

NE2251 Hatch Integrated Multistate Research Project

Project Title: Tourism Resilience and Community Sustainability: Adaptation and Recovery of Rural Businesses and Destinations.

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Background: External forces such as globalization and technological change have led to a decline in traditional agricultural, forestry, and mining jobs in rural America. As a result, many small towns and communities in rural areas are looking to effective means such as recreation and tourism for economic diversification and growth. The rural authenticity, unique culture and heritage, distinctive and “living” assets of traditional music, art and craft, local food and drink, and outdoor beauty and recreation are increasingly identified as important assets that can help to improve local economies. The increasing importance of the recreation economy is recognized by the USDA as an emerging or priority area of national need and an effective means for rural development.

Recreation and tourism play an increasing role in rural economies. However, tourism activities are very susceptible/vulnerable to external factors such as natural disasters, economic crises, disease outbreaks, climate change, terrorism, and uncertainties in safety and security, among others. The COVID-19 pandemic proved especially challenging for rural tourism economies, and while the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry has been widespread, the depth and breadth of the impacts vary among businesses and destinations. For example, many destinations saw declines in business activity and increased unemployment, while others reported increased visitation and resource overuse. Given the importance of outdoor recreation and rural tourism in local economies and its vulnerability to external shocks, particularly the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, a multistate long-term project that assesses and monitors the recovery of the tourism sector in rural areas is necessary.

While rural tourism has been widely examined in the literature as a means for rural development, a search of the National Information Management and Support System (NIMSS) database reveals few projects that explicitly address outdoor recreation/rural tourism issues and challenges or its role in rural community resilience. This proposed project arose out of the identified need to examine the impact of crises and disasters such as COVID-19 on the tourism sector in rural areas systematically and longitudinally to fully understand the resilience, adaptability, and recoverability of rural tourism across states during and post the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic may offer an opportunity for tourism sectors in rural areas to restructure in a more sustainable way in the long run.

The specific **Objectives** of this integrated research project are to:

1. Assess, inventory, and classify the impact of current and potential external shocks on rural tourism at the multi-state level.
2. Investigate the resilience, adaptability, and recoverability of different components of the rural tourism system (i.e., suppliers, buyers, and destinations).
3. Identify, implement, and evaluate strategies for tourism businesses and destinations to cope with external shocks.

The research methods and approaches that are being proposed will be developed and applied to all participating states. Although all states face similar COVID-19 issues, the impacts and associated coping strategies may differ from county to county and from region to region (region here refers to tourism region defined by each state), which allows for comparative analysis of the relationships between dependent and independent variables. Thus, interstate collaboration provides the opportunity not only for longitudinal analysis within a single state, but also for cross-section analysis across states, research that has never been done before.

The Outreach Plan for this project will include active involvement and collaboration with the National Extension Tourism (NET). Working collectively across the U.S., the NET Design Team is a loosely structured group geographically aligned with the four Regional Rural Development Centers. NET members provide research-based education and engagement and outreach support among participating land-grant and sea grant institutions. NET provides strategies to collaborate and share including a bi-annual conference, website, webinars, and joint programming around topics such as agritourism, community or rural tourism development, and coastal tourism.

Projected Outputs

- Publications in scientific articles/reports
- Webinars/workshops
- Crisis recovery frameworks and theory development
- Inventory of tourism assets in rural areas under examination
- Assessment of tourism performance pre, during, and after crisis
- Creation of a rural tourism resilience index dashboard
- Graduate students engaged in multi-state projects
- Extension programs engaged
- New Extension programs developed

Projected Outcomes and Impacts:

- A better understanding of the role of the tourism industry in local and regional economy and how dependency on tourism sectors influences local/regional economic resiliency.
- Development of funding proposals that promote collaborative, integrated research and extension activities on tourism resiliency and community sustainability in the U.S.
- Development of best practice toolkits for rural tourism responses to external shocks.
- Development of strategies to recover from external shocks.

Your institution/agency/entity is invited to participate in this new Integrated Multistate Research Project: **NE2251: Tourism Resilience and Community Sustainability: Adaptation and Recovery of Rural Businesses and Destinations**

Project Duration: October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2026

Participation is encouraged from the following:

1. **Ag Experiment Station Faculty:** AES Faculty who join the project can request Hatch funding to support research. These faculty members should contact the AES director's office at their institution in addition to their department chair and request permission to join the project.
2. **Extension Specialists and Agents:** Extension Specialists and Agents interested in joining the project should first contact their Extension Director and request permission to join the project. Extension Specialists and Agents are invited to serve on or lead research teams, identify research topics and priorities that will lead to more relevant and robust extension programming, and assist with dissemination and practical applications of research results.
3. **Land-grant University Faculty not affiliated with an Ag. Experiment Station:** These faculty should identify and contact the AES director's office at their institution in addition to their department chair and request permission to join the project. Hatch funding may not be available to non-AES affiliated faculty, however, opportunities for participation and extramural support may still be available.
4. **Non Land-grant University Faculty:** Non LGU faculty or other interested stakeholders should email their NIMSS regional system administrator:
http://www.nimss.org/directory/regional_offices to discuss participation options.

