

Webinar Introduction

Welcome, everybody, to the 2018 webinar information webinar on the Agriculture Economics and Rural Communities program. I will kind of stall here a little bit, and let a few more people join in. In the meantime, I will just give a quick overview of what our intent today here is to give you just a brief overview of the program and types of grants available and a brief overview of the AERC programs in general, talk about some new ones. We have three new ones this year. Then talk about review criteria. That always seems to be a useful thing to know. And entertain any questions you have regarding this program. Also, please be -- we think we have the audio working out, but we would entertain your questions if you type them into the chat box. We will gather them during the presentation and try to address them at the end. Anything else we need to tell them at this point? Don't use the video. Please don't click on your video button. Apparently we can't go both ways with the video. This is new software for us. We are still working out the kinks. I would say the whole band and not just Ray Davies, for those of you old enough to remember the kinks.

Welcome, good afternoon. I'm Robbin Shoemaker, the National Program Leader for the Agriculture Economics and Rural Communities program. With us today is Jason, who is program specialist with the program. Also, Wesley, a sociologist and Lelan Dixon who is another program specialist and another one of those people who makes it all work. Assuming everyone can hear me and we are in business and recording, we are recording this webinar and will make it available for people to follow up later or see on the web, or otherwise move it around. We will get going here.

AERC Presentation

Real quickly, I'm advancing the slides.

Thank you very much. So for the Agriculture Economics and Rural Communities program, we have \$22 million to spend this year. For each programs overall. Three of those are new, and I will talk a little more details on those later. The other ones -- we have a mix of research only programs, and integrated programs. I will talk briefly about those. Overall, the economic markets and trade, the environmental and natural resource economics program, the innovation for rural entrepreneurs and communities, and small medium-sized farms. Social implications for food and agricultural technologies, and new for this year, economic implications and applications of big data in food and agriculture and Center for behavioral and experimental economics for agri-environmental and risk management policy research. Lastly, valuing environmental benefits from natural resource conservation programs. I will go in more detail about those in a minute. This should work.

The grant type, basically there's the standard grants available, conference grants and the FASE grants. The standard grants are original research. They support up to \$500,000 of the four years and that includes the direct cost, which are fixed at a maximum of 30 percent, I might add. The only exception to that is the center for behavioral and experimental economics supports \$1 million grants and only funds one of those. Is also conference grants \$50,000, and that cannot be used for salaries or indirect. The food and agricultural science enhancement grants are designed to provide support capacity in advancing the scientific capacity of individuals and institutions. The types of grants there include a new investigator grant, which is available to anyone who's only been in a career for less than five years, and not had any direct support from the federal grantee organization in the past. Strengthening grants

include -- subject to certain eligibility requirements. For example, coming from an EPSCoR state. A small university or minority serving institutions. These strengthening grants include sabbatical grants for one year salary, travel, and supplies. And seed grants which support \$200,000 for developing preliminary data. It was previously \$150,000 and we raised that to \$200,000. Saying now and again and again, we encourage you to look at the RFA to look at the details about the eligibility requirements and types of grants available. The other point we really want you to know is to look for opportunities where you can partner with universities of different types to try and strengthen both the opportunities and capabilities of all partners involved.

Briefly and again, I'm just going over very briefly the various programs under the rural communities program which we encourage you obviously to look closely at the RFA. Briefly in economics markets and trade program, this is a research only program, so it will not support integrated functions such as extension or education. The program looks at applied microeconomics, looking at structure and function of the sector, various policies both producer, commodity programs, trade programs, integration of issues surrounding insurance, food security, insecurity. Look at policies around those types of things. You will see that we list some specific suggestions. In all cases, it's not limited to that. [Indiscernible low volume] we kind of want to nudge.

