

2015 University of Tennessee and Tennessee State University Combined Research and Extension Plan of Work Review

Status: Accepted

Date Accepted: 05/13/2014

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State: Tennessee

Institution(s):

- University of Tennessee
- Tennessee State University

Type of Report (Check all that apply)

- 1862 Research
- 1862 Extension
- 1890 Research
- 1890 Extension
- Tuskegee Research
- Tuskegee Extension

NPL Reviewers:

- Eric Norland

Plan Overview Section (Required):

Acceptable		
YES	NO	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Executive summary. (Suggested in Guidance)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Total FTEs are included for each appropriate institution of the plan

Comments:

The UT-TSU Combined Research and Extension POW begins with a good overview of the two institutions and whom they serve and the importance of agriculture and associated industries to the economy of Tennessee and the livelihoods of Tennesseans: \$60 billion and 300,000 Tennesseans represent significant impacts and contributions. Special mention is made of the new Beef and Forage Center at UT that integrates research and extension work to support the state's beef cattle producers. This overview is beneficial to all POW readers in framing the combined programs of UT and TSU.

The projections for professional FTE's and Scientist-Years show that the numbers are likely to be level through 2019. It was interesting to note that the number of research scientist-years are nearly identical for both institutions; however, there are more extension FTE's per scientist-year at UT than at TSU. This difference could be explained in the next POW update. Are the "service areas (counties)" for both institutions the same or different?

Merit/Program Review Process Section (Required):

Acceptable		
YES	NO	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	At least one process has been checked (including other) (required)

Comments:

UT and TSU have utilized an innovative process for the merit review process of its programs. First, the criteria for a merit review were submitted to an out-of-state panel of Extension administrators, program leaders, and scholars. Upon confirming that the criteria were fair, reliable, and consistent with the current research-base and overall model for a merit review, UT and TSU pursued a coordinated merit review process for all programs. This involves the development of program or research proposals, reviews by program leaders and department head, with their input considered by the State Action Agenda Review Team which accepts, rejects, or accepts pending changes the proposal. Single-state Hatch projects are reviewed for merit and scientific soundness at several steps along the way toward being approved for funding. Multi-state projects are vetted in much the same way but are reviewed by a regional review team. This Reviewer finds the review of criteria to be innovative and sound.

Evaluation of the Success of Multi and Joint Activities Section (Required):

Acceptable		
YES	NO	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(1) How will the planned programs address the critical issues of strategic importance, including those identified by the stakeholders?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(2) How will the planned programs address the needs of under-served and under-represented populations of the State(s)?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(3) How will the planned programs describe the expected outcomes and impacts? and
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(4) How will the planned programs result in improved program effectiveness and/or efficiency?

Comments:

UT and TSU utilize several approaches to ensure that planned programs address the critical issues of their stakeholders. They have collected data from meetings, on-line surveys and one-on-one conversations with leading voices in agriculture and natural resources to ensure that the priorities are in line with the needs. Tennesseans are faced with changing trends in land use, demographics, and environmental conditions that necessitate continual monitoring of priorities to ensure they are relevant. Both Tennessee land-grant universitie have long a long history and established record of ensuring that planned programs address the most urgent needs.

UT and TSU are especially cognizant of the needs of under-served and under-represented populations. Several programs, including Profitable Agriculture, Family Economics, Childhood Obesity, and Living Well with Chronic Conditions are examples of extension programs that address the needs of these audiences. Research programs are also focused on indentifying and addressing needs of under-served and -represented populations.

To ensure that planned programs achieved the expected outcomes and impacts, TSU and UT have identified the indicators that should be measured in order to determine program effectiveness. This has been done at the beginning of programs to ensure that they are "driving" to the desired "destination."

The program review process will ensure that resources are allocated to high priority programs which in turn ensures that the programs result in improved effectiveness and efficiency.

