

# Building a Systems Team



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# Southern Region SARE 2011 Request for Pre-proposals

## Pre-proposal pass/fail criteria:

- 1. Focus on developing sustainable agriculture systems
- 2. Project's central purpose should be research based with an educational/outreach component.
- 3. **Take a systems research approach.**

# Perspectives on Systems Research



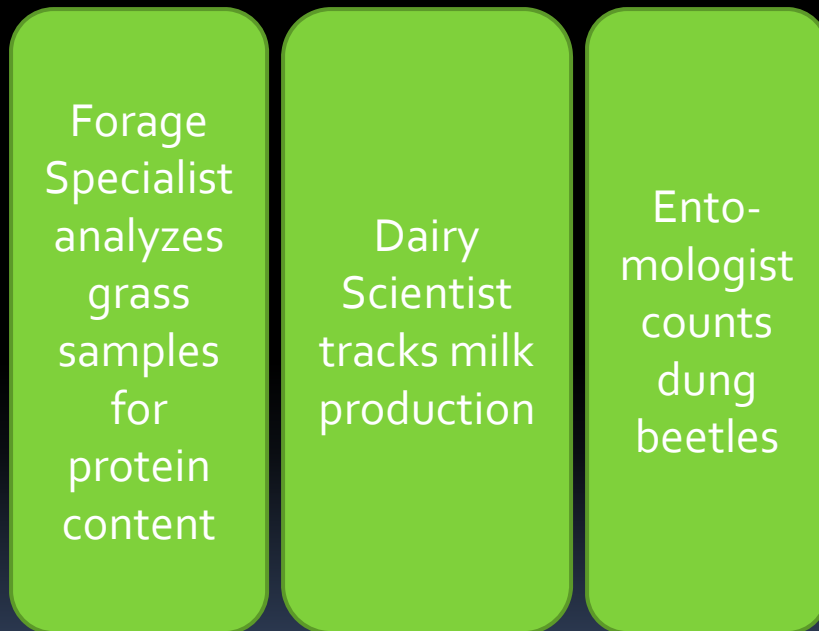
[http://www.southernsare.uga.edu/pdf\\_files/systemsperspectives.pdf](http://www.southernsare.uga.edu/pdf_files/systemsperspectives.pdf)

## Multi-disciplinary vs. Inter-disciplinary

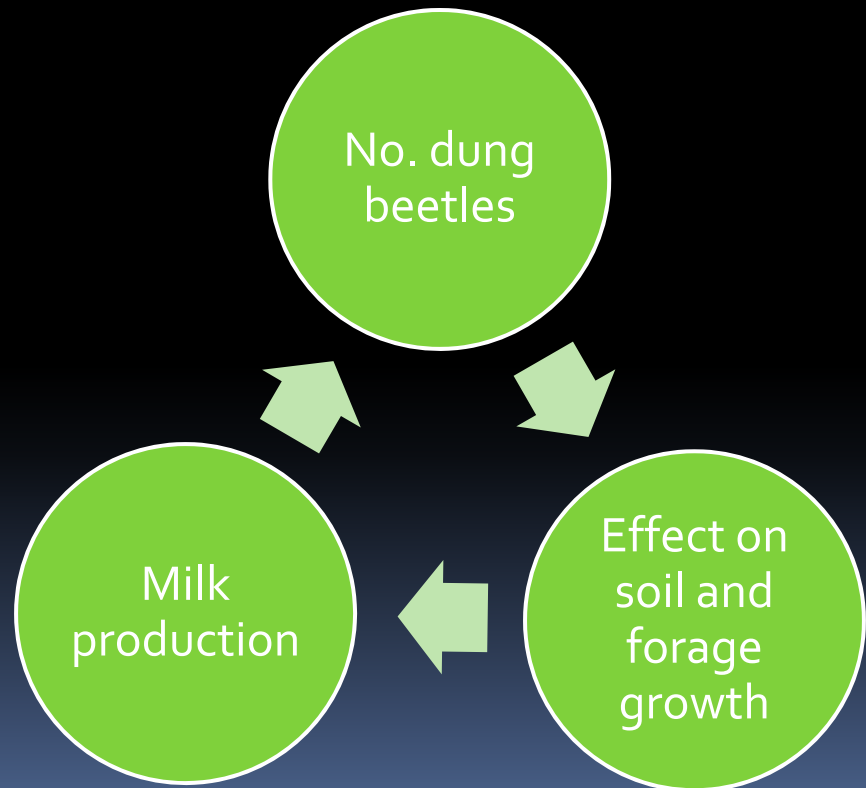
- Multi-disciplinary –  
Compartmentalized activities are coordinated among several departments; will produce multi-faceted results
- Inter-disciplinary –  
relationships between compartmentalized activities are monitored

