

**SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDELINES
FOR
WESTERN MULTISTATE RESEARCH
AND
INTEGRATED RESEARCH/EXTENSION/TEACHING**

ALASKA
AMERICAN SAMOA
ARIZONA
CALIFORNIA
COLORADO
GUAM
HAWAII
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MICRONESIA
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NEVADA
NEW MEXICO
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**WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION DIRECTORS
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY FORT COLLINS, COLORADO 80523**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PREFACE.....	1
I. DEFINITIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS	1
II. MULTISTATE REVIEW COMMITTEE	2
III. WESTERN REGION PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	3
IV. COMMITTEE MEETINGS	5
VII. REPORTING AND REVIEW REQUIREMENTS	6
VIII. MIDTERM REVIEW AND EVALUATION.....	7
IX. ADMINISTRATIVE ADVISORS	7
 APPENDIX A: CRITERIA & PROCESS FOR ESTABLISHMENT & REVIEW	
OF REGIONAL OFF-THE-TOP PROJECTS	9

Preface

The four regional associations of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors (Northeast, North Central, South, and West), in cooperation with the National Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA)/USDA, have developed Multistate Research Guidelines for organizational and operational procedures that are common to all regions. These guidelines, however, recognize that there are some regional differences in procedures and policies relative to the conduct of multistate activities, which are sufficiently important as to require the regional associations to develop supplements to the National Guidelines.

These Western Regional Supplementary Guidelines apply to the Multistate Research Fund (MRF) research (W) projects and regional coordinating activities [Western Coordinating Committees (WCC) and Western Education/Extension and Research Activities (WERA)] that are, or will be, sponsored by the Western Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors (WAAESD), the Western Extension Directors Association (WEDA), and the Western Academic Program Directors Association (W-APD). In all cases, where guidance is provided in the National Guidelines, that guidance will take priority over these procedures. However, consistent with the nature of guidance, exemptions are permitted, and these supplementary guidelines reflect the operational procedures for the Western region.

I. Definitions and Descriptions

Western Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors (WAAESD): The Western Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors (WAAESD) – or shortened to WDA) was established in conformity with the constitution of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU). It represents the administrators of the State Agricultural Experiment Stations in the Western Region in their collective dealings.

Western Extension Directors Association (WEDA): The Western Extension Directors Association (WEDA) was established in conformity with the constitution of APLU. It represents the administrators of the State Cooperative Extension Service (SCES) in the Western Region in their collective dealings

Western Academic Program Directors Association (WAPDA): The Western Academic Program Directors Association (WAPDA) was established in conformity with the constitution of APLU. It represents the administrators of the Academic Program Directors (APD) in the Western Region in their collective dealings.

SAES: State Agricultural Experiment Stations

SCES: State Cooperative Extension Service

National Information Management Support System (NIMSS): The National Information Management Support System (NIMSS) is an electronic project management tool that allows the

Directors to perform all functions relative to the development, submission, review, and approval of multistate projects.

Multistate Review Committee (MRC): In the Western Region, the WDA, WEDA and WAPDA have established the Multistate Review Committee (MRC), which has been delegated the responsibility for development, review, evaluation, and approval of all aspects of western regional research and integrated research/extension/academic programs.

Administrative Advisor (AA): The Administrative Advisor (AA) is the key person in the development and management of a multistate research or an integrated research and extension activity. All western Administrative Advisors are appointed by the MRC with the approval of the WDA.

Western Directors' Office (WDO): The WDO is the office of the Executive Director and the recording secretary of the WAAESD and coordinates all aspects of the western multistate research and multistate integrated programs. The WDO is an information resource for Administrative Advisors (AA), committee chairs, and committee members and should be contacted for assistance in developing and implementing all multistate research fund activities.

The address of the WDO is:

Western Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors
4040 CAMPUS DELIVERY
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado 80523-3001
Telephone: (970) 491-6280
Fax: (970) 491-6250
E-Mail: waaesd@lamar.colostate.edu
Web Page: <http://www.waaesd.org/>

II. Multistate Review Committee

The Multistate Review Committee (MRC) is delegated the authority for development, review, evaluation, approval, and termination of all western regional research projects and integrated research/extension/academic program projects. In addition, the MRC is delegated authority to make administrative advisor assignments by the WAAESD.

The MRC will annually develop a portfolio of approved, active regional efforts that are maintained on the NIMSS. These projects may be accessed by logging on to NIMSS (<http://www.nimss.umd.edu>) and searching for active projects in the Western Region. The MRC will:

- Review and recommend the disposition of proposed multistate research projects and coordinating committees to the directors;
- Provide oversight and accountability in compliance with the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act (AREERA) requirements for accomplishments and resource commitment reporting;

- Conduct a survey and report to the directors on newly emerging issues that require multistate coordination;
- Serve as a clearinghouse for acute problems and issues that require multistate consideration;
- Develop strategies to encourage multistate integrated efforts; and
- Utilize the services of the WDO for logistical support, administrative oversight and record keeping.

The MRC membership consists of:

- Four representatives from the WAAESD (4 year term);
- Four representatives from WEDA (4 year term);
- One member from the W-APD (4 year term);
- USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) (no term limit); and
- The Western Committee on Agriculture, Research, Extension and Teaching (CARET) (no term limit).

For purposes of doing business of the MRC, a quorum shall consist of a minimum of eight (8) members present and voting at any duly called meeting. A simple majority resolves all issues.

III. Western Region Project Development

Steps for development and approval of Western Region Multistate Research projects are described in Appendix N of the national Guidelines for Multistate Research (<http://escop.ncsu.edu/docs/MRF%20Guidelines%20Revised%2008%201%20513.pdf>) and summarized in the table below.

