



Request for pre-proposals (RFP) – Summer 2004

Leopold Center Marketing and Food Systems Initiative

The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture explores and cultivates alternatives that secure healthier people and landscapes in Iowa and the nation. The Center is committed to supporting research and education that will make agriculture more sustainable. The Center accomplishes its work through three initiatives: *ecology, marketing and food systems, and policy*. For more information about the three initiatives, please go to www.leopold.iastate.edu. **This RFP is for the Center's Marketing and Food Systems Initiative.**

The Marketing and Food Systems initiative will:

- Research and test new marketing strategies and business structures that allow Iowa's small and midsize producers to retain more of the value for food, fiber, or energy produced with high standards of environmental and community stewardship.
- Conduct research and education to address challenges that impede farmers from fully sharing in the risks and rewards of food, fiber, or energy-based value chains.*
- Research and document economic, environmental, and community impacts of local and regional food, fiber, and energy value chains and determine best how farmers and other groups can use this information in their market messages.

Areas of Interest: We are seeking pre-proposals that directly address these topics:

- Integrated technical and educational programs that support farmer and business groups in meeting the increased demand for food, fiber, and energy produced using the principles of sustainable agriculture. These programs should address the challenges existing across the value chain that hinder farmer and business groups from maintaining and expanding their market bases. Program content should include but not be limited to information on cost of production, quality assurance, producer certification, access to capital, business planning, transportation/logistics, and organization and governance structures.
- Documentation of the existing or potential economic, environmental, and community impacts of local and regional food production and/or processing in Iowa. This could be done on a community, county, watershed, or regional basis. Investigations of consumer acceptance and understanding of the community, economic, environmental, and food security benefits should be integrated into these efforts.
- Investigation of consumer interest and understanding regarding existing or new food or fiber ecolabels, including research that documents the demographic and ethnographic profiles of midwestern consumers who are currently purchasing these products.
- Case studies that document the business and market relationships of food or fiber-based enterprises where farmers share more equitably in the risks and rewards of the value chain.
- Programs that develop the marketing, entrepreneurship, and business planning skills of small and midsize Iowa farmers to allow them to transition from commodity farming and participate in highly differentiated value chains where the production practices are based on the principles of sustainable agriculture.
- Market research on economic potential of alternative crop and/or livestock enterprises for midsize farmers (where products are grown/raised using the principles of sustainable agriculture).

* A value chain is a network of companies or players working together to satisfy market demands for a particular product.

- Examination of Iowa's cultural, ecological, and historical food and agricultural background in order to assess the market potential of geographical-based food products, which are sometimes referred to as food products with a "taste of place." Research on which geographic-based traits that Iowa and midwestern consumers best respond to could be integrated with these efforts or conducted separately.
- Sensory, nutrient, and quality analysis research of local, regional, and other highly differentiated foods that are produced using principles of sustainable agriculture.

Other innovative market and food systems research or education ideas not fitting the areas of interest topics will be considered. It is required, however, that you contact the Center *prior* to submitting the pre-proposal to discuss these ideas (if they are outside the area of interest topics in this RFP).

Important information about participating in this 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); there are no restrictions on project partners or collaborators.

Procedure: Send a one- or two-page concept paper containing the following:

- Separate cover page with project title, contact information for the principal investigator, and dollar request (do not count the cover page or letters of support as part of your page total)
- Objectives (must be clearly defined and measurable)
- Strategies (activities that will help you achieve project objectives)
- Explanation of how your concept fits within one or more of the areas of interest
- Outcomes (narrative of what will happen short and intermediate term if you achieve your objectives)
- Evaluation statement (briefly state how you will determine if you have achieved your objectives)
- Partners (list the names of each partnering/collaborating organization and briefly state their roles)
- Budget (please itemize and briefly explain each category)

Please be clear and concise in writing your pre-proposal. Cite any other financial resources you already have or expect to have to conduct the work. Budget requests for Leopold Center funding can be for one or two years. Project collaborations with other organizations or partners in the value chain are strongly encouraged; letters documenting partner support are encouraged. For a list of current Marketing Initiative-funded projects, please go to: http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/marketing_files/grant_profiles.htm or call the Center for a copy.

What happens after submission: An invitation to submit a full proposal will be based upon review of all the marketing and food systems pre-proposals received. The Center will notify all applicants in late September 2004 as to whether they will be invited to submit a full proposal. If funded, projects could begin in December 2004.

Ten copies of your pre-proposal document and an electronic copy must be received by 5 p.m. Tuesday, August 24, 2004. No faxes, please. Electronic version should be a file attachment in Microsoft Word or contained within the body of the e-mail. Send both paper and electronic versions to:

Leopold Center Marketing and Food Systems Initiative Pre-proposal

209 Curtiss Hall - Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa 50011-1050

E-mail: rspirog@iastate.edu

Questions about your Marketing and Food Systems pre-proposal?

Contact: Rich Pirog, Marketing and Food Systems Program Leader

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