

**Request for Interest and Proposal to Participate in the USDA**  
**Agricultural Economics Faculty Exchange Program**  
USDA, FOREIGN AGRICULTURAL SERVICE, OFFICE OF CAPACITY BUILDING AND  
DEVELOPMENT, TRADE AND SCIENTIFIC EXCHANGES DIVISION

**Summary:**

USDA is requesting expressions of interest and capability statements from land grant universities to participate in a proposed Agricultural Economics Faculty Exchange Program (FEP). The training is anticipated to begin in fall semester 2011. Participants would be scheduled to arrive in the U.S. in early to mid August and complete their university program in mid-December, 2011.

Universities interested in participating in this program should submit a proposal including capability statements, a list of applicable courses offered, potential staff to carry out this program, a list of proposed practical activities and field trips that could be incorporated into the program, and an estimated budget to carry out the program by April 8, 2011 to Edward Gerard ([edward.gerard@fas.usda.gov](mailto:edward.gerard@fas.usda.gov)) 202-690-1983 and Alex Gittelson ([alex.gittelson@fas.usda.gov](mailto:alex.gittelson@fas.usda.gov)) 202-690-0818. After review of submissions, USDA will select the universities to participate in the program. Universities selected to participate in 2011 can anticipate continued participation in the program for 3 years given successful performance in 2011 and continued funding for the program.

**Background:**

**Faculty Exchange Program**

For the last 15 years, the USDA, Foreign Agricultural Service, has implemented a program called the **Faculty Exchange Program for Agricultural Economics (FEP)**. This program has brought university instructors of agricultural economics from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to the U.S. for a period of 4-5 months to upgrade their technical subject knowledge, to improve their teaching skills, and to develop new and revised course material for introduction at their home institutions. Participants have been placed at land grant colleges in groups of 4-6 where they observe classes in their field; work with U.S. mentoring professors to develop new and revised course outlines; and, travel on practical field trips to farms, agribusinesses, extension offices, etc; to gain an overall understanding of how agricultural systems operate in the U.S. Participants spend approximately 85% of the time in class and 15 % on field trips, special short workshops, seminars, extension events, etc. U.S. mentoring faculty travel to visit the participants 3-6 months after their return to their home countries. The purpose of the faculty visit is to provide onsite advice, lectures, and seminars as necessary. These reciprocal visits are likely but not guaranteed as they depend on sufficient funds availability at the end of the program.

The FEP Programs aims to improve the institutional capacity of participating universities to provide quality educational and research programs in agricultural economics to students and

adults by increasing the technical knowledge and teaching skills of individual faculty, and to provide an opportunity for U.S. and foreign institutional partnerships to develop as a result of U.S. faculty follow-on visits.

## **2011 Program**

We have requested funding from the Department of State to continue the FEP economics program in Ukraine and Kazakhstan. We expect to recruit one Kazakh participant and 8 or 9 participants from Ukraine for this year's program.

### **Expected Outcomes of the Program:**

#### **1. Course and Curricula Development**

University instructors will travel to the U.S for a period of between 4-4.5 months to upgrade technical subject knowledge, to improve teaching skills, and to develop new and revised courses for introduction at home institutions. Participants will attend 3-5 courses as visiting faculty and develop 3 new or revised course outlines to put into use at the home institution at the end of the program. Participants do not receive credit for attending courses but use the opportunity to observe teacher-student interaction and to learn new teaching and student assessment methods. They will meet with the U.S. professors one-on-one to learn how to develop course outlines and how to choose and develop class materials. Participants should also attend short courses, seminars, and brown bag lunches on research methodologies, literature review, and teaching methodologies and other topic areas as appropriate.

#### **2. U.S. Faculty Follow-on Visits**

Once participants have returned home and begun teaching the new curricula, the mentor faculty from U.S. land-grant universities will travel to the participants' universities to assist participants in modifying and institutionalizing the new curricula. A faculty visit will occur 3 to 5 months after the participant returns home. During this visit the faculty member will provide on site advice and assistance to the participant, will hold meetings with university administrators to discuss agriculture education strategies and methodologies and may be called upon to provide seminars, workshops or lectures on specific topics as requested by the participant.

#### **3. Develop a Practical Understanding of the overall U.S. Agricultural System**

During their stay participants should learn how our system of higher education in agriculture operates; how universities are supported, how they interact with the private sector and the state and federal governments, how courses are designed, U.S. principles and practices of teaching and learning, how our extension and research services operate and interact to support the private farmer and business, and the influence and involvement that private business has on course and curricula design at our institutions. They should be able to compare and contrast the two systems

by the end of the program and come away with ideas for possible implementation/improvements at their home institutions.