Stakeholder Input Process Section (Required):

Acceptable		
YES	NO	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(a) Actions taken to seek stakeholder input that encourages their participation (Required)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(b) Method used to identify groups and individuals (Required)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(c) Method used for collecting stakeholder input (Required)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(d) A statement of how collected input will be considered (Required)

Comments:

Actions to seek stakeholder input that encourages their participation - UT and TSU pursue multiple data collection methods for the Plan of Work update: Extension personnel are surveyed; Tennesseans attended strategic planning meetings across the state and completed on-line surveys, and focus groups were held with leaders of state agencies. Also, discipline-specific stakeholder input and representation is included in all processes.

Methods to identify stakehodlers - TSU and UT utilize several methods to identify individuals and groups, including advisory committees, listening sessions, needs assessments, and use surveys. Of particular note are the research advisory committees and advocacy groups that are responsible for identifying additional individuals and groups that need to be included.

Methods for collecting stakeholder input - UT and TSU employ several approaches to collecting input. These include several hundred advisory committee meetings and focus groups and more than a thousand interviews with key informants. Of note is the instruction that Extension agents and specialists received in selecting needs assessment strategies for different clientele groups.

How collected input is considered - Finally, the input that is received is utilized in the budget process, identification of emerging issues, redirection of programs, and finally hiring the necessary staff to address the issues. The POW describes several specific programs that were modified based on stakeholder input. TSU scientists are involved so closely with stakeholders that there is almost constant feedback about the utility and practicality of the research that is being conducted.

Planned Programs Section (Required):

Acceptable		
YES	NO	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Uses Appropriate Logic Model Elements
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Appropriate Knowledge Areas
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Appropriate Outputs for each Program
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Appropriate Outcomes for each Program

Comments:

The TSU-UT combined plan of work describes 13 planned programs with FTEs allocated at each institution for both research and extension. The integration of research and extension is evident throughout the Planned Programs section. Each program describes in words the various elements in the logic model for each particular planned program: Summary, Program Existence and Duration, Funding Sources to be Utilized, External Factors, Planned Evaluation Summaries, Outputs, Outcomes, and External Factors Which May affect Outcomes. The plan is thorough and comprehensive and follows the logic model format.

The Plan of Work describes 157 Outcomes that will be measured. This is a significant undertaking and this reviewer presumes that sufficient program evaluation resources (staff, funding, professional development opportunities for state and field staff) are available for developing evaluation plans for each of the 157 outcomes.

In a few cases it is unclear to the reviewer what will be measured to reflect the outcome. For example:

- Program #4 - Childhood Obesity - Outcome #10 - Public acceptance of soy fiber fortified breads for increased fiber consumption. What is/are the indicators that will represent "public acceptance"?
- Program #5 - Economic Infrastructure and Commerce - Outcome #11 - Assess.... This is the name of an action, assess. What is the indicator that will be measured? Completion of an assessment? or something else;
- Program #8 - Food Safety - Outcome #13 - Prevent (rather than respond to) to food-borne illness. What will be measured for this outcome?

This reviewer recommends that the Program Evaluators and the Planned Program Leads review the outcomes to ensure/clarify what is being measured for the various outcomes. Most of the 157 have measures that are identified; there are a few that would benefit from another look.

General Recommendations:

Congratulations on your efforts to submit a Combined UT-TSU Research and Extension Plan of Work. I can appreciate that this took a lot of effort and re-tooling of planning processes. The result, however, is a very fine plan of work. It appears that it will be addressing the pressing needs of Tennesseans both in terms of new knowledge from research efforts as well as the extension programs that will help stakeholders use the new information.

There are no major deficiencies or significant recommendations. This reviewer encourages the development of evaluation plans for each of the outcomes. The plans for some may be more elaborate and resource-intensive than others. If that is the case and if it is more practical given available resources, you might be more selective in the number and kinds of outcomes that you plan to report on. Several planned programs have 14-18 outcomes. The aspiration to report on 157 is commendable; the reality may need to be tempered with available resources.

This is a fine plan and is ACCEPTED as submitted.

We hereby recommend NIFA acceptance of this Plan of Work.

Eric Norland /s/ _____

NPL Signature

05/12/2014 _____

Date