

2007 INTERNAL REVIEW for Economic and Business Decision Making Portfolio

I. Background

This document was prepared in August 2007 as the internal review of Economic and Business Decision-Making Portfolio for Fiscal Year 2007. It contains updates to the portfolio, responses to the comments of the external panel review and changes to criteria scores with accompanying justifications. This document is a result of the efforts of the National Program Leaders and Program Specialists from the Economic and Community Systems Unit and cooperating units in collaboration with CSREES Office of Planning and Accountability.

- **The following knowledge areas (KAs) are included in the Economic and Business Decision-Making Portfolio:**
 - 134: Outdoor Recreation
 - 602: Business Management, Finance and Taxation
 - 608: Community Resource Planning and Development
 - 609: Economic Theory and Methods
 - 901: Program and Project Design and Statistics
 - 902: Administration of Projects and Programs

Knowledge Area 903 (Education, Communication and Information Delivery) has moved to a stand-alone portfolio for Education (as recommended by the 2006 External Review).

- **The following are included as secondary KAs in this portfolio:**
 - 601: Economics of Agricultural Production and Farm Management
 - 610: Domestic Policy Analysis
 - 803: Sociological and Technological Change Affecting Individuals, Families, and Communities

- **Portfolio reviews:**

External Review: January, 2006

Internal review: August, 2007

- **Portfolio score from the PREP in February, 2006: 84**
- **Portfolio score for annual internal review in August, 2007: 90**

The portfolio received an overall score of 84 from the panel in the 2006 PREP. Table I-2 below shows the breakdown of scores for different questions and criteria.

Table I-2. Scoring of 2006 PREP Expert Panel			
Criteria	Recommendations imported from the External Panel Recommendations	Panel Score	2007 Score
Relevance			
1. Scope		3	3
2. Focus		2	2.5
3. Emerging Issues		2	2.5
4. Integration		3	3
5. Multi-disciplinary		2	2
Quality			
1. Significance		3	3
2. Stakeholder		3	3
3. Alignment		2	2.5
4. Methodology		3	3
Performance			
1. Productivity		3	3
2. Comprehensiveness		3	3
3. Timeliness		2	2
4. Agency guidance		1	2
5. Accountability		2	2
Overall score		84	90

II. PREP Report Summary and Specific Panel Recommendations

The panel recognized the tremendous importance of the issues facing rural America addressed by this portfolio, and observed that the programs in this area are severely under-funded, even in relation to other similar program areas. The panel was impressed with the overall relevance, quality and performance of the portfolio, and with the efforts of the staff of the Economic and Community Systems Unit, the Planning and Accountability Unit, and the NPLs from other units working on this portfolio. Specific recommendations are addressed below in section IV.

III. CSREES response to PREP recommendations that cross all portfolios

In response to directives from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) of the President, CSREES implemented the Portfolio Review Expert Panel (PREP) process to systematically review its progress in achieving its mission. Since this process began in 2003, fourteen expert review panels have been convened and each has published a report offering recommendations and guidance. These external reviews occur on a rolling five-year basis. In the four off years an internal panel is assembled to examine how well CSREES is addressing the expert panel's recommendations. These internal reports are crafted to specifically address the issues raised for a particular portfolio; however, despite the fact that the expert reports were all written independent of one another on portfolios comprised of very different subject matter, several themes common to the set of review reports have emerged. This set of issues has repeatedly been identified by expert panels and requires an agency-wide response. The agency has taken a series of steps to effectively respond to those overarching issues.

Issue 1: Getting Credit When Credit is Due

For the most part panelists were complimentary when examples showing partnerships and leveraging of funds were used. However, panelists saw a strong need for CSREES to better assert itself and its name into the reporting process. Panelists believed that principal investigators who conduct the research, education and extension activities funded by CSREES often do not highlight the contributions made by CSREES. Multiple panel reports suggested CSREES better monitor reports of its funding and ensure that the agency is properly credited. Many panelists were unaware of the breadth of CSREES activities and believe their lack of knowledge is partly a result of CSREES not receiving credit in publications and other material made possible by CSREES funding.

Issue 1: Agency Response:

To address the issue of lack of credit being given to CSREES for funded projects, the Agency implemented several efforts likely to improve this situation in 2005.

First it developed a standard paragraph about CSREES' work and funding that project managers can easily insert into documents, papers and other material funded in part or entirely by CSREES.

Second, the Agency is in the process of implementing the "One Solution" concept. One Solution will allow for the better integration, reporting and publication of CSREES material on the web. In addition, the new Plan of Work (POW), centered on a logic model framework, became operational in June 2006. The logic model framework is discussed in more detail below. Because of the new POW requirements and the POW training conducted by the Office of Planning and Accountability (also described in more detail below), it will be simpler for state and local partners to line up the

work they are doing with agency expenditures. This in turn will make it easier for project managers to cite CSREES contributions when appropriate.

Issue 2: Partnership with Universities

Panelists felt that the concept of partnership was not being adequately presented. Panelists saw a need for more detail to be made available. Questions revolving around long-term planning between the entities were common as were ones that asked how the CSREES mission and goals were being supported through its partnership with universities and vice versa.

Issue 2: Agency Response:

CSREES has taken several steps to strengthen its relationship with university partners. First, to the extent possible, implementing partners will be attending the CSREES strategic development exercise which is intended to help partners and CSREES fully align what is done at the local level. Second, CSREES has realigned the state assignments for its National Program Leaders (NPLs). Each state is now assigned to two specific NPLs. By reducing the number of states on which any individual NPL is asked to concentrate and assigning and training NPLs for this duty, better communication between state and NPLs should occur. Finally, several trainings that focused on the POW were conducted by CSREES in geographic regions throughout the country. A major goal of this training was to better communicate CSREES goals to state leaders which will facilitate better planning between the universities and CSREES.

Issue 3: National Program Leaders

Without exception the portfolio review panels were complimentary of the work being done by NPLs. They believe NPLs have significant responsibility, are experts in the field and do a difficult job admirably. Understanding the specific job functions of NPLs was something that helped panelists in the review process. Panelists did however mention that often times there are gaps in the assignments given to NPLs. Those gaps leave holes in programmatic coverage.

Issue 3: Agency Response:

CSREES values the substantive expertise that NPLs bring to the Agency and therefore requires all NPLs to be experts in their respective fields. Given the budget constraints often times faced by the agency, the agency has not always been able to fund needed positions and had to prioritize its hiring for open positions. In addition, because of the level of expertise CSREES requires of its NPLs, quick hires are not always possible. Often, CSREES is unable to meet the salary demands of those it wishes to hire. It is essential that position gaps not only be filled but that they be filled with the most qualified candidate.

Operating under these constraints and given inevitable staff turnover, gaps will always remain. However, establishing and drawing together multidisciplinary teams required to complete the portfolio reviews has allowed the Agency to identify gaps in program knowledge and ensure that these needs are addressed in a timely fashion. To the extent that specific gaps are mentioned by the expert panels, the urgency to fill them is heightened.

Issue 4: Integration

Lack of integration has been highlighted throughout the panel reviews. While review panelists certainly noted in their reports where they observed instances of integration, almost without fail panel reports sought more documentation in this regard.

Issue 4: Agency Response:

Complex problems require creative and integrated approaches that cut across disciplines and knowledge areas. CSREES has recognized the need for these approaches and has undertaken steps to remedy this situation. Congress has recently mandated that up to twenty-two percent of all NRI funds be put aside specifically for integrated projects. These projects cut across functions as well as disciplines and ensure that future Agency work will be better integrated. In addition, NPLs provided national leadership on the importance of integrating functions and disciplines in their participation in professional associations, multistate research projects, and within their funded programs. Finally, integration is advanced through the portfolio process which requires cooperation across units and programmatic areas.

Issue 5: Extension

While most panels seemed satisfied at the level of discussion that focused on research, the same does not hold true for extension. There was a call for more detail and more outcome examples based upon extension activities. There was a consistent request for more detail regarding not just the activities undertaken by extension but documentation of specific results these activities achieved.

Issue 5: Agency Response:

Outcomes that come about as a result of extension are, by the very nature of the work, more difficult to document than the outcomes of a research project. CSREES has recently shuffled its strategy of assigning NPLs to serve as liaisons for states. In the past, one NPL might serve as a liaison to several states or a region comprised of states. Each state will be assigned two specific NPLs and no NPL will serve as the lead representative to more than two states. This will ensure more attention is paid to extension activities.

In addition CSREES also has been in discussion with partners and they have pledged to do their best to address this issue. The new POW will make extension-based results and reporting a priority. Placing heavy emphasis on logic models by CSREES will have the effect of necessitating the inclusion of extension activities into the state's POWs. This, in turn, will require more reporting on extension activities and allow for improved documentation of extension impact.

Issue 6: Program Evaluation

Panelists were complimentary in that they saw the creation of the Office of Planning and Accountability and portfolio reviews as being the first steps towards more encompassing program evaluation work; however, they emphasized the need to see outcomes and often stated that the scores they gave were partially the result of their own personal experiences rather than specific program outcomes documented in the portfolios. In other words, they know first hand that CSREES is having an impact but would like to see more systematic and comprehensive documentation of this impact in the reports.

