

Extension Education Symposium: Does Extension Have a Future in Today's Agriculture?

732 National Science Foundation outreach: A non-traditional model. S. Ellis,* *Clemson University, Clemson, SC.*

Agricultural issues emphasized by extension personnel are obviously well-aligned with the mission of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). But there are also substantial areas of overlap between missions of the National Science Foundation (NSF) and extension groups. Both groups seek to expand the pool of scientifically literate residents that can apply scientific advances to improve the health, prosperity, welfare, and security of the US. Both groups also support adult learners with interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) topics. So, while the NSF does not have a singular focus on agricultural issues, there are opportunities for Extension personnel to extend, improve, and adapt their practices with NSF support. As an example, a typical extension presentation might be directed toward a crowd of adult learners with common STEM interests (e.g., entomology or economics) but with varied educational backgrounds. Questions related to the effectiveness of curricular design, pedagogy or andragogy approaches, and outcomes assessment that are the mainstay of education

researchers are just as valid and important for Extension personnel. The opportunity to involve Extension program participants as study subjects could improve our understanding of adult learning and lead to improvements in Extension service offerings. Another example of the potential to align Extension activities with NSF priority areas is in the Broader Impacts domain. All NSF proposals are rated for 2 merit criteria: intellectual merit and broader impacts. The broader impacts of a NSF research project frequently include public outreach and preparation of educational materials. Extension offerings that include similar activities are already exceptionally well-aligned with the NSF goals for broader impacts. Having access to producers, commodity groups, youth groups, and other interested consumers may thus provide a distinct advantage to Extension personnel who lead or collaborate on NSF research projects in either the physical or social science domains. The challenge is to recognize complementary or synergistic funding opportunities for which Extension personnel and their resources are at a competitive advantage.

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