They should gain an understanding of how our entire agricultural system operates from farm to table via practical field trips to farms, agribusinesses, extension offices, credit offices, banks, marketing and storage facilities, short family visits and/or home stays, etc.

### **Implementation of the Program:**

USDA plans to engage a senior agricultural economist for the Economics Program at your university to serve as Program Coordinator. This coordinator should have Former Soviet Union or Eastern European experience and will work on a part-time basis to take overall responsibility to plan and execute the program for the participants. The coordinator will identify and involve counterpart professors from the courses selected by the participants for observation, study, and course development. The coordinator will plan various field trips and meetings outside the university throughout the program so that participants can gain a good understanding of how our agricultural systems operate in the U.S.

The university coordinator will be responsible for helping individual participants narrow their focus and develop a plan of study including the outputs each participant will produce by the end of the program. The coordinator will ensure that reports and products are produced as agreed upon. The coordinator serves as the main contact person for the participants and USDA for all program activities.

The coordinator will meet with participants for a **minimum** of 3 hours per week to assess the progress of work, attend to minor requests or problems, to plan field trips and practical experience in response the needs and interests of the participants as the program progresses, and to advise participants of university activities such as seminars or cultural events. Individual course professors and/or subject advisors will meet with participants to discuss course content and teaching and assessment methods, to answer technical questions, and provide comments and suggestions on course revision and development.

The coordinator/university selected will also be responsible for arranging for apartments at the university and for regular communication with USDA.

### **Computers and Office Space:**

To the extent possible, participants will be provided office space in the agricultural economics department and will be provided with computers and internet access. Each participant should have a computer (or shared computer) made available from the beginning of the program for his or her use. Accessibility to computers after hours and during the weekend is vital. Participants should be able to review, try out, and purchase computer software to be used for research and instruction. Participants should be exposed to the use of the Internet and how this resource may be used to continue to support change at their institutions in the future. Students should also be exposed to distance learning opportunities and methods used at the university.

## **Apartments**

The university coordinator is expected to find apartments for the participants. At least two people may share an apartment; each should have his/her own bedroom.

## **Example of a Schedule**

The schedule outlined below is the basic model that has been successful for the FEP for the last 15 years. In general, participants spend approximately 85% of their time in the classroom/library/special workshops and approximately 15% of their time on field trips and other practical experiences. We offer this as an example but welcome any other ideas.

This schedule will vary somewhat depending upon individual university schedules. It is expected that participants will arrive in Washington, DC for a 3-5 day orientation approximately 2 weeks before the fall semester begins.

Period 1: Three to five days orientation in Washington, DC.

Period 2: One to two weeks before classes begin: Settling-in to apartments and town. Tour of campus/facilities. Local field trips, introduction, and overview of local and state agriculture. Introduction to university agricultural economics/sciences faculty, staff, and programs. Overview of U.S. education, concentrating on higher agricultural education; how university education is funded; the federal, state, and private sector involvement and support for education; curriculum development; research and extension; the interaction of educational, governmental, and private sectors; food safety and the agencies involved in policy and regulation; government policy and regulation in agriculture. Initial participant needs assessment for individual program development. Initial planning meetings with university coordinator and project faculty that will continue on a weekly basis. Courses and research areas for observation and development will be selected. Work plans will be developed. Introduce subject/research professors in the department, attend departmental staff meetings, brown bag seminars, etc.

Period 3: Approximately one month. First class observation concentration. Throughout the stay, 3-5 courses will be observed. During this period, the participant will concentrate on one course in order to develop one of the three course outlines required by the program. Participants will attend selected lectures, look at all of the literature listed on the syllabus, review the textbooks, and collect all of the handouts and reading materials for use in their own course development. Participants will be given an allowance (by USDA) to purchase textbooks and other educational materials. Participants should have time allotted to meet on a regular basis with the course instructor to understand how the course was designed, what skills the student is expected to develop by taking the course, how the course fits in with other courses in a particular major/curricula, how student progress is assessed, how professor performance is assessed, and what unique teaching methods are used in course instruction. Participants will submit a course outline for review to their university coordinator and to the FEP manager in Washington, DC. Participants will also be exposed to research in their field to study research methods and build a network of resources, both materials and people. Participants will participate in field trips and special events throughout this period.