Issue 6: Agency Response:

The effective management of programs is at the heart of the work conducted at CSREES and program evaluation is an essential component of effective management. In 2003 the PREP process and subsequent internal reviews were implemented. Over the past three years fourteen portfolios have been reviewed by expert panel members and each year this process improves. NPLs are now familiar with the process and the staff of the Planning and Accountability unit has implemented a systematic process for pulling together the material required for these reports.

Simply managing the process more effectively is not sufficient for raising the level of program evaluations being done on CSREES funded projects to the highest standard. Good program evaluation is a process that requires constant attention by all stakeholders and the agency has focused on building the skill sets of stakeholders in the area of program evaluation. The Office of Planning and Accountability has conducted training in the area of evaluation for both NPLs and for staff working at Land-Grant universities. This training is available electronically and the Office of Planning and Accountability will be working with NPLs to deliver training to those in the field.

The Office of Planning and Accountability is working more closely with individual programs to ensure successful evaluations are developed, implemented and the data analyzed. Senior leadership at CSREES has begun to embrace program evaluation and over the coming years CSREES expects to see state leaders and project directors more effectively report on the outcomes of their programs as they begin to implement more rigorous program evaluation. The new POW system ensures data needed for good program evaluation will be available in the future.

Issue 7: Logic Models

Panelists were consistently impressed with the logic models and the range of their potential applications. They expressed the desire to see the logic model process used by all projects funded by CSREES and hoped not only would NPLs continue to use them in their work but, also, that those conducting the research and implementing extension activities would begin to incorporate them into their work plans.

Issue 7: Agency Response:

Logic models have become a staple of the work being done at CSREES and the Agency has been proactive in promoting the use of logic models to its state partners. Two recent initiatives highlight this. First, in 2005, the POW reporting system into which states submit descriptions of their accomplishments was completely revamped. The new reporting system now closely matches the logic models being used in portfolio reports. Beginning in fiscal year 2007, states will be required to enter all of the following components of a standard logic model. These components include describing the following:

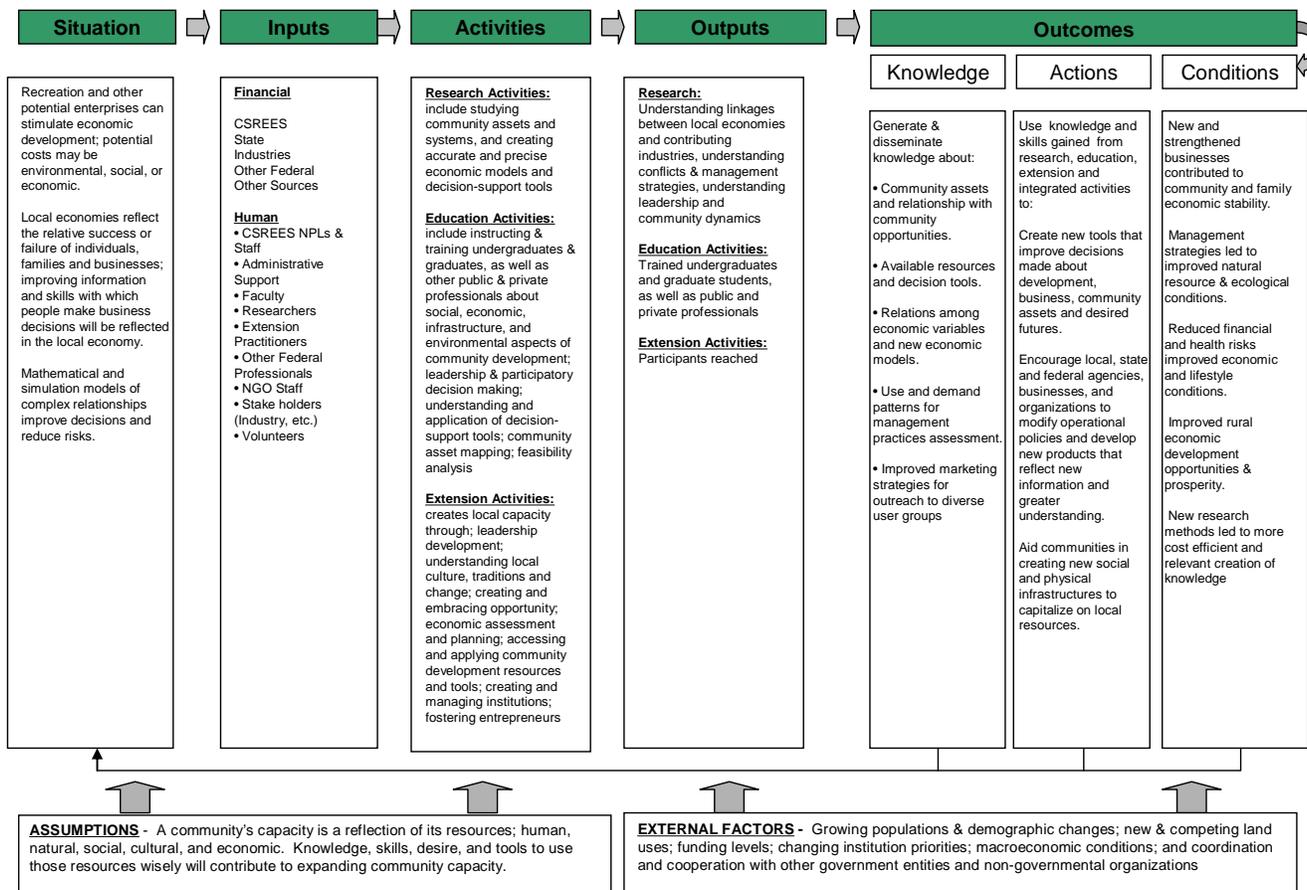
- Program Situation
- Program Assumption
- Program Long Term Goals
- Program Inputs which include both monetary and staffing
- Program Output which include such things as patents
- Short Term Outcome Goals
- Medium Term Outcome Goals
- Long Term Outcome Goals
- External Factors
- Target Audience

The system is now operational and states were required to begin using it by June of 2006. By requiring the inclusion of the data components listed above states are in essence, creating a logic model that CSREES believes will help improve both program management and outcome reporting. Please note a sample logic model has been included in Appendix A.

The second recent initiative by CSREES regarding logic models concerns a set of training sessions conducted by Planning and Accountability staff. In October and November of 2005 four separate training sessions were held in Monterrey, California, Lincoln, Nebraska, Washington D.C. and Charleston, South Carolina. More than 200 people representing land-grant universities attended these sessions where they were given training in logic model creation, program planning, and evaluation. In addition, two training sessions were provided to NPLs in December 2005 and January 2006 to further familiarize them with the logic model process. Ultimately it is hoped these representatives will pass on to others in the Land-Grant system what they learned about logic models thus creating a network of individuals utilizing the same general approach to strategic planning. These materials also have been made available to the public on the CSREES website.

NPLs who manage CSREES regionally structured programs have encouraged their partners and grantees in research and extension to incorporate logic models in their work plans. Logic models are in place or are being developed at the regional level and state partners of these programs are being encouraged to use logic models. This is helping to establish the network of individuals approaching strategic planning and reporting in the same manner.

Expand Economic Opportunities Through Economic and Business Decision Making Portfolio 2.1



Version 1.2

IV. National Program Leader’s response to PREP recommendations regarding Economic and Business Decision-Making Portfolio

Members of the team for Economic and Business Decision-Making Portfolio include:

Jill	Auburn	National Program Leader	Economic and Community Systems
Antonio	McLaren	Program Specialist	Economic and Community Systems
Sally	Maggard	National Program Leader	Economic and Community Systems
Kristen	Grifka	Program Specialist	Economic and Community Systems
Fen	Hunt	National Program Leader	Economic and Community Systems
Siva	Sureshwaran	National Program Leader	Competitive Programs
Pat	Hipple	National Program Leader	Economic and Community Systems
Janie	Hipp	National Program Leader	Economic and Community Systems
Henry	Bahn	National Program Leader	Economic and Community Systems
Maurice	Dorsey	National Program Leader	Economic and Community Systems
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Djimé	Adoum	Planning and Evaluation Leader	Office of Planning and Accountability
Tekila	King	Program Analyst	Office of Planning and Accountability
Catalino	Blanche	National Program Leader	Natural Resources and Environment
Elizabeth	Tuckermanty	National Program Leader	Competitive Programs

The team identified the following set of issues that were specifically raised within the portfolio review and prepared the following set of responses. (Words in italics are direct quotations or close paraphrasing of the external review panel’s report.)

Relevance

The review panel finds the documentation contained in the self-examination report to represent a highly relevant body of work related to the creation and transfer of knowledge about economic and business and community development decision-making that leads to expanded economic opportunities in rural America. Examples were presented wherein a problem is traced from initial description through conception, development, and application, thus providing sufficient evidence to indicate real problems were solved.

