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# Association of Extension Administrators

May 18, 2009

Dr. Colien Hefferan  
Administrator  
Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, USDA  
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Dr. Hefferan:

This letter is in response to the request for stakeholders' input for the 1890 Institution Capacity Building Grants Program (CBGP) that appeared in the Federal Register on April 16, 2009. The stakeholders' comments listed below are provided on behalf of the Association of Extension Administrators (AEA). The AEA is an organization whose membership includes the Extension Administrators and Associate Administrators who provide leadership for the Extension programs at the 1890 Land-Grant Universities.

The AEA is pleased that you are seeking input from stakeholders as you prepare the new rules and regulations for the CBGP. This is really important to the Extension Administrators because this is the first time that Extension has been included as a primary component of the CBGP. The addition of Extension to the program provides an opportunity for genuine collaboration and partnership between teaching, research, and Extension as capacity is built at the 1890 land-grant universities.

In order to prepare these comments, input was solicited from the 1890 Extension Administrators regarding implementing the changes in the CBGP, as stipulated in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008. Based on their feedback, the information below is being submitted to USDA/CSREES for consideration in developing the new rules and regulations to implement the 1890 Capacity Building Grants Program.

1. The new rules and regulations should ensure that Extension is a viable component of the CBGP.
2. If there is a limit to the number of proposals that can be submitted from each university, the limit should allow for an equal number of proposals from teaching, research, and Extension. However, the decision regarding which proposals are submitted for consideration for funding from a particular university should be determined by the university. For example, if the number of proposals that can be submitted is limited to twelve, then each area (Extension, research, teaching) should be eligible to submit four qualified proposals; however, the final decision will be made by the university.
3. Institutions should be able to submit standalone research, teaching, or Extension proposals, as well as joint proposals that include two or all three of these areas.
4. A percentage of the funds should be designated for research, teaching, and extension proposals, as well as to fund joint proposals. It is recommended that 30% of the funding should be provided to each entity and 10% to fund joint proposals.
5. If research, teaching, or extension failed to submit a sufficient number of qualified proposals to utilize the allocated funds, the remaining funds should be redistributed equally among the areas with additional qualified proposals.

6. Consideration should be given to funding planning grants and/or mini-grants to address a particular capacity building issue or problem.
7. Peer reviewers should be identified from the 1890 universities to assist with the review process. Persons will not be allowed to review proposals that are submitted from their respective institution. However, the CBGP rules and regulations should no longer prohibit persons from the 1890 land-grant universities from serving as a member of the peer review panel for this program. Every effort should be made to ensure that reviewers of Extension proposals have a working knowledge of Cooperative Extension
8. Proposals submitted from teaching, research, and extension should be reviewed separately and not as single group of proposals. This will ensure that proposals that are similar in nature are reviewed together. More importantly, this will avoid trying to compare 'oranges and apples' extension, research and teaching proposals. For joint proposals, consideration should be given to having reviewers from Extension, research, and teaching to serve on the review panel.
9. Consideration should be given to funding Extension proposals up to \$225,000.00 and joint proposals with research or teaching up to \$350,000.00.
10. It should be optional for Extension professionals to include federal partners as collaborators on their proposals. There are not many persons at the federal level with extension responsibilities or appointments and making federal collaborators a requirement could adversely impact proposals submitted in Extension.

Cooperative Extension is the outreach effort of the university whereby resources are utilized to address public needs through science-based non-formal and non-credit educational programs. The 1890 programs reach diverse audiences with special focus on the needs of limited-resource, hard to reach, and disadvantaged clientele. Cooperative Extension programs focus on the following broad areas:

- 4-H Youth Development —cultivates important life skills in youth that build character and assist them in making appropriate life and career choices. At-risk youth participate in school retention and enrichment programs inclusive of after school and Saturday academy. Youth learn science, math, social skills, and much more, through hands-on projects and activities.
- Agriculture —research and educational programs help individuals learn new ways to produce income through alternative enterprises, improved marketing strategies, and management skills and help farmers and ranchers improve productivity through resource management, controlling crop pests, soil testing, livestock production practices, and marketing. The 1890s are also conducting educational programs in aquaculture, small ruminant production, small fruits and vegetable production, and many other niche crops that are important to small-scale producers.
- Leadership Development —trains Extension professionals, volunteers, and others to deliver programs in gardening, health and safety, family and consumer issues, and 4-H youth development and to serve in leadership roles in the community.
- Natural Resources —teaches landowners and homeowners how to use natural resources wisely and protect the environment with educational programs in water quality, timber management, composting, lawn waste management, and recycling.
- Family and Consumer Sciences —helps families become resilient and healthy by teaching nutrition, food preparation skills, positive child care, parenting, family communication, financial management, and health care strategies.

- Community and Economic Development – helps local governments, faith-based and non-profit organizations to investigate and create viable options for economic and community development, such as improved job creation and retention, small and medium-sized business development, effective and coordinated emergency response, solid waste disposal, tourism development, workforce education, and land-use planning. Also help clients to develop small family owned businesses.

It is critical for the 1890 universities to increase their capacity in extension in the aforementioned areas. Additionally, the CBGP should support informal education to increase nutrition, health, financial, family, and agricultural literacy of adults and/or youth through training, workshops, institutes, and other methods. The program should allow extension professionals to develop sound extension methodology, curriculum, and innovations to the “Demonstration Model” to delivery of effective research based programs. The CBGP should provide support to develop faculty, staff, and volunteer capability to plan, implement, and evaluate programs based on identified needs that will engage audiences and enable informed decision making. The program should also support extension technology upgrades to improve program delivery.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments for your consideration. Should there be questions or if additional information is needed, please contact Dr. Albert Essel, Chair, Association of Extension Administrators and Associate Dean, Delaware State University at 302-857-6424 or by e-mail at [aessel@desu.edu](mailto:aessel@desu.edu).

Prepared by,

Albert E. Essel, Chair, AEA and  
Associate Dean for Extension