

**University of Connecticut**

**College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources**

**The Storrs Agricultural Experiment Station (SAES)  
Competitive Capacity Grants Program**

**Call for Proposals: FY 2025 Competitive Capacity Grants**

**Guidelines for Proposal Development and Submission**

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## PART I – Purpose and Types of Capacity Grants

USDA-NIFA (National Institute of Food and Agriculture) supports research and extension activities at land-grant institutions through federal block grants that are awarded to land-grant university colleges of agriculture and related sciences on the basis of statutory, formulas based on agricultural production and rural population. Legislative mandates for capacity grant funding include the Hatch Act of 1887, McIntire-Stennis Act of 1962 and the Animal Health and Disease Research Program. Receipt of federal capacity funds is contingent on a 1:1 match by the state, which CAHNR accomplishes through the state funding provided for support of faculty positions that carry a research appointment. These funds are administered through the state agricultural experiment stations, the Cooperative Extension System, and Cooperative Forestry Programs located at land-grant universities across the nation. The four research funding programs for 1862 land-grant universities are Hatch, Hatch Multistate Research (a subset of Hatch), McIntire-Stennis, and Animal Health and Disease.

Hatch and Hatch/Multistate: As per USDA, Hatch activities broadly include research on all aspects of agriculture, including soil and water conservation and use; plant and animal production, protection, and health; processing, distribution, safety, marketing, and utilization of food and agricultural products; forestry, including range management and range products; multiple use of forest rangelands, and urban forestry; aquaculture; home economics and family life; human nutrition; rural and community development; sustainable agriculture; molecular biology; and biotechnology. Research may be conducted on problems of local, state, regional, or national concern. Hatch multistate activities involve research on a common theme conducted by institutions in multiple states. USDA funds support studies of human health as they relate to community development and to the science of human nutrition.

McIntire-Stennis: As per USDA, these funds support forest **research** related to reforestation and management of land for the production of crops of timber and other related products of the forest, management of forest and related watershed lands to improve conditions of water flow and to protect resources against floods and erosion, management of forest and related rangeland for production of forage for domestic livestock and game and improvement of food and habitat for wildlife, management of forest lands for outdoor recreation, protection of forest land and resources against fire, insects, diseases, or other destructive agents, utilization of wood and other forest products, development of sound policies for the management of forest lands and the harvesting and marketing of forest products, and such other studies as may be necessary to obtain the fullest and most effective use of forest resources.

Animal Health and Disease: As per USDA, the purpose of this funding is to increase animal health and disease research activities at accredited public or private veterinary schools or colleges, or state agricultural experiment stations, which conduct animal health and disease research.

## **Priorities for Capacity Grant Funding**

The College's Storrs Agricultural Experiment Station (SAES) Competitive Capacity Grant funding priorities are aligned with NIFA priorities, and all grants must address one or more of the priorities for U.S. agriculture included in the Farm Bill. These priorities change but presently include:

1. Plant health and production and plant products
2. Animal health and production and animal products
3. Food safety, nutrition, and health
4. Bioenergy, natural resources, and environment
5. Agriculture systems and technology, and
6. Agriculture economics and rural communities.

In addition, Capacity Grant projects are expected to address one or more of the strategic priorities outlined in the CAHNR Strategic Vision (<https://cahnr.uconn.edu/visionandvalues/>).

These strategic priorities include:

1. Ensuring a vibrant and sustainable agricultural industry and food supply
2. Enhancing health and well-being locally, nationally, and globally
3. Advancing adaptation and resilience in a changing climate, and
4. Fostering sustainable landscapes across urban-rural interfaces.

The intent of the USDA capacity fund grants that the College applies for and receives is to serve the needs of the federal and state partnership while being consistent with USDA priorities. As such, research should address state and national needs.

## **PART II – CAHNR Award Information**

### **Available Funding**

In FY 2025, the SAES anticipates funding approximately 26 capacity grant projects through a competitive process, including approximately 18 Hatch projects, 5 Hatch Multi-state projects, and 3 McIntire-Stennis projects. No integrated McIntire-Stennis projects will be funded. Information regarding integrated projects can be found at <https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/integrated-programs-application-information>.