1.1 Scope

While several of the KAs may be somewhat limited in scope, others are appropriately broad and effective, resulting in an overall balance deemed to be exceptional. However, the panel finds that the scope of the portfolio might be artificially limited because of the narrow interpretation of specific KAs. Its scope would be better communicated if examples were included that had only minor assignments in these KAs, as opposed to emphasizing those most central to the KAs. Exceptional scope also seems to depend upon whether or not the NPL’s targeted responsibilities cover the programmatic activities in a particular KA. The appearance of a narrow scope may be in part an artifact of data used to create the portfolio report. Much of what is known by the panelists to contribute to the exceptional scope of this portfolio is supported by base funding, particularly in extension, and this important role was not captured by the portfolio report.

One example of where scope appears to be too narrow is in the description of KA 134. Rural communities are increasingly recognizing the extensive variety of non-traditional amenities that can be developed, marketed, conserved or otherwise managed to improve the health of a community. Furthermore, the roles recreation and outdoor amenities play in changing the dynamics of a community as people immigrate to rural areas were not sufficiently represented in this KA as currently conceived.

Related external panel recommendations from the “General Comments” section of their report: Review the KAs, updating planning and reporting systems, and adequately capturing research, extension and teaching program accomplishments.

Action Taken:

Secondary KAs have been added to the portfolio.

To broaden the scope of KA 134, the agency has made concerted efforts and initiated a strategic planning process for outdoor recreation research, education, and outreach. In May 2007, the agency convened a National Steering Committee that consisted of a diverse set of stakeholders in developing a strategic plan to identify critical issues, needs, and opportunities. Program leaders in three units (Economic and Community Systems, National Resource and Environment, and Family, 4-H, and Nutrition) who have diverse background are also collaborating to address the broad scope of the program that encompasses issues such as enhancing community resilience, straightening human health and well-being, and supporting sustainable outdoor environments for recreation experiences. In addition, CSREES has joined an interagency collaboration to promote public health and recreation, in support of the President’s Healthier US Initiative. This interagency collaboration is of broad scope and multi-disciplinary.

To improve the ability to incorporate activities supported by base funding, CSREES has implemented a Plan of Work and reporting process that captures formula-funded plans and activities according to Knowledge Areas. These data will be reported to CSREES by land-grant partners and be available for incorporation into portfolios in 2008.

KA 803, which is a secondary knowledge area, includes the Alert, Evacuate, and Shelter Community Mapping Program, which was newly launched in 2007. This program includes an emphasis on 4-H Youth leading Community Emergency Readiness efforts in 12 coastal states that are most at risk to hurricanes. Partnerships between Emergency Management Agencies, community leaders, and 4-H youth and adults created networks whose goal will be to keep residents safe. Through the use of innovative geospatial technology, communities located in these southeastern states will be provided with critical mapping information to ensure the well-being of all.

Other KA 803 impacts include but are not limited to the following:

- 500 counties launch Community Mapping efforts to document needs for community improvements, redirecting millions in local investments.
- Students involved in Community Technology Teams stay in school longer.
- Students engaged in Ag in the Classroom curriculum score higher on state aptitude tests.

1.2 Focus

When focus is considered to be the portfolio's ability to meet the strategic objectives of Economic and Business Decision-Making Portfolio, the panel would describe the focus of this portfolio as satisfactory.

In areas where program leadership is strongly aligned with the KAs, (e.g., regional rural development centers, risk management centers, and regional SARE centers), the focus is quite exceptional. However, there are places where KAs seem to fall between the cracks of NPL responsibilities and focus is deficient. In addition, where CSREES/NPL leadership is not aligned with the KAs, focus on specific problems and opportunities to achieve [the portfolio's] objective is sometimes lacking. It was also agreed that a lack of focus across the portfolio is not always disadvantageous, as local discretion over base funding is necessary to address local needs and to respond to emerging issues.

The panel feels that inclusion of the 900-series KAs with the ECS objective-specific KAs in this portfolio detracts from the overall perception of focus. For instance, determining the standards for the criteria of scope, relevance, and multi-disciplinarily are often quite different for the 900-series KAs. It was agreed that the 900-series KAs deserve separate/independent analysis and consideration. The series cuts across other program areas, so measurements of accountability are diminished if reported within the existing issue-oriented portfolios. Additionally they feel that the remaining four KAs have limitations in describing this portfolio, as they do not fully capture the scope of work relevant to objective 3.1. In fact, critical pieces were reported in other KAs and other portfolios.

The panel notes that some of the knowledge areas encompassed in this portfolio are exceptionally broad in scope, and resist efforts to confine their reach. Fitting the diverse body of work into logic models in a retrospective setting is necessarily imperfect. However, future accountability exercises should benefit greatly from the modeling efforts undertaken during this inaugural portfolio review.

The content represented by this portfolio represents a rapidly changing environment, and is a relatively new focus for CSREES and the land-grant partnership. As the life-cycle for research and education around business and economic decision-making matures, the panel would like CSREES to stay current with these emerging issues.

Action Taken:

The issue of focus being deficient where some KAs “fall between the cracks of NPL assignments” was remedied by adjusting the assignment of one NPL onto KA134, which was the KA about which the panel expressed the most concern. The resulting enormous improvements in the focus of this KA are evident in the description above (under 1.1).

The issue of the 900 series of KAs being an imperfect fit with this portfolio has been remedied by removing KA 903 and assigning it to a separate portfolio. In addition, some activities primarily classified in KA 902 due to their regional structure (e.g., SARE), are being partially re-classified to include other relevant KAs, but are being left partially in KA 902 because of their close interactions with other KAs in this portfolio and their consequent contributions to this portfolio's outcomes.

1.3 Contemporary and/or Emerging Issues

The panel recognizes a number of important emerging issues that appear to receive limited attention in this portfolio, although satisfactory documentation was provided for the emerging issues that were covered.

The Panel thinks several important emerging issues were not strongly represented. These issues include continuing education needs for rural residents, the implications of cultural and outdoor amenities on retirement, migration, and community development in the recreation KA, and the overall impacts associated with globalization and changing demographics. Moreover, while much was said by policy makers throughout the country about the importance of entrepreneurship to meet the objectives of this portfolio, and much activity is known to occur in this area, it was not adequately captured in the portfolio report. In addition, although there is good documentation for work in the area of enhanced decision-making for agri-business, there is not enough good evidence presented that shows the portfolio is addressing other promising economic enterprises important for rural America.

There is a notable lack of reported activity in KA 901 with respect to investigations into experimental design and analysis to improve the application and value of social sciences to meet the objectives of this portfolio. Similarly, the narrowness of the outdoor recreation KA obscures emerging issues in this area.

Much of the work in emerging issues tends to occur in the extension arena, and this is not reported in this portfolio. For example, KA 602 seems exclusively concerned with farm and farm-related businesses.

Information technology and its extraordinary rate of change should be more fully integrated throughout this portfolio, especially as it applies to the distance education needs of rural residents. For instance, advanced information technology needs to be developed for expanding higher education into “place-based” programs, which include those for enhanced communication, the support of decisions in rural business and human services, as well as research programs to determine the role of technology in understanding the seven capitals.

Action Taken:

The Economics and Business Decision-Making Portfolio team appreciates the recommendations of the external panel and has prepared responses to issues raised by the panelists. Setting priorities is an important means of facilitating the improvement of economic, business decision-making, and community development skills needed to meet the challenges facing rural communities in the United States. Our priority-setting processes are multi-faceted -- shaped by Congress and by a variety of activities to insure stakeholder input. We include an overview of these processes and specific actions that respond to the external panel’s recommendations.

Congress sets the budgetary framework by providing funds to CSREES. Members of Congress also make recommendations for scientific and programmatic administration through appropriation language and their questions and comments during Congressional hearings. Input into the priority-setting process is sought from a variety of customers and stakeholders. The Agricultural Research,

Education, and Extension Reform Act of 1998 formally required that formula-funded projects reflect stakeholder priorities.

Participation by National Program Leaders (NPLs) in review panels for competitive programs, federal interagency working groups, program reviews, and stakeholder workshops continue to be important mechanisms for identifying emerging issues for this portfolio. Collectively, NPLs attend professional and scientific meetings that cover all of the agency's species of responsibility to stay current on scientific trends that should be reflected in CSREES programs and in the coordination of priority setting with other federal agencies. Through such meetings, NPLs learn of stakeholders' current priorities, and solicit comments and suggestions on ways that CSREES can assist in meeting their needs. For example, the NPLs involved with KA 608, 602 were instrumental in setting up and maintaining the regional centers mentioned above, and making sure these issues were squarely before the decision-makers.

Another example is CSREES leadership in helping understand and respond to the nation's economic restructuring and its diverse impacts on rural places. Stakeholders are looking for innovative approaches to strengthen local and regional economies. Building rural entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial communities has emerged as a current issue in economic development, and specific actions are discussed below.

