

# **RULES OF OPERATION FOR AGINNOVATION NORTHEAST**

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## **ARTICLE I - NAME**

The name of this organization shall be agInnovation Northeast, formerly known as the Northeastern Regional Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors or NERA. In these Rules, agInnovation Northeast will also be referred to as "the Association".

## **ARTICLE II - PURPOSE**

agInnovation Northeast is an autonomous federation of State Agricultural Experiment Stations (SAES) represented in its membership by the individual SAES directors. The 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; administering federally-assigned responsibilities for Multistate Research activities; and pursuing 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 Board on Agriculture Assembly of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU), principally through the national organization, agInnovation. In these Rules agInnovation will also be referred to as "the Section".

The Association also:

- Arranges for and independently conducts its own affairs, elects members to agInnovation, makes recommendations to agInnovation, reacts to proposals from agInnovation, 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 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 Association.

## **ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP**

The regular members shall consist of the director, associate director(s), and assistant director(s) of each of the fifteen (15) SAES's eligible for funding under the Hatch Act, as amended in 1955 (69 Stat. 671):

- 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 (Geneva);
- New York-Cornell University (Ithaca);
- 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 Association shall be:

- agInnovation Northeast 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 agInnovation Northeast;
- Participating on agInnovation Northeast committees;
- Participation as an agInnovation Northeast representative on agInnovation committees;
- Recognition on the agInnovation Northeast website; and
- Inclusion on agInnovation Northeast -managed listservs and other communications managed by the Association.

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 a two-thirds majority vote of the members.

Loss of member in good standing status shall result in:

- Removal from participation in any Association roles, votes, and responsibilities;
- Removal from any Association committees and appointed positions;
- Removal from website, all listservs, and other communications managed by the Association; 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 in good standing. This request must be accompanied by payment of all outstanding assessments due at the time of removal, or as mutually agreed in writing (email) between the institution to be reinstated and agInnovation Northeast.

## **ARTICLE VI - ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTION**

The individual member SAES Directors of the Northeastern Region comprise the Association's legislative body. The Association shall hold a minimum of four (4) meetings (virtual or face-to-face) each year, typically in March (spring), June (summer), September (fall), and December (winter).

Special meetings may be scheduled with the approval of the agInnovation Northeast Executive Committee, provided that the meeting's time, place, and agenda are shared with the voting membership at least one week in advance.

The membership shall agree upon the location of meetings, 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 agInnovation Northeast officers shall expire at the close of the Association's September (fall) meeting.

**B. Election of Officers.** Each year, the Officers of agInnovation Northeast (the Executive Committee) and all other elected designees shall be elected at the June (summer) meeting (or at the discretion of the agInnovation Northeast 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 resigns 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 the Association may stand for reelection without restriction on eligibility.

**C. Official Duties.** The Chair, as the Chief Executive Officer of the Association, shall preside at business meetings of agInnovation Northeast, 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 agendas.

The Vice-chair shall serve as Acting Chair in the absence of the Chair. The Vice-chair shall undertake such other duties as the Association's Chair shall direct and shall serve as 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 of candidates for committee membership for the coming year.

## **ARTICLE VIII - COMMITTEES**

Committees may be established, and administrative advisors and other designees may be appointed at the will of the Association. Administrative Advisors to Multistate Research Projects and Multistate Coordinating Committees shall be named from among the membership of the 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 (agInnovation Northeast 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 for the summer meeting of the 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 agInnovation Northeast are:

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

A review of the annual performance of the Office 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 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, the establishment of multistate priorities via broad-based issue identification and strategic planning. The Multistate Activities Committee shall consist of six members: four of whom will be agInnovation members and two of whom shall be members from the Association of Northeast Extension (NEED); the agInnovation Northeast Chair will appoint all members for a three-year term. The Association's Executive Director is an ex-officio, non-voting member of the MAC.

## ARTICLE IX - LIAISONS

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

agInnovation Northeast 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; agInnovation (and its committees and subcommittees, as requested); and
- the Board on Agriculture Assembly (and its committees and subcommittees, as requested).

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

## ARTICLE X - REPRESENTATION TO AGINNOVATION

agInnovation is the body that represents the directors of the state agricultural experiment stations and agricultural research units at institutions designated as 1862 and 1890 Land-grant Universities, as a section of the Board on Agriculture Assembly of APLU. The agInnovation Executive Committee 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 or through referenda conducted during the interim between business meetings. The agInnovation Executive Committee handles ongoing business and attends to organizational and policy matters, often through relationships within APLU, with federal agencies, and with farm organizations,

commodity, and agribusiness groups that are referred to it by the Section or the regional associations.

agInnovation Northeast's representation on the agInnovation Executive Committee shall be by election by the Association. The agInnovation Northeast representative will serve a one-year term and is eligible for re-election without term limits.

## **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 questions of financial assessment, which require a two-thirds majority of those Stations voting.

## **ARTICLE XII - PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY**

The emphasis in all agInnovation Northeast meetings shall be on an 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 agInnovation Northeast membership, preferably at the spring meeting, or if necessary, at the summer meeting.
- Approval of the agInnovation Northeast budget shall be by either a voice vote, written ballots, or by electronic balloting, at the discretion of the Chair.
- Two-thirds (2/3) majority of those voting is required for the 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 (excluding funds from National Research Support Projects) relative 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 AGINNOVATION NORTHEAST OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

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

- Serving as Secretary/Treasurer, including oversight of financial stewardship, compliance with institutional fiscal policies, and transparent reporting to the Association;
- Planning, coordinating, and supporting meetings of the Association in collaboration with the Chair, ensuring agendas, materials, and follow-through actions are aligned with Association needs and priorities;
- Maintaining accurate and accessible records and documents, and providing institutional knowledge essential to the continuity and effective functioning of the Association;
- Supporting the Executive Committee and Association members in executing agreed-upon priorities and activities, and ensuring that responsibilities are appropriately delegated and completed;
- Identifying opportunities, emerging issues, and strategic options that advance the mission and effectiveness of the Association;
- Staying informed about regional and national trends, policies, and opportunities relevant to the Association, and advising the Executive Committee and Association accordingly;
- Serving as a regional liaison to external organizations, communicating priorities, opportunities, and perspectives that reflect the mission and values of the Association;
- Providing logistical and administrative support to the agInnovation Chair, when the Chair is from the Northeast region;
- Facilitating communication, collaboration, and knowledge sharing across member institutions to support effective teamwork and regional coherence; and
- Performing other duties consistent with these responsibilities and necessary to advance the purposes of the Association.

## **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 the titles of organizations, institutions, or committees identified in these Rules of Operation to ensure 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.