

## **National Research Initiative (NRI) Stakeholder Workshops on Social Science Research Priorities in Agriculture and Rural Development**

**Summary:** The 3 primarily social science programs within the NRI, Agricultural Prosperity for Small and Medium-sized Farms, Rural Development and the Agricultural Markets and Trade, held 2 joint internet based stakeholder workshops on November 28, 2006. The workshops entitled, "Social Science Research Priorities in Agriculture and Rural Development", were used to obtain stakeholder feedback on the proposed logic models for the three programs. There was also limited discussion of the social science priorities within the other NRI programs. The logic models will be used to develop funding priorities and provide continuity in the programs over time.

**Format:** Both workshops utilized Macromedia Breeze Meeting by Adobe to enable communication with stakeholders on the proposed logic models. Macromedia Breeze Meeting allows quick and easy sharing of online meetings, presentations, training courses, and events over the Internet.

**Sessions:** Participants for the first session (10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.) were identified via communication with the Rural Sociological Society and other sources (e.g., listserves for small and medium sized farm interest groups, rural development centers, etc). Participants for the second session (2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.) were identified through communication with the Council on Food, Agriculture and Resource Economics and other sources (e.g., listserve for Department Heads of Agricultural Economics).

Twenty-two participants registered to attend each session. Each session included a brief presentation by the program leader, written comments from stakeholders and further discussion of comments. The agenda and purpose for each session were included in the presentation.

**Feedback:** Some of the feedback received from the workshop includes:

- (a) Desire to broaden the scope of all three programs;
- (b) "Youth development" alone is not sufficient to address the goal of improving quality of life in the NRI Rural Development program;
- (c) "Reducing barriers to entrepreneurship, technology transfer and small business growth" alone are not sufficient to address the goal of eradicating poverty in the NRI Rural Development program;
- (d) No consensus was reached to the proposed change in the name of the Agricultural Markets and Trade Program to Agribusiness Marketing and Trade;
- (e) "Commercialization of new technology" does not adequately reflect the intended goal for the Agribusiness Markets and Trade Program;
- (f) One of the goals of the Agribusiness Markets and Trade program should be expanded to "enhancing economic efficiency and equity".
- (g) Need to increase funding to social science programs;
- (h) Desire new programs or increased funding to current programs to study gender issues; environmental impacts of trade; issues affecting the rural-urban interface; linkages between the different goals; bio-fuels and alternative energy; ecosystem services, etc.
- (i) Desire to have a separate awards program to recognize the impacts of social science grants programs; and
- (j) Desire to continue to have similar internet based workshops at least once a year to provide input into the RFA development process.

**Next Steps:** This feedback from stakeholders reflects the input from those who participated in the two workshops. The three programs attract applications from a very diverse group of stakeholders. The CSREES license for Macromedia Breeze Meeting limited the number of participants to 25 at each session. Since it was not possible to have more people participating in these workshops, it is imperative to provide opportunities for others. Therefore, efforts are being made to obtain additional input from those who were not present at these workshops. In this context, the links to the entire proceedings of the workshops are provided below and feedback is requested from any interested stakeholders. We will begin work on the FY 2008 RFA development process in Spring 2007 and would like to have the logic models revised and finalized soon.

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**Links:** Entire Workshop Presentation – Approximately 75 minutes in length each.

10am session

<http://csrees-breeze.csrees.usda.gov/p74434532/>

2pm session

<http://csrees-breeze.csrees.usda.gov/p97116800/>