

National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education and Economics Advisory Board

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National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education and Economics (NAREEE) Executive Committee - Brainstorming Session

Friday, March 9, 2012 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Executive Committee Members Present: Jean-Mari Peltier (Chair), Dr. Steven Hamburg (Vice Chair), Dr. Charles Boyer, Dr. Carrie Castille, Dr. Nancy Childs, Dr. Steve Daley-Laursen, Dr. Milo Shult, Leo Holt, and Dr. Mary Wagner.

NAREEE Board Staff: Robert Burk (Executive Director) and Shirley Morgan-Jordan (Program Support Coordinator).

Others Present: Dr. Ann Bartuska (USDA Deputy Undersecretary for REE), Dr. Edward Knipping, Dr. Cynthia Clark, Dr. Mary Bohman, Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young, Dr. Caird Rexroad, Dr. Judy St. John, Dr. Molly Kretsch, Dr. Kay Simmons, Mary Conley and Mary Ann James.



Facilitated by: Dr. Mary Wagner

REE BRAINSTORMING SUMMARY

There is an opportunity to use the NAREEE committee influence to highlight the need for transformation of the Research, Education, and Economics (REE) organization's ability to deliver on the Research, Education, and Economics Action Plan. The NAREEE and REE agency members took advantage of this opportunity and held a brainstorming session March 9, 2012 in Washington, D.C. The brainstorming session started out highlighting the REE mission:

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Research, Education, and Economics (REE) is dedicated to the creation of a safe, sustainable, competitive U.S. food and fiber system and strong, healthy communities, families, and youth through integrated research, analysis and education.

Next, the group reviewed the Research, Education, and Economics Action Plan goals:

GOALS:

1. *Local and Global Food Supply and Security*
 - a. *Crop and Animal Production*
 - b. *Crop and Animal Health*
 - c. *Crop and Animal Genetics, Genomics, Genetic Resources, and Biotechnology*
2. *Responding to Climate and Energy Needs*
 - a. *Responding to Climate Variability*
 - b. *Bioenergy/Biofuels and Bio-based products*
3. *Sustainable Use of Natural Resources*
 - a. *Water availability: Quality and Quantity*
 - b. *Landscape-Scale Conservation and Management*
4. *Nutrition and Childhood Obesity*
5. *Food Safety*
6. *Education and Science Literacy*
7. *Rural Prosperity/Rural-Urban Interdependence*

Finally, the NAREEEAB and REE agency brainstorm participants focused in on three areas in which to transform or innovate change needed to execute the Research, Education, and Economics Action Plan:

1. Funding
2. Collaboration
3. Communication

Results of the brainstorming were as follows:

1. Funding:

Several areas were highlighted for funding REE activities that work well in today's world, including the ability to leverage and pool funding. REE realizes that long term investments are possible in the current funding model, something universities often lack.

On the flip side, there are opportunities for how funding works today. For instance, many within REE believe there is little flexibility in funding and that change or solicitation of funding takes too long. How budgets are broken down, how money is leveraged, and simple understanding of the budgeting process were issues echoed by many within and outside of REE. Lack of one voice of agriculture funding and general lack of coordination was also prominent in the discussion, as was the inability to use dollars to work on emerging issues and attract key talent.

When asked what might be done differently in the funding process to achieve the Research, Education, and Economics Action Plan, the priority areas were clear: aggressively go after partnerships; consider creating a USDA-type Foundation to raise dollars; get NIH gain a greater appreciation of agriculture and open up its funding model to help to meet goals for agriculture; and align on the "Big Issues" among agencies.

2. Collaboration:

When collaboration was discussed as a means to address the Research, Education, and Economics Action Plan, several positive activities happening today were highlighted. Among the popular collaborative call outs were the multi-disciplinary approach to obesity (it was also believed this could be a model template for future collaborations). Also noted were the international activities (gene banks) and industry alignments (cocoa genome).

In need of improvement in current collaborations was the ever present "mission creep" and lack of recognition especially if someone does work and others take credit. All agreed that to turn collaborations

into positive events and to be successful, a champion was needed, as well as a network. Scientists need to be valued, use data for decisions, and must have a safe work environment.

To meet the goals of the Research, Education, and Economics Action Plan and ignite a more collaborative environment, a few key things need to happen ASAP. Alignment with key competitors on key projects (i.e., China); alignment with those that value Ag (i.e., stop trying to get everyone to appreciate what REE does); and aggressively interact, or visit (frequently) Congress Policy Makers and Industry.