Date	Action
November 15	Informal Deadline for submission of request to write a proposal in NIMSS. This applies to all new and/or renewing projects.
January 15	Deadline for submission of final new or renewing MRF project proposals on the NIMSS and by the WDO. Deadline for requests for extensions of existing MRF projects by the WDO (5 year limit).
January-March	MRC reviews requests and external reviewer comments.
March - April	MRC meets to discuss requests and reviews and make funding decisions. MRC decisions are presented to the WAAED, WEDA, and W-APD during annual summer meeting(s). Decisions on multistate projects are forwarded to NIFA by the WDO.
April – June	Committees address modifications and finalize proposals, as necessary. MRC and/or WDO reviews and makes final approvals, as necessary.
June – July	The WDO assigns project numbers; notifies NIFA of new/renewing projects.
October 1	Usual starting date for new or revised regional research projects and coordinating committees.

Table 1. Chronology for Western Region Research (W), coordinating committee (WCC), and extension/education/research (WERA) project proposals.

Peer Review Process

All Multistate Research Projects undergo peer review when initiated or renewed. The initiation of the peer review process is the responsibility of the WDO with support from Administrative

Advisor. By January 15th, the Administrative Advisor provides to the WDO the names and contact information for at least four (4) scientists, who have previously agreed to serve as peer reviewers for the proposal. These individuals should be qualified to judge the worthiness of the proposal based on the criteria on which they are being asked to comment.

The WDO contacts the designated peer reviewers to request a review of the proposal and also provides instructions on submission of comments via the NIMSS. The peer reviewers will evaluate the proposal using Appendix G in NIMSS.

MRC Review Process

The Western Region Multistate Review Committee reviews all Research, Extension/Education/Research (ERA) and Coordinating Committee (CC) activities. At least two (2) MRC members review each proposal using Appendix J in NIMSS. Reviewers present their findings to the rest of the committee. After discussion, the MRC renders one of the following decisions regarding the proposal:

- **Approve with major revision:** Proposal requires substantial revision, potentially including changes to objectives and milestones. Typically one month is allowed for revisions. MRC members assigned to the proposal then re-review and communicate their decision to the WDO who issues final approval in NIMSS.
- **Approve with minor revisions:** Proposal requires minor revision, typically no changes to objectives; potentially committee is asked to recruit members with specific expertise. Typically one month is allowed for revisions. The WDO then reviews and issues final approval in NIMSS.
- **Disapprove:** Proposal is not recommended for funding.
- **Development Committee Status:** For proposals requiring major revisions that cannot be addressed in one month, the MRC can give Development Committee status for one year to enable the group to meet and improve the proposal. The proposal then re-enters the review process again during the following annual cycle.

For proposals that require major or minor revisions, the Regional System Administrator will change the proposal status on NIMSS to “draft” to allow changes to be made. When all materials have been revised according to the recommendations of the MRC, the AA again submits the draft as final. This notifies the Regional System Administrator that the changes have been made and the project is ready for final review by the MRC.

Project Numbers

The WDO has assigned the responsibility for determining the status of project numbers to the MRC. A research project number will be retained only if there is a strong and compelling justification for retaining the existing number. Committees desiring to retain the existing project number should fully justify the request in writing to the MRC via the WDO at the time of the renewal request. Either or both of the following two strong arguments must be made in order to retain a project number: 1) The project has established a unique relationship with stakeholders and clientele groups such that the project number has significant meaning to those groups; 2) The project has long term objectives such as variety trials that transcend a project cycle; or projects in which tracking and identification of samples are tied to the project number. Examples include plant breeding and animal genetics projects where products are referenced to the multistate project number. Note: Identification of the project to the participants or a project’s publication

history does not constitute strong justification.

After Association approval, the Regional System Administrator assigns a number to the research project. Research project numbers are typically reassigned in sequence so that, for example, W1000 will become W2000 in the second funding cycle and W3000 in the third funding cycle, and so on. Typically, WCC/WERA projects retain their number, unless MRC recommends otherwise.

NIFA Approval of WR Projects

Approved Research projects are submitted to NIFA by the WDO via NIMSS for consideration and approval. Note: CCs and ERAs do not require NIFA approval.

NIFA sends a letter to the WDO indicating approval or requesting further action.

Upon approval by NIFA, NIFA notifies the states, agencies, and institutions listed as participants in the proposal. Projects are approved for up to five years.

Each participating scientist prepares forms AD-416 (CRIS work units), AD-417 (research classification), and 662 (protection of human subjects) as required by NIFA and submits the forms through his or her research administrator to NIFA. In the case of federal scientists, all that may be required is an amendment to fields 22-23 of their existing AD-416's.

IV. COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Meeting Authorization

The Administrative Advisor must authorize all committee meetings using the "Reports/Meetings" - "Authorize Annual Meeting" function in the NIMSS. With this wide distribution, the announcement provides an opportunity for soliciting additional participation in the project or committee.

Frequency of Meetings

Committees normally meet once each year. If necessary, the Administrative Advisor may authorize more than one meeting per federal fiscal year (October 1 – September 30). The announcement should indicate that it is an additional meeting and explain why it is needed.

Location of Meetings

The meeting location is left to the discretion of the Administrative Advisor in consultation with the committee. The appropriateness of location and the conservation of time and travel funds should be considered in determining the location of meetings. If meetings are held in conjunction with professional society meetings, committees are encouraged to meet prior to the society meetings.

Authorizations for committee meetings to be held in Canada or Mexico must indicate prior authorization by a member of the WDA in those cases where the Administrative Advisor is not a

member of the Western Directors Association. When planning meetings in Canada or Mexico, Administrative Advisors are encouraged to select locations that are easily accessible.

