Fall Business Meeting Agenda
Grand Junction Convention Center
Whitewater Room
Tuesday, September 22, 2026
Mountain Time Zone

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM				
Agenda Item	**Time (min)**	**Description**	**Presenter**	**Page(s)**
1	9:00-9:05	Call to Order, Welcome, Introductions	Donkin	-
2	9:05-9:06	Approval of Business Meeting Agenda	Donkin	1
3	9:06-9:07	Approval of 2026 Summer Meeting Minutes	Anderson	2-4
4	9:07-9:15	Chair's Interim Actions & Executive Committee Report	Donkin	5-10
5	9:15-9:20	Treasurer's Report	Kelly	11
6	9:20-9:25	Progress on Administrative Advisor Openings	Hess	12
7	9:25-9:35	NIMSS Update	Horton	-
8	9:25-10:00	Discussion of New and Emerging Issues • agInnovation Letter to BAA BOD • US-malign activity • OMB Uniform Guidance • USDA Reorganization • OSTP Report • NE response to OSTP Report	All Bajwa Bajwa Donkin Donkin Donkin	 13-14 - - - - 15-18
9	10:00-10:30	WRDC Options on Public Value of Outlying Stations	Lewin	19-24
10	10:30-10:45	Break	All	-
11	10:45-11:30	AWE Implementation	Donkin/Hess	25-35
12	11:30-11:45	Preparation for agInnovation Fall Meeting • National Multistate Guidelines • NRSP RC Whitepaper on Digital Agriculture • Proposed agInnovation Budget	Kelly/Hess	 36-70 71-75 76-80
13	11:45-11:55	Upcoming Meetings • Virtual Spring Meeting • WRJSM with WRAOM	 Donkin Horton	 - 81
14	11:55-12:00	Leadership Changes	Donkin	82-83
15	12:00	Adjournment of business meeting	All	

Item 3.0
Agenda Item: 2026 Fall Business Meeting Minutes
Presenter: Jodie Anderson
Action: Approval

agInnovation-West Summer Meeting
June 25, 2026
3:00-5:00 pm
Hilo, Hawaii

Attendance- Jodie Anderson, Shawn Donkin, Leslie Edgar, Darrin Boss, Glenda Humiston, Chris Pritsos, Bret Hess, Kevin Olival, Mark Schmaedick, Frank Camacho, Paul Johnson, Jay Lillywhite, Lara Prihodko, Staci Simonich, Gene Kelly, Holly Neibergs, Manoj Nair, Jennifer Horton (recording secretary).

I. **Welcome-** Shawn welcomed members.

II. **Approval of business meeting agenda-** Paul moved to approve the business meeting agenda. Glenda seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

III. **Approval of 2026 Spring Meeting Minutes-** Leslie moved to approve the spring meeting minutes as presented. Gene seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. **Chair's Interim Actions & Executive Committee-** Shawn reviewed the Chair's Interim Actions and Executive Committee report. Holly moved to approve the report as presented. Gene seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously.

V. **Treasurer's Report**- There are six outstanding assessments totaling $30,907.93. An additional $17,097.68 has been deposited for Summer Meeting registrations. Total revenue as of the end of May 2026 is $140,611.94**.**
Our accountant filed our 990 for a fee of $740. Additional expenses include $1,260.91 in Summer Meeting costs, $500 for APLU BAA Leadership Meeting registration, and $1,106.95 in staff travel expenses. Total expenses as of the end of May are $32,822.20**.**
We are showing a profit of $107,789.74**,** and our current bank balance is $326,856.54**.** Gene moved to approve the treasurer's report as presented. Leslie seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously.

VI. **Election of Officer and Committee Assignments-** Glenda moved to approve the slate of officers as presented. Chris seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously.

VII. **Administrative Advisor Opening-** There are currently 15 openings, which Bret reviewed along with the responsibilities of an AA. Guidelines state that CC or ERA committees should have a research activity. It is acceptable for a department head or above to serve as AA.
Bret suggested updating guidelines so that a research (W) project does not require an AES position to fill the AA role. A recommendation was made that individuals in leadership positions should be eligible to serve as AA. Discussion ensued. Recommendations were made on filling positions. Bret and Jenn will follow up with recommendations.

