



NORTHEAST MULTISTATE ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

Report and Recommendations

September 26, 2011

Chair, Jon Wraith (NH)

Members: Kirby Stafford III (CT-NH), Tim Phipps (WV), Gary Thompson (PA) and Bob Schrader (NEED)

1. Request approval of proposal for a Coordinating Committee NE_temp1882 - Nanotechnology Risk Assessment, 10/2011 to 2016

Action: Recommends approval of proposal to form a Coordinating Committee.

Concerns were expressed about the limited number of participants who have joined through NIMSS. Clarification was given by Advisor Fred Servello that nanotechnology risk assessment is a newly emerging research topic so “the community of scientists in our institutions is still not well established”. This Coordinating Committee, hopefully, will serve as the vehicle to attract these specialists. The MAC members felt that this is an important area. A member noted that “nanoparticles have been and are being used in many products without knowing what the risks may be”. Although it might require some time to develop broad interest, additional participation is expected. The proposal is recommended for approval and will be allowed to start with a small group. The technical committee will be requested to report to MAC after the first year as to the degree of interest generated by this multistate activity through increased participation.

2. Request approval of Request to Write a Proposal entitled, “Collaborative Potato Breeding and Variety Development Activities to Enhance Farm Sustainability in the Eastern US” [Renewal of NE1031], 10/2012 to 9/2017. Also attached is the Midterm Review by Advisor Kirby Stafford III.

Action: Recommends approval of Request to Write a multistate project proposal to replace NE1031. It was also noted that based on Advisor Kirby Stafford’s midterm review, it appears that the noted problems with technical committee carry-through are being taken care of and the Advisor supports continuation of the project.

3. Consideration of Mid-term Review of NE9 - Conservation and Utilization of Plant Genetic Resources submitted by Advisor Tom Burr.

Action: MAC commends Advisor Tom Burr for his informative midterm evaluation report and his administrative leadership of this important and productive committee.

4. NRSP Review Committee Report

The following have been discussed at our spring and summer meetings. Our Directors will be voting individually per station at the Experiment Station Section Meeting on Sept. 27.

- NRSP_temp1 NIMSS 5-year proposal
- FY2011-12 Off-the-Top Funding for NRSPs 1-3-4-6-7-8-9

5. 2012 NERA Planning Grants Program

Action: MAC supports continuation of the planning grants program. Some revisions were suggested as follows. They have been incorporated in the revised version of the 2012 NERA Planning Grants RFP (see below).

- including a copy of the assessment sheet that MAC uses in evaluating the proposals along with the RFP. [The evaluation criteria were added to the RFP, instead of attaching the assessment sheet.]
- clarify that these are research projects/funds and the extension aspect applies to stakeholder input and subsequent application aspects of the research project
- minor correction -- Add a comma and delete so from the following sentence: As the funds come from the NERA operational budget so they cannot be used to pay F&A., and we reimburse only the actual expenses.

2012 NERA Planning Grants Program

The Northeastern Regional Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors (NERA) announces the next round of its regional competitive planning grants program. These grants are to be used to organize Northeast researchers and Extension educators around teams to develop new mission-oriented, cross-disciplinary, multistate problem-solving programs. The programs are to be primarily research focused and needs driven but include a clearly defined outreach component. They must focus on new and promising research collaborations or integrated research and extension activities that bring together specialists in diverse fields to apply complementary approaches to work on an important well-defined problem. Proposals in support of programs that are forward looking/anticipatory are especially encouraged.

While we will not have a specific focus to this year's round of proposals, we ask that you keep in mind the AFRI priority areas:

- Keep American agriculture competitive while ending world hunger
- Improve nutrition and end child obesity
- Improve food safety for all Americans
- Secure America's energy future through renewable biofuels
- Mitigate and adapt agriculture to variations in climate

Proposals (not to exceed **three** single spaced pages) will be due on **November 22, 2011**. The NERA Multistate Activities Committee will review the proposals and make recommendations for funding to the NERA Directors. Final decisions will be made by December 15, 2011. Funding up to \$10,000 will be available to support transportation and meeting expenses to bring the team together. As the funds come from the NERA operational budget, they cannot be used to pay F&A., and we reimburse **only** the actual expenses. The funding will be available to the teams for a maximum of one year from the date of the award notification. The funds will be administered by the Office of the NERA Executive Director and can only be used to reimburse actual expenses. Unused funds will be returned to our pool for future planning grants.

Proposals for planning grants should include:

- Mission and goals of the proposed program
- Justification for the program relative to stakeholder needs and potential for sustained external funding
- Activities to be engaged in by team members towards a more complete definition of the program
- Timetable for completion of the planning activities and preparation of a competitive proposal
- Team members from two or more Northeastern State Agricultural Experiment Stations and an explanation of their roles on the team
- Team leader with a demonstrated track record of leading cross-disciplinary and/or multi-institutional collaborations
- Budget for planning activities not to exceed \$10,000

An expected outcome of a planning grant will be a proposal submitted to the National Institute for Food and Agriculture in response to the FY2012 or 2013 RFA's or other funding sources specified in the proposal. Grant recipients will be expected to provide a written report at the end of the grant period and subsequent periodic reports on the status of resulting proposals.

The specific criteria that will be used to evaluate proposals are:

- Addresses an important need in the region
- Stakeholder supported justification
- Consistent with goals of competitive funding programs of USDA, NSF, NIH, etc.
- Potential for sustained funding
- Clearly defined activities
- Integrated research and extension activities
- Realistic timetable
- Team members appropriate to proposed activities
- Team leaders with demonstrated track record
- Leveraged support
- Overall quality of proposal

In order to provide guidance and feedback from the previous rounds of grant proposals, the following are some of the reviewer comments on those proposals:

- Goals not well defined
- Not clear what specific major compelling issues will be addressed
- Priority not well established
- Needs not clearly justified by stakeholder support; did not identify specific clientele being served
- Planned specific research and extension activities not well defined
- No specifics on what activities are being planned – what are the key approaches to be used
- Strategy of individual proposal development and then consolidation not clear
- Proposed collaboration not well described
- Deliverables not clear
- Potential for sustainable funding not clear

Please submit planning grant proposals by c.o.b. on **November 22, 2011** to Rubie Mize at rgmize@aesop.rutgers.edu.