Minutes

The secretary of the committee records the minutes of meetings and submits them (including attendance) as part of the SAES-422 Annual Report on NIMSS. An expanded or complete set of minutes are recommended for the record by the committee itself for the purpose of assisting the committee in the management of the project. The full set of minutes should be maintained on the NIMSS activity web page where each administrative advisor/committee is invited to locate and maintain the project/coordinating committee web page or on the server at the WDO.

VII. REPORTING AND REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

Annual Report

The Administrative Advisor for each multistate research activity, with assistance of its members, submits an annual report using the "Report/Meetings" - "Draft/Edit Report" function in NIMSS (SAES-422 Annual Report - Appendix D in the *Guidelines for Multistate Research Activities*). The report is due **60 calendar days** following the annual meeting. This report should highlight the milestone accomplishments, collective outputs, outcomes, and actual or anticipated impacts, resulting from the activity. The annual report should also include a summary of the minutes (including attendance) of the meeting and a citation to the location (URL) of the full minutes.

The SAES-422 is intended to facilitate a participating station's Plan of Work accomplishments reporting, and should assist national activities that document the contributions of multistate activities. The SAES, SCES and AP Directors can use this report for identifying their contributions to the multistate activity. The SAES-422 will also be utilized to generate reports describing the impacts of multistate projects such as Impact Statements that are widely distributed to the SAES and policy makers.

Administrative Advisors are responsible for developing the actual impact statements for inclusion in the SAES-422. Engaging communications professionals from the Administrative Advisor's university or the WDO to help prepare the impact statements is encouraged.

Termination Report

At the end of the project's approved time span, the Administrative Advisor, with assistance of the project's members, submits an annual report using the "Report/Meetings" - "Draft/Edit Report" function in NIMSS. This special version of the SAES-422 serves as both the annual report in the final year and the termination report for multistate projects that are being completed. The emphasis in the final annual report should be on the cumulative accomplishments and impacts of the research over the duration of the project. Responsibility for submitting the termination report rests with the Administrative Advisor. Termination reports are distributed through the same process as the annual reports and are used for similar purposes as described above.

VIII. MIDTERM REVIEW AND EVALUATION

In the Western Region, the MRC will review multistate research, extension/education/research, and coordinating committee projects during the projects mid-term year; typically this will be done at the committee's midterm (3rd year of a 5-year project). Based on this review, the MRC will decide if projects should continue (and renew), modify their objectives, or be terminated.

Mid-term evaluations and recommendations by MRC will be reported to the WAAESD, WEDA, and W-APD. The forms used by MRC members to conduct reviews are contained in Appendices I and K.

Prior to the MRC Midterm Review and Evaluation, the Administrative Advisor will be asked to provide a brief evaluation of the activities and success of the project/activity using Appendices I and K.

An optional first or second year review may be requested by the Administrative Advisor if the project is scheduled for less than a 5-year term.

IX. ADMINISTRATIVE ADVISORS

The Administrative Advisor is the key person in the development and management of a multistate research or an integrated research and extension activity. He/she encourages team effort, advises on administrative and operational procedures, and acts as liaison among the committee, the directors of SAES, SCES, AP, other cooperating agencies and institutions, the OWDA, the MRC, and NIFA.

Eligibility and Selection

All western Administrative Advisors are appointed by the MRC. The MRC attempts to match the expertise and interests of the Administrative Advisor with those of the committees.

Administrative Advisors of multistate research projects must be SAES directors (including assistant and associate directors), deans or associate deans of member institutions of the WAAESD.

Administrative Advisors of WERAs and WCCs may be SAES, SCES, or AP directors (including assistant and associate directors), deans or associate deans, and department heads/chairs of the member institutions.

Co-Advisors

In the cases where it is desirable to identify administrators of USDA research-performing agencies or department heads/chairs of member institutions, or directors of affiliate groups as the Administrative Advisor for Research or WCCs/WERAs, the person is identified as the "Lead Administrative Advisor." A Co-Advisor must be appointed from one of the above listed groups located in the same state. For research projects, an SAES Director must be identified as the Administrative Advisor of record for reporting purposes. The Lead Administrative Advisor will assume all of the advisory functions; however, the Co-AA is ultimately responsible for all reporting and other requirements.

The Co-Advisor should be kept informed of all committee activities and reports. The directors serving as Co-Advisors are not required to attend the meetings of the WCC's/WERAs.

New Administrative Advisor Training

New Administrative Advisors should familiarize themselves with the National Multistate Guidelines and the Western Region Supplementary Guidelines. The WDO will provide additional assistance as needed to facilitate the AA meeting his/her responsibilities. In addition, the WDO has developed a virtual Administrative Advisors Notebook that is designed to lead AA through their responsibilities (<http://www.waaesd.org/multistate-program/aa-virtual-notebook>).

As needed, all Directors and Administrative Advisors will be apprised of and have input on a continuing basis regarding changes and issues associated with the management of multistate research projects, coordinating committees, and extension/education/research projects.

APPENDIX A: CRITERIA & PROCESS FOR ESTABLISHMENT & REVIEW OF REGIONAL OFF-THE-TOP PROJECTS

These criteria are based on the National Research Support Program Guidelines adopted by the Experiment Station Section in August 2013. The following statement defines the mission of the Regional Off-The-Top Program:

The activity of a regional off-the-top project is focused on the development of enabling technologies, support activities (such as to collect, assemble, store, and distribute materials, resources, resources and information), or the sharing of facilities needed to accomplish high priority research. Ideally, a regional off-the-top would facilitate a broad array of research activities. The primary purpose of regional off-the-top activities shall not be solely to conduct research as there are other available mechanisms for creating these types of projects including the multistate research projects and the National Research Project (NRP) options.

