

# Partnership Vision and Joint Initiative Process

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Representatives from cooperative extension, agricultural experiment stations, and CSREES met in Baltimore, MD, February 2001 at the Partnership Workshop to address strengthening the Partnership for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The resulting report, prepared by the ad-hoc Partnership Task Force, is published on the web at <http://www.escop.msstate.edu/partnership>. The ECOP/ESCOP Joint Planning Committee (JPC) was asked to develop a vision for the Partnership and a joint initiative development process. The JPC began with the purpose, functions and operating principles from the Workshop report and developed a vision for the Partnership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and a statement on developing joint initiatives. Below are the purpose, functions, principles and vision, as well as some key definitions, recommendations and references.

## Purpose

The purpose of the partnership is to assure that the land-grant system effectively engages the public in the discovery, dissemination and application of knowledge to prevent and solve problems.

## Functions

1. Promote a shared agenda
2. Support and advocate for each other, even when agendas do not overlap
3. Market and communicate the capacity and successes of the system
4. Promote and encourage sharing of knowledge, within and among states and institutions and among Partners
5. Mobilize rapid response to immediate, short-time issues and opportunities
6. Anticipate and take timely actions on long-term issues and opportunities
7. Leverage resources to further the purposes of the partnership
8. Engage in public policy formulation
9. Set joint priorities (added by JPC)

## Principles

Through our actions, we demonstrate that ...

- ▶ We respect that all Partners have their own agendas, that there are areas of shared agenda, and there are areas where the Partners pursue individual agendas.
- ▶ We represent the interests of all Partners when they are "not at the table".
- ▶ There are bases for these groups to be connected beyond federal funding.
- ▶ We share responsibility for ensuring the efficacy of public investment.
- ▶ We value the benefits of our interdependency.
- ▶ We value and embrace diversity, pluralism and inclusion.
- ▶ We operate with mutual trust and respect.
- ▶ We share a commitment to open communications and dialogue.
- ▶ We are guided by the needs of the people, nation and world.
- ▶ We strive for excellence.

## **Vision**

The Partnership functions in an environment of harmony and trust and creates alliances around mutual issues and opportunities. These alliances create and expand mutual programs, projects and activities to better serve the public.

## **Definitions**

Partners: Partners currently refer to the cooperative extension system, agricultural experiment stations, academic programs, international programs and the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES).

Alliance: An alliance exists when two or more Partners and/or other entities develop a mutually agreed upon written program or project based on a priority issue which is intended to result in joint outcomes. Guidelines for forming such an alliance include:

- ▶ The terms of the alliance are negotiated at the beginning of the relationship and may be renegotiated at any time.
- ▶ The terms of the alliance are written and signed by all members.
- ▶ Each member clearly defines their roles and responsibilities.
- ▶ The area of joint work is clearly defined within the mission of each member and each member's mission is respected.
- ▶ Each member may have other program priorities that do not involve the alliance members and alliances may be formed that do not involve other Partners.
- ▶ Each member contributes resources and share in resources resulting from the alliance.
- ▶ Members of the alliance maintain their individual identity and name.
- ▶ Credit for outcomes is shared and jointly recognized.
- ▶ Outcomes are evaluated regularly by the alliance members for continuous improvement.
- ▶ The alliance practices the functions and principles identified above for the Partnership.

Expected outcomes of an alliance include:

- ▶ enhancing each member's capacity
- ▶ achieving each member's mission in agreed upon and defined areas
- ▶ increasing access to resources around priority issues
- ▶ demonstrating added value to the public.

## **References on Alliances**

1. Austin, James E. 2000. The Collaboration Challenge, How Non-profits and Businesses Succeed Through Strategic Alliances. Jossey-Boss Publishers, San Francisco, CA.
2. Sagawa, Shirley and Eli Segal. 2000. Common Interest, Common Good, Creating Value Through Business and Social Sector Partnerships. Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA.

## **Recommendations**

1. The JPC strongly endorses the appointment of a continuing Partnership team as recommended by the ad-hoc Partnership Task Force.
2. This team should be charged with implementing the Partnership vision through the formation of alliances as described in this document.
3. This team should also be charged with facilitating appropriate Partnership-level actions as recommended in the *Implementation Plan for Recommendations in the Strategies for Enhanced Engagement Report* prepared by JPC and accepted by ESCOP and ECOP in August, 2001.

## Joint Initiative Process

The following principles should apply in the formation of alliances which result in joint national initiatives among the Partners, including cooperative extension, agricultural experiment stations, academic programs, international programs and CSREES. Other agencies or organizations should be included when the expected outcomes are mutually beneficial to all members.

The following objectives and purposes were identified for guidance in establishing joint initiatives:

- ▶ Coordination and synchronization of the Partners' efforts when appropriate.
- ▶ Provide an alternative process to develop joint initiatives that is compatible with, and in addition to, current individual initiative processes
- ▶ Facilitate joint initiative development with other agencies and organizations
- ▶ Encourage alliances and mutual action in areas of common interest
- ▶ Increase and enhance outputs and impacts of national initiatives
- ▶ Broaden and diversify potential funding sources
- ▶ Encourage a future orientation and focus for joint efforts
- ▶ Increase integration of programs to better serve clientele and the public interest
- ▶ Gain a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of all Partners

The following questions should all be answered positively by all Partners involved to move an initiative forward as a joint initiative.

1. Will national interests or stakeholder interests be better served if the initiative is a joint effort?
2. Does the issue benefit from effort and expertise of multiple Partners, although the input and output may not be equal and may change over time?
3. Is the issue a high priority for all Partners involved?
4. Are all Partners involved willing to commit an appropriate level of their resources for implementation?

If a "fast-track" process for a joint initiative is justified due to a crisis situation, immediate funding opportunity, or some other circumstance, leadership of the Partners involved should determine the best course of action. The basic steps for a deliberate, long-term process to develop a joint national initiative are the following.

1. A proposal for a joint initiative originates from anywhere within or outside the Partnership, particularly from stakeholders and/or faculty, and is presented to one or more of the Partners' leadership.
2. Each interested Partner's leadership requests their planning group to review the proposal and recommend whether or not a joint initiative is appropriate.
3. All Partners deciding to participate in the joint initiative development jointly appoints an Initiative Development Task Force with appropriate representation.
4. This Development Task Force:
  - Describes the current state of the science and/or educational effort, including Partners' capabilities.
  - Identifies knowledge, expertise and capability gaps and associated needs.
  - Describes potential outcomes and impacts and the advantages of pursuing a joint initiative.
  - Sets long-range goals and objectives.
  - Seeks stakeholder review.
5. The Task Force reports back to the various Partners, who will decide whether or not to continue.
6. Each Partner that decides to participate in the joint initiative implementation jointly appoints an Initiative Implementation Task Force with appropriate representation.
7. This Implementation Task Force develops an implementation action plan and facilitates enhancing the various Partners' local effort within the joint initiative area.
8. The Partners that decide to participate in the joint initiative implementation also charge their budget groups to work together to develop appropriate budget requests based on the gap analysis done by the Development Task Force.
9. Leadership of each Partner involved with the joint initiative jointly monitors its progress, evaluates its success, and makes adjustments as necessary.