

**THE EXPERIMENT STATION SECTION**  
**GUIDELINES FOR NATIONAL RESEARCH**  
**SUPPORT PROJECTS (NRSPs)**

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## **I. 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.

## **II. GENERAL**

National Research Support Projects are created to conduct activities that enable other important research efforts. 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.

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. All projects must pass scientific scrutiny as well as be an issue that has national significance. Where appropriate, linkages to similar international activities are encouraged.

Priority for funding will be given to NRSPs that address and meet one or more of the national priority areas identified by ESCOP. General consideration will be given to assuring that the portfolio of NRSP projects has sufficient diversity so as to make best use of limited funds.

NRSP are initiated by use of Hatch funds drawn from the total federal allocation prior to the formula distribution to state agricultural experiment stations (SAESs). This funding process is called “off-the-top” and in total represents about 1% of the federal formula funds to SAES.

The National Information Management and Support System (NIMSS) is the official repository for NRSP project information. NIMSS is a web application for management of the Multistate Research Activities in a paperless environment. It is an information technology tool that facilitates the submission of proposals, reports and reviews online. NIMSS also serves as the central repository of records pertaining to multistate research projects and activities since September 2003. Information can be accessed anywhere, anytime at [www.nimss.umd.edu](http://www.nimss.umd.edu).

Refer to Appendix B for more information on “Criteria for Establishing or Renewing an NRSP.”

## **III. ORGANIZATION: NRSP REVIEW COMMITTEE**

### **A. General**

Since the dissolution of the Committee of Nine, there has been no single SAES entity with the general oversight responsibility for National Research Support Projects. An NRSP Review

Committee (hereafter referred to as 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 committee does not have the responsibility to micromanage individual projects.

While playing a gatekeeper function for the SAES system, it is also important that the committee's role is clearly advisory to the system. It makes recommendations to the Experiment Station Section (ESS) concerning existing and new projects. A key component of their role is to oversee implementation of sunset clauses whereby an NRSP reduces or eliminates its dependence on off-the-top funding. The committee brings its recommendations to the annual ESS meeting, currently held in September. It reports on the final project proposals and projected budgets, as well as their final recommendation. The 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 overturn the NRSP Review Committee recommendation.

One of the specific charges to the committee is to use the national priorities and needs as a basis for the review and evaluation of existing and new NRSP projects. It is responsible for assuring that the NRSP portfolio is monitored and is responsive to needs. The committee will identify specific areas of research support needs or at least utilize input from an established ESCOP mechanism such as the Planning Committee because of their focus on emerging issues and needs. The committee has the authority to proactively identify research support needs. The committee has access to resources available to seed the creation of new NRSPs responsive to emerging needs.

The committee is directly responsible for the annual review of progress and budget 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, selects reviewers, assists in establishing protocols for review, and prepares the specific charge to the panels. 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.

A final role for the committee is one of broad advocacy for the NRSP system. It insures the documentation of system and individual project impacts. It serves as the point entity for marketing the system and bringing it to national level prominence.

## **B. The NRSP Review Committee shall consist of:**

1. One representative from each of the four SAES regions (1862 experiment stations) who is a current or past member of an 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.
3. One representative from NIFA, preferably a National Program leader, recommended by the NIFA Administrator and appointed by the ESCOP Chair.
4. One stakeholder representative, possibly a CARET representative, appointed by the ESCOP Chair.

5. Two regional executive directors appointed by the ESCOP Chair. One of the executive directors should be 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 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 NC, W, S, and NE.

### **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 will meet face-to-face once per year prior to the September ESS meeting. Other business of the committee will be conducted electronically through conference calls and e-mails. 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 coordinate peer reviews of new and revised NRSP proposals and associated five-year and annual 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 Fall meeting on new or revised NRSP project proposals and five-year and annual budgets and makes a recommendation for approval or rejection.

6. The committee reviews annual reports and annual budgets of active NRSPs and reviews annual budget requests. The committee reports and makes a recommendation for approval or disapproval or projects and annual budgets at the annual ESS meeting.