3. Communication:

Many believe REE is the science communication arm and go-to resource for science-based knowledge (i.e., #1 nutrition website). Brand “USDA” is already a powerful symbol of doing things right and it hosts probably the hottest sub-brand – Extension. Storytelling is considered one of the best ways to ignite science and social media and is becoming a favorite vehicle for communication of the science.

All this being said, it was admitted that it is extremely difficult to reach audiences outside of Ag, primarily due to the lack of “one voice”. Even the word agriculture was considered a hindrance in communicating science. All believe that the “Ag of our fathers is definitely not the Ag of our children”, so is in need of a major rebranding or facelift.

To turn around and excel in communicating messages, identity and ability, 3 main focus areas were highlighted as need immediate attention in order to deliver on the Research, Education, and Economics Action Plan:

excel at storytelling (hire the folks to translate if necessary); get the right spokespeople, and put them out there to beat the drum for REE; and stay laser focused on what is to be communicated (narrow tighten the message).

Wrap Up

Overall the brainstorm session provided incredibly valuable in learning and communicating wants and needs to achieve Research, Education, and Economics Action Plan. Change or transformation will require exploration and activation of new funding models to stay competitive. There will be a sense of urgency to align with what were considered competitors (i.e., China, industry, etc.) There will also be the need to make fewer, bigger, and bolder research bets. The NAREEEAB and REE participants agreed that the highlighted action items around funding, collaboration and communication will require much deeper analysis and discussion, but must happen. We all aligned to be part of the solution and next steps.

The following notes were transcribed from wall charts developed at the meeting:

REE FUNDING

What works well today with funding model for REE?

- Leveraging funds
- Pooling funds
- Able to fund major advances
- Stability and flexibility in programming
- Efficiencies in using funds (i.e., tech & structured)
- Technology allows for greater efficiencies between groups
- Long term investments vs. universities short term projects funding model
- Funds government work not fundable by others (i.e., infrastructure such as laboratories)
- Opportunity to get input from users
- Both competitive and collaborative approaches are supported

What doesn't work well with today's funding model for REE?

- No flexibility in funding, hamstrung to fund new opportunities
- Takes too long to get funding - the process does not allow you to be nimble
- Continuing resolution, kills progress vs. NSF gets funding year ahead
- Not enough funding
- Confusion on what USDA does. (i.e., ERS has one budget line, so not enough detail on breakout)
- Not enough understand how budget and funding work (do not understand leveraging)
- Like Gulliver - tiny little strings (small projects) holding you down from funding larger game changing efforts
- Lack of ability to carry over funds from year to year
- Time frame is short particularly in science to get one year funding – if the funding ever moved to 2 years it would be a huge benefit
- Lack of one voice for Agriculture
- Lack of coordination between agencies
- Difficult to be entrepreneurial to see new ideas or innovative
- Breadth and understanding of subject matter
- 70% USDA budget is WIC, food stamps, different needs in R&D/Innovation
- Formula funds – not sure they benefit REE
- Are formula funds designed to support the infrastructure? What are they for and how do they get utilized?
- Some states can lose matching fund opportunity (lose ability to address emergency issues in a State).
- Not sure all funds are mapping to R&D
- Do they attract cutting edge people/scientists & getting job done?
- Does the best talent have the best access?

What is possible with funding model for REE?

- Competitive process today for existing funds
- How might we raise more funds vs. relying on set of funds that we get from normal process?
- Partnerships should be more aggressive

- Immigration rules – restrictions on funding get stronger, could spread to money that we give to partners
- If we were in a global science partner mindset, would we act differently?
- Today we educate and folks back to compete against us
- Economic model changes – maybe make commission based and remove bottlenecks?
- Fee-for-service model could be explored
- Extension/pay for service/dif role for these folks
- Why aren't we like NIH?
- USDA public research institutions. Foundational support – via a private or public process
- 501c3 – Puerto Rico model
- Foundation support needed
- Public private partnerships – have good models but we're not working with multiple food companies at this time
- Association alliance
- Establishing support
- Have gov't & private in same room to talk about opportunities and priorities
- Existing formal cooperatives
- Joint powers systems
- 501c3's
- NSF has come up couple of times in industry/university models
- IP – make money from your IP licenses
- IP – private industry that has and not using IP that we can donate to USDA for one of the important goals
- Change funding model – why not have NIH change funding model?
- NSF to change their model to help fund needs?
- Bring in other sectors of govt funds
- Change the boundary issues
- Alignment on big issues for R&D with others (i.e. childhood obesity group)
- Partner with industry
- Build productive relationships
- Focus on reducing complexity
- Check-off for R&D and innovation
- Health insurance industry is good model for funding

What can we do differently with funding model of REE?