Moving on, the innovation for rural entrepreneurs and communities program, which supports both research only and integrated projects. This program looks at such things as basically strategies for economic development of communities in the rural sector and individual entrepreneurs. Looks at the infrastructure that's there, investment strategies and incentive mechanisms to enhance development of infrastructure. And area of interest in particular is in developing and expanding broadband into rural areas and associate benefits that arise such as telemedicine or other capabilities. Is looking at opportunities for bridging the relationship between the private sector, bring industry, training, the labor force within rural areas to fill needs a potential emerging industries. That is an exciting area and probably the most growth in that program of the various programs that we have.

The next one is a small and mid-sized farm programs or medium-sized farm program. That also invites research and integrated projects. Some of the areas of interest: develop outreach capabilities to support veterans entering farming, land tenure issues, issues with their property, and the potential of impacts of regulation on entry and persistence of small and medium-sized farms.

The environmental and natural resource economic program is for all of you environmental and natural resource economists, exactly what you think it is. It supports research only addressing issues around environmental and natural resource economics. Some area of interests: our ability to value ecosystem services, particularly as it contributes to environmental policy design. May be developing protocols for standardizing the measurement of ecoservice values. And new areas which is related to this but other areas as well, is looking at the use of experiments and using students and testing the validity of those types of results and economic experience as it relates to a broader population or constituency. I think that is important research that can really advance the use of economic services.

And then the next program is a social implications of food and agricultural technologies. Somebody wrote emerging because that seemed to be an interest in remains as such. This was new last year. Was an attempt to really develop some capability by bringing together teams of a whole array of social scientists, ethical, legal journalists and others, to explore the impact or implications of various emerging technologies such as gene drive, gene editing, and these types of unconventional

technologies. Clean meat or lab meat, those are an emerging area, so we want to understand how to communicate the science, how consumers and producers respond to these things and just a whole array of social implications associated with those emerging technologies.

New for this year, there's three programs and I will talk about those in turn. This is the economic implications and applications of big data in food and agriculture. Also in the AFRI program is the FACT program which is the Food and Agriculture Cyberinformatics and Tools program, which is our attempt to expand capability around big data and aspects associated with that. In this particular program here, we are looking at these issues through an economic lens. For example, how much big data informed decision-making, the effect it may have on market performance, efficiency and effectiveness within the sector. The value of big data for small and large size farms, different parts of the value chain. What impact it may have on food loss and waste, developing environmental and natural resource management strategies, potential impacts on trade and competitiveness. The whole range of issues associated with enhancement of big data, use of artificial intelligence and so on and the role that it plays in the food and agricultural sectors. Also, part of this program is we felt there is a need based on input from stakeholders that we need to train agricultural economists in using the tools associated with big data, whether machine learning or natural language processing or whole range of tools associated with that. Wanted to support an educational component that involves development of curriculum and tools to help train agricultural economy that needs tools in this area. One option if eligible for one, the FASE program is to do a sabbatical to learn some of these tools. Actually supported somebody in doing that a year or so ago. I think that's a really good opportunity to look at.

Also new this year is the support of the center for behavioral and experimental economics for agri-environmental and risk management policy research. Let me redo the this. Apparently nobody heard me. This is new, a program, the Center for behavioral and experimental economics for agri-environmental and risk management policy research. We will support up to \$1 million for this, and one project. The center will employ advanced use of behavioral economics to conduct research on developing policies and programs to improve the provision of ecosystem services from agricultural resources and addressing risk management and other policy aspects. An important consideration is reaching out and engaging some of the program agencies such as Natural Resource Conservation Service, a risk management agency. We actually see those program agencies as a beneficiary of this type of research. Direct beneficiaries, but as well, we want to advance the understanding and use of these types of tools to the broader research community. We really would encourage applicants to look at outreach capabilities. The real point of this program is to really support this type of research and enhance these capabilities in the profession. Any other questions about that, we can entertain at the end.