VIII. Discussion of New & Emerging Issues

a. USDA Terms and Conditions- Shawn provided a high-level overview. Many institutions are not agreeing to the terms and conditions and will not accept or spend the funds. Jay shared that NMSU is moving forward but waiting on the injunction first.

b. OMB Uniform Guidance- Concerns were raised regarding advertising and public relations restrictions—grant dollars may not be used to advertise for positions. Jodie noted sections 200–205: discretionary awards should be given to those with lower indirect rates. Conference attendance must be pre-approved to use grant funds, but no approval process has been established. Mark questioned the likelihood of such a process being approved.
Jodie referenced section 305 regarding federal payments, which may require more reporting and staff. Concerns were expressed about sudden termination in Section 340. Shawn recommended that each institute respond individually, but that agInnovation-West should ask APLU to respond at the national level.
Jodie moved that agInnovation-West request APLU to write a strong letter addressing concerns and implications for LGUs. Chris seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously. Glenda shared that California is engaging stakeholders, such as Farm Bureau, to sign on.

c. USDA Reorganization- USDA plans to dissolve area ARS area offices and move to a model of four topical focus areas and locations. Shawn noted that he previously had a one-to-one relationship with a director but now must coordinate with four station directors and four business centers.
Leslie is hosting listening sessions with ARS. Bret asked Rachel whether the agency has received official notice of when the move will be official. USDA REE HR has notified ARS that reporting must occur by the end of September. Bret shared that agInnovation will continue supporting NIFA however possible.

d. FAIR Model- This counterproposal addresses costs and indirect costs of conducting research, including environmental health and safety in labs. Frank noted that Guam does not have the capacity. Bret shared a video including a plea to support the FAIR model.
The executive committee brought this forward for discussion. Mark asked whether it would affect capacity. Gene noted that the impact depends on what is determined to be direct cost. The group agreed they do not support the model, as it would increase costs, especially for smaller institutions.
There could be opportunity for changing NIFA grant programs in the next Farm Bill. Current grants are capped at 30%. The group agreed this is not the path they wish to pursue but that they can make recommendations to USDA for Farm Bill changes.

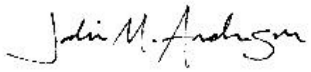
IX. Upcoming Meetings

a. **agInnovation Annual Meeting-** Gene shared highlights for the fall meeting. The theme is *Headwaters to Tidewaters*. The ag tour is planned along the river. The conference will focus on promoting different funding models with industry speakers. The meeting will be held in Grand Junction, Colorado, September 21–25, 2026. Jenn will email when registration opens.

b. **WRJSM with WRAOM-** The WRJSM (June) and WRAOM (October) meetings will be combined and held in Guam on July 26–29, 2027. Combining the groups will support collaboration and help secure group discounts. Leslie recommended inviting Deb Driskell to speak about ROI and cost accounting.

X. Adjournment of business meeting.

Respectfully submitted on July 13, 2026, by Jodie Anderson, Secretary



Item 4.0
Agenda Item: Interim Actions Report
Presenter: Shawn Donkin
Action: Approval

Chair's Interim Actions and Executive Committee's Report

Drafted a letter opposing proposed changes to OMB Uniform Guidance (attached).

Declined to contact members of the Senate Agriculture Committee and their staff to express support for including FFAR in the Senate bill or through an amendment.

Developed the agenda for the summer business meeting.

Submitted electronically via Regulations.gov
Docket ID No. OMB-2026-0034
FR Doc. No. 2026-10817

July 13, 2026

Russell Vought, Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20503

RE: agInnovation- West's Comments on Proposed Rule, Regulation for Federal Financial Assistance, 91 Fed. Reg. 32198 (May 29, 2026)

Dear Director Vought:

On behalf of the agInnovation- West, please consider the below comments on the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) proposed revisions to the Regulation for Federal Financial Assistance (Proposed Rule), issued on May 29, 2026.

agInnovation- West, formerly known as the Western Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors, is an association that supports administrators of agricultural research at land-grant universities throughout the Western Region, including the 13 western most states and the 4 Pacific trust territories. Since its founding in 1948, agInnovation- West has partnered with the federal government to advance a shared public mission: advancing science-based knowledge, strengthening the agricultural industry, and serving the Nation. This longstanding federal partnership has produced measurable national benefits. The outcomes produced by members of agInnovation- West depend on a system of federal support that is stable, predictable, and governed by clear rules that allow us to complete research that feeds the world.

Members of agInnovation- West are concerned about the new OMB Uniform Guidance proposals because they could significantly change how federal research grants are awarded, managed, and terminated. The research universities represented by members of agInnovation-West receive billions of dollars annually in federal funding, so even seemingly technical regulatory changes will have major impacts on research operations, finances, and academic independence. Given the breadth of the proposed changes, members of agInnovation- West

wish to respond with an explanation of how several sections of the newly proposed OMB Uniform Guidance impact our collective research enterprise.

