

**National Institute of Food and Agriculture
Department of Agriculture
Information Collection OMB No. 0524-New**

SUBJECT: Supporting Statement for Paperwork Reduction Act Submission to change OMB 0524-New, Research, Education, and Extension project online reporting tool (REReport).

1A. Justification

1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Identify any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection. Attach a copy of the appropriate section of each statute and regulation mandating or authorizing the collection of information.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) administers several competitive, peer-reviewed research, education and extension programs, under which awards of a high-priority are made. These programs are authorized pursuant to the authorities contained in the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977, as amended (7 U.S.C. 3101); the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, as amended (P.L. 107–293, 2002); and other legislative authorities.

NIFA also administers several formula funded research programs. The programs are authorized pursuant to the authorities contained in the McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Research Act of October 10, 1962 (16 U.S.C. 582a-582a-7) (McIntire-Stennis Act); the Hatch Act of 1887, as amended (7 U.S.C. 361a-i) (Hatch Act); Section 1445 of Public Law 95-113, the Food and Agriculture Act of 1977, as amended (7 U.S.C. 3222) (Pub. L. No. 95-113); Section 1433 of Subtitle E (Sections 1429-1439); Title XIV of Public Law 95-113, as amended (7 U.S.C. 3191-3201) (Pub. L. No. 95-113); the Smith-Lever Act; and the Renewable Resources Extension Act. Each formula funded program is also subject to requirements, which were revised in March 2000, and set forth in the *Administrative Manual for the McIntire-Stennis Cooperative Forestry Research Program*, the *Administrative Manual for the Hatch Research Program*, the *Administrative Manual for the Evans-Allen Cooperative Agricultural Research Program*, and the *Administrative Manual for the Continuing Animal Health and Disease Research Program*. NIFA is developing administrative regulations for the formula funded programs it administers.

The Current Research Information System (CRIS) was the U. S. Department of Agriculture's documentation and reporting system for ongoing research and education activities in agriculture, food science, human nutrition, and forestry. CRIS forms AD-416, AD-417, AD-419 and AD-421 constituted a necessary information collection for publicly-supported research and education projects as set forth in requirements established in 7 CFR Parts 3400-3419 pertaining to the aforementioned authorities. NIFA is changing these requirements to the Research, Education, and Extension project online reporting tool (REReport). This information collection is necessary in order to provide descriptive information regarding individual research, education, and integrated activities, to document expenditures and staff support for the activities, and to monitor the progress and impact of such activities.

Moreover, REEport will replace the CRIS AD-421 (Progress/Final Report) with a Progress/Final Report module to fully implement the Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR). Out of an initiative of the Research Business Models (RBM) Subcommittee of the Committee on Science (CoS), a committee of the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC), came the RPPR. The RPPR is a new uniform format for reporting performance progress on Federally-funded research projects. Upon implementation, the RPPR will be used by agencies that support research and research-related activities for use in submission of interim progress reports. It is intended to replace other interim performance reporting formats currently in use by agencies. In anticipation of the RPPR's implementation, NIFA based REEport's Progress Report format on the RPPR.

NIFA is planning to transition from the collection of the CRIS AD-416, AD-417, AD-419, and the AD-421 through its phased implementation of the REEport system. Upon approval, the CRIS collection will expire.

2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purpose the information is to be used. Except for a new collection, indicate the actual use the agency has made of the information received from the current collection.

REEport operates administratively under the NIFA, but is a cooperative endeavor whereby information is collected on a project by project basis from many participant organizations, both federal and non-federal. Information is received from USDA agencies, State Agricultural Experiment Stations, the state land-grant colleges and universities, the institutions of 1890, state schools of forestry, cooperating schools of veterinary medicine, USDA grant recipients, and other cooperating institutions.

The information is collected primarily via the Internet through a web site that may be accessed via the NIFA Reporting Portal (<http://portal.nifa.usda.gov/>). This site provides access to REEport. Electronic submission is required.

