The following statement defines the mission of the NRSP program: "MISSION OF NATIONAL RESEARCH SUPPORT PROJECTS

The activity of an NRSP focuses on the development of enabling technologies, support activities (such as to collect, assemble, store, and distribute materials, resources and information), or the sharing of facilities needed to accomplish high priority research, but which is not of itself primarily research. Ideally, an NRSP would facilitate a broad array of research activities. The primary purpose of NRSPs shall not be solely to conduct research as there are other available mechanisms for creating these types of projects including the multistate research projects and the National Research Project (NRP) options. Examples of NRSP activities might include collection of data that are widely used by other research groups and efforts; development of databases; or development of critical technologies."

Based on the mission of NRSPs, all proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Project ID / Title
NRSP8: Genomic Capacity: Building Applied Genomic Capacity for Animal Industries
A. Prerequisite criteria for NRSPs:

1. Mission: Is the NRSP consistent with the mission of an NRSP? No

2. National Issue:
   a. All NRSPs must involve a national issue, relevant to and of use by most, if not all regions. These projects draw on the best minds and resources within and outside the State Agricultural Experiment Station (SAES) system to address the issues. The proposal should discuss its support activities relative to other NRSPs. No
   b. For renewals, proposals must demonstrate direct relationship in support of continuing national priority need(s). The renewal application builds on the previous project and provides a logical progression. No

Comments

B. These are the criteria addressing the rationale for the NRSP:

1. (20 points) Priority Established by ESCOP/ESS: Priority for funding will be given to NRSPs that address and support one or more of the national priority areas identified by ESCOP (see ESCOP Science and Technology Committee and Science Roadmap) 0/20

2. (20 points) Relevance to Stakeholders: 0/20

Comments
C. Criteria for implementing the NRSP proposal

1. (15 points) Management and Business Plan:
   
   a. Each NRSP should have a well-developed business plan that describes how the project will be managed and funded for a five-year period. This plan includes a management structure to adequately integrate the efforts of multiple participants. The plan should include provisions for linking multiple sources of funding and leveraging those sources with the limited off-the-top research funds. The plan should demonstrate that alternative funding sources have been explored. This plan should include efforts to bring in new agencies, organizations, industry, foundations, etc. to help address the issues and provide funding for the project. All project proposals must provide evidence of contributions from experiment stations across the nation beyond what is available through off-the-top funds.

   b. The business plan for project renewals must include a funding plan including development of alternative funding for reducing off-the-top funding to a minimal level. Renewals will be judged as to the degree to which the project has been on task, had an impact, on time and within budget for the previous funding period. The renewal application should include a critical assessment of the original plan and address any shortcomings to ensure that the project will function more smoothly or effectively in the future. The proposal must indicate what additional resources have been generated or leveraged and indicate how those and any additional resources will be continued or sought.

Comments

2. (15 points) Objectives and Projected Outcomes:
   
   a. Objectives, milestones and deliverables should be described in sufficient detail such that progress can be measured. Indicate the prospects for meaningful impacts within the proposed duration of the project. The proposal must indicate what approaches will be used to assess outcomes including stakeholder use and how these assessments will be used in program planning.

   b. For renewals, the proposal must address productivity, completion of original objectives and the relationship between projected goals and actual accomplishments. The proposal must include an assessment of the outcomes and/or impact of the previous project period. This assessment must include an evaluation of stakeholders' use of project outputs. The proposed objectives must reflect appropriate revision, e.g. evolution or building to greater depth, and/or capacity. All project revisions must incorporate stakeholder needs.

Comments

(15 points) Integration: 

0/15
a. Projects should indicate how efforts are integrated with extension or academic programs and how results might be of use by other potential stakeholders.

b. For renewals, the proposal should indicate any new partnerships built during the project period. The proposal should address the degree to which the full team is engaged in project planning and implementation. Discuss plans to correct any weaknesses that may have been identified.

Comments
4. (15 points) Outreach, Communications and Assessment:

a. All projects must have a sound outreach, communications and assessment plan that seeks to communicate the programs goals, accomplishments and outcomes/impacts. The communication plan must detail how results will be transferred to researchers and other end users and contain the following elements:
   i) Clear identification of the intended audience(s) of the NRSP. Since this is a Research Support Project, in most instances the primary beneficiary of the results will be other scientists. However, careful consideration should be given to other possible users of the information (such as consumers, producers, governmental agencies (local, state and federal), general public, etc.)

   No
   ii) Clear description of the engagement of stakeholders in the definition and/or conduct of the research support project.

   No
   iii) Thorough description of the methodology to measure the accomplishments and impacts of the National Research Support Project and effectiveness of the communication plan. Methods such as surveys, town meetings, conferences, analyses of reference data (e.g. citation index, etc.), and use of professional evaluators should be considered.

   No
   iv) Specific description for development of communication pieces describing the activities, accomplishments, and impacts of the NRSP. The communication pieces will be used with SAES/ARD directors, stakeholders and their organizations, funding sources and agencies, and congressional delegations.

   No
   v) Suggested mechanisms for distribution of the results of the research support project. Examples include sharing the results at annual meetings of stakeholders, providing material to the Budget and Advocacy Committee of the NASULGC Board on Agriculture Assembly and other appropriate committees within the SAES/ARD organization, and assisting CSREES in preparation of appropriate documents highlighting the impacts of the project.

   No

Comments
Overall, the NERA directors are supportive of the renewal of NRSP8. The project renewal fulfills all the pre-requisite criteria for NRSPs. The issue that we’d ask the NRSP8 technical team to reconsider is the evaluation of the impact of the project. How do they know that they are making a difference? The question of evaluation of impact was also raised by Reviewer 1 who noted that “the assertion of impact was articulated several times”. Reviewer 1 observed that the proposal states that NRSP8 members produced 924 publications, $43 million in grants, and had an overall ROI of 20:1. We agree that these metrics are indicative of the productivity of the members of NRSP8. Alternatively, we are concerned with the approach that technical team took in response to the question of “assessment of impact” posed by Reviewer 1. The technical team states, “While we agree that these metrics are a simplification of the impact of genomics research upon animal industries, it is not clear how else the impact of NRSP8 might be measured?” We’d suggest an alternative approach and that is to seek the assistance of an expert (or experts) in
measurement, evaluation, and program assessment to assist in the design and implementation of an impact assessment strategy.