The section-by-section comments that follow focus on provisions that most significantly affect federally supported research. agInnovation- West does not address every proposed change, and the absence of comment should not be interpreted as agreement. For each issue addressed, agInnovation- West identifies the relevant provision and explains the impact of the proposed approach on institutions represented by members of agInnovation- West.

Greater Federal Discretion Over Funding Decisions

(§200.202, §200.204, § 200.205, §200.206, § 200.208)

These proposed provisions affect how research funding decisions are made, including how research opportunities are developed and approved by officials before posting, how research proposals are evaluated, how funding priorities are established, and the extent to which subjective political, programmatic, and policy considerations affect funding decisions. These provisions shift the process away from clear merit-based criteria and documented decision-making and toward more discretionary judgment at multiple stages. Treating peer review as advisory, while introducing an additional layer of discretionary decision-making, weakens the connection between funding decisions, demonstrated scientific merit, and likely societal benefit from the research. That does not strengthen accountability. The proposed provisions make the process less predictable, less transparent, and harder for applicants to understand. Many of the institutions represented by agInnovation- West operate in states and territories that are costly to run research and require higher ICR rates than many other universities in the contiguous U.S.: that should not negatively affect proposal approvals for research that works to feed the world. If OMB wants to ensure that awards align with agency priorities and national interest, those priorities should be stated clearly at the outset and applied consistently. Any Proposed Rules should not authorize displacement of expert peer review after applicants have relied on published criteria. Merit-based peer review must be preserved for academic freedom and timeliness of award execution.

Expanded Suspension and Termination Authorities

(§ 200.340-200.343)

These proposed provisions would increase uncertainty for multi-year projects, research centers, graduate student enrollments, workforce planning, and other long-term investments that depend on policy stability. This stability enables researchers and their institutions to achieve the national competitiveness goals of federal research grants. Federal grants and cooperative agreements for the conduct of research are not ordinary procurement contracts and should not be held to the same termination procedures in that expanded termination authorities pose a direct threat to the stability of long-term agricultural research. Multi-year agricultural and natural resource studies require uninterrupted funding. Developing a new crop variety or animal breed, for examples, are exhaustive, multi-year biological processes. Data collection begins on timelines that cannot be easily stopped and restarted. Interruption of an ongoing generational line or multi-season trial due to shifting "federal agency priorities" could erase decades of accumulated genetic research and delay or negate the release of new varieties or improved animal breeds. Giving agencies broad power to terminate awards mid-cycle based on shifting federal agency priorities makes long-term project planning problematic and raises the potential for project failure. Communities organize around promised services. Suppliers contract for specialized materials. Allowing agencies to terminate such work midstream for post-hoc policy reasons would not protect federal investments, it would undermine them. Ending lawful, ongoing work

wastes already expended federal funds, disrupts critical activities, and harms individuals, communities and institutions that reasonably relied on the award. It does not produce a corresponding public benefit.

Changes to Allowable Costs

(§ 200.205, § 200.421, § 200.432, § 200.454, and § 200.461)

The proposed provisions would reduce indirect cost reimbursement through broad disallowance of some costs. By making previously allowable research, dissemination, and professional activity costs unallowable, the proposal would shift those costs to institutions and the research infrastructure that supports federally funded work, including activities often supported through facilities and administrative cost recovery. The result would be a material change in how research costs are allocated between the federal government and recipients, even though negotiated indirect cost rates remain unchanged on paper. This has implications for the institutional infrastructure that supports research, including compliance, cybersecurity, research security, animal care, facilities, grants administration, and other research support functions. Agricultural research would be disadvantaged because of its massive physical footprint compared to standard bench-science disciplines. Furthermore, any disallowance of publication or conference costs would increase the costs to institutions, limit dissemination of federally funded research findings, and restrict professional development collaboration important to the training of future experts. These changes systematically narrow or eliminate allowability for core categories of scientific communication and engagement. Research achieves its purpose when new knowledge becomes available to other scientists, innovators, policymakers, and the public. Scientific conferences, scholarly publications, professional societies, research libraries, subscriptions, and related activities are not peripheral to that process. They are the mechanisms through which federally funded discoveries are evaluated, challenged, replicated, improved, and translated into practical benefits. These activities are not ancillary but are in fact integral to the conduct of research itself. Agricultural research is uniquely capital-intensive, requiring extensive field travel, physical community workshops, and specialized publication methods. Tightening definitions around allowable conference costs and printing will stymie the ability to deliver benefits of research to stakeholders, which will significantly slow advances in a multitude of agricultural sectors. Restricting advertising costs could hinder mandatory public notice requirements or complicate the recruitment of specialized research staff and student workers.

