Tips for Developing and Implementing Integrated Projects

This tip sheet was developed as a resource to help applicants develop and implement Integrated Projects. It should be used as an additional resource to the "General Grant Writing Tips for Success" document.

CSREES competitive programs define "Integrated" as bringing together the three components of the agricultural knowledge system (research, education, and extension) around a problem or issue.

- ***Research activity*** means a scientific investigation or inquiry which results in the generation of knowledge.

- ***Education Activity*** means formal classroom instruction, laboratory instruction, and practicum experience in the food and agricultural sciences and other related matters such as faculty development, student recruitment and services, curriculum development, instructional materials and equipment, and innovative teaching methodologies.

- ***Extension Activity*** means a series of educational activities with identified learning objectives that deliver science-based knowledge to people outside of the traditional classroom, enabling them to make practical decisions.

The following tips are intended to aid in the process of developing and implementing Integrated Projects. Use of the Logic Model Planning Process is recommended to assist applicants in developing their projects – see http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evallogicmodel.html.

Project Area Identification:

- Aim for high potential impact and significant public benefit for agriculture, the environment, human health and well being, and communities
- Address current data/knowledge gaps
- Identify those who will be benefited/affected by this project
- Identify goals and possible positive outcomes by evaluating short, intermediate, and long term results
    - Short term – *Learning* (awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills, opinions, aspirations, motivations)
    - Intermediate – *Action* (behavior, practice, decisions, policies, social action)
    - Long term – *Conditions* (social, economic, civic, environmental)
- Match the problem to an appropriate funding opportunity within CSREES programs

Team Building:

- Build a synergistic collaboration representative of the integrated approach
- Design an interdisciplinary team and clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of each team member
- Build on existing partnerships while allowing new alliances to be formed

- Include collaborators that are trusted by and representative of the stakeholder community
- Recognize the importance of diversity within the team
- Ensure proper balance relative to fields of expertise and organizations
- Essential Factors for Successful Teamwork
    - Mutual Respect
    - Trust
    - Follow through on Actions
    - Communication
    - Flexibility
    - Shared Values
    - Allocation of Resources among Integrated Functions and Participating Institutions

Stakeholder Input:

- Identify key stakeholders
- Include stakeholders early and often
    - To identify the problem
    - To develop the project
    - To evaluate progress
- Create a stakeholder advisory committee
- Maintain constant and effective communication with stakeholders
- Substantial involvement of stakeholders will help to ensure true integration

Project Development:

- Begin early! Integrated projects take more time to develop than standard research projects
- Invest in face-to-face meetings for project planning/proposal writing
- Define and document the extent of a problem
- Identify existing resources
- Consider how the solutions will be implemented
- Clearly identify and involve information providers that advise end users on implementation of new knowledge
- Establish measures of project performance and supporting evaluations
- Include mechanisms to capture new knowledge in sustained education or extension activities that have impact beyond the life of the project
- Create an integrated approach (two or more of the following):
    - Research: What are the gaps in knowledge?
    - Extension: How will you reach those who need the information?
    - Education: How will you train the next generation?

Writing the Proposal:

- Ensure all team members are involved from the beginning of project development
- Represent all project functions (research, extension, education) in one or more project objectives

- Address the funding program's evaluation criteria
- Identify expenses for all project activities
- Clearly identify the stakeholder community and their involvement in the project (include letters of support when appropriate)

Implementing the Project:

- Maintaining the Collaboration
    - Regular project team meetings (at minimum, annual meetings)
    - Mini team meetings at conferences, etc.
    - Regularly scheduled conference calls
    - Regular e-mail correspondence
- Project Management
    - Clearly stipulate roles of team members, including identification of project leader(s)
    - Ensure that administrative and management strategies are clearly articulated
    - Allow for transparency in budget issues
    - Create a realistic agenda and timeframe for delivery of products
    - Develop coordination strategy to enhance communication, data sharing, reporting, etc.
    - Establish a protocol to continuously report progress to team members
    - Include all team members in the development of progress reports to ensure that all project components receive appropriate recognition for accomplishments