Specific contemporary and emerging issues raised by the external panel and actions taken follow.

Issues: Continuing education needs for rural residents, information technology, distance education, globalization, Extension arena activities

Action Taken:

- CSREES is supporting the use of internet technology to help rural business enterprises succeed and compete in global markets. The National Rural e-Commerce Demonstration Project, led by the Regional Rural Development Centers, introduces e-commerce to rural communities and small businesses. Its competitive grants program funded 7 projects in 2005-2006 that developed new science-based educational web-based resources to be released to Extension educators in 2007. It also supported training programs for Extension educators in all four USDA regions. A national roll-out of new educational curricula is set for 2007. Extension educators are being prepared to meet the continuing education needs of rural enterprises and communities across the nation as a result of this program (KA 608).
- The Farm Transfer and Estate Planning program of the University of Minnesota Extension assists farm families with business succession and estate planning. Research shows that two-thirds of U.S. farm families have not identified a successor and more than half have no estate plan. Less than 30% of farm families have spoken to an attorney, accountant, or banker about transitioning their farm business to the next generation (KA 803).
- Knowledge in rural economic development has evolved to incorporate spatial considerations using such emerging technology as Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to analyze the roles and impacts of natural resource development and conservation. CSREES co-sponsored a one-day workshop, entitled "Fundamentals of Spatial Economics" at the 2007 annual meeting of the American Agricultural Economics Association, American

Agricultural Economics Association, the West Agricultural Economics Association, and the Canadian Agricultural Economics Association. Through the workshop, CSREES promoted cross-disciplinary collaborations in using cutting-edge technology to address rural landscape changes, especially those resulting from natural amenity-induced immigration. Over 90 people, including 20 graduate students, attended (KA 134).

In addition to information technology being incorporated in these examples, the panel's primary concern – about information technology being incorporated into higher education – will be more appropriately addressed in the portfolio that will include KA 903 in the future.

Issue: Cultural and outdoor amenities impacts on retirement, migration, and community development; expand focus of KA 134

Action Taken:

- Extractive industries, such as mining, logging, oil and gas, and agriculture have been the traditional backbone of many rural economies. Today, rural communities seek to create a more balanced and stable base for long-term economic and community development. Developing a sustainable tourism and outdoor recreation economy is creating desirable opportunities for rural communities. CSREES partnered with the land-grant university system's National Extension Tourism Design Team to sponsor the 2006 conference, "NETworking in Tourism: People, Places, and Partnerships," to advance knowledge and practices in sustainable tourism development. CSREES is also engaged with other federal agencies and the National Geographic Society to promote geotourism principals and practices and outdoor recreation (KA 134).

Issue: Changing demographics

Action Taken:

- CSREES worked with the four Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDCs) to increase representation from 1890 and 1994 institutions on the RRDC Boards of Directors. In 2006, these leaders included the Associate Director of Extension, West Virginia State University (1890); the Director of Extension, Little Priest Tribal College; the Extension Director, Chief Dull Knife College and the Executive Director of Coquille Tribe; the 1890 Research Administrative Director and the 1890 Extension Administrative Director of the Southern region, as well as the Director of the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, a Native American non-Land Grant representative. In addition, the southern Center's Technical Operations and Advisory Committee (TOAC) included six 1890 Research and Extension faculty, an African American non-land grant member from the philanthropic community, and a non-land grant representative who works extensively in the impoverished communities of the Delta region. All of the Northeast Center's Board of Directors are members of the Change Agent States for Diversity (CAS-D) teams. This represents significant efforts to include "emerging stakeholders" as recommended by the external review panel.
- In 2006, the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development convened a work shop on "The New Pluralism" with nationally recognized scholars who identified research priorities and strategies to encourage scientific advances in understanding immigration and

changing rural communities. The Southern Rural Development Center led an initiative to establish the new Southern Extension and Research Activity (SERA37) on demographic change that was approved in 2007: “The New Hispanic South: Strengthening the Capacity of the Region’s Land Grant University System to Respond” (KA 608). These also represent efforts to include “emerging stakeholders” in CSREES programs.

- The SARE program funds, each year, several projects that address the needs and opportunities of immigrant farmers, Latino farmers, and/or Native Americans, including Professional Development Program projects that help Extension and other agricultural professionals reach new and emerging audiences. SARE’s national outreach arm published a bulletin for educators, “Meeting the Diverse Needs of Limited-Resource Producers” (KA 601).
- CSREES joined Washington State University to host the joint Administrative Officers and the National Diversity Conferences. The Change Agent States for Diversity and National Center for Diversity were co-sponsors. eXtension is also hosting “Diversity Across Higher Education” as a Community of Practice. The North Central States hosted the bi-annual Urban Extension Conference which focused on “The Future Urban Extension Agenda: Reaching New and Diverse Audiences.”

Issue: Economic decision-making beyond agribusiness

Action Taken:

- Work in KA 602 focuses on the management and administrative techniques applied to farming, agricultural businesses, and other businesses and enterprises to enhance planning, decision making, and resource use. A CSREES-funded Hatch Project in its third year addresses decisions regarding financing, capital investment, and managing risks that are important to agricultural producers, agribusinesses, and rural financial markets. The purpose is to better understand the economics of managing risk with intra-year risk management strategies, such as price and yield risk contracts, versus managing risk using inter-year strategies, such as borrowing-saving and investment-disinvestment (funded 100% in KA 602).
- A new CSREES-funded Hatch Project is looking at retirement preparation of single women, the least prepared group for (funded 50% in KA 602). The project evaluates the degree of significant similarity and difference between the characteristics, life history, and economic status of never married and previously married women and evaluates the impact of the demographic and economic life history of three birth cohorts of never married and previously married women on their retirement savings behavior, retirement timing, and retirement income adequacy.
- The Regional Risk Management Education (RME) Centers have continued to diversify projects funded within their regions. Each Center reports at least 20-25% of all projects funded having focused on the following communities: women in agriculture, minority farmers and ranchers, beginning farmers and ranchers, socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, new immigrant farmers and ranchers, and farmers/ranchers in need of intensified focus on estate planning and farm succession activities. The RME Centers have determined

to set aside funds beginning in 2008 for additional impact analysis among previously funded and now closed projects, and to continue to evaluate outcomes and impacts of funded grants. The “Annie’s Project” (see below) and Farm Transfer and Estate Planning (see above) information identify two efforts to evaluate outcomes and impacts of funded activities (KA 602).

Issue: Entrepreneurship Research and Extension Arena Activities

Action Taken:

- To identify a baseline of entrepreneurial activity, knowledge, and needs, the four Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDCs) held 38 “listening sessions” in 40 states with diverse audiences ranging from Indian Country in the west and north central regions to the Mississippi Delta. Analysis of the input led to a national eXtension Community of Practice proposal, funded as a “Pioneer Community of Practice” team of researchers and Extension educators. They held a “soft” launch of an eXtension website that will provide 24/7 access to educational resources, professional advisors, technical assistance, and cutting edge research for both individual entrepreneurs and community leaders seeking to create climate and capacity in their community to support entrepreneurship as a key to rural economic development. The National Rural e-Commerce Demonstration (see above) contributes to this work. The RRDCs are working with the Economic Research Service and university partners to insure a scientific roadmap will underpin the diverse efforts across the nation to support and expand entrepreneurship.
- “Annie’s Project” is a comprehensive Risk Management Education (RME) curriculum for Farm Women funded through the CSREES RME program. Named for a woman who grew up in a small farm community and learned to become an involved business partner with her farm husband, the project targets farm women who want to manage information systems and use and improve critical decision making processes while building local networks, all with the focus on improving their farming and ranching enterprise. Since its inception in 2003, 25 states have adopted the curriculum and use it regularly. The curriculum brings together small “classes” of women over at least six weeks for intensive learning. Local sponsors have been added, and individual women are charged a small attendance/participation fee.

Issue: Rapidly developing bioeconomy impacts

Action Taken:

CSREES responded to another emerging, critical issue not yet identified in 2005 by the external review panel: the impacts of a rapidly developing bioeconomy. In 2006 CSREES identified the human and social dimensions of the rapidly developing bioeconomy as a critical emerging issue and created a new National Program Leader position in sustainable bioeconomy in the Economic and Community Systems unit. That NPL established an extensive network of social scientists and others around the country and used those contacts to publicize a new Department of Energy (DOE) competitive grant opportunity on ethical, legal and social dimensions of bioenergy and also to recommend reviewers for the program. This laid the groundwork for a CSREES co-sponsored workshop with DOE’s Biological and Environmental Research unit to identify and prioritize

research, education and extension issues on the social, economic and dimensions of bioenergy. The report from the workshop will inform both CSREES and DOE planning and programs in this critical emerging area. Work on these issues crosses KAs, including 601, 602, and 608..

1.4 Integration

Integration of the portfolio is exceptional. This exceptional integration is especially evident through the risk management work, the SARE program, and the Regional Rural Development Centers. In these organizational structures, regional boards or committees regularly confer to coordinate the objectives of stakeholders from many disciplines during the course of implementing their various programs.

