

## AGINNOVATION/EXPERIMENT STATION SECTION

### GUIDELINES FOR NATIONAL RESEARCH SUPPORT PROJECTS (NRSPs)<sup>1</sup>

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## **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, reagents), support activities (e.g., collect, assemble, store, and distribute materials, data, resources, or information) or the sharing of facilities (e.g., analytical equipment, lab, field) needed to accomplish high priority research. NRSPs are designed to conduct activities that enable important research efforts dedicated to a national issue, relevant to and of use by most, if not all, regions.

## **Stakeholders**

Clear identification of the intended stakeholders of the NRSP is critical. Since NRSPs are research support projects, 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, public, private sector, and governmental agencies (local, state, federal). In addition, it is important to understand the project's secondary stakeholders, the end-users of the results from the research that is being supported by the NRSP. Stakeholder advisory committees can continually provide feedback to the project director(s) and can be an effective means of assessing progress throughout the project life.

## **General**

The NRSP program is overseen by the NRSP Review Committee (NRSP RC or the committee) which manages the review of projects and makes recommendations on funding to the research directors at the 1862 institutions. NRSPs are financially supported by the annual allocation of Hatch Multistate Research Funds (MRFs) drawn from the total MRF federal allocation prior to the formula distribution to state agricultural experiment stations (1862 SAESs). This funding process is called "off-the-top" (OTT MRF) and represents up to 1% of the total federal Hatch capacity funds allocated to SAES.

A two-track system of NRSPs provides the mechanisms to support and catalyze important research efforts via: 1) Capacity NRSPs and 2) Emerging Innovation NRSPs. Several core characteristics of Capacity NRSPs are: highly successful renewable projects with meritorious performance through significant leverage, strategic outputs, demonstrated meeting of critical national and stakeholder needs, and long-term support for scientific research. The NRSP RC recommends these projects at the pre-renewal stage (Year 4) with each renewal, supports these projects at a modest, sustainable level of funding, and permits a renewal proposal that is not as comprehensive as the initial project or first renewal proposal. Current examples of Capacity NRSPs are NRSP1 and NRSP3. Emerging Innovation NRSPs must: be targeted to new or seed projects worthy of short-term investment, provide a detailed transition business plan to fully transition off NRSP funds before completing the first renewal proposal, and integrate research and allied aspects of research support. Emerging Innovation proposals will originate from scientists and may be in response to strategic needs identified by directors. A current example is NRSP10.

The National Information Management and Support System (NIMSS, [www.nimss.org](http://www.nimss.org)) is the

official repository for NRSP project information. NIMSS is a web application for management of 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.

### **Organization of the NRSP Review Committee**

A NRSP RC with broad oversight responsibility for the NRSP portfolio has been established and charged with providing general oversight, ensuring consistency in review and approval processes, interfacing with regional associations and NIFA, and bringing national perspectives relative to research support needs. The committee has delegated authority from 1862 SAES directors and is considered a standing committee of ESCOP.

The NRSP RC plays two important roles: as a gatekeeper function for the SAES system and as an advisor to SAES. The NRSP RC makes recommendations to the SAES directors concerning Capacity or Emerging Innovation NRSPs. A key component of the NRSP RC is to oversee implementation of business plans whereby a NRSP reduces or eliminates its dependence on OTT funding. The committee reports on final project proposals with five-year budgets and makes “seconded” recommendations at the annual agInnovation meeting. The SAES Directors cast one vote per 1862 experiment station. A simple majority vote by the SAES Directors is required to either approve or reject the NRSP RC’s recommendation. (Quorum is defined in the Rules of Operation available at [www.escop.info](http://www.escop.info)).

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 national needs. The committee may identify strategic areas of research support needs or utilize input from regional associations and standing ESCOP committees ([www.escop.info/committees/](http://www.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. The NRSP RC has the authority to ensure that the criteria contained in these guidelines are satisfactorily met by NRSPs.

The NRSP RC oversees evaluation processes by peer reviews and consults with NIFA. The NRSP RC develops criteria for the reviews, assists in establishing protocols for review, prepares the specific charge to the reviewers, and evaluates completed reviews. Utilizing the results of the reviews and the committee’s understanding of NRSP needs, the NRSP RC makes recommendations concerning proposed projects to SAES.

The NRSP RC will:

- Make recommendations on new strategic areas for NRSP investments.
- Conduct reviews of new Capacity and Emerging Innovations proposals.
- Recommend a proposal as a Capacity NRSP at the pre-renewal stage.
- Conduct reviews of project renewals.
- Make recommendations on project approval to SAES.