Based on this mission statement, all proposals (new and renewals) will be evaluated using the following criteria (renewal of a regional off-the-top must meet all of the criteria for a new off-the-top in addition to the specific criteria identified for a renewal):

A. PREREQUISITE CRITERIA FOR REGIONAL OFF-THE-TOP PROJECTS

1. Mission: All regional off-the-top projects must be consistent with the mission statement (above).

2. Regional Issue:

- a. All regional off-the-tops must address a regional issue, relevant to and/or of use by most, if not all states in the region. These projects draw on the best minds and resources within and outside the State Agricultural Experiment Station (SAES) system in the Western Region. The proposal should discuss its support activities relative to other regional activities including, but not limited to, multistate research projects, National Research Support Program projects, and USDA initiatives.
- b. For renewals, proposals must demonstrate direct relationship in support of continuing regional priority need(s). The renewal application builds on the previous project and provides a logical progression.

B. CRITERIA FOR ADDRESSING THE RATIONALE FOR THE REGIONAL OFF-THE-TOP:

1. Priority: Regional off-the-top projects must address regional priorities. Proposals must make a compelling case for why the regional issue in question is a priority. Links to recent regional priorities as identified by the Western Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors and/or the ESCOP Science Roadmap are encouraged.

2. Relevance to Stakeholders:

- a. The proposed project must identify stakeholders and indicate their active involvement in project development, project activities, review and/or management plans. The proposal must indicate how the project meets stakeholder needs and indicate the relationship of the stakeholders with the research to be supported. The proposal must also include a mechanism for assessing stakeholder use of project outputs. If appropriate, proposals should identify project outcomes that aide in development of or contribute to the discussion of public policy.
- b. Renewing proposals must demonstrate continued need as evidenced by stakeholder use of outputs and impacts of research efforts that are supported by the activity.

C. CRITERIA FOR IMPLEMENTING THE REGIONAL OFF-THE-TOP PROPOSAL

1. Management and Business Plan:

- a. All regional off-the-top projects must present a well-developed business plan that describes how the project will be managed and funded for a five-year period. This plan includes a management structure to adequately integrate the efforts of multiple participants. The plan should include provisions for linking multiple sources of funding and leveraging those sources with the limited off-the-top research funds. The plan should demonstrate that alternative funding sources have been explored. The business plan should include strategies to bring in new agencies, organizations, industry, foundations, etc. to help address the issues and provide funding for the project.
- b. All project proposals must provide evidence of contributions from experiment stations across the Western Region beyond what may be available through off-the-top funds. If other experiment stations outside the region are expected to participate in the project, a *pro rata* contribution of resources is required from these stations.
- c. The business plan for project renewals must include a funding plan including development of alternative funding for reducing off-the-top funding to a maintenance level. Renewals will be judged on the degree to which the project has met goals and objectives, had an impact, and been on time and within budget for the previous funding period. The renewal application should include a critical assessment of the original plan and address any shortcomings to ensure that the project will function more smoothly or effectively in the future. The proposal must indicate what additional resources have been generated or leveraged and indicate how those and any additional resources will be continued or sought.

2. Objectives and Projected Outcomes:

- a. For all proposals, objectives, milestones, and deliverables should be described in sufficient detail such that progress can be measured. Indicate the prospects for meaningful impacts within the proposed duration of the project. The proposal must indicate what approaches will be used to assess outcomes, including stakeholder use of project outputs, and how these assessments will be used in program planning.
- b. The renewal proposal must address productivity, completion of original objectives, and the relationship between projected goals and actual accomplishments. The renewal proposal must include an assessment of the outcomes and/or impact of the previous project period. This assessment must include an evaluation of stakeholders' use of project outputs. The proposed objectives must reflect appropriate revision (e.g., evolution or building to greater depth, and/or capacity). All project revisions must incorporate current and emerging stakeholder needs.

3. Integration and Documentation of Research Support:

- a. All project proposals should indicate if and/or how efforts are integrated with extension and/or academic programs and if and/or how results might be of use by other potential stakeholders.
- b. All project proposals should indicate specifically how the project will support research activities region-wide.
- c. For renewals, the proposal should indicate any new partnerships built during the project period. The renewal proposal should address the degree to which the full team is engaged in project planning and implementation, and discuss plans to correct any weaknesses that may have been identified.

4. Outreach, Communications and Evaluation:

- a. All project proposals must have a sound outreach, communication, and evaluation plan to describe how the program's goals, accomplishments, and outcomes/impacts will be communicated and disseminated.
- b. All communication plans must detail how results will be transferred to researchers and other end-users.
- c. Outreach, Communications, and Evaluation plans must contain the following elements:
 - i. Clear identification of the intended audience(s) of the regional off-the-top project. Primary beneficiaries of the results may be other scientists, consumers, producers, governmental agencies (local, state and federal), the general public, etc.
 - ii. Clear description of the engagement of stakeholders in the definition and/or conduct of the research support project.
 - iii. Thorough description of the methodology to measure the accomplishments and impacts of the project and effectiveness of the communication plan. Methods such as surveys, town meetings, conferences, analyses of reference data (e.g., citation index, etc.), and use of professional evaluators should be considered.
 - iv. Specific description for development of communication pieces describing the activities, accomplishments, and impacts of the project. The communication pieces may potentially be used with SAES/ARD/AHS/EXT directors, stakeholders and their organizations, funding sources and agencies, and congressional delegations.
 - v. Suggested mechanisms for distribution of the results of the research support project. Examples include sharing the results at annual meetings of stakeholders, providing material to the Western Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors, the Western Extension Directors Association, Western Region Academic Heads Section, CARET, and others. The project may also be asked to assist the WAAESD with preparation of appropriate documents highlighting the impacts of the project.
- c. For renewals, the proposal should evaluate the success of the project's outreach and communications plan and indicate any steps to be taken to improve effectiveness. A clear description of impacts resulting from the project is required.

