



2011 National e-Commerce Extension Initiative Grants Program

Building Quality e-Commerce Educational Resources to Support Extension Programming

Deadline: Postmarked by April 29, 2011

Or e-mailed by 5 p.m CDT on April 29, 2011

KEY INFORMATION

PROGRAM TITLE:	<i>Building Quality e-Commerce Educational Resources to Support Extension Programming</i>
FUNDING AGENCY:	Southern Rural Development Center, in partnership with CSREES and the Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDCs)
GRANT AMOUNT AND TYPE OF PROJECTS:	Funding up to \$25,000 provided to develop new educational products, or to significantly expand/improve existing resources, related to e-commerce educational outreach efforts in rural America.
WHO IS ELIGIBLE:	Land-Grant University Faculty/Educators (1862, 1890 or 1994) located anywhere in the U.S.

Note: Non-land-grant entities can partner with a state land-grant university in applying for these e-commerce grant funds. However, grants must be awarded to a land-grant institution that can, in turn, subcontract a portion of the grant to a non-land-grant entity.

DEADLINE:	Proposals must be postmarked no later than April 29, 2011 or received by e-mail to the SRDC by 5 p.m. Central Daylight Time on April 29.
AWARD NOTIFICATION:	May 20, 2011
PROJECT TIMELINE:	July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012

Building Quality e-Commerce Educational Resources to Support Extension Programming

INTRODUCTION:

The Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC), in partnership with NIFA/USDA and the Regional Rural Development Centers, is pleased to announce a new round of funding for its e-commerce competitive grants program. The intent of this program is to support the development or expansion of innovative educational resources focusing on key e-commerce and broadband-related topics. This document is designed to provide specific guidelines for individuals wishing to submit a formal proposal.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC), located at Mississippi State University, is providing leadership to the National e-Commerce Extension Initiative funded by the U.S. Congress through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). The central goal of this important national effort is to introduce, strengthen and expand the delivery of Extension-based, e-commerce and broadband adoption educational outreach programs relevant to the needs of small businesses, governments or communities in rural America. The SRDC's National e-Commerce Extension Initiative is intended to respond to the increasingly important role that small businesses and entrepreneurs are playing in shaping the economic vitality of rural areas. E-Commerce represents one important strategy that rural businesses can consider as they seek to expand their reach to broader markets, and/or improve the efficiency of their operations through the use of appropriate e-business activities. The initiative is also intended to expand the capacity of rural communities to provide citizens with easier access to local information and services. This latest round of e-commerce competitive grants is designed to invest in the development of educational resources that complement the existing e-commerce produced educational materials. Approximately 5-6 grants are expected to be awarded as part of the 2011 competitive grants program.

THIS YEAR'S PRIORITY TOPICS:

The SRDC will consider proposals of up to \$25,000 to fund the development of new curricula that are designed to help fill important gaps in the e-commerce educational programs developed to date for use by Extension educators and key partners. The topics listed below represent the "high priority" educational products being sought in this year's round of competitive grants. Applicants are urged to submit proposals that relate to one or more of these topics.

Please note: all products developed by grantees will be copyrighted by the SRDC for use to support the educational mission of the National e-Commerce Extension Initiative. Therefore, they must be in a format that can be downloaded or shared electronically.

The following represent the priority topics for this year's competitive grants program:

1. Youth as Technology Educators: Youth can be active and effective adopters of information technologies. We are interested in the development of educational resources that can be used to train high school aged youth to become information technology mentors and technology resources for elementary and middle school aged children, for senior citizens, for local

businesses, community organizations/agencies, other appropriate residents or groups. This could include the effective use of new and emerging technologies.

