



**LEOPOLD CENTER  
FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE**

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LEOPOLD CENTER

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## **Request for pre-proposals (RFP) – Summer 2010**

The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture 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. Each initiative has a separate section in this RFP.

**Note: Special project call planned for ~~fall-2010~~ Spring 2011**

The Leopold Center believes that a focus on stronger and more diverse local and regional collaborations will lead to increased adoption of sustainable practices, new market opportunities, and added incentives for farmers and entrepreneurs. The Center is considering an investment in local and/or regional projects that will create the conditions necessary for increased dialogue and collaboration among diverse farming and community partners. Look for a special call for pre-proposals on this topic **next spring 2011**.

### **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 to include in your pre-proposal?** Please refer to each initiative's RFP section to find the best fit for your pre-proposal, and follow these directions.

- Prepare a **two- or three-page concept paper** containing the following group of **required** elements.

- Separate **cover page** with project title, complete contact information for the principal investigator including mailing address, phone number and email address, dollar request per year, and the initiative area—ecology, marketing and food systems, or policy—that best fits your pre-proposal. Do not count the cover page as part of your page total.
- **Focus areas**—How does your pre-proposal fit within one or more focus areas for one of the initiatives?
- **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.
- **Outcomes**—What will be the outcomes, both end-of-project and long-term, if you achieve your objectives?
- **Outreach**—How (and with whom) will you share project results?
- **Budget** estimate and brief financial explanation by calendar year, starting February 15, 2011. Funding may be for multiple years, depending on initiative.
  - Estimate total expenses and itemize by: Salary and Benefits; Equipment/Supplies/Materials; Travel; Subcontracts/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.

(Note: Letters of support are not a consideration at the pre-proposal stage.)

**How to submit?** An electronic copy (sent via e-mail or delivered on a CD) or one hard copy must be received by **5:00 p.m., Monday, August 16, 2010**. No faxes, please. The electronic version should be a .doc or .txt file or contained within the body of the e-mail. Be sure to combine all elements of your pre-proposal into **one** document. Send your copy to the appropriate contact person listed in this 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. Pre-proposals will be screened for adherence to requirements found in this RFP as well as economic, environmental, and community/social sustainability. The Center will notify all applicants in late September 2010 as to whether they will be invited to submit a full proposal. Full proposals will be due November 8, and funding decisions made by late January 2011.

#### **Other pre-proposal ideas?**

Other innovative research or education ideas not fitting specific focus areas will be considered as part of the competitive grant process. Research and/or demonstration projects in areas critical to the Center's legislative mission are highly desirable. It is highly recommended, however, that you contact the appropriate initiative program leader *prior* to submitting the pre-proposal to discuss any ideas that are outside the focus area topics in this RFP.

## **Ecology Initiative**

### **(Contact: Lois Wright Morton)**

#### **Ecology Initiative RFP objective:**

Address agricultural risks from higher oil prices, climate instability and economic fluctuations through ecosystem approaches that develop diversified systems, practices, measures or metrics that encourage transitioning from highly specialized one- or two-product systems to more resilient working farms and landscapes, resulting in:

- more living roots in the ground,
- management for multiple benefits, and
- increased profit options for farmers.

#### **Focus areas for Ecological Systems Initiative Summer 2010 RFP:**

- ❖ Research that develops new or improves existing agricultural practices or policy and enables Iowa farmers to adapt to a future with expensive energy and a variable climate.
- ❖ Economically actionable farming strategies that keep living roots in the ground for longer periods of the year.
- ❖ Putting “proof of concept” on-the-ground: demonstration/research and/or education projects for moving from classic corn/soybean rotations to more diversified farming systems. (One example, three- to four-year low external input rotations shown at [www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/eco\\_files/ground/systems.html](http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/eco_files/ground/systems.html)).
- ❖ Farmer, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Extension, and technical service provider-friendly decision making tools that assess year-to-year planting, timing and yield tradeoffs against soil erosion and water benefits for operations transitioning to cover crops with corn and soybean.
- ❖ Practical ways of measuring and/or practical strategies for improving soil health on working farms in Iowa. Practical methods that help farms restore natural ecosystem function and minimize external inputs. (A measure of success might be increased organic matter, pore space, and erosion resistance.)