Period 4: Approximately one month: Second class observation concentration. Continue in research methods and resources. Field trips and special events continue throughout this period.

Period 5: Approximately one month: Third class observation concentration. Continue in research methods and resources. Field trips and special events continue throughout this period.

Period 6: One or two day wrap up and program evaluation Washington, DC. Depart U.S.

### **The Ideal University to Carry Out This Program:**

We are looking for a university/universities to carry out this training program with the following:

- A college of agriculture with faculty experience and interest in working in the former Soviet Union
- Ability to host at least four and up to six participants at one time
- A large and diverse agricultural industry in the state. Similar climate and crops to that of the Former Soviet Union is preferred.
- Departments/school of agricultural economics, business school/department. Wide range of regularly scheduled courses in the subject areas outlined above, both undergraduate and graduate, so that participants will have a wide selection of course for observation to choose from based on their own academic backgrounds and interests. A college or school of business that will also be willing to participate in the program and allow our participants to observe courses. Many of the courses that participants are interested in taking (banking, finance, real estate evaluation, stock market, business management, business administration) are offered in the college/school of business and not in the agricultural economics departments at many U.S. universities.
- Faculty willing to allow participants to attend class and willing to mentor individual participants
- A faculty member willing to serve as coordinator for the program, preferably with experience in the former Soviet Union with a background in agricultural economics and good connections to the agribusiness community and state and federal agencies in the state to arrange for appropriate and meaningful practical field visits, home stays, internships, etc.
- Coordinator should have the ability to customize, to the extent possible, the program for each participant based on his/her needs. Good mentoring and advising skills and experience with international visitors required.
- Office space and computers for participant use throughout the program
- Reasonably priced housing nearby the campus.
- The presence of specialized centers on campus (ex: center for excellence in teaching, center for rural development, center for agricultural policy) with staff and resources that can be called upon for special seminars/sessions.
- Regularly scheduled seminars, workshops, brownbag lunches that participants can attend on teaching methods, research methods, extension education/adult education
- Ability to arrange special workshops as required.

- Staff interested in and willing to travel to participant universities for follow-on support visits for periods of 1-3 weeks.
- In-kind or cash contributions that can be made in support of the program (donated time, office space, computers, TVs/bicycles/apartment essentials (kitchen utensils) for participants, local donors that are willing to become involved in the program, host families for farm visits at no charge, book donations, free entertainment visits, etc)
- A college of agriculture committed to working in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and willing to search for outside funding to carry on collaborative activities with participant universities after this project ends.

### **Proposal Format/Content**

It is understood that each program will be individualized, to the extent possible, based on each participants background and learning needs within the broader framework of this program as presented above. Please present an outline of your institutions capability to carry out this program including activities and events that you have or would develop to carry out this program, as well as campus and in-state resources, faculty, and staff that will be available for use or reference. Please make your proposal narrative no more than 15 pages (not counting staff background/biographical information, course lists or other generic capability statements).

The proposal should include:

- Faculty available to participate in the program, their qualifications, their international experience, their roles and responsibilities, estimated percentage of time with the program, and accompanying costs.
- Courses related to agricultural economics regularly scheduled during spring and fall semester for study and observation and other learning experiences available at your university that could meet the needs of the participants and the program.
- Proposed short courses, conferences, seminars, and other resources/linkages with other institutions, agencies, or businesses that can or may be used/developed during the program.
- Your general program design, with a general list of activities and the persons responsible for carrying them out, for the duration of the program, with special emphasis on the first periods covering the introductions and overviews of agriculture, government policy, and U.S. agricultural education, research and extension system. This should include how you will work with each participant to upgrade technical subject knowledge, and/or to upgrade research methods and establish or strengthen contacts, to develop course outlines, and to provide a thorough understanding of our agricultural systems.
- **An estimated budget should be included outlining the costs for 4 participants:**
  - Housing: Cost of participant housing in your area (2 participants to a furnished apartment furnished)
  - Project coordinator salary, other staff salaries, other university fees,
  - Estimated in-state travel, field trip expenses, special workshop/seminar expenses, etc.
  - Equipment, materials and supplies
  - Other direct costs (IT expenses, photocopying, local transportation, etc)

- Indirect costs at no more than 10% of the budget
- A list of any in-kind contributions that you are able to provide

At this time **do not** include expenses for international airfare, health insurance or follow-on visits, participant allowances, book or educational material allowances, etc, as most of these will be standard and determined by USDA.