Tips for Developing and Implementing WAMS Projects

This tip sheet was developed as a resource to help applicants develop and implement WAMS Projects. It should be used as an additional resource to the "General Grant Writing Tips for Success" document.

WAMS competitive grants programs support projects in research and extension that will increase the participation of women and underrepresented minorities from rural areas in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Fields that address the priority areas <vv> identified by the Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

• *Research activity* means a scientific investigation or inquiry which results in the generation of knowledge.
• *Extension Activity* means a series of educational activities with identified learning objectives that deliver science-based knowledge to people outside of the traditional classroom, enabling them to make practical decisions and contribute within the STEM work force.

The following tips are intended to aid in the process of developing and implementing WAMS Projects. Use of the Logic Model Planning Process is recommended to assist applicants in developing their projects – see
http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evallogicmodel.html.

WAMS Project Area Identification:
Aim for high potential impact and significant public benefit from increased participation of Women and Minorities in STEM Fields related to USDA mission areas in agriculture, the environment, human health and well being, and communities
- Address current data/knowledge gaps/STEM skill level needed in the work force
- Identify the beneficiaries for the proposed project
- Identify goals and possible positive outcomes by evaluating impacts on learning, actions and conditions
    - *Learning* (awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills, opinions, aspirations, motivations)
    - *Action* (behavior, practice, decisions, policies, social action)
    - *Conditions* (social, economic, civic, environmental)
- Match the objectives of the proposed WAMS project to the published Request for Applications for the WAMS Grant Program

Leverage Collaborations
Team Building:
- Build synergistic collaborations representative of the anticipated impacts for the proposed WAMS project
Design an interdisciplinary team and clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of each team member
Build on existing partnerships while allowing new alliances to be formed
Include collaborators that are trusted by and representative of the stakeholder community
Recognize the importance of diversity within the team
Ensure proper balance relative to fields of expertise and organizations

Stakeholder Input:
- Identify key stakeholders
- Include stakeholders early and often
  o To identify the problem
  o To develop the project
  o To evaluate progress
- Create a stakeholder advisory committee
- Maintain constant and effective communication with stakeholders
- Substantial involvement of stakeholders will help to ensure positive return on investment of public dollars

Project Development
- Begin early! WAMS projects can be as simple or complex as the proposer plans
- Invest time to develop clear measurable objectives, with aligned activities to result in positive measurable outcomes to meet the purpose and goals of the WAMS Grant Program
- Invest in face-to-face meetings for project planning/proposal writing
- Define and document the extent of a problem
- Identify existing resources
- Consider how the solutions will be implemented
- Clearly identify and involve information providers that advise end users on implementation of new knowledge
- Establish measures of project performance and supporting evaluations
- Include mechanisms to capture new knowledge in sustained activities that have impact beyond the life of the project
- Create a feasible approach to achieve WAMS project success

Writing the Proposal
- Ensure all collaborating members are involved from the beginning of project development
- Represent research, and extension functions in the WAMS project objectives
- Address the WAMS Grant Program evaluation criteria
- Identify expenses for all project activities
- Clearly identify the stakeholder community and their involvement in the project (include letters of support when appropriate)

Implementing the Project
- **Maintaining the Collaboration**
  o Regular project meetings of collaborators (at minimum, semi-annual meetings)
  o Mini team meetings at conferences, etc.
  o Regularly scheduled conference calls
  o Regular e-mail correspondence

- **Project Management**
  o Clearly stipulate roles of members in the collaboration, including identification of project leader(s)
  o Ensure that administrative and management strategies are clearly articulated

- Allow for transparency in budget issues
- Create a realistic agenda and timeframe for delivery of WAMS Grant Program goals
- Develop coordination strategy to enhance accountability for results through communication, data sharing, reporting, etc.
- Establish a protocol to continuously report progress to members in the collaboration
- Include all members in the development of progress reports to ensure that all project components receive appropriate recognition for accomplishments