Restrictions on Foreign Collaborations and Expanded Oversight of Subrecipients

(§ 200.202(e), § 200.303(f), § 200.216, § 200.220, § 200.305, § 200.329, § 200.331, § 200.332)

The proposed provisions broadly restrict international engagement fragmenting the global research enterprise, diminishes U.S. scientific leadership, and impairs the ability of universities represented by members of agInnovation- West to attract and retain world-class talent. Institutions with significant subaward portfolios, affiliated entities, international collaborations, or foreign subrecipients would face increased compliance, reporting, and oversight obligations. Forcing mandatory E-Verify down to all subrecipients means members of agInnovation- West would have to monitor and enforce employment verification compliance on every local farm, ranch, or small business partner collaborating on federal grants. This would be a tremendous unfunded burden. Furthermore, a written justification for every payment request across multiple awards and subawards becomes a paperwork requirement repeated again and again, even when the payment is routine, budgeted, and already supported by financial records. The burden falls on agencies as well as recipients: more justifications mean more federal agency staff time reviewing them.

Procurement and Small Business Contracting

(§ 200.318 and § 200.321)

The proposed changes to Sections 200.318 and 200.321 risks narrowing participation in federally funded procurement opportunities, particularly for smaller businesses that may lack the resources or visibility of larger, established contractors. Over time, reduced participation limits competition, decreases supplier pool, and reduces access to innovative products and services. Moreover, encouraging participation from a broader supplier base helps strengthen local economies, promote job creation, support small business growth, and increase economic resilience within communities. Removing these considerations diminishes the broader public value generated through federal expenditures. The proposed provisions will ultimately reduce competition rather than strengthen it. Existing procurement requirements do not create preferential treatment; rather, they encourage broad outreach and ensure that qualified suppliers are aware of opportunities to competitively compete. Competition is most effective when the pool of potential suppliers is as broad as possible.

Elimination of Fixed Amount Awards and Subawards

(§ 200.201, § 200.333)

Elimination of fixed amount awards and subawards represents a significant departure from recent efforts to reduce administrative burden and costs. The proposal will increase documentation, invoicing, monitoring, and oversight requirements across the research enterprise. It also reduces the ability to manage financial risk through appropriate use of fixed amount subawards. Agricultural experiment stations frequently collaborate with local agricultural groups, tribal groups, small-scale farmers, and international partners where complex cost-reimbursement tracking is unfeasible. Institutional grant management services and sponsored program administration would face a significant increase in oversight burdens to manage compliance for these smaller agreements. Eliminating fixed amount awards and subawards would not improve accountability or protect taxpayer dollars. It would simply require more projects to be administered through cost-reimbursement structures that demand additional documentation, cost tracking, and administrative review regardless of risk or whether the work involves defined deliverables. That means more staff and time spent processing transactions and less time focused on achieving project objectives and delivering results.

In conclusion, several proposed provisions are particularly concerning. If finalized, the proposed provision changes would severely undermine the strength and independence of the American scientific enterprise, and would have harmful consequences for research and education, institutions, public health, and American research and innovation leadership and competitiveness. Further, the proposed rule changes the Uniform Guidance from “guidance” into regulatory policy, expanding OMB’s authority in policymaking for federal agencies. The proposal would expand the authority of OMB and the Executive Branch and, in some cases, circumvent congressional authority.

As stewards of substantial federal research investments, we strongly support accountability, transparency, and responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars. These principles are currently embedded throughout the research enterprise—from identifying stakeholder priorities and conducting rigorous merit review to grant oversight, performance reporting, and program evaluation. We support efforts to modernize federal grant administration that improve efficiency, strengthen accountability, and reduce unnecessary administrative burden.

However, we are deeply concerned that the proposal extends well beyond codifying existing policy. We respectfully encourage OMB to revise the proposed rule in a manner that preserves scientific excellence, promotes innovation, minimizes unnecessary administrative burden, and sustains the robust federal-university partnership that has driven decades of discovery and economic prosperity.

Thank you for your careful consideration on these very important matters.

