the long-term sustainability of agriculture, forests, and rangeland.

A second challenge is to ensure that those who depend on a steady flow of research-based guidance to produce, process and market food and fiber; to care for the environment or assure healthy diets; or to attend to leadership development among youth worldwide, have relevant and useful information available when, where and how they need it. On April 15, 2004, CSREES will launch a new Web site that will provide better access to our programs and the research, education, and extension accomplishments of our partners and program recipients. The Web site, along with services such as e-Grants, will streamline our business processes and ease access to the university system. Later this year, the nationwide Cooperative Extension System will debut e-Extension, a state-of-the-art online education system serving traditional extension customers in ways they have never imagined and reaching new customers with a whole new way to think about land-grant university extension programs.

These are incredible times of discovery and application in biology, systems science, and understanding human behavior—those disciplines needed to advance knowledge in agriculture, the environment, human health and well-being, and communities. In its 10th year, CSREES is a precocious youth, with extraordinary energy to use these opportunities to turn goals into action in its second decade.

–Colien Hefferan, Administrator

CSREES Launches New Web Site, Improved Communication Tool

Terry Meisenbach, Communications Director

April 15 is unforgettable for many reasons. In 2004, however, CSREES brings a new dimension to the date by kicking off the Agency's 10th anniversary by launching a new public Web site to better serve our partners and the public.

The new Web site comes to you at **www.csrees.usda.gov** and culminates a lengthy process that engaged most of CSREES during the past 18 months. The Agency's vast information resources have been reviewed, synthesized, analyzed, and recast into a more usable site designed following a communications strategic planning process that involved individuals from USDA, CSREES, and our partners.

The Web site organizes the Agency's 59 programs into 11 national emphasis areas. Each program description features an overview, an **In focus** section highlighting select program successes, funding opportunities, partnership efforts, events, results and impacts, resources, and Agency contacts.

An extensive **Doing Business with CSREES** section features policies and procedures, frequently asked questions, discussion of award reviews and post-award management, planning and reporting impact, and training opportunities. The **Funding Opportunities** part of the Web site organizes all funding programs and details the grants process, providing access to e-Grants and all application forms.

An exciting addition to the new site is a **Newsroom** featuring news from our partner institutions related to CSREES programs. CSREES staff will continually "mine" partner sites for news stories that can be featured weekly on the new site. Links back to the supplying institutions will be provided. Impact statements, news releases and media advisories, speeches and Congressional testimony, and a listing of relevant partnership events will also be featured.

Under the leadership of the CSREES Communications Staff and with the cooperation and participation of CSREES program leaders and support staff, the Agency engaged in a thorough review of all information on the current CSREES site, developed standards for information on the new site, and created new information or migrated current information to the new site.

So, in 2004 CSREES has a new "face" for its 10th anniversary. As the major communications tool for the Agency, we are proud to launch this Web site and bring the best work of CSREES to our partners and the public.

Developing Society-Ready Graduates and Human Capital for Tomorrow's Agriculture

George Cooper, Deputy Administrator Science and Education Resources Development.

The American food and agricultural system is the world's largest commercial industry and offers a broad, complex array of challenges. American agriculture is being challenged as never before to develop and use new technologies, expand industrial uses of agricultural materials, and operate to be internationally competitive and environmentally sensitive. Education is the key to meeting these challenges. Our success as world leaders in agriculture and in providing our citizens with the best possible life depends on a critical mass of ingenious and creative scientists, educators, and other professionals who can solve the problems of the future.

CSREES' Science and Education Resources Development (SERD) unit is leading USDA's commitment to human capital development. SERD's grant programs strengthen agricultural and science literacy in K-12 education, influence students' career choices toward agriculture, strengthen higher education in the food and agricultural sciences, prepare graduates, and train master's and doctoral-level students as future scientists. SERD also provides national leadership for revitalizing curricula, recruiting and retaining new faculty, expanding faculty competencies, using new technologies to improve instruction delivery, attracting outstanding scholars, developing research and teaching capacity at minority-serving institutions, and increasing the diversity of the food and agricultural scientific work force.

