

RULES OF OPERATION FOR THE NORTHEASTERN REGIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION DIRECTORS (NERA)

Adopted September 27, 2001

Revised March 6, 2003

Revised September 27, 2004

Revised September 26, 2005

Revised September 28, 2015

Revised January 5, 2018

Revised September 28, 2021

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this organization shall be the Northeastern Regional Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors, hereinafter called the Northeastern Regional Association, or the Association and, when abbreviated in official documents, it shall be known as NERA.

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE

NERA is an autonomous federation of State Agricultural Experiment Stations (SAES) represented in its membership by the individual SAES directors. The Northeastern Regional Association is one of five such U.S. Regional Associations.

The Association shall represent the regional interests of the administrators of the State Agricultural Experiment Stations (SAES) in the Northeastern region. These interests include but are not limited to: meeting the priority research needs of the region's agriculture in a broadly defined context to include research issues related to the environment, natural resources, foods and nutrition, and economics; administer federally-assigned responsibilities for Multistate Research activities; and pursue the research purposes of their respective institutions through collaborative efforts within the region and beyond. Additionally, the Association facilitates national research cooperation and coordination through the Experiment Station Section (ESS) of the Board on Agriculture Assembly of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU), principally through the ESS's Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy (ESCOP).

The Northeastern Regional Association also:

- Arranges for and independently conducts its own affairs, elects members to ESCOP, makes recommendations to ESCOP and to the Experiment Station Section, reacts to proposals from ESCOP and the Experiment Station Section, and participates in the implementation of the Section's priorities;
- Participates with other Regional Associations in programming and conducting cooperative Multistate Research Projects supported by the Multistate Research Fund (MRF), which is authorized by Section 3(c) 3 of the Hatch Act, Public Law 84-352;
- Facilitates cooperation among the various SAES, with Cooperative Extension, federal agencies, industry and others in the planning, programming, financing, management, monitoring and implementation of all types of agricultural research;

- Employs and pays salaries and benefits of the Northeastern Regional Association's Executive Director, and other staff of the Office of the Executive Director; and
- Collects and disburses membership dues, and enters into agreements with cooperators, institutions, or agencies to implement programs agreed upon by the members of the Northeastern Regional Association.

ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP

The regular members shall consist of the director, associate director(s) and assistant director(s) of each of the fourteen (14) SAES's eligible for funding under the Hatch Act, as amended in 1955 (69 Stat. 671) as:

- Connecticut-Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (New Haven);
- Connecticut-University of Connecticut (Storrs);
- District of Columbia-University of the District of Columbia;
- Delaware-University of Delaware;
- Maine-University of Maine;
- Maryland-University of Maryland;
- Massachusetts-University of Massachusetts;
- New Hampshire-University of New Hampshire;
- New Jersey-Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey;
- New York-Cornell University (Ithaca and Geneva);
- Pennsylvania-The Pennsylvania State University;
- Rhode Island-The University of Rhode Island;
- Vermont-University of Vermont; and
- West Virginia-West Virginia University.

Each member SAES that is current in payment of assessments (no more than two years in arrears) is entitled to one vote, which may be cast by the director, or by a designated representative.

Non-voting, ex-officio members of the Northeastern Regional Association shall be:

- NERA Executive Director;
- Director, USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture, or her/his designee;
- Director, USDA Agricultural Research Service Northeast Area;
- Vice President for Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources, APLU;
- Director of agricultural research at the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore;
- Director of agricultural research at Delaware State University; and
- Director of agricultural research at West Virginia State University.

ARTICLE IV - MEMBERS IN GOOD STANDING

Members in good standing shall be defined as those member institutions that are current in payment of assessments (no more than two years in arrears). Members in good standing shall have the privilege of:

- Holding office in NERA;
- Participating on NERA committees;
- Participation as a NERA representative on ESCOP committees;

- Recognition on the NERA website; and
- Inclusion on NERA-managed listservs and other communications managed by the NERA.

Any member institution that fails to pay its assessments for two (2) years shall be given a written (email) notice that all outstanding balances must be paid by June 30 of the current calendar year or said institution may be removed as a member in good standing by two-thirds majority vote of the members.

Loss of member in good standing status shall result in:

- Removal from participation in any and all Association roles, votes and responsibilities;
- Removal from any and all Association committees and appointed positions;
- Removal from website, all listservs and other communications managed by NERA; and
- Appropriate notifications to the institution President, Dean/Director, USDA-NIFA, the Board on Agriculture Assembly and APLU.

ARTICLE V - MEMBER REINSTATEMENT

Any member institution removed for failure to pay assessments as indicated above, may, at any time, request, in writing (email), to be readmitted as a member on good standing. This request must be accompanied by payment of all outstanding assessments that were due at the time of removal or as mutually agreed upon in writing (email) between the institution to be reinstated and NERA.

