



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Research,
Education, and
Economics

National Institute
of Food and
Agriculture

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TO: NIFA Employees and Stakeholders

FROM: Roger N. Beachy
Director, NIFA

SUBJECT: New Organizational Structure for the National Institute of Food and
Agriculture

I am pleased to announce that the new organizational structure for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) has been approved. This new structure will be implemented on October 1, 2010.

Background

Section 251(f) of the Department of Agriculture Reorganization Act of 1994 ("Reorganization Act") (7 U.S.C. 6971(f)), as added by section 7511(a)(4) of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, Pub. L. No. 110-246, (2008 Farm Bill) requires the Secretary of Agriculture ("Secretary") to establish within the Department of Agriculture an agency to be known as the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. On October 1, 2009, NIFA was established, and the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) was terminated. The new organizational structure has now been finalized for NIFA.

The 2008 Farm Bill and guiding principles called for the integration of programs across functions, funding authorities, and funding mechanisms. In establishing a new Institute, the goal was to optimize the organizational configuration to effectively serve stakeholders and enhance the quality, relevancy, and performance of the programs. The Farm Bill required the Director of NIFA to promote the use and growth of grants awarded through a competitive process and to use merit and peer review to ensure scientific standards are of highest quality and relevance.

NIFA Mission

The mission statement of NIFA is "Leading Food and Agricultural Sciences to Create a Better Future for the Nation and the World." The broad expectation is that NIFA will enhance and elevate the stature of agricultural science and ultimately grow support for agricultural research, education, and extension.

Reorganization Goals

The goal in establishing NIFA is to enhance the stature and impact of food, agricultural, and natural resource sciences. The new organizational structure allows for the creation of a system to integrate basic and applied research, education, and extension/technology transfer to address important issues facing agricultural production, the global food supply, the environment, and rural communities, among others.

This new structure meets the requirements set forth by the 2008 Farm Bill which requires the Under Secretary/Chief Scientist to ensure that agricultural research, education, and extension programs are effectively coordinated and integrated across disciplines, agencies, and institutions; and among applicable participants, grantees, and beneficiaries.

The establishment of four Institutes within NIFA will both focus on national priorities and outcomes and unify national program leaders and program specialists based on program discipline or subject matter expertise. Cross-institutional management will be established to enable improved sharing of institutional knowledge across programs, regardless of whether agency investments are made through competitive or non-competitive funding mechanisms. Institute staff will develop a holistic perspective when planning science programs; this is expected to result in the identification of new opportunities for strategic engagement across programs and greater leveraging of agency investments.

In addition, it will improve alignment of NIFA's funding mechanisms (i.e., formula based programs, competitively awarded grants, and other legislative mandates) since national program leaders within the science Institutes will be responsible for the complete portfolio of competitive and noncompetitive programs across all three functional areas (research, education, and extension). Enhanced program integration will be a direct consequence of including research, extension, and education expertise across each science Institute. The proposed organizational structure will reduce program fragmentation and increase coordination and efficiency while focusing on outcome-driven research, education, and extension.

USDA solicited extensive input from employees and stakeholders to develop recommendations for the reorganization of the existing structure to establish NIFA. After extensive review and analyses, recommendations were incorporated into the final organizational structure that has now been approved. Throughout this process, employees have been assured that the reorganization will involve no elimination of positions. Rather, it has afforded an opportunity to create new opportunities for NIFA staff advancement and clearer career pathways.

NEW ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE:

NIFA is the Federal component of a nationwide extramural research, education, extension, and outreach system that supports the global, science-based agricultural enterprise and accomplishes its mission in partnership with land-grant and non-land-grant colleges and universities and other scientific organizations. NIFA programs support the full spectrum of innovation, from educating scientists, to discovery, to technology development, to training, extension of knowledge, and outreach. As shown in Attachment A, the proposed organizational structure establishes four Science Institutes, positioning NIFA staff to effectively provide program leadership and to administer Federal assistance programs, including competitively awarded grants, which support each of these functions, individually and through integrated programs. Attachment B identifies the Divisions within the Institutes and Offices.