This diverse portfolio of programs challenges educators to focus on issues important to the future of human capital development in the food and agricultural sciences. Key science education issues facing the Nation in the near future include: the retirement of the "baby boom" generation in the next 10-20 years and the corresponding need to replace vast numbers of scientists and other advanced-knowledge professionals -- this, at a time when fewer and fewer students and families have a connection to farms or rural issues. Also of concern is an increasing minority population with historically low educational attainment levels and a stigma against agriculture. Where will we get the replacements for needed scientists?

Despite gains in minority-serving institutions and programs encouraging diversity, USDA faces challenges to promote human capital development by helping all citizens realize their educational potential. First and foremost, agriculture does not look like the rest of the United States: minority students comprise only 20 percent of agriculture students compared to the 30 percent of

minorities in the total U.S. population and 40 percent of the population age 18-24. The recruitment of women into agriculture careers also continues to lag relative to their representation in the U.S. population. Women comprise only 40 percent of the students pursuing doctoral degrees in agriculture. In all other fields, on average, women comprise 56 percent of graduate students and 60 percent of undergraduates.

And, there is an additional challenge to graduate education -- approximately 42 percent of agriculture Ph.D.'s are awarded to foreign nationals and only half of those stay in the U.S. after graduation and get jobs.

There are also gaps in graduate "supply" and employment "demand." Studies project that in this first decade of the 21st century, half of all agriculture jobs will go to non-agriculture majors. Average annual openings for scientists, engineers, and related specialists in the U.S. food, agricultural, and natural resources system are projected at 18,538 during 2000-2005. To meet these challenges, we need to strengthen the educational "pipeline" from kindergarten to post-graduate study in science, especially at the secondary school to college transition point; and we need to increase student awareness of the enormous variety of agriculture-related careers, and increase student participation in secondary-level agricultural science curricula.

Through our programs, CSREES is helping our Nation's schools, colleges, and universities develop strategies for the future: expanding student recruitment, preparing graduates in areas of national need, maintaining curricular relevance through innovative degree programs and technologies, developing academic infrastructure, and endowing graduates with the problem-solving and communication skills and the hands-on and collaborative learning experiences they'll need to lead scientific inquiry and meet the challenges of an ever-changing world.

Enhancing Protection, Safety of the Nation's Agriculture, Food Supply Is Priority for Research and Education

Anna Palmisano, Deputy Administrator Competitive Programs

The safety of the Nation's food and agriculture systems must be ensured from farm to table, from production to consumption. At this time, there is a heightened awareness of the potential vulnerability of agriculture to pathogens, pests, and toxins introduced through natural processes, accidents, or intentional acts. Research, education, and extension supported by CSREES over the past decade will combat diseases and pests through knowledge and education, and will provide the science and technology to reduce the number and severity of pest and disease outbreaks. Building on this approach, CSREES provides the foundation for an effective agricultural biosecurity program focusing on early response to the entry of pathogens or pests into the U.S. food and agriculture systems.

Current research and integrated activities in plant and animal biosecurity aim to safeguard American agriculture from animal and plant diseases and pests of high economic impact. Researchers are developing new tools, such as microarrays and DNA chips, to take advantage of the growing amount of genomic data on agriculturally relevant organisms.

For example, rapid advances in genomics are providing new strategies for studying genes in tomatoes and soybeans that confer resistance to common pests such as nematodes. Scientist-stakeholder partnerships have led to research addressing the viral pathogen that causes Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS), a disease costing the swine industry $600 million annually. CSREES programs also support the development of new surveillance technologies as well as educating growers, extension educators, and agribusiness for early detection. Through the Food and Agriculture Defense Initiative, CSREES has developed the National Plant Diagnostics Network and the National Animal Health Laboratory Network for rapid detection and immediate reporting of foreign plant and animal diseases.