Action Taken: None required.

1.5 Multi-disciplinary Balance

The portfolio presents evidence that there is sufficient interdisciplinary balance to accomplish the strategic objectives as laid out by the Agency. Across the portfolio, some activity is very discipline-specific and some is quite broad. There seem to be projects that would benefit from more disciplinary involvement, but this perception may be due to the project examples that were selected for the report and are based on their centrality to the description of KAs. With the exception of economics, there seems to be significant opportunity to incorporate more social science expertise into this portfolio.

Action Taken:

CSREES competitive grant programs specifically encourage multidisciplinary research when soliciting proposals. Congressional language requires the NRI competitive grants program to support a minimum of 30% multi-disciplinary work, however the actual percentage achieved is closer to 40% or higher. Moreover, CSREES requires that 20% of the research formula funding that it provides to states be devoted to multi-state activities, which directly promotes multidisciplinary approaches for selected topics of importance to health and quality of life. In response, the regional agriculture experiment station systems use the funds to support multi-state research projects and committees. During the period of review, NPLs in these KAs served as advisors to 63 multi-state research projects (see Evidentiary Materials). These multistate committees are making important contributions by strengthening existing collaborations across the country, including international linkages, and by beginning new partnerships that further broaden the committee's composition. These multistate activities also help CSREES build the science and expertise needed to respond to such current and emerging issues and demographic change and immigration.

CSREES increased social science activity across the agency by convening a monthly Social Sciences Working Group, which featured discussions with a variety of external speakers and internal topics. Speakers were representatives from the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, Department of Energy and the National Association of State Land Grant Colleges and Universities, and the ESCOP Social Science Committee. Topics have included Obesity, Families 4-H and Youth Development, Entrepreneurship, Small Business Innovation, National Research Initiative, Bio Energy, Ecosystems, the USDA Executive Potential Program, and Vulnerability. ERS and CSREES hosted a Seminar Series.

Social science involvement in the SARE program is being significantly increased through several initiatives undertaken jointly by Southern SARE and the Southern Rural Development Center, which have also expanded to other regions. The two centers have initiated a joint program of Sustainable Community Innovation Grants that must meet both sustainable agriculture and community development goals. A draft report from a third-party evaluation (Glenn Israel, University of Florida) indicates that most grants are achieving the program's objectives. (The evaluation will be finalized for next year's portfolio update.) The program has spread to a similar program in the Northeast. In 2006-7, the Appalachian Regional Commission provided additional funds to carry out a three-way partnership. In addition, Southern SARE issued a special invitation for social science participation in the SARE program, and the S-SARE and SRDC coordinators collaborated on a special journal issue on the social sciences and sustainable agriculture.

Quality

The exceptionally high quality of work performed by CSREES and the land-grant partnership, related to the knowledge areas assembled in this portfolio, is a major factor contributing to the overall success in meeting the Department's goals and objectives for rural America.

3.1 Significance of Findings

It is the perception of the review panel that the significance of the work and the accomplishments reported in portfolio 3.1 are very high. The self-examination report provides evidence that the outputs from this work have been used by farmers, small towns, and community governments from across the country. The results and findings of investigations have been shared with appropriate decision makers in venues ranging from Congressional testimony to agency briefings to industry-specific reports. Evidence is provided that results of this work have informed a wide spectrum of public and private policies and practices.

Related external panel recommendations from the "General Comments" section of their report: Pursue efforts to make people aware of accomplishments through partners.

Related external panel recommendations from the "Future Directions" section of their report: CSREES leadership needs to take a more aggressive approach in disseminating information to partners through a supported communication and public relations function.

Action Taken:

Program staff and CSREES Communications staff highlight partner activities and accomplishments in program web pages, in presentations and other communications with partners and stakeholders, and in regular reports to USDA administrators and partners (e.g., weekly and monthly reports to Under Secretary; biweekly CSREES Updates). The new Plan of Work reporting will assist greatly in the identification of partner accomplishments to highlight.

2.2 Stakeholder/Constituent Inputs

Overall, stakeholder input into the work of the partnership appears to be very strong. Evidence of this is particularly persuasive when the research, education, and extension activities are clearly tied to needs, and when those activities result in tangible outputs and outcomes for end-users. Stakeholder input is necessarily a primary function of the university partners. However, coordination of that input across the system is not well documented.

The management of the portfolio does not exhibit the same level of responsiveness to stakeholder input as do individual projects and programs described in the portfolio. Consequently, the panel identifies significant opportunity to engage more stakeholders (i.e., partners) to help define and describe KAs and to establish resource priorities to address KAs.

Action Taken:

The 1998 Agricultural Research, Education and Extension Reform Act (AREERA) requires recipients of formula funds (Hatch, Evans-Allen, and Smith Lever) to collect stakeholder inputs every year and describe the process used to identify individuals or groups as stakeholders. Also each institution needs to describe how these inputs relate to plans of work, priority setting, immediate needs and long-term goals, guidance on monitoring, and proposed research activities.

During 2006-7, CSREES continued to maintain close involvement with its principal partners and stakeholders through both formal and informal processes. Details are included in the Performance Criteria section.

CSREES National Program Leaders actively participate in partner workshops or information dissemination sessions which is another valuable source of information. Active communication linkages are maintained with NASULGC and its membership organizations. Additionally, active communication is fostered with multiple professional societies and organizations through National Program Leaders' memberships, invited presentations, and formal requests for guidance. National Program Leaders' involvement with multi state committees, as well as competitive peer review panels and panel managers, and regional grants workshops provide invaluable feedback and direction. Numerous national and international scientific conferences, meetings, and sub-committees are attended by agency social and behavioral scientists that help inform decisions regarding program development. NPLs participate on Federal interagency working groups, committees and task forces, which contribute to close linkages with other Federal priorities. Partner strategic plans are also used to align CSREES' efforts.

To coordinate stakeholder input across the Southern Region, the Southern Rural Development Center conducted State Rural Development Roundtables in all 14 states in its region, hosted by teams of land-grant faculty and funded by CSREES and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Over 600 people representing a variety of constituencies identified the most significant rural development issues facing their states as well as their recommendations for research, technical assistance, and education for the next five years. SRDC also conducted a web-based survey of land-grant research and Extension faculty and educators for their input on the top rural development priorities. Then at a Regional Rural Development Roundtable of the state roundtable coordinators and non land-grant university partners analyzed the combined data and recommend "A New Strategic Blueprint" for the SRDC to its Board of Directors. This effort will maintain the relevance of the SRDC and its partners to the people and communities in the rural South over the next five years.

CSREES committed to a systematic approach in gathering KA 134 stakeholder inputs through workshops (items a and c) and roundtable discussions at professional meetings (items b and d):

- a. CSREES partnered with the West Virginia University (WVU) and organized a joint one-day workshop (October 2006). WVU faculty and students were actively engaged in a panel discussion and poster exhibits. Panel members included representatives from

Forest Service (FS), US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and National Park Service (NPS). This was the agency's first attempt in generating KA 134 stakeholder input at the regional level.

- b. National Program Leader facilitated a roundtable discussion on outdoor recreation research and education at the Northeast Recreation Research Symposium (April 2007). Participants included nationwide professionals from the university, public and private sectors.
- c. CSREES convened a National Steering Committee Workshop on Outdoor Recreation Research and Education (May 2007). A concerted effort was made to invite cross-section steering committee members that included various disciplines (e.g., biology, ecology, economics, forestry, human health, rangeland, and sociology) from various land-grant universities and Federal agencies, such as the Economic Research Service, FS, National Institute of Health, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Sea Grant Programs), US FWS, NPS, Bureau of Land Management, and US Army Corps of Engineers.
- d. National Program Leader was the facilitator of a roundtable discussion at the International Symposium on Society and Resource Management (June 2007). Participants included multi-disciplinary scientists and educators and government representatives from the US and foreign countries, e.g., Canada, Switzerland, and Taiwan.

Inputs from these workshops and roundtable discussions were documented and are being incorporated into a strategic plan of outdoor recreation research, education, and outreach for the 21st century. The goals of the strategic plan are (1) to build a coordinated research program that takes transdisciplinary approach to address broad scope recreation related health, natural resources, and community development issues; and (2) to strengthen education and outreach programs that connect people and nature through recreation and support diverse economic opportunities.

2.3 Alignment with Current State of Science

Alignment was, overall, satisfactory in this report. However, opportunities exist to improve this measure in the future. Some important areas of knowledge identified by the panelists seem to be insufficiently represented in the portfolio (see "Comments and Recommendations on Future Directions"). The alignment may also be partially limited because of the organizational structure in partner institutions (academic departments and colleges) that limits access to other disciplines and knowledge bases. Furthermore, the emerging knowledge base surrounding globalization is not as fully incorporated into the portfolio as it could have been, even though the importance of globalization issues is recognized.

