

# National Research Support Project Review Committee Meeting

Dallas, Texas

June 7-8, 2010

## Minutes

### In Attendance:

Dr. Mike Vayda, Chair (NERA)

Dr. Daniel Rossi, Executive Vice-Chair (NERA)

Dr. Ralph Cavalieri (WAAESD)

Dr. Mark Cochran (SAAESD)

Dr. Arlen Leholm (NCRA)

Dr. James Wade (APLU)

### Notes:

1. NRSP-1 Research Planning Using the Current Research Information System (CRIS and NIMSS)

**Discussion:** Following a peer review of the project renewal proposal, it was decided that funding for the CRIS system was no longer justified given the development of the REEport System. There is still a strong consensus that NIMSS needs to receive continued support. In order to allow time to transition from the current CRIS system to REEport and to prepare a separate proposal for NIMSS, a one year extension is requested. In addition, given the current process for funding both CRIS and NIMSS will have sufficient funds to support the program through the FY2011 fiscal year. There is also some discussion about other research support activities such as coordinated impact reporting for multistate research projects that might be provided through a revised NRSP-1 proposal in addition to support for NIMSS.

**Recommendation:** Approve one year no-cost extension.

2. NRSP TEMP4 Enabling Pesticide Registrations for Specialty Crops and Minor Uses, 2010-2015

**Discussion:** There is support for the NRSP-4 proposal in all regions.

**Recommendation:** Approve project proposal for 2010-2015.

3. NRSP TEMP6 The US Potato Genebank: Acquisition, Classification, Preservation, Evaluation and Distribution of Potato (*Solanum*) Germplasm, 2010-2015

**Discussion:** The following concerns/questions about the proposal were raised by the Committee:

- 1) The Peer Review report raises a question about the lack of specific types of milestones. The response to this comment by NRSP-6 did not appear adequate to the Review Committee. The Committee understands the rapidly changing resource and policy climate but also feels that NRSP-6 should be able to identify more specific milestones for the five-year period of the proposal against which progress could be measured.
- 2) The proposed 5-year flat budget is not realistic given anticipated increases in salaries, wages, etc. The proposal does not include a plan for addressing cost increases. There does not appear to be any other means to support such increases.
- 3) The budget plan includes funding from the MRF and ARS. It includes no other sources of funding including in-kind support from SAES's and industry. What is the total amount of funding available for the acquisition, classification, preservation, evaluation and distribution of potato germplasm?
- 4) The NRSP-RC would like an explanation as to why commercial users of NRSP-6 services cannot be expected to pay for those services. It is argued that these services are important to the industry being served and it is not clear why the industry would not be willing to pay for them.
- 5) Appendix G provides some information on the impact of the program. Can NRSP-6 provide or describe how they will provide more specific quantifiable documentation of its impact on the industry?

The above questions will be sent to the NRSP-6 Committee with a request for a response by August 1, 2010. The NRSP-RC will review the response during the August teleconference prior to finalizing a recommendation concerning the proposal. At that time the Review Committee will consider three options: approval; disapproval and discontinuation of funding; and disapproval and a three year phase out of funding.

**Recommendation:** No action on proposal. Questions will be sent to the NRSP-6 Committee with a response deadline of August 1, 2010.

4. NRSP TEMP161 National Animal Nutrition Program, 2011-2016

**Discussion:** The proposal was revised to address a series of questions raised by the NRSP-RC Committee at last year's meeting. The following concerns/questions about the revised proposal were raised by the Committee:

- 1) The Committee feels that the revised proposal still does not make a compelling case for the need for this project. The Committee feels that the responses to the questions raised last year concerning the demand for this project and the lack of support from ARS and NRC are inadequate. It is not clear why there is no proposed support from ARS. The proposal describes the recent/current activities of NRC for specific species – sheep, goats, equine and fish. It appears that the NRC 10-20 year schedule for updates is the issue and not necessarily the lack of support.
- 2) The response indicates that this proposal is supported by several multistate research projects. What specific multistate projects will be supported by the proposed NRSP?
- 3) The proposal appears to support Extension activities. What specific research activities are dependent on this information? What specific empowering tools are being provided to researchers? Perhaps the project’s activities would be better addressed as an Extension and Research Activity (ERA) project or as a component of eXtension.
- 4) There appears to be considerable duplication in infrastructure including separate coordinators with equal budgets. Again would an ERA type project support coordination of these activities?

