

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.

The screenshot shows a website layout with a 'Spotlights' section on the left and a sidebar on the right. The 'Spotlights' section contains five items, each with a small image and a text description:

- Rural Funding Sources**: USDA, NAL, Rural Information Center. Check out this page, which serves as a gateway to major funding programs, tools and assistance for rural areas from both public and private sources.
- Federal Funding Sources for Rural Areas Database**: USDA, NAL, Rural Information Center. Search the database for information on rural federal programs. Full program description and contact information for each program. This database is in cooperation with the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance.
- Rural Library Funding from USDA. (PDF|36.18KB)**: USDA, Rural Development. Factsheet describing the use of Community Facilities funds for rural libraries.
- A Guide to Funding Resources**: USDA, NAL, Rural Information Center. This full-text publication provides a variety of information that link to helpful web sites and non-electronic publication citations that assist in identifying funding programs.
- Grants.gov**: Grants.gov. Allows organizations to electronically find and apply for Federal grants.

The sidebar on the right contains several sections:

- Start a Business**: Start a Business, Find Farm Funding.
- Funding Resources**: Rural Funding Sources, Federal Funding Database.
- Services for Citizens**: A photo of a woman smiling.
- See Also**: Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance.
- Media Help**: To view PDF files you must have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer. To view Flash files you must have Macromedia Flash Player installed on your computer.

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 be 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.

Resources

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

"...in a global society, in which timely information is the most important commodity, collaboration is not simply desirable, it is inevitable. In all but the rarest cases, one is too small a number to produce greatness."

Source: Organizing Genius: The Secrets of Creative Collaboration by Warren Bennis and Patricia Ward Biederma, 1997