Hatch/Hatch Multistate and McIntire-Stennis projects will be funded not to exceed \$20,000/year for up to a maximum of 3 years and are not renewable. Integrated projects will be funded not to exceed \$30,000/year for up to a maximum of 3 years and are not

renewable. Integrated projects must include at least one-third of the budget for extension activities. No more than \$2,500 from the extension budget (Smith-Lever funds) can be allocated for student support and may not be used to support tuition. Any student funded by Smith-Lever must be supervised by a faculty member with an Extension appointment for their Extension-related work. All projects must support a minimum of one 25% (10 hours, academic year) graduate student during each year of funding. Capacity funds can be used to support only graduate students who have matriculated as majors in CAHNR Departments.

The funding cycle for all capacity grants is based on the federal fiscal year of October 1 through September 30. No cost extension of projects may be approved only under unforeseen circumstances. A request for a no-cost extension must include the reason and the objectives to be accomplished during the extension year. Funding amount and duration are subject to change, as necessitated by future changes in state and federal budgets.

### **PART III – Eligibility**

The SAES capacity grants are available to all CAHNR tenure-track faculty, full-time extension professionals, and in-residence faculty who actively mentor graduate students and seek extramural grants. Proposals will be accepted only from these eligible faculty. Although faculty members from other colleges at UConn and universities may serve as collaborators/Co-PIs on a project, they are not eligible to receive any SAES funds. A clear justification for the role of an investigator from outside UConn must be included in the project proposal. A faculty member can serve as the principal investigator on no more than one active capacity grant at a time, but there is no limit to the number of grants for which s/he can be listed as a Co-PI or a member of a multi-state project.

### **IV – Proposal and Submission Information**

#### **A. Letter of Intent**

Applicants are required to submit a “letter of Intent to submit an application” no later than 5 pm on 10/02/2023. The letter of intent must be emailed in portable document format (PDF) to [eva.wiggins@uconn.edu](mailto:eva.wiggins@uconn.edu). It will be used to determine if the objective(s) of the application is line with the NIFA priority areas and the potential reviewer workload. (Note: A faculty member must not submit more than one letter of intent as the PI in a given fiscal year).

The letter of intent must not exceed one page, and must contain the following:

- 1) a descriptive title of the proposal,
- 2) the name, professional title, department, and e-mail address of the principal

- investigator (PI) and name, professional title, department, and institution of Co-PI and collaborating investigators (if applicable),
- 3) the capacity grant type (Hatch/Hatch Multistate, McIntire-Stennis, Animal Health,), and duration of proposed project,
  - 4) if the capacity grant type is a Hatch Multistate project, indicate the NIMSS project number(<https://www.nimss.org/>) Instructions on joining a multi-state project can be found at (<http://cahnr.uconn.edu/research/SAES/index.php>)
  - 5) the NIFA priority area that is most closely addressed in the proposal
  - 6) the CAHNR strategic priority addressed in the proposal
  - 7) brief description of the proposal objective(s), and
  - 8) signature of the department head.

## **B. Proposal Submission Deadline**

Only electronic applications will be accepted. The proposals must be emailed in portable document format ( PDF) to [eva.wiggins@uconn.edu](mailto:eva.wiggins@uconn.edu) no later than 5 pm on 11/13/2023. Proposals received after the deadline will not be considered.

## **C. Project Proposal Format**

Format:

- Margins - 1 inch: top, bottom, left, and right.
- Minimum font size - 12 point.
- Single- or double-spaced, single-sided 8.5 x 11-inch pages.
- Pages should be numbered.

## **D. Proposal Content:**

Storrs Agricultural Experiment Station (SAES) Capacity Grant Proposal Cover Page (Note. – signatures are needed on the cover page). The cover page file can be found at <http://cahnr.uconn.edu/research/SAES/index.php>

- 1) Project Summary/Abstract –The Project Summary is limited to 250 words. The summary should be non-technical and briefly describe the following: (a) the issue and why it is important, (b) your goal and objectives, (c) the target audience and how they will benefit, and (d) how your activities lead to the outcomes described in the goal statement or objectives.
- 2) Project Narrative (Project Description) – limited to 6 pages for research proposals, and 8 pages for integrated proposals. This page limit applies only for the following sections a through d. Proposals that exceed the page limit will be returned without review.
  - a) Introduction and Literature Review. The introduction should contain a clear statement of the research question/problem and long-term goal(s) of the proposed

project. Summarize the body of knowledge or past activities that substantiate the need for the proposed project. All works cited should be referenced. Describe ongoing or recently completed work related to the proposed project, including the work of key project personnel. Include preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed project. In integrated proposals, critical stakeholder needs addressed by the proposal should be included.

