THE EXPERIMENT STATION COMMITTEE ON ORGANIZATION AND POLICY (ESCOP)

EXPERIMENT STATION SECTION

GUIDELINES FOR NATIONAL RESEARCH SUPPORT PROJECTS (NRSPs)

ADOPTED December 13, 2002
REVISED September 27, 2004
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REVISED September 15, 2009
REVISED September, 2012
REVISED, January, 2014
REVISED, November, 2015
REVISED, Xxxxxxx 2019

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I. MISSION OF NATIONAL RESEARCH SUPPORT PROJECTS

National Research Support Projects (NRSPs) focus on the development of enabling and critical technologies (e.g., databases, cyberinfrastructure, on-line toolkits, etc.), support activities (e.g., collect, assemble, store, and distribute materials, data, resources, or information), or the sharing of facilities (e.g., example) needed to accomplish high priority research, but not primarily research. NRSPs are created to conduct activities that enable important research efforts dedicated to a national issue, relevant to and of use by most, if not all, regions.

II. GENERAL

The National Research Support Project (NRSP) program is overseen by the NRSP Review Committee which manages the review of the projects and makes recommendations on funding. NRSPs are backed by the annual allocation of Hatch Multistate Research Funds (MRF) drawn from the total MRF federal allocation prior to the formula distribution to state agricultural experiment stations (SAESs). This funding process is called "off-the-top" and represents approximately 1% of the total federal Hatch capacity funds allocated to SAES.

The National Information Management and Support System (NIMSS; www.nimss.org) is the official repository for NRSP project information. NIMSS is a web application for management of the multistate research activities and an information technology tool that facilitates the online submission of proposals, reports, and reviews. NIMSS also serves as the central repository of records pertaining to multistate research projects and activities since September 2003.

ORGANIZATION OF THE NRSP REVIEW COMMITTEE

A. General

A NRSP Review Committee (also referred to as the NRSP RC or the committee) with broad oversight responsibility for the NRSP portfolio has been established and charged with providing general oversight, consistency in review and approval processes, and a national perspective relative to research support needs.

The NRSP RC will:

- Make recommendations on new opportunities for NRSP investments.
- Make budget recommendations to the ESS.
- Conduct reviews of new project proposals.
- Conduct reviews of project renewals.
- Make recommendations on project approval (new and revised) to ESS.
- Conduct midterm reviews (year 3) of each project.

- Invest up to 1% of the total federal Hatch capacity funds (Hatch regular and Hatch multistate) allocated to SAES or $2,471,000 in NRSPs

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The NRSP RC plays two important roles: as a gatekeeper function for the SAES system and as an advisor to the system. The NRSP RC makes recommendations to the state agricultural experiment station (SAES) directors concerning existing and new projects. A key component of the NRSP RC is to oversee implementation of sunset clauses whereby an NRSP reduces or eliminates its dependence on off-the-top funding. The committee reports on the final project proposals and 5-five-year budgets and makes recommendations at the annual ESS/AES/ARD meeting. The SAES Directors cast one vote per 1862 experiment stations contributing off-the-top funding) on approval of the project and its five-year budget. A simple majority vote by the SAES Directors is required to either approve or reject the NRSP RC's recommendation.

The NRSP RC uses national priorities and needs as a basis for the review and evaluation of existing and the establishment of new NRSPs. The committee is responsible for assuring that the NRSP portfolio is monitored and is responsive to needs. The committee may identify specific areas of research support needs or utilize input from established ESCOP committees (see http://escop.info/committees/). The NRSP RC has the authority to identify research support needs.

The committee is directly responsible for the review of project progress and budgets for existing NRSPs. It has the authority to ensure that the criteria contained in these guidelines are satisfactorily met by NRSPs.

Relative to the evaluation of revised and new projects, the committee oversees review by peer and merit panels. It develops criteria for the reviews, assists in establishing protocols for review, prepares the specific charge to the review panels, and evaluates completed reviews. Utilizing the results of the reviews and the committee's understanding of national research support needs, the committee makes recommendations concerning revised and proposed projects to the ESS.

B. The NRSP Review Committee Composition

1. One representative from each of the four SAES regions (1862 experiment stations) who is a current or past member of a multistate research committee (MRC), and one from the ARD region (1890 Research Directors), appointed by the regional association chair. Each unit represented on the NRSP Review Committee will also designate an alternate to insure representation. For the geographical regional associations, a logical alternate would be the regional MRC chair.

2. One representative from Extension appointed by the ESCOP Chair following the recommendation of the ECOP Chair.

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3. One representative from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), preferably a National Program Leader, recommended by the NIFA Director and appointed by the ESCOP Chair.

4. One stakeholder representative, possibly a Council for Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching (CARET) representative, appointed by the ESCOP Chair.

5. Two regional Executive Directors appointed by the ESCOP Chair. One of the Executive Directors is from the same region as the chair of the committee and will serve as the Executive Vice Chair, administratively supporting the committee. These two appointed Executive Directors will be voting members of the committee. The other three regional Executive Directors [both SAES and/or Association of Research Directors (ARD)] not assigned to the committee, may attend meetings as ex-officio, non-voting members.