In addition, there is not strong documentation that the state of science around community and business decision-making has been incorporated across the portfolio to the extent appropriate. Content that should be explored for inclusion in this portfolio can be found in the literatures of,

- *Public Policy,*
- *Management Science,*
- *Organizational Development,*

- *Social and Community Psychology,*
- *Civic Engagement,*
- *Leadership Education and Development,*
- *Intercultural Education, and*
- *Cultural Studies.*

Finally, considerable academic work in Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology has been generated and applied throughout rural America but it was not captured in the self-review document. For example, advances in regional and community economics could help communities evaluate options for growth.

Related external panel recommendations from the “Future Directions” section of their report: Approach to Issues in Rural America

- more consultative & collaborative approaches to goal setting like SARE and RRDCs*
- more attention to interactions between globalization, entrepreneurship & workforce devel.*
- broader definition of agricultural community success to include health of people, environment, economy*
- a modest incremental cost could bring major advances to rural economic development*
- frame increased diversity & demographic change as an opportunity rather than a challenge (new thinking & new paradigms)*
- include emerging challenges: growth, land-management, taxation, provision of new service, public policy, community and regional development, revitalization, population, emigration, poverty, education, economics of regional partnerships, health and wellness, communications, local impacts of globalization, international trade investments in information technology*
- address the issue of new technologies and their effect on distance and place-bound education, e.g., eXtension and NAL-AgNIC initiatives*

Action Taken:

As discussed above, the successful initiative by the Regional Rural Development Centers to apply for and then develop an eXtension “Pioneer Community of Practice” in rural entrepreneurship has resulted in a national planning team and four regionally developed resource teams to bring state-of-the-art science and educational materials to rural America’s entrepreneurs, planners, and community leaders.

Based on stakeholder input, the 3 social science programs in the NRI have developed new logic models to help determine the funding priorities in FY 2008 and beyond. The goals of the Rural Development program now include workforce development and entrepreneurship development. The goals of the Agribusiness Markets and Trade program now include the organizational structure and conduct of the agribusiness firms and its impacts on marketing and trade. More NRI applications in the topics of community and business decision-making are expected in the future years.

IN FY 2006, the SBIR program funded a Phase I grant to develop software for leadership education. This project focuses on providing cultural based business related training to those on Indian reservations who have had difficulty maintaining employment. While it teaches certain leadership skills, the main intent is to use technology to train its participants in general workplace skills, behavior, and entrepreneurship. However, the Phase II application for this project submitted in FY

2007 was not reviewed favorably, as the review panel found the Phase I results to be less than satisfactory. In FY 2007, another Phase I grant was funded to develop a research based, computer integrated, leadership training program for tribal leaders. The project will also evaluate the impacts of the training.

In CRIS, there are numerous Formula-funded projects that are multidisciplinary in nature, and cut across a variety of knowledge areas and subjects of investigation relative to this portfolio. The comments made by the External Panel include areas of expertise that have been narrowed from broader fields of science. Under the Social and Behavioral code classification, CRIS classifies projects using a broad system so that projects can be coded accordingly. For example, projects that include social and community psychology might not be classified as such, but there is a broader field of science code for psychology, which is 3070. Projects that include management science might be coded under 3100, which is the field of science code for management. Projects that include cultural studies might be classified under 3000, which is the field of science code for anthropology. In summary, CRIS employs a broad approach in project classification so that the traceability of true multidisciplinary projects is accounted for without having too many categories that might prove too difficult to manage.

2.4 Appropriate and/or Cutting Edge Methodology

Scientific rigor and appropriateness of methodologies are very high. Peer reviews in competitive grant programs and the disciplinary journals and books have sustained high standards for methodology and appropriate analyses. However, the panel felt quasi-experimental and other designs that are well respected in social science should be featured more in the work of this portfolio.

Action Taken:

Formula Funded projects are peer reviewed by each institution and must agree with the Plans of Work that are approved by CSREES (see Evidentiary Materials). All proposals are then reviewed by CSREES and either approved, disapproved, or deferred for revision. All concerns of reviewers must be addressed before a special project is recommended for funding. In some cases, the CSREES project liaison also solicits ad hoc reviews from authorities outside of the agency to better inform the recommendation.

All competitive projects are rigorously reviewed by individual experts and Peer Review Panels for scientific merit, innovation, impact, national significance, and potential for success. Competition is extremely keen. Due to many needs but small agency appropriations for the improvement of decision-making and governance in rural areas, it is more difficult to receive a USDA competitive grant than a grant from the HHS or the EPA. For example, there is only around a 20% success rate for applicants.

CSREES began its support for the development of eXtension to better meet future information dissemination needs through the internet during the period of review. More recently, the 2005 eXtension budget of \$2.7M was composed of contributions from State Extension Services of an amount equal to 0.8 of 1% of Smith Lever funding. Most of the budget will be devoted to content development, building information technology infrastructure, communications and marketing; long range planning, evaluation and financial development, and administrative costs. Work has begun in several areas of content for the prototype, including the "eXtensionizing" of materials from the

Regional Rural Development Centers, Risk Management Education Centers and through the SARE Program.

Performance

While overall portfolio performance with regard to productivity and comprehensiveness was rated highly, the panel noted some difficulties in reporting and documenting efforts that hampered informed judgments about timeliness. Moreover, the panel gave agency guidance (during the period covered) the lowest score of their Review.

3.1 Portfolio Productivity

Overall, the review panel considered the productivity of the portfolio to be high. The nature of the land-grant system and the research, extension, and education mandate results in the opportunity for extremely productive programmatic complementarity. There was excellent performance based on federal investment (leveraging). This was partially due to the flexibility allowed by base funding in land-grant universities. Moreover, the new reporting system will enhance compilation of evidentiary materials.

Action Taken: None required.

3.2 Portfolio Comprehensiveness

Documentation of outputs and outcomes describes a highly comprehensive portfolio with respect to the goals of the portfolio. The panel did find however, that quantitative documentation of outputs and outcomes is often less than optimal, but overall the comprehensiveness is very good. In addition, outputs and outcomes are well aligned with the scope and objectives of the portfolio.

Action Taken:

The new POW reporting will improve our ability to report quantitative outputs and outcomes in future years.

3.3 Portfolio Timeliness

The panel found it difficult to address timeliness based on the evidence provided. Panelists saw no evidence to indicate exceptional or inadequate performance based on timeliness.

Action Taken:

This is an agency-wide issue. Please refer to the response below under “Portfolio Accountability” and to the CSREES efforts in improving accountability across the agency discussed under section II of this report.

3.4 Agency Guidance

The panel observed examples of exceptional strength in specific areas as related to program guidance. In other areas, leadership absences were not addressed by the agency in a timely manner. For some KAs, the Agency is only beginning to identify an appropriate leadership structure/process. The review team felt that the overall guidance for the period covered by this report was not adequate, but acknowledges progress has been made in the past year.

Excellent guidance has been exhibited throughout the reporting period for some specific programs. One program in particular that merits recognition is the regional rural development centers and SARE. Other programs such as the risk management centers have recently implemented strong guidance mechanisms but these were not in place during the time frame covered by this reporting period.

The lack of leadership identified by the panel in specific areas and episodes during the reviewed period is not intended to reflect on the current leadership, evolving leadership procedures, or the potential for future leadership in this portfolio. In spite of agency/organizational shortfalls in leadership, the panel recognized excellent performance in some areas of this portfolio.

Action Taken:

In the last two years, CSREES has filled the gap of leadership in regards to economics by the appointment of a new Deputy Administrator for the Economic and Community Systems unit, the transfer of an experienced agricultural marketing NPL into the ECS Unit, and the establishment of an agency-wide social science working group that addresses leadership, management and knowledge voids within the social sciences.

In 2006 CSREES redirected a National Program Leader position to NPL for sustainable bioeconomy (see above). CSREES also hired a new Program Specialist to work with KA608, focusing on regional rural development and sustainable bioenergy development.

In fiscal year 2007, CSREES successfully hired a new NPL for Farm Financial Management to replace the NPL who provided leadership over the program over the last four years, and arranged for a period of overlap between the new and retiring NPLs. This hiring was crucial as the beginning of 2007 included the reauthorization of the TAA program, and the competitive grants process that is imperative to maintaining one regional Risk Management Education center in all four regions, and a Digital Center for providing a number of supporting services to the regional RME Centers.

The guidance mechanisms for the RME centers are now fully in place.

3.5 Portfolio Accountability

Accountability in this portfolio was considered to be satisfactory during the reporting period. It was noted that the Agency, through most of the reporting period, maintained insufficient human capacity to accomplish exceptional accountability standards. Further, during this period, metrics and procedures to document performance and impact were not widely endorsed or employed.

The panel strongly endorses the current direction of the Planning & Accountability, and in particular, their efforts to improve the systematic reporting of research, education and extension efforts.

Related external panel recommendations from the “General Comments” section of their report: Have accounting systems that consider the value of projects funded directly as well as indirectly and for base as well as targeted funds. New performance measures such as economic health, social health, and environmental health should be used to determine the efficacy of programs where outcomes and results are indirect.

