The Agriculture Network Information Center (AgNIC) and e-Extension:
Commonalities and Opportunities

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<u>**AgNIC's Vision**</u>: "to be a premier comprehensive web portal for agriculture and the related sciences using state-of-the-art technologies. The AgNIC Alliance will serve as a model for collaborative and synergistic provision of discipline-specific electronic information."

<u>**e-Extension's Vision:**</u> to re-establish Extension's brand and purpose and to satisfy new customer base and societal needs

"plan and implement a national web-based information and education network for current and new Extension clientele that will support just-in-time learning by providing coordinated access to LGU expertise"

<u>**AgNIC Strengths**</u>:

1) continually growing "alliance" since 1995; currently involves 44 partners land-grant universities, the National Agricultural Library, Cooperative Extension, and others

2) successful collaborative model based on voluntary "bottom-up" participation with limited funding

3) established organizational structure providing central, identifying image, while also maintaining "brands" of individual partners

4) growing record of successful competitive grants

5) established technical foundation including standards for metadata, controlled vocabulary, customizable portal applications, ADA compliance, and new web services applications

6) operational central database of distributed links and information resources

7) provision of online reference services linking users to experts

<u>**e-Extension Strengths:**</u>

1) strong "top-down" leadership with an articulate and persuasive vision for Extension's survival by using technology to bring trusted and valued agriculture-related information to U.S. citizens

2) based on historical successes and widespread reputation in diffusing research and knowledge from the land-grant system to taxpayers

3) potentially could link information and resources from 3,000 local outlets

4) well-defined plan for a content management system involving a metadata database and interface, format management, peer-review, use of templates and automated publishing

5) allocation of Smith-Lever funds from five out of six states to fund first year of development (2004-05); newly hired Director and two Associate Directors for Technology and Content Development

AgNIC Issues and Opportunities:

1) stable core funding for maintaining servers, up-dating central web site, and providing incentives for partners to cost-share

2) expanded content areas to include all agriculture, natural resources and the environment, and related health and nutrition subjects

3) development of original, high-quality content, learning tools, and advanced educational applications

4) improved marketing, visibility, and buy-in strategies

e-Extension Issues and Opportunities:

1) stable funding to continue to develop core technologies and central web services

2) further devising the technical plan and taking it to an operational level

4) training Extension personnel to utilize the system and to promote it to clientele

Potential Benefits for AgNIC/e-Extension Collaboration (see also "Opportunities for Collaboration to Develop a Digital Land-Grant Information System" Heatley and Gardner, 2003):

1) Improved and expanded informational and educational products

2) Increased user access to and awareness of products

3) Elimination of duplication of effort

4) Improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness

3) Ensured long-term public access to the products

Underlying Questions:

1) Can collaboration between AgNIC and e-Extension benefit both without negating their individual uniqueness and strengths?

2) Why is it important for AgNIC and e-Extension to survive? (If we don't do it, the marketplace will and the public and USDA will lose).

3) Could a collaboration form the basis for a national agricultural information system and computing grid on the order of a Medline Plus or a WebMD?