6. Officers will include a chair and chair-elect chosen by the committee from the representatives' four SAES regions. The position of chair will rotate among the four geographical regions in the following order: North Central, Western, Southern, and Northeast.

C. NRSP Review Committee Operations

1. Term of appointment to the committee will be four years. Terms of the four SAES regions' representatives will be staggered so as to provide continuity to deliberations.

2. The committee may meet face-to-face at least once per year prior to the annual ESS meeting. Other business of the committee will be conducted electronically through conference calls and emails. All expenses will be borne by member's respective institutions except for the stakeholder representative. Travel funds for the stakeholder representative will be provided by ESS/ESCOP.

3. The committee will secure from the lead AA of an NRSP, peer reviews of new and revised NRSP proposals and associated five-year budgets.

4. The committee and NIFA jointly arrange for external peer review of NRSPs at the beginning of year 5.

5. The committee reports at the ESS annual meeting on new or revised NRSP project proposals, five-year budgets, and any subsequent budget revisions, and makes a recommendation for approval or rejection.

6. During a project's third year, the committee evaluates the midterm review results and the first three year's annual reports of active NRSPs, and makes a recommendation for approval or disapproval of the remaining two years' budgets at the annual ESS meeting.

III. ESTABLISHING NEW NRSPs

(Also refer to Appendix A1 for NRSP Calendar for New NRSP Projects, Appendix C for the NRSP

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proposal format, Appendix D for the NRSP Peer Review Form, and Appendix F for Regional Association Review Form.)

In addition to addressing the criteria previously described in Section III. A. General, a proposal for a new NRSP must contain elements detailed below.

A. Relevance

The proposal must clearly identify the scientific research that the project will support. What's the relevance of the support work and how the support will advance the area of science. The proposal must identify stakeholders and indicate their involvement in project development, review, and/or management plan. The proposal must indicate how the project meets stakeholder needs. The proposal must also include a mechanism for assessing stakeholder use of project outputs.

B. Management and Business Plan

Each NRSP must have a well-developed business plan that describes how the project will be managed and funded for a five-year period. This plan should include a management structure that adequately integrates 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 Multistate Research Funds (MRF). This plan should include efforts to bring in new agencies, organizations, industry, foundations, and others to help address the issues and provide funding for the project.

All project proposals must provide evidence of contributions from agricultural experiment stations across the nation beyond what is available through off-the-top funds.

NRSPs should expect a finite period of off-the-top funding. This is not a reflection of the quality of work conducted or the research supported by the project, rather, it allows the SAES system to continually assess priority needs and develop new projects as necessary. For this reason, the business plan of project renewals must include a transition plan and provisions for developing alternative funding including eliminating off-the-top funding.

Occasionally, an NRSP might require a continuing level of minimal funding. Long-term, minimal-level support would be considered by the NRSP RC if the NRSP shared a compelling rationale. Even in this circumstance, the NRSP RC will recommend that a project team identify strategies to eliminate OTT funding.

C. Objectives and Projected Outcomes

Objectives, milestones and deliverables should be described in sufficient detail such that

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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 and how these assessments will be used in program planning.

D. Integration

Where applicable, projects should indicate how efforts are integrated with Extension or academic programs and how results might be of use by other potential stakeholders.

E. Outreach, Communications and Assessment

All projects must have a sound outreach, communication, and assessment plan that seeks to convey the project's goals, accomplishments, and outcomes/impacts. The communication plan must detail how results will be transferred to researchers and other end users and should contain the following elements:

1. Clear identification of the intended audience(s) of the NRSP. Careful consideration should be given to all possible users of the information (e.g., consumers; producers; local, state, and federal governmental agencies; general public; etc.)

2. Clear description of the engagement of stakeholders in the definition and/or conduct of the research support project.

3. Thorough description of the methodology to measure the accomplishments and impacts of the

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NRSP. Methods such as surveys, town meetings, conferences, analyses of reference data (e.g., citation index, etc.), and use of professional evaluators should be considered.

4. Specific description for development of communication pieces describing the activities, accomplishments, and impacts of the NRSP. The communication pieces will be used with SAES/ARD directors, stakeholders and their organizations, funding sources and agencies, MRF impact writers (see https://www.mrfimpacts.org and congressional delegations.

5. Plans should include mechanisms for distribution of project results. Examples include sharing the results at annual meetings of stakeholders, providing material to the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) Board on Agriculture Assembly and other appropriate committees within the SAES/ARD organization, and assisting NIFA is preparation of appropriate documents highlighting the impacts of the project.

6. Data management plan. How will the data from the project be managed, archived, and made available to prospective users?

F. Budget and Budget Narrative
(*See Appendix H for the NRSP budget templates.*)

Project budgets must identify funds required to perform the project. Further two budgets must be submitted; one that identifies the annual and total amount of Multistate Research Funds required for the project. A second budget sheet that identifies all other sources of funding (e.g., industry, federal agencies, grants and contracts, and SAESs) must be submitted.

