



LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Research Committee

Terms of Reference (TOR)

Updated 30 September 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	PREAMBLE	3
2.	MEMBERSHIP TO THE LDA RESEARCH COMMITTEE	3
3.	FUNCTIONS OF THE LDA RESEARCH COMMITTEE	3
4.	GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS	4
4.1.	PROCEDURES FOR SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL	4
4.2.	CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL	5
5.	BASIC ELEMENTS OF A PROPOSAL	5
6.	THE PROJECT / TRIAL NUMBERING SYSTEM.....	10
7.	PROJECTS FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS	11
8.	REPORTS.....	11
8.1	PROGRESS REPORTS	11
9	SUSPENSION, TERMINATION AND COMPLETION OF PROJECTS	12
9	LIFESPAN OF PROPOSAL	Error! Bookmark not defined. 13

1. PREAMBLE

The Limpopo Department of Agriculture (LDA) Research Committee has been established to evaluate, recommend and/or approve all agricultural research (livestock, crop, climate, natural resources and social) research projects to be conducted in the Province. This includes all departmental research done by LDA officials and other organisations. Departmental research as well as studies that involves departmental research inputs must conform to the vision and mission of the LDA.

2. MEMBERSHIP TO THE LDA RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Members of the Research Committee shall be appointed by the Head of the Department (HOD). The LDA Research Committee is constituted as follows:

- Chairperson : Senior Manager- Research Services
- Secretariat : Delegated (1)
- Scientific Managers Research (all)
- Delegates from other directotates:
 - Animal Production (1)
 - Crop Production (1)
 - Training: Madzivhandila (1)
 - Training: Tompi Seleka (1)
 - Agribusiness (1)
 - Natural Resource Management, NRM (1)
 - Extension Services (1)
 - Spatial Information services (1)

Delegates from all LDA branches and other institutions may be co-opted on ad-hoc basis.

3. FUNCTIONS OF THE LDA RESEARCH COMMITTEE

LDA Research Committe shall perform the following functions:

- a) Evaluate, recommend and /or approve agricultural research projects to be conducted in the Province
- b) Develop a procedure / format for research proposal, application and registration
- c) Approve ammendments of original proposals
- d) Review progress on approved projects annually
- e) Provide guidance on scientific writing and presentation

- f) Provide platform for networking/collaborations with other research organisations locally and internationally.
- g) Promote the dissemination of research results to clientele and sponsors.
- h) Provide platform for reference and adherence to provincial research and ethics committees.

These functions may be amended during the operation of the committee.

4. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS

Approval rest upon the decision of the Research Committee and the Senior Management. Approval will be based on criteria such as:

- Contribution to LDA, Provincial and national strategic objectives
- Scientific value or soundness
- Benefits to clients or relevance
- Need driven
- Value for money
- Practical applicability
- Capacity building
- Innovation potential
- Technology transfer (e.g. farmers days , publications and etc).

4.1. PROCEDURES FOR SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL

The sectional head must submit the proposal to the Secretariat of the Research Committee. The preferred method to obtain approval is by following the following steps:

- Submit the proposal to at least one peer reviewer / researcher in the same field.
- Researchers should submit the proposal to the relevant sectional head.
- Submit the proposal to the Secretariat of the Research Committee (researchcommittee@agric.limpopo.gov.za) at least three weeks before Research Committee sitting. The applicant shall be required to present a 15 minutes Powerpoint Presentation to the Research Committee on a suggested date.
- The approved proposal must be signed by the Chairperson of the Research Committee and the General Manager (GM) Agricultural advisory services.

As an exception, however, approval in principle can be obtained by submitting a concept note to the Research Committee (this is basically a research proposal without the literature study) to get

approval to start the trial. Afterwards, final approval is obtained by submitting a full proposal within three months of approval of the concept note. However, motivation should be submitted to provide an explanations on why the proposal could not be submitted as stipulated in this document.

