



**LEOPOLD CENTER
FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE**

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LEOPOLD CENTER

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Request for pre-proposals (RFP) – Summer 2008

The Leopold Center was established by the Iowa Legislature as part of the Iowa Groundwater Protection Act of 1987. Its legislatively mandated *mission* is to identify and reduce negative environmental and socio-economic impacts of agricultural practices, contribute to the development of profitable farming systems that conserve natural resources, and cooperate with Iowa State University Extension to inform the public of new findings.

The Center's work is organized in three initiative areas—*ecology, marketing and food systems, and policy*—each aimed at enhancing the condition and viability of Iowa's natural resources in varying, yet integrated ways. These three initiatives have separate sections in the RFP.

Important information about the RFP process

Who may submit a pre-proposal? Investigators representing any *Iowa* nonprofit organization/agency and/or educational institution (such as soil and water conservation districts, schools and colleges, and regional development groups). The Center strongly encourages the involvement and collaboration of farmers, landowners, and farm-based businesses in the pre-proposal process.

What lessons have we learned? The Leopold Center now has 20 years of accumulated research, and we would welcome pre-proposals focused on retrospective studies of long-term impacts of previously funded LCSA research. If you have ideas in this area, please contact the appropriate initiative leader to discuss your project.

Please refer to each initiative's RFP section to find the best fit for your pre-proposal, and follow these general directions. Prepare a **one- or two-page concept paper** containing these elements:

- Separate **cover page** with project title, complete contact information for the principal investigator including mailing address, phone number and email address, dollar request by year, and the initiative area—ecology, marketing and food systems, or policy—that best fits your pre-proposal. Do not count the cover page or letters of support as part of your page total.
- **Objectives**—What do you want to achieve? Must be well defined and measurable.
- **Strategies**—What activities will help you achieve project objectives? Describe by objective.
- **Focus areas**—How does your pre-proposal fit within one or more focus areas for one of the initiatives?
- **Outcomes**—What will happen in the short and intermediate term if you achieve your objectives? How do your proposed outcomes match up with expected outcomes listed in the initiative area under which you are applying?

- **Outreach**—How (and with whom) will you share project results?
- **Evaluation**—How you will determine if you have achieved your objectives? (Brief)
- **Budget** estimate and brief financial explanation by calendar year, starting February 1, 2009. Funding may be for multiple years, depending on initiative or special call area.
 - Estimate total expenses and itemize by: Salary and Wages; Equipment/Supplies/Materials; Travel; Consultants; and Other.
 - Which of the following best describes your estimated budget? Does this change per year of your request?
 - _ LCSA will provide all funding.
 - _ LCSA funds are a start, but work is contingent on other funds to meet all desired outcomes.
 - _ LCSA funds are filling a gap in ongoing work sponsored by other funding.
 - _ LCSA funds will support completing part of the work even if funds from other sources are not received.

How to submit? An electronic copy (sent via e-mail or delivered on digital media such as CD or diskette) or one hard copy must be received by **5:00 p.m. August 18, 2008**. No faxes, please. Electronic version should be a .doc or .txt file or contained within the body of the e-mail. Send your copy to the appropriate contact person listed in the RFP.

What happens after submission? An invitation to submit a full proposal will be based upon review of all pre-proposals by the Leopold Center Advisory Board and staff. Proposals will be screened for adherence to recommendations found in this RFP as well as economic, environmental, and community/social sustainability. The Center will notify all applicants in late September 2008 as to whether they will be invited to submit a full proposal. Full proposals will be submitted by early November, and funding decisions made by mid-January 2009.

Marketing and Food Systems Initiative (Contact: Rich Pirog)

Marketing and Food Systems Initiative objectives:

- Research and test new marketing strategies and business structures that allow Iowa's farmers to retain more of the value for energy, food, or fiber produced with high standards of stewardship that protect Iowa's water resources.
- Support education, conduct research, and facilitate partnerships to increase investment and support of local and regional energy, food and fiber enterprises that protect Iowa's water resources and provide significant economic and social benefits to Iowa farmers and rural communities.
- Conduct research and education to address challenges that impede farmers and farmer networks from being equal partners with other players in larger-volume energy, food or fiber-based value chains.*

* A *value chain* is a network of businesses cooperating to satisfy market demands for a particular product.