A budget narrative must accompany the budgets. The budget narrative should provide greater detail of proposed expenditures in the categories listed in the budget template (salaries, benefits, travel, supplies, equipment, etc.) The budget narrative should also describe the specifics on contributions to the project from funding sources other than MRF. Once approved, an NRSP is provided with a five-year budget by the ESS, which is subject to any changes in Hatch funding provided by Congress. For example, if Hatch funding is reduced by 1%, all NRSPs would be reduced also by 1%, accordingly.

IV. MIDTERM REVIEW
Also see Appendix D for the midterm review form.

All NRSPs must undergo a progress review in the third year. This substantive review is conducted

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by the Administrative Advisors of the particular project and then reviewed by the NRSP RC. Pending satisfactory progress as detailed below, the committee will forward its recommendation to the regional associations for informational purposes in time for their respective spring meetings and to the ESS for continued funding at the approved level in years four and five. Should an NRSP fail to meet performance expectations or funding commitments, the committee may recommend that funding approval be reduced or terminated by the ESS.

The midterm review shall consider the requirements and criteria set forth above for the development/approval of an NRSP in *Section IV. Establishing New NRSPs*.

1. **Relevance to Stakeholders**

   Is there evidence of stakeholder use of project outputs? Briefly describe the efforts. Are there project outcomes that aide in development of, or contribute to, the discussion of public policy. If so, please describe.

2. **Management and Business Plan**

   The midterm review must reflect progress toward meeting external funding expectations. Failure to meet funding goals may result is alterations to the off-the-top budget contribution provided by the SAES system.

3. **Progress Toward Objectives and Projected Outcomes**

   In the midterm review, the project must demonstrate productivity, progress toward original objectives and the relationship between projected goals, actual accomplishments and any impacts to date. As appropriate, this assessment must include an evaluation of stakeholders' use of project outputs to date.

4. **Integration**

   As appropriate, the NRSP must indicate how efforts are integrated with Extension or academic programs and how results might be of use by other potential stakeholders. By the midterm review the project must demonstrate actual collaborations and describe new partnerships built during the project period. The report should address the degree to which the full team is engaged in project planning and implementation. Discuss plans to correct any weaknesses that may have been identified.

5. **Outreach, Communications and Assessment:**

   The midterm review must demonstrate the extent that the NRSP is working to effectively communicate project results to the intended audiences and others who need them.

V. RENEWAL OF A NRSP
(Also refer to Appendix B for the NRSP criteria, Appendix C for the NRSP proposal format, and Appendix E for the NRSP Review Forms.)

Prior to consideration for a renewal, each NRSP must undergo an external peer review according to the schedule presented in *Section VII. Review and Approval Timelines for New NRSPs or Renewal of an Existing NRSP*. This peer review is arranged jointly by the Lead Administrative Advisor and the NIFA Representative. The review should include both the accomplishments of the current project and the draft renewal project proposal. Each NRSP seeking renewal must meet all of the criteria for a new NRSP previously described in *Section IV. Establishing New NRSPs*. In addition, renewal requests must address the

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following:

1. **General**: NRSPs should expect a finite period of significant levels of off-the-top funding. This allows "the system" to undertake new initiatives and address new priorities. For this reason, the business plans of applications for renewals will be carefully scrutinized. For renewals, proposals must demonstrate direct relationship in support of continuing national priority need(s). The proposal should discuss its support activities relative to other NRSPs. The renewal application must build on the previous project and provide a logical progression.

2. **Relevance**: Proposals must demonstrate continued need as evidenced by stakeholder use of project

outputs and impacts of research efforts that are supported by the activity.

3. **Assessment of Outcomes**: The proposal must address productivity, completion of original objectives and the relationship between projected goals and actual accomplishments. The 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.

4. **Objectives**: The proposed objectives must reflect appropriate revision (e.g., evolution or building to greater depth, and/or capacity). All project revisions must reflect ongoing, new, or emerging stakeholder needs. Renewals will be judged as to the degree to which project has been on task, on time, and within budget for the previous funding period.

5. **Management and Business Plan**: In general, NRSPs should expect a finite period of off-the-top funding. The business plan of project renewals *must* include a transition plan and provisions for developing alternative funding including eliminating off-the-top funding. An assessment of transition options, and/or alternative funding sources should be included in the plan.

   Occasionally, an NRSP might require a continuing level of minimal funding. Long-term, minimal-level support would be considered by the NRSP RC if the NRSP shared a compelling rationale. Even in this circumstance, the NRSP RC will recommend that a project team identify strategies to eliminate OTT funding.

   The renewal application must 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. *NOTE: Not all projects can be transitioned to other funding sources and, if the project meets an ESCOP priority, the project may continue with off-the-top funding.*

6. **Integration and Documentation of Research Support**: The business plan must indicate the breadth of partners involved in the project and the multiple sources of leveraged funding. The renewal 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 complement any weaknesses that may have been identified.

   In addition, the renewal proposal should contain a description of how research activities nationwide will be supported by the project.

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7. **Outreach and Communications**: The renewal proposal should assess 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.

8. **Budget and Budget Narrative**

   (See Appendix H for the NRSP budget templates.))

