

# Principles Underlying the Role and Function of External Funding

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This document delineates the principles underlying the role and function of external funding in supporting ARS' mission.

- The purpose of obtaining external funding is to support ARS' mission. ARS encourages its scientists to seek external funding but there is no requirement to do so. External funding is appropriate to further scientific goals as defined by National Programs and could also strengthen partnerships with stakeholders.
- ARS has a unique and important role as USDA's primary, intramural research agency. With the ability to fund projects over the long term, ARS is able to maintain continuity in its research efforts to produce objective and credible scientific results which solve problems, develop and transfer solutions, and respond to emergencies through the rapid mobilization of technical expertise and resources. External funding must be considered in the context of this unique and important role and especially should not jeopardize the ability of ARS in accomplishing its mission by, for example, involving ARS too deeply with a regulated entity on a regulated matter or inadequately addressing intellectual property issues.
- Considerable stakeholder input and ARS planning go into the development of National Programs.
  - The primary work of scientists is articulated by the research objectives and desired outcomes in the PDRAM, which must be honored.
  - Scientists' base-funded projects ("D" projects) should be defined with objectives that can be supported by available appropriated funding. Some projects do have special circumstances that require external funds for their core objectives.
  - External funding may be sought to support or extend research objectives on base-funded funds.
- Organizations that offer grants or other external funding to ARS are interested in seeing their particular goals achieved. Recognition of funder's goals must be given in drafting proposals for external funding. ARS reviewing officials will provide guidance in defining permissible work that is complementary to project plan objectives in base-funded projects.
- External funding agreements should recover the full costs of the covered research, including support for facilities, project administration, and technical support. Large, multi-collaborator grants may also include support to fund a project manager for the grant.

- These principles reinforce the review and approval of all external funding proposals by the Office of National Programs and the Area Office *prior to submission* while recognizing the creative means of science and the goals of funding organizations. The standard for such a review is at least 30 days prior to submission.

### ***Frequently Asked Questions***

Q: Am I required to seek external funding?

A: No. While ARS is encouraging and supporting scientists in seeking external funding, there is no mandate to do so.

Q: Is there a limit on how many grants or other extramural agreements I may seek or manage?

A: There is no predefined limit. However, scientists are reminded that their primary obligation to ARS is to accomplish the objectives of their base-funded project (“D” project) and any external funding should not distract from the accomplishment of those objectives. Innovative ideas such as a different set of approaches to enhance your base project are encouraged. Specific scientist workload is a scientist and line management issue and is one item to be considered in the application approval process.

Q: Funding organizations are often interested in either the most efficient biological model organism for solving a research question or the one that satisfies their objectives. Am I allowed to write proposals around the biological organism of interest to the funding organization when the results would forward the research on the research organism to which I am assigned?

A: Yes, as long as the research results are readily transferrable to the agricultural problem defined in your base project and you have made an adequate case for this to Area Office and Office of National Program approvers.