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**NRAC FULL PROPOSAL REVIEW FORM**

Project Code/Title: 23-13 Gordon - Rebooting the Northeast Aquaculture Extension Network: A Skills Training and Mentorship Program for Extension Professionals

Date Due: December 9, 2022

Please provide the information requested below. Length and detail of responses may vary according to the nature of the proposal. We value your honest appraisal and the format allows you to be as expansive as you deem necessary (feel free to use a separate sheet if necessary). Your comments and scoring will be shared with the principal investigator but with complete anonymity.

1. **Science, Technology, and/or Extension Program Design (technical merit of all aspects of the project, 30%):** Does this proposal use top quality science and/or technology, or demonstrate extension scholarship? Is (are) the PI(s) familiar with relevant previous and contemporary investigations? Are the objectives and hypotheses explicit and clear? Is the experimental plan clear and the statistical design appropriate? Is the methodology described in the plan appropriate to meet the objectives for a research or extension project? Will this work advance understanding of the science and the contemporary problems that the industry faces? If this is an Extension-demonstration or education project do the PI(s) provide an adequate plan to evaluate the success of the effort? Are the proper metrics provided? Can the PI(s) properly assess the short-term, medium-term, long-term outcomes projected?

*Comments: The project is based on the needs assessment that was developed and completed by over 30 Extension connected individuals in the region. There has been a dramatic turnover in Extension both in the northeast and throughout the US. With the corresponding overlap with the COVID outbreak, Extension personnel have been dealt a difficult hand. The project is well designed but has difficulty in developing a clear statistical approach because it is extension. They have developed both quantitative and qualitative methods to evaluate success. It will be difficult to evaluate short term, mid-term and long-term outcomes because it is Extension. The project is certainly needed.*

*Rating: Maximum score = 30*

Excellent (numerical value = 30) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Very Good (numerical value = 27) \_\_\_\_x\_\_\_

Good (numerical value = 24) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Fair (numerical value = 21) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Poor (numerical value = 18) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Industry Relevance and Probability of Success (30%):** Are the benefits and potential impacts related to industry utility such as increased farm-gate value or grower profitability? Will the project likely provide usable results that can be adopted by the industry in a timely manner? Alternatively, if it is a development effort toward a new technology, will this project’s results increase the team’s capacity to compete for external funds to support the next iteration of research and outreach needed to take the results to application? Will this project create an opportunity for information to be turned over to the industry for refinement and adoption that will eventually become self-sustaining?

*Comments: As for industry relevance and probability of success, one could argue that it is analogous to what comes first the chicken or the egg. Adaption of research by industry is extremely dependent upon excellent extension and is the foundation of the long successful land grant model. This project would build on the successful integration and training over extension personnel. As for direct impacts to the industry and farm gate value it is nebulous. for potential improvement in farm gate value, grower success and profitability, if it is based upon Extension interaction, the long-term importance of this project is it extremely important to the future.*

*Rating: Maximum score = 30*

Excellent (numerical value = 30) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Very Good (numerical value = 27) \_\_\_x\_\_\_\_

Good (numerical value = 24) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Fair (numerical value = 21) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Poor (numerical value = 18) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Integration with Extension (20%):** Does this work identify the key stakeholders? Stakeholders include those individuals (industries and agencies) not directly involved in the project. Is the extension plan appropriately designed to reach the targeted stakeholders? How will the results of this work address the needs of key stakeholders? Will this project extend our knowledge to all stakeholders? Are the expected outputs, outcomes, and impacts clearly described? Is the budget appropriate for effective integration?

*Comments: The project is directly integrated into extension and is an extension project. The project addresses key stakeholders which are the extension personnel for the region. It should improve and extend knowledge of all of those participating. The budget appears appropriate, and more funds could have been made available for interaction between mentors and mentees. Another addition to the program could be travel for all agents and specialists to the National Extension Aquaculture Conference. The most recent one was held in Maine in 2022. Since the meeting is held every five years funds may be reserved for the next one in 2027.*

*Rating: Maximum score = 20*

Excellent (numerical value = 20) \_\_\_x\_\_\_\_

Very Good (numerical value = 18) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Good (numerical value = 16) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Fair (numerical value = 14) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Poor (numerical value = 12) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**4. Capacity (10%):** Is (are) the principal investigator(s) and specified members of the research (extension) team qualified to conduct the research (program)? Is there industry representation as part of the team? Have the investigators clearly articulated they have adequate facilities and equipment to complete the project. Is the overall budget appropriate given the scope of the project? Is there a reasonable chance the project will be completed on-time?

*Comments: The principal investigators and Extension team appear to have good capacity, and the budget appears to be reasonable for the scope of the project. The project should be completed on time.*

*Rating: Maximum score = 10*

Excellent (numerical value = 10) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Very Good (numerical value = 9) \_\_\_\_x\_\_\_

Good (numerical value = 8) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Fair (numerical value = 7) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Poor (numerical value = 6) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Accountability (10%):** Does the investigator and her/his team have a successful track record of previous NRAC funding being adopted by the industry? Have they leveraged NRAC funding for additional resources to solve bigger problems that can be funded by NRAC alone? Is there evidence that the investigator(s) has (have) an established record indicating a high probability of success on the proposed work? Does the PI(s) have an established record of completing projects on-time meeting the objectives laid out in previous projects? Can this project integrate or be leveraged with funding from other work of the investigator(s)? Does the investigator(s) have a track record that suggests this project will be a good investment for NRAC resources?

*Comments: The investigators have a successful track record of in funding and adoption by industry. This project is an extension project thus it is well integrated in extension.*

*Rating: Maximum score = 10*

Excellent (numerical value = 10) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Very Good (numerical value = 9) \_\_\_x\_\_\_\_

Good (numerical value = 8) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Fair (numerical value = 7) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Poor (numerical value = 6) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Non-Applicable – First Time Applicant \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**6*.* Total score: \_\_\_92\_\_\_\_**

**Rating Excellent \_\_x\_\_\_\_**

**Very Good \_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Good \_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Fair \_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Poor \_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Final Recommendation: Must fund \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Fund if resources are available \_\_\_x\_\_\_\_\_**

**Encourage Resubmission next year \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Do Not Fund \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**7. Strengths:** What are the major strengths of this proposal? If you provided a rating of excellent for any of the categories above but did not comment, would you please share why you rated a particular category as “excellent”?

*Four decades ago I was a “wet behind the ears” college graduate that was assigned an Extension aquaculture position 250 miles from campus in a town I was unfamiliar with and people I was unfamiliar with. The basis of my success was an elderly extension agent that had nothing to do with aquaculture and a one-week trip to Louisiana to spend with the late Larry de la Bretonne, who was LSU's Extension aquaculture specialist at the time. Those two Extension interactions were far and away the most important building blocks for my success.*

*With the turnover in staffing of the aquaculture team in NRAC, this project is important to the long-term success of transferring excellent research to the industry in a timely and proper fashion.*

**8. Weaknesses:** Identify the weaknesses of this proposal. Are there any flaws (design, methodological, etc.) that might seriously compromise the scientific integrity, value and/or validity of the work? If you rated an evaluation area as fair or poor, how might that area of the proposal be improved?

*Two potential improvements to the project would be inclusion of Extension Specialists from outside of the region as mentors, particularly associated with specific species, and timing. The next National Extension Aquaculture Conference won't be until 2027. Hopefully, number of the new agents and specialist attended the conference in Maine in 2022. NRAC funds should be set aside for the next conference.*