



**2008 National e-Commerce Extension Initiative:**

**Program Implementation Mini-Grants**

**Deadline Date: Postmarked by January 9, 2009**

The Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) is pleased to announce a new initiative to foster implementation of one of its new e-commerce curricula products that are intended to expand the adoption of e-commerce strategies by communities and small/micro businesses. U.S. Land-Grant University (LGU) Extension educators or teams are invited to submit proposals outlining how they propose to implement any of the FOUR new e-commerce educational curricula that the SRDC has released, or is releasing, this fall. The maximum amount allowed for any proposal is \$3,000.

This document provides specific application guidelines for those wishing to submit a formal proposal to the SRDC. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at any time.

**KEY INFORMATION**

<b>PROGRAM TITLE:</b>	<i>National e-Commerce Extension Initiative: Program Implementation Mini-Grants</i>
<b>FUNDING AGENCY:</b>	Southern Rural Development Center, in partnership with CSREES/USDA
<b>GRANT AMOUNT</b>	Seed funding, in an amount not to exceed \$3,000, to support the launching and delivery of one of the four SRDC-funded e-commerce educational curricula. No indirect costs are allowed.
<b>DEADLINE:</b>	<b>Proposals must be submitted to the SRDC by 5 p.m. Central Time, January 9, 2009.</b>
<b>AWARD NOTIFICATION:</b>	Successful grantees will be notified by February 2, 2009.
<b>ELIGIBILITY:</b>	While non-land grant partners are encouraged to be actively involved in the delivery of these educational curricula, the lead entity for the grant proposal must be a land-grant Extension educator(s).

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

Since 2003, the SRDC has served as the lead entity for the *National e-Commerce Extension Initiative*, a focused effort designed to introduce, strengthen and expand the delivery of Extension-based e-commerce programs to small/micro businesses, governments, and communities in the United States. SRDC-led grant investments have resulted in the development of exciting new e-commerce educational resources that are now available to support the educational programming activities of Extension educators across the country, especially for those having an interest in community/economic development and information technology efforts.

Four comprehensive educational products are being made available for use by Extension educators this fall and as such, the SRDC wishes to promote the delivery of these new educational programs to appropriate stakeholders in the coming months. A new set of e-commerce products will be released in 2009 and thus, a second round of implementation mini-grants is being planned for spring 2009 to promote use of these newest set of materials by Extension educators.

## **CURRICULUM PRODUCTS:**

The following are the four curriculum resources being showcased in fall 2008. Applicants are asked to choose one of the curriculum products they wish to launch in their states:

- **Connecting Rural Communities**

Authors: William Shuffstall, Pennsylvania State Cooperative Extension; Rae Montgomery, University of Minnesota Extension Service; Sheila Sager, Pennsylvania State University; and Dana Noonan

This guide is designed to provide the information and tools community leaders need to identify, develop and implement projects that improve: (1) the availability of access to broadband connectivity across the community; (2) the ability of organizations in the community to use digital technology to achieve their mission and goals; and (3) the capacity of individuals in the community to use digital technology to improve their social and economic well-being.

- **Internet Strategies to Improve Farm Businesses Management**

Authors: Sarah A. Roth, Jeffrey A. Hyde, and Ellie Hollabaugh Vranich Pennsylvania State University

The e-Management curriculum is intended to educate farm managers about existing Internet-based technologies that they can use to strengthen or complement their managerial skills. The program offers an introduction to a large number of diverse tools that take advantage of the Internet as a communication technology.

- **Helping Artisans Reach Global Markets**

Author: Pamela J. Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service

Providing educational information to crafters (artisans) on the benefits and methods of utilizing e-commerce to strengthen their businesses is the central focus of this curriculum. The resource provides artisans with sound information to guide their decisions on whether or not to develop a Web page, how to do it, what resources to utilize, and methods for evaluating the Web site's effectiveness.

- **Strengthening Competitive Advantage of Rural Businesses with e-Commerce and Experience Economy Strategies**

Authors: Miyoung Jeong; Ann Marie Fiore; Cheryl O. Hausafus; Linda Niehm; and Haemoon Oh, Iowa State University

This e-commerce curriculum improves the competitiveness of small rural retail, hospitality and tourism businesses. This is accomplished through an e-commerce educational program that: (1) enhances the understanding of experiential strategies to add customer value for a firm; (2) provides experiential strategies that are deemed appropriate for use by a firm's bricks-and-mortar location; (3) introduces experiential strategies that are applicable to the firm's Web site design; and (4) offers ideas on how to enhance and/or align the experiential nature of the firm's Web site with the bricks-and-mortar location as a means of creating a unified firm image.

The following is an additional resource that grantees are encouraged to use to supplement the e-commerce curriculum that they propose to implement. It highlights a number of businesses of various sizes and types that have effectively incorporated e-commerce strategies into their operations. Here is a brief description of this valuable supplementary product:

- **e-Commerce as a Strategy for Improving Business Vitality: Lessons Learned from Small Rural Businesses**

Authors: David L. Barkley, Clemson University; David R. Lamie, Clemson University; and Deborah Markley, RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, University of Missouri-Columbia

The project provides “lessons learned” by small rural businesses that use an e-commerce marketing strategy to increase profits and expand markets. These lessons are based on in-depth interviews with several rural businesses and related service providers. The case-study firms represent a cross-section of industries, regions of the country, and firm types (e.g., bricks-and-mortar versus virtual).

## **PROPOSAL OUTLINE:**

Applicants are asked to prepare a 3-5 page proposal (single spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font) that addresses each of the following items:

- 1. Specify which curriculum you intend to use.**
- 2. Identify the state in which the program will be implemented.**
- 3. Describe the need/opportunity for this type of educational program.**

Provide information or documentation that helps justify the need for this program in your state or county. Make a solid argument as to the importance of this program in your state and/or county.

