EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC) of The Ohio State University established the Research Enhancement Competitive Grants Program (RECGP) in fall 1995. The major goal of this program is to foster research excellence among OARDC-supported scientists. The RECGP began with modest funding and scope. However, the program has expanded and evolved to now include four primary objectives: (1) increase the competitiveness of OARDC scientists in extramural grant programs; (2) encourage partnerships with private industry and other stakeholders; (3) encourage the development of interdisciplinary teams; and (4) provide undergraduate students with research experience. To address these objectives the OARDC Research Committee (the governing body for the RECGP) designed six grant competitions and released a request for proposals in spring 1996 and annually in the fall from 1996 through 1999.

COMPETITIONS

SEED: Stimulate new and innovative research and generate preliminary data needed to apply for competitive external funding.

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM: Stimulate new partnerships and build on programs of excellence with new avenues of research.

MATCHING: Stimulate new collaborations with industry and non-profit foundations or other non-traditional sources of funding.

INDUSTRY SMALL: Stimulate new collaborations with industry and non-profit foundations.

AGENCY EXTERNAL: Provide matching funds to approved competitive grant programs that require a match or cost sharing.

DIRECTOR’S UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH: Provide undergraduate students with in-depth research experience by allowing them to work full-time on a research project for a summer.

Between 1996 and fall 1999, OARDC scientists submitted 249 proposals, with 96 two-year projects being funded, totaling $3,447,495 ($1,837,756 from OARDC and $1,609,739 from private sources). Of these 96 projects, 15 have been completed.
RECGP PROGRAM EVALUATION BY OBJECTIVE

OBJECTIVE 1
Increase the competitiveness of OARDC scientists in extramural grant programs. Objective 1 is specifically addressed by the Seed Grant Competition. However, any of the other five competitions may result in additional funding and projects from outside sources.

For the fifteen projects that submitted final reports, $939,110 in extramural funding has been obtained as a result of the preliminary data generated from RECGP funding.

OBJECTIVE 2
Encourage partnerships with private industry and other stakeholders. The Matching and Industry Small Grant competitions address this objective. Because industry matches must be obtained when projects are initiated, data beyond the fifteen completed projects are available (34 projects).

For the 34 projects in the Matching and Industry Small Competitions, OARDC funded a total of $1,055,162, while industry matches provided $1,609,739. More than $1.50 was returned for every OARDC dollar invested. Thirty-one partnerships were established or re-established.

OBJECTIVE 3
Encourage the development of interdisciplinary teams. Objective 3 is specifically addressed by the Interdisciplinary Team Competition. Thirty-eight proposals were submitted between 1997 and 1999.

Nine interdisciplinary teams were funded, totaling $806,093. Five teams include three academic units per team, and four teams include two academic units.

OBJECTIVE 4
Provide undergraduate students with research experience. In 1999 the Undergraduate Research Grant Competition was initiated. Students who received grants majored in the Department of Horticulture and Crop Science, the Department of Food, Agricultural and Biological Engineering, and the School of Natural Resources. Three of four possible undergraduate research projects were funded ($3,000 per project).

OTHER MEASURES OF SUCCESS

For the entire program, every OARDC dollar invested had a $2.42 return as a result of industry matches and extramural funding to date.

A U.S. patent application has been filed as a result of the initial findings of an RECGP research project.

Of the fifteen projects that have final reports, two master’s theses and four doctoral dissertations were produced.

Of the fifteen projects that have submitted final reports, twenty-three papers and abstracts have been published or are in press, and twenty-six presentations were given at professional meetings.

This research was funded through the OARDC Research Enhancement Competitive Grants Program, which receives funding from dollars appropriated by the state of Ohio.