### **IV. ESTABLISHING NEW NRSPs**

**(Also refer to Appendix B for the NRSP criteria; Appendix C for the NRSP proposal format; Appendix D for the NRSP Peer Review Form and Appendix E for Regional Association Review Form.)**

In addition to addressing the criteria described in the General section above, a proposal for a new NRSP must contain the following elements:

#### **A. Relevance**

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 and indicate the relationship with the research to be supported. (The real stakeholders are the researchers and the funding agencies that will use the information or services generated.) The proposal must also include a mechanism for assessing stakeholder use of project outputs.

#### **B. Management and Business Plan**

Each NRSP should 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. 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.

In general, NRSPs should expect a finite period of off-the-top funding. This is not a reflection of the quality of work being conducted or the research being supported by the project. Rather, this allows the SAES system to continually assess 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 or reducing off-the-top funding to a minimal level.

### **C. Objectives and Projected Outcomes**

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 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, 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:

1. 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.)
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 National Research Support Project. 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, and congressional delegations.
5. 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 in preparation of appropriate documents highlighting the impacts of the project.

**F. Budget: The NRSP team must present an annual budget for each of the five years (See Appendix G).** The budget must take into account all sources of funds (Multistate Research Funds, industry, federal agencies, grants and contracts, and SAESs). There are two tables in

Appendix F, one for MRF and one for Other Sources. For the SAESs, the project should estimate the in-cash and in-kind contributions. The budget narrative should provide an estimate of the per cent contribution from each funding source.

## **V. RENEWAL OF AN NRSP**

**(Also refer to Appendix B for the NRSP criteria; Appendix C for the NRSP proposal format; and Appendix D for the NRSP Review Forms.)**

Prior to renewal, each NRSP must undergo an external peer review according to the schedule presented in the timelines section. Each NRSP seeking renewal must meet/address all of the criteria for a new NRSP described in the previous section. In addition, renewal requests must address the following:

### **A. 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 builds on the previous project and provides a logical progression.

### **B. Relevance**

Proposals must demonstrate continued need as evidenced by stakeholder use of outputs and impacts of research efforts that are supported by the activity,

### **C. 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

### **D. Objectives**

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. 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.

### **E. Management and Business Plan**

In general, NRSPs should expect a finite period of off-the-top funding. This is not a reflection of the quality of work being conducted or the research being supported by the project. Rather, this allows the SAES system to continually assess 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 or reducing off-the-top funding to a minimal level. Included would be an assessment of transition options, and alternative funding sources.

However, not all projects may be shifted to other funding sources. Projects seeking to continue with significant amount of off the top funding should fully justify the request.

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.

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.

#### **F. Integration and Documentation of Research Support**

The business plan must indicate the diversity of partners involved in the project as well as the multiple sources of funding. The proposal should indicate any new partnerships built during the project period. The proposal should address the degree to which full team is engaged in project planning and implementation and discuss plans to complement any weaknesses that may have been identified.

The proposal should contain a description of how research activities nationwide will be supported by the project.

#### **G. Outreach and Communications**

The 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.

#### **H. Budget:**

The NRSP team must present an annual budget for each of the five years (See Appendix G). The budget must take into account all sources of funds (Multistate Research Funds, industry, federal agencies, grants and contracts, and SAESs). There are two tables in Appendix G, one for MRF and one for Other Sources. For the SAESs, the project should estimate the in-cash and in-kind contributions. The budget narrative should provide an estimate of the per cent contribution from each funding source.

### **VI. REVIEW AND APPROVAL TIMELINES FOR NEW NRSPs OR RENEWAL OF AN EXISTING NRSP (Also, refer to Appendix A1 - A3)**

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

##### **Anytime**

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 Review Committee for a preliminary review no later than September 1 of the year prior to the proposed start date (ie Sep 1, 2010 for a start date of Oct 1, 2011). If this review is positive then the following steps should be followed to formally submit a proposal for consideration by the ESS.

(Note: transmission of materials to the Executive Directors throughout this process implies subsequent transmission to members of corresponding regional associations for consideration by their multi-state review committee)

Sponsoring Director(s) submits request to establish a regional development committee to one of the Executive Directors following that region's standard process for initiating new multistate activities.

Sponsoring regional association assigns lead Administrative Advisor and solicits names of Co-advisors from other Executive Directors. Sponsoring regional association follows the normal process for approving the establishment of a development committee and soliciting additional participants.

