

2017 University of Tennessee and Tennessee State University Combined Research and Extension Plan of Work Review

Status: Accepted

Date Accepted: 05/31/2016

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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:

University of Tennessee and Tennessee State University (UT &TSU) have submitted a combined research and extension plan of work in which the work of both institutions is presented. Together, they plan and deliver effective and relevant research and extension programs in all 95 counties of the state that meet the needs of 6.4 million Tennesseans.

The Plan of Work (POW) is based on a significant strategic planning effort in 2010 to map the directions of UT &TSU programs for the following ten years. The program planning process was guided by a diverse team of employees from both institutions from across the state. This strategic planning process informed the development of the 2017-2021 Plan of Work that is the subject of this review.

The importance of the research and extension programs of UT & TSU are evident given the fact that the agriculture and natural resource sectors account for more than a \$60 billion input to the state's economy. The summary of the plan provides a good overview of the issues and program areas which UT & TSU research and extension programs will focus. These include: nursery production, agronomic crop varieties, reproductive health of livestock, biomass production and processing; hardwood lumber processing, no-till agriculture, soil erosion, food safety; and methods to minimize water pollution and predict disease patterns in the field.

This plan includes information about stakeholder input, review processes for research and extension programs, and the structure and content of programs that are planned.

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:

The merit review processes used by UT & TSU are described and fully acceptable. All extension programs in Tennessee funded in whole or part by Federal funds require a merit review process. To establish the process, criteria for the merit reviews were developed and then submitted to an out-of-state panel for review. The criteria were judged to be fair and comprehensive and thus are being used by both institutions in a coordinated merit review process. Planned programs, written as "State Action Agendas," are developed by state Extension specialists. These action agendas, each of which includes a program logic model, are reviewed by department heads, program leaders and program coordinators. This input is then forwarded to a State Action Agenda Review Team which approves, conditionally approves, or rejects the agenda.

All proposed single-state research projects that are funded through the Hatch Act undergo a rigorous review process for merit and scientific soundness. Multi-state, Hatch-funded projects are reviewed by a multi-state team coordinated by the project Administrative Advisor.

These review processes ensure that programs and projects are based on the existing or expanding areas of science, all of which undergirds the credibility of the work of UT & TSU.

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

Acceptable		
YES	NO	

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:

The planned programs will address the critical issues as they are identified from data collected for the Tennessee Extension Strategic Plan. Six major trends are projected to shape the future of the research and extension programs and are fully described in this section of the POW.

The planned programs will address the needs of under-served and under-represented audiences in Tennessee. Each of the themes mentioned above are considered in the context of under-served and -represented audiences and programs are tailored to meet their needs.

The planned programs in this POW will yield outcomes and impacts due to the thoughtful and rigorous of developing and reviewing the programs as described in the previous section of this review.

The planned programs will result in improved effectiveness and/or impact because the institutions have devised and implemented program reviews of state action agendas before they are implemented to ensure that they are coordinated with local needs, that state-level subject matter expertise exists for the priority programs, that effective teaching techniques are used, and that expert information technology staff are available to support innovative program delivery techniques.

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:

UT & TSU have strong and long-standing efforts to identify and encourage stakeholder involvement, collect input from them and actually use it. Specifically:

ACTIONS TO SEEK STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION THAT ENCOURAGES PARTICIPATION - UT & TSU employ multiple approaches to collecting data from stakeholders. These include surveying the Extension Agents; planning and conducting 10 area meetings for strategic planning input; on-line surveys, and focus groups, UT AgResearch relies on input from the seven research departments and their departmental advisory committees. Additionally, UT AgResearch has 10 Research and Education Centers across the state, and each has an advisory/advocacy committee. TSU research utilizes stakeholder input during the hiring process of new scientists. TSU also utilizes a wide range of agricultural organizations and commodity groups where they solicit input.

IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS - TSU & UT employ their extensive networks of individuals, advocacy groups, and advisory committees to identify additional individuals and organizations. This is one of the responsibilities of the UT AgResearch committees. As in previous years, the institutions do not rely on single strategies but are constantly modifying and expanding their approaches to identifying individuals and groups,

METHODS FOR COLLECTING INPUT - TSU & UT provide instruction and training for agents and specialists in selecting strategies for collecting input. Needs assessments are one of the formal ways in which input is collected. Face-to-face and survey instruments are the primary strategies used.

HOW INPUT IS CONSIDERED? - TSU and UT's use of stakeholder input is straightforward. It is used to improve existing programs, determine what new programs and research is needed, recommend priorities when resources are constrained, and for budgeting. Several programs are named in which stakeholder input was considered for program improvement purposes. TSU puts high importance on extensive stakeholder input to determine what extension agent and specialist positions are needed for programs that are of high importance to their clientele.

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:

University of Tennessee and Tennessee State University, combined, have a total of 13 planned programs: eight are integrated research-extension programs; four are Extension only, and one is research only. Across the planned programs there are 162 outcomes that will be measured. All planned programs have thorough descriptions of the situations and rationale for the program. While many of the planned programs are in subjects outside the expertise of the reviewer, it appears that Extension educators and specialists have a thorough understanding of the issues, opportunities, and needs in their specialties. The overall program goals are well-written and concise. The situation, inputs, outputs, and outcomes reflect a thorough understanding of the "what is" and "what could/should be", and the educational interventions that should result in narrowing or closing the gap. In other words, the logic models are, indeed, logical. No deficiencies are noted in the planned programs.

General Recommendations:

The extension and research programs of University of Tennessee and Tennessee State University have strong stakeholder support and are well integrated within each institution's research-extension frameworks as well as well-integrated between the two institutions. The plan of work, in its entirety, demonstrates the complete and holistic understanding of what is needed to enhance the lives of Tennesseans, improve the vitality of the state's communities, and sustain the natural resources that provide the inputs for the production of food and fiber. The plan of work is ambitious in its goals and far-reaching in its possibilities. The pursuit of all that is in the plan is a critical and worthwhile investment of the federal funds that are provided to these two institutions in a manner that leaves the program direction and priority-setting to the discretion of the institutions and their stakeholders who know best what is needed for their state. As such this plan demonstrates the criticality of capacity funds that enable the institutions to pursue their missions in service to all Tennesseans. This plan is completely acceptable is approved as submitted. No changes are needed. This reviewer appreciates all of the effort that goes into the planning process and looks forward to reading about the results and impacts that result from the implementation of this five-year Plan of Work. Best wishes to all administrators, faculty, and staff for all that you are and will undertake over the course of the next five years.

We hereby recommend NIFA acceptance of this Plan of Work.

Eric Norland /s/

NPL Signature

05/26/2016

Date