# Example of Multi-disciplinary vs. Inter-disciplinary - dairy grazing study

## Multi-disciplinary




## Inter-disciplinary



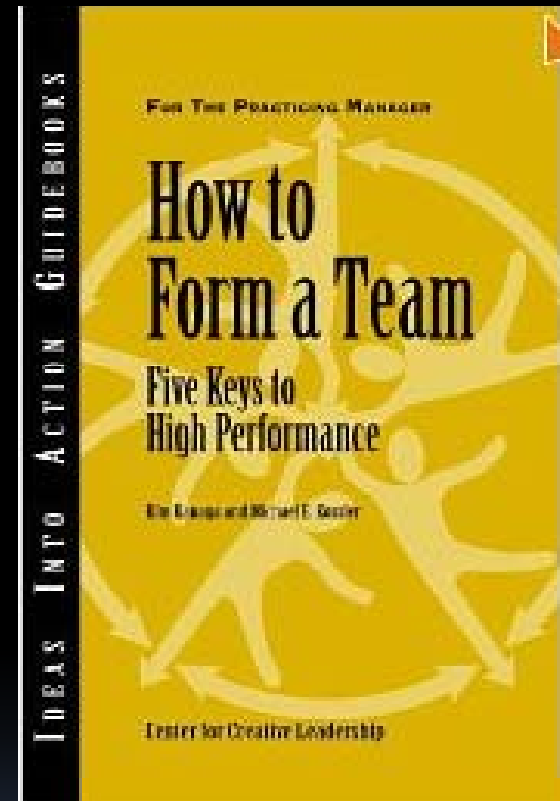
# Qualities of a leader of an inter-disciplinary team:

- Collaborative mind-set
- Democratic approach to problem-solving
  - Participatory decision making will create the team spirit and energy needed for creative problem solving
- Traditional model of one supervisor coordinating experts in solving parallel parts of a problem will not work

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- Early stages – leader must bridge gaps between disciplines and stakeholders
  - As teammates become more familiar, responsibilities for leadership can be shared.
  - Three important functions of leader:
    1. Inspire teammates to a shared vision of what the project can achieve, and keep the vision alive over time as circumstances change
    2. Help team develop decision-making framework for solving problems effectively
    3. Set a good example for collaboration

# What is a Team?

1. Members of a team are dependent upon each other for the completion of a complex task.
2. Members possess different but complementary skill sets.
3. Teams manage their own work within boundaries set by the organization.

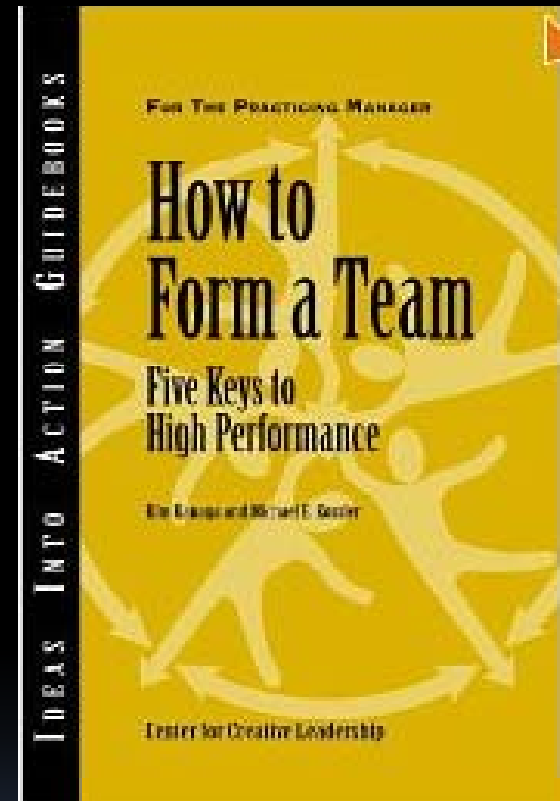


Kanaga and Kossler, 2004



# What is a team?


4. Teams have internal processes for managing communication, resolving conflicts, solving problems, making decision, and reaching goals.
5. Teams are bounded and stable over time.



Kanaga and Kossler, 2004



## Forming an Effective Team:



“... what a leader does or fails to do prior to and during team formation has considerable impact on the team’s fate. You can head off most of the problems that beset teams by considering in advance the composition of the team, its purpose, the resources it will need, and the potential obstacles it will face.”



# Forming an Effective Team:

1. Set a clear direction.
2. Identify key relationships.
3. Create an empowering team structure.
4. Build organizational support.
5. Monitor external factors.

# 1. Set a clear direction.

- Establish an overall mission of the project.
  - Must focus on developing a sustainable agriculture system research project.

## 2. Identify key relationships.

- Consider both research and educational/outreach components.
  - Research component:
    - Scientists – Example: dairy scientist, agronomist, entomologist, soil scientist
    - Support faculty - statistician, economist, sociologist
    - Farmers, other stakeholders. *"The strongest pre-proposals clearly demonstrate that the project will be relevant to producers."*
  - Educational/outreach component:
    - Extension faculty
    - Teaching faculty

### 3. Create an empowering team structure.

- Identity team functions.
  - Research
  - Outreach
  - Monitoring
  - Maintain focus and enthusiasm.
- Determine team roles.
- Shared responsibility for decisions regarding direction of the team.

## 4. Build organizational support.

- Develop proposal. Each team member should have sufficient resources.
- Project should be supported by administration.
  - Carefully determine if Assistant Professors should participate; accomplishments for these types of projects may take longer than others.

## 5. Monitor external factors.

- Evaluation plans are required; yearly evaluation of project.
- Make changes as needed.



# Lessons Learned:

1. Set a clear direction.
2. Identify key relationships.
3. Create an empowering team structure.
4. Build organizational support.
5. Monitor external factors.



## ■ “Twelve Aprils”

- Farmer, Tom Trantham, initiated project
  - Highly engaged in project
  - Loss of control of the research when it is conducted on a commercial farm
- Key team member, economist, retired during project
  - Should have picked up someone from another state

# Types of Proposals Accepted:

## 1. Developing/Planning Project

- \$10,000 - \$20,000
- 1 year

## 2. Preliminary Research

- Up to \$50,000
- 2 years

## 3. Full R&E grant proposal

- Up to \$300,000
- 3 years

