

**NCRA MULTISTATE RESEARCH COMMITTEE  
REGIONAL PROJECT EXPECTATIONS**

**Committee Types and Descriptions (please refer to our [NCRA Multistate Guidelines for details](#))**

**Multistate Research Projects (NC-type Projects):** The membership of a Multistate Research Project is called the technical committee, and is made up of SAES scientists, an AA, NIFA representative, other public and private sector scientists, and as applicable, extension specialists and/or extension agents. This type of activity involves cooperative, jointly planned research employing multidisciplinary approaches in which a SAES, working with other SAESs, the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), or a college or university, cooperates to solve problems that concern more than one state and usually more than one region. In addition, the following must be demonstrated in the project proposal:

1. The objectives are clearly focused.
2. Each participant listed has direct involvement in the accomplishment of the stated objectives.
3. The project is multistate and multidisciplinary
4. The project proposal has been peer-reviewed.
5. The proposed project is oriented toward accomplishment of specific outcomes and impacts and based on priorities developed from stakeholder input.
6. There is a clear intent to leverage multistate funds with extramural grant activities.
7. The project is responsive to NIFA goals.

**NC Projects:** The "engine" of the multistate research program is the collection of supported, technical committees. In the North Central Region, these are referred to as NC committees and the associated projects as NC projects. The guidelines and criteria for NC projects are described in the Prioritization Process document (NCRA Guidelines Appendix A-1). Projects are reviewed, in most cases, every five years with a midterm review within the third year of existence. SAES-422 Annual Reports are due within 60 days of an annual meeting.

**Multistate Research Coordinating Committees (CC) and Education/Extension and Research Activity (ERA):** The membership of a CC or an ERA is made up of an AA, NIFA representative, scientists, and as applicable, extension specialists and/or extension agents. A CC or ERA provides opportunity for scientists, specialists, and others to work cooperatively to solve problems that concern more than one state, share research data, and coordinate research and other types of activities. This is presently one of the most common mechanisms for functionally integrated activities such as the regional IPM programs. These activities are reviewed and approved by the sponsoring regional association. The steps for development and approval of Multistate Research CCs and ERAs are described in Appendix N of the NCRA Guidelines.

**NCCC Committees:** In the NCRA, CCs are referred to as NCCC Committees and provide a mechanism for addressing critical regional issues where multistate coordination or information exchange is appropriate within a function (i.e. research, education or extension); have expected outcomes; convey knowledge; and are peer reviewed. These activities are reviewed and approved by the sponsoring regional association. The duration of the committee can be up to five years. Membership of the committee is comprised of scientists appointed by participating state research and extension directors, as appropriate. There is one voting member per SAES, but participation by others is an option of each director. Meetings are held annually, with provisions for interim meetings upon authorization by the administrative advisor. SAES-422 Annual Reports are due within 60 days of an annual meeting.

**NCERA Committees:** In the NCRA, ERAs are referred to as NCERA Committees and serve to integrate education (academic and/or extension) and research on a particular topic where multistate coordination or information exchange is appropriate; have expected outcomes; convey knowledge; and are peer reviewed. The duration of the committee can be up to five years. Membership of the committee is comprised of scientists appointed by participating state research and extension directors, as appropriate. There is one voting member per SAES, but participation by others is an option of each director. Meetings are held annually, with provisions for interim meetings upon authorization by the administrative advisor. SAES-422 Annual Reports are due within 60 days of an annual meeting.

**National Research Support Projects (NRSP):** NRSPs are made up of four AAs (one appointed from each SAES regional association), a NIFA representative, and scientists from SAES and elsewhere, as appropriate. This type of activity 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. NRSPs are eligible for off-the-top funding. SAES-422 Annual Reports are due within 60 days of an annual meeting. Specific guidelines for NRSPs have been adopted and may be found at the following website: <http://escop.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/NRSP-GUIDELINES2c-Revised-Nov-2015.pdf>

#### **Development Committees (NCDC):**

**NCDC - Regular:** Scientist from two or more states may initiate a proposal for a development committee with concurrence of two or more SAES directors. The duration of the committee is one to two years. These committees generally are charged to prepare a justification and a proposal outline for a new multistate activity. Membership of the committee is comprised of an AA appointed by the chair of the regional association and scientists appointed by participating state research and extension directors, as appropriate. SAES-422 Annual Reports are due within 60 days of an annual meeting.