D. TIMELINE FOR ESTABLISHING A NEW REGIONAL OFF-THE-TOP PROJECT

Not later than September 1 of the year prior to the proposed start date (e.g., September 1, 2014 for a start date of October 1, 2015):

Western Region SAES Directors interested in creating a new regional off-the-top project submit an outline of the proposed regional off-the-top project's relevance, justification, need, objectives, and tentative budget to the Western Director's Office (WDO) which will distribute the outline to the WAAESD Executive Committee (EC) for a preliminary review. A simple majority decision of the EC is needed to recommend development of a full proposal.

If a full proposal is requested by the EC, the following steps and deadlines apply to formally submit a proposal for consideration by the WAAESD membership:

1. Sponsoring SAES Director(s) submit a request to establish a regional development committee to the WDO following the region's standard process for establishing a multistate development committee/new research project via Development Committee (DC).
2. The WDO assigns a lead Administrative Advisor and possibly a co-Administrative Advisor. Additional participants are solicited.
3. The DC, in consultation with the Administrative Advisor(s), prepares the project proposal, including projected 5-year budget.
4. The Administrative Advisors(s), in consultation with the WDO and NIFA, must provide complete contact information for at least five peer reviewers who have agreed to serve in this capacity.
5. Peer reviews are conducted following the guidance issued in Appendix C (Peer Review Guidelines: Performance Standards and Operational Guidelines for State Agricultural Experiment Stations) and will be completed using Appendix G (Peer Review Form).
6. The DC revises the proposal based on comments and suggestions provided through the peer review process.

Not later than January 15th: The DC submits a full proposal, including five-year budget and outreach/communication plan in NIMSS using Appendix A (outreach/communications plan and five-year budget should be submitted as separate attachments). The WDO reviews the package for completeness.

January-March: The WDO transmits the revised final proposal to the WAAESD membership. The complete final proposal is reviewed by the WAAESD membership.

March-April: During the annual Spring Meeting of the Association, the EC discusses the proposal and provides a recommendation (as a seconded motion) to the membership regarding funding the proposed project. During the regular association meeting, a project representative gives a presentation of the proposal. The WAAESD Chair then presents the EC recommendation/motion to the membership and calls for discussion of the proposal; a vote is conducted with a two-thirds majority required for approval. Newly approved Regional Off-the-Top projects start a five-year cycle with five-year budget on October 1st of the current year. If a proposed project requires minor revision, the Directors may request the DC to make appropriate changes for consideration at the annual Summer meeting of the Association.

July: If necessary, the WAAESD members issue a final funding decision during the annual Summer Association Meeting; a two-thirds majority vote is required. On approval, the WDO transmits project information to NIFA.

October 1: Approved regional off-the-top starts a five-year cycle with five-year budget approval.

During Project Term (Years 2-4)

Annual Report: Annually each regional off-the-top project will prepare a State Agricultural Experiment Station 422 Report (SAES-422) and include the following information:

1. Stakeholders: A description of the interaction and engagement with the stakeholders during the past year and brief description of plans for next year.
2. Activities, Accomplishments, and Impacts: A description of the activities (i.e., meetings, etc.), accomplishments (i.e., publications, information sharing, etc.), and impacts (i.e., demonstration of adoption of new techniques; advancement in sharing information; changes in stakeholders' techniques, knowledge, or actions, etc.) for the past year and a brief description of plans for next year.
3. Communication Plan: A description of the implementation of the Communication Plan as stated in the proposal and a brief description of plans for next year.
4. Research Support activities: Describe how project contributes to and supports related research programs in the region.

An annual report must be filed in NIMSS within 60 days of the annual meeting of the committee. In addition, the Administrative Advisor(s) will report on progress at the annual Spring Regional Association Meeting. If there is no change in the total annual budget from the approved five-year budget, the WDO transmits the report and budget to the WAAESD membership for consideration at the Spring Regional Association Meeting. If a change in the annual budget from the approved five-year budget is requested, a detailed justification must be submitted to the members via the WDO for consideration during the annual budget approval process during the annual Spring meeting of the Association; no increases will be allowed during the 5-year funding period.

Year 3: A mid-term review is required of all regional off-the-top projects. The mid-term review will be conducted by the Multistate Review Committee (MRC) during the third year of the five-year funding cycle and will follow the process established for Western Region Multistate Projects (see that section of the supplemental guidelines—*reference to be filled in once revised supplemental guidelines are finalized, but will use modified version of the mid-term review form developed for the National Research Support Projects (Western Directors Office to develop)*). The MRC will conduct the mid-term review in June during the annual MRC conference call. If, after midterm review, the MRC recommend that any off-the-top project be discontinued, this decision must be ratified by a two-thirds majority vote of the WAAESD Membership at the Summer Regional Association Meeting. The WDO transmits comments and/or concerns expressed during the mid-term review to the off-the-top project committee to be addressed immediately in any subsequent renewal proposal. Off-the-Top projects recommended for discontinuation receives one year terminal funding (with budget equal to the 5th year budget) to

transition off Regional Off-the-Top funding to other sources or downsize the project.

E. RENEWAL OF AN EXISTING REGIONAL OFF-THE-TOP PROJECT

Year 4: The WDO, in coordination with project Administrative Advisor(s) and NIFA, arranges for a peer review of the project that is due to terminate at the end of year 5. Peer reviewers provide feedback using the prerequisite criteria (above).

Year 5 (Not Later than September 1): The project's Administrative Advisor(s) submit a request to write a proposal, following the region's standard process for renewing a multistate research project. The complete draft renewal proposal and draft 5-year budget are subsequently uploaded into NIMSS. The Administrative Advisors(s), in consultation with the WDO and NIFA, provides complete contact information for at least five peer reviewers who have agreed to serve in this capacity.

