The National e-Commerce Extension Initiative
Promoting e-commerce learning opportunities for all...

2010 - 2011 National e-Commerce Extension Initiative

Program Implementation Mini-Grants

The Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) is pleased to announce new quarterly rounds of funding to help foster the implementation of its e-commerce curricula products. These resources are intended to expand the adoption of e-commerce strategies by communities, small/micro businesses, and entrepreneurs across the country. Land-Grant University (LGU) Extension educators or teams (involving both Extension and non-Extension partners) are invited to submit proposals outlining how they propose to implement one of the e-commerce educational curricula that the National e-Commerce Extension Initiative has released. The maximum amount allowed for any proposal is $3,000.

Quarterly Proposal Submission Date:	Notification of Award:
Wednesday, October 27, 2010	Friday, November 12, 2010
Wednesday, January 26, 2011	Friday, February 11, 2011
Wednesday, April 27, 2011	Friday, May 13, 2011
Wednesday, July 27, 2011	Friday, August 12, 2011
Wednesday, October 26, 2011	Friday, November 18, 2011

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

PROGRAM TITLE: *National e-Commerce Extension Initiative: Program Implementation Mini-Grants*

FUNDING AGENCY: Southern Rural Development Center, in partnership with NIFA.

GRANT AMOUNT: Seed funding, in an amount not to exceed $3,000, to support the launching and delivery of one of the SRDC-funded e-commerce educational curricula released to the current National e-Commerce Extension Initiative Web site. No indirect costs are allowed.

DEADLINE: **Proposals must be submitted to the SRDC by 5 p.m. Central Time, on the specific due date listed above.**

AWARD NOTIFICATION: Successful grantees will be notified by the notification date listed above.

ELIGIBILITY: 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.

There are comprehensive educational products that have been released (or are soon to be available) on the National e-Commerce Extension Initiative Web site for use by Extension educators and as such, the SRDC wishes to promote the delivery of these educational programs to appropriate stakeholders.

CURRICULUM PRODUCTS:

All of the curriculum resources that can be adopted for use as part of the mini-grant funding by applicants can be reviewed and selected for use by visiting our learning center. (http://srdc.msstate.edu/ecommerce/learningcenter)

The list below is not exhaustive as new curricula are released periodically throughout the year. But it does provide a list of the current educational products that you can propose for use as part of your mini-grant proposal.

- **Helping Artisans Reach Global Markets**
  Author: Pamela J. Brown

  The purpose of this program is to provide educational information to crafters (artisans) on the benefits and methods of utilizing e-commerce to strengthen their businesses. The content of the course provide artisans with sound, research-based information to make decisions on whether or not to develop a Web page, how to do it, utilize resources, and evaluate effectiveness. Though the benefits of e-commerce are well documented, there are limitations to its effectiveness in some cases.

- **A Beginner's Guide to e-Commerce: Easy Tools for Profit**
  Author: Kimball A. Marshall.

  The objective of this curriculum is to provide guidance and encouragement to people that may have limited computer skills as they begin to explore the opportunities offered by small-scale Internet-based businesses. In order to do this we, the educators, must instill confidence in our clients' abilities to use e-commerce for the fulfillment of personal goals. In fostering this confidence we must provide technical support and computer know-how as they are developing their Internet skills.

- **Marketing Food Specialty Products**
  Author: Stan Ernst

  This learning module is designed for use by grocery store managers and marketers of specialty food products. Whether the food business is large with many employees or a small operation with very specialized sales; all can find some benefit from this self-paced learning module. If the business is already involved in using technology, ideas of how to evolve the existing use of information technology to meet changing business priorities or market demands can also be drawn from this lesson.

- **Strengthening Competitive Advantage of Rural Businesses with e-Commerce and Experience Economy Strategies**
  Author(s): M. Jeong, A. M. Fiore, H oh, L. Niehm, C. Hausafus

  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 website with the bricks-and-mortar location as a means of creating a unified firm image.

- **Connecting Rural Communities**
  Author(s): William Shuffstall, Shelia Segar, Rea Montgomery, Dana Noonan

  This online guide is designed to provide the information and tools that 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 Business Management**
  Author(s): Sarah Roth, Jeffrey Hyde, and Ellie Hollabaugh Vranich

  This 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.

- **Web site Basics: A Primer for Hispanic Small Businesses**
  Author: Brian Whitacre

  Presented in both English and Spanish, this learning module includes an extensive overview of who in the Hispanic population is using the Internet, why a Web site would benefit a Hispanic business, appropriate Web site approaches to Web design, Web design tips, and an overview of self-design techniques. It is intended both businesses that target Hispanic clientele as well as those businesses wishing to expand their markets to the Hispanic population.

- **Going Global: A Guide to e-Commerce Expansion**
  Author (s): Rae Montgomery and Stephanie Lott

  Going Global: A Guide for e-Commerce Expansion is a worksheet driven learning module that seeks to orientate the already ecommerce savvy business owner to the possibility of marketing to foreign-based customers. After completing the module, the entrepreneur will be able to make decisions on the time involved, Web site customization requirements as well as overall cost associated with an international customer upgrade.

- **Electronic Retailing: Selling on the Internet**
  Author: Julie Sexton

  Electronic Retailing is a self-paced learning course that will introduce potential and current e-tailers to the concepts that govern conducting business over the Internet.   Using online interactions, such as games, simulations and you-fix-it case studies, the learners will be taught the basics of selling online, from understanding what motivates consumers to making practical choices about Web sites and credit-card processing.   This course is an entry-level guide to starting an online retail business and will be suitable for Extension educators and clientele alike.

- **Security Squad: Keeping your Equipment and Information Safe**
  Author: Marilyn Schlake, Connie Hancock, Diane Becker, Mike Hendricks With Video Production by: Mike Kamm

  As a business owner, there are numerous actions that will help you minimize or eliminate equipment, data and identify theft that threatens you and your customers. The Security Squad's Video Series will provide you with general equipment and data safety information. The Security Squad Supplemental Planning Workbook provides the action tools to help you develop and implement a security plan for your own business.

The following is an additional resource that grantees are encouraged to use (if appropriate) 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, David R. Lamie and Deborah Markley

  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) that addresses each of the following items:

1. **Specify which curriculum product you intend to use.**

2. **Indentify the state (and county/counties) 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 do you intend to train?

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 in the design/development of the pre/post assessments and in conducting 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 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 (state, regional, or county/parish).

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: Indirect costs are not allowed for this program nor is the purchase of any equipment.

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

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 the due date listed. E-mail your completed proposal to Roberto Gallardo at robertog@srdc.msstate.edu

Mailed proposals using first class mail must be postmarked by the submission date for the specific quarterly cycle in which you are applying.   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: Roberto Gallardo

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: Roberto Gallardo

FOR QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT:

Roberto Gallardo
SRDC e-Commerce Extension Initiative Coordinator
P.O. Box 9656
Mississippi State, MS 39762
662-325-9426
robertog@srdc.msstate.edu

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ONLINE EDUCATIONAL CURRICULA?

Those interested in learning more about the SRDC e-Commerce educational Products are encouraged to listen to the pre–recorded Webinars presented by the author(s) of most of the curriculum products.   These Webinars were designed for Extension educators, economic development professionals and other interested parties who have a desire to work with local leaders, citizens, and organizations to build a strong, vibrant plan for introducing and effectively using the National e-Commerce Extension Initiatives' online learning curricula in the communities in which they serve.

For the complete listing of these Webinars and the link the listen please go to:

http://srdc.msstate.edu/ecommerce/webinar.html