NIFA Implementation of Centers of Excellence

Input Listening Session
July 17 and July 31, 2014
Topics to be Covered

• Why have Centers of Excellence?
• Who can be a Center of Excellence?
• How are Centers of Excellence Selected?
• How Might NIFA Identify Centers?
• How Might NIFA Provide Priority Consideration for Funding Centers?
Why Have Centers of Excellence?

- 2014 Farm Bill requires NIFA identify Centers of Excellence for food and agricultural research, extension, and education activities.

- Purpose: to provide these Centers of Excellence with priority consideration when selecting recipients of grants from any of the Agency's research or extension competitive grant programs.
Who Can Be a Center?

- Centers’ include 1 or more of the following:
  - State agricultural experiment stations;
  - colleges and universities;
  - university research foundations;
  - other research institutions and organizations;
  - Federal agencies;
  - national laboratories;
  - private organizations or corporations; and
  - individuals
How are Centers of Excellence Selected?

• Criteria for recognition as Center:
  – Ensure coordination and cost effectiveness by reducing unnecessarily duplicative efforts in research, teaching, and extension;
  – Leverage available resources by using public-private partnerships among agricultural industry groups, institutions of higher education, and the Federal Government;
– Implement teaching initiatives to increase awareness and effectively disseminate solutions to target audiences through extension;

– Increase economic returns to rural communities by identifying, attracting, and directing funds to high-priority agricultural issues; and

– Where practicable, include efforts to improve teaching capacity and infrastructure at colleges and universities
How Might NIFA Select Centers of Excellence?

• Use existing grant application process
  – Applicants self-identify, include justification for Agency consideration
  – Status would be specific to application

• Create request for designation process
  – Applicants request consideration, justify for area of science
  – Status could apply across programs to time period
How Might NIFA Provide Priority for Funding Centers?

- At time of application, if separate process
- During or as part of peer review, if justification included in application
- After peer review and only if “tie breaker” was needed relative to rankings
Additional Input Opportunities

• July 31 web-based listening session
  – 1 to 3pm EDT at http://nifa-connect.nifa.usda.gov/frnce/
    • Call-in number: 888-844-9904
    • Access code: 3702409#

• Written comments due by July 31
  Email to vbest@nifa.usda.gov