

Background and Allocations for \$300M Supplemental NIFA Funding for Research

Agricultural research at Land-grant Universities (LGUs) and other institutions throughout the U.S. are uniquely positioned to address challenges amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Eighty one percent of agricultural research directors at LGUs provided information on impacts of pandemic restrictions. Directors also reported donation of personal protective gear and equipment, hand sanitizer, reagents and consumables for diagnostic testing, RNA kits, and loaning of PCR machines, other small equipment, and laboratory space for testing.

Public investment in agricultural research is reflected in Hatch, Evans-Allen, McIntire-Stennis, Tribal Research, and AFRI program lines at USDA NIFA. Supplemental support is critical to meet the direct needs caused by a stop in U.S. research operations. Additional federal assistance will help the U.S. agricultural research enterprise overcome unexpected disruptions in the following areas.

Ramp-down and ramp-up costs to close and restart research activities

- Nearly 60% of directors reported ramp-down or closure of at least 61% or greater; only 5% of directors reported ramp-down or closures of less than 21%.
- The cost of terminating on-going experiments coupled with future restarts will be devastating. On average, directors anticipate 6 months of additional support is needed to meet research objectives.

Ramp-up costs for new research related to COVID-19

- 68% of directors reported one or more projects initiated with capacity funds.
- Several projects have been launched to identify antiviral compounds, assess effectiveness of antiviral drugs, monitor disease prevalence in communities, evaluate various modes of SARS-CoV-2 transmission, and determine impacts of the pandemic on food safety and security.

Salaries, benefits and other costs with retaining research, technical and work-study employees

- 49% of directors reported spending greater than 60% of their NIFA-supported budget on salaries of personnel considered essential for conducting critical research.
- Hiring moratoriums decreased on-boarding and future recruitment of research personnel.
- Although paid, most undergraduates, work-study students, graduates, staff, post-docs, and faculty across lab and field programs have been unable to conduct any laboratory, greenhouse, and field research.
- Prohibitions on all travel negates research in which personnel must travel to research sites.

Core facilities supporting NIFA research

- Costly shutdown of greenhouses; genomic, proteomics and other ‘omic’ labs; fabrication units; wet laboratories; and specialized BSL2 and BSL3 containment facilities.
- The 24/7 nature of any laboratory animal and livestock facility, and the redundancies needed from scarce personnel, drives up costs locally and throughout the supply chain.

The five program lines recommended for supplemental allocations support most research negatively affected. COVID-19 disproportionately affected Tribal Research and Evans-Allen programs. Therefore, we recommend allocating \$5M for Tribal Research and \$36.2M for Evans-Allen, which also raises Evans-Allen to 30% of Hatch as directed by the 2008 Farm Bill¹. NIFA estimates additional funding needs for AFRI at \$150M and Federal Administration (4%) at \$12M. We recommend allocating the remaining funds to Hatch and McIntire-Stennis based upon FFY2020 proportional share. Lastly, given the severity of COVID-19 impact on State budgets, broad waiver authority for the Secretary match and other criteria would be significant contributions.

Proposed Allocations by Program		
Program	FFY2020 Actual (\$M)	Supplemental (\$M)
Hatch	259	85.0
Evans-Allen ¹	67	36.2
McIntire-Stennis	36	11.8
Tribal Research	3.8	5
AFRI	425	150
Federal Administration	---	12
Grand Total	---	300

¹Section 1445(a)(2) NARETPA (7 U.S.C. 3222(a)(2)), as amended by Section 7122 of the 2008 Farm Bill with Evans-Allen not less than 30% of Hatch Act appropriations.