Focus areas for Marketing and Food Systems Initiative Summer RFP:

- Projects that contribute to and complement efforts of new or existing Iowa-based communities of practice* or working groups based on farmer and community needs and documented challenges in energy, fiber, and food enterprises.
- Research and/or education projects and tools that assess and address the infrastructure challenges, needed business skills, and management risks for agricultural enterprises comprised of networks of farmers selling into larger-volume markets.
- Research into the health, safety, economic, and environmental impacts of Iowa-grown foods that are produced using the principles of sustainable agriculture, and identification of how these factors influence consumer choice of these foods.
- Research that examines energy efficiencies, greenhouse gas emissions, and other environmental and social factors that impact food, fiber, and energy value chains.
- Research, demonstration, and education to increase opportunities for new, beginning-again, immigrant, and transitioning farmers and absentee landowners using the principles of sustainable agriculture to produce food, fiber, or energy.
- Research that examines nutritional quality, taste, perishability, and other characteristics of local, organic, and other foods differentiated by more sustainable production practices, and identification of how these factors influence consumer choice of these foods,
- Strategies that increase access to healthy, nutritious, affordable local or regional food that is produced using principles of sustainable agriculture for children in Iowa's elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools as well as families coping with economic hardship.
- Research on the design and effective use of technologies that would allow Iowa farmers, farmer networks, and farmer-led food businesses to add value to their products and/or access new markets.

* *Communities of practice* and the types of working groups or teams we are interested in are groups of people who share a concern for a set of problems and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis.

Marketing and Food Systems Initiative outcomes

Funded projects will deliver a broad range of measurable outcomes that may include:

- Increased participation in an ongoing or formation of a new community of practice, working group, or network that leverages the learning of diverse group participants to benefit farmers and communities;
- Profitable farmer-led businesses and networks increasing capacity to meet demand for products in various market segments and scales, with emphasis on larger-volume markets;
- Increased opportunities for beginning, immigrant, and transitioning farmers in existing and new markets;
- Increased local and state investment in community-based food, fiber, and energy enterprises;
- Food, fiber and energy enterprises that significantly contribute to the health and well-being of Iowans in rural and urban communities;
- Increased understanding of distinguishing characteristics and benefits of local and regional foods differentiated by more sustainable production practices;
- Improvements in the quality of Iowa's soil, water, and wildlife resources.

Important considerations

- ▶ Pre-proposals that support or complement the work of one of the following community of practice groups are encouraged: Pork Niche Market Working Group, Regional Food Systems Working Group, Small Meat Processing Working Group, Fruit and Vegetable Working Group, and Grass-based Livestock Working Group. To learn more about these groups go to www.valuechains.org or contact Rich Pirog at the Leopold Center.
- ▶ Please articulate how your proposed work will address one or more of the objectives and outcomes listed in this RFP.
- ▶ Identify which focus area(s) listed above provides the best fit with your pre-proposal.
- ▶ Pre-proposals should, where appropriate, articulate how the proposed work will build on Leopold Center or other Iowa projects to create more sustainable food, fiber, and energy enterprises.
- ▶ Pre-proposals that respond to documented farmer marketing challenges and that show collaboration across organizations are highly encouraged.
- ▶ Budget requests for Marketing and Food Systems Initiative funding can be for one or two years.

Other pre-proposal ideas?

Other innovative marketing and food systems research or education ideas not fitting the specific focus areas will be considered. It is highly recommended, however, that you contact the Marketing and Food Systems Initiative program leader *prior* to submitting the pre-proposal to discuss any ideas that are outside the focus area topics in this RFP.

Questions about your Marketing and Food Systems pre-proposal?

Contact: Rich Pirog, Associate Director and Marketing and Food Systems Program Leader

Phone: 515-294-1854

E-mail: rspirog@iastate.edu, subject: LCSA 2008 RFP - Marketing