

# Enhancing Multistate & Multidisciplinary Research Activities

## Lessons from the AFRI CAP Biofuels Program

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# AFRI CAP Biofuels Program

- September 2010 submission
- \$45 M maximum request
- Multiple states, region-specific crop focus
- 2:1 split – research & extension/education
- Status – won award ~ 50% of request



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# Project Vision Development

- Vision came first; invitee list followed
- Vision based on existing program focus



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Operates 3-4 months/year



# Complementary Crops

Sweet Sorghum



July - September

\*\*\* Energy Cane



January - March

Bagasse, syrup,  
woodchips,  
molasses, etc.



February - June



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Operates 10-12 months/year  
Main focus = sugar  
Other crops supplemental



# Sugar Mill as a Biorefinery

Food additives



Agrichemicals



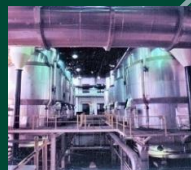
Electricity



Sugar



Bioplastics



Alcohols



Algae



Nutraceuticals

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# Project Vision Development

- Vision came first; invitee list followed
- Vision based on existing program focus
- Identify key faculty leaders who help refine and develop vision
- Focused on what we wanted to do ...  
not on people/programs we had available



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# Partner Identification

- Tap existing relationships that are consistent with project vision
  - Outside industry partners – already engaged
  - Outside faculty partners – in place



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# Partner Identification

- Tap existing relationships that are consistent with project vision
  - Outside industry partners – already engaged
  - Outside faculty partners – in place
- Partner selection keyed to vision
  - Final team not a gumbo of all ~ related expertise
  - Some successful faculty & programs omitted
  - Identified exactly what project needed, then enrolled expertise strategically



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# Budget Development

- Traditional approach ... How much we have
  - Award max  $\div$  # scientists



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# Budget Development

- Traditional approach ... How much we have
  - Award max  $\div$  # scientists
- Task-based approach
  - Which task do we need you to perform?
  - How much to do this task ... realistically?



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# Budget Development

- Traditional approach ... How much we have
  - Award max  $\div$  # scientists
- Task-based approach
  - Which task do we need you to perform?
  - How much to do this task ... realistically?
- Didn't ask for full award ... left headspace
  - Complex multidisciplinary initiatives
  - Have room to add areas if needed



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# Proposal & Project Management

- Huge task
  - ~ 40 individuals, 8 industry partners
  - Pilot plant construction



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# Proposal & Project Management

- Huge task
  - ~ 40 individuals, 8 industry partners
  - Pilot plant construction
- Centralized management
  - No-nonsense project leader, dedicated budget and office assistance
  - Senior, experienced ... industry background
  - Hard decisions approved and supported by Directors' office
  - Rigorous proposal timeline, facilitated by templates, etc



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