Related external panel recommendations from the “Future Directions” section of their report: improve accountability for outcomes from all investments (special grants, base and matching funds as well as competitive) ...including accounting to evaluate how resources are allocated, and strategic planning involving partners

Action Taken:

The CSREES One Solution Initiative began in May of 2005. It is designed to increase the quality and completeness of reports to OMB, Congress, and the public. One Solution aligns the budget with performance outcomes in the research, education, and extension areas. The system is being developed to allow for streamlined reporting requirements.

The 2007-2011 Plans of Work (POW) for Research and Extension formula funds were entered via electronic, HTML-based forms pre-populated with CSREES-known information about each project. The system also utilizes pop-up help screens to facilitate clarification of data entry. Automatic e-mail notifications alert national program staff and project directors to submit and review reports.

The advent of the One Solution system and its integration with the migration of the Current Research Information System (CRIS) is laying the foundation for ease of reporting and reviewing reports and impact information from funded projects. The system will eliminate much of the “teasing out” of information necessary in the past by soliciting and retaining pertinent project information in a readily accessible database. The system will further enable the reporting of outputs and impacts to stakeholders by requesting the information in a standardized template.

While One Solution is not finalized and complete at this time, early pilot testing results have been favorable and predict that One Solution will facilitate CSREES contributions to increased public accountability and quality government reporting for all three areas of research, education, and extension.

Future Directions

The recommendations made by the external panel under “Future Directions” have been identified and addressed under the appropriate PART headings in the preceding section.

IV. Updates of the self-assessment paper

1. Budget

Table 1: CSREES Research Funding for Economics and Business Decision-Making Portfolio by Source during 2000-2005							
Funding Source	(\$ in the Thousands)						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Grand Total
Hatch	5,040	5,026	4,457	4,300	4,374	4,400	27,597
McIntire-Stennis	615	644	771	756	641	736	4,163
Evans Allen	889	906	388	204	679	1,088	4,154
Animal Health	0	3	4	0	0	1	8
Special Grants	1,299	2,286	2,600	3,122	3,486	4,416	17,209
NRI Grants	720	374	604	1,475	1,847	2,932	7,952
SBIR Grants	390	390	485	158	400	653	2,476
Other CSREES	20,854	21,423	13,470	41,533	39,439	53,234	189,953
Total CSREES	29,810	31,052	22,777	51,549	50,867	67,459	253,514

Table 2: Funding from All Sources for Economics and Business Decision-Making Portfolio during 2000-2005							
Sources of funding	(\$ in the Thousands)						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Grand Total
CSREES	29,810	31,052	22,777	51,549	50,867	67,459	253,514
Other USDA	2,371	2,953	3,914	2,938	2,768	4,268	19,212
Other Federal	4,979	7,793	9,367	7,705	9,743	18,448	58,035
State Appropriations	23,767	22,352	24,634	21,886	23,558	36,977	153,174
Private or Self Generated	1,470	1,152	1,718	1,915	1,735	4,159	12,149
Industry Grants and Agreements	1,793	2,199	2,735	2,721	4,249	4,725	18,422
Other non-federal	3,296	2,743	2,994	3,043	2,814	6,454	21,344
Grand Total	67,487	70,243	68,142	91,761	95,734	142,491	535,858

Table 3: CSREES Funding for Economics and Business Decision-Making Portfolio by Knowledge Area during 2000-2005							
Knowledge Area	(\$ in the Thousands)						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Grand Total
134: Outdoor Recreation	929	711	767	1,070	1,160	1,351	5,988
602: Business Management, Finance and Taxation	1,808	2,018	1,379	1,636	1,476	2,026	10,343
608: Community Resource Planning and Development	2,618	6,112	2,561	3,374	3,219	5,222	23,106
609: Economic Theory and Methods	354	572	461	929	646	1,074	4,036
901: Program and Project Design and Statistics	1,319	1,282	939	1,213	1,653	1,239	7,645
902: Administration of Projects and Programs	8,145	9,575	12,142	13,974	13,203	15,807	72,846
903: Communication, Education and Information Delivery	14,637	10,782	4,528	29,353	29,510	40,740	129,550
Total	29,810	31,052	22,777	51,549	50,867	67,459	253,514

2. Challenges and opportunities

V. 2007 score changes for Economic and Business Decision-Making Portfolio

After evaluating all the updated information of the portfolio, the national program leaders have identified 4 categories where significant progress has been identified that justifies changes in score. Justifications are highlighted below.

1) Focus:

- a. 2006 score: 2.0
- b. 2007 score: 2.5
- c. Justification for the increase: The issue of focus being deficient where some KAs “fall between the cracks of NPL assignments” was remedied by adjusting the assignment of one NPL onto KA134, which was the KA about which the panel expressed the most concern. The resulting enormous improvements in the focus of this KA are evident in the description above (under 1.1).

The issue of the 900 series of KAs being an imperfect fit with this portfolio has been remedied by removing KA903 and assigning it to a separate portfolio. In addition, some activities primarily classified in KA902 due to their regional structure (e.g., SARE), are being partially re-classified to include other relevant KAs, but are being left partially in KA902 because of their close interactions with other KAs in this portfolio and their consequent contributions to this portfolio's outcomes.

- d.
- 2) Emerging issues
 - a. 2006 score: 2.0
 - b. 2007 score: 2.5
 - c. Justification for the increase: Based on strong recommendations from the external review panel, KA 134 (outdoor recreation) organized a series of meetings by inviting national experts for a two-day workshop. These experts provided significant strategic directions to tackle emerging issues. These will be incorporated into the new RFA.
- 3) Alignment
 - a. 2006 score: 2.0
 - b. 2007 score: 2.5
 - c. Justification for the increase: As discussed above, the successful initiative by the Regional Rural Development Centers to apply for and then develop an eXtension "Pioneer Community of Practice" in rural entrepreneurship has resulted in a national planning team and four regionally developed resource teams to bring state-of-the-art science and educational materials to rural America's entrepreneurs, planners, and community leaders.

Based on stakeholder input, the 3 social science programs in the NRI have developed new logic models to help determine the funding priorities in FY 2008 and beyond. The goals of the Rural Development program now include workforce development and entrepreneurship development. The goals of the Agribusiness Markets and Trade program now include the organizational structure and conduct of the agribusiness firms and its impacts on marketing and trade. More NRI applications in the topics of community and business decision-making are expected in the future years.

- 4) Agency Guidance
 - a. 2006 score: 1.0
 - b. 2007 score: 2.0
 - c. Justification for the increase: In fiscal year 2007, CSREES successfully hired a new NPL for Farm Financial Management to replace the NPL who provided leadership over the program over the last four years, and arranged for a period of overlap between the new and retiring NPLs. This hiring was crucial as the beginning of 2007 included the reauthorization of the TAA program, and the competitive grants process that is imperative to maintaining one regional Risk Management Education center in all four regions, and a Digital Center for providing a number of supporting services to the regional RME Centers.

VI. Summary

The Economic and Decision-Making Portfolio proves to be broad in scope, is inclusive of emerging issues, aligned with current science, and brings together the social sciences to support the CSREES Strategic Goals and Objectives – with emphasis on Goal 3. While the portfolio increased scores in four categories, it should be noted that scores in other categories did not decrease. The Economic and Community Systems continues to provide overall leadership and program delivery to support the portfolio’s activities, and the inclusion of secondary KAs, as well as the expertise and inputs from other National Program Leaders adds significant value to the overall breadth and scope of the portfolio.

Major shifts and accomplishments are summarized below:

- **Scope:** New strategic planning efforts for KA 134 (Outdoor Recreation) continues to add value to the portfolio. Furthermore, these strategic planning efforts provides a basis for other KA’s to work from, particularly for planning efforts that translate into programmatic impacts that are realistic, measurable, specific, and timely. The recognition and inclusion of secondary KA’s into the portfolio brings together a myriad of expertise and programs for future collaboration. The inclusion of specific KA 803 impacts justifies a clientele that was not discussed in the previous report to the expert panel.
- **Emerging Issues:** New innovative efforts are the common theme regarding this portfolio’s approach to addressing emerging issues. The Regional Rural Development Centers are applying strategies to spearhead entrepreneurship efforts for rural citizens, and eXtension continues to be a vehicle in doing so. The Risk Management Education program continues to reach out to diverse audiences, and continues to coordinate efforts with the Digital Center to report activities with emphasis on measurable outcomes. The Regional Rural Development Centers and the SARE program continue to implement activities to reach out to new and emerging clientele.
- **Alignment/Stakeholder Input:** The portfolio continues to exceed in this area by supporting the CSREES Strategic Goals and Objectives, and incorporating the various social sciences. There is an improved base of stakeholder/constituent input – particularly for KA 134 (Outdoor Recreation).
- **Agency Guidance:** CSREES has addressed gaps by hiring two additional National Program Leaders and one program specialist, all supporting programs under the Economic and Community Systems umbrella that are critical to this portfolio.