4.2. CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL

Criteria for aproval is based on the following (Annexure A):

- Scientific merit based on scientific standards
 - Significance
 - Methods
 - Workable timeframes and budget
- Relevance to the LDA strategic objectives or focus areas
 - How well the study address strategic objectives of LDA, provincial and national government
 - Impact on beneficiaries
 - Potential for innovation
 - Technology transfer potential and strategy
- Overall assessment of the research proposal

5. BASIC ELEMENTS OF A PROPOSAL

5.1 RESEARCH PROJECT PROPOSAL

The following is standard format for preparing a research proposal:

A. COVER PAGES

- Refer to Annexure B for a generic cover page for new proposals.

B. PROJECT NUMBER

- Please refer to Section 6 (Project Numbering System).

C. PROJECT TITLE

- The title must be short and well descriptive of the research project/trial.

D. INTRODUCTION

- Include a short **background** and description/statements of the **research problem and sub-problems**. State the problems and sub-problems clearly and completely.
- What is the **purpose (objectives)** of your study
 - ✓ Note: each objective should be a completely researchable unit on its own and each objective should add to the totality of the problem.
- **Significance of the study**
 - ✓ Clearly illustrate the importance and need for the research project (why do you think its necessary to conduct such a project).
 - ✓ How well the study address strategic objectives of LDA, provincial and national government
 - ✓ It must include a mention of beneficiaries and how they will benefit from your research.
 - ✓ Is there value for money?
 - ✓ Novelty of the study.
- Are there any **limitations** and /or **delimitations**, (what shall your study not entail)?

E. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS AND/OR RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- State clearly what hypothesis will be tested (if possible).
- What are the research questions and sub-questions (if possible).

F. LITERATURE REVIEW

- Detailed **related literature review** must be done.
- The literature review must be in line with the proposed study- it must be relevant.
- Are there any gaps in the literature?
- If the same study has already been done, what/how shall your study add to the body of knoweldge available in the literature?

Note: A literature review is not a mere gathering of information, BUT require your assessment of what does it mean (the “so what” factor?).

G. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The following can be sub-headings under this section:

Study location/area

- Give a short but accurate description of the project site (where, area, longitude & latitude, rainfall, minimum & maximum temperatures, soil types, plant communities, etc.).

Research Design

- How will you solve the research problem, achieve research objectives or test hypothesis?
- Describe the type of design and its assumptions.
- Describe the layout of the project/trial in detail (also sketch if possible).
- Describe treatments in detail (planting methods, treatments to animals etc.).

Data collection

- Describe sampling procedures (e.g., how will you select subjects for the projects?).
- Describe the data needed and means of collecting such data.
- Also include when such data will be collected.

Data analyses

- Describe foreseen analyses (statistical) of data, i.e. how will you deduce meaning from data.
- Also mention specific software package that you envisage to employ.

H. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Address ethical issues surrounding your proposed study.
- For example: confidentiality by all participants, invasion of privacy – weigh up benefits of research with relative harm.

I. ACTIVITY PLAN

- Provide a list of each activity required in your project together with relevant sub-activities.
- Link them to their timeframes.
- Also provide in a Gantt Chart.

J. BUDGET

- Supply a proper budget in which all expected costs are given in details (if possible linked to activity plan).
- Note that the Research Committee does not fund the projects, it is the responsibility of the researcher to source funds.
- Approval of the research proposal by the Research Committee is not a guarantee for the availability of funds to implement research project.

K. REFERENCES

- Provide a list of all references used in the proposal according to an accepted journal's format.

5.2 CONCEPT NOTE FOR DEMONSTRATION TRIAL

Demonstration projects/trial act as bounded experiments, trialing the application of structural innovations such as technology, infrastructure or science, as well as non-structural innovations such as education or policy programs. They can occur at a range of scales and trial any number of innovations. Each project may offer new insights into how new technology and innovation can contribute to change or enhance current practice and help shift towards more sustainable agricultural practices. The following is standard format for preparing a demonstration trial concept note:

A. COVER PAGES

Refer to Annexure B for a generic cover page.

B. PROJECT NUMBER

Please refer to Section 6 (Project Numbering System).

C. PROJECT TITLE

The title must be short and well descriptive of the demonstration trial.

