The following information resulted from a roundtable conversation among peers about how to develop successful multi-state collaborations, particularly focusing on funding proposals.

The consensus of the group was that multi-state collaborations are going to be increasingly important in the future as resources continue to be limited. In addition, these types of collaborations provide personal and professional benefits to those participating.

The following tips and strategies emerged during the conversation. They appear below in the order that they were discussed.

**STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATIVE PROPOSALS**

**Before the grant writing begins...**

- **Build your team early.** Use professional associations, conferences and regional networks to identify individuals that you might like to collaborate with on a regional project or grant. Having a working relationship in place will help pave the way when it is time to write that proposal.

- **Look beyond your content area.** While it is natural to be most comfortable with those colleagues with whom you share some content area expertise, it can useful to broaden your network to include individuals with other knowledge. Many RFPs (requests for proposals) coming out now express a preference for multi-disciplinary work.

- **Have a list of “dream projects” in place.** Take the time to keep a list of projects that you would really like to be working on. Include potential collaborators and an approximate budget for these projects. When looking for grant funding it is important to fund projects that you have identified a need for rather than letting the requirements of the funding source direct your actions. Although it can be tempting to apply for whatever money is available (especially when resources are tight), this scenario often leads to mission-creep. This can lead to poor execution of the project, disappointing results, and, in the long run, can hurt your future chances of securing funding.

- **Meet with your university’s Sponsored Programs Office to be sure that you understand the procedure for developing sub-awards, contracts, etc.** It can be a complicated process and one that you should be prepared to follow up on with your collaborators. Knowing the procedure ahead of time will alleviate some of the stress when you are pulling together your proposal.

- **Be clear and transparent in your communications.** The key to successful collaborations is clear communication. That becomes especially true when there is money involved. Establish early on who will be the primary applicant for the funding and what the roles of each collaborating organization will be.
**USDA Rural Information Center**
For a comprehensive resource on funding opportunities and Community Development Resources, the USDA Rural Information Center maintains listings of current programs and resources.

**USDA-NIFA Funding.**
Learn more about available or anticipated competitive grants or cooperative agreements here. For these grants, NIFA accepts applications from eligible entities and considers the applications for funding through a competitive peer review process.

On each individual grant page you will find links to full requests for applications (RFAs) and application forms. RFAs explain the evaluation criteria used in the competitive peer review process, and contain instructions for preparing and submitting applications. To be considered for funding, applicants must submit the required forms with their applications.

**NACDEP**
The National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) is a professional association where you might build networks of individuals interested in collaborating on projects.

**RRDCs**
The four Regional Centers for Rural Development are key partners in many regional projects. Each of the Centers works closely with the Land Grant Universities in their respective...