In the next decade new and emerging diseases will continue to be one of our biggest challenges. We must be able to identify risk factors and vulnerability in advance of an outbreak to protect food and agriculture. Predictive epidemiological models will be needed to combat regional, national, and global dissemination of disease agents. The science of nanobiotechnology may lead to new sensor technologies and materials to monitor large food production units for biological and chemical agents, and to tag or clean potentially contaminated food. Biologically based sensors using proteins or nucleic acids could provide real-time pathogen or bioterrorism agent detection with high specificity and sensitivity. Communicating risk in real-time would facilitate prompt intervention, reducing impact on the food supply, producers and processors, and consumers. Finally, education and extension must train the next generation of leaders in this important area of research. Extension will be essential in training the first responders--crop consultants, producers, and veterinarians--in rapid detection, intervention, and disease control agents. Through these efforts we will strengthen and expand our Nation's professional work force in food and agriculture to provide rapid and effective protection of these vital resources.

A Natural Resource Retrospective from 2014—Looking Back to Look Ahead

Dan Kugler, Deputy Administrator Natural Resources and Environment

Borne out of seemingly intractable environmental concerns that grew with industrialization through most of the 20th century, the age of global information and communication spawned unprecedented public concern and awareness for environmental security. People in their homes, at their jobs, and within their communities understood and identified with the effects of poorly managed natural resources. The effects were many--physical because of orange and red air quality alerts, economic because of dramatic water and sewage service cost increases, social because of living and lifestyle changes impelled by climate change, and environmental because of years of coping with recovery from massive wildfires in the Nation's forests. Put simply, people's everyday lives were affected.

Matching water supply and quality to the needs of users had been the most contentious issue in natural resource management. Climate change was real--precipitation patterns were changing--flora and fauna were adjusting. People, however, continued to move to arid, water-deficient areas of the country, or found themselves in a region becoming increasingly water deficient. Competition among water users--business, industry, agriculture, urban sprawl, environment and habitat, surface and subsurface recharge--became hostile, particularly in the West. During 2005, the situation was so charged that a new coalition was formed--the Metascape--an unusually profound coalition of organizations--government at all levels, industry, agriculture, universities, and many other interest groups all aiming toward sustainability. The first of these metascapes, the Las Vegas Metascape (LVM), was founded on a principle of zero net increase in water consumption, establishment of a baseline supply to affected user groups, and founding of a fair and functional water market for user group trades and exchanges.

In the 9 years since LVM began, the metascape has made great strides toward sustainability. Population growth stabilized. Water use efficiency greatly improved, especially in irrigated agriculture. Water reuse and quality-to-use matching matured. Conservation education programs have been widely embraced, from appropriate landscape plantings by homeowners to the Water Star program for water-efficient appliances and fixtures. Real-time water supply forecasting is as common as weather reporting and far more reliable. Reallocation via the water market allowed some continued growth of residential suburban areas, albeit at the cost of many agricultural operations moving to other states.

Cooperation within the LVM coalition is extraordinary, particularly among the state governments involved. Perhaps even more extraordinary, the LVM success brought other natural resource issues to national public attention. New metascapes formed around land use and development in the Northeast, hypoxia and water quality through the Mississippi River Basin, and forest health and wildfire recovery in the West and South. During her 2009 inaugural address, the President hailed formation of these metascapes and encouraged greater cooperation between governments, the public, private, and non-profit sectors to stem natural resource degradation and meet the growing demands for a safe, healthy, sustainable food and fiber supply. Now, some 5 years later, that dream is taking shape and a new course has been charted reflecting a sustainable future--across the Nation and around the globe.