- PARTNERSHIPS – (13 votes)
 - ✓ Aggressively
 - ✓ Mitigate constraints with Industry
- USDA/PUBLIC RESEARCH ... FIGURE OUT HOW TO CREATE FOUNDATION – (13 votes)
 - ✓ Private/public filter (501c3) to get as much funding from source other than gov't
 - ✓ Public/private partnerships in Nutrition are good model
 - ✓ Good models today for 1:1
 - ✓ Move to new vocabulary from "Agriculture"
- CHANGE FUNDING BOUNDRIES OF NIH OR NSF – (10 votes)
 - ✓ NSF to change THEIR model to help fund USDA needs
 - ✓ Emerge brand USDA or align with other agencies

- ALIGNMENT ON “BIG ISSUES” for R&D with other agencies – (10 votes)
 - ✓ Childhood obesity is a good example!
- ECONOMIC MODEL CHANGE – (9 votes)
 - ✓ Commission base pay vs. fee for service
 - ✓ Remove bottlenecks!
 - ✓ Extension/pay for service/different role for these folks
- FORMALIZED CO-OPS – (8 votes)
 - ✓ Pool resources
 - ✓ Private universities have knowledge, we should share
 - ✓ NSF
- IP – (8 votes)
 - ✓ Licensing more!
 - ✓ Use IP from industry to solve problems
- IMMIGRATION RULES – (5 votes)
 - ✓ Restrictions on who can hire, go for best talent and flexibility
- ALLIANCE WITH ASSOCIATIONS – 3 (votes)
 - ✓ GMA, ILSI, IFT, NFI, NRA – All do R&D
 - ✓ Fundraising? Can if 501C3/foundation
- CHECK OFF FOR R&D INNOVATION – (3 votes)
- HEALTH INSURANCE – (2 votes)
 - ✓ Small change for R&D
- TAX ON FOOD & BEVERAGE IN COUNTRY – (0 votes)
- FOCUS ON REDUCING COMPLEXITY OF GOV’T AGENCIES IN FUNDING R&D – (0 votes)
 - ✓ Minimum duplication of effort

REE COLLABORATION

What works well in Collaboration for REE?

- NCCOR Childhood obesity – multi-disciplinary approach
- Access to specialized resources
- Intellectual synergies
- Achievement of international objectives
- Could not do any other way!
- Lead with key infrastructure & guiding principles
- International gene banks – lead with same things (REE)
- Enhance REE as place to go for clearing house (R&D...extension)
- GMA – climate change!
- China most attractive for more collaboration
- ENGRAPA Brazil (REE) – household name!
- Cocoa Genome Project – Multi-industry
- NSF Univ Co-ops are successful today
- National Plant Genome Institute
- Nebraska – Scientists across country (food safety O157H7 in entire supply chain)
- Oat Project – GML, NIFA, Others...exploded tools for improvement for Oats
- <http://twitter.com/#!/ScienceAtUSDA> twitter account

What doesn't work well with today's Collaboration for REE?

- Mission creep...can result in funding changes, it causes agency interactive issues
- Loss of recognition – especially in international
- Takes a lot to build collaborations – takes from R&D Scientists time etc. (transaction costs)
- IP concerns on sharing
- Rewarded for partnerships, not always strategic
- Tension – someone gets funding and someone else does work

How do Collaborations even happen today for REE?

- Need someone to push
- Need network
- Need willing partners to participate
- Scientists time available
- Need Champion – may or may not be scientist
- Movement to characterizing complex technologies to utilize advanced data
- Scientists need environment to be valued. Use of data, agreements. New way to make safe environment for work
- Align w/ those that value Ag
- Congress/Policy makers can be roadblocks
- Private industry should be more involved
- Needs to be one message – private industry – gov't industries
- Focus on Ag research we all need to have one exercise
- White house

What can we do differently with Collaboration of REE?