   Project budgets must identify funds required to perform the project. Further, two budgets must be submitted; one that identifies the annual and total amount of Multistate Research Funds required for the project. A second budget sheet that identifies all other source s of funding (e.g., industry, federal agencies, grants and contracts, and SAESs) must be submitted.

   A budget narrative must accompany the budgets. The budget narrative should provide greater detail of proposed expenditures in the categories listed in the budget template (salaries, benefits, travel, supplies, equipment, etc.) The budget narrative should also describe the specifics on contributions to the project from funding sources other than MRF. Once approved, an NRSP is provided with a five-year budget by the ESS, which is subject to any changes in Hatch funding provided by Congress. For example, if Hatch funding is reduced by 1%, all NRSPs would be reduced also by 1%, accordingly.

VI. REVIEW AND APPROVAL TIMELINES FOR NEW NRSPs OR RENEWAL OF AN EXISTING NRSP

(Also, refer to Appendix A1 for the NRSP Calendar for New NRSP Projects, Appendix A2 for the NRSP Calendar for Renewal of NRSP Projects, and Appendix A3 for the NRSP Calendar for Continuing NRSP Projects)

A. New NRSP Development

Not Later than September 1. Individuals interested in creating a new NRSP are required to submit an outline of the proposed NRSP's objectives, justification, and tentative budget to the NRSP RC for a preliminary review no later than September 1 of the year prior to the proposed start date, for example, September 1, 2020 for a start date of October 1, 2021. If this review is positive, then the following steps should be followed to formally submit a proposal for consideration by the ESS:

1. Sponsoring SAES Director(s) submits a request to establish a regional development committee to one of the Executive Directors following that region's standard process for initiating new multistate activities.
2. Sponsoring regional association assigns lead Administrative Advisor and solicits names of Administrative Advisors, from other regional Executive Directors. Sponsoring regional association follows the normal process for approving the establishment of a development committee and soliciting additional participants.

3. NRSP development committee membership, in consultation with Administrative Advisors, prepares initial project proposal, including projected five year budget. Administrative Advisors submit the project proposal and projected five year budget, and arranges for at least four external peer reviews of the proposal. Peer reviewers should be instructed to use the peer review form shown in Appendix E. The Administrative Advisors work with the NRSP development committee to revise the proposal and budget based on the peer review comments and prepares a review response indicating how the reviewer's comments were addressed in the revision.

Not later than January 15. Administrative Advisors submit revised proposal and five year budget, along with peer review comments and committee's responses, to the NRSP Review Committee Chair. The NRSP Review Committee Chair reviews package for completeness and then forwards it to the regional Executive Directors for distribution to the appropriate multistate activities committee and the proposal's subsequent evaluation.

February—April. Appropriate regional committees review the project proposal and projected five year budget using the review form shown in Appendix E and report to the regional AES Directors at their spring regional association meeting. The sponsoring Executive Director transmits comments and/or concerns along with a summary of the review form results to the assigned Administrative Advisors and NRSP RC.

April. NRSP Development Committee addresses any comments and/or concerns received from the regional

associations and finalize the proposal in NIMSS for submission to the NRSP RC.

May/June/July. The NRSP RC meets and prepares recommendations on the project proposal and shares those recommendations with the NRSP development committee and the Regional Executive Directors who distribute the information to their regional associations. The NRSP development committee responds to the recommendations made by the NRSP Review Committee. The NRSP Review Committee also reports preliminary recommendations to ESCOP.

August. NRSP Review Committee finalizes recommendations that will be presented at the annual ESS meeting.

September. The NRSP RC makes a recommendation for approval or rejection of the final project proposal and projected budget at the ESS annual meeting. SAES Directors vote (one vote per institution contributing off-the-top funding) on approval of the project and five-year budget, a simple majority vote is required to carry the motion.

October 1. Approved NRSP starts five year cycle with five-year budget approved.

B. During Project Term (Years 2-4)

(Also refer to Appendix A3 for the Calendar for Continuing NRSP Projects)

Annually. NRSP Committee holds an annual meeting and subsequently submits an annual report (see below) in NIMSS using the SAES-422 form within 90 days of the annual meeting. Note that a midterm progress report is needed in year three as described below.

If a change in the annual budget from the approved five year budget is requested, a detailed justification must be submitted to the NRSP RC and regional Executive Directors for consideration by the regional associations.

October—November (Year 2): NRSP midterm review forms are assigned via email to NRSP AAs. AAs review project activities and accomplishments and email completed midterm review form to the NRSP RC by January 15. The AA review should be a combined effort between all four NRSP AAs. Only one form is required per project.

February 28 (Year 3): NRSP AA midterm review forms due to NRSP RC. The NRSP RC reviews these forms and conducts their own evaluations prior to their June meeting.

February—April. Regional associations review budget requests for new projects and any alteration to existing project budgets during spring meetings and transmit comments to the NRSP RC.

April—September. The NRSP RC interacts with NRSP AAs and NIFA to determine and recommend any budget changes for the next year to the ESS.