Sincerely,

Bret W. Hess
Executive Director
5890 Brittania Dr.
Reno, NV 89523
(307) 760-3319

agInnovation-West Budget FY 2026						
Revenues	Budget FY26	**March**	**April**	**May**	**July**	**AUG**
Annual Assessments						
Membership Dues	$ 103,604.18	$ 16,514.70	$ 58,463.51	$ 73,880.13	$ 88,273.36	$ 87,073.36
Total Annual Assessments	**$ 103,604.18**	**$ 16,514.70**	**$ 58,463.51**	**$ 73,880.13**	**$ 88,273.36**	**$ 87,073.36**
Event Income						
Association Event Income	$ 50,000.00	$ 28,198.82	$ 49,456.20	$ 66,553.88	$ 74,556.33	$ 74,556.33
WRAOM	$ 20,000.00					$ 969.80
Other Event Income	$ 30,000.00					
Event Sponsorships and Grants	$ -					
agInnovation Fall Meeting	$ 90,000.00				$ 23,355.55	$ 59,921.85
Total Event Income	**$ 190,000.00**	**$ 28,198.82**	**$ 49,456.20**	**$ 66,553.88**	**$ 97,911.88**	**$ 135,447.98**
Other Types of Income						
SWAG & apparel	$ -	$ 177.93	$ 177.93	$ 177.93	$ 177.93	$ 177.93
Miscellaneous Revenue	$ -					
Services (UNR Inkind)	$ -					
Total Other Types of Income	**$ -**	**$ 177.93**	**$ 177.93**	**$ 177.93**	**$ 177.93**	**$ 177.93**
Total Revenue	**$ 293,604.18**	**$ 44,891.45**	**$ 108,097.64**	**$ 140,611.94**	**$ 186,363.17**	**$ 222,699.27**
Contracted Services						
Accounting Fees	$ 750.00	$ 14.78	$ 14.78	$ 754.78	$ 754.78	$ 754.78
Outside Contract Services	$ 10,000.00					
Web Management	$ 3,000.00					
Total Contracted Services Total	**$ 13,750.00**	**$ 14.78**	**$ 14.78**	**$ 754.78**	**$ 754.78**	**$ 754.78**
Expenses						
Business Sponsorships (NCFAR & ACE)	$ 5,000.00		$ 3,300.00	$ 3,300.00	$ 3,300.00	$ 3,300.00
Business Registration Fees	$ 40.00	$ 27.25	$ 27.25	$ 27.25	$ 27.25	$ 27.25
Total Business Expenses	**$ 5,040.00**	**$ 27.25**	**$ 3,327.25**	**$ 3,327.25**	**$ 3,327.25**	**$ 3,327.25**
Operations						
Postage, Mailing Service	$ 300.00					
Office Equipment	$ 500.00					
Software and Software Subscript	$ 1,800.00	$ 810.00	$ 1,086.00	$ 1,086.00	$ 1,289.39	$ 1,421.39
Supplies	$ 600.00		$ 87.68	$ 87.68	$ 87.68	$ 130.55
Telephone and Internet	$ 900.00					
Total Operations	**$ 4,100.00**	**$ 810.00**	**$ 1,173.68**	**$ 1,173.68**	**$ 1,377.07**	**$ 1,551.94**
Other Types of Expenses						
Association SWAG	$ 6,000.00					
Other Types of Expenses	$ -					
Total Other Types of Expenses	**$ 6,000.00**	**$ -**	**$ -**	**$ -**	**$ -**	**$ -**
Program Expenses (off set costs)						
Association Meetings Spring, Summer, Fall	$ 50,000.00	$ 5,486.25	$ 9,971.92	$ 11,232.83	$ 52,165.38	$ 95,324.43
WRAOM	$ 20,000.00					
Other Events Conferences	$ 30,000.00					
agInnovation Meetings	$ 90,000.00					$ 5,396.69
NERAOC	$ -					
Total Program Expenses	**$ 190,000.00**	**$ 5,486.25**	**$ 9,971.92**	**$ 11,232.83**	**$ 52,165.38**	**$ 100,721.12**
Travel						
Guest Travel & Meetings	$ 5,000.00		$ 168.07	$ 225.32	$ 897.02	$ 2,095.40
Registration Fees- Conference, Convention, Meeti	$ 10,000.00	$ 1,975.00	$ 1,975.00	$ 2,475.00	$ 3,474.00	$ 3,474.00
Staff Travel	$ 45,000.00	$ 11,031.40	$ 12,583.64	$ 13,633.34	$ 16,016.15	$ 22,243.80
Total Travel and Meetings	**$ 60,000.00**	**$ 13,006.40**	**$ 14,726.71**	**$ 16,333.66**	**$ 20,387.17**	**$ 27,813.20**
Total Expenses	**$ 278,890.00**	**$ 19,344.68**	**$ 29,214.34**	**$ 32,822.20**	**$ 78,011.65**	**$ 134,168.29**
Profit/Loss	**$ 14,714.18**	**$ 25,546.77**	**$ 78,883.30**	**$ 107,789.74**	**$ 108,351.52**	**$ 88,530.98**
Bank Statement Balance		$ 244,611.57	$ 297,948.10	$ 326,854.54	$ 323,569.80	$ 315,843.91

Item 6.0
Agenda Item: Progress on Administrative Advisor Openings
Presenter: Bret Hess
Action: Discussion

