We are pleased to announce a request for proposals for unique project opportunities to develop new programming and resources around themes critical to the sustainability and future of Wisconsin agriculture. The overarching goal of this competitive grants program is to encourage multi-disciplinary research, teaching and outreach innovation that will stimulate new programs and leverage additional resources in the area of food and agricultural systems, while respecting the diversity of Wisconsin agriculture as one of our greatest strengths.

Theme-based projects will build and engage stakeholder networks around the selected theme, build a resource base to address needs and opportunities, align teams of expertise and interests from among existing departments, centers, programs, institutes and external entities, and develop a research and outreach plan. Theme-based projects will also tie stakeholder networks and place-based learning opportunities into undergraduate and graduate education through innovative internships and graduate training – effectively taking the classroom to the state as a reflection of the Wisconsin Idea. Tasks associated with funded projects may be similar to what is expected from competitive planning grant programs, such as the initiation of new conversations and program directions that currently lack cohesive leadership or would benefit from strategic planning and preliminary “seed” research.

The request for theme-based projects is a result of a series of listening sessions and Steering Committee input conducted around the reinvigoration of the Wisconsin Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (WISA). For more background and context for this unique grants program as related to WISA, please read the Phase II report listed under “About WISA”: www.wisa.cals.wisc.edu.

Most importantly, projects will be selected that:

- Are **trans-disciplinary** and implement a **systems approach** to the study of food and agricultural production throughout the supply chain.
- Stimulate **innovative** and **entrepreneurial** relationships within and beyond UW-Madison.
- **Engage stakeholders**, including but not limited to growers, food processors, retailers, public agencies, non-government organizations and citizens.
- Develop or support **farmer/stakeholder networks** as a means of stakeholder-to-stakeholder outreach.
- Focus on **current issues** or **opportunities** in Wisconsin agriculture and food production, and are **nimble** and **adaptable** to a changing society and landscape.
- Clearly describe how the funding will be used to leverage additional funding and/or **stimulate new programming**.
- Are directly related to one or more of the five **USDA priority areas** outlined below.
Potential themes were solicited from stakeholders in an open and transparent process in fall 2010. Stakeholder input is posted on the WISA web page, under "Funding Opportunities": www.wisa.cals.wisc.edu. Additionally, PIs are invited and encouraged to come up with their own themes that would stimulate stakeholder engagement and involve multi-disciplinary teams of colleagues.

Each proposal should include the following components, based on the vision outlined above:

1) **Network building and engagement.** Multi-disciplinary networks of interested parties will be created, including faculty and staff from multiple departments, colleges and programs, students, external stakeholders (i.e. public agency personnel, interested citizens, the agricultural community, and non-government organizations), and county Extension personnel. The networks will serve two primary roles: first, they will provide input and guidance in the project by communicating realistic issues and goals; and second, they will be developed into the outreach arm to disseminate results through stakeholder-to-stakeholder contact and informal educational opportunities. The networks should be engaged in the proposal development and goal prioritization process, and this role should be indicated in the proposal.

2) **Place-based learning and outreach.** Not independent of the networks, the projects will utilize the principles of place-based learning, where experiential learning with the state as the laboratory will be engaged in addition to conventional labs and research stations. Place-based learning and outreach opportunities will test realistic sustainability goals while engaging stakeholders in their own "backyards".

3) **Integration with graduate and undergraduate student education.** Each project will include a Graduate Research Assistantship to assist with the research and outreach associated with each project. The benefits to the project may be rather traditional in terms of graduate student training, but conversely, the experiential learning provided to the student in the form of stakeholder networks, multi-disciplinary expertise and place-based learning will be very unique. Each project will also include an undergraduate internship in each of two years, in which students will be involved in stakeholder communities pertinent to the given issue or opportunity. This experience may be in conjunction with the agricultural production or processing community, with public agencies, with associated non-government organizations, or with county Extension personnel.
**USDA priority areas:**
USDA has recently (2010) identified five national priority areas on which to focus NIFA and other USDA science funds to solve specific problems and demonstrate results. Proposals must clearly relate the work to be completed to one or more of these priority areas.

**Global Food Security and Hunger:** NIFA supports research, education and extension that will boost U.S. agricultural production and improve global capacity to meet the growing food demand. NIFA also fosters innovation in fighting hunger by addressing food security for vulnerable populations.

**Climate Change:** NIFA supports projects that generate knowledge to develop an agriculture system that maintains high productivity in the face of climate changes and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This will help producers to plan and make decisions in adapting to changing environments, sustaining economic vitality, and taking advantage of emerging economic opportunities offered by climate change mitigation technologies.

