

Background

In FY 2000, CSREES funded the formation of four geographically-based Regional Pest Management Centers corresponding to USDA-CSREES Administrative Regions. Over the past three years, these Centers have been instrumental in initiating and developing a regional system that has fostered increased regional collaboration and coordination among institutions and individuals involved with IPM research, education and implementation. USDA places a high priority on Centers as a way to strengthen the federal, regional, state partnership in service to stakeholders in the agriculture, food and natural resource enterprises.

Through national competition in FY 2003, CSREES will award a total of four grants for Regional IPM Centers (Centers), one in each of its Administrative Regions (North Central, Northeastern, Southern, and Western). While Centers will have a regional focus, it is anticipated that there will be interregional collaboration and activity.

The Role for Centers

Center Directors will serve as representatives on the National IPM Steering Committee to harmonize regional needs and program areas into a comprehensive national program. Centers will assist and be a catalyst for promoting IPM through needs identification and prioritization, facilitation, identification of accomplishments, and reporting.

Centers are expected to build on the developments of the previous three years to further enhance the ability of the land-grant system and USDA to respond to public and private sector IPM information and knowledge needs as outlined in the IPM Roadmap. Center programming is expected to be relevant to all areas where IPM has potential to contribute. This includes developing tactics and systems for pest suppression, and targeting specific pest problems through both chemical and non-chemical approaches: (1) in plant and animal systems from production through consumption; (2) for public health issues; and (3) in the environment, including recreational areas, residential and institutional facilities.

Specific Objectives:

- (a) Serve as a focal point for interactive communication;
- (b) Involve stakeholders in identifying needs and priorities for IPM in serving agriculture, food and natural resource systems;
- (c) Facilitate the development of knowledge, information, technology, communication, and education to enhance IPM for the benefit of regional stakeholders and the environment;
- (d) Promote interdisciplinary and multi-organizational collaboration;
- (e) Facilitate relationships with multiple government agencies;
- (f) Promote collaboration to minimize duplication of effort;
- (g) Organize responses to emerging regional issues; and
- (h) Manage resources to facilitate regional IPM programs and activities.

Centers are expected to be at the forefront and involved in addressing emerging and high priority IPM issues at the regional level. Centers will provide leadership in establishing and facilitating regionally based processes to identify and prioritize IPM research, extension, and outreach needs on a multi-state basis with the goal of enhancing collaboration with state programs and other entities. Centers will engage stakeholders in regional needs identification/prioritization processes. When regional needs have been identified and prioritized, Centers will conduct a competitive process to fund projects that address the needs. Centers will take care to ensure that the stakeholder process is kept separate from the funding process. Centers must have an equitable plan for notifying potential applicants of funding opportunities.

It is expected that coordinated efforts will be developed and resources committed to organizing regional, institutional and individual expertise to address multi-state IPM issues confronting pest managers. Centers are to serve as a focal point for collaborative team building on IPM issues engaging broad-based stakeholder participation within a region, for example in developing strategic plans for crops or cropping systems. Centers will be expected to establish a relationship with existing programs in the four-year degree granting institutions (e.g., the Land Grant System's multi-state research and extension committees and programs related to IPM).

Centers will organize and develop multi-state communication networks that engage state IPM programs. Centers are expected to promote open communication and facilitate the exchange of information and resources to enhance the collaboration and integration of activities among individuals, institutions, states, and regions. Centers will provide a communication network to other related CSREES programs, for example: Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE), Water Quality, Food Safety.

There are various government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have regionally based programs that relate directly or indirectly to IPM. Some of the programs are in USDA (e.g., the Natural Resources Conservation Service) and some are in other agencies (e.g., the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Interior). Centers should identify approaches and processes for developing linkages with other such programs in their region to enhance the overall IPM effort.

To assist in addressing regional and multi-state issues, Centers will be expected to manage regionally-focused IPM grants programs with funds that reside at CSREES. Programs will encompass fundamental investigations, from research through application, both tactic and system development, from site specific to landscape/community based projects. A key element is the demonstration of effective technologies to promote user adoption based on regionally developed priorities. Centers should enhance and broaden opportunities for scientists and stakeholders to identify and obtain new resources in order to more fully participate in regional and national activities, issues and programs.

Regional IPM Center Applications:

The Project Description portion of a Regional IPM Center application must:

- (a) Describe plans for developing and conducting a regional program that fulfills the mission and role for Centers and
- (b) Explain the organizational and management structure and processes that will be used to manage consultative and decision-making processes to accomplish the role for Centers.

While applicants may include additional information, they should use the Project Description to:

- (a) Identify goals for the Center;
- (b) Identify the Center Director and other key personnel (or positions) that will comprise the Center personnel;
- (c) Describe the Center management process for: establishing program priorities; involving stakeholders, partner institutions and other government agencies (e.g., Environmental Protection Agency regional offices, and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and Agricultural Research Service); aggregating and disseminating information; and coordinating Center activities with other entities;
- (d) Describe the process that will be used to establish an advisory team of pest managers and stakeholders, including producers, who represent the diversity of capabilities, institutions, and pest management issues found in the region. Demonstrate capabilities to facilitate an interactive process designed to identify pest-related issues and opportunities to be developed through a multi-state approach;
- (e) Describe the process for outsourcing functions, activities and projects to effectively and efficiently fulfill the Center role and mission. Specifically address plans to equitably and competitively solicit and select potential applicants for funding opportunities, and strategies to safeguard a fair and open decision-making process;
- (f) Present a plan that demonstrates the capacity to form and operate interactive communication networks that cross traditional institutional, disciplinary, programmatic and geographic boundaries to address regional IPM priorities;
- (g) Present a plan for a regional, Web based, IPM information and communication network that is linked to other regional and national systems. It is envisioned that the network will serve multiple functions including, for example, sharing current information (e.g., Crop Profiles; pest management strategic plans; IPM elements) and providing a mechanism to develop and review science and regulatory documents between entities. Explain how stakeholders who do not have electronic information access will be informed; and

(h) Provide a plan, including milestones to assess progress and accomplishments throughout the project.