The NRSP RC meets in person or via teleconference in June to discuss proposed budgets and feedback from regional associations. The budget recommendations are forwarded to the regional Executive Directors and each NRSP AA.

September. The NRSP RC reports at the ESS annual meeting on final project proposals with projected budgets, project midterm reviews, and its recommendations. SAES Directors vote (one vote per institution contributing off-the-top funding) on approval of the project and its five year budget. A simple majority vote is required to carry the motion..

October 1. NRSPs continue.

C. Renewal of an Existing NRSP
Year 4.
No Later than August 1. The Lead Administrative Advisor (AA) notifies the NRSP RC Chair of the intent to renew the project. The Lead AA, in consultation with the NIFA Representative arranges for an external peer review of the current NRSP project's accomplishments and the draft proposal for the renewal project. Potential external peer reviewers (at least four individuals) are solicited by the Lead AA from the project committee and the other AA's. Reviewers should not be potential recipients of funds or other resources (no conflict of interest) from the new project and agree to perform the review within a designated time period.

August. The NIFA Representative chooses the external peer review team (at least four members) from the potential reviewers. The Lead AA transmits the current project's accomplishments, draft renewal proposal, and any supporting documentation to the reviewers with a timeline for the review. Either the regional RSA or the ED associated with the NRSP RC's Chair assigns the peer review forms (Appendix E.)

Year 5.
September—December. External peer review team conducts review of past four year's accomplishments and the draft renewal proposal. The peer review team should use the peer review form shown in Appendix E to guide review of the draft renewal proposal. The NIFA Representative will schedule a conference call with the reviewers to discuss the reviews and determine final recommendations. An integrated set of recommendations are transmitted to the Lead AA, along with individual reviewer's comments no later than December 1. The Lead AA will then share these recommendations with the other AAs and the project committee.

December. The NRSP renewal committee revises the renewal proposal based on external review comments and prepares a review response indicating how the reviewer's comments were

addressed in the revision.

No Later than January 15. Renewal proposal, budget, and external peer review responses are sent to the NRSP RC Chair. The NRSP RC Chair reviews package for completeness and then forwards it to the regional Executive Directors for distribution to the appropriate multistate activities or research committee and the proposal's subsequent evaluation.

February—April. Appropriate regional committees review the renewal proposal using the review form shown in Appendix E. The regional associations discuss the renewal proposal and budget at their spring meetings and each regional Executive Director transmits comments and/or concerns along with a summary of the review form results to the AAs and the NRSP RC.

April—May. The NRSP RC collates comments and/or concerns identified through renewal proposal reviews and/or budget revisions and/or separate responses.

May/June/July.
The NRSP Review Committee meets and prepares recommendations on the project proposal and shares those recommendations with the NRSP development committee and the regional Executive Directors who distribute the information to their regional associations. The NRSP development committee responds to the recommendations made by the NRSP RC. The NRSP RC also reports preliminary recommendations to ESCOP.

If desired, the final recommendations can be discussed at the summer regional association meetings.

September. The NRSP RC reports at the ESS annual meeting on the final project proposals with projected budgets, project midterm reviews, and its recommendations. SAES Directors vote (one vote per institution contributing off-the-top funding) on approval of the project and its five year budget. A simple majority vote is required to carry the motion.

October 1. NRSPs approved for renewal start a five-year cycle with the five year budget approved. A NRSP not approved for renewal receives a one-year project approval, with a budget equal to the previous year's budget, to transition off NRSP funding to other sources or downsize the project.

VII. ANNUAL REPORT OF AN NRSP

Annually each NRSP 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, change is stakeholders' techniques, knowledge, or action, 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 nationwide.

VIII. REVISION OF GUIDELINES

These guidelines will be modified using the following process:

1. Periodically, the guidelines will be reviewed by the NRSP RC. Proposed changes will be drafted by the Committee and incorporated into this document.

2. The proposed changes will be submitted to ESCOP for an additional review, editing, and approval.

3. Final changes will be presented to the ESS for approval by a simple majority vote at the annual meeting.

APPENDIX A1 - NRSP CALENDAR FOR NEW NRSP PROJECTS

Not Later than September 1 of the Year Prior to the Proposed Start Date
• Regional association or NRSP Review Committee recommends development of new project as NRSPs and notifies NIFA (and NRSP Review Committee if they are not already aware)

Not Later than January
• Lead Administrative Advisor submits NRSP proposal and five-year budget, along with peer review comments (from review form in Appendix E) and the committee's responses to the reviews, to the NRSP Review Committee Chair via NIMSS

February-April
• Appropriate regional committees review the project proposal and projected five-year budget using review form in Appendix E and report to AES Directors at their

April-June
• NRSP Development Committee addresses any comments and/or concerns received from the regional association spring meetings and finalize the proposal in NIMSS for submission to the NRSP Review Committee

June
• The NRSP Review Committee meets in person or via teleconference to discuss proposal and budgets and feedback from regional associations.