Lastly, the new program is valuing environmental benefits from natural resource conservation programs. This again, is one where we partnered with NRCS to develop this program area and develop these particular issues. The point of this program is to look at the role of the payment services and payment for conservation practices, and the impact effectiveness they have on improving these ecosystem services. This research is really needed and asked for by these conservation management agencies to assess the value of these programs to the public, and to try to monetize or assess the values of enhancements the ecosystem services directly from these programs. With that was a hope to be able to design and implement more efficient resource conservation programs. Again, this is looking at standard grants up to \$500,000 for four years.

Moving on, I want to talk for the rest of this presentation a little bit about the grant writing aspect of this. A couple things we think are worth noting based on the feedback we have gotten overtime. What do we mean by innovative integrated programs? Basically, they consist of two of the three functions associated with these projects. The first must be a research component, which is obviously developing new knowledge. The other of the two involve either an extension component, which is the delivery of science based knowledge into the hands of users. Ideally, there is highly integrated in a dynamic relationship between research and extension. Often extension drives the research where the methods and techniques that need to be developed to be able to effectively meet certain challenges, practical toners. The education one is the development of classroom and instructional materials to train capable students. Part of the overall purpose of the program is to advance the knowledge base broadly in the food and agriculture sectors. Having a highly interactive or dynamic relationship between those functions is highly desirable. You don't really want to see impact on [Indiscernible]

The next point is some of the evaluation criteria. Broadly, we look at intellectual merit and relative broader applications. Intellectual merit looks at the novelty and innovation, creativity of a project. Clearly defining what the objectives are, providing an adequate description of the methods and tools to undertake the project. It is very desirable to demonstrate feasibility, particularly through preliminary data, that there's a high probability of success, given the originality of the project is a good thing. These are less high risk but high reward. Also, the broader implications, broader impacts is an important component. We want to be sure that the broad priorities of AFRI program and economics are addressed. The other broad impacts include increasing public scientific literacy and engagement. Dissemination of new knowledge that can inform public policy and ultimately enhance well-being and advance the economic and social science disciplines. And train the students. That is another component we are advancing, their capability to be good and objective researchers is a really important consideration.

One thing I can't emphasize enough besides reading the RFA, is the importance of well-written proposals. One comment we hear during the panel discussions on almost every proposal that is discussed and it's usually the first comment made is about the quality of the writing, the reviewers will say with glee this was a well-written proposal or they will say not so much. That really has an impact on the perception of the proposal. I can't stress enough to really do a good job. Have somebody review it. Have a peer or your mom or somebody look at it and make sure that they can understand very simple language. And somebody who is willing to hurt the feelings. Good point. That is really crucial point.

Here are the due dates associated with the various programs. This information is in the RFA so again, be sure to read the RFA. Some of the information that used to be in the RFA are now in links associated with that. You can check those out as well. I would say virtually every question I get about the application process or eligibility is answered in the RFA. I would encourage you to look at those.

At the same time, I, Wesley, and Denis are perfectly willing to talk to you about your ideas and make sure they are a good fit and what program they should be in and any other thing that we can help shed light on. Here is who we are. How you can contact us. We will leave this page up for a while, but those links at the bottom of the page will get you to the abstracts of previously awarded proposals for the various programs. The existing programs. With that, we will entertain questions.

Question and Answer Session

Okay from Crystal, for research only or integrated projects, the full RFA says research organizations can apply and they don't have to be a university while the two pager I received says the project director must be a university or college. For all research only projects, virtually anybody -- anybody that is US-based can be an applicant. For integrated projects which are the ones that involve research, extension or education, only colleges and universities can be applicants for that. That is the distinction. For research only, virtually anybody can apply. For integrated projects only colleges and universities can apply.

The next question, are we able to receive the slide deck after the meeting? Yes you are. We will post those and if you want to send your Gmail address, we will fire one off right to you. This is Jason. With most of these programs, we will try to have both recording the slide deck up on our website within a week. If you need the slide deck before then, contact Robbin, he can provide them for you. Absolutely.