#### **Ecological Systems Initiative outcomes**

*Funded projects will deliver a broad range of measurable outcomes including (but not limited to):*

##### **End-of-project outcomes**

- Reductions in net energy and increased profitability in Iowa farming systems.
- Increase in viable management options for cover crops, perennials and more diversified

- farming systems.
- Increased producer, landowner and policy maker knowledge of conservation practice costs and benefits.
- Improved farmer accessibility to strategies and practices that improve soil health, restore biodiversity and maintain hydrologic integrity.
- Increased point of contact water infiltration on the landscape.

#### **Long-term outcomes**

- Improved resilience for farms facing increasing energy and input costs and climate destabilization.
- Improved carbon sequestration and landscape biodiversity.
- Reduced movement of sediment, nutrients, and pesticides to surface in groundwater.
- Increased levels of soil organic matter and water holding capacity on Iowa farms.
- Nationally recognized and rewarded (policy-enabled) farm/landscape designs (i.e., Bear Creek, [www.buffer.forestry.iastate.edu/HTML/demosites.html](http://www.buffer.forestry.iastate.edu/HTML/demosites.html)).

#### **Important considerations:**

Preference will be given to pre-proposals:

- Articulating how the proposed work addresses multiple focus areas listed in this RFP.
- Representing regions outside the Des Moines Lobe. We are interested in ecologically appropriate regional initiatives, planning or implementation that give consideration to ecological regions and improve opportunities for farmers.
- Showing active participation in an ongoing (or formation of a new) working group, network, consortium or community of practice that leverages the learning of diverse group participants to benefit farmers and communities while increasing diversity of the landscape.
  - If your proposal includes grass, forage, or grazing elements; agroforestry; cover crops; and/or on-farm energy; please visit [www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/eco\\_files/groups.htm](http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/eco_files/groups.htm) to familiarize yourself with the related working groups, described briefly below, as we will want you to participate in these groups.
  - For on-farm energy background, please visit [www.ceee.uni.edu/Home/Programs/Energy/Energy/FarmEnergyWorkingGroup.aspx](http://www.ceee.uni.edu/Home/Programs/Energy/Energy/FarmEnergyWorkingGroup.aspx).
- Providing user-friendly indicators, measures or metrics that look at changes in quality and function of farm soil and/or water resources.

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### **Leopold Center Cross-Initiative Working Groups linked to the Ecology Initiative**

#### **Grass-Based Livestock Working Group (initiated 2008))**

- This working group functions across all three Leopold Center initiatives and includes grass-based farm and food businesses and the outreach professionals who support them in Iowa.

Its aim is to promote sustainable, diverse grass-based livestock production, enhanced environmental services, and niche marketing of grass-based products.

**Farm Energy Working Group**

- This working group, led by the UNI Center for Energy and Environmental Education in collaboration with the National Center for Appropriate Technology, supports the implementation of a variety of energy conservation, efficiency and renewable energy practices to meet the needs of Iowa's small and mid-sized farms

**Mid-American Agroforestry Working Group (initiated 2009)**

- The purpose of this multi-partner working group, with members ranging from practitioners to agencies, is to provide an organization for advancing the science, practice and adoption of agroforestry by landowners and natural resource managers in the Midwest region of the United States

**Questions about your Ecology pre-proposal?**

Contact: Lois Wright Morton, Director and Interim Ecology Initiative Leader

Phone: 515-294-3711

E-mail: [lwmorton@iastate.edu](mailto:lwmorton@iastate.edu), subject line: LCSA 2010 RFP – Ecology

## **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 and communities to retain more of the value for energy, food, or fiber produced.
- Support education, conduct research, and facilitate partnerships to increase investment and support of local and regional food, fiber, and energy enterprises.
- Conduct research and education to address various challenges that impede farmers and farmer networks from being equal partners in energy-, food- or fiber-based value chains.

