2026 Multistate Research Proposal Guide

Key Requirements

- Joining a multistate project is a two-phase process utilizing separate online systems.
- Joining a multistate research project does not negate the Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station (VAES) requirement for new faculty to have an *active* Hatch project during the first five years of service at Virginia Tech.
- Faculty may have both a Hatch and Multistate project simultaneously.
- **Coordinating Committees** (CC) are information exchange groups and do not fulfill the VAES requirements of a multistate **research** project.
- It is acceptable to participate in a Coordinating Committee exchange group, *in addition to* active research projects.
- Projects reflecting "TEMP" are pending regional approval and remain in temporary status until that review is finalized.
    - "TEMP" projects may remain in pending status for several months and do not meet the requirement of having an "active" research project.
    - **Phase I** (Appendix E) may be completed while a project is in TEMP status; however, **Phase II** cannot be completed until the project is fully approved.

- **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**.
- Will the research have human or animal subjects?
- **IRB or IACUC approval letters must be on file with the VAES office before final proposal documents are submitted in Phase II**. If the proposal contains human or animal subjects, please begin the protocol approval process early. **This applies to exempt survey research, too.*
- Proposals are public and should not include proprietary data.
- **Avoid including figures or tables, as the NIFA Reporting System (NRS) is a .csv-type format and will not render figures or tables correctly.**

Two-Phase Process

Phase I – Appendix E

1. Create an account in the National Information Management Support System (NIMSS).
2. Request to join the multistate project by completing Appendix E in NIMSS.
3. Appendix E must be submitted and approved before moving to Phase II.
4. Phase I may be completed while the project is in TEMP status; however, Phase II cannot be completed until USDA NIFA officially approves the regional project and removes TEMP status.

Phase II – Proposal Submission

1. After Appendix E is approved, VAES will provide the PD with a multistate proposal template.
2. All proposals are reviewed by the VAES office prior to USDA submission.
3. Proposals are submitted via the NIFA Reporting System (NRS).
4. NRS is the NIFA reporting portal for all capacity-funded projects.

APPROVAL OF APPENDIX E AUTHORIZES PARTICIPATION; HOWEVER, THE PD DOES NOT HAVE AN ACTIVE PROJECT UNTIL BOTH PHASES ARE COMPLETED.

NIMSS Account Creation Instructions

Follow the steps below to create an account in NIMSS.

1. Go to the National Information Management Support System (NIMSS) website.
2. On the right side, select "**New User?**"
3. Complete the New User information on the following screen.
    a. **IMPORTANT**:
        i. **Station**: Virginia – Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VA Tech): AES
        ii. **Region**: South

Using keywords to search for a project

If searching for a project using keywords, follow the steps below.

1. Log in to the NIMSS website.
2. On the landing page, scroll down to the center bottom section.
3. Under "**Search Projects & Project Proposals**", enter a keyword and select "**Search**". (e.g., *watershed*)
4. The next page will list all projects that include the keyword.
5. It is important to select a project that is active and will remain active for at least the next year.
6. Filters can be helpful when searching for multistate projects by region or status.
    a. **IMPORTANT**:
        i. The list will reflect active, pending (TEMP), and expired projects.
        ii. Make sure to select a project with dates that are currently active or will be active in the near future.
        iii. Selecting "**active**" from the filter drop-down will not display TEMP or pending projects.
7. Select "**View**" on the right side of the screen to visit a specific project page and learn more about the multistate effort.

Things to consider

Before beginning Appendix E, consider the following:

- Which project activity number will you join? (e.g., NE-1776 or NE_TEMP1948)
- Which multistate research objective(s) will your research support have based on work conducted at Virginia Tech?
- Are any other Virginia Tech faculty already involved in the project you plan to join?

