



**LEOPOLD CENTER
FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE**

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LEOPOLD CENTER

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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 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/comprants/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 Ecology