July 1
• Final project proposal, projected five-year budget, and preliminary recommendation from the NRSP Review Committee are transmitted to the Executive Directors so all information can be shared with regional associations. The Review Committee also

August 1
• NRSP Review Committee finalizes recommendations that will be presented at the annual

September
• The NRSP Review Committee reports at the ESS annual meeting on the final project proposal and projected budget, and its recommendation. Directors vote on

October 1
• NRSP starts five-year cycle with approved five-year budget.

APPENDIX A2 - NRSP CALENDAR FOR RENEWAL OF NRSP PROJECTS

September—December
• External peer review of NRSP occurs.

December
• NRSP Committee develops renewal proposal based on external review comments.

January 15
• Administrative Advisors submit NRSP proposal and five-year budget, along with peer review comments from review form in Appendix E and the committee's responses, to the NRSP Review Committee Chair via NIMSS.

February—April
• Appropriate regional committees review the project proposal and projected five-year budget using review form in Appendix E and report to AES Directors at their spring regional association meeting.

April-June
• NRSP Development Committee addresses any comments and/or concerns received from the regional association spring meetings and finalize the proposal in NIMSS for submission to the NRSP Review Committee.

June
• The NRSP Review Committee meets in person or via teleconference to discuss proposal and budgets and feedback from regional associations. Feedback is shared with NRSP development committee.

July 1
• Budget recommendations from the NRSP Review Committee are transmitted to the Executive Directors so all information can be shared with regional associations.

August 1
• NRSP Review Committee finalizes recommendations that will be presented at the annual

September
• The NRSP Review Committee reports at the ESS annual meeting on the final project proposal and projected budget, and its recommendation. Directors vote on recommendations.

October 1
• Approved NRSP starts five-year cycle with five-year budget approved. NRSP not approved for renewal receives one-year project approval, with a budget equal to the fifth year, to transition off NRSP funding to other sources or downsize project.

APPENDIX A3 - NRSP CALENDAR FOR MIDTERM REVIEW OF CONTINUING NRSP PROJECTS

January 15
• Annual budget and explanation only required if there are changes in the total annual budget from the approved 5-year budget.

February 28 (Year 3
• Administrative Advisors submit midterm review form to the NRSP RC.

February-April
• Appropriate regional committees review any alteration to existing project budgets and report to AES Directors at their Spring regional association meeting.

April-June
• NRSP Development Committee addresses any comments and/or concerns received from the regional association spring meetings and finalize the budget for submission to the

June
• The NRSP Review Committee meets in person or via teleconference to discuss any proposed budget changes and feedback from regional associations.

July 1
• Budget recommendations from the NRSP Review Committee are transmitted to the Executive Directors so all information can be shared with regional associations.

August 1
• NRSP Review Committee finalizes budget recommendations that will be presented at the annual ESS meeting.

September
• The NRSP Review Committee reports at the ESS annual meeting on the final project proposals with projected budgets, project midterm

October 1
• NRSPs continue.

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APPENDIX C - NRSP PROPOSAL OUTLINE

Project Title: (140 characters):
Requested Duration:
Administrative Advisor:
NIFA Representative:

STATEMENT OF ISSUES AND JUSTIFICATION:

Prerequisite Criteria:
1. How is the NRSP consistent with the mission? *(8,000 characters)*

    a. Mission: The activity of an NRSP focuses on the development of enabling technologies, support activities (such as to collect, assemble, store, and distribute materials, resources and information), or the sharing of facilities needed to accomplish high priority research, but which is not of itself primarily research. Ideally, an NRSP would facilitate a broad array of research activities. The primary purpose of NRSPs 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. Examples of NRSP activities might include collection of data that are widely used by other research groups and efforts; development of databases; or development of critical technologies.

2. How does this NRSP pertain as a national issue? *(10,000 characters)*

    a. All NRSPs must involve a national issue, relevant to and of use by most, if not all regions. These projects draw on the best minds and resources within and outside the State Agricultural Experiment Station (SAES) system to address the issues. The proposal should discuss its support activities relative to other NRSPs.

    b. For renewals, proposals must demonstrate direct relationship in support of continuing national priority need(s). The renewal application builds on the previous project and provides a logical progression.

Rationale:
1. Priority Established by ESCOP/ESS: Priority for funding will be given to NRSPs that address and support one or more of the national priority areas identified by ESCOP (see ESCOP Science and Technology Committee and Science Roadmap). *(8,000 characters)*

2. Relevance to stakeholders: *(8,000 characters)*

    a. The proposal must identify stakeholders and indicate their involvement in project development, project activities, review and/or management plans. The proposal must indicate how the project meets primary and secondary 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.

    Identify project outcomes that aide in development of or contribute to the discussion of public policy.

b. For renewals, proposals must demonstrate continued need as evidenced by stakeholder use of outputs and impacts of research efforts that are supported by the activity.

IMPLEMENTATION:

1. Objectives and Projected Outcomes: *(4,000 characters)*

a. 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 and how these assessments will be used in program planning.

b. For renewals, the proposal must address productivity, completion of original objectives and the relationship between projected goals and actual accomplishments. The 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 stakeholder needs.