September - December: External peer reviewers review the draft renewal proposal and five-year budget and provide feedback to the committee.

Not later than January 15th: The committee submits a full renewal proposal, including new five-year budget and outreach/communication plan in NIMSS using Appendix A (outreach/communications plan and five-year budget should be submitted as separate attachments). The WDO reviews the package for completeness.

January-March: The WDO transmits the final renewal proposal to the WAAESD membership. The final renewal proposal is reviewed by the WAAESD membership.

March-April: During the annual Spring Meeting of the Association, the EC discusses the renewal proposal and provides a recommendation (as a seconded motion) to the membership regarding renewal of funding for the project. During the regular association meeting, a project representative gives a presentation of the proposal. The WAAESD Chair then presents the EC recommendation/motion to the membership and calls for discussion of the renewal proposal; a vote is conducted with a two-thirds majority required for approval. Newly approved Regional Off-the-Top projects start a five-year cycle with a five-year budget approval on October 1st of the current year. If a proposed project requires additional revision, the Directors may request the DC to make appropriate changes for consideration at its summer meeting.

July: If necessary, the WAAESD members issue a final decision to renew funding during the annual Summer Association Meeting; a two-thirds majority vote is required. On approval, the WDO transmits project information to NIFA.

October 1: Approved regional off-the-top starts a five-year cycle with five-year budget approval.

F. REVISION OF THESE GUIDELINES

These guidelines may be modified using the following process:

1. Periodically, the guidelines will be reviewed by the WDO. Proposed changes will be drafted by the WDO and incorporated into this document.
2. The proposed changes will be submitted to the WAAESD EC for review, editing, and a

recommendation for approval.

3. Changes will be presented to the WAAESD Membership for approval by a simple majority vote at the annual Spring Regional Association Meeting.

ATTACHMENT 1

Easy NIMSS for Station Administrators: Quick Training Guide

Topics

Getting Started With NIMSS	2
Basic Searches	3
Contacting Committee Members	4
Authorizing meetings	4
Annual Reports (Also Known as SAES-422 forms).....	5
Approving Participants	6
Removing Participants	6
Adding Participants/Completing Appendix E forms	7
Setting Up a Renewal Proposal.....	7
Inviting Participants to Join a Project	8
Completing, Submitting, and Viewing Reviews.....	9
Assigning Committee Officers	9

Getting Started With NIMSS

What is NIMSS?

NIMSS stands for the National Information Management and Support System. NIMSS is the online database to help organize all aspects of the Land-Grant system's Agriculture Experiment Station (AES) multistate research projects/committees (within the multistate system, we often use the terms projects and committees interchangeably). Participants on these projects/committees are mostly from the AES system, but can also have AES/Extension appointments; Extension-only appointments; neither AES nor Extension appointments, but be members of a Land Grant; from industry, foreign countries, or non-Land Grant institutions. Just about anyone can participate in multistate projects, provided they are approved by the regional NIMSS admins and the project members/Administrative Advisors.

Who do I contact for help?

North Central Region: Christina Hamilton (chamilton@cals.wisc.edu)

North East Region: Rubie Mize (rgmize@AESOP.Rutgers.edu)

Southern Region: Donna Pearce (donna_pearce@ncsu.edu)

Western Region: Sarah Lupis (Sarah.Lupis@ColoState.edu)

Registration and Logging Into NIMSS

1. Are you registered?
 - a. Navigate to http://lgu.umd.edu/lgu_v2/ and click on **Member Login and Registration**.
 - b. Click on the **Track ID** button and enter your email address. If it's not found, but you believe you are indeed registered, try an old email address. If you still can't find it, please call or email your regional NIMSS system admin, listed above. Please do not register again; duplicates cause problems in the database.
 - c. If you've never registered, go to http://lgu.umd.edu/lgu_v2/ and click on register. Enter your information and click **OK**. Write down the Login ID you select. Once your registration has been approved, you'll receive your password via email.
2. Logging into NIMSS
 - a. Go to http://lgu.umd.edu/lgu_v2/
 - b. Enter your username and password and click Login
 - c. *Tip 1: Do not use Google to search for NIMSS, one of the links listed takes you to a dead site that will log you in, but won't work.
 - d. *Tip 2: Much of the coding in NIMSS is not compatible with Internet Explorer. We recommend using either Mozilla or Safari. Also, NIMSS works quite well on many mobile devices.
3. Editing your profile – use this option to update your email address, phone, number, address, or password. If you wish to change your username, please contact your regional admin.
 - a. From the top menu bar, click on **Settings**

- b. Click on the **Edit Profile** button
- c. Make any changes needed, then click Update when done
- d. Click on the picture of the NIMSS “trees” at the top left to return to the main page

How to Gain Station-Level Admin Access

Before you will be able to access projects and edit participants from your AES station, contact your regional admin to make sure you have station level NIMSS access.

Alternatively, you can check this on your own after logging into NIMSS.

1. After logging in, select **Settings** from the top menu bar.
2. Click on **Station Profile** from the gray box on the left.
3. From here, you can see if your name and email address is listed within the station profile. Individuals listed have full access to their station options.
4. *Tip: AES and Extension are considered completely separate stations by NIMSS, even within a given institution. If you need access to both, please let your regional admin know.

Your Main Page

The Scary “For Action !!”

It looks scary, but it’s really not. The “For Action !!” banner lists items that are ready for you to take care of and provides alternative links to access each feature. All of these features are listed below. For instance, you may see “Approve Participants,” which just means that there are participants awaiting either Station Director (SD) or Administrative Advisor (AA) approval.

Your regional admin or NIFA will contact you with a friendly reminder if you forget or miss something, so don’t panic.

