

2nd Annual National Research Initiative (NRI) Stakeholder Workshop Enhancing Social Science Programs and Impacts

Background: The purpose of the NRI Social Science Stakeholders workshop is to keep interested parties informed of program activities; gauge support for the program priorities and proposed changes; obtain feedback; and enhance stakeholder support and visibility for the Social Science programs. It is intended that the workshops also include limited discussion of the Social Science priorities within the other NRI programs.

The inaugural workshop, held on November 28, 2006, contributed to the development of the logic models for the core Social Science programs and the FY 2008 Social Science Program Priorities. At the request of stakeholders, these workshops are now annual events.

Summary: The 2nd annual stakeholder workshops for the core Social Science programs within the NRI - Agricultural Prosperity for Small and Medium-sized Farms, Rural Development and Agribusiness Markets and Trade - was held on Tuesday, November 27, 2007. Session I (10:00 - 11:30 am) was primarily focused towards Agricultural Economists and Session II (2:00 – 3:30 pm) was primarily focused towards Rural Sociologists. However, both the sessions were open to all social science disciplines and several disciplines were represented.

Each session included a brief presentation by the National Program Leader, written comments from stakeholders, further discussion of comments, and poll questions to gauge support or to obtain clarification.

Both workshops utilized Macromedia Breeze Meeting by Adobe to enable communication with stakeholders. To accommodate demand, there were two sessions with 23 user sites. More than 80 people registered to participate in the workshops from 46 different sites. Participants included land-grant and non-land grant universities, federal agencies and private entities. Invitations to participate in the workshops were disseminated via:

- 1) Committee on Food Agriculture and Resource Economics;
- 2) Department Heads of Agricultural Economics list serve;
- 3) Agricultural Economics Extension Leaders list serve;
- 4) Rural Sociological Society;
- 5) ESCOP Social Sciences sub-committee;
- 6) Regional Rural Development Center Directors; and
- 7) Several multi-state groups (e.g., NCAC-24), etc.

Long-term Goals of the Social Science Programs: The long term-goals and fiscal year priorities of the core Social Science programs were presented and appear below. For a more complete description of the long term goals and annual program priorities, please see the links to the workshop proceedings provided below.

Agricultural Prosperity for Small and Medium-Sized Farms Program:

- 1) Enhance sustainability;
- 2) Increase farmers share of the food dollar; and
- 3) Enhance farm land preservation.

Rural Development Program:

- 1) Enhance economic vitality;
- 2) Protect and enhance the environment; and
- 3) Build a diversified workforce.

Agribusiness Markets and Trade Program:

- 1) Increase efficiency and equity in agribusiness marketing;
- 2) Expand international export opportunities; and

3) Facilitate new product development and placement in the value chain.

Feedback: Excerpts of feedback received during the workshop includes:

- (i) There is strong support for the long-term goals of the NRI Social Science programs. Percentage of participants in Session I (Session II) supporting the long-term goals are: 16% (9%) very strongly; 74% (79%) somewhat strongly; 11% (6%) indifferent; and 0% (6%) do not support. None of the participants selected "none of the above, to be discussed in comments", as their response to this poll question.
- (ii) The participants wanted Experiment Station Directors to be informed of the increasing social science opportunities in the NRI. They believe that social science is a very small part of their portfolio, and they should be encouraged to strengthen that segment of the Experiment Station.
- (iii) It was recommended that the NRI program should try to build stronger working ties with the Regional RD Centers since they have strong links to the social sciences community in the land-grant system.
- (iv) NRI program can make Social Scientists aware of smaller grant opportunities such as conference grants.
- (v) The rural development program could be offered every year.
- (vi) One of the proposed changes for FY 2009 was the merging of the Rural Development and the Agricultural Prosperity for Small and Medium Sized-Farms program as one large program with 2 elements. One of the comments was that the merging of Rural Development with small and medium sized farms will short change the Rural Development program. However, a majority were in favor of the proposed change. The proposed change was acceptable the following percentage of participants in Session I (Session II): 50% (33%) acceptable; 33% (36%) acceptable with reservations; 0% (12%) not acceptable; and 17% (18%) no opinion.
- (vii) There were several positive comments regarding our effort to reach out to stakeholders, and the organization of and the information provided at the workshop. One of the comments was "You have reached out to your colleagues as well as anyone I can remember. Thanks!!" Approximately 95% of the participants rated this workshop as very good or excellent (with the remaining rating it as "good").

Next Steps: The feedback from stakeholders reflects the input from those who participated in the two workshops. Since it was not possible to have more people participating in these workshops (CSREES license for Macromedia Breeze Meeting limited the number of participants to 23 at each session), it is imperative to provide opportunities for others.

Efforts are being made to obtain additional input from those who were not present at these workshops. The links to the entire proceedings of the workshops are provided below and feedback is requested from any interested stakeholders. We will begin work on the FY 2009 RFA development process in Spring 2008 and would like to have your comments soon.

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Links: Entire Workshop Presentation – Approximately 90 minutes in length each.

10am session

<http://csrees-breeze.csrees.usda.gov/p22196225>

2pm session

[http://csrees-breeze.csrees.usda.gov/p49538959/.](http://csrees-breeze.csrees.usda.gov/p49538959/)