

Prospective Proposal to USAID on Critical Issues in Contemporary Agrarian and Rural Development
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February 8, 2012

We would like to bring together people interested in discussing a proposal to create a USAID-funded university center dedicated to tackling the most critical issues in contemporary agrarian and rural development.

USAID has released [a draft RFA](#) for [University Engagement Through Higher Education Institutions](#). The Office of Science & Technology in the Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning seeks to establish a network of centers that will improve the Agency's, as well as the larger development community's, ability to define and solve large development challenges. This initiative would support the creation of a single university center or consortium that harnesses the intellectual power of faculty, students, and staff in academic institutions, including institutions in the developing world, to partner with USAID in order to enhance evidence-based analysis and test new solutions, to champion and incubate creative approaches to accelerate solutions to traditional development challenges, and to encourage universities to assist in addressing development problems through sustainable, creative, multidisciplinary approaches. This is clearly an interdisciplinary endeavor.

We think that there is a wide range of relevant people and programs on campus, some of which the Atkinson Center has helped to fund, from the Food Systems and Poverty Reduction IGERT funded by NSF, to work on biochar, village-scale liquid fuels, mycotoxin control, the development of the Cornell Agrarian Index, smallholder value chains, nonfarm rural enterprise development, market-based biodiversity conservation programs, the new strategic partnership with CARE, etc. The core thrust of the center needs to be decided but would ideally include an emphasis on identifying and evaluating environmentally and socially sustainable approaches to improve productivity, resilience and quality of life in rural regions around the globe where poverty is especially prevalent and persistent. This will involve the development of new technologies and practices in the sciences and engineering, as well as of new data, evidence and understanding based on cutting edge social science methods. Partnerships with collaborators in developing countries and the training of students committed to careers in international development will be central to the design of the center.

We invite those interested in helping conceptualize the boundaries, organization and thematic foci to join this open discussion about the prospective proposal to USAID. Please **RSVP to Paula Euvrad (pege3@cornell.edu)** so that we have a confirmed count for the lunch and join us in **300 Rice Hall** **Wednesday, February 8 from 12:00 – 1:00pm.**