Status Report

This section lists the status of all projects led by AAs from your institution. If an AA from your institution needs help with a report or renewal, this is a quick way of accessing projects and reports due for which your station members are responsible.

Basic Searches

There are two searches you are likely to use in NIMSS: One for projects, the other for people/users.

Searching for Projects

1. From the top menu, mouse over **Projects**
2. Select **View Projects**, then **Search for Projects** (quick tip: you can also just do **Projects >> View Projects** and the **Search for Projects** page will open automatically)
3. This page will allow you to search projects by number, words in the title, expiration date, etc.

Searching for People

1. Select **Directory** from the top menu
2. Select **Find a Person**. This opens the **Find a Person** page
3. Enter your search parameters
4. Click on the **Search for Person** button at the bottom

Contacting Committee Members

This function allows you to easily send a message through NIMSS to all official members of a committee. This is especially useful for new AAs wanting to introduce themselves to a committee or for reminding members to submit reports, etc.

1. Mouse over the **Directory** menu option from the top bar
2. Select **Contact an Expert/Contact Participants**
3. Select **Contact Participants** from the next menu list
4. Select the project from the drop down list
5. Select the project members you wish to contact
6. Fill out the Subject and Message Text Boxes
7. Add an attachment if needed by clicking on the **Browse** button next to the attachment field (only one attachment is allowed per message)
8. Browse through your computer to find the file and upload it
9. Click **Send Email** to send the message

Authorizing meetings

Multistate committees are expected to meet once a year, either in person or by teleconference. All meetings must be “authorized” in NIMSS by their AA to maintain a record of a committee’s activity. Also, authorizing a meeting then sets up a location in the NIMSS database within which the annual report can be placed; annual reports cannot be uploaded unless they are associated with an authorized meeting. An AA from your institution may ask for help with this function.

1. Collect the meeting date and location information from the committee’s leadership or meeting host.
2. In NIMSS, mouse over the **Reports/Meetings** menu
3. Select the **Authorize an Annual Meeting** option
4. Fill out as many of the fields as possible on the **Create Meeting** form that opens up
5. Click **View Before Submit**
6. If it looks the way it should, click on the **Send Emails** button. This will send the meeting information out through the regional and national AES directors’ lists.
7. Once it’s been sent out, you cannot make any changes to the meeting information, but your NIMSS system admin can. Do not authorize the meeting again, this will duplicate meetings and confusion in the NIMSS database.

Annual Reports (Also Known as SAES-422 forms)

Administrative Advisors or committee/project members from your station may sometimes request help with submitting multistate project annual reports. With Station Admin access, you have the ability to upload reports only for projects that belong to AAs from your station. Projects led by AAs from other institutions will need to be uploaded either by the AA or

committee members with editing access. If you or someone from your institution is having trouble finding where to upload a report, please contact your regional admin.

Annual reports must be submitted to NIMSS within 60 days after a meeting to meet NIFA reporting requirements and NIMSS will automatically send project AAs reminders at 30, 60, and 90 days. If a committee does not submit their report, regional offices may cancel their next meeting. Also, a lack of annual reports may result in a poor review or even early termination of a project. We need these reports to prove to our stakeholders that our multistate projects are indeed active and working towards their goals and objectives.

Please note: Committee members, not your AAs, are ultimately responsible for preparing annual reports, although a good AA will stay on top of the reports and remind the committee in advance.

Uploading a Report

1. Select **Reports/Meetings**
2. Select **Draft/Edit Report**
3. Click on the **Edit Report** button next to the desired committee meeting date
4. Enter the report information, using the links in the gray box on the left to navigate between sections. Be sure to click **Save** before moving to a new section.
5. When the report is complete, click **Submit Report** from within the gray box. When an AA submits the report, it is submitted as final; there is no need to approve a report you submitted.

If changes need to be made to a submitted report, please contact the NCRA office. We can place the report back into Draft status for editing. Once the changes are complete, the report will need to be re-submitted for approval.

Procedures for uploading annual reports into NIMSS vary from committee to committee. Some committees will send their AA the completed report and the AA will upload the file into NIMSS. Others have committee members upload the reports themselves, but in this case, the person uploading needs to have editing access. With Station Admin access, you can authorize this access easily in NIMSS for your station AAs' projects:

Assigning Editing Access to a Committee Member

1. Select **Reports/Meetings >> Assign Editor**
2. Click on the **Assign Editor** button for the desired project.
3. When the **Assign Editor** page opens, click on the **Pick** button. Do not type the name in the text box, it won't work.
4. When the **Pick Editor** page opens, search for the member you wish to grant editing access to
5. Once you select them, their name should appear in the **Assign Editor** text box.
6. Click on the **Set** button to confirm

**Note: Sometimes, you may find two listings for the member you wish to select, which means there is a duplicate listing in the database that should be corrected. If this happens, please contact your regional admin before granting editing access and we will fix the problem.*

Approving an Uploaded Annual Report

When a committee member with editing access uploads an annual report and clicks the **Submit to AA** button, NIMSS will send the AA a message notifying them that there is a report needing approval. You may be asked by one of your station's AAs to approve an annual report for him/her:

1. Select **Reports/Meetings** from the top
2. Pick **Approve a Report**
3. Click on the **View Report** link under the report date to review the material. The report will open in a new browser tab
4. If it looks fine, navigate back to the **Approve a Report** tab in your browser and click on the Approve button.
5. If you don't like the report, rather than clicking on the reject button, I recommend you contact the committee directly to discuss any issues you have.

Approving Participants

When participants are added to your project by their AES office, you will receive a notice from NIMSS that "Participants are Awaiting Approval". When you receive this message, try to approve them right away so that you don't forget. Approving participants is very simple:

1. Select **Participants >> Approve Participant**
2. Click on the **Approve as SD** button to approve

Removing Participants

Occasionally, you may need to remove a participant from a project, for whatever reason.