The REEport interface provides an intuitive, electronic means to submit required information to the project information collection. Screen shots of this interface may be found in the information collection list. Grant recipients who are required to submit to REEport receive preliminary information via a letter sent by the awarding NIFA program office. Online manuals for preparing REEport forms are available through the REEport web page at http://www.nifa.usda.gov/business/reeport_imp.html. Guidance and supplemental information are further provided through hyperlinks embedded in the data entry screens. Further assistance can be obtained by directly contacting the REEport staff. Contact information is also available for technical issues pertaining to the REEport site.

The information collection process is driven by the information associated with four forms developed and implemented specifically for this purpose in the late 1960s together with the Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR) which can be found on the National Science Foundation website at <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/rppr/>.

The Forms AD-416 and AD-417 which were approved for collection are being reformatted into one Project Initiation electronic submission module in REEport with many fields being

prepopulated with information already collected in the Grants Management process. This information includes data items such as title, investigator, project number, performing organization, project type, objectives, approach, non-technical summary, keywords, need area, discipline, start date and termination date, and a predefined classification system to categorize the project with assignments of knowledge area, subject of investigation and field of science categories providing descriptive classification for each project. In addition to the three primary elements, a percentage of effort value associated with each set of assigned classification codes is also specified. Additionally, separate designations are made regarding the percent of the project pertaining to basic versus applied versus developmental research. Projects are also assigned percentage values for animal health or forestry related research activities when appropriate. The Form NIFA–2008, *Assurance Statement(s)* was also approved for collection under OMB approval number 0524-0042 and is being incorporated as part of the Project Initiation module in REEport. This form is used in formula grant programs and provides required assurances of compliance with regulations involving the protection of human subjects, animal welfare, and recombinant DNA research. This information is required at the onset of a project and need only be resubmitted upon revision of the project.

The AD-421, is being reformatted into the Progress/Final Report electronic submission in REEport using the format approved for use in the RPPR, providing progress and impact information as well as publication citations relating to the project. This progress report is required on an annual basis and reflects progress for a 12-month period. A final report is required within 90 days following the termination of a project and reflects the progress over the entire life of the project.

The AD-419 form is being formatted identically in REEport as the Financial Report and provides data on annual expenditures for support of the project, identified by funding source. NIFA administered funds, other federal funds, and non-federal funds are the primary categories of funding. The information on staff support which was collected in the AD-419 form in CRIS is being collected in the Progress Report in REEport. This information is requested annually and reported on a fiscal year basis.

The mission of REEport, broadly stated, is to document the research, extension, and education project activities of the USDA and the State agricultural research system partners, to satisfy a variety of reporting requirements, and to provide access to research information. This mission supports one of the NIFA's primary functions, stated in the agency strategic plan, of providing program leadership to identify, develop, and manage programs to support university-based and other institutional research, extension. The information collected for REEport is utilized in an essentially unlimited number of ways for a wide array of purposes. Generally, REEport provides ready access to information through public web accessible data as well as individually requested, customized reports and services for agency officials, program leaders, administrators and managers. The information provided helps users to keep abreast of the latest developments in agricultural, food science, human nutrition and forestry research and education; track resource utilization in specific target areas, plan for future activities; plan for resource allocation to research and education programs; avoid costly duplication of effort; aid in coordination of research and education efforts addressing similar problems in different locations; and aid researchers and project directors in establishing valuable contacts within the agricultural community.

Descriptive information pertaining to documented projects is available to the general public as well as the research and education community contributing to REEport. Limited financial information is available on individual grant projects and cooperative agreements as well as summary financial information through the REEIS web site at <http://www.reeis.usda.gov> and the CRIS database website at <http://cris.nifa.usda.gov/>. Cooperating institutions, including the state agricultural experiment stations, state forestry schools, and land grant institutions (1862, 1890, and 1994), have access to all the data pertaining to their institution. Many institutions take advantage of this access utilizing CRIS system and REEIS system facilities to manage the research programs at their institution. In addition, NIFA staff members can request specialized reports directly from the Planning, Accountability, and Reporting Staff at NIFA. These requests can include financial disclosure pertaining to a particular subject area or targeted program. The nature of this type of request characterizes one of the strengths of the REEport information collection. The system collects obligations and expenditures on individual projects, however, information can be retrieved and aggregated based on subject areas or targeted programs, and corresponding financial information can be tabulated accordingly. The inclusion of subject-based classifications and subject specific descriptive fields supports a unique retrieval capability in this system. The information can be utilized nationally, regionally, or at more detailed levels, by program leaders, budget officials, and administrators to identify resource utilization, monitor research and education activity in specific target areas, and support decision making and resource allocation, not just on individual projects, but also for specific program areas. Combining system capabilities facilitates the program evaluation, accountability, and decision making processes.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.