Phase I – Appendix E Instructions

1. Log in to the NIMSS website.
2. In the center of the screen, under Action Items:
   - Select "**Join a Project (Participation Form/Appendix E).**"
   - Enter the Project Number (e.g., NE1776 or NE_TEMP1948)
   - Enter your username.
     - If you have already created an account, your name should appear in the pre-populated list as you begin typing.
   - If you do not have an account, select "**Submit user creation request**" and enter:
     - **Station Name**: Virginia – Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VA Tech)
     - **Station Address**:104 Hutcheson Hall, Blacksburg, VA 24061
3. **Official Representative**:
   - There is only one Virginia Tech official representative per multistate.
   - If no other VT faculty members are listed as participants, please select the box to serve as the official representative.
   - If another VT faculty member is already listed, they should serve as the official representative.
4. **Objectives**:
   - At least one objective must be selected.
   - Select objective(s) based on the research you will conduct at Virginia Tech to support the greater multistate effort.
5. **Research**:
   - Participants must enter a code under Knowledge Area (KA), Subject of Investigation (SOI), and Field of Science (FOS).
   - Select "**Find CRIS Code**" and choose from the pre-populated codes.
   - Each box (KA, SOI, and FOS) must contain a code.
6. **Research Commitments**:
   - The Project Director (PD) enters time commitment percentages.
   - A Scientist Year (SY) entry is required for the PD.
   - **Scientist Years (SY)** reflects time for:
     - Professor
     - Associate Professor
     - Assistant Professor
     - Research Scientist

- **Professional Years (PY)** reflects time for:
    - Department Head
    - Statistician
    - Graduate Student
    - Postdoc
    - Analyst
- **Technical Years (TY)** reflects time for:
    - Technician
    - Lab Assistant
    - Machinist
- If you are unsure about this entry, please enter **00.10**.

7. **Extension**:
    - This section is only for faculty with an extension appointment.
    - **If you do not hold an extension appointment, leave this section blank**.
    - If you do hold an extension appointment, select a KA code and enter the FTE for the time you will commit to extension activities on the project.
    - If you are unsure about this entry, please enter **00.10**.
8. **Submit**:
    - Once all entries are completed, select "**Submit**".
9. **VAES Approval**:
    - All Appendix E requests are reviewed and approved by the VAES office.

Phase II – Proposal Development and Submission

1. After VAES approval of Appendix E, a brief proposal must be developed outlining the research you will conduct as the Virginia Tech Project Director (PD).
    a. One way to think of this proposal is that the multistate project functions like a large prime award, and your individual proposal is like a subcontractor supporting the broader effort.
2. The objectives in the Virginia Tech multistate proposal must match the objectives in the approved Appendix E.
3. Use the template on the following pages and develop the proposal in a Microsoft Word document.
4. Email your proposal to **Laura Rasnick (Lrasnick@vt.edu)**.
5. Laura Rasnick will review and provide comments and suggested updates.
6. Once the proposal is approved internally, the Project Director (PD) will enter the proposal into the NIFA Reporting System (NRS).

7. Laura Rasnick will conduct a final review and submit the proposal on behalf of the PD.
8. **USDA NIFA must approve each Virginia Tech proposal in NRS before the project can be considered active and meet the requirements for an active multistate research project**.

NRS Peculiarities:

- NRS is a separate system from NIMSS.
- NRS requires creation of an account using your **Virginia Tech email address** and Login.gov for eAuthentication.
- Annual reports/results must be entered in NRM by **December 10** each year.
- NRS and NIMSS do not communicate with each other.
- It is recommended that you enter results in NRS first, then create a PDF of the report to share with the larger multistate group.

Multistate Proposal Template

IMPORTANT:

If your research has human or animal subjects, please begin your protocols early. NIFA requires that the corresponding IRB or IACUC approval letters be on file with the VAES office before submission.

Project Director Name:

Multistate Project Number:

Project Title:

Non-Technical Summary:

- The Non-Technical Summary is limited to **9,500 characters**, including spaces.
- Use lay terms to describe the following (create sub-header for each section)
- **Do not copy and paste language directly from NIMSS**.
    - **Issue**:
        - Describe the issue and why it is important.
        - Describe how this research aligns with current USDA NIFA Priorities.
    - **Objectives**:
        - List the multistate objective(s) and your goals or specific aims for the project.
    - **Target Audiences**:
        - Identify the target audience(s) and explain how they will benefit or have the potential to benefit from your research.
    - **Outcomes**:
        - Describe how your research activities will lead to the outcomes outlined in the objectives.

Methodology:

- The Methodology section is limited to **9,500 characters**, including spaces.
- Clearly reflect objectives in the order listed above.
- Describe how the project will be conducted, emphasizing the general scientific methods and any unique approaches or departures from standard methods.