AA Project Leaders Needed 09.08.2026

ag-West-6	N.Marianas-1	Alaska-0
Arizona-1	Nevada-3	Hawaii-0
CA-2	NM-4	Micro-0
Colorado-6	Oregon- 7	Am S.- 0
Guam-1	Utah- 6	Wyoming-0
Idaho-3	Washington-11	OPEN- 4
Montana-5		Pending-2

1	**W5186**	Variability, Adaptation and Management of Nematodes Impacting Crop Production and Trade	Parwinder recommended-Kevin to tbd- JH 7/2	10/01/2023-9/30/2028
2	**WERA1021**	**Spotted Wing Drosophila Biology, Ecology, and Management**		10/01/2022 - 09/30/2027
3	**W3193**	**Poisonous Plants: Impact, Ecology, and Management**		10/01/2025-09/30/2030
4	**WERA1008**	**The Rangelands Partnership as a Community of Practice**	Ashley Stokes? TBD BH	10/01/2021-09/30/2026
1	**WERA77**	**Managing Invasive Weeds in Wheat**	New WSU Endowed chair-Position to be filled TBD JH with Holly 7/7	10/01/2024-9/30/2029
2	**W5122**	**Adam Chicco as AA after Pritsos retire**		

Current List of AA's

Barbara Petty (Retiring) WERA1008
Bill Payne
Bret Hess
Chris Pritsos (Retiring) W5045, WERA1024, W5122
Darren Haver
Darrin Boss
David Gang
Derek McLean
Doreen Hauser-Lindstrom
Ed Martin
Eric Belasco
Gene Kelly
Glenda Humiston
Holly Neibergs
Holly Ober
Jennifer Thompson
Lara Prihodko
Leslie Edgar
Naidu Rayapati
Patty Coleman
Paul Johnson
Rachael Leon Guerrero
Ricardo Ramirez
Ryan Thum
Scott Jones
Shawn Donkin
Sieg Snapp
Sreekala Bajwa
Troy Bauder
Vicki McCracken

August 24, 2026

Dear Dr. Bajwa,

The partnership between agInnovation and the APLU's Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources (FANR) Office is critically important to the Land-grant mission. FANR connects the APLU to the Land-grant food, agriculture, and natural resources community. agInnovation and the regional associations connect FANR to the institutions, scientists, and programs that carry out that Land-grant mission.

In short, we seek a stronger, more accountable relationship with FANR and share the following three requests.

1. **Establish a formal mechanism for agInnovation to provide input as part of the annual performance evaluation of the FANR Vice President (VP).**
2. **Provide agInnovation with the opportunity to contribute to the development of the FANR VP position description and performance expectations.**
3. **Establish a formal mechanism for agInnovation to provide input during the search process for future FANR VPs.**

Annual Performance Feedback. Because the FANR VP and his office works closely with agInnovation and the regional research associations, we believe agInnovation can provide valuable perspectives that complement APLU's broader evaluation process.

Our feedback would focus on, for example, FANR's effectiveness in understanding and representing Land-grant research priorities; engaging agInnovation and the regional research associations in meaningful and timely ways; facilitating two-way communication and information sharing; coordinating activities with member needs; fostering productive partnerships across the Land-grant system and with key stakeholders; and advancing shared national priorities.

We recommend that this feedback be considered as one component of APLU's annual performance evaluation of the FANR VP and evaluated in the context of the responsibilities, priorities, and performance expectations established for the position. Because the VP establishes the strategic direction and leadership of the FANR Office, the feedback should also consider the effectiveness of the FANR Office in serving the Land-grant research community. Equally important, this process would help identify opportunities for both FANR and agInnovation to become even stronger partners in advancing the Land-grant mission.

FANR VP Position Description and Performance Expectations. We also respectfully request the opportunity to provide input during the development or periodic revision of the FANR VP position

description and the position's performance expectations. Because FANR serves as a key partner to agInnovation and the Land-grant research enterprise, we believe the position's responsibilities, competencies, priorities, and performance expectations should reflect the needs of this community.

FANR VP Search Process. We also request that agInnovation be formally represented or provided another meaningful mechanism for input—during the search process for the next FANR Vice President, when that opportunity arises. Such engagement would help ensure that the leadership qualities, experience, competencies, and collaborative approach sought in the next VP align with the needs of agInnovation, its member institutions, and the broader Land-grant system.

Together, these recommendations establish a continuous framework for partnership from providing ongoing feedback that supports continuous improvement, to define expectations for FANR, and informing the selection of future leadership. We believe this framework will strengthen communication, transparency, mutual accountability, and strategic alignment between FANR and the Land-grant research community.