- b) Rationale and Significance. Include the rationale behind the proposed project, the relationship of the project objectives to at least one of the NIFA and CAHNR priority areas (indicated on page 3), the potential long-term impact on improvement in and sustainability of U.S. agriculture and food systems, and the potential of this project to enhance future extramural grant applications. Use this section to make a compelling case for why your project should be funded.
  - c) Approach. Include a statement of objectives or specific aims of the proposed project. In addition, a description of the proposed activities and the sequence in which the activities are to be performed, methods to be used in carrying out the proposed project, including the feasibility of the methods, pitfalls, and considerations of alternative methods should be included here. In integrated proposals, stakeholder involvement in problem identification should be described and educational activities and implementation timeline must be clearly defined.
  - d) Data analysis and outcomes. Expected outcomes, means by which results will be analyzed and interpreted, and a timeline of the proposed project should be included here. Integrated proposals must include educational outcomes based on the statewide evaluation indicators. Inclusion of a [logic model](#) is expected and should account for one of the additional two pages allowed for integrated proposals.
- 3) References Cited – No Page Limit. All work cited in the text, including that of key personnel, should be referenced in this section. The References Cited page is not included in the page limit.
  - 4) Role of Key Personnel – One Page Limit and is not included in the project narrative page limit. Clearly describe the roles and responsibilities of the PI and Co-PIs. Each PI is expected to commit not less than 10% of his/her time towards the project. Co-PI's are expected to commit not less than 10% of his/her time towards the project.
  - 5) Facilities & Equipment – One Page Limit and is not included in the project narrative page limit. Describe available equipment. Items of nonexpendable equipment and facilities necessary to conduct and successfully complete the proposed project should be listed.
  - 6) Budget. Applications must contain a detailed budget and budget justification for each budget period for the entire duration of the proposed project. Annual and cumulative

budgets are required. No faculty salary or equipment purchases are allowed. Allowable costs include:

- a) A graduate research assistantship. All projects must support a minimum of one 25% (10 hours, academic year) graduate student during each year of funding. Capacity funds can be used to support only graduate students who have matriculated as majors in CAHNR Departments.
  - b) Summer support for a graduate student directly working on the project
  - c) Materials and Supplies
  - d) Travel directly relevant to proposed effort.
  - e) Publication charges of manuscripts generated from the capacity grant project.
  - f) Integrated project budgets must dedicate one-third of the total budget for extension objectives. No more than \$2,500 from the extension budget (Smith-Lever funds) can be allocated for student support.
- 7) Biographical sketch – Provide a biographical sketch for each investigator, limited to two pages in length excluding the publications list. The publications list shall include a chronological list of all publications in refereed journals during the past four years, and any other relevant manuscripts directly pertinent to the proposed project.
  - 8) Current and Pending Support Form for PI and Co-PIs.
  - 9) Conflict of Interest List for PI and Co-PIs – Provide an alphabetical list of people who have been a thesis, dissertation or postdoctoral advisee/advisor, co-author on a publication within the past 3 years, and a collaborator/Co-PI on a project within the past 3 years.
  - 10) Collaboration – Evidence such as letter(s) of support from collaborators providing services or materials critical to the proposed project should be provided. If a collaborator is playing an active role in the project, biographical sketch, current and pending support, and conflict of interest list should be included for the collaborator.
  - 11) Accomplishments from the previous capacity funded project awarded as PI. Provide the project CONS#, project title, extramural grants submitted and awarded, journal manuscripts and conference presentations generated from this project. Proposals must also include justification of how the proposed project will help extramural grant applications in relation to specific funding sources and potential projects. Also indicate how proposed project will enable PIs to seek additional external funding, including specific programs and funding agencies that will be targeted for future funding.
  - 12) No additional materials, appendices, or supplementary documentation will be accepted.

## Part V – Proposal Review and Evaluation

- A. Each proposal will be evaluated in a two-stage process. First, each proposal will be screened to ensure that it meets the administrative requirements indicated in this document. Applications that do not meet the guidelines will be returned to the applicant without review. Second, a review panel will evaluate proposals for scientific/technical content.
  
- B. Review Panel Selection and Evaluation Process: When possible, the review panel will consist of faculty members from the nine departments of CAHNR. Besides the review panel, written comments may be solicited from ad hoc reviewers. The Review Panel will evaluate, discuss, rank, and make recommendations for funding.
  
