



agInnovation North Central (agNC) MULTISTATE RESEARCH COMMITTEE REGIONAL PROJECT EXPECTATIONS

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 (awarded or attempted as a team), 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 considered 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. 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 NIMSS/CRIS search to ensure no overlap with other committees both regionally and nationally.

Multistate Committee Types and Descriptions

(please refer to the *agInnovation Multistate Research Activities* document [here](#) 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 (agNC Guidelines Appendix A-1). Projects are reviewed, in most cases, every five years with a midterm review within the third year of existence. Official meetings are required annually, with provisions for interim meetings/events at the discretion of the committee leadership. Annual Reports are required and 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.

NCCC Committees: In the agNC, 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. Official meetings are required annually, with provisions for interim meetings/events at the discretion of the committee leadership. Annual Reports are required and due within 60 days of an annual meeting.

NCERA Committees: In the agNC, 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. Official meetings are required annually, with provisions for interim meetings/events at the discretion of the committee leadership. Annual Reports are required and 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 [here](#).

NCDC projects - Development Committees (2-year projects designed for preparing 5-year multistate project proposals

- NCDCs follow the federal fiscal year (October to September), so all NCDCs, regardless of when they start, will expire on September 30 of their second year.
- Standard NCDC Requirements (see below for NCDC-Proposal Requirements):
 - Two letters of support from NC AES directors - one of these directors must be willing to serve as the project AA or assign someone to fill the role for them. Preferably, these letters should be sent electronically to the agNC office.
 - Electronic submission of a committee justification to the agNC office.
 - Format for an NCDC Issues and Justifications section: Include a brief statement of (1) the nature and significance of the issues for which multistate coordination is

proposed, and (2) how the proposed activity addresses national and/or regional priorities; see <https://www.aginnovation.info/our-promise> for agInnovation Grand Challenges. (Limit this section to approximately one-half page).

- In this statement, identify the sets of stakeholders, customers, and/or consumers for whom the activity is intended.
- Include also a list of expected project members and/or participating stations/states.
- Members of the pending NCDC must name a project Administrative Advisor.
- NCDCs have roughly two years to develop an association-sanctioned activity (either an NC-research type project, NCCC, or NCERA. Please refer to the Multistate Research Activities link at <https://escop.info/resources/> for more information on these project types. The technical committee has the option, at a later date, to obtain approval as a five-year project, through normal procedures described here: <https://www.aginnovationnc.org/new-renewal-nc-project-instructions>

NCDC-Proposal Committees: An NCDC-Proposal serves as a platform for the development of a multi-state or regional competitive grant proposal for submission to AFRI, NSF, NIH, or other programs. The establishment of the committee needs the concurrence of three or more SAES directors and has a 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 the development of the competitive grant proposal. The committee must have representation from three or more states working collaboratively on 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 a consensus on the development of a regional proposal, a summary report of activities is expected in place 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.

NC-500 - Rapid Response Projects: The purpose of a rapid response research (Series-500/ NC-500) activity is to provide a mechanism to assure responsiveness to acute crises, emergencies, and opportunities using the multistate research approach and MRF. Requires support from two AES directors, the name of a willing AA, and an issues and justifications narrative sent to the agNC office.

NC-500 Project Requirements:

- Two letters of support from NC AES directors are required. Preferably, these letters should be sent electronically to the agNC office.

- A report of intent 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.
- To make the approval process move quickly, we strongly suggest the committee line up an AA before beginning the NC-500 series project request. The agNC office will not assign an AA for you.
- A Rapid Response (500 series) proposal request must be submitted to the agNC Office (via NIMSS) ASAP (Project Proposal >> New Project Proposal, then select Rapid Response (500 series) in the Form dropdown.
- When all materials have been submitted appropriately, the agNC office will notify NIFA and the agNC directors of the proposal submission. By design, NC-500 series projects do not require review by either the appropriate North Central Administrative Committee (NCA) (committee of department heads/chairs) or the agNC Multistate Research Committee (MRC), but they are informed of the application.
- 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 (either an NC-research type project, NCCC, or NCERA. Please refer to the Multistate Research Activities link at <https://escop.info/resources/> for more information on these project types. The technical committee has the option to later obtain approval as a multistate research project or other multistate research activity, through normal proposal submission procedures.