2. E-Commerce Resources for Youth: The National e-Commerce Extension Initiative would like some of the currently offered online e-commerce educational curriculum adapted for youth audiences. The proposal must identify which key online resources will be changed to meet the needs of a youth driven audience, how a youth audience could benefit from the adapted curriculum, and how to best measure youth learning outcomes once the new, youth tailored curriculum has been facilitated.
3. Technology Educational Assessment Tool(s): Given the accelerated efforts by the federal government to expand broadband access to people and communities across the nation, the delivery of educational programs that help promote broadband adoption will become increasingly more important. To ensure that the right educational programs are being delivered to the right mix of people, communities and organizations, the National e-Commerce Extension Initiative is seeking to invest in the development of a variety of assessment tools that can help determine the technology awareness, knowledge and needs of key Extension audiences (such as small businesses, local governments and households). The development of such “best practices” technology education assessment tools should be designed for online use and be tailored to address the unique needs of some of the different Extension audiences noted above.
4. Interactive Map Applications as a Means to Increase Commerce: Entrepreneurs and small businesses, as well as civic and governmental organizations, can benefit greatly from having their businesses and community activities – including their products and services – listed on interactive map programs. We are seeking the creation of an online learning module that can demonstrate how interactive maps and geo-location tools can be used to help attract customers to local businesses and communities. Because computers and handheld technology are being used often to inform and guide consumer purchases, employing readily available mapping and GPS tools can operate as an important marketing tool for local businesses, governments and organizations.
5. Hiring a Professional for Web Site Development: The National e-Commerce Extension Initiative is looking to fund a project that will explore the do’s and don’ts of hiring Web site design and development staff as well as outside IT consultants that can help businesses make their online presence and e-commerce goals a reality. Such an educational resource should include – but should not be limited to – cost considerations, types of services, education and skills needed to complete those services, types of questions to ask an IT consultant, as well as how to prepare contracts, determining ownership of intellectual and online information, and how to handle potential disputes.
6. Smart Phone Applications for Small Rural Businesses: Small business owners are facing increasing pressure to manage their offices while networking and nurturing clients in the field (be they local, regional, national, and/or international). As such, they can find it overwhelming to oversee and manage the wide array of responsibilities associated with managing a small firm. More firms are exploring how Smartphones and tablets might be used to keep business owners organized and ahead of their game. Given the expanding importance of these technological innovations, proposals that offer small businesses with a better understanding of these innovations, the types of applications that might prove most valuable, and information on how to utilize some of the key applications, are being sought.

APPLICATION GUIDELINES:

All proposals must be organized in the following manner. Please use a 12-point font to ensure easy readability and use a single-spaced format for the text, with double spaces between paragraphs. The total length of this proposal should not exceed eight single-spaced, 12-point font pages (including budget information). However, the length limitation does not include the abbreviated CV of the Project Leader(s) that is required as an attachment to your proposal.

- I. *Title of the Proposal*
- II. *The Priority Area(s) (from the six listed above) that the Proposal Addresses*
- III. *Project Leader(s) and Collaborators:* List the name and institutional affiliation of each team member/collaborator. Provide the telephone number, fax number, mailing address and e-mail address of the Project Leader(s).
- IV. *Relevant Experiences of Applicant(s) and Curriculum Vita:* Briefly highlight the past activities that the applicant(s) has been engaged in that are relevant to the proposed project. This could include information about curriculum resources, relevant publications, reports and contributed papers that the applicant(s) has helped author. An abbreviated curriculum vita (of approximately three pages or less) of the Project Leader(s) should be included as an attachment to the project proposal packet.
- V. *Project Summary:* Provide a summary of your proposal (approximately 250 words).
- VI. *Project Description:* This represents the most critical part of your proposal. All proposals must include the following sections:
 1. *Introduction and Statement of Need:* Provide an overview of the need that exists for the type of educational resources that you are proposing to develop. Offer documentation from research publications, trade reports and/or other sources to help support your argument. The key is to offer evidence of the importance and value of investing funds in the type of e-commerce resources that you wish to develop.
 2. *Proposed Content:* Provide a detailed description of the proposed content of your new curriculum product(s), including the specific educational curricula/resources that you intend to develop. These could include a list and description of educational modules, PowerPoint documents, worksheets, Instructor's guide, Web site, etc. that you intend to produce as part of the grant.
 3. *Contributions by Collaborators:* If more than one person is working on the project, provide information on the specific contributions that each individual will be providing to the successful completion of this project (for example, what aspects of the proposed content noted in Section VI.- 2 above will they be assisting in?).
 4. *Target Audience(s)/Delivery Methods:* Identify the target audience(s) for your e-commerce program and indicate the approaches you are proposing be used for delivering your educational program/resources to this audience(s) (i.e., Webinars, self-paced learning, face-to-face training, etc.).