We also recognize that the relationship between FANR and agInnovation is one component of the broader partnership between FANR and the Board on Agriculture Assembly (BAA). The Board of Directors may wish to consider whether similar opportunities for stakeholder input would benefit the other BAA sections and the Board of Directors, providing APLU leadership with a more comprehensive perspective on FANR's effectiveness and opportunities to strengthen collaboration across the Land-grant mission.

Our request: that the BAA Board of Directors review, endorse, and formally forward our recommendations to the APLU President Dr. Waded Cruzado. Further, we ask that the Board consider whether a broader input framework across all BAA sections would strengthen FANR's accountability and partnership with the Land-grant system.

We appreciate your leadership and welcome the chance to discuss this further with you and the Board. Thank you for your leadership and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

agInnovation Chair—Chandra Reddy

Item 8.6
Agenda Item: NE response to OSTP Report
Presenter: Shawn Donkin
Action: Discussion

Explanatory Notes for agInnovation Northeast from Rick Rhodes, Executive Director

This summarizes OSTP Director Michael Kratsios' newly released report, Science: A New Golden Age, and flags the elements most relevant to the State Agricultural Experiment Station system and Land-grant research enterprise. While the report celebrates the creation of Land-grant universities it simultaneously advances an investment framework that differs fundamentally from the rationale on which those Land-grant institutions were created. Herein, I highlight the report's central omission: a coherent rationale for science conducted for the public good rather than for a defined commercial or mission payoff. This gap has direct implications for how we position our (agInnovation and agInnovation Northeast) advocacy over the coming year.

What the Report Is?

- The report was released on July 21, 2026, by OSTP Director Michael Kratsios to President Trump; 123 pages.
- It's billed by the White House as the first comprehensive rethinking of U.S. science policy in over 80 years, explicitly positioned as this generation's answer to Vannevar Bush's 1945 report, Science, the Endless Frontier (this is the reprinted version in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the writing of the document).
- The report is organized around four pillars tied to a March 2025 presidential directive to Kratsios.
- It was released alongside a White House Fiscal Year 2028 R&D Priorities Memorandum, co-signed by Kratsios and OMB Director Russ Vought, which converts the report's recommendations into directives to federal agencies. Agencies must submit implementation action plans within 90 days (roughly mid-October 2026) and reflect the guidance in FY2028 budget submissions.
- The report articulates a new core policy direction: shift federal research agencies toward operating more like venture investors than grant administrators, with a flagship AI-for-science initiative (e.g., the "Genesis Mission"), a reallocation of funding toward individual investigators and mission-driven organizations, and de-emphasis of traditional peer review and life sciences funding relative to AI and the physical sciences.

The Public Good Gap

The report's framing device is worth considering: it explicitly invokes the establishment of Land-grant universities alongside the founding of DARPA and the emergence of venture capital as a precedent for the kind of institutional reinvention it is now calling for. That's notable, because Land-grant universities and the Hatch Act/experiment station system were built on precisely the premise the report seems to sideline: that publicly funded research whose value is diffuse, regional, and non-proprietary is a legitimate and necessary category of federal investment in its own right, not merely a feeder for commercializable IP. The experiment station system exists not because public research is morally preferable to private research, but because markets consistently underinvest in research whose benefits are broadly shared, long-term, and difficult to privatize.

A venture-investor model answers the question “will this generate a return?” It does not answer “does the public need this even if no one can capture the return?” More fundamentally, the report leaves largely unanswered a different question: “why does federal science funding matter when the benefits cannot be privately captured?" Unlike time-limited mission programs, the agricultural experiment stations maintain long-lived scientific capacity as demonstrated by the nearly 140 years of continuous Federal investment in the Hatch Act of 1887. This long-term, capacity funding preserves people, facilities, datasets, research farms, and institutional memory: national assets.

Independent commentary on the OSTP report has converged on a related critique: several reviews describe the report's core recommendation as shifting research dollars from universities toward industry, primarily technology and AI firms. Likewise, the report does not reconcile with the administration's own proposed FY2027 budget, which would cut NSF funding by roughly 53 percent alongside reductions at other science agencies. One review went further, characterizing the document as a blueprint that reads less like Bush's public-interest case for federal science and more like a private-equity justification for restructuring an institution around what a management consultant would call inefficiency with the university system. The university-based research model, including the Land-grant system, is among the institutional structures most directly challenged by the report's recommendations.

None of this means the report lacks merit. Its emphasis on cutting administrative burden, diversifying funding mechanisms, and taking on ambitious mission-driven science tracks with things we've said for years. The concern is narrower and more structural: without an explicit “public good” rationale sitting alongside the venture-capital rationale, our stations' work risks being read by OMB and appropriators as a legacy cost center rather than the category of research the venture model was never designed to fund.

