2026 Hatch Proposal Guidelines

Key Requirements

- Create value by generating preliminary data that advances your research program and addresses emerging research areas with potential impacts on stakeholders, Virginia, and the nation.
- **Align with the latest USDA NIFA Priorities and comply with Executive Orders and Secretarial Memorandum 1078-021**.
- Review Appendix B for terms no longer accepted under current federal guidance.
- **Note: This list is not exhaustive, as policies and priorities continue to evolve*.
- **Do not use other federally funded work to complete proposed activities**.
- Approved funding sources include:
    - Startup funds
    - Commercial entities
    - Private funding
    - Foundations
    - Field trials
    - Commodity grants
    - VT internal grants
    - Pratt Funding
- Projects must have five years of performance.
- Proposals are public and must not include proprietary data.
- **IRB or IACUC approval letters must be on file with the VAES before final documents are submitted to USDA for proposal approval**. Begin protocol approval early if human or animal subjects are involved. **This applies to exempt survey research, too*.
- **Avoid including figures or tables, as the NIFA Reporting System (NRS) is a .csv-type format and will not render figures or tables correctly.**

Importance of Hatch Projects

- Required for tenure-track faculty with research appointments.
- Needed within 18 months after arrival for new faculty.
- See the **VAES Guide for Single Project Director (PD) Hatch Research Projects** for details.
- Faculty without an approved capacity project (Hatch/Hatch Multistate) may not be eligible for an annual raise or other potential VAES support (graduate student support, equipment, seed grant, etc.)

Three-Phase Internal Review Process

Phase 1: Peer and departmental review
Phase 2: VAES internal review
Phase 3: Final review and proposal submission to USDA NIFA

Things to consider

The internal review can take three to four months from initial review to proposal submission. Please plan accordingly.

- Are you following the latest guidelines?
- Previous guidelines may no longer be valid due to frequent federal updates.
- Contact **Laura Rasnick** at **Lrasnick@vt.edu** for the latest handouts.
- Do the proposal objectives clearly support your research goals and **USDA NIFA Priorities**?
- Will you have human or animal subjects that require a protocol approval?

Publications Note

Proper acknowledgement of your public funding in published articles, manuscripts, dissertations, poster presentations, patents, and press releases is critical for the success of the agency's programs. As your project progresses, please use the following language to acknowledge NIFA support in publications, as appropriate:

THIS WORK IS/WAS SUPPORTED BY THE USDA NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE, [INSERT PROJECT TYPE, E.G., HATCH] PROJECT [INSERT *ACCESSION NUMBER].

**The accession number is located on the cover page of your Hatch project award.*

Technical Details/ Hatch RFP

Please follow the format below (headers/sub-headers/character limits)

1. **TITLE**
   - Maximum 180 characters, including spaces
   - A brief description of the research

2. **NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

   This is the most important section of your proposal. It can be accessed by legislators making funding-allocation decisions, the general public, community leaders, taxpayers, government staff, and other scientists.

   - **Non-Technical Summary is limited to 9,500 characters, including spaces**.
   - Use layman's terms to serve general citizens without a scientific background.
   - Include sub-headers A – F listed below.

   A. <u>Importance</u>:
      a. In a brief paragraph, discuss:
         i. The issue or problem your research will address.
         ii. Why is the topic important at this moment?
         iii. The overarching goal ("hook") that shows the project's value to USDA and stakeholders.
         iv. How the research aligns with current USDA priorities.

   B. <u>Relevance to Advancing Virginia, the region, and the United States</u>:
      a. In a brief paragraph, address at least two of the following areas: economics, community, environment, or agriculture.

   C. <u>Approach</u>:
      a. Summarize the basic methods and approaches used to collect and produce data or results.
      **Do not repeat detailed objectives, methods, or procedures from other sections*.

   D. <u>Goals</u>:
      a. Provide a clear, concise statement of the major goals for the project.
         i. Major goals describe the broad purpose, intended achievement, or milestones of the project.

b. **Following the major goal statement, please list the numbered objectives of your project**.

E. Target Audiences:

a. **Provide at least three (3) primary audiences and one (1) or more secondary audiences and describe how each will benefit from your findings**.
b. Audiences may include individuals, groups, market segments, or communities.
c. Identify population groups when possible.
d. The list must extend beyond the scientific community.
e. You may also include potential audiences.

F. Outcomes:

a. Describe the ultimate outcomes your project hopes to achieve and the significant changes it may produce. These include:
    i. **Changes in knowledge** (e.g., increased understanding of a process or issue.
    ii. **Changes in action** (e.g., adoption of new behaviors or practices)
    iii. **Changes in conditions** (e.g., improvements in environmental, social, or economic factors)
b. Explain the potential **economic impacts** of your findings. (e.g., industry or consumer savings).
c. Explain the potential **social impacts** or benefits of your findings. (e.g., enhanced quality of life, changes in activity, strengthened communities, or a healthier population).
d. Identify any long-term benefits that could develop over the next five to ten years. These may include increased profitability or efficiency, or contributions to the prevention, detection, control, or eradication of pests and diseases.