- Make budget recommendations to SAES.
- Conduct midterm reviews (Year 3) of each project.
- Limit recommendations to SAES on investing up to 1% of the total federal Hatch capacity funds (Hatch regular and Hatch multistate) allocated to SAES.
- Annually instruct NIFA to allocate OTT MRF to designated stations.

#### **A. NRSP Review Committee Membership**

One director 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 director representative from the ARD region (1890 Research Directors), appointed by the regional association chair. Each member represented on the NRSP RC will also designate an alternate to ensure representation. For the geographical regional associations, a logical alternate would be the regional MRC chair.

One director representative from Extension recommended by ECOP and appointed by the ESCOP Chair. 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. One stakeholder representative, possibly a Council for Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching (CARET) member, appointed by the ESCOP Chair.

Two regional Executive Directors. 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. The second Executive Director will be from the region of the Chair-elect. These two 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.

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 SAES regions in the following order: North Central, Western, Southern, and Northeast.

#### **B. NRSP Review Committee Operations**

1. Term of appointment to the committee will be four years. Terms of the four SAES regional representatives will be staggered, to provide continuity to deliberations.
2. The committee is expected to 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 video conferences, conference calls, and/or emails. Airfare and related travel expenses to attend in-person meetings will be borne by member's respective institutions, except travel funds for the stakeholder representative will be provided by agInnovation. When permitted by the member's employer and approved by agInnovation, expenses for meeting space plus lodging and meals for the timeframe surrounding in-person meetings will be borne by agInnovation.

In addition to evaluating the merits of proposals, NRSP RC will assess information provided by peer reviews, the Administrative Advisors (AA), and regional associations, and associated five-year budgets.

3. The committee reports at the annual ESS meeting on Capacity or Emerging Innovation NRSP proposals, five-year budgets, and any subsequent budget revisions, allied actions, and then makes a “seconded” recommendation(s) for approval or rejection.
4. In Year 3, the committee evaluates the midterm review results and the first three year’s annual reports of active NRSPs, and then makes a recommendation for approval, modification, or disapproval of the remaining two years’ budgets at the annual ESS meeting.

### **Establishing New NRSPs**

New NRSPs must follow the NRSP Proposal Format with attention to elements described below.

**A. Statement of Issues and Justification:** The proposal must clearly identify the scientific research that the project will support, the relevance of the support work, and how the support work will advance quality scientific research. The nature and scope of the proposal’s connection to any existing multistate project should be provided. The proposal must identify stakeholders and indicate their involvement in project development, review, and/or management plan. The proposal must indicate how the project helps to meet stakeholder needs. The proposal must also include a mechanism for assessing how the project support work is used by other researchers.

**B. Objectives and Projected Outcomes:** Objectives, milestones, and deliverables should be described in detail such that progress can be measured. Indicate the prospects for meaningful impacts within the proposed duration of the project. The proposal must identify what approaches will be used to assess outcomes and how these assessments will be used in program planning.

**C. Management, Budget, and Business Plan:** Each NRSP must have a well-developed business plan that describes how the project will be managed and funded during the first five-year period. This plan should include a management structure that integrates the efforts of multiple participants. The plan should include provisions for linking multiple sources of funding and leveraging those sources with the limited OTT MRFs. This plan should include efforts to bring in new agencies, organizations, industry, foundations, and others to help address the issues and provide additional project funding. All project proposals must provide evidence of all contributions from multiple SAESs across the nation beyond what is available through OTT MRFs.

NRSPs should expect a finite period of OTT MRF. 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 strategic needs including development of new projects or capturing OTT MRFs for distribution to the SAES. For this reason, the business plan of project renewals must

include a detailed transition plan and provisions for developing alternative funding, including eliminating OTT MRF. The transition plan must be included in the business plan.

Occasionally, an NRSP might require ongoing OTT MRF. NRSP RC recommends designation as a Capacity NRSP for each renewal. Long-term support (modest, sustained) may be recommended by the NRSP RC, if the NRSP shared a compelling rationale(s) including, but not limited to: meritorious performance, highly leveraged and diversified funding, on-going need within the scientific community, and significant stakeholder support. Even in this circumstance, the NRSP RC will recommend that a project team identify strategies to eliminate or minimize OTT MRF.