Rather than sending these comments/questions to the authors with a request for a written response, the Committee feels a direct conversation with them would be more productive. A conference call will be scheduled with the Committee and Nancy Cox (and/or any other individual Nancy would suggest).

**Recommendation:** No action on proposal. The Committee will schedule a conference call with Nancy Cox to discuss the comments/questions presented above.

#### 5. FY2010-11 Off-the-Top Funding Requests

<u>Project</u>	<u>Request</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>
NRSP-1	\$0	\$0
NRSP-3	\$50,000	\$50,000
NRSP-4	\$481,182	\$481,182
NRSP-6	\$150,000	No action pending decision on proposal
NRSP-7	\$325,000	\$325,000 *
NRSP-8	\$500,000	\$500,000
NRSP TEMP161	\$350,000	No action pending decision on proposal

\* with the caveat that if funds equal to or less than this amount become available to NRSP-7 through a Congressional special grant or equivalent funding mechanism during FY2010-11, that amount will not be distributed to NRSP-7 from Hatch MRF

## 6. Other Topics

### **Discussion:**

A concern was raised in the Western Region that the Committee and the System as a whole spend an inordinate amount of time on annual budget requests for the NRSP's when the projects and associated budgets are approved for five-year periods. A question was raised as to whether this process is the best use of the Directors' time. The assigned Administrative Advisors prepare and recommend the annual budgets based upon appropriate progress. This discussion led into a subsequent discussion of the purpose of NRSP's and the role of the NRSP-RC Committee.

The ESS Guidelines for National Research Support Projects includes the following charge to the Committee:

*One of the specific charges to the committee is to use the national priorities and needs as a basis for the review and evaluation of existing and new NRSP projects. It is responsible for assuring that the NRSP portfolio is monitored and is responsive to needs. The committee will identify specific areas of research support needs or at least utilize input from an established ESCOP mechanism such as the Planning Committee because of their focus on emerging issues and needs. The committee has the authority to proactively identify research support needs. The committee has access to resources available to seed the creation of new NRSPs responsive to emerging needs.*

Consistent with this charge, the Committee first discussed several possible processes for identifying new areas of research support needs. Two processes that were discussed were sessions at regional meeting and sessions at the annual ESS meeting. The Committee then conducted a brainstorming session to identify potential research support needs.

The first area that generated considerable discussion was the germplasm collection system. The members discussed the need for a new, comprehensive and creative analysis of the overall system. The current collections are underutilized and support appears piecemeal. This system is critical particularly in light of the implications of the system to contribute to the high national priority areas such as sustainable bioenergy, climate change, and food security. Is there an opportunity to authorize support for a new system in the upcoming Farm Bill? Perhaps we can work with other advocates such as the Specialty Crop Alliance. A comprehensive system would have direct input from stakeholders. The Clean Plant Network and IR-4 may serve as models. Ralph Cavalieri

will contact Lee Sommers concerning developing a proposal that could be brought to ESCOP.

A second area where a NRSP might be constructive would be climate change; namely support systems and tools necessary for modeling. These tools will contribute to projects to adapt agriculture to climate change/variability. Components of climate change research to support would be genetics, breeding, modeling, water resources and pest management.

A third area of needed research support is the broad area of bioinformatics. The development of a systematic bioinformatics platform would be valuable. Perhaps NRSP-8 might evolve into such a NRSP that would develop tools necessary for modeling and common data bases. There is potential to work with the USDA and NSF to develop long-term support for this area.

