

For More Information

For program-related issues, contact the appropriate research leader, area director, national program leader, or deputy administrator.

See <http://www.ars.usda.gov/pandp/locations.htm> to find contacts associated with particular ARS area offices and locations.

For legal and procedural issues, contact:

Extramural Agreements Division
Agricultural Research Service
United States Department of Agriculture
5601 Sunnyside Avenue Mail Stop 5110
Beltsville, MD 20705-5110
(301) 504-1147

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United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Research Service

Specific Cooperative Agreements With the Agricultural Research Service

Guidelines for Partner Institutions



About ARS

The Agricultural Research Service is the intramural research arm of USDA that develops new scientific knowledge and technology to solve technical agricultural problems and to enhance the productivity, protection, and quality of food and other agricultural products for the ultimate benefit of the general public.

The ARS program scope is broad, covering:

- Natural Resources and Sustainable Agricultural Systems
- Crop Production and Protection
- Animal Production and Protection
- Human Nutrition and Food Safety and Quality

The ARS research program is financially supported by annual appropriations. These funds pay the salaries and operating expenses of more than 2,200 ARS scientists and their support personnel at more than 100 Federal laboratories in the United States and at several overseas locations.

Research Partners

For some projects, ARS collaborates with scientists from universities and other organizations to conduct joint research. Partner institutions contribute personnel, financial, and material resources to these mutual research activities.

In some cases, as needed or required, ARS provides partial funding to partners to support research projects that contribute to specific ARS program objectives and help carry out the ARS mission. Typically, no more than 50 percent of the funds designated for such a joint project are allocated to the cooperator.

When ARS provides funding, the cooperator's research plan will be reviewed for scientific quality using the established ARS peer review process.

The financial support mechanism used by ARS to support cooperator research is termed a Specific Cooperative Agreement (SCA), as authorized by

7 USC 3318(b). An SCA is a legally binding agreement between ARS and a partner that describes in detail a jointly planned, executed, and funded research program or project, not to exceed 5 years. ARS does not competitively allocate funds through a grant program.

Criteria and Requirements for SCAs

For ARS:

- Legal authority to conduct the type of research that is contemplated by an SCA.
- Relevance of the contemplated research project to an established ARS National Program.
- Common interest with the cooperating institution in the outcome of the project.
- Contribution of enough in-house resources to establish a true stake in the outcome of the research project.
- Substantial involvement in the performance and accountability of the research project.
- Compliance with the Small Business Innovation Act requirement that ARS transfer 2.5 percent of the funds it allocates to the cooperating institution to the Small Business Competitive Grants program.

For cooperating institutions:

- Jointly develop with ARS a research plan compliant with an ARS program requirement.
- Jointly develop a project budget with ARS.
- Contribute in-kind resources totaling no less than 20 percent of the funded amount of the agreement.
- Be accountable for project performance and fiscal expenditures.
- Provide technical progress reports and financial status reports as required by the terms and conditions of the agreement.
- Manage intellectual property according to 37 CFR Part 401.14. Invention Disclosures must be reported to ARS through the Interagency Edison database. Website: <http://www.iEdison.gov>
- Provide ARS a project plan using the ARS-provided format for external peer review.

Prohibited Uses of the SCA

The SCA cannot be used to:

- Circumvent the Federal hiring process.
- Fund construction projects.
- Modify or improve real property.
- Acquire resources for the direct support of ARS employees.
- Pay travel costs of ARS employees.
- Purchase equipment for ARS.

ARS employees are prohibited from engaging in the employer/employee relationships of a cooperating institution making decisions on hiring, conducting performance evaluations of cooperator personnel, approving leave, providing bonus awards, etc.