**NCDC – Proposal:** An NCDC-Proposal serves as a platform for development of a multi-state or regional competitive grant proposal for submission to AFRI, NSF, NIH or other programs. Establishment of the committee needs the concurrence of three or more SAES directors and has duration of not more than two years. Membership of the committee is comprised of an AA, preferably the director from the lead institution on the proposal team, and scientists who intend to collaborate on development of the competitive grant proposal. The committee must have representation from three or more states working collaboratively of the grant proposal. The expected outcome is a grant proposal submitted to a regional or national competitive program involving collaboration among three or more states with a minimum budget of \$1M per year. Should the committee not reach consensus on the development of a regional proposal, a summary report of activities is expected in lieu of the proposal. The committee chair is expected to submit a copy of the submitted proposal or the summary of activities to the MRC within 30 days after the grant program due date. A proposal submission or summary report would terminate the committee. Committee activities could be extended beyond the normal two-year period if the submitted proposal was not funded but received good reviews and encouragement for resubmission. Grant proposals and their reviews should be submitted to the MRC for renewal consideration.

Meetings will be held as needed to support the development of the proposal. The NCRA office would assist the committee in scheduling meetings, conference calls, etc. A host institution would take responsibility for local arrangements of meetings. Each state AES represented on the committee is expected to cover the travel cost of its representative(s) to the committee meeting. Costs associated with travel to committee meetings, meeting support and proposal are allowable multi-state Hatch expenditures.

**Rapid Response Research Activity:** The purpose of rapid response research (**Series-500/NC-500**) activities is to provide a mechanism to assure responsiveness to acute crises, emergencies, and opportunities using the multistate research approach and MRF. Activities may range from formally organized research on targeted objectives to very informal research coordination or information exchange activity, depending on the circumstances. To create a rapid response activity, directors from two or more SAES must agree to form the activity. The proposal is a report of intent which is submitted to the regional association's chair (usually through the ED's office). The Chair of the regional association approves the project and serves as the AA to the project or assigns that responsibility to another director. Neither NIFA nor regional association approval is required. If NIFA does not respond within five working days, the project will be approved. It would not require review by either the appropriate North Central Administrative Committee (NCAC, a committee of department heads/chairs) or the NCRA. The technical committee for a Rapid Response Research activity is made up of an AA, NIFA representative, research scientists, and as applicable, extension specialists and/or extension agents. These activities have two years from the date of initiation to convert to an association sanctioned activity; thus, the technical committee has the option, at a later date, to obtain approval as a multistate research project or other multistate research activity, through normal procedures. SAES-422 Annual Reports are due within 60 days of an annual meeting.

### **Expectations for Successful NCRA Projects**

In recent years, MRC deliberations have placed a greater emphasis on accountability. The “bar has been raised” on several different levels. Each year, the MRC members can plainly see the committees that stand out as “model projects.”