#### **Focus areas for Marketing and Food Systems Initiative Summer 2010 RFP:**

- Projects that help initiate new or contribute to existing Iowa-based, multi-organizational working groups based on farmer and community needs and documented challenges in food, fiber, or energy enterprises. Projects that support or complement the work of existing Value Chain Partnerships\* (see descriptions that follow this section) working groups are a key part of this focus area.
- Research, demonstration, and education to increase market opportunities, enhance profitability, and reduce risk for farmers aggregating supply from farmer networks to sell to larger volume buyers.
- Research into the community, 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 enhance consumer choice of these foods.
- Research that examines energy efficiencies, greenhouse gas emissions, value-adding technologies, food safety, producer marketing networks, labor markets, and other economic, environmental and community factors that impact food, fiber, and energy value chains.
- Strategies that increase access to healthy, nutritious, affordable local food that is produced using principles of sustainable agriculture for students in Iowa's elementary and secondary schools and colleges as well as for families coping with economic hardship.

#### **Marketing and Food Systems Initiative outcomes**

*Funded projects will deliver a broad range of measurable outcomes including (but not limited to):*

##### **End-of-project outcomes**

- Increased farmer and new organizational participation in the Iowa Network for Food and Agriculture Working Groups (Value Chain Partnerships) and other Iowa or regional networks that leverage the expertise and learning of diverse group participants to benefit farmers and communities.
- Increased opportunities at reduced risk for farmers to market food, fiber and energy products using more sustainable production practices.

- Iowa farmers understand and take action on weaknesses in their business operations and marketing strategies.

### **Long-term outcomes**

- At least 20 percent of the food served in Iowa educational institutions, hospitals, and all other publicly operated institutions comes from Iowa farms that use more sustainable production practices.
- Profitable Iowa farmer-led businesses and networks significantly contribute to rural and urban economies while conserving and protecting natural resources.
- Increased federal, state, and local investment in community-based and owned food, fiber, and energy enterprises.

### **Important considerations:**

- Pre-proposals that support or complement the work of one of the existing Value Chain Partnerships working groups (see descriptions that follow) are encouraged: To learn more about these groups, go to [www.valuechains.org](http://www.valuechains.org) or contact Rich Pirog at the Leopold Center.
- Please articulate how the proposed work addresses one or more focus areas and the end-of-project and long-term outcomes listed in this RFP. Suggested budget request terms for the initiative are one to two years.
- Pre-proposals should, where appropriate, articulate how the proposed work will build on existing or past Leopold Center projects to create more sustainable food, fiber, and energy enterprises.
- Pre-proposals that respond to documented marketing challenges of new, underserved, and minority farmers and that show strong partnerships across organizations are highly encouraged.

### **\*Value Chain Partnerships – the Iowa Network for Food and Agriculture Working Groups**

Value Chain Partnerships is an Iowa-based network for food and agriculture working groups that strives to deliver social, environmental, and economic benefits to its clients and communities. Network members leverage funding and expertise to identify food system challenges, foster learning and innovation, and implement solutions.

### **Pork Niche Market Working Group (initiated 2001)**

- This working group comprised of Iowa-based niche pork companies and supporting groups. Its aim is to create and maintain more competitive and viable operations for smaller-scale players in the pork sector.

### **Regional Food Systems Working Group (initiated 2003)**

- This working group is comprised of geographically based practitioners and community leaders. Its aim is to increase the investment in and support for local and regional food businesses in Iowa.

**Small Meat Processors Working Group (initiated 2006)**

- This working group is comprised of small meat processors, state agencies, and producer groups. Its aim is to improve the vitality of small-scale meat processing plants in Iowa.