ARTICLE VI - ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION

The individual member SAES Directors of the Northeastern Region comprise the legislative body of the Association. Three meetings of the Association shall be held each year: Winter/Spring; Summer; and Fall.

Special meetings may be scheduled with approval of the NERA Executive Committee, provided that the meeting's time, place and agenda are shared with the voting membership with one week prior notice.

The location of meetings shall be agreed upon by the membership, but the decision may be delegated to others, such as in the case of a joint meeting with other regional associations or Sections of APLU.

ARTICLE VII - OFFICERS

A. Officers and Terms of Office. The Officers of the Association shall be: a Chair; a Vice-chair; the immediate past-Chair, and an Officer-at-large, each serving one year terms. All terms of NERA officers shall expire at the close of the Association's fall meeting.

B. Election of Officers. Each year the Officers of NERA (i.e., the NERA Executive Committee) and all other elected designees shall be elected at the summer meeting (or at the discretion of the NERA Chair, immediately following the summer meeting by electronic ballot). Nominations of other willing candidates may be made from the floor, or in the case of electronic balloting,

may be made by write-in ballots. A simple majority vote is required for candidate selection. The Chair, Vice-chair, Past-chair, and the Officer-at-large shall assume their duties following the conclusion of business conducted at the fall meeting.

In the event that the Chair, Vice-chair, Past-chair, or the Officer-at-large resign or is otherwise unable to serve, the remaining members of the Executive Committee shall arrange a special election to complete the officer's term.

Any currently serving officer of NERA may stand for reelection, without restriction as to eligibility.

C. Official Duties. The Chair, as the Chief Executive Officer of the Association, shall preside at business meetings of the Northeastern Regional Association, at all meetings of its Executive Committee, and on all other occasions where the head of the Association is to be recognized. The Chair assigns duties and directs the activities of all standing committees, appoints ad hoc committees, and provides guidance and direction to the Association. The Chair is also responsible for final approval of all meeting agenda.

The Chair, Past-chair, and the Vice-chair automatically become members of ESCOP, upon assuming their official positions. The Past-chair shall serve as the senior member of the region's delegation to ESCOP, representing the Association on the ESCOP Executive Committee.

The Vice-chair shall serve as Acting Chair in the absence of the Chair. The Vice-chair is also responsible for representing the Association to the Program Planning Committee for the annual Summer Joint Session meeting. The Vice-chair shall undertake such other duties as the Association's Chair shall direct, and shall become interim Chair until a special election can be held, should the Chair resign or otherwise be unable to serve. The Vice-chair shall recommend to the Chair slates for committee memberships for the coming year.

All officers are responsible for maintaining, and then transferring to their successors, complete sets of official documents and records of an administrative or directive nature. A permanent copy of all such documents also shall be made available to the Office of the Executive Director as well. This may be done electronically.

ARTICLE VIII - COMMITTEES

Committees may be established and administrative advisors and other designees appointed at the will of the Northeastern Regional Association. Administrative Advisors to Multistate Research Projects and Multistate Coordinating Committees shall be named from among the membership of the Northeastern Regional Association, SAES directors including assistant and associate directors or individuals such as senior faculty, department chairs or other administrators who are endorsed by their institutional SAES director (these individuals are hereafter called the SAES designee.) Committee members may include anyone (NERA members or not) willing to serve. A list of current committee members, designated liaisons and SAES designees is to be prepared by the Office of the Executive Director and circulated to the membership as part of the agenda of the summer meeting of the Northeastern Regional Association. The members will subsequently consider the make-up of the committees and the appointment of liaisons at the summer meeting, and agree to a slate of appointees (i.e., new and reappointed individuals) to begin their terms at the end of the fall meeting each year.

The Standing Committees of NERA are:

Executive Committee (EC). The officers of NERA shall serve as the Executive Committee of the Association. The NERA Executive Director is an ex-officio, non-voting member of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee, through the Chair, executes the programs of the Northeastern Regional Association and gives managerial direction to the Association's Executive Director and other NERA staff. The Executive Committee also is empowered to handle the immediate affairs of the Northeastern Regional Association between business meetings.

A review of the annual performance of the Executive Director shall be conducted by the Executive Committee, following the evaluation of documentation provided by the Executive Director, and based on input from the Association's members. The annual evaluation of the Executive Director shall be conducted in September/October during the Association's Fall meeting.

