



# **WORKING AS A TEAM MEMBER ON MULTI-DISCIPLINARY GRANTS**

**Dr. Lisa House  
Food and Resource Economics  
Department  
University of Florida**

# GENERAL THOUGHTS

- Participating on a team often means bringing social sciences together with physical or biological sciences
  - Being involved from ground-up is important
  - More than cost-benefit analysis, but that is often what they know
  - May involve other types of social scientists
- Helps to understand issues facing agriculture and agribusiness
- We need each other
  - If a new technology saves money, why don't all farmers adopt it?
  - What products or technologies are out there that need consumer research before products make it to the market?



## MY BACKGROUND

- Team 1 – Collaboration with horticultural scientists on market potential for new citrus products
- Team 2 – Collaboration with multiple fields for USDA SCRI (Specialty Crops Research Initiative) Planning Grant
- Team 3 – Collaboration with food scientists, agricultural communications, and psychology on childhood obesity
- Team 4 – Collaboration with anthropology on social network structures



# HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- Grant programs that encourage multi-disciplinary programs help (i.e. AFRI, SCRI)
- Participating in College-level activities like committees
- Reading literature outside your field
- Picking up (or answering) the phone/e-mail
- Saying “yes” where you can add value
  - Sometimes just saying “yes” if you think you can add value



# WORKING AS A TEAM

- Strong personalities
  - Pay attention in the proposal writing process, this can help you avoid getting into difficult situations
- Taking ownership
  - Though you are part of a team, you need to take the lead on social science research – make sure your voice is heard
- Pull your weight
  - If you want involved in future projects



# WHY APPLY FOR GRANTS WITH LOW PROBABILITY OF FUNDING?

- If you don't "vote", you can't complain
- You can't get funded if you don't try
- You can't get as much feedback if you don't try
- If as a field we don't apply for grants, it sends a collective message that there is not a need for support of social science research, or we are not relevant
- The process of applying leads to other things with partnerships
- The process of writing raises your awareness of issues



# GETTING STARTED

- Look for grants
  - Don't only look where you have looked in the past
- Look for partners
  - Use literature, contacts, your university, colleagues to find partners
- Get to know team
  - Though internet is helpful, face-to-face is worth something
- READ the RFA
- Talk to the program managers
- Start Early!



# ADVICE FOR WRITING THE PROPOSAL

- Keep it simple... (avoid jargon)
- But include details on methods, especially when data collection is involved
- Clearly define objectives and responsibilities
  - Use a logic model!!
- Don't write the proposal individually, then cut and paste together
- Have a non-economist proof-read for you
- Follow the RFA



# DURING THE GRANT

- Defined roles and expectations
  - Timelines
  - Objectives
  - Regular meetings (phone, e-mail, skype, in-person)
- Importance of a team-leader
  - Meeting deadlines
  - Tracking progress



# BENEFITS/CHALLENGES FROM YOUR UNIVERSITY

- Challenges inside the university
  - Getting “credit” for being a team-player
  - Paperwork/Budgets
- Benefits inside the university
  - Can build centers of excellence that attract students, funding, allow for future multi-disciplinary work
  - Can impact teaching programs by showing relevance of disciplines
  - Can train students to ‘think multi-disciplinary’



# BENEFITS/CHALLENGES FOR YOU

## ○ Potential Benefits

- Relevance of work
- Finding new and interesting topics to research
- Recognition by University, T&P, etc.
- Publications

## ○ Challenges

- Time management
- Paperwork
- Being “heard” within group
- Credit from colleagues/profession