D. INTRODUCTION

- Include a short **background** and description/statements of the **problem and sub-problems**.
 - ✓ What is the **purpose (objectives)** of your study
- Objectives should be clear and practical
- **Significance of the study**
 - ✓ You must clearly illustrate the importance and need for the demonstration trial (why do you think its necessary to conduct such a trial).
 - ✓ It must include a mention of beneficiaries and how they will benefit from your work.
 - ✓ Is there value for money?
- Are there any **limitations** and /or **delimitations**, (what shall your study not entail)?

E. SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROCEDURES/ METHODS

The following can be sub-headings under this section:

Study location/area

- Give a short but accurate description of the project site (where, area, longitude & latitude, rainfall, minimum & maximum temperatures, soil types, plant communities, etc.).

Study Design

- How will you solve the identified problem and achieve research objectives.
- Describe the layout of the project/trial in detail and provide sketch (exception may apply to certain demonstration trial for animals).
- Describe treatments in detail (e.g., planting methods, treatments to animals etc).

Data collection

- Describe sampling procedures (e.g., how will you select subjects for the projects?).
- Maximise variables.
- Describe the data needed and means of collecting such data.
- Also include when such data will be collected.

Data analyses

- Describe foreseen analyses of data, i.e. how will you deduce meaning from data.
- Also mention specific software package that you envisage to employ wherein applicable.

F. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Address ethical issues surrounding your proposed study (if necessary).
- For example: confidentiality by all participants.
- Note: Invasion of privacy – weigh up benefits of research with relative harm.

G. ACTIVITY PLAN

- Provide a list of each activity required in your project together with relevant sub-activities.
- Link them to their timeframes. Also provide a Gantt Chart where feasible.

H. BUDGET

- Supply a proper budget in which all expected costs are given in details (if possible linked to activity plan).
- Note that the Research Committee does not fund the projects.
- Approval of the proposal by the Research Committee is not a guarantee for the availability of funds to implement the project.

I. REFERENCES

- Provide a list of all references used in the proposal according to an accepted journal's format.

6. THE PROJECT / TRIAL NUMBERING SYSTEM

As an example, project / trial numbers will consist of the following:

LW/LR/2013/1/D

Where:

- L = Limpopo
- W = The code of the District in which the project / trial will be conducted (e.g.g. Waterberg)
- LR = Discipline (e.g.. LR=Livestock Research, PR=Plant Research, PASER=Precision Agriculture & Socio-Economic Research)
- 2004 = the year of commencement
- 1 = Project / Trial No. 1 under the discipline Livestock Research (to be assigned by Secretariat after approval).
- D = Demonstration trial, R = Research.

The following are the abbreviations used for different Districts:

- C = Capricorn
- M = Mopani
- S = Sekhukhune
- V = Vhembe
- W = Waterberg
- L = if more than one district is applicable(provincial wide project).

Projects are done in the following disciplines, using the following abbreviations:

- LR = Livestock Research
- PR = Plant Research
- PASER=Precision Agriculture & Socio-Economic Research

7. PROJECTS FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS

- Projects from other institutions are not obliged to use the LDA format.
- Projects for post-graduate studies form part of this category. The Research Committee shall verify the alignment of the research project with objectives and mandates of the LDA, provincial and national government.
- Progress and final reports must be submitted.
- Research projects from other institutions which involve researchers must be presented to the research committee.

8. REPORTS

8.1 PROGRESS REPORTS

- A progress report for each research project/trial must be handed in annually. The deadline is the **end of September**.
- A final report must be handed in if the trial is completed within 3 months.
- An interim report is submitted if the trial is suspended for a relatively long period, but later data collection is planned. This is usually done where long-term trials are done.
- Reports in different disciplines must be sent to the secretariat of the Research Committee (researchcommittee@agric.limpopo.gov.za).
- The Research Committee shall meet and discuss progress reports
- The Research Senior Manager compiles an annual provincial report on all research / trials and distributes it to whoever wants insight in Departmental research.
- Data remain the property of the Department. Where collaboration with NGO's are concerned, data are shared.