2. Management, Budget, and Business Plan: *(16,000 characters)*

a. Each NRSP must have 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. This plan should include efforts to bring in new agencies, organizations, industry, foundations, etc. to help address the issues and provide funding for the project. All project proposals must provide evidence of contributions from experiment stations across the nation beyond what is available through off-the-top funds.

b. The business plan for project renewals must include a plan for securing alternative funding and reducing off-the-top funding. Renewals will be judged as to the degree, to which the project has been on task, had an impact, 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.

c. Budget and Budget Narrative *(See Appendix H for the NRSP budget templates.))* Project budgets must identify funds required to perform the project. Further two budgets must be submitted; one that identifies the annual and total amount of Multistate Research Funds required for the project. A second budget sheet that identifies all other sources of funding (e.g., industry, federal agencies, grants and contracts, and SAESs) must be submitted.

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A budget narrative must accompany the budgets. The budget narrative should provide greater detail of proposed expenditures in the categories listed in the budget template (salaries, benefits, travel, supplies, equipment, etc.) The budget narrative should also describe the specifics on contributions to the project from funding sources other than MRF. Once approved, an NRSP is provided with a five-year budget by the ESS, which is subject to any changes in Hatch funding provided by Congress.

d. On approval by the NRSP RC and endorsement by the Experiment Station Section, a 5-year budget approval will be provided. This approval is contingent of satisfactory meeting requirements set forth in the midterm review section below.

e. In the event that federal funds are reduced, NRSP budgets will be reduced by a similar percentage.

3. Integration and Documentation of Research Support: *(5,000 characters)*

a. Projects should indicate how efforts are integrated with extension or academic programs and how results might be of use by other potential stakeholders.

b. For renewals, the proposal should indicate any new partnerships built during the project period. The proposal should address the degree to which the full team is engaged in project planning and implementation. Discuss plans to correct any weaknesses that may have been identified.

c. Proposals should indicate specifically how the project will support research activities nationwide.

4. Outreach, Communications and Assessment: *(15,000 characters)*

a. All projects must have a sound outreach, communications and assessment plan that seeks to communicate the programs goals, accomplishments and outcomes/impacts. The communication plan must detail how results will be transferred to researchers and other end users and contain the following elements:

i. Clear identification of the intended audience(s) of the NRSP. Since this is a Research Support Project, in most instances the primary beneficiary of the results will be other scientists. However, careful consideration should be given to other possible users of the information [such as consumers, producers, governmental agencies (local, state and federal), 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 National Research Support 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 NRSP. The communication pieces will be used with SAES/ARD 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 Budget and Advocacy Committee of the APLU Board on Agriculture Assembly and other appropriate committees within the SAES/ARD organization, and assisting NIFA is preparation of appropriate documents highlighting the impacts of the project.

APPENDIX D - NRSP MIDTERM REVIEW FORM

The Administrative Advisor team for each NRSP shall conduct a midterm progress review during the third year of each project's funding cycle. The intent of this review is to assure that adequate progress toward meeting goals, objectives and funding obligations is being made. This review will cover the criteria set forth for initial approval of NRSPs modified below.

To aid in the review, year one and two annual reports and an interim progress report (year three) shall be considered.

The results of this review will be reported to the Regional Associations and to the Experiment Station Section at its Annual Meeting as an integral element of the five-year budget approval and management plan for the NRSP Program

NRSP Midterm Review Form

Project Number:

Dates Covered (list the 3-year period since last renewal/inception):

Reviewer Name:

According to the National Guidelines, all NRSP projects shall undergo a midterm progress review

1. *Relevance to Stakeholders*:

   Is there evidence of stakeholder use of project outputs? **Yes_____No_____**

   Are there project outcomes that aide in development of or contribute to the discussion of public policy? **Yes_____No_____**

   If so, please describe:

Implementation of the NRSP:

1. *Management and Business Plan:*

   Each NRSP must have 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 sought. This plan should include efforts to bring in new agencies, organizations, industry, foundations, etc. to help address the issues and provide funding for the project. All project proposals must provide evidence of contributions from

experiment stations across the nation beyond what is available through off-the-top funds.

The midterm review must reflect progress toward meeting funding expectations. Failure to meet funding goals may result in alterations to the off-the-top budget contribution provided by the SAES system.

Comments:

2. ***Progress Toward Objectives and Projected Outcomes:***

a. Objectives, milestones and deliverables should be described in sufficient detail such that progress

can be measured.

b. The midterm review of the project must demonstrate productivity, progress toward original objectives and the relationship between projected goals, actual accomplishments and any impacts to date. As appropriate, this assessment must include an evaluation of stakeholders' use of project outputs to date.

Comments:

3. *Integration:*

   a. Project proposals should indicate how efforts are integrated with extension or academic programs and how results might be of use by other potential stakeholders.
   b. In the midterm review, the project must address actual collaborations and any new partnerships built during the project period. The report should address the degree to which the full team is engaged in project planning and implementation. Discuss plans to correct any weaknesses that may have been identified.