Key changes include the following:

- The establishment of two Deputy Directors to assure a sustained career level, immediate executive staff to the Director. The workload, breadth and responsibility, including NIFA-wide communications, and multi-agency collaboration and coordination will be beyond what a single position can effectively lead and manage. In addition, more extensive stakeholder interaction is envisioned, requiring the involvement of two Deputy Directors in the Office of the Director (Attachment C). I have asked Meryl Broussard to serve as the Deputy Director, Agricultural and Natural Resources, and Ralph Otto to serve as the Deputy Director, Food and Community Resources. Attachments D and C reflect the Institutes and Offices for which Dr. Broussard and Dr. Otto will have direct responsibility. These attachments also show the leadership positions within each Institute and Office.

This shared leadership across the scientific and programmatic aspects of NIFA allows for a greater capacity to achieve the Administration's and Secretary Vilsack's goals for NIFA as a research agency in the Department. Problems and issues facing agriculture and rural communities today are increasingly complex and systems oriented. A need for collaborative and transdisciplinary action is necessary to implement priorities and coordinate and focus programs.

- The four Institutes are established to bring together professionals with expertise in various disciplines/functions to form multi-disciplinary, outcome-based teams focused on the achievement of core stakeholder needs while enhancing the overall quality, relevancy, and performance of programs. Organizing each Institute by Divisions around program functions provides a clear line of accountability and program transparency. This enables a more effective framework for program planning and implementation and will eliminate redundant staffing.

Another major emphasis of the organizational strategy is to integrate programs across functions, authorities, and funding mechanisms by providing an organizational structure that supports agency-wide cooperation, collaboration, and shared leadership in planning, development, and implementation of NIFA's science initiatives. The strategy will ensure the continued high performance of the day-to-day operations in accomplishing the mission.

Each of the four Institutes will be co-led by a Principal Scientist and an Assistant Director. The Principal Scientist will provide broad scientific and technical leadership to programs assigned to the Institute. The Principal Scientist also will be responsible for ensuring programs assigned to the Institute are strategically positioned in terms of current science and technology, and that these programs take full advantage of advances in science and technology. In addition, the Principal Scientist will assist the Director in elevating the standing of the agricultural sciences within the federal science enterprise, and provide scientific and technical guidance to the Deputy Directors and the Director of NIFA. In the near future, NIFA will be recruiting broadly to fill these four positions.

The Assistant Director will provide broad outcome-based leadership for the administration of programs and the day-to-day operational management of each Institute. With the Principal Scientist, the Assistant Director also will ensure that the programs assigned to the Institute are aligned with the broad strategic goals of the Department, the Mission Area, and NIFA. In addition, the Assistant Director will be responsible for compliance with policies, regulations, and legislative authorities in the administration of all programs assigned to the Institute. In the near future, NIFA will be recruiting broadly to fill the vacant position in the Institute of Food Safety and Nutrition.

The Division Directors in each Institute will provide critical leadership and supervision in the management of programs and other responsibilities assigned to each Institute. NIFA initially will recruit internally to fill the six vacant Division Director positions.

- The Office of Grants and Financial Management (formerly Office of Extramural Programs) and the Office of Information Technology (formerly Information Systems and Technology Management) will provide the administrative, financial, and technology support needed to provide financial assistance to the recipients of NIFA funding.
- The Center for International Programs is established in the Office of the Director to foster NIFA's global engagement as an agency translating research, education and extension into achieving sustainable food, fiber, and energy supplies.

- In keeping with the Department's focus on diversity and inclusion, we note that this is a high priority of each of the Institutes. Those programs and funding authorities addressing the needs of minority-serving institutions are also central to the Institute of Youth, Family, and Community.
- Acknowledging the Department's focus on rural vitality and jobs creation, the economics science programs will be integrated as a high priority into each of the Institutes.
- Central to the traditional land-grant and extension missions, extension program leadership will be integrated as a high priority into each of the Institutes.

I appreciate the advice and support you have given me over the last year. Standing up a new organization at the start of a new fiscal year will be a challenge but we have all been eager for this to occur. Thank you in advance for your continued cooperation and patience as we move forward with the implementation of this new organizational structure that is the "NEW NIFA."

Attachments