1. Select **Participants >> Remove Participants**
2. Click the **Remove** button under the participant and project desired

Adding Participants/Completing Appendix E forms

Only authorized AES administrators can complete and approve Appendix E (participation) forms for Land Grant University (LGU) participants. Here's how to complete an Appendix E form for participants in your station:

1. Make sure they are registered in NIMSS by doing a search under **Directory**. If you see them listed, but under another institution, please contact your regional admin to switch them to your station. Please do not re-register them, as duplicate listings cause problems in the database.
2. Ask the participant which of the project's objectives they will be associated with
3. Ask them if they know their KA, SOI, and FOS codes (aka CRIS codes). If they do, great. If not, don't worry. It's simple to look up the codes within the Appendix E form them up by field of expertise This information is helpful but not mandatory for non-LGU participants. If you know their field of study, the NCRA office can help look up the appropriate codes.
4. Locate the person in NIMSS by searching under **Directory**. Write down their Station/Institution listing exactly as you see it (i.e. Christina Hamilton's is AES/NC/North Central Regional Assoc). You'll need this information to look them up when you're in the Appendix E form
5. Select **Participants >> Draft/Edit Participant Info >> Draft New**. This will open the online AppE form.

6. Select the project #. The title will fill in automatically. Make sure that if it's a renewing proposal, be sure to select the "temp" version, not the expiring project number.
7. Using the Station/Institution information you wrote down earlier, select the appropriate drop down options in the Station field. NIMSS needs to access a lot of data for these fields, so be sure and wait a few seconds for it to load after you've made each selection. If you've selected correctly, their name should appear in the Name drop down menu. If not, please contact the NCRA office. I have some tricks to find people if you cannot.
8. Select 0.1 as the default Research Commitment, unless you know otherwise
9. Enter the KA codes (if you have them) in the Research boxes
10. Do not enter anything in the Extension section; this is only for Extension participants.
11. Click **Submit** when done

Setting Up a Renewal Proposal

As a station admin, there may be times (rarely) that you will be asked to initiate a new or renewal proposal in NIMSS. Before you start, be sure the project members/AA have given you the Issues and Justification section, as you'll need this to submit the proposal request.

This step is referred to as "Requesting to Write a Proposal "

1. Login into NIMSS
2. Select Projects >> Request to Write a Proposal >> Create New. The Submit a Request to Write a Proposal form will appear. (Any project member or project AA can complete this step. You do not need to have editing access to request to write a proposal, only for editing an existing proposal.)
3. From the first pull down menu, select New only if the project is NOT a renewal (starting a full five-year project from an DC is considered a NEW project). Select Revision/Replacement if you are renewing an existing multistate project (most common). Select Extension only if you are requesting a one-year project extension.
4. For Renewals, select the appropriate project number. The title and all other information will automatically populate each text box. Please type in the project end date, five years from the start date.
5. Only for new projects: Choose the correct Appendix from the second pull-down menu
6. NC, W, NE, S Committees - Use Appendix A (Includes a Methods section)
 - a. CC/ERA Committees - Use the appropriate Appendix B (Includes an Activities and Procedures section in place of a Methods section)
 - b. 500 Committees (Rapid Response Committees) - Use Appendix F (Does not include a Methods Section, but does include a section to list the types of project activities expected, requires prior approval from your Regional Administrator). Refer to specific the NC-500 series instructions within our NCRA New Project Guidelines.
 - c. DC Projects - Only two letters of justification from two different state AES directors are necessary to explain the nature of the project. Refer to regional specific DC instructions from your regional NIMSS administrator.
7. Only for New projects: Type in the desired project title, enter the five year begin and end dates, and choose the sponsoring station (the station from which the AA is from).

8. For all proposal requests: Enter the Issues and Justification in the text box, paying close attention to the formatting requirements and character limit. If you wish to save the request and return to it at a later time, follow the directions under IIb above, then choose "edit/approve." Choose "View Request" to update the request. When complete, click Submit to submit it as final and send the request to your regional NIMSS system administrator.

Inviting Participants to Join a Project

This step should only be done when a renewal proposal is being developed and after the Objectives section is uploaded. Here's how:

1. Select **Participants >> Invite Participants**
2. The official NIMSS participation invitation should appear on your screen
3. Scroll down to the "Cut-Off Date" box. Check with your regional office to determine the appropriate date.
4. If you change the date, the page will re-load appearing to have sent the invite, but it actually has not. You'll need to click **Send** when done.
5. Click **Send** to send the invite to the national AES lists.
6. NIMSS will post a confirmation that the message was sent

Completing, Submitting, and Viewing Reviews

Station directors/AAs are often assigned to review projects in NIMSS and they may ask for help with this. Be sure first that your regional admin has assigned the review to your director then, To access and complete a review in NIMSS:

1. Select **Reviews** from the top menu, then **Submit a Review**
2. Complete the review form as best you can, paying attention to character limits.
3. Click on the **AA Review** or **AA Midterm Review** form button, depending upon the type of review.
4. Complete the review and be sure to click the **Submit** button to notify the Regional Administrator's office that the review is final
5. You can also view past reviews by clicking on one of the **View Review** buttons or selecting **Reviews >> View a Review** from the top menu bar

Assigning Committee Officers

Although it's not done as often as we'd like, there is an official way in NIMSS to list and update a committee's officers, such as Chair, Vice-Chair, and Secretary. We recommend updating committee officer lists annually and here's how:

1. Select **Participants >> Officers >> Assign/Edit Committee**
2. Click on the **Assign** button next to the committee
3. Use the pull down menu to choose the appropriate member for each role
4. Click **Save** when done