



**LEOPOLD CENTER
FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE**

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Request for pre-proposals (RFP) – Summer 2009

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.

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.

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 Iowa during the short and intermediate term if you achieve your objectives?
- **Outreach**—How (and with whom) will you share project results?
- **Evaluation**—How will you determine if you have achieved your objectives?

- **Budget** estimate and brief financial explanation by calendar year, starting February 1, 2010. 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 a CD) *or* one hard copy must be received by **5:00 p.m., Wednesday, August 19, 2009**. 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. Pre-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 2009 as to whether they will be invited to submit a full proposal. Full proposals will be due in early November, and funding decisions made by mid-January 2010.

Ecology Initiative **(Contact: Jeri Neal)**

Ecology Initiative RFP Objective:

Research, education, research/demonstration and development of practices, measures or metrics that encourage transitioning from highly specialized one- or two-product systems that are likely to be more at risk from higher oil prices, climate instability and economic fluctuations, to more resilient working farms and landscapes that have more roots in the ground, are managed for multiple benefits, and provide more opportunities for farmers.

Focus Areas for Ecology Initiative Summer 2009 RFP:

- Providing models for Iowa agro-ecological farms; that is “farms for the high-priced oil, climate-variable future”
- Practices and management for putting more ‘living roots in the ground’ and providing living cover on the ground for more of the year
- Demonstrations of ‘smart diversity;’ that is, on-farm use of increased biological diversity to increase net profitability, increase carbon capture and improve energy use ratios
- Practices and management for improving soil quality on working farms, for example, improving water holding capacity (*greater moisture absorption and holding capacity*); increasing pore space for air and water circulation and ease of root penetration in soils, improving erosion resistance, increasing organic matter.

Expected Two-Stage Outcomes of Funded Projects:

Immediate -- Farming systems knowledge that delivers a broad range of measurable results directly leading to one or more of these outcomes:

- ♦ Reduced on-farm net energy use and increased net profitability
- ♦ Reduced sediment movement, improved soil health and function, and cleaner water
- ♦ Management options for transition to inclusion of more continuous living cover and perennials, and/or
- ♦ Models for successfully managing practices that provide a transition to a more diverse farming operation (multiple-animal species, ‘third’ crops, trees, rotations, legume inter-seeding, in forages and double-cropping).

Longer term -- Knowledge that directly contributes to these changes in Iowa agricultural systems and in the Iowa landscape:

- ♦ Improved quality and sufficiency of surface and groundwater resources in agricultural, rural and urban watersheds in Iowa,
- ♦ Incorporation of more perennial plants, continuous living cover and agricultural diversity in Iowa agricultural landscapes, and
- ♦ Increased profit potential and improvements in soil tilth and function through integration of people, biodiversity and natural resource management (multifunctional agriculture).

Important considerations:

Preference **will be given** to pre-proposals that:

- Articulate how the proposed work addresses one or more of the focus areas listed in this RFP. Suggested budget request terms for the initiative are one to three years.
- Show 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, communities while increasing diversity of the landscape. If your proposal involves grass, forage, or grazing, please visit the Center’s web site to learn about the Grass-Based Livestock Working Group (www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/eco_files/groups.htm) as we will want you to participate in this group. If your proposal is focused on energy work, please be aware that we have a new farm energy working group and that depending on relevance and fit, we may want to you to participate in this working group.
- Provide indicators, measures or metrics that look at changes in quality and function of farm soil and/or water resources.
- Offer clearly described and measurable outcomes; meaning, there is at least one, and hopefully more than one, qualitative or quantitative impact that will arise from your project work.

Are you thinking of something different, innovative and/or unique? We welcome your ideas, and other innovative ecology research or education ideas not fitting the specific focus areas will be considered. Be sure to check our ecology active grants list at www.leopold.iastate.edu/compgrants/E2009_new.html. to see if we already have project(s) active in your area of interest. It is highly recommended that you contact the Ecology Initiative program leader *prior* to submitting the pre-proposal to discuss any ideas that are outside the area of interest topics in this RFP.

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

Grass-Based Livestock Working Group

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 midsize farms.

Questions about your Ecology pre-proposal?

Contact: Jeri Neal, Ecology Program Leader

Phone: 515-294-5610

E-mail: wink@iastate.edu, subject line: LCSA 2009 RFP Ecolog

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 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 2009 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 page 6 in the RFP) working groups are a key part of this focus area.
- 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, new technologies, and other environmental and social factors that impact food, fiber, and energy value chains.
- Research, demonstration, and education to increase market opportunities and reduce risk for new, immigrant, and transitioning farmers as well as farmers aggregating supply from farmer networks to sell to larger volume buyers.
- Strategies that increase access to healthy, nutritious, affordable local food that is produced using principles of sustainable agriculture for children in Iowa's elementary and secondary schools and colleges, as well as 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):

- Increased participation in an ongoing or new working group or network that leverages the learning of diverse group participants to benefit farmers and communities;
- Profitable farmer-led businesses and networks that significantly contribute to the health and well-being of Iowans in rural and urban communities;
- 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;
- Increased understanding of distinguishing characteristics of local and regional foods differentiated by more sustainable production practices; and
- 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 existing Value Chain Partnerships working groups (see text below) are encouraged: 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, explain 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 strong partnerships across organizations are recommended.
- ▶ 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.

***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 is 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 2008 – also a Leopold cross-initiative group)

- 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.

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 midsize farms.

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 line: LCSA 2009 RFP – Marketing

Policy Initiative **(Contact: Jerry DeWitt)**

Policy Initiative Objectives:

- Link potential local, state, or regional policies to enhanced sustainability of natural resources.
- Provide basic research or benchmark data analysis needed to help assess or implement possible new local or state policies and alternatives for Iowa.

Focus areas for Policy Initiative Summer 2009 RFP:

- Research to identify policies that ease barriers to sustainability at various scales of farm operations.
- Research on effectiveness of existing land use policies or on what policies are needed for local and regional governments to encourage flood mitigation practices or improvements in land preservation and conservation on a watershed basis.
- Local or regional policy that encourages or enhances energy conservation and/or use of renewable energy in agricultural food, feed and fiber systems.

Some examples of local or state policy research ideas:

- Assess the economic impacts of alternative or integrated production systems.
- Look at policies that provide conservation and/or marketing incentives that meet sustainability criteria.
- Assess the benefits to the (local) community and society of responsible natural resource stewardship.
- Explore policy options to encourage innovations and/or alternatives in agricultural energy production and use.
- Survey (or assess costs of) potential land use policies or practices that would mitigate effects of unprecedented climate events on a watershed basis.
- Examine policy options that promote the sustainable production of foods offering healthier choices for consumers.
- Weigh the benefits of regulatory versus incentive-based options for adoption of conservation or water quality practices.

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.

Possible outcomes for research:

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

- Data that will help policymakers formulate state, local, or regional agricultural policy measures.
- Analyses that inform and educate policymakers and the public about the impacts of policies within the community, area, or state.
- Background and analysis *both* are provided on a specific policy option.
- Adoption of new state or local policies informed by Leopold Center research.

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.

Other pre-proposal ideas?

Other innovative policy ideas not fitting the specific focus areas will be considered. It is highly recommended, however, that you contact the Policy Initiative program leader *prior* to submitting the pre-proposal to discuss any ideas that are outside the area of interest topics in this RFP.

Questions about your Policy pre-proposal?

Contact: Jerry DeWitt, Director and Policy Program Leader

Phone: 515-294-3711

E-mail: jdewitt@iastate.edu, subject line: LCSA 2009 RFP - Policy

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