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 three external peer reviews of the proposal. Peer reviewers should be instructed to use the peer review form shown in Appendix D the Administrative Advisors work with the NRSP development committee to revise the proposal and budget based on the peer review comments.

### **Not later than January 15**

Administrative Advisors submit revised proposal and five-year budget, along with peer review comments and the committee's responses, to the NRSP Review Committee Chair. NRSP Review Committee Chair reviews package for completeness and then forwards it to the Executive Directors.

### **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 AES Directors at their spring regional association meeting. Executive Director transmits comments and/or concerns along with a summary of the review form results to the Administrative Advisors and NRSP Review Committee.

### **April**

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**

NRSP Review Committee meets and prepares preliminary recommendation relative to project proposal. The preliminary recommendation is transmitted to the Executive Directors

### **July**

The NRSP Review Committee recommendations are shared with and reviewed by the regional associations.

### **August**

NRSP Review Committee finalizes 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 proposal and projected budget, and its recommendation. 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 overturn the NRSP Review Committee recommendation.

### **October 1**

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

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

### **January**

NRSP Committee submits annual report (see below) and detailed budget for subsequent fiscal year to the NRSP Review Committee and Executive Directors by January 15.

If there is no change in total annual budget from approved five-year budget, the Executive Directors transmit report and budget to regional associations for their consideration at spring meetings. If a change in the annual budget from the approved five-year budget is requested, a detailed justification must be submitted to the Executive Directors for consideration by the regional associations and the NRSP Review Committee.

### **February - April**

Regional associations review budget requests during spring meetings and transmit comments to the NRSP Review Committee.

### **April - September**

The NRSP Review Committee interacts with NIFA and NRSP Administrative Advisors to determine and recommend any budget changes for the next year to the ESS.

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

### **September**

The NRSP Review Committee reports at the ESS Fall meeting on the final project proposal and projected budget, and its recommendation. 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 overturn the NRSP Review Committee recommendation.

### **October 1**

New NRSP approved starts five-year cycle with year 1 budget approved.

## **C. Renewal of an Existing NRSP**

### **Year 4**

NIFA and the NRSP Review Committee jointly arrange for peer review of NRSP that is due to terminate at the end of year 5. Review organizer consults with the NRSP Review Committee and NRSP Administrative Advisors regarding review protocol, charge, etc.

### **Year 5**

#### **September - December**

External peer review team conducts review of past four years progress and provides feedback to the NRSP project on a draft renewal proposal. The peer review team should use the peer review form shown in Appendix D to guide review of the draft renewal proposal.

#### **December**

NRSP Committee completes proposal based on external review comments.

#### **No Later Than January 15**

Renewal proposal, budget, and external peer review responses are sent to the NRSP Review Committee Chair. NRSP Review Committee Chair reviews package for completeness and then forwards it to the Executive Directors.

### **February - April**

Appropriate regional committees review the renewal proposal using the review form shown in Appendix E. Regional associations discuss renewal proposal and budget at their spring meetings and Executive Director transmits comments and/or concerns along with a summary of the review form results to the Administrative Advisors and the NRSP Review Committee.

### **April - May**

NRSP Committee addresses any comments and/or concerns identified through renewal proposal reviews and/or budget revisions and/or separate responses.

### **June**

The NRSP Review Committee meets in person or via teleconference to discuss the project proposal and, budget and feedback from regional associations. The project proposal and budget recommendations are forwarded to the Executive Directors and each NRSP Administrative Adviser. If desired, the final recommendations can be discussed at the summer regional association meetings.

### **September**

The NRSP Review Committee reports at the ESS Fall meeting on the final project proposal and budget, and its recommendation. SAES Directors vote (one vote per contributing institution) on approval of the project and five-year budget. A simple majority vote is required to overturn the NRSP Review Committee recommendation.

### **October 1**

NRSP approved for renewal starts five-year cycle with year 1 budget approved. NRSP not approved for renewal receives one-year extension (with budget equal to 5th-year budget) to transition off NRSP funding to other sources or downsize 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 in 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 Review Committee. Proposed changes will be drafted by the Committee and incorporated into this document.
2. The proposed changes will be submitted to ESCOP for review, editing, and approval.
3. Changes will be presented to the ESS for approval by a simple majority vote at the annual meeting.