Appendix: Supporting Funding Tables

Table 4: CSREES Research Funding for Knowledge Area 134 by Source during 2000-2005							
Funding Sources	(\$ in the Thousands)						Grand Total
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	
Hatch	191	212	169	253	194	244	1,263
McIntire-Stennis	416	445	524	476	343	356	2,560
Evans Allen	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Animal Health	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Special Grants	0	0	0	112	331	0	443
NRI Grants	0	0	0	10	0	93	103
SBIR Grants	265	0	0	0	80	496	841
Other CSREES	57	54	74	218	212	163	778
Total CSREES	929	711	767	1,070	1,160	1,351	5,988

Table 5: Funding from All Sources for Knowledge Area 134 during 2000-2005							
Sources of funding	(\$ in the Thousands)						Grand Total
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	
CSREES	929	711	767	1,070	1,160	1,351	5,988
Other USDA	277	87	190	519	470	697	2,240
Other Federal	973	994	1,348	1,207	1,212	1,439	7,173
State Appropriations	2,092	1,962	2,206	2,249	2,573	3,274	14,356
Private or Self Generated	106	75	237	80	206	611	1,315
Industry Grants and Agreements	432	365	649	761	584	829	3,620
Other non-federal funding	623	570	479	498	349	578	3,097
Grand Total	7,432	6,765	7,878	8,387	8,558	10,784	49,804

Funding Sources	(\$ in the Thousands)						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Grand Total
Hatch	1,002	1,005	1,161	875	650	868	5,561
McIntire-Stennis	3	24	59	114	127	198	525
Evans Allen	36	39	30	30	45	775	955
Animal Health	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Special Grants	120	55	130	455	364	439	1,563
NRI Grants	135	201	0	51	0	122	509
SBIR Grants	0	271	0	0	0	0	271
Other CSREES	511	423	0	111	289	324	1,658
Total CSREES	1,808	2,018	1,379	1,636	1,476	2,026	11,042

Sources of funding	(\$ in the Thousands)						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Grand Total
CSREES	1,808	2,018	1,379	1,636	1,476	2,026	10,343
Other USDA	528	406	283	550	571	1,699	4,037
Other Federal	90	520	244	310	461	305	1,930
State Appropriations	3,598	3,396	4,735	3,962	4,118	5,527	25,336
Private or Self Generated	333	332	300	219	296	664	2,144
Industry Grants and Agreements	135	115	303	210	379	405	1,547
Other non-federal funding	674	658	965	957	859	1,147	5,260
Grand Total	7,167	7,445	8,209	7,845	8,159	11,774	50,597

Funding Sources	(\$ in the Thousands)						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Grand Total
Hatch	1,511	1,427	1,192	1,259	1,344	1,442	8,175
McIntire-Stennis	75	29	48	52	44	35	283
Evans Allen	330	320	163	30	103	95	1,041
Animal Health	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Special Grants	347	1,167	519	289	371	360	3,053
NRI Grants	211	0	399	724	331	1,637	3,302
SBIR Grants	0	49	58	75	280	157	619
Other CSREES	143	3,120	182	945	745	1,496	6,631
Total CSREES	2,618	6,112	2,561	3,374	3,219	5,222	23,104

Sources of funding	(\$ in the Thousands)						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Grand Total
CSREES	2,618	6,112	2,561	3,374	3,219	5,222	23,106
Other USDA	495	383	665	403	235	316	2,497
Other Federal	652	422	413	714	802	1,104	4,107
State Appropriations	4,796	4,560	4,838	4,700	4,183	5,508	28,585
Private or Self Generated	313	180	154	228	210	438	1,523
Industry Grants and Agreements	333	419	398	406	358	641	2,555
Other non-federal funding	491	394	668	509	645	1,253	3,960
Grand Total	9,698	12,469	9,698	10,335	9,652	14,483	66,333

Funding Sources	(\$ in the Thousands)						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Grand Total
Hatch	250	391	394	503	508	406	2,452
McIntire-Stennis	14	11	12	1	1	4	43
Evans Allen	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Animal Health	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Special Grants	0	0	0	40	36	475	551
NRI Grants	90	106	44	281	101	188	810
SBIR Grants	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other CSREES	0	64	11	104	0	1	180
Total CSREES	354	572	461	929	646	1,074	4,036

Sources of funding	(\$ in the Thousands)						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Grand Total
CSREES	354	572	461	929	646	1,074	4,036
Other USDA	30	44	152	75	230	357	888
Other Federal	242	394	47	369	237	195	1,484
State Appropriations	700	1,561	1,960	2,010	2,457	2,982	11,670
Private or Self Generated	6	39	21	98	38	85	287
Industry Grants and Agreements	30	59	271	88	149	227	824
Other non-federal funding	118	62	149	96	96	216	737
Grand Total	1,480	2,731	3,062	3,665	3,852	5,136	19,926

Table 12: CSREES Research Funding for Knowledge Area 901 by Source during 2000-2005							
Funding Sources	(\$ in the Thousands)						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Grand Total
Hatch	659	580	507	612	770	530	3,658
McIntire-Stennis	63	88	34	49	94	89	417
Evans Allen	0	0	52	49	41	40	182
Animal Health	0	3	4	0	0	1	8
Special Grants	0	61	97	159	88	55	460
NRI Grants	137	25	115	225	15	414	931
SBIR Grants	125	0	0	0	40	0	165
Other CSREES	335	524	130	119	605	110	1,823
Total CSREES	1,319	1,282	939	1,213	1,653	1,239	7,644

Table 13: Funding from All Sources for Knowledge Area 901 during 2000-2005							
Sources of funding	(\$ in the Thousands)						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Grand Total
CSREES	1,319	1,282	939	1,213	1,653	1,239	7,645
Other USDA	85	47	74	256	444	377	1,283
Other Federal	1,988	3,172	3,443	3,823	5,612	9,581	27,619
State Appropriations	4,857	3,882	3,367	3,517	3,718	8,172	27,513
Private or Self Generated	550	379	587	1,044	514	1,291	4,365
Industry Grants and Agreements	246	718	653	769	2,264	1,815	6,465
Other non-federal funding	615	349	117	291	210	1,255	2,837
Grand Total	9,660	9,829	9,180	10,914	14,415	23,730	77,727

Table 14: CSREES Research Funding for Knowledge Area 902 by Source during 2000-2005							
Funding Sources	(\$ in the Thousands)						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Grand Total
Hatch	442	454	294	224	307	371	2,092
McIntire-Stennis	2	2	22	14	23	21	84
Evans Allen	0	0	0	0	413	707	1,120
Animal Health	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Special Grants	121	50	813	867	1,027	1,132	4,010
NRI Grants	0	3	6	1	395	0	405
SBIR Grants	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other CSREES	7,580	9,066	11,008	12,868	11,038	13,576	65,136
Total CSREES	8,145	9,575	12,142	13,974	13,203	15,807	72,847

Table 15: Funding from All Sources for Knowledge Area 902 during 2000-2005							
Sources of funding	(\$ in the Thousands)						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Grand Total
CSREES	8,145	9,575	12,142	13,974	13,203	15,807	72,846
Other USDA	506	1,163	1,346	1,007	245	314	4,581
Other Federal	112	120	1,355	183	182	415	2,367
State Appropriations	3,161	2,382	2,322	513	663	2,294	11,335
Private or Self Generated	3	2	54	70	114	182	425
Industry Grants and Agreements	112	105	83	111	47	121	579
Other non-federal funding	23	25	57	146	12	149	412
Grand Total	12,063	13,372	17,360	1,605	14,467	19,282	92,545

Table 16: CSREES Research Funding for Knowledge Area 903 by Source during 2000-2005							
Funding Sources	(\$ in the Thousands)						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Grand Total
Hatch	985	957	740	574	601	539	4,396
McIntire-Stennis	42	45	72	50	9	33	251
Evans Allen	523	547	143	95	77	171	1,556
Animal Health	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Special Grants	711	953	1,041	1,200	1,269	1,955	7,129
NRI Grants	147	39	40	183	1,005	478	1,892
SBIR Grants	0	70	427	83	0	0	580
Other CSREES	12,228	8,172	2,065	27,168	26,550	37,564	113,747
Total CSREES	14,637	10,782	4,528	29,353	29,510	40,740	129,551

Table 17: Funding from All Sources for Knowledge Area 903 during 2000-2005							
Sources of funding	(\$ in the Thousands)						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Grand Total
CSREES	14,637	10,782	4,528	29,353	29,510	40,740	129,550
Other USDA	450	823	1,204	128	573	508	3,686
Other Federal	922	2,171	2,517	1,099	1,237	5,409	13,355
State Appropriations	4,563	4,609	5,206	4,935	5,846	9,220	34,379
Private or Self Generated	159	145	365	176	357	888	2,090
Industry Grants and Agreements	505	418	378	376	468	687	2,832
Other non-federal funding	752	685	559	546	643	1,856	5,041
Grand Total	21,988	19,633	14,757	36,613	38,634	59,308	190,933