Project budgets must identify funds required to perform the project. Two budgets must be submitted: one that identifies the annual and total amount of OTT MRFs required for the project and a second budget that identifies all other sources of funding (e.g., industry, federal agencies, foundations, fees, grants and contracts, and other SAES resources).

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, fringe [and FTE summary], travel, equipment, other). The budget narrative should describe the contributions to the project from funding sources other than OTT MRF. Once approved, an NRSP is provided with a five-year budget by SAES, which is subject to any reductions in Hatch funding provided by Congress. For example, if Hatch funding is reduced by 1%, all NRSPs would be reduced by 1%.

**D. Integration:** Where applicable, projects should indicate how efforts are integrated with Extension, academic programs, or international 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 outcomes, and impacts. The communication plan must detail how results will be transferred to researchers, stakeholders and other end users and should contain the following elements:

1. Clear identification of the intended audience(s) for the NRSP. Careful consideration should be given to all possible users of the information (e.g., consumers, producers, local, state, and federal governmental agencies, public).
2. Clear description of the engagement of stakeholders in the definition and/or conduct of the research support project. A stakeholder advisory committee may provide continuous feedback and contribute to the midterm review.
3. Thorough description of the methodology to measure the accomplishments, outcomes, and impacts of the NRSP. Methods such as surveys, town meetings, conferences, and analyses of reference data (e.g., citation index). Use of professional evaluators is a best practice and an allowed expense in the budget.

4. Specific description for development of communications describing the activities, accomplishments, and impacts of the NRSP. The communication pieces will be used with SAES and ARD directors, stakeholders, NIFA and their affiliates, funding entities and agencies, MRF or Land-grant impact writers (<https://www.mrfimpacts.org> or <http://www.landgrantimpacts.org>), and congressional delegations.
5. Plans should include mechanisms for distribution of project results. Specific acknowledgement of the NRSP support from Hatch MRF via SAES and NIFA should be provided in all outputs. 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 (BAA) and other appropriate committees within agInnovation and ESCOP, and assisting NIFA in preparation of appropriate documents highlighting the project impacts.
6. Data management plan should be descriptive. How will the data from the project be managed, archived, and made available to prospective users? This plan must be consistent with the terms and conditions of USDA NIFA awards and reflect community standards.

### **Midterm Review**

All NRSPs must undergo a progress review in Year 3. This substantive review is conducted by the AAs and is then reviewed by the NRSP RC. Pending satisfactory progress as detailed below, the NRSP RC will forward its recommendation to the regional associations for informational purposes in time for their respective spring meetings and to the SAES for continued funding at the approved level in years four and five. Should an NRSP fail to meet performance expectations or funding commitments, the NRSP RC may recommend that the approved budget be reduced or terminated. The midterm review shall consider the requirements and criteria set forth above for the development/approval of an NRSP in Establishing New NRSPs and the concepts below.

**A. Relevance:** Is there evidence of stakeholder use of project outputs? Briefly describe the efforts. Are there project outcomes that aid in development of, or contribute to, the discussion of public policy? If so, please describe. How does the NRSP advance scientific research? What is the impact on the multistate project portfolio?

**B. Management and Business Plan:** The midterm review must reflect progress toward meeting external funding expectations. Is a transition business plan advancing? Is there a process established for developing a transition plan for a renewal proposal, if one is to be proposed? Failure to meet funding goals may result in alterations to the OTT MRF budget contribution provided by the SAES system.

**C. Objectives, Projected Outcomes and Impacts:** In the midterm review, the project must demonstrate productivity, progress toward original objectives, and the relationship

between projected goals, actual accomplishments, and outcomes. An initial impact analysis is an expectation for the midterm review and should outline the progress made in contributing to the scientific community and adoption.

**D. Integration:** As appropriate, the NRSP must indicate how efforts are integrated with Extension, academic programs, or international 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.

**E. 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.

### **Renewal of a NRSP**

Prior to consideration for a renewal, each NRSP must undergo an external peer review according to the schedule presented in Review and Approval Timelines for New NRSPs or Renewal of an Existing NRSP. The NRSP RC should be consulted in the pre-proposal stage for consideration as a Capacity NRSP. This peer review by 3-5 reviewers is arranged jointly by the Lead AA in consultation with the NIFA representative. The review should include the accomplishments of the current project and is co-submitted with the draft renewal project proposal. Each NRSP seeking renewal must meet the criteria described in Establishing New NRSPs. In addition, renewal requests must address the following:

**A. General:** NRSPs should expect a finite period of OTT MRF. This allows SAES to undertake new initiatives and address strategic priorities. For this reason, the business plans of renewal applications will be carefully scrutinized. For renewals, proposals must demonstrate direct relationship in support of continuing national strategic need(s). The proposal should discuss its support activities relative to other NRSPs and multistate projects. The renewal application must build on the previous project and provide a logical progression of new support for quality scientific research, not merely a new five-year funding period for similar activities.