**Fruit and Vegetable Working Group (initiated 2007)**

- This working group is comprised of fruit and vegetable growers and buyers and their assistance providers. Its aim is to build the production, handling, and marketing capacity of Iowa's fruit and vegetable industries.

**Grass-Based Livestock Working Group (initiated 2009)**

- This working group functions across all three Leopold Center initiatives and includes grass-based farm and food businesses and the outreach professionals who support them in Iowa. Its aim is to promote sustainable, diverse grass-based livestock production, enhanced environmental services, and niche marketing of grass-based products.

**Food Access and Health Working Group (initiated 2010)**

- This working group includes a statewide network of food and nutrition assistance program providers focused on establishing a regionally based food system that ameliorates hunger and improves the health of Iowans by increasing access to fresh and nutritious food.

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**Leopold Center Cross-Initiative Working Groups linked to the Marketing and Food Systems Initiative****Grass-Based Livestock Working Group (see description above)****Farm Energy Working Group**

- This working group, led by the UNI Center for Energy and Environmental Education in collaboration with the National Center for Appropriate Technology, supports the implementation of a variety of energy conservation, efficiency and renewable energy practices to meet the needs of Iowa's small and mid-sized farms

**Questions about your Marketing and Food Systems pre-proposal?**

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

Phone: 515-294-1854

E-mail: [rspirog@iastate.edu](mailto:rspirog@iastate.edu), subject: LCSA 2010 RFP - Marketing

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Policy Initiative</b><br/><b>(Contact: Lois Wright Morton)</b></p> |
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## **Policy Initiative Summer 2010 RFP**

### **Focus Areas**

**Please indicate which focus area(s) your pre-proposal primarily addresses.**

- Research to identify policies that create or reduce barriers to sustainability for various sizes and types of farm operations, particularly for those groups that may be underserved at present.
- Research on effectiveness of existing land use policies or policies that would help local and regional governments to encourage enhanced water quality and/or flood mitigation practices.
- Research on local or regional policy that encourages or enhances energy conservation and/or use of renewable energy in agricultural food, feed and fiber systems.
- Research that encourages more effective participation by local or state government and/or farmers in federal farm programs (i.e., carbon credits, market subsidies, etc.)

*Please note:* The Center does not take positions on or advocate for specific legislation. It is our expectation that work in this area will help inform policy makers and stimulate creative thinking about potential policies and the impacts and consequences of those policies.

### **End-of-project outcomes:**

- Increase in number of immediately available incentives offered to help beginning or transitioning farmers get started in agriculture in Iowa
- More farmers, community leaders and policy makers know about and understand the economic impacts of alternative production systems
- More Iowa farmers are accessing and using long-term programs to implement conservation practices developed by conservation agencies and adopted by farmers and landowners
- Greater awareness that policies can help growth of local and regional food commerce in Iowa at the local and state levels

### **Long-term outcomes:**

- Increase in number of policies or practices adopted at local and state levels based on research by the Leopold Center or other sustainable agriculture groups
- Adoption rates of proven alternative practices have increased via creative use of education or incentives
- Knowledge and use of policies that help reduce obstacles to growth of local and regional food commerce have increased in Iowa at the local and state levels

**Important considerations:**

- Please articulate how your proposed work will address one or more of the objectives listed in this RFP.
- Suggested budget request terms are one to two years. Please contact the initiative leader if you are considering something different.
- Emphasis will be placed on pre-proposals with multiple benefits and clearly articulated and measurable outcomes; meaning, there should be at least one, and hopefully more than one, qualitative or quantitative impact that will arise from your project work.

**Questions about your Policy pre-proposal?**

Contact: Lois Wright Morton, Director and Policy Initiative Leader

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E-mail: [lwmorton@iastate.edu](mailto:lwmorton@iastate.edu), subject line: LCSA 2010 RFP - Policy

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