This information collection permits electronic submission of responses. Through the use of a web-based interface known as the REEport software, respondents are able to enter information and submit that information to NIFA electronically. To reduce burden, the technology prepopulates data that is already available from the grant application and award process in REEport which was not available before in the CRIS collection. Moreover, the technology prepopulates data from the project initiation process in the Progress/Final Report.

4. Describe efforts to identify duplication. Show specifically why any similar information already available cannot be used or modified for use for the purposes described in Item 2 above.

The structure of the REEport information collection, periodic reviews within NIFA of reporting requirements and the cooperative interactions with the contributing institutions, help assure that duplication does not occur in this process. Other units within NIFA have adopted the input derived from the REEport information collection as the vehicle for satisfying reporting requirements under their program conditions, eliminating collection activities that were

overlapping. This has increased the critical nature and importance of the REEport information collection. The elements associated with the REEport information collection are essentially unique but are reviewed on a regular basis for consideration of the occurrence of overlap or duplication with other collection processes. In general, the collection of project descriptions and associated information documented by the Project Initiation, Financial Report and Progress/Final Report have no parallel or corresponding items in other collection efforts. As such, there is no recognized duplication of effort with respect to this collection of information.

As stated previously, NIFA is transitioning to the REEport system and the Progress/Final Report is modeled on the Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR), which is to be used by all Federal research agencies.

5. If the collection of information impacts small businesses or other small entities (Item 5 of OMB Form 83-I), describe any methods used to minimize burden.

NIFA awards approximately 130 Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grants each year. All of the awardees are required to submit Project Initiation and Progress Reports to document their activities. The awarding unit within NIFA provides additional guidance to awardees to reduce their burden to the extent possible.

6. Describe the consequence to Federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

The information obtained through the collection process for REEport furnishes unique data that are not available from any other source. Interruption in the collection process, or failure to collect this information, would severely compromise one of NIFA's primary functions stated in the agency's strategic plan of "providing program leadership to identify, develop, and manage programs to support university-based and other institutional research." Information in the collection is critical to other NIFA programs in meeting their mandated obligations and responsibilities. Additionally, the information collected by REEport and stored in REEIS databases is utilized by state institutions in administering their individual research programs and in their planning processes for the allocation of resources in critical research areas. The information gap created by a failure to collect REEport information would have serious negative impacts on the administration and management of agricultural research, extension and education on a national level. REEport is an electronic system providing the capability of storing and retrieving program information on USDA-supported research, education, and extension activities. Failure to provide the system to the participating agencies and institutions would result in a significant increase in the burden on those organizations to meet their information requirements and accomplish program management.

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner:

*** requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly;**

There are no special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner that would require a respondent to report information more often than quarterly.

*** requiring respondents to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it;**

There are no special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner that would require respondents to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it.

*** requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document;**

There are no special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner that would require respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document.

*** requiring respondents to retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records, for more than three years;**

In order for an institution to participate as a state cooperator in the electronic submission of project documents, the institution must agree to observe certain procedures. One stipulation for audit purposes agreed to by the cooperator requires the institution to retain original signed documents in their files for at least three years after the conclusion or termination of the authorized effort. This special requirement could result in the necessity to retain records for more than three years.

*** in connection with a statistical survey, that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study;**

There are no special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner in connection with a statistical survey that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study.

*** requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;**

There are no special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB.

*** that includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use; or**

There are no special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner that includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use.

*** requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secrets, or other confidential information unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.**

There are no special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secrets or other confidential information unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.

8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d), soliciting comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments.