Enhancing Economic Opportunities for Agricultural Producers Through Flexible Leadership, Innovation

Ralph Otto, Deputy Administrator Plant and Animal Systems

Sustaining and expanding new markets for U.S. agricultural products is critical for the long-term economic health and prosperity of the food and agricultural sector. American farmers and ranchers have superior natural resources, cutting-edge technology, a high level of education and management skill, and a supporting infrastructure that results in production capacity that exceeds domestic needs. U.S. agricultural productivity expands global markets and results in a consistently positive balance of agricultural trade. Our productive capability is the basis for new uses for agricultural and forestry resources in industrial and pharmaceutical markets, as well as the reason for world's lowest percentage of disposable income spent for food.

Some of the work supported by CSREES is along standard lines and continues the long tradition of refining existing crops, products, and processes to enhance output and improve the cost effectiveness of our agricultural production systems. Classic examples include the land-grant system's work with berries, including a blueberry iced tea developed by Rutgers, and blueberry and blackberry markets promoted by Mississippi State Extension and Georgia Extension. More innovative work ranges from herbal remedies such as South Carolina State's work on Echinacea production, to niche crops like the habanera pepper production studies at Florida A & M to utilizing local fish in reindeer diets in Alaska.

Contemporary CSREES activities include the broad areas of genomics. Few aspects of agricultural research and education

promise more impact than genomics. Recent research has resulted in improved vaccines, better diagnostic tools for plant and animal diseases, and the discovery of new catalysts and enzymes for industrial processes. Continued efforts are expected to lead to plants and animals with strengthened disease resistance, microorganisms that can aid in the digestion of concentrated fibers of lignin and cellulose, and plants and animals that produce new products, such as pharmaceuticals that are currently either not available at all or available only at prohibitively high prices. Ultimately, the results of genome-enabled research will forge markets for new plant and animal products that will be healthier for consumers. With new discoveries will come new industries and the concomitant growth in allied industries, distribution systems, marketing systems, and, of course, an increased demand for the agricultural product that benefited from the discovery to begin with.

In general, CSREES underwrites important research and development contributions for new products, quality improvements, new uses, and value-added processes that enhance market opportunities for agricultural and forest products. CSREES and its partners effectively demonstrate and transfer to users the knowledge to produce new marketable products, generate new uses, implement value-added processes, and enhance product quality. CSREES-sponsored research, education, and extension is responsible for new biobased lubricants, important new wood technologies, cost-effective and environmentally sound integrated pest management strategies, and the development of minor-use animal drugs and minor-use crop protection chemicals.

This dynamic and fast-changing agricultural industry requires equally flexible leadership. CSREES provides this leadership so that its partners may continue to enhance the economic viability of agricultural producers.

Improving the Nation's Nutritional and Health Status

Mary McPhail Gray, Deputy Administrator Families, 4-H, and Nutrition

The national public health crises of obesity and rapidly rising health care costs have sounded an alarm for the Nation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that 40 percent of adults (69 million) will be classified as obese in 2010 if trends go unchanged. In 2001, the total annual cost of obesity was estimated to be $123 billion; $6 billion more than the year before. This statistic is even more startling when reports indicate that 43 million Americans do not have health insurance. Health care costs are escalating largely due to an increase in diseases that can be prevented or improved by maintaining a healthy diet and active lifestyle. It is a vicious cycle.

Obesity is a complex problem involving genetic, psychological, physiological, cultural, and environmental aspects. The obesity and health crisis requires a multidisciplinary approach--scientific discovery and program delivery--to help Americans change behaviors to improve their nutritional and health status. The "Win the Rockies" program launched with CSREES funding is allowing local communities in Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana to develop community-based interventions that foster good health and provide healthy options for their residents. The solutions of the future must address the complexity of the problem.

Notable health disparities exist among racial, ethnic, and economically disadvantaged groups in the United States today. As the Nation's demographics change, such disparities will present an even greater challenge. CSREES' Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and other Extension nutrition education programs address the needs of these high-risk audiences. EFNEP, for example, focuses on three key areas: sound nutrition, food safety, and family economics—all critical elements that directly benefit the quality of life for high-risk groups. And, we know these programs are cost effective. Multiple cost-benefit analyses in several states document the value of EFNEP. For every $1 invested in EFNEP, benefits of up to $10.64 from reduced health care costs can be expected.