**B. Relevance:** Proposals must demonstrate continued need as evidenced by stakeholder use of project outputs and impacts of quality research efforts that are supported by the activity.

**C. Objectives and Project Outcomes:** 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 evaluated on whether the project has been on task, on time, and within budget for the previous funding period.

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.

**D. Management, Budget, and Business Plan:** NRSPs should expect a finite period of OTT MRF. The business plan of project renewals must include a transition plan and provisions for developing alternative funding including eliminating OTT MRF. An assessment of transition plan options and/or alternative funding sources must be included.

Occasionally, an NRSP might require a continuing level of minimal funding and NRSP RC recommendation as a Capacity NRSP. Long-term, minimal-level support (modest, sustained) 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 MRF.

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 secured.

Project budgets must identify funds required to perform the project. Two budgets must be submitted: one that identifies the annual and total amount of OTT MRFs required for the project and a second budget that identifies all other source of funding (e.g., industry, federal agencies, foundations, fees, grants and contracts, and SAESs).

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, fringe [and FTE summary], travel, equipment, other). Contracts for services provided to NRSPs should be re-evaluated at each renewal. The proposal to renew must indicate the process for re-competing ongoing service contracts. If a contract is not re-competed, the budget narrative must provide a justification for re-entering a contract with an existing service provider. The budget narrative should describe the contributions to the project from funding sources other than OTT MRF. Once approved, a NRSP is provided with a five-year budget by SAES, which is subject to any reductions in Hatch funding provided by Congress. For example, if Hatch funding is reduced by 1%, all NRSPs would be reduced by 1%.

**E. Integration:** The renewal proposal should indicate any new partnerships built during the previous project period. The renewal proposal should address the degree to which the full team is engaged in project planning, 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.

**F. Outreach, Communications, and Assessment:** 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 outcomes and impacts resulting from the project is required. As appropriate, were the impacts reported in the Multistate Research Funds Impacts or Land-grant Impacts databases? Implementation and advancement of data management, data archival protocols, and data availability for prospective users must be evident, be consistent with the terms and conditions of USDA NIFA awards and reflect community standards.

## **Review and Approval Timelines for New NRSPs or Renewal of an Existing NRSP**

### **A. New NRSP Development**

**Not Later than April 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 April 1 of the year prior to the proposed start date, for example, April 1, 2025 for a start date of October 1, 2026. If this review is positive, then the following steps should be followed to formally submit a proposal for consideration by the SAES:

1. Sponsoring SAES Directors from two SAES regions submit 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 AA and solicits names of AAs, from other Executive Directors. Sponsoring regional association follows the process for approving the establishment of a development committee and soliciting additional participants.
3. NRSP development committee membership, in consultation with AAs, prepares initial project proposal, including projected five-year budget.
4. AAs 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. The AAs work with the NRSP development committee to revise the proposal and budget based on peer review comments and prepares a review response indicating how the reviewer's comments were addressed in the revision.

**Not later than January 15.** AAs submit revised proposal and five-year budget, along with peer review comments and committee's responses, to the NRSP RC Chair and Executive Vice-Chair and to NIMSS. The NRSP RC Chair reviews package for completeness and then forwards it to the Executive Directors for distribution to the appropriate multistate research committee for proposal evaluation.

**February – April.** Appropriate regional committees review the project proposal and projected five-year budget using the review form and report to the SAES 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 AAs and NRSP RC.

**April.** NRSP development committee addresses any comments and/or concerns received from the regional associations and finalizes 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 Executive Directors who distribute the information to their regional associations. The NRSP development committee responds to the recommendations made by the NRSP RC and makes any needed revisions to the proposal in NIMSS. The NRSP RC also reports preliminary recommendations to ESCOP, ideally at the Joint COPs meeting in late July.

