Extension Perspectives on Facilitating Integrated Multistate Activities

ASRED/SAAESD Spring Meeting

Greenville SC

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University of Kentucky – College of Agriculture

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Survey of ASRED Directors

- Factors that have led to success in integrated proposals
- Key obstacles that hinder success
- Regional needs that should be addressed by an integrated proposal

Success Factor #1: True Integration

- Research and Extension develop the proposal together
- Inclusion of eXtension and social media as relevant part of proposal
- Each mission area has clear role and outcomes

Success Factor #2: Team Dynamics

- Proposals must be built on an existing foundation, a team with common vision to address strategic needs of region
- Willingness and ability to share resources, visibility and credit
- Relevant inclusion of an 1890 institution is valuable

Success Factor #2: Team Dynamics

- Submitting a proposal with productive existing or continuing teams of individuals is more efficient than with a team convened for the sole purpose of applying for the grant
  - eXtension CoPs
  - Southeast Small Fruits Consortium
- Team members have trust and repect
- Team members have positive track record

Success Factor #3: Proposal Quality

- Proposed project must fit RFA
- Compelling story, clear outcomes
  - "Laser-like focus"
- Adherence to deadlines and page limits

Success Factor #4: Good PI Leadership

- Able to take the broad view
- Fair in budget allocations
- Strong organizational skills
- Takes ownership of the process
- Facilitates meeting deadlines
- Carry the vision of project all the way to submission

Success Factor #5: Timing

- Need to start getting ready earlier by fostering cooperation among R, E, I faculty around areas of broad state or regional need
- Get started early on writing the project narrative
- Having preliminary data/results

Key Obstacle #1: Poor Integration

- Lack of effective, meaningful R/E partnership and engagement from the start
- Lack of active participation from all in proposal development

Key Obstacle #2: Complexity of Teams

- Bureaucracy of institutional subcontracts
- Dilution of funds for large teams
- Grant requests can become excessive for large teams
- Managing across multiple units
- Hard to keep a diverse team focused
- Assembling a team from scratch

Key Obstacle #2: Complexity of Teams

- Transactional costs are high and time consuming
  - "I have over 2000 emails in my 'AFRI 2010' email folder"
- Politics of deciding on lead institution for large consortium

Key Obstacle #3: Leadership

- Having a PI too focused on their own area of interest
- Lack of vision to integrate components
- Lacks broad view, ability to fairly allocate budget

Other Obstacles

- Matching requirements with non-federal dollars
- Tradition/culture of expecting “public money” to provide the funding
- Inability of Grants.gov to handle submissions reliably

Regional Needs for Integrated Proposals

- Energy – biofuels, energy conservation, biomass, alternative sources
- Food safety and security
- Childhood obesity; general health and obesity
- Diary/small fruit production
- Specialty crops
- Electronic technology (Social media, productivity applications, etc)

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Regional Needs for Integrated Proposals

- Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) for youth
- Stronger Economies Together (SET) with SRDC
- Water Conservation

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Suggestions

- CES/AES: Organize and support regional meetings focused on major themes with the goal of coordinating proposal efforts
- USDA/NIFA:
  - Recognize merits of better coordination and concept development workshops in advance of RFAs
  - Longer lead times for developing larger proposals

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