

Multiple Activity Programs

Introduction

The program support and sustained funding of agricultural research and extension through the federal-state partnership has long been acknowledged as most important by the Land Grant Universities. Without that base of support it is projected that the State Agricultural Experiment Stations (SAES) system and the Cooperative Extension System (CES) would cease to function at least as we know it. Additionally, the imperative of balancing the types of funding between competitive grants, targeted awards, and formula payments is also acknowledged as essential for efficient and effective performance to continue.

Recent patterns in federal funding have raised concerns that the balance of these three sources of funding has begun to drift apart, and that the proper management of the collective national research and extension portfolio is at risk. Central to this trend is the alleged concern in the federal executive branch that formula funds are not held sufficiently accountable to assure federal managers that additional allocations would be effectively used for the intended purpose, and that the resulting outcomes and impacts could not be adequately documented. To address this concern a new multistate management mechanism has been proposed to provide the necessary management and program accountability when addressing newly identified national priorities through agricultural research and extension.

Background

Repeated attempts to enhance federal support for agricultural research and extension activities conducted at Land Grant Universities have met with concerns that accountability for any formula funding increases for specific initiatives is inadequate. Linking investments to program accomplishments and USDA performance reports is seen to be problematic, from the perspective of the USDA.

To address this consideration a new organizational framework referred to as Multiple Activity Programs or MAPs has been proposed to rapidly respond to national research and extension initiatives and track outlays and outputs. The notion is to greatly facilitate multistate and multi-functional collaborations with direct reportability of outcomes and impacts whenever practical, and to link those reports to investments and USDA performance plans.

Definition of Multiple Activity Programs

Multiple Activity Programs (MAPs) are organizing frameworks for tracking expenditures of new formula funds (and funds from other sources) for research and extension initiatives of national scope, and for reporting results from and impacts of those programs.

The authority to create MAPs exists through the federal legislative mandate that created the Multistate Research Fund (MRF). Likewise, currently multistate provisions of ARRERA allow Extension Services to program on a multistate basis.

MAPs Criteria

- National in scope;
- Multistate in participation;

- Multi-disciplinary in approach;
- Functionally integrated when appropriate;
- Managed by a sponsoring regional association of SAES or CES directors;
- Funded by the participating Directors with federal formula and/or other sources of funds; and,
- Accountable for program accomplishments (outcomes and impacts).
- Be handled at regional levels through a system similar to that utilized in the Multistate Research Program wherein projects are developed and approved by the Regional Association.
- Fund management is retained by the individual Director.

Operational Details

To propose a MAP any two (or more) SAES directors, any two (or more) SCES directors, or for a functionally integrated MAP any two SAES directors and one or more SCES directors, or any two SCES and one or more SAES directors are to describe an activity that addresses an identified national priority not currently receiving adequate attention from research or extension programs.

1. The MAP proposal will be drafted with the following outline:
 - Title
 - Statement on the National Issue to be Addressed (with a justification) Objectives
 - Strategies
 - Expected Outcomes and Impacts
 - Internal and External Linkages
 - Governance
 - Budget
2. Subsequent to at least two states having agreed to develop the proposed MAP (for multifunctional MAPs, two SAES or two SCES directors and one or more of the other, respectively; for unifunctional MAPs, two or more SAES or two or more SCES directors), the proposal will be shared nationally via the Internet. All SAES and SCES directors will be notified by e-mail of the URL. If a SAES or SCES director chooses to participate, they will declare their institution's commitment to specific objective(s) through submission of a "Projected Participation Form." The "Projected Participation Form" is designed only to document an individual's participation by objective. In addition, language is needed regarding the need for subsequent meetings (either face-to-face or virtual) of the group after approval of the MAP to determine the approach to be taken by each participating institution, to set budgets, etc.
3. All MAPs will be peer and/or merit reviewed as required by the AREERA of 1998.
4. CSREES will expedite their review and approval process.
5. Outcomes and Impacts will be reported as a collective activity through the sponsoring regional SAES or SCES association. Directors' will continue to report accomplishments through their Plans of Work; however, the regional associations of experiment station and extension directors may establish regional activities focused on a MAP topic with scientists and specialists being expected to report at the regional level.
6. CSREES will provide the links between their Performance Plan and the annual MAPs accomplishments reports.
7. Non-technical summaries of impacts will be made periodically by the sponsoring regional association, and shared broadly.

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