- 4. Identify your target audience and how many people you plan to reach.**

For example, are you proposing to deliver this program to key stakeholders? If so, which ones and how many are you hoping to reach? Or do you wish to provide training to Extension educators in your state (i.e., state specialists, regional/district directors, multi-county or county Extension educators), and if so, about how many Extension educators?

- 5. Describe your implementation plans and timeline.**

How do you intend to launch your project? Do you plan to conduct face-to-face workshops, Web-based sessions, or some combination of these delivery mechanisms with your target audience? Or do you have other innovative strategies in mind for delivering your chosen curricula to your target audience? Please describe your specific plans on how you intend to implement the program.

In addition, provide a timeline of your activities. That is, develop and briefly describe a month by month timeline of your proposed implementation plans. You will have 12 months to complete your program and to submit an accomplishment report to the SRDC.

- 6. Describe your expected outcomes and evaluation activities.**

What do you hope to accomplish as a result of implementing this educational program? How do you plan to evaluate the outputs and outcomes of your program? *PLEASE NOTE:* The

SRDC will work closely with grantees to administer pre/post assessments and to conduct six month and 12 month follow-up evaluations with your program participants.

**7. Describe your sustainability plans.**

Indicate how you plan to support and sustain this program after your project is completed. Is this a program that will be an integral part of your Extension outreach education work?

**8. Identify the staff who will be involved in carrying out this program.**

Who will be the Project Coordinator? What other staff, if any, will be part of the team involved in carrying out this effort? What skills and abilities do the P.I and support staff brings to the project? NOTE: A brief resume/vita (approximately three pages) for the P.I. must be attached to the grant application but does not count in the page limit. Also, the P.I must be an Extension educator.

**9. Identify partnering organizations.**

Do you have organizations or individuals who will partner with you on this effort? If so, please indicate who they are and briefly describe the role they will play in supporting your e-commerce program.

**10. Provide a budget.**

Detail you budget and provide a budget justification for the items in your proposal. *PLEASE NOTE* that indirect costs are not allowed for this program.

**REVIEW CRITERIA:**

SCORING OF PROPOSALS

All proposals will be reviewed by the National e-Commerce Advisory Committee members. Proposals will be reviewed on the following criteria:

1. Effectiveness in documenting the need for the program (20 points)
2. Quality of the project implementation plan (25 points)
3. Sustainability plan (15 points)
4. Evaluation plan (15 points)
5. Background of project coordinator and staff (15 points)
6. Partnerships (10 points)

FORMATTING INSTRUCTIONS

*Page length:* Proposals are limited to five pages, not including budget information and staff bios/vitas. Single spacing is allowed.

*Margins:* One inch margins on all edges

*Font:* Times New Roman, 12 point

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

Please submit one copy of your proposal by January 9, 2009. Proposals may be submitted electronically or via first class or overnight mail.

Electronic proposals must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. Central Standard Time on January 9, 2009. E-mail your completed proposal to Shannon Turner at [shannont@srcd.msstate.edu](mailto:shannont@srcd.msstate.edu).

Mailed proposals using first class mail must be postmarked by January 9, 2009. Copies sent by regular U.S. Postal Service first class mail should be mailed addressed:

Southern Rural Development Center  
P.O. Box 9656  
Mississippi State, MS 39762  
ATTN: Shannon Turner

Overnight mailing of proposals submitted through FedEx, UPS, or other relevant carriers should be mailed to:

Southern Rural Development Center  
190 Bost-North, Room 410  
Mississippi State, MS 39762  
ATTN: Shannon Turner  
662-325-3207

### **FOR QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT:**

Shannon Lane Turner  
SRDC e-Commerce Extension Initiative Coordinator  
P.O. Box 9656  
Mississippi State, MS 39762  
662-325-3207  
[shannont@srcd.msstate.edu](mailto:shannont@srcd.msstate.edu)

### **WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS GRANT OPPORTUNITY AND UPCOMING E-COMMERCE WEBINARS?**

Those interested in learning more about the SRDC e-Commerce Implementation Mini-Grants are encouraged to join Bo Beaulieu and Shannon Turner on October 10, 2008 for a special one hour Webinar to discuss this grant initiative. Following this kickoff Webinar, the SRDC will be hosting a series of Webinars showcasing each of the four curricula products and the supplemental case study report mentioned elsewhere in this document. The dates for these six presentations are:

#### **Introduction to the e-Commerce Implementation Grant Webinar**

October 10, 2008  
10:30 - 11:30 a.m. CDT

#### **Connecting Rural Communities Webinar**

October 27, 2008  
2:00 - 3:00 p.m. CDT

#### **Internet Strategies to Improve Farm Business Management Webinar**

November 11, 2008  
2:00 - 3:00 p.m. CST

**Helping Artisans Reach Global Markets Webinar**

November 20, 2008

2:00 - 3:00 p.m. CST

**Strengthening Competitive Advantage of Rural Businesses with e-Commerce and Experience Economy Strategies**

December 16, 2008

10:00 - 11:00 a.m. CST

**e-Commerce as a Strategy for Improving Business Vitality: Lessons Learned from Small Rural Businesses**

TBA

If you would like to take part in any of these webinars, just click the following link or copy and paste it into your browser to enter the meeting: <http://connect.extension.iastate.edu/srdc>.

When you go to that URL you will find yourself at a login page. Simply enter your name under the "Enter as a Guest" heading. Click on "Enter Room." The instructions that detail how to join the integrated phone audio conference will be on the screen when you join the meeting.

Anytime before the meeting, you can visit the following URL to confirm your ability to connect to the Connect server: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/testconnect/>.