**August.** NRSP RC finalizes recommendations that will be presented at the annual agInnovation meeting.

**September.** The NRSP RC reports at the annual agInnovation meeting on final project proposals with projected budgets and provide a recommendation. SAES Directors from 1862 institutions vote (one vote per institution contributing OTT MRF) on approval of the project and five-year budget; a simple majority vote is required to carry the motion.

**October 1.** Approved NRSP starts a five-year cycle with five-year budget approved following NIFA administrative action.

## **B. During Project Term (Years 2-4)**

**Annually.** The NRSP holds an annual meeting and subsequently submits an annual report in NIMSS using the SAES-422 form within 90 days of the annual meeting. Note that a midterm progress review, conducted by the NRSP AAs, is needed in Year 3 (see 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 Executive Directors for consideration by the regional associations.

**October—November (Year 2).** NRSP midterm review form are assigned via NIMSS to NRSP AAs. AAs review project activities and accomplishments and submit the NIMSS review form February 28. 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 NIMSS. The NRSP RC reviews these forms and conducts their own evaluations prior to their May/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 by May 1.

**April—September.** The NRSP RC interacts with NRSP AAs to determine and recommend budget changes for the next year to SAES. The NRSP RC meets in person or via teleconference/videoconference in May/June to discuss proposed budgets and feedback from regional associations. The budget recommendations are forwarded to the Executive Directors and each NRSP AA.

**September.** The NRSP RC reports at the annual agInnovation meeting on final project proposals with projected budgets, project midterm reviews, and NRSP RC recommendations. SAES Directors from 1862 institutions vote (one vote per institution contributing OTT MRF) on approval of the project and 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 AA notifies the NRSP RC Chair and Executive Vice-Chair of the intent to renew the project. In addition, the NRSP RC should be consulted in the pre-proposal stage for consideration as a Capacity NRSP. The Lead AA, in consultation with fellow AAs and 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 (3-5 reviewers) are solicited by the Lead AA from the project committee and the other AAs. 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 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 System Administrator or the Executive Director associated with the NRSP RC Chair assigns the peer review form.

#### **Year 5.**

**September—November.** 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 and NIMSS to guide review of the draft renewal proposal. The Lead AA will then share the individual reviewer's comments and recommendations with the other AAs and the project committee no later than December 1.

**December.** The NRSP's 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, projected budget, and external peer review responses are sent to the NRSP RC Chair and Executive Vice-Chair and uploaded into NIMSS. The NRSP RC Chair reviews package for completeness and then forwards it to the Executive Directors for distribution to the appropriate multistate research committee for proposal evaluation.

**February—April.** Appropriate regional committees review the renewal proposal using the review form. The regional associations discuss the renewal proposal and budget at their spring

meetings and each 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 RC meets and prepares recommendations on the project proposal and shares those recommendations with the Executive Directors who distribute the information to their regional associations. The Lead AA and project committee responds to the recommendations made by the NRSP RC and makes any needed revisions to the proposal in NIMSS. The NRSP RC also reports preliminary recommendations to the ESCOP Chair, ideally at the Joint COPs meeting in late July.

**September.** The NRSP RC reports at the annual agInnovation meeting on final project proposals with projected budgets, project midterm reviews, and its recommendations. SAES Directors from 1862 institutions vote (one vote per institution contributing OTT MRF) on approval of the project and 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 following NIFA administrative action. A NRSP not approved for renewal may receive a one-year project approval (contingent upon approval of SAES), with a budget equal to the previous year's budget, to transition off NRSP funding to other sources or downsize the project.

### **Annual Report of a NRSP**

Annually each NRSP will hold a meeting authorized in NIMSS by the Lead AA then prepares a SAES 422 Report. This report must be uploaded to NIMSS (NIMSS report template <https://www.nimss.org/forms/appendix d.pdf>) and approved by the Lead AA within 60 days of the NRSP's annual meeting, and include the following information:

1. **Participants:** Provide a list of those who attended each meeting and their employing institution. A description of the interaction and engagement with the stakeholders during the past year and brief description of plans for next year.
2. **Summary of Minutes:** Provide information with a focus on the decisions made during the NRSP annual meeting.
3. **Accomplishments:** This section focuses on activities, outputs, and short-term outcomes. Committees should build on information around the milestones identified in the original proposal. Describe how the project contributes to and supports related research programs and multistate projects nationwide. Indicate evidence of linkages both internal to the project/ committee and to external peer groups, stakeholders, clientele, and other multistate activities. This should also reflect on the items that stakeholders want to know; has there been a change in stakeholders' techniques, knowledge, or action for the past year. Describe the communications plan.