## APPENDIX A1 - NRSP Calendar For Renewal of NRSP Projects

<b>Anytime</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional association or NRSPRC recommends development of new project as NRSP and notifies NIFA (as well as NRSPRC if they are not already aware).</li> <li>Potential NRSP committee is created through a regional association development committee.</li> </ul>
<b>Jan 15</b>
Administrative Advisors submit NRSP proposal and five-year budget, along with peer review comments from review form in Appendix D and the committee's responses, to the NRSP Review Committee Chair via NIMSS.
<b>Feb-April</b>
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.
<b>Apr-June</b>
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.
<b>June</b>
The NRSP Review Committee meets in person or via teleconference to discuss proposal and budgets and feedback from regional associations.
<b>July 1</b>
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.
<b>August 1</b>
NRSP Review Committee finalizes recommendations that will be presented at the annual ESS meeting.
<b>September</b>
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.
<b>October 1</b>
Approved NRSP starts five-year cycle with annual budget approved.

**APPENDIX A2 - NRSP Calendar For Renewal of NRSP Projects**

<b>September - December</b>
External review of NRSP occurs.
<b>December</b>
NRSP Committee develops renewal proposal based on external review comments.
<b>Jan 15</b>
Administrative Advisors submit NRSP proposal and five-year budget, along with peer review comments from review form in Appendix D and the committee's responses, to the NRSP Review Committee Chair via NIMSS.
<b>Feb-April</b>
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.
<b>Apr-June</b>
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.
<b>June</b>
The NRSP Review Committee meets in person or via teleconference to discuss proposal and budgets and feedback from regional associations.
<b>July 1</b>
Budget recommendations from the NRSP Review Committee are transmitted to the Executive Directors so all information can be shared with regional associations.
<b>August 1</b>
NRSP Review Committee finalizes recommendations that will be presented at the annual ESS meeting.
<b>September</b>
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.
<b>October 1</b>
Approved NRSP starts five-year cycle with annual budget approved. NRSP not approved for renewal receives one-year extension (with budget equal to 5th-year budget) to transition off NRSP funding to other sources or downsize project.

### APPENDIX A3 - NRSP Calendar For Continuing NRSP Projects

<b>Jan 15</b>
Administrative Advisors submits annual budget for NRSP to the Executive Directors.
<b>Feb-April</b>
Appropriate regional committees review the annual project budget and report to AES Directors at their Spring regional association meeting.
<b>Apr-June</b>
NRSP Development Committee addresses any comments and/or concerns received from the regional association spring meetings and finalize the budget for submission to the NRSP Review Committee.
<b>June</b>
The NRSP Review Committee meets in person or via teleconference to discuss proposal and budgets and feedback from regional associations.
<b>July 1</b>
Budget recommendations from the NRSP Review Committee are transmitted to the Executive Directors so all information can be shared with regional associations.
<b>August 1</b>
NRSP Review Committee finalizes budget recommendations that will be presented at the annual ESS meeting.
<b>September</b>
The NRSP Review Committee reports at the ESS annual meeting on the annual budget and its recommendation. Directors vote on recommendations.
<b>October 1</b>
Annual off-the-top budget for NRSP approved.

## **APPENDIX B - CRITERIA FOR ESTABLISHING OR RENEWING A NATIONAL RESEARCH SUPPORT PROJECT**

Established September 22, 2003

These criteria are based on the NRSP Guidelines adopted by the Experiment Station Section in January 2003. The Experiment Station Section adopted these specific criteria on September 22, 2003.

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 (new and renewals) will be evaluated using the following criteria (renewal of an NRSP must meet all of the criteria for a new NRSP in addition to the specific criteria identified for a renewal):

### **A. Prerequisite criteria for NRSPs**

- 1. Mission:** All NRSPs must be consistent with the mission of an NRSP.
- 2. National Issue:**
  - 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.

### **B. These are the criteria addressing the rationale for the NRSP.**

- 1. (20 points) 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)
- 2. (20 points) Relevance to Stakeholders:**
  - 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.