- ALIGN WITH THOSE THAT ADD VALUE IN AG – (12 votes)
- WHITE HOUSE (OSTP & OMB) – (11 votes)
 - ✓ Get closer on activities and understanding of funding models
 - ✓ Get in on conversations on priorities and gaps
 - ✓ Express message and communicate
- CONGRESS POLICY MAKERS – (10 votes)
 - ✓ Other committees besides Ag we should build relationships with (don't just focus on normal)
 - ✓ State Dept of Ag – visit Hills
- PRIVATE INDUSTRY – (9 votes)
 - ✓ Combine efforts together for one message
 - ✓ Define expectations
- NGOs – (8 votes)
 - ✓ Partnerships need more development and common message
 - ✓ Do normal changing – understand power struggle
- ALIGN WITH BIG COMPETITORS LIKE CHINA – (5 votes)
- ALIGNMENT OR COLLABORATION WITH LIKE-MINDED NEEDS – (3 votes)
 - ✓ Food service, energy companies, etc.
 - ✓ Use existing infrastructure
- EXTENSION VALUE – (3 votes)
 - ✓ Want to be transformational arm to USDA – get info out on all Fed agencies
- STATE DEPT OF AG – (2 votes)

- ✓ Funding changes
- ✓ Someone may need to step in
- ✓ Liaison brainstorming
- ✓ Job sharing/swapping
- ✓ Ag research
- ✓ Promote REE agenda
- ✓ Lack of marketing funds – impact REE
- INSERTING OURSELVES IN OTHER ORGS – (1 vote)
 - ✓ Decision tree – create focused effort
- AG RESEARCH – (0 votes)
- PARTNER WITH YOUTH ACTIVITIES – (FFA, 4H) – (0 votes)

REE COMMUNICATION:

What works well in Communication for REE today?

- Respond quickly to issues – responsive outreach – quickly, appropriately
- We're science and fact based - objective
- We've adopted new social media – twitter, facebook
- We have #1 nutrition website
- Brand of USDA brand (best beef is USDA grade)
- Broadening audiences – brand heartiness maps (going in Home Depot) lots of hits
- County based extension – tremendous/positive resources
- Ask an expert E-extension
- Broader audience than we realize
- Champions – former Ms. America was Ms. Nebraska and her platform was agriculture
- International success from Ag to extension programs, expertise
- Highly regarded brand internationally
- Story teller
- Human health
- Focus on social media vs. print

What doesn't work well in Communication for REE today?

- Don't reach audiences outside Ag
- Not one voice
- Not one size fits all
- Not targeting messages to decision makers (congress>constituents)
- Partnering with organizations to send communication
- Confusion due to program diversity (NIFA vs AFRI)
- Agriculture – word itself – perception (not your father's Ag)
- New congress not aware of Ag
- Sustainability
- Ag of our fathers isn't ag of our youth
- Not enough human side of what we do
- Continually fail to relate the issue that we're facing – we need to feed 9 billion ppl – unless we frame differently
- Focus too much on research and not results

- Message lost because people think all we're looking for is money – we don't capture essence of outcome
- Don't communicate frequently enough
- Get bad rap for USDA vs. FDA (agency confusion by public)

What can we do differently in Communication for REE?

- STORY TELLING – (18 votes)
 - ✓ Excel!
- NEED FOCUS & TARGET FOR COMMUNICATION – (18 votes)
- SPOKESPEOPLE – (13 votes)
 - ✓ Continue to showcase
 - ✓ Should ARS scientists speak on work?
 - ✓ Key spokespeople do well
- FOCUS ON SOCIAL MEDIA vs. PRINT – (9 votes)
 - ✓ To get story out
 - ✓ REE – showcase “History of Vaccine” vs. others to show integration
 - ✓ Short & direct films on Ag
 - ✓ Sprinkle in stories of people
- PUSH INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE – (6 votes)
- DIVERSITY – (6 votes)
- CREATE STAMP OF APPROVAL FOR USDA – (6 votes)
 - ✓ USDA (REE) stamp to mean good science
 - ✓ REE Science is THE science!
- PULL STAKEHOLDERS INTO REE – (4 votes)
 - ✓ NASA/DOD – Go to TV
 - ✓ Make our news sexy
 - ✓ Share dirty laundry to tell stories
 - ✓ USDA has facebook, not agency
 - ✓ Take advantage of opportunities, they exist for USDA, not REE
 - ✓ Make communication easier on how much control is needed
- EVERYDAY RESPONDERS – (2 votes)
- INTEGRATION OF SCIENCE WITH & IMPACT ON HUMAN HEALTH (CLEARING HOUSE) – (1 vote)
- TEMPLATE FOR WHO'S WHO – (1 vote)
- FOCUS ON MESSAGE ON YOUTH – (4 votes)

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Mary Wagner

Jean-Mari Peltier
Chair

Rob Burk
Executive Director

APPROVAL BY ADVISORY BOARD:

Date

Initials
Chair

Initials
Executive Director