The next question is: can a postdoc student be a lead PI or CoPI on a research project? Yes, you can. I think I would suggest being a co-PI as a postdoc, although you could certainly apply and indicate you would be a new investigator and qualify for that. The one caution I have is all of these programs are very competitive, so you want to make sure you have a strong set of researchers on the project. You are certainly eligible to do that. Again, I would suggest as the PI, you want to indicate you are a new investigator. Other than that, yes, you can certainly be a co-PI.

The next question is do each of the program areas have the same length and funding? No, roughly equal amount of funding. -- Yes, it will vary. We try to allocate funding to the program based on demand. Each program area has an equal opportunity for success within each program area. Just a couple of points again, all of the research or all of the projects are up to \$500,000 for four years. There's a no-cost extension for a fifth year. Beyond that they really have to make a justification for extending -- extenuating circumstances. On the other end of the process, absolutely must adhere to the deadlines for submitting proposals. Again, see the RFA to see what the main requirements are, but they must be PDFs. We will not accept word documents. They must be in by 5 PM Eastern time on the indicated date. We cannot accept proposals after that. The only exceptions are grants.gov -- grants.gov is down or you are subject to a natural disaster like trainer hurricane. That has happened, that we are aware of these things. I will echo that last comment. You do not want to get close to the deadline. It does take time for the files to be uploaded and sent, so if you are doing something and see 10 minutes left, you should be worried. Do not wait until the last minute. Upload the documents with your office of sponsored programs early. They're probably the ones uploading it for you. If you are a small college that doesn't have office of sponsored programs or a very small office, we have the kind of do not have capacity to get these things done in time so you really want to be conscious of that and make sure you're getting this information to them as early as possible so they can get the stuff in. You just don't want to lose to a silly thing like missing a deadline.

The next question is for the small farm program area are preferred topics such as outreach veterans, land tenure the only topics will be considered? Not at all. We hope that the language in the RFA indicates a broad reach and the issues affecting small farms. Everything from barriers to entry to issues with staying in business, opportunities for markets, participation in food, a whole array of issues we listed. There are areas we are interested in and suggested topics but they are by no means all. That is

the case. We like it when people do respond to our suggested topics, but that is not only interest, that is probably a small portion [Indiscernible]

The next question comes from Craig is a PI a new investigator simply if it is the first time applying as a PI? No, a new investigator is someone who is within five years of receiving the degree and have not previously been awarded grants from any organization.

Next question comes from Selena. What would you recommend for submitting documents and spend - specifically the time management and is hardcopy acceptable? No, hardcopy is not acceptable. It must go through grants.gov. They must be PDF documents so you really need to look at that. I would suggest shooting for one week in advance of a deadline, particularly if this process is new to you, and you are not sure about what your grants office -- what kind of support they have. I think I would see now what kind of support they have and understand what are the limitations, so you know what to do. If the documents are not uploaded as PDFs, we have to exclude them from the applications. Software cannot process the word documents. We also don't have the capability of uploading the documents into the system ourselves, so you really need to put it through grants.gov. There is no other way. It has to go through grants.gov.

I believe that's the questions. Does anyone have anything else that would like to ask?

The clarity of writing, again, I can't stress that enough. Having a good draft done early enough for a colleague or appear, or somebody to review for you to ensure that you are getting what it is you're trying to do across very clearly. You want a compelling idea, convincing approach to addressing it, and a good suggestion that it will result in good, useful information to inform policy or well-being of Americans everywhere. Generally, if you are doing a interdisciplinary grant application, the earlier all components are involved in the process, the better in the writing process. The later they get involved, the more obvious that is to panelists.

[Indiscernible low volume] Most of these programs are very much economics orientated but not exclusively. Particularly the innovation for rural entrepreneurs and communities and small farms, often there are room for geographers, demographers involved with those. Are looking at for example, the demographic shifts in people in rural areas and immigration. Quite often in those programs in particular, there are interdisciplinary programs and participants. That's a good thing. Don't do it just for the sake of doing it, but do it with the eye towards what is appropriate and necessary to address the questions at hand. We encourage it particularly as appropriate.