Multistate Activities Committee (MAC). The MAC is responsible for recommending to the membership the proper disposition of Multistate Activity Project proposals and Multistate Coordinating Committees in accordance with national and regional priorities. This is done through the commissioning of external reviews, the evaluation of projects and committees, the monitoring of research progress and, as appropriate, establishing multistate priorities via broad-based issues identification and strategic planning. The Multistate Activities Committee shall consist of six members: four of whom will be NERA members and two of whom shall be Northeast Extension Directors Association (NEED) members; all members will be appointed by the NERA Chair for a three-year term. The NERA Executive Director is an ex-officio, non-voting member of the MAC.

ARTICLE IX - LIAISONS

The Association provides and facilitates interaction with other groups involved in research that is similar or complementary to the research done within the SAES.

NERA representatives are appointed to serve indefinitely as liaisons to the following groups:

- NE Academic Programs Section;
- NE Extension Directors;
- NE Regional Aquaculture Center (2);
- NE Center for Rural Development Board of Directors (2);
- NE Integrated Pest Management Center;
- NE Sustainable Agriculture Research and Extension Committee; and
- ESCOP (and its Committees and subcommittees, as requested).

At the discretion of the Association's Chair, liaisons may be appointed to NERA's committees, and liaisons are invited to attend NERA meetings as observers.

ARTICLE X - REPRESENTATION TO ESCOP

ESCOP is the Executive Committee of the Experiment Station Section of the Board on Agriculture Assembly of APLU. ESCOP is empowered to formulate policy and to act on behalf of

the Section, subject to the will of the Section as expressed at business meetings of the Section, or through referenda conducted during the interim between business meetings. ESCOP handles continuing business and attends to organization and policy matters, oftentimes through relationships within APLU, with agencies of the federal government, and with farm organizations, commodity and agri-business groups that are referred to it by the Section or by the regional associations.

NERA's representation to ESCOP shall be the immediate Past-chair as the senior delegate, the current Chair, and the Chair-elect. The immediate Past-chair shall serve on the ESCOP Executive Subcommittee.

ARTICLE XI - QUORUM

For purposes of doing business, a quorum shall consist of a simple majority of the duly constituted voting membership (i.e., 8) at any officially called meeting (face-to-face or virtual) for which written notice is sent out at least one week in advance of the meeting. A simple majority resolves all issues except amendments to the rules of operation and on questions on financial assessments, which shall require a two-thirds majority of those Stations voting.

ARTICLE XII - PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

The emphasis in all NERA meetings shall be on orderly process to achieve an objective decision by those present and voting. Should there be a parliamentary challenge it shall be answered by referring to the most current edition of Robert's Rules of Order.

ARTICLE XIII - ASSESSMENTS

Assessments (or dues) are invoiced through the Office of the Executive Director, and shall be a singular, annual request. Budget development, decision making and invoicing shall be an orderly process conducted in accordance with the following schedule:

- Budget requests shall be presented by the Executive Committee and discussed by the NERA membership, preferably at the Spring NERA meeting, or if necessary, at the Summer NERA meeting.
- Approval of the NERA budget shall be by either a voice vote, written ballots, or by electronic balloting, at the discretion of the Chair.
- A two thirds (2/3) majority of those voting is required for adoption of a budget. All member institutions will be assessed, if the question passes. Assessments will be calculated by an agreed formula that reflects federal formula commitments to the Association's member institutions. The formula is based on a percentage of a station's most recent Hatch Multistate Research Fund allocation (not including funds from National Research Support Projects) in comparison to the total regional allocation.
- The Office of the Executive Director will invoice the amounts due immediately following agreement on the annual dues. Association dues are payable immediately upon receipt of the invoice for the agreed budget year, which begins July 1 of each year.

ARTICLE XIV- RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NERA OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Office of the Executive Director is responsible for supporting the activities of the Association through carefully planned services and projects. These activities include:

- Serving as the Secretary/Treasurer for the Association;
- Organizing and supporting the Association's meetings, under the direction of the Chair;
- Assisting the NERA members and the Executive Committee in completing identified tasks;
- Proposing options for advancing the mission of the Association;
- Representing the region's interests to external organizations and associations;
- Providing logistical support to the ESCOP Chair, when that person is from the NE region;
- Performing other duties that advance the purposes of NERA; and
- Other duties, as assigned by the Executive Committee.

ARTICLE XV - AMENDMENTS TO THESE RULES OF OPERATION

These rules of operation may be amended at any business meeting of the Association provided the proposed amendment has been mailed (e-mailing is permitted) to all members at least one month in advance of an official meeting, and the question is passed by a two-thirds majority of the voting members present at that meeting.

The Chair may authorize changes in titles of organizations, institutions or committees identified in these Rules of Operation to make the rules conform to changes made external to the Association, as they occur, and shall report all such changes in writing at the next meeting of the Association.