The following are directions for viewing the proposal and for creating an Appendix E to authorize participation by a scientist(s) /specialist(s) in this proposed activity.

To complete an Appendix E participation request:

1. If you are a member of a Land-grant institution, first contact your AES or EXT director's office to be sure you are approved to join the project.
2. Non Land-grant participants should contact the regional system administrator for the project to be added.
3. Log into NIMSS (<http://www.nimss.org>)
4. From the left side menu bar, click on Participants, Draft/Edit Participant Info, and then Draft New
5. Complete the entire form; all Research fields are required for AES participants
6. Click the Submit button when finished to save your work

Please submit the Appendix E as soon as possible. To view this proposal:

1. Log into NIMSS (<http://www.nimss.org>)
2. If this is a "temp" proposal, select Project Proposals and View All Proposals
3. Click on **NE2251** in the Current Project Number field to view the proposal
4. If this is an active project, select Projects >> Project Search

If you have questions about this process, please email your NIMSS regional system administrator: http://www.nimss.org/directory/regional_offices

THE MISSION OF MULTISTATE RESEARCH

The mission of the multistate research program is to enable research on high-priority topics among the State Agricultural Experiment Stations (SAES) in partnership with the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), other research institutions and agencies, and with the Cooperative Extension Service (CES). In this way, technological opportunities and complex problem-solving activities which are beyond the scope of a single SAES, can be approached in a more efficient and comprehensive way.

TYPES OF MULTISTATE RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Multistate Research Projects: The membership of a Multistate Research Project is called the technical committee, and is made up of SAES scientists, an AA, NIFA representative, other public and private sector scientists, and as applicable, extension specialists and/or extension agents. This type of activity involves cooperative, jointly planned research employing multidisciplinary approaches in which a SAES, working with other SAESs, the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), or a college or university, cooperates to solve problems that concern more than one state and usually more than one region. In addition, the following must be demonstrated in the project proposal:

1. The objectives are clearly focused.
2. Each participant listed has direct involvement in the accomplishment of the stated objectives.
3. The project is multistate and multidisciplinary.
4. The project proposal has been peer-reviewed.
5. The proposed project is oriented toward accomplishment of specific outcomes and impacts and based on priorities developed from stakeholder input.
6. The project is responsive to NIFA goals.

Integrated Multistate Activities: Any of the above types of activities may be suitable as an integrated activity with the Cooperative Extension Service (CES). Extension specialists and agents may be invited to participate in any activity deemed appropriate by the responsible research and extension directors. The sponsoring regional association of SAES or CES Directors will document extension's participation. It is the responsibility of CES Directors to document expenditures through appropriate reporting mechanisms.

Multistate Research Project

Projects that involve integrated, potentially interdisciplinary, and multistate activities; have expected outcomes, including original research results; convey knowledge; and are peer reviewed.

- The portfolio of projects and other activities should reflect the needs of the region's stakeholders and the priorities derived from those expressions of need. Inasmuch as the

collective SAES system is to operate as a national network, any SAES is free to address its priorities through participation in the projects that are sponsored by any of the other regional associations.

- In addition to SAES scientists, membership to multistate research activities (but not access to formula funding) is open to Extension educators and others who are in a position to contribute to that activity. This should be seen as encouragement to committees to reach out to others when organizing an activity, recognizing that the multistate research authority is a unique and powerful organizing principle.
- **Requests to join an on-going multistate research project must originate with the administrator of the proposed member's institution; in the case of an SAES that would be the director;** for a private laboratory that might be the scientist's supervisor. For ARS scientists, ARS administrators have vested the authority to participate in multistate research activities with the scientist him or herself. This correspondence must include the information required in Appendix E. It is the responsibility of each Experiment Station Director to monitor their faculty members' participation in multistate projects. Although it is preferred that all participants be involved prior to the writing stage of new projects, it will occasionally be necessary to add a participant to an active project. After an Experiment Station Director approves a faculty member to join a project, it is the responsibility of the AA to facilitate incorporation of the new member into that project. If a concern arises regarding a member's participation in a project, the AA should discuss this concern with the member. If the concern is not resolved, the AA should discuss the member's participation with that member's Experiment Station Director. It is the responsibility of that Director to take whatever action is appropriate relative to that member's future participation.