

LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AGRICULTURAL CENTER

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RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: Director-La. Agricultural Experiment Station

CATEGORY: Research, Extension, & Academics

Documentation of Research Programs

I. Purpose:

This policy defines and formalizes the requirement for LSU AgCenter faculty with 20% or greater research appointments in the Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station (LAES) to document their research programs with formally approved projects within the LAES and USDA-NIFA project system.

II. Definition:

The document(s) that delineate a faculty member's research program is referred to as an "Experiment Station project." It also can be used as a "plan of research" or a "program of research." It is a formal, written, peer reviewed document that accurately describes the faculty member's research program.

The LAES project system includes the following steps:

- Development of an Experiment Station project proposal. The proposal document includes objectives, justification, literature review, procedures, duration, personnel, and cooperating units.
- Review of project proposals by faculty peers and appropriate administrators.
- Revision of project proposal addressing all reviewers' comments.
- Approval of research project. The approved project should accurately and comprehensively describe the research that will be conducted.
- Formal initiation of research project within the appropriate federal project reporting system.

- Once approved and initiated, faculty are expected to complete annual progress reports within the appropriate federal system. In addition, at the conclusion of the project, faculty are expected to complete a final report on project accomplishments, also within the appropriate federal reporting system.

III. Background:

The state and federal authorizations under which the LAES operates mandate that it “...enhance the quality of life for people through basic and applied research....” Because the LAES mission is primarily that of research, all LSU AgCenter faculty who receive salary and research support from the LAES agree, among other things, to conduct a program of original research to improve or enhance Louisiana’s food and agricultural industries, its natural resources, and /or its human resources. The Experiment Station project(s) is the mechanism that each LAES faculty member uses to plan and describe his or her research activities.

The LAES utilizes both federal capacity research funds (Hatch, McIntire-Stennis, Animal Health) and state funds to support the research mission of the LSU AgCenter. Because federal capacity funds, in addition to state funds, are used to support faculty salaries, LAES research faculty whose salary is supported by capacity funds are required to always maintain an active federal research project. The majority of the federal capacity research projects within the LAES are funded by Hatch funds, with a smaller portion funded by McIntire-Stennis and Animal Health capacity funds. When fully approved, the project becomes an agreement between the faculty members and the LAES administration.

The LAES provides salary, office space, a broad research infrastructure, and base operating resources and support. In return, as a condition of employment, the faculty member agrees to conduct the research program that has been carefully planned, reviewed, revised, documented in USDA’s NIFA Reporting System (NRS), and approved for funding.

The Experiment Station project serves several purposes:

- It serves as a logical process for planning individual research programs in accordance with external and internal input and administrative guidance.
- It sets realistic, well-defined research goals to be used in annual faculty performance evaluations.
- It serves as a legal/fiscal document that, when approved by USDA-NIFA, allows the legal expenditure of federal funds allocated to the LAES in support of the described research.
- It serves as a vehicle for annually reporting to the USDA-NIFA on the progress of the research conducted in the project, through annual reports which include scientific effort, financial expenditures, and technical progress directed to the project’s coded attributes including “research problem area, subject of investigation, and field of science.”

IV. Policy

Each faculty member with a 20% or greater LAES research appointment must ensure that their research program, always, be formally documented by one or more current Experiment Station projects that accurately describe the research activities being conducted by the scientist as a part of his/her LAES appointment. Research faculty members must maintain at least one active federal capacity funded project (Hatch, McIntire-Stennis, or Animal Health) at all times.

The project(s) developed must be mission-oriented, responsive to stakeholder needs, cognizant of equal opportunity requirements, and subject to peer review. The number of projects in which a faculty member is involved will vary according to the breadth of the faculty member's research. For faculty with closely focused programs, one Hatch, McIntire-Stennis, or Animal Health, project may be sufficient. Federal capacity project proposals should be written generally enough to cover the breadth and scope of the faculty member's research program, but not so detailed that it limits the faculty member from pursuing other federal grants. Project objectives can be written in such a way as to cover the range of planned research to be conducted within a faculty member's research program within one federal project proposal. For those with broader research interests or responsibilities, multiple Hatch or other federal capacity research projects may be required to adequately document their research programs. If a faculty member is actively involved in collaboration with scientists in other states, a Multistate Research project may be included. For external research funding from federal grant awards, a Grant project may be added. Consultation with the unit head and LAES administration will resolve any questions about the number and type(s) of project(s) needed.

Extra-mural grants received from commodity boards, industry sources, state, or federal agencies, etc. will generally contribute financial resources to support research on specific parts of a scientist's Experiment Station project(s). Although federal grants may be documented through some federal agency reporting system, these grants, along with all other extra-mural grants, do not substitute for an approved Experiment Station project.

New LAES faculty members are expected to submit a LAES research proposal to the LAES Director's office within six months of the initial appointment. Hatch research projects are generally proposed with a four-year project period. A one-year project extension is allowable if needed to complete project objectives. To ensure that faculty members always have an approved LAES research project, a replacement project proposal should be submitted to the Director's office no later than three months before the expiration date of an existing project. Consultation with the unit head and LAES administration will resolve any questions about the timing of Experiment Station project preparation or replacement. Failure of faculty with a LAES appointment to always have an approved Experiment Station project may result in disciplinary action.

V. Additional Information

Additional information related to federal capacity funded research project proposal development and reporting, NIFA database of federally funded research projects, multistate research groups,

and other pertinent information can be found at the LSU AgCenter Researcher Resources web page at <https://www.lsuagcenter.com/portals/it/researchers>.

VI. Exceptions:

There are no exceptions to this policy.

VII. Violations:

Any AgCenter employee who is determined to have violated this policy is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. LSU AgCenter supports an environment free from retaliation. Retaliation against any employee who brings forth a good faith concern, asks a clarifying question, or participates in an investigation is prohibited.

VIII. Resources:

- The tenets of this policy are usually outlined in research faculty employment offer letters.
- This policy repeals and replaces LAES-01 Documentation of Research Programs, Version 0 issued 4/1/2002.