**Sustainable Energy:** NIFA contributes to the President’s goal of energy independence by supporting science to develop biomass used for biofuels, design optimum forest products and crops for bioenergy production, and produce value-added bio-based industrial products.

**Childhood Obesity:** NIFA supports research to identify effective measures that guide individuals and families to make informed, science-based decisions that will reduce child obesity and improve health.

**Food Safety:** NIFA supports research that results to reduce the incidence of food-borne illnesses and provides a safer food supply by: eliminating causes of microbial contamination and antimicrobial resistance; educating consumer and food safety professionals; and developing food processing technologies to improve food safety.

**Theme and proposal selection process:**
The theme and project selection process will be as unique as the funded project opportunities and will ensure stakeholder engagement and relevance while honoring faculty governance:

1. Themes were suggested in an open and transparent solicitation from Wisconsin stakeholders as outlined above. Additionally, PIs are encouraged to propose their own theme ideas that would include multidisciplinary teams of stakeholders and colleagues.
2. Potential theme leaders will submit project proposals through this current call.
3. The CALS Research Advisory Committee, in consultation with WISA leadership, will select five projects for funding.
Resources provided to theme-based leaders:
The following resource package will be provided, each year for two years, to each theme-based leader:

1. One 50% Graduate Research Assistant, including fringe benefits. Tuition Remission could be accommodated via salary savings if Hatch funds are used to support the PI and Co-PI salary.
2. Support for one undergraduate student intern ($4,000 in hourly pay plus fringe benefits).
3. $1,000 for in-state travel directly related and documentable to the funded project.

It is anticipated, contingent on federal budget resolution and USDA approval, that five theme-based projects will be chosen in this process. Funding will be available for two years, from May 1, 2011 through April 30, 2013. Proposals may be submitted by those with principal investigator status in the College of Agricultural & Life Sciences, but collaboration across colleges is encouraged.

Submission deadline: February 1, 2011 by 4:30PM to WAES Office via WISPER, with departmental approval. The WISPER record should be routed to Angela Seitler.

The required proposal format is included below. Deviations from this format will not be considered.

Please contact me with any questions pertinent to this call for proposals.

Sincerely,

Jed Colquhoun
Director of Agricultural Systems Programming,
College of Agricultural & Life Sciences
Wisconsin Institute for Sustainable Agriculture:
Call for proposals for theme-based projects

Required proposal format

1. Cover page and 200 word summary (1 page):
   Proposal title
   Theme-based leader and contact information
   Names of participating faculty and staff
   Project summary (In 200 words or less, what theme will be addressed and how? What stakeholder networks will be engaged or developed? How will the project leverage additional new funding or stimulate new programming within the USDA priority areas?)

2. Budget worksheets:
   A budget worksheet must be completed for each year of funding requested, along with a cumulative summary integrated into the cover page. The Excel workbook is available on-line at: http://www.cals.wisc.edu/waes

   The standardized Excel form is designed to expedite preparation of yearly budgets. **Begin by entering data for Year 1.** The project title, principal investigator, etc information on the Year 1 budget worksheet will automatically carry forward onto subsequent years, and the cover page. Category totals on each year will also carry forward onto the cover page. Requests less than 4 years should leave unused years blank (Maximum of 2 years funding allowed in this call for proposals). These Excel documents are required in your submission.

   With the development of the Excel documents, we have attempted to simplify the budget submission process. The RA stipend and fringe rates on the forms are fixed for all years. The fringe rates should remain at the current rate across all years. Tuition remission is not allowed for these budgets and will be paid from the pool of funds generated through salary savings by including 5-10% of the PI and Co-PI's salary in the proposal budget.

3. Background and justification (1 page):
   What current issue or opportunity does the proposed project address, and why is it critical to Wisconsin stakeholders? How is this project pertinent to the USDA priority areas? Include how this funding will be used to "seed" or build other opportunities, funding, and/or programming. If the information derived from the proposed work will be used to leverage other funding, please name sources for future funding applications.

4. Proposal body (3 pages maximum):
   Objectives and impact: what does your team intend to accomplish during the project period, and what is the tangible impact of completing these objectives?
Methods: describe the methods used to achieve the above objectives, including a timeline and appropriate references.

Network building and engagement: list multi-disciplinary team members and stakeholder involvement, including affiliation and responsibilities for the proposed project. Please indicate the role of the network in the proposal development.

Place-based learning and outreach: describe where the project will take place.

Integration with graduate and undergraduate education: indicate the role of students in the project.

5. Curriculum vitae (2 pages):
   Please provide a 2-page CV for the theme-based project PIs and Co-PIs, listing recent publications, service and other contributions relevant to the theme area.

6. Compliance
   Approved projects require all compliance issues to be addressed with approvals for human subjects, animal care, and biological safety.