Another area of needed research support is the development of standardized methodologies for life cycle analysis. A NRSP could address issues of process, methodology, data and resolution issues. Like the area of bioinformatics, it would be critical to consolidate the multiple environmental data sets into one place where all researchers could have access. This need is another area where the USDA could take the lead but partner with other federal agencies. It would be important to contact Cathy Woteki early on to discuss this idea. We should look to establish a task force to discuss and think through this area.

A fifth area of need would be the development of a common database to serve as a science foundation for functional foods research. There is a need to invest in big science rather than just projects. This NRSP could support and enhance a number of multistate research projects.

The Committee discussed mechanisms for developing these national data repositories. It was suggested that we propose "NRSP Development Committees" for these five areas. The committees would be created with a two year life. The expectation would be that the committee would develop strategies for implementing these ideas along with strategies for long term funding. A report would be expected after the first year of their initiation. Funding in the range of approximately \$75,000 would be provided to the committee to support project coordinators and meeting expenses. Each committee would have a regional Executive Director assigned to it but the coordinators would be expected to provide the key facilitation to the teams. The white papers prepared for the Science Roadmap would provide a 30,000 foot perspective on the research needs in these priority areas.

Members of the NRSP-RC volunteered to develop concept papers, key scientists and potential leadership for these proposed NRSP's:

Ralph Cavalieri	-	Plant Germplasm
Arlen Leholm	-	Climate Change
John Kirby	-	Bioinformatics
Mark Cochran	-	Sustainable Lifecycle Analysis
Mike Vayda	-	Functional Foods

Another very different area of support that the NRSP-RC could provide would be in the area of networking facilitation to bring together teams of scientists to address issues in new challenge areas. This idea could potentially expand the current multistate research system beyond one that is reactionary to one that is proactive in tackling the larger societal issues. The augmentation of the current multistate research system could direct it to address the current USDA priority needs and assist the scientists in the development of competitive proposals in these areas. Dan Rossi agreed to develop a concept paper for this area of support.

The NRSP-RC would serve as an umbrella mechanism to provide overall support to and monitoring of these activities.

The overall proposal will be discussed on the upcoming ESCOP Chair's Advisory Committee conference call and at the July ESCOP meeting. If the proposal is approved, the members of NRSP-RC will prepare concept papers and lists of potential members. Reports on progress will be discussed during the August conference call and during a meeting of the Committee at the ESS/SAES/ARD meeting in September.

**Recommendation:**

The proposal for the new NRSP's and new multistate project facilitation will be presented to ESCOP for approval first during the CAC conference call on June 21 and if it receives positive feedback at the ESCOP meeting in July.

7. Committee Leadership

**Discussion:**

Mike Vayda has accepted a position at the University of Arkansas and will no longer have SAES responsibilities. The Committee considered three alternative replacement strategies for the chair of the Committee. The first alternative was to rotate Committee leadership to the incoming chair, John Kirby. John will assume the chairmanship of

NCRA this coming year and would prefer a year delay in assuming the chair of NRSP-RC. The second option was to maintain the chair from the Northeast region but there was a concern that the incoming chair would not have had direct experience serving on the Committee. The third alternative was to have Ralph Cavalieri assume the chair for one year. Ralph has the most previous experience on the Committee. In order to maintain continuity, it was also suggested that Dan Rossi continue to serve as the Executive Vice Chair for the coming year.

**Recommendation:** Recommend to ESCOP Chair that Ralph Cavalieri be appointed as the NRSP-RC Chair for the remainder of the two year term and that Dan Rossi continue as Executive Vice Chair.

#### 8. Future Meetings

The Committee will meet by conference call in August. Dan Rossi will forward a Doodle poll to schedule the call.

The Committee will also meet in person at the ESS/SAES/ARD meeting in September. We will attempt to schedule a 7:00 am breakfast meeting. (Note that the Committee recommended including the NRSP definition as part of its presentation at the ESS meeting.)