8.2 ANNUAL REPORTS

The report should be written in the form of a scientific paper using an acceptable journal or donor organization / funder format. The deadline for annual reports is 31 March.

A. COVER PAGE

The cover page includes the following.

- An indication whether it is an annual, interim, final, suspension or termination report.
- Project number.
- Project title.
- Specialized field
- Responsible officer and co-workers
- Reporting year.

B. REPORTING FORMAT

Reporting should be cumulative. The first report will include data for one year only, the second report two year's data, the third three year's data, etc. Reporting should be done under the following headings:

- a) Abstract / Summary
- b) Introduction / Background
- c) Objectives
- d) Materials and methods
- e) Results and discussions
- f) Conclusions and / or Recommendation
- g) Constraints / challenges
- h) Impact on beneficiaries / Value for money
- i) Budget report

9 SUSPENSION, TERMINATION AND COMPLETION OF PROJECTS

- A project is suspended if it cannot continue at the current moment but continuation is planned at a later stage.
- A project is terminated if it cannot continue for the proposed duration and / or before all the objectives have been achieved.
- A project is completed if all the objectives have been achieved.
- The application for suspension, termination or completion must be made to the Chairperson of the Research Committee with reasonable justifications. The application must be accompanied by a report.

.....
SENIOR MANAGER: RESEARCH SERVICE

.....
DATE

Recommended / Not recommended

.....
**GENERAL MANAGER: AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY
SERVICES**

.....
DATE

Approved / Not approved

.....
ACTING HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

.....
DATE

ANNEXURE A

LDA RESEARCH COMMITTEE - INDIVIDUAL PANEL MEMBER ASSESSMENT FORM

PANNEL MEMBER NAME:

APPLICANT:

PROJECT TITLE:

SPECIALIZED FIELD:

PART 1: SCIENTIFIC MERIT BASED ON SCIENTIFIC STANDARDS

Criterion 1: Significance	Rating scale and Descriptors		
	Excellent	Good	Fair
	Of very high scientific merit	Of sound scientific merit	Proposal needs further development
Please indicate choice of rating with X:			
Comments:			
Criterion 2: Method	Rating scale and Descriptors		
	Excellent	Good	Fair
Please indicate choice of rating with X:			
Comments:			
Criterion 3: Workable time frames and budget	Rating scale and Descriptors		
	Excellent	Good	Fair
Please indicate choice of rating with X:			
Comments:			

PART 2: RELEVANCE OF THE PROPOSAL

CRITERION 1: RELEVANCE TO THE LDA STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OR FOCUS AREA PROGRAMME AND/OR SUB-PROGRAMME

Please rate & comment on:	Excellent	Good	Fair
How well the proposal address at least one or more of the strategic objectives of the LDA	Comment:		

CRITERION 2: IMPORTANCE OF OUTCOMES TO VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS

Rate and comment on:	Excellent	Good	Fair
Impact on beneficiaries			
	Comment:		
Potential for innovation			
	Comment:		
Technology transfer potential and strategy			
	Comment:		

PART 3: OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Comments:

PART 4: RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue in present form	
Continue after minor revision	
Revise and resubmit for review	



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

ANNEXURE B

APPLICATION FOR A PROPOSED PROJECT

APPROVAL IN PRINCIPLE

APPROVAL

Project number

Branch

Sub Branch

Division

Project location

Key Focus Area

Specialized field

Title

Objectives

Expected outcomes

Main beneficiaries

Commencement date	Year	Month	End date (Expected)	Year	Month

Estimated annual expenditure	Funds available	YES	NO

Officers:		Responsible officer (one only)	
Surname and initials	Rank	Highest qualification	Work station

Co-workers (Maximum 10)			

Applicant's Signature: :... ..

Manager's Signature:..... Date:

Decision on behalf of Head of Department

	Above-mentioned facet has been approved in principle
--	--

	Approval in principle cannot be granted for the attached reasons
--	--

..... Date

Chairperson: Research Committe

Date

..... Date

General Manager: Agricultural advisory services

Date