## **C. Criteria for implementing the NRSP proposal**

### **1. (15 points) Management and Business Plan:**

a. Each NRSP should 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 funding plan including development of alternative funding for reducing off-the-top funding to a minimal level. 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.

### **2. (15 points) Objectives and Projected Outcomes:**

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.

### **3. (15 points) Integration and Documentation of Research Support:**

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. (15 points) Outreach, Communications and Assessment:**

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 in preparation of appropriate documents highlighting the impacts of the project.

b. For renewals, the 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.

## APPENDIX C - NRSP Proposal Outline

*15 Page limit*

**Project Title: (140 characters)**

**Requested Duration:**

**Administrative Advisor:**

**CSREES 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 should 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 funding plan including development of alternative funding for reducing off-the-top funding to a minimal level. 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. 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 in preparation of appropriate documents highlighting the impacts of the project.

**PROJECT PARTICIPATION: NIMSS Appendix E**

**LITERATURE CITED:**

**BUDGET:**

The NRSP must present an annual budget for each of five years (See Appendix G). Information should be provided on funding from MRF and funding from other sources (i.e. industry, federal agencies, grants and contracts, and SAESs). **(Refer to Appendix G)**

**APPENDIX D - 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.**

	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Unacceptable</b>
<b><i>Mission:</i></b>				
Consistency with the mission of an NRSP	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b><i>Relevance:</i></b>				
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	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b><i>Technical Merit:</i></b>				
Overall technical merit (sound scientific approach, achievable objectives, appropriate scope of activity)	_____	_____	_____	_____
Potential for significant outputs (products) and outcomes and/or impacts	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b><i>Implementation Plan:</i></b>				
Benchmarks for success clearly identified	_____	_____	_____	_____

Management structure that adequately coordinates efforts of multiple participants

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

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Efforts integrated with extension and/or academic programs

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

**APPENDIX E - NRSP Proposals Regional Association Review Form 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:**

<b>A. Prerequisite criteria for NRSPs:</b>		<b>Circle One:</b>
<b>1. Mission:</b> Is the NRSP consistent with the mission of an NRSP?		<b>Yes / No</b>
<b>2. National Issue:</b>		
	1. 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>Yes / No</b>
	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.	<b>Yes / No</b>
<b>Comments:</b>		

<b>B. These are the criteria addressing the rationale for the NRSP:</b>		<b>Total Points:</b>
a. <b>(20 points) Priority Established by ESCOP/ESS:</b> 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)		<b>__ / 20</b>
<b>2. (20 points) Relevance to Stakeholders:</b>		<b>__ / 20</b>
	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>b.</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.	
<b>Comments:</b>		

<b>C. Criteria for implementing the NRSP proposal</b>		<b>Total Points:</b>
<b>1. (15 points) Management, Budget and Business Plan:</b>		<b>__ / 15</b>
	<p><b>a.</b> Each NRSP should 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.</p> <p><b>b.</b> The business plan for project renewals must include a funding plan including development of alternative funding for reducing off-the-top funding to a minimal level. 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.</p>	
<b>2. (15 points) Objectives and Projected Outcomes:</b>		<b>__ / 15</b>
	<p><b>a.</b> 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.</p> <p><b>b.</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.</p>	

<p><b>3. (15 points) Integration and Documentation of Research Support:</b></p>	<p>__ / 15</p>
<p>a. Projects should indicate how efforts are integrated with extension or academic programs and how results might be of use by other potential stakeholders.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>c. Proposals should indicate specifically how the project will support research activities nationwide.</p>	

<p><b>4. (15 points) Outreach, Communications and Assessment:</b></p>		<p>__ / 15</p>
	<p>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:</p>	
	<p>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.)</p>	<p>Yes / No</p>
	<p>ii) Clear description of the engagement of stakeholders in the definition and/or conduct of the research support project.</p>	<p>Yes / No</p>
	<p>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.</p>	<p>Yes / No</p>
	<p>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.</p>	<p>Yes / No</p>
	<p>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 in preparation of appropriate documents highlighting the impacts of the project.</p>	<p>Yes / No</p>

	<p><b>b.</b> For renewals, the 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.</p>	
<p><b>Comments:</b></p>		

<p><b>Total</b></p>	<p>___ /</p>
<p><b>Points:</b></p>	<p><b>100</b></p>