Cindy has a question or comment. The [Indiscernible] is broken do you have a link to the program on the website? >> It shouldn't be broken because there is not a link for a 1641. There's only a link for the additional program. You get the whole giant 89 page request for applications. Within that, -- ported we say? Page 55 or something like that? Around there is where the a 1641 is. Unfortunately, there are not hyperlinks to the various programs. That is something we have talked about but we are getting there. I think you are talking about the RFA and I think Sandy was talking about specifically a URL that you have up there that's broken. Okay. We will have to fix that. I'm surprised. There should be no reason it changed. And are they up on the website is the other half effort question. They are not. There only this tiny URLs. We will reset those and make sure they are all functioning. Thank you for telling us.

Will the links change it all when we accept them? Are the quick links? They should be. We will do that right after this webinar.

Next question comes from Selena. Can someone in the partnership with Clemson to enhance the community programs basically in a rural area? Again, depends on what you are after. Sounds like you are talking about something that would be more of an integrated project. Clemson University would have to be the institution, you can partner with them as a sub award. That is no problem at all. Hopefully that answers your question.

Once again, we are caught up on the questions. If anyone has anything else that would like to ask, please put into the chat box. We have about another 15 minutes here. Selena, I had an e-mail from somebody at Clemson just earlier today that may be the collaborator you had in mind. Hopefully you encourage him to proceed.

If you can't think of a question now but think of one later, we have the names of the bunch of different points of contacts. Lookup the NPL associate with program. Should be able to find their e-mail as well. They are always willing to take questions about the program so feel free to contact them.

We will reset the URLs with that exact same URL so you can get to this information. There are other ways to get to these things on the website.

Good about another 15 minutes, we will just stay here on the line if anybody else has questions, and we will be glad to address them.

Crystal asks is there a contact person at NRCS to discuss interest in the following system priority system? Yes, actually. His name is Mark Xu spelled X U. He and I are the ones that hook this up originally. Need to go into background we were going to partner for these projects, but because of the timing and release, they were not able to participate in that, unfortunately. Mark was very excited about this idea. I believe he is the director of their economics program. I don't remember what it is called exactly, but it is Mark Xu spelled X, U. He would be the one to talk to.

Sandy, I think if you go to [Indiscernible] and there is one of the items is an RFA list. If you click on that, it will give you all the current lists. You want to look for the -- it was the agriculture and food research initiative, and it will list the programs on there including ours but any one of those will take you to the AFRI Foundational RFA. You get essentially this big giant PDF. It's not actually in an HTML type of document. You just have to scan down through that to find the economic markets and trade portion of it. It is not linkable, but you have to get into the AFRI Foundational RFA and page down to the program.

Another question from Sandy. She was mentioning the due date on the website is 2019, 09 30. On the presentation we mentioned August of this year. The September 30 one is incorrect. She's saying 2019 on the website. Sandy, did you mean the RFA when you said the website or where were you looking for that? In the RFA it says August so I don't know what the website is doing there with that date. What is listed in the RFA itself is correct. There are no 2019 in the RFA.

I know the closing date of the September 2019 and that is within the foundational program. There's the exploratory research program, which is open the entire year, and closes at the end of the fiscal year 2018. That would be such 30, 2019. That is confusing and that is what that is referring to. Ignore

anything with 2019 on it. Just to reiterate, I think with that 2019 date is about is the higher RFA, not the individual program. Each program will have dates. She will have to look into the RFA and look at the individual program. Don't trust the closing date for that total foundational program. Again, the economic markets and trade is on page 55.

We are going to end the meeting now. There seems to be no further questions. I suppose nobody is here to listen to me, but if you are, if you have any other further questions, please feel free to call or email and we will be glad to help. Thank you and good luck.