Comments:

4. *Outreach, Communications and Assessment:*

All project proposals must have a sound outreach, communications and an assessment plan that seek to communicate the program's goals, accomplishments and outcomes/impacts. The communication plan must detail how results will be transferred to researchers and other end users and contain the following elements:

   a. Clear identification of the intended audience(s) of the NRSP. Since this is a Research Support Project, in most instances the primary beneficiary of the results will be other scientists. However, careful consideration should be given to other possible users of the information (such as consumers, producers, governmental agencies (local, state and federal), general public, etc.) **Yes_____No_____**

   b. Clear description of the engagement of stakeholders in the definition and/or conduct of the research support project. **Yes_____No_____**

   c. Thorough description of the methodology to measure the accomplishments and impacts of the National Research Support 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. **Yes   No___**

d. Specific description for development of communication pieces describing the activities, accomplishments, and impacts of the NRSP. The communication pieces will be used with SAES/ARD directors, stakeholders and their organizations, funding sources and agencies, and congressional delegations. **Yes_____No_____**

e. 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 Budget and Advocacy Committee of the APLU Board on Agriculture Assembly and other appropriate committees within the SAES/ARD organization, and assisting NIFA is preparation of appropriate documents highlighting the impacts of the project.

    The midterm review must demonstrate the extent to which the NRSP is working to effectively communicate project results to those who need them and their use by target audiences. **Yes___No_____**

Comments:

Should the project continue to be funded at the proposed levels?

_____Yes,

_____No

If no, briefly explain why''

_____
_____
_____

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APPENDIX E - NRSP PROPOSAL PEER REVIEW FORM

The following statement defines the mission of the National Research Support Projects (NRSP's):

"The activity of an NRSP focuses on the development of enabling technologies, support activities (such as to collect, assemble, store, and distribute materials, resources and information), or the sharing of facilities needed to accomplish high priority research, but which is not of itself primarily research."

Based on this mission statement, please rate the proposed NRSP using the following criteria.

	Excellent	**Good**	**Fair**	**Unacceptable**
Mission:				
Consistency with the NRSP mission	____	____	____	____
Relevance:				
Addresses and supports a high priority national issue	____	____	____	____
Demonstrates clear/tangible benefit to the scientific community as a whole	____	____	____	____
Clearly identified sponsoring "stakeholders"/ beneficiaries	____	____	____	____
"Stakeholder" involvement in project development, project activities, review and/or management plans	____	____	____	____
Technical Merit:				
Overall technical merit (sound scientific approach, achievable objectives, appropriate scope of activity)	____	____	____	____
Potential for significant outputs (products) and outcomes and/or impacts	____	____	____	____

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Implementation Plan:

Benchmarks for success clearly identified   ____   ____   ____   ____

Management structure that adequately
coordinates efforts of multiple participants   ____   ____   ____   ____

Well-developed business plan hat links
with multiple sources of funding and leverages
limited off-the-top research funds   ____   ____   ____   ____

Funding plan that develops alternative
funding sources to reduce off-the-top
funding in future years   ____   ____   ____   ____

Efforts integrated with Extension and/or
academic programs   ____   ____   ____   ____

Outreach, communications and assessment
plan that communicates the programs goals,
accomplishments and outcomes/impacts   ____   ____   ____   ____

Comments (Please add general and specific comments on strengths and weaknesses of the proposal, including specific revisions that would improve the proposal. Use as much space as needed for your comments.):

_____

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Recommendation: ___**Approve**   ___**Approve with revision**   ___**Disapprove**

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APPENDIX H - NRSP BUDGET REQUESTS SUMMARY

Project Number and Title

DESCRIPTION	MRF FUNDING									
	Proposed FY (year 1)		Proposed FY (year 2)		Proposed FY (year 3)		Proposed FY (year 4)		Proposed FY (year 5)	
	Dollars	FTE	Dollars	FTE	Dollars	FTE	Dollars	FTE	Dollars	FTE
SALARIES/WAGES										
FRINGE BENEFITS										
TRAVEL										
SUPPLIES										
OTHER										
EQUIPMENT										
TOTAL										

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The following statement defines the mission of the NRSP program:¶
¶
MISSION OF NATIONAL RESEARCH SUPPORT PROJECTS¶
"The activity of an NRSP focuses on the development of enabling technologies, support activities (such as to collect, assemble, store, and distribute materials, resources and information), or the sharing of facilities needed to accomplish high priority research, but which is not of itself primarily research.¶
Ideally, an NRSP would facilitate a broad array of research activities. The primary purpose of NRSPs 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.¶
Examples of NRSP activities might include collection of data that are widely used by other research groups and efforts; development of databases; or development of critical technologies."¶
¶
Based on the mission of NRSPs, all proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:¶
¶
A. Prerequisite criteria for NRSPs:

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	OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDING									
Other (please list): _____										
DESCRIPTION	Proposed FY (year 1)		Proposed FY (year 2)		Proposed FY (year 3)		Proposed FY (year 4)		Proposed FY (year 5)	
	Dollars	FTE	Dollars	FTE	Dollars	FTE	Dollars	FTE	Dollars	FTE
SALARIES/WAGES										
FRINGE BENEFITS										
TRAVEL										
SUPPLIES										
OTHER										
EQUIPMENT										
TOTAL										