- C. Evaluation Criteria: The review panel and ad hoc reviewers will be asked to consider the following factors for reviewing proposals.
  - 1) Overall scientific merit of the application, including novelty, uniqueness, and originality, conceptual adequacy of the hypothesis, research question, or problem(s) to be addressed, clarity and delineation of objectives, adequacy of the description of the undertaking and suitability and feasibility of methodology, and probability of success of project.
  - 2) Qualifications of proposed project personnel. Research productivity and quality as measured by successful graduate student mentoring, peer-reviewed publications in high-quality professional journals, experience, track record, and training. Progress indicated in the annual report and productivity from previous funding will also be considered.
  - 3) Relevance of the project to U.S. and/or Connecticut agriculture, and a clear justification of how the proposed project is aligned with national agricultural, environmental, natural resources, food security, bioenergy, food safety, or childhood obesity research priorities as well as CAHNR strategic priorities.
  - 4) Leveraging that includes efforts and success for extramural funding, and compliance with federal reporting requirements. Success and the level of success in extramural funding from all sources will be considered for continued SAES funding. Timely and satisfactory reports as required by federal laws or regulations are required for continued SAES funding.
  - 5) Integrated proposals must include faculty with research appointments and extension appointments. The extension and research activities must be clearly related to each other, address a significant need for a target audience, and demonstrate the strong likelihood of accomplishing the projected educational outcomes.
  
- D. Funding Decisions: Based on the aforementioned criteria, the review panel will rank all the proposals into categories of Must Fund/High Priority for funding, Could Fund/Medium Priority for funding, and Do Not Fund/Low Priority for funding, and submit the recommendations to the Associate Dean/Director for SAES; integrated proposal recommendations will also be sent to the Associate Dean for Extension.



Funding decisions will be made according to the availability of funds based on the rankings and recommendations of the Review Panel. Final funding decisions will be approved by the Dean/Director of SAES and may seek Department Head input. A panel summary, along with reviews, will be sent to the lead PI following completion of the review.

## Part VI – Project Approval and Release of Funds

- A. Approval for research with animals, human subjects, hazardous materials (including biological agents and toxins), and recombinant DNA is required before project funds can be used.
- B. Once proposals are recommended for funding by the SAES Director, the PI must complete a Project Initiation report, using the USDA online reporting system, NIFA Reporting System (NRS). <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/data/nifa-reporting-system>  
The Project Initiation should be submitted to NIFA before June 30, 2024 to allow time for NIFA review and approval. **No funds can be allocated to the project before NIFA approval.**
- C. Once a Multistate project proposal is recommended for funding by the SAES Director, the PI must complete and submit an Appendix E in the National Information Management and Support System (NIMSS; <http://nimss.org>) to join a multistate project.
- D. Recipients of capacity grant funding are required to acknowledge SAES and NIFA support in their publications and presentations.

## Capacity Grant Checklist

When submitting your full proposal, make sure to include the following items:

- Project summary/abstract
- Project narrative
  - Introduction and literature review
  - Rationale and significance
  - Approach
  - Data analysis and outcomes
- References cited
- Facilities and equipment
- Budget (draft enclosed)
- Biographical sketch
- Current and pending support form
- Conflict of interest
- Collaboration/support letters

- Accomplishments from previous capacity funded projects
- Integrated proposals only: Logic model

**Best practices for writing your grant proposal:**

- Ensure that your proposed timeline is appropriate for the scope of the project.
- Have a budget that is suitable for the proposed objectives.
- Create a clearly defined objective that is not open ended.
- Call attention to the novelty or uniqueness of the project.
- What is the anticipated impact of the project.
- Use a well-defined approach.
- Ensure that there is little to no overlap with prior capacity grants.
- Include a discussion of ‘next steps’ in terms of research, implementation and future extramural funding.
- Have a reporting on outcomes and impact from previous capacity grant(s).
- Before you submit your proposal, check it to ensure that your writing is clear and free of spelling and grammar errors.

**Part VII – Timetable**

October 2, 2023	Letter of intent due by 5 PM to <a href="mailto:eva.wiggins@uconn.edu">eva.wiggins@uconn.edu</a>
November 13, 2023	Full proposals due by 5 PM to <a href="mailto:eva.wiggins@uconn.edu">eva.wiggins@uconn.edu</a>
November 13, 2023 – February 9, 2024	Proposal Review and recommendation of projects for funding
February 16, 2024	SAES Director will finalize and approve funding decisions; final decisions will be mailed to PIs
June 30, 2024	Project Initiation reports due to USDA-in NIFA Reporting System (NRS), NIFA’s new online system.
October 1, 2024	Project start, with USDA-NIFA approval

## Part VIII – Contact information

Additional information about the project funding process covered in this document and about the research and outreach activities of SAES can be obtained from the following sources:

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