4. **Impact Statements:** This section focuses on actual or intended potential long-term outcomes and impacts. The NRSP should build on information around the project milestones as identified in the original proposal.

**Publications:** List the publications for the current year only (with the authors, title, journal series, etc.). If the list exceeds the maximum character limit below, an attachment file may be used.

### **Revision of NRSP Guidelines**

These guidelines will be modified using the following process:

1. Periodically, the guidelines will be reviewed by the NRSP RC, regional associations and Executive Directors. Proposed changes will be drafted by the NRSP RC 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 SAES for approval by a simple majority vote at the annual agInnovation meeting.

## **NRSP Proposal Format**

**Project Title: (140 characters):**

**Requested Duration:**

**Administrative Advisors:**

**NIFA Representative:**

**Statement of Issues and Justification:**

**Prerequisite Criteria:**

A. How is the NRSP consistent with the mission? (8,000 characters)

1. 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 multistate research projects.

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

1. All NRSPs must address 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 SAES system to address the issues. The proposal should discuss its support activities relative to other NRSPs.
2. 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:**

A. Priority Established by agInnovation/ESCOP: Priority for funding will be given to NRSPs that address and support one or more of the national priority areas identified by agInnovation (ESCOP Science and Technology Committee (STC) and Science Roadmap [www.escop.info/committees/](http://www.escop.info/committees/)). (8,000 characters)

B. Relevance to stakeholders: (8,000 characters)

1. 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 stakeholder needs and indicate the relationship of the stakeholders with the research support. 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.

2. 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:**

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

1. Objectives, milestones, and deliverables should be described in 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.
2. 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.

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

1. 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 OTT MRF. This plan should include efforts to bring in new agencies, organizations, industry, and foundations to help address the issues and provide project funding. All project proposals must provide evidence of contributions from SAESs across the nation beyond what is available through OTT MRF.
2. The business plan for an Emerging Innovation project renewal must include a transition plan and provisions for developing alternative funding including eliminating OTT MRF by the end of the first renewal period. Capacity NRSP renewal proposals submitted after successful completion of the first project renewal must provide compelling rationale for modest and sustained support. 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.
3. Budget and Budget Narrative (NRSP Budget Requests Summary Form). Project budgets must identify funds required to perform the project. Two budgets must be submitted:



one that identifies the annual and total amount of OTT MRF required for the project and a second budget sheet that identifies all other sources of funding (e.g., industry, federal agencies, foundations, fees, 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, fringe (and FTE summary), travel, equipment, other). A proposal to renew must indicate the process for re-competing ongoing service contracts. If a contract is not re-competed, the budget narrative must provide a justification for re-entering a contract with an existing service provider. The budget narrative should also describe the specifics on contributions to the project from funding sources other than OTT 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.

4. On approval by the NRSP RC and endorsement by SAES, a 5-year budget approval will be provided following NIFA administrative action. This approval is contingent on satisfactory meeting requirements set forth in the midterm review section below.
5. If federal funds are reduced, NRSP budgets will be reduced by a similar percentage.

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

1. Projects should indicate how efforts are integrated with Extension, academic, or international programs and how results might be of use by other potential stakeholders.
2. 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.
3. Proposals should indicate specifically how the project will support research activities and multistate projects nationwide.

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

1. All projects must have a sound outreach, communications, and assessment plan that seeks to communicate the programs goals, accomplishments, outcomes, and impacts. The communication plan must detail how results will be transferred to researchers and other end users.
2. 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), and the public.

3. Clear description of the engagement of stakeholders in the definition and/or conduct of the research support project.
4. Thorough description of the methodology to measure the accomplishments and impacts of the NRSP and effectiveness of the communication plan. Methods such as surveys, town meetings, conferences, analyses of reference data (e.g., citation index), and use of professional evaluators should be considered.
5. Specific description for development of communication pieces describing the activities, accomplishments, outcomes, and impacts of the NRSP. The communication pieces will be used with SAES and ARD directors, stakeholders and their organizations, funding sources and agencies, and congressional delegations.
6. Data management plan should be descriptive. How will the data from the project be managed, archived, and made available to prospective users? This plan must be consistent with the terms and conditions of USDA NIFA awards and reflect community standards.
7. 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 (BAC) of the APLU Board on Agriculture Assembly and other appropriate committees within ESS, and assisting NIFA in preparation of appropriate documents highlighting the impacts of the project.