3. TECHNICAL SECTION

Key reminders:

- **Do not include figures or tables, as NRS does not render them correctly.**
- Do not include proprietary data.
- Include citations/references throughout the proposal, as appropriate.
- Include a complete list of citations/references at the end of the document.

A. Previous Work and Present Outlook

   a. Summarize the current status of your research topic, including **non-proprietary** preliminary data.
   b. Identify the knowledge gaps the project aims to address.
   c. Explain how information gathered during this project will build upon or provide a foundation for future research efforts.

B. Methodology

   Key reminders:

   - **Methodology is limited to 8,000 characters, including spaces**.
   - Each clearly labeled objective should include:
     - Experimental design
     - Methods used
     - One sentence describing potential statistical analysis method(s)
     - If the same statistical method is used for all objectives, you may include a single sentence at the end of the methodology section to cover all objectives.

C. Potential difficulties

   In a few sentences, describe any expected difficulties, known limitations, or potential alternative plans.

D. Outcomes

   a. USDA considers **outcomes** and **accomplishments** to be synonymous.
   b. Outcomes are activities, events, services, and products that reach people.
   c. An outcome or accomplishment reflects a significant change in **knowledge**, **action**, or **condition**.
      i. **Change in Knowledge**:
         A change in knowledge may include breakthroughs in scientific understanding (research projects) or significant gains in understanding among participants (education or extension).
      ii. **Change in Action**
         A change in action occurs when behaviors or practices shift as a result of the project's activities.
      iii. **Change in Condition**
         A change in condition occurs when a societal concern improves due to the project's activities. When available and appropriate,

support outcomes with quantitative data (e.g., acres impacted, increased profits, number of people impacted).

d. **Example languages include**:
    a. "Increase in the number of acres that…"
    b. "Decrease the number of children who…"
    c. "Increased profits from the sale of…"

E. Products
    a. Products differ from outcomes.
    b. USDA considers **products** and **outputs** to be synonymous.
    c. Products include:
        i. **Activities**
        Conducting and analyzing experiments, surveys, assessments, facilitating, teaching, or mentoring.
        ii. **Events**
        Conferences, demonstrations, field days, symposia, workshops, or training.
        iii. **Services**
        Consulting, counseling, tutoring.
        iv. **Outputs that reach others**
        Audio, video, curricula, databases, equipment, or instruments. Patent applications, Plant Variety Act applications, models, collaborations fostered by the project, physical collections or resources, new animal germplasm, genetic maps, software, technology, methods, techniques, training manuals, websites, skills, or technologies for individuals, communities, programs, or students.

F. Project Evaluation Plan

Describe the plan and steps to evaluate or measure the project's success toward the stated goals. Include key milestones and measurable or quantitative indicators of success. Relate milestones and indicators to expected outcomes/accomplishments and impacts.

These sections are required for internal VAES records in preparation for future auditing. They will **not** be included in your USDA NIFA proposal submission.

4. Probable Duration

Five years

5. Timeline

Provide a timeline for the proposed activities in **Gantt chart format**.

Do not specify calendar months (e.g., July) or years (e.g., 2026), as the project approval date is unknown.

Instead, label the timeline using **Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, Year 4, Year 5**.

6. Personnel:

List the **Project Director (PD)** and all other personnel contributing to the project.

7. Effort Contribution

1. Estimate the **5-year total** scientist-years (SY), professional years (PY), and technical/clerical years (TY) for the proposed effort.
2. Indicate the number of students in each category (Undergraduate, Graduate, Postdoctoral Scientists) expected to work on the project.

The SY, PY, and TY commitments should reflect **cumulative effort over the full five-year duration**, not annual effort. Include all participants (except volunteers) who will devote time to the project.

SY = Scientist Year

- Faculty time.
- Cannot exceed the amount of research time a person has available.
- Total typically ranges from 0.5 to 1.25 over five years.

PY = Professional Year

- Graduate students, undergraduate students, postdocs, or research associates
- Should not exceed 0.5 PY per student, annually.

TY = Technical Year

- Classified staff time.

SY, PY, and TY reflect total research time committed to the project, regardless of funding source. NIFA uses these values to understand the level of research support for each project.

Final note: Not all proposals will include personnel in each category, and that is acceptable.

8. Institutional Units Involved

List each subject matter unit in the Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station and any other relevant unit (AREC, centralized advisory, coordinating, directing committee). Include the official title and responsibilities of each individual or committee.

9. Cooperation:

List the U.S. Department of Agriculture units or other stations, institutions, or agencies cooperating on the project. If a Multistate Project is involved, include the Multistate Project number.

10. Internal:

This section is for internal use only and helps VAES understand how you anticipate supporting the project without federal funding.

- Describe your plans for funding the project.
- **Remember, funding from another federal source is *not* allowed**.
- You may include startup funds, industry grants, foundation grants, or other non-federal sources that directly support this project.

11. References

Include all literature citations/references used within the proposal.

**Please let me know if you need alternative formatting for this document.*