

AFRI Centers of Excellence (COE)

Purpose: When two or more proposals are “tied” with Highly Meritorious ranking by the peer review panel, the proposal that also meets the **Center of Excellence (COE) criteria** will receive priority consideration during the final review process.

Authorized via 2014 Farm Bill

General Information:

Centers of Excellence are NEW concept from 2014--these Centers didn't already exist as a USDA funded entity at any institution. It could be a way to “formalize” an existing team.

Encourages researchers to collaborate to increase efficiencies, leverage funding and resources, and expand capacities in research/teaching/extension.

Reward for developing a Center of Excellence could mean the difference between being funded or not.

Basic Information:

- COE can position grant for priority consideration
- If there's a tie between a COE proposal and non-COE proposal, the COE will likely get the award
- Select RFA's support the creation of a COE
- **No extra money for becoming a COE; but no extra reporting requirements either**
- COE can be multi-institutional
- The COE receives the recognition – not the PI's Institution
- Peer Review panelists review proposals first for science and then for COE criteria—the proposals are about the science first
- **No extra pages allowed to describe the COE. PI must weigh advantage of using pages for COE vs science.**
- **Could be a mechanism to formalize an existing informal relationship**
- A NIFA document attached provides more details about why the Centers were developed and who is eligible.

2015 USDA RFA's Impacted allowing Centers of Excellence (2016 not released) :

Agriculture and Food Research Initiative – Foundational Program and Challenge Areas • Aquaculture Research • Biomass Research and Development Initiative • Biotechnology Risk Assessment Research Grants Program • Children, Youth, and Families at Risk • Crop Protection/Pest Management • Farm Business Management and Benchmarking • Farm Safety and Youth Farm Safety Education and Certification • Methyl Bromide Transition • Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative • Organic Transition Program • Rural Health and Safety Program • Specialty Crop Research Initiative

Criteria: http://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource/NIFA_centers_of_excellence.pdf

- Demonstrate ability to reduce duplicative efforts regarding research, teaching and extension
- Leverage available resources: public-private partnerships; institutions of higher ed; federal government
- Educate and disseminate solutions to target audiences
- Potential to increase economic returns to rural communities

If you would like to discuss further or would like to use this concept in an upcoming AFRI, please contact Dawn Parks at dwparks@purdue.edu!