- When the MRC approves a proposal, it typically has higher writing quality as compared to those that require revision or that the MRC denies. These proposals clearly and concisely state the importance of the research. The committee must address ALL PROPOSAL SECTIONS!
- The Multistate Research Committee requires that projects submit SAES-422 Annual Reports within 60 days of the annual meeting. The AA may not authorize subsequent annual meetings without this annual report. In lieu of the SAES-422, NCDC - Proposal Projects are required to submit a copy of the completed grant proposal submitted as an outcome of their effort. If no proposal was submitted the committee chair is to submit a summary of activities. Either the proposal or the summary of activities is to be submitted to the MRC within 30 days of the grant program due date.
- On a national level, the MRC examines internal and external indicators of interaction and linkage among participants and stakeholders. The MRC identifies linkages by asking the following questions:
  - Is there evidence of the interaction among committee participants and with other projects/agencies? A list of relevant joint publications, grant proposals, conferences organized, and meetings can serve to illustrate the degree to which interaction occurs.
  - Is there evidence of delivering accomplishments to peer groups, stakeholders, clientele, and other multistate activities? For example, committee results delivered at workshops, scientific conferences, and publications.
  - Is there evidence of collaboration (collective interactive activity) among the committee members? Evidence for collaborative activities could include attendance at multistate meetings and demonstrated accomplishments resulting from meetings and planning activities.
  - Has the committee moved beyond a collection of individual activities and ideas to some collective, integrated activity? Provide evidence of synergy, collaborative output via joint publicity, specific coordinated activity, etc.
- Committees must demonstrate why a multistate project will succeed where an individual project cannot.
- Proposals must clearly state the role of each participating station.
- Other factors taken into account by the MRC:

1. **Outputs:** Defined products (tangible or intangible) delivered by a research project. Examples of outputs are reports, data, information, observations, publications, and patents
2. **Impacts:** Actual or intended potential long-term outcomes and impacts. Committees should build information around the activity's milestones, as identified in the original proposal. The report should also reflect on the items that stakeholders want to know, or want to see. List any grants, contracts, and/or other resources obtained by one or more project members as a result of the project's activities. Include the recipients, funding source, amount awarded and term if applicable. If the committee is filing an annual report, the impacts will cover only the current year of the project; for termination reports, list impacts from the entire span of the project. To aid in understanding the "accomplishment" description, the MRC offers these additional definitions:

*Additional Definitions of "Impact":*

"The economic, social, health or environmental consequences derived as benefits for the intended users. These are usually quantitatively measured either directly or indirectly as indicators of benefits." Source: National Multistate Guidelines – Glossary. For example, "NC1007 research on food animal diarrheal diseases has improved understanding of the pathogenic mechanisms used by these pathogens. This allows for novel intervention strategy development to reduce individual animal infections and to control environmental contamination." Source: NC1007 Impact Nugget.

"The quantifiable difference a land-grant program makes in the quality of life for its clients and general citizenry." Supplementing that brief statement is also the definition of an impact statement: "A brief document that describes the social, environmental, and/or economic difference that your research, teaching, or extension efforts have made on the public. Specifically, it states your accomplishments and the payoff to society." Source: National Impact Statement Writing Team

*Activities:* Organized and specific functions or duties carried out by individuals or teams using scientific methods to reveal new knowledge and develop new understanding.

*Milestones:* Key intermediate targets necessary for achieving and/or delivering the outputs of a project, within an agreed timeframe. Milestones are useful for managing complex projects. For example, a milestone for a biotechnology project might be "To reduce our genetic transformation procedures to practice by December 2010."

*Indicators:* Qualitative surrogate observations or indirect measures of quantitative performance measures which permit monitoring the achievement of outcomes when direct measurement of performance is difficult, too costly, or not possible. An indicator of cultivar adoption might be seed certification records, rather than actual land area planted to that cultivar. Has the committee made quantitative impacts?

3. Progress since the midterm review based on outputs, impacts and milestones.
4. Objectives: Clear, concise, attainable one-sentence statements for each researchable objective arranged in a logical sequence. Include only objectives on which the committee can make significant progress during the life of the project with the resources committed. Do not specify the exchange of information, the coordination of research, the development of standardized techniques, or joint publication as objectives, as these are to be organized under other types of activities.
5. Timelines and benchmarks to gauge success must be evident in the proposal.
6. Participation: Proposal must include participants with sufficient expertise and geographical distribution to adequately address the objectives.
7. Outreach/Technology Transfer: Proposals must document stakeholder involvement.
8. The committee must write a title clearly, concisely and in lay language.
9. The committee must demonstrate a complete CRIS search to ensure no overlap with other committees both regionally and nationally.