A Federal Register Notice was published on Friday, June 7, 2013, Vol. 78, No. 110. There was one comment in response to the notice. The comment was very supportive and addressed some administrative recommendations to make the process more users friendly. NIFA will continually improve the technical issues and usability to make them more user friendly to the grantees.

9. Explain any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than reenumeration of contractors or grantees.

There are no plans to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than reenumeration of cooperators or grantees.

10. Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for the assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.

There is no specific assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents.

11. Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitudes, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private. This justification should include the reasons why the agency considers the questions necessary, the specific uses to be made of the information, the explanation to be given to persons from whom the information is requested, and any steps to be taken to obtain their consent.

NIFA does not request information of a sensitive nature through REEport.

12. Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. The statement should:

NIFA used burden estimates from the current CRIS collection to estimate the burden for REEport but anticipates the transactions for project initiation may be reduced because grant application information will be used to prepopulate many fields. The total annual burden for the non-RPPR portion of this collection is 30,510 hours and 31,050 hours for the RPPR Progress and Final Report. The estimates are summarized in a table on the following page.

Table Reference for Item 12

Research, Education, and Extension project online reporting tool (REeport) -- Data Collection

Description	Number of Respondents	Responses / Respondent	Total Annual Responses	Estimated Hours/Response	Annual Burden Hrs.	Estimated Cost/Response	Annual Cost
REeport	5,285	1	5,825	11.4	60,250	\$350.49	\$1,790,335

13. Provide an estimate for the total annual cost burden to respondents or record-keeper resulting from the collection of information, (Do not include the cost of any hour burden shown in Items 12 and 14). The cost estimate should be split into two components: (a) a total capital and start-up cost component (annualized over its expected useful life) and (b) a total operation and maintenance and purchase of services component.

There are no capital/start-up or ongoing operation/maintenance costs associated with the REEport information collection.

14. Provide estimates of annualized costs to the Federal government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include quantification of hours, operational expenses (such as equipment, overhead, printing, and support staff), and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information. Agencies may also aggregate cost estimates from Items 12, 13, and 14 in a single table.

For fiscal year 2014, REEport is supported by 5 FTE positions (one vacant) devoted exclusively to system maintenance, data management, retrieval and reporting services for this data collection. This effort is supported by a budget of \$1,200,000. Approximately 65% of the budget is expended on direct personnel costs and other human resources in support of the collection. The remaining 35% supports all other costs of program operation, including maintenance, operation, upgrading of equipment (hardware & software), materials and supplies, travel, training, etc. This is the only identifiable cost to the federal government for the REEport data collection that would not be incurred without this collection effort.

15. Explain the reasons for any program changes or adjustments reported in Items 13 or 14 of the OMB Form 83-I.

There is a minor overall increase in the total annual burden as a result of recalculating the number of forms received. This adjustment does not correlate directly to any specific program changes, but simply represent an adjustment in the volume of the various transactions NIFA has received. NIFA also adjusted for a double counting error in the number of respondents in the previous submission.

16. For collections of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication. Address any complex analytical techniques that will be used. Provide the time schedule for the entire project, including beginning and ending dates of the collection of information, completion of report, publication dates, and other actions.

There are no planned or scheduled publications generated from REEport information in the traditional concept. However, information in the REEport data collection is organized in a searchable database of elements supported through the Project Initiation and Progress/Final Report input processes. The primary database is available on the

Internet and can be accessed by the public. Various options and formats are available for selection and output of the information stored in the CRIS and REEIS databases. The elements from the Financial Report are stored in restricted fields, and therefore, are not on the web site nor available to the public. Tables summarizing Financial Report data are generated for each new fiscal year collected. The tables are overall summaries, approved by the contributors for general release. The summaries are available through the CRIS and REEIS web sites for access by the public. The Planning, Accountability, and Reporting Staff at NIFA can provide other types of summaries, standard reports and custom reports of more detailed levels of REEport information by special request, but only to agency authorized individuals, not to the public.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

There is no effort underway to seek approval not to display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in Item 19, "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions," of OMB Form 83- I.

There are no exceptions to the certification statement and hence, no explanation is required.