5. *Training of Extension Educators:* What approach (es) do you propose be used to train Extension educators in the use of your educational products/resources? (For example, should it be face-to-face, Web-based platforms such as Moodle, Webinars, a combination of approaches, etc.?)
6. *Program Evaluation Instrument(s):* Outline the evaluation plan that you propose to recommend for use by Extension educators to help them measure the impact of your e-commerce educational program/resources on the audience(s) being targeted.
7. *Timeline* for completion of the various components being proposed in your project (NOTE: project must be completed by June 30, 2012).
8. *Budget Request:* List your proposed budget expenditures and prepare a good budget justification statement for all budget categories included in the request. Please note that no indirect costs are allowed nor can computer hardware be purchased with these grant funds.

NOTE: The total length of this proposal should not exceed eight single-spaced, 12-point font pages (including budget information). However, the length limitation does not include the abbreviated CV of the Project Leader(s) that is required as an attachment to your proposal.

PROJECT DURATION:

All awardees will have **12 months** to complete the proposed project. Projects will begin on July 1, 2011, and will terminate on June 30, 2012. “No Cost Extension” on funded projects will not be provided by the SRDC. Thus, it is critical that projects be completed on time.

REVIEW PROCESS:

The *National e-Commerce Extension Advisory Committee* will be involved in reviewing all grant proposals. All proposals will be judged using the following criteria:

- The overall merit of the proposed project (25 percent).
- Its relevance to the priority e-commerce topics outlined in this RFP (20 percent).
- The quality of the information/description provided on the curriculum/educational resources being proposed for development (25 percent).
- The potential contribution of the project in strengthening the adoption of e-commerce strategies by small businesses, governments or rural communities (20 percent).
- The qualifications of the individual or team who will provide leadership to this Extension effort (10 percent).

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For questions about the e-commerce grant program, or any aspect of your proposal, please contact Shannon Lane Turner at shannont@srcd.msstate.edu or 662-325-5960 / 662-325-3207.

MAILING OF COMPLETED PROPOSALS:

If you plan to mail your proposal by regular mail, please use the following address:	If you plan to send your proposal by overnight delivery, please use the following mailing address:
Southern Rural Development Center ATTN: Coordinator, National e-Commerce Extension Initiative Box 9656 Mississippi State University Mississippi State, MS 39762-9656	Southern Rural Development Center ATTN: Coordinator, National e-Commerce Extension Initiative 190 Bost North Mississippi State University Mississippi State, MS 39762 Telephone: 662-325-3207

E-MAILING OF COMPLETED PROPOSALS:

If you wish to mail your completed proposal by e-mail, please note the following:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Your proposal must be sent no later than 5 p.m. Central Daylight Time on April 29, 2011.2. Send a PDF version of your document that includes the necessary cover sheets from your university's sponsored programs office or other appropriate entity to whom official award letters should be sent or with whom any official communication should be undertaken.3. E-mail the completed proposal to Shannon Lane Turner at shannont@srcd.msstate.edu. Please request verification that your proposal has been received. SRDC will make every effort to notify you by May 2, 2011 that your proposal has been received. If you do not receive such notification, please contact the SRDC immediately.

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