Related research areas requiring exploration include behavioral nutrition, the development of functional foods, food safety, environmental health, and the development of effective new interventions that help consumers have the knowledge and skills to make informed lifestyle decisions so they can maintain a healthy weight. It is essential that we improve the health literacy of consumers as they are confronted with myriad messages about nutrition and health. We know that the treatment of obesity has proven to be difficult and is often unsustainable. Focusing on prevention may prove much more effective.

Sadly, adults are not the only group challenged by the problems of obesity. Greater attention to programming for youth will also be needed. CSREES, with its 4-H youth development program, has expertise and outreach capabilities to position the land-grant university partnership to lead in the education of youth about healthy diets. And, of course, the importance of the community should not be undervalued in addressing the problems of obesity and health. Cooperative Extension's programs in community development will need to focus on community assessment and planning to meet the growing needs for safe and accessible

areas for citizens to exercise. Vital communities of the future will be expected to create environments that nurture healthy lifestyles.

CSREES will continue to build upon the collaborations that currently exist with other Federal agencies within USDA, Health and Human Services and the CDC, professional societies, and community organizations like the National Association of Counties to most effectively improve the nutritional and health status of Americans. CSREES and the land-grant community have found great strength in integrating research, education, and extension in the discovery of solutions to problems such as obesity. We see this as a direction for the future. CSREES and its land-grant university partners, with their existing infrastructures and networks, are uniquely positioned to take advantage of the power of their mission in research, education, and extension to bring a holistic approach to addressing the multifaceted problem of obesity.

Change Marks the Future of Rural America

Philip Schwab, Acting Deputy Administrator Economic and Community Systems

Economic and demographic forces are changing the face of rural America in profound ways and the Nation's land-grant university system must respond as it has to so many changes in the past. In some ways, today's changes are merely continuations of the challenges faced by rural Americans since the days of the homesteaders – while in some ways they are radically different.

There can be no doubt that the economic base of rural areas is changing. The production of bulk commodities or livestock alone is seldom enough to sustain a community or even a farm. Communities and individuals are turning to new sources of income and new techniques to diversify their economic bases. In some cases this means turning to new niche production technologies, like organic production, biomass production, or carbon sequestration. In some cases it means using the natural amenities of the area for tourism or recreation activities. Sometimes it means developing land into suburban housing. In most cases however, it means walking a fine line between agricultural producers' needs and newer economic incentives. Addressing questions related to air and water quality, regulation of agricultural biotechnology, farmland preservation, and livestock concentration, just to name few, requires scientific data and a keen understanding of social issues. The land-grant university system is uniquely positioned to help communities and individuals navigate these tough issues.

The current rate of technological change in rural America is without precedent. Rural citizens who relied on local news media for views of the outside world now have satellite data links to global markets, 24-hour news, and myriad connections to the Internet. These technologies link rural communities to the outside world like never before. At the same time, agricultural producers are adopting new technologies, like biotechnology, faster than ever before. The pace of change can overwhelm even the most experienced farm manager. The land-grant research and extension community has a rare opportunity not only to help producers sift through this wealth of information and determine how best to manage their economic risk, but also to provide expert training to the information management professionals consulting daily with producers and rural communities.

We also must realize the changing demography of rural America. The aging farm population creates new, urgent challenges in succession planning, financial security, and community sustainability. The rise of low-skill, employment-based immigration to rural communities creates challenges in education, health-service, housing, and job training that some have not faced for decades. If rural communities are to remain good places for people to raise families and start businesses, they will need expert assistance in developing the next generation of community leaders, enhancing the economic future for young farmers, and integrating new arrivals into the local economy.

The challenges to rural America are severe, but the assets of rural America are great. One of those assets is the land-grant university research, education, and extension system. With a strong vision and commitment to address these complex issues, this system can be as relevant to the problems of today's rural America as it was to the first homesteaders.

Budget, Performance Integration and Portfolio Assessment Keys to Planning the Future

Tina Buch, Director, Budget Office and Cheryl Oros, Director, Office of Planning & Accountability

Budget and Performance Integration (BPI) is one of the five government-wide initiatives of the President's Management Agenda--a strategy to improve the performance of the Federal government in areas with the greatest need. Beginning with the FY 2005 budget, Agriculture Secretary Veneman identified BPI as a priority area for policy-level attention. The goal of BPI is to align goals, objectives, outcomes, and performance with budget decisions. Through this alignment of strategic goals, objectives, and quantifiable performance information, decision makers have data to use in the budget process. They can now assess program cost-effectiveness and performance in achieving the Department's stated goals, and to improve the Department's resource competitive-

ness government-wide. The FY 2005 CSREES budget aligns funding and performance with the Department's strategic goals and objectives. To provide performance data for the BPI process, and also for the OMB Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART), CSREES is more systematically assessing its complex interplay of education, research, and extension work within defined portfolios supporting the Department's goals and objectives. The result of these efforts is a new portfolio assessment system by experts who can best deal with the complexity of outcome data.

CSREES' portfolio assessment process facilitates outside expert review of agency program performance. This new, formal review process is a systematic, quantitative assessment of the three OMB Research and Development Criteria--relevance, quality, and performance--of a portfolio of work based on assessments of dimensions relevant to each of those three major criteria. The portfolios describe higher education, research, and extension work funded by CSREES and performed by land-grant universities and other partners in specific areas of science and national need. Portfolios define a direct BPI link between agency funding authorizations and the USDA Strategic Plan. Review panels will produce two main products--a quantitative score of the progress of the portfolio and a report of recommendations for future efforts. The score will be used in the OMB PART for budget and performance integration and other documents requiring a quantitative performance measure. All portfolios will be reviewed over the next 3 years, with emphasis on USDA Goal 1 (Enhance Economic Opportunities for Agricultural Producers) in 2004, Goals 3 (Enhance Protection and Safety of the Nation's Agriculture and Food Supply) and 5 (Protect and Enhance the Nation's Natural Resource Base and Environment) in 2005, and Goals 2 (Support Increased Economic Opportunities and Improved Quality of Life in Rural America) and 4 (Improve the Nation's Nutrition and Health) in 2006.

CSREES Positions Itself as Leader in Doing Business Electronically

Sally Rockey, Deputy Administrator Information Systems Technology Management

Electronic government changes the way the government interacts with citizens and customers. The President and Congress are mandating an expansion of e-government activities to match what is happening electronically in the private sector. CSREES has long anticipated this evolution, and has positioned itself as a leader in e-government which, as part of the USDA, makes the Department and Agency electronically available any place, any time.

We all now live in a world of electronic business and the customers of CSREES expect services and information quickly and easily. We have been transforming our business processes to provide easier access to our programs, our information, and the grants application process itself. CSREES truly has been at the forefront of Departmental e-government activities, as demonstrated by our willingness to serve as the pilot agency for grants.gov, the new Federal portal for electronic submission of grant applications. Currently a number of CSREES programs are being submitted through grants.gov and we expect to give all applicants the option to submit electronically in FY 2005. The peer review process has "gone" electronic, allowing reviewers to view applications via the Web and then write and submit their reviews through the CSREES Peer Review System. The CSREES internal electronic grants process also is transforming how CSREES employees conduct business, with the goal of increased efficiencies and the creation of high quality work products. CSREES, in collaboration with its partner institutions, also has been examining ways to consolidate reporting to bring all CSREES programs under one electronic reporting system. This will enable CSREES and its partners to be accountable for Federal funds, to produce high-quality, reproducible information, and to reduce reporting burdens.

April 2004