The future federal science enterprise requires both venture-oriented investments that accelerate breakthrough technologies and sustained public investments that maintain the scientific infrastructure markets cannot provide. These are complementary, not competing roles.

Implications for agInnovation Northeast

- Messaging: our advocacy this year should make the "public good" case explicitly and by name, rather than assuming it's understood. "Public good" and "regional public value" are not currently load-bearing terms in the administration's own framework, we need to supply them.
- Timing: the 90-day agency action-plan deadline (~mid-October 2026) is a real near-term forcing function. USDA/NIFA's implementation plan is worth watching closely and may be an opening for direct engagement before it's finalized.
    - How will the NIFA interpret the venture-investor model?
    - Will NIFA redefine merit review?
    - What is the fate of capacity funds? Will capacity funds be viewed as strategic investment or as legacy funding?
    - Will NIFA implementation plans distinguish "public good" research from commercially oriented research?
- Budget context: the report's silence on the proposed FY2027 NSF cuts is a genuine vulnerability in the administration's own narrative useful to flag in Hill conversations, since it undercuts the report's credibility on its own terms.
- Coalition: this is a natural point of alignment with APLU and other Land-grant-adjacent associations, who are likely reading the report the same way.

Suggested Next Step

I'd propose drafting a short statement (two to three paragraphs) that makes the "public good" argument directly, anchored in the report's own Land-grant reference, for use in future conversations and possibly as a formal response if OSTP opens a comment channel during the 90-day implementation window.

Independent Commentary:

Nietzel, Michael T. 2026. White House Science Report Calls For Reducing University Research Funding. Forbes, July 23, 2026. https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaeltnietzel/2026/07/23/white-house-science-report-calls-for-reducing-university-research-funding/

Flavelle, Christopher and Stolberg, Sheryl G. 2026. Trump's Plan for Science: More Money for A.I., Less for Universities. New York Times, July 22, 2026. https://www.nytimes.com/2026/07/22/us/politics/trump-research-funding-artificial-intelligence.html

Mervis, Jeffrey. 2026. White House report calls for big changes to 'calcified' U.S. science system. Science, July 22, 2026. https://www.science.org/content/article/white-house-report-

calls-big-changes-calcified-u-s-science-system?__cf_chl_tk=f6ivs5ugRJAw.g3KjCWkbmkAgFmB2Jvn83vBH_H5ZWY-1784811145-1.0.1.1-dJnMdht12yZ1l.NFo7Gq.KJ2vtDim2LaLzeVtwrFvGM

Timmer, John. 2026. White House report says Trump can usher in a "new golden age" of science. ARS Technica. July 23, 2026. https://arstechnica.com/science/2026/07/white-house-report-says-trump-can-usher-in-a-new-golden-age-of-science/

Oza, Anil. 2026. White House offers its science blueprint: More AI, less life sciences. Stat, July 24, 2026. https://www.statnews.com/2026/07/24/science-new-golden-age-report-draws-mixed-reaction/

Showing the Value of Experiment Stations to Their Local Communities

A Draft Discussion Document — Prepared for ag-Innovation West by WRDC

This is a draft and not a finished plan. The goal of this document is to help identify what areas we will consider in the evaluation. Please use it as a guide to talk it through together, not to approve it. We want your reactions, your disagreements, and your ideas.

1. What You Asked Us to Do

You asked WRDC to build a tool that Experiment Station directors across the West, and maybe the whole country, could use to show the value and benefits a station provides to its local community. Not just "we do science," but something that shows real, everyday value to the people who live nearby.

That is a good goal, but it is also a bigger job than it sounds like at first. Before we can build the tool, we need to agree on what it is supposed to show.

2. Why This Is Harder Than It Looks

"Benefit to the community" is not one thing. Money is one kind of benefit. Knowledge and technical help are another. A sense of local pride and belonging is another. Land and resource stewardship is another. A single instrument cannot measure all of these well at once. For example, a tool built to hold up in a budget hearing looks very different from a tool built to capture what a community feels about its station. So the first decision is not "what questions do we ask." It is **"what kind of benefit are we trying to show, to whom, and for what purpose."**

3. Four Possible Modules

Below are four different building blocks. They are not competing choices. They answer different questions and can all be used, but they need to be understood as separate modules, not blended into one.

Module A — Community and Belonging

This module treats the station as a gathering place where 4-H kids show livestock, where teachers bring classes, where neighbors run into each other.

Bottom line:

This module answers: "Does the community feel connected to the station, and does the station feel like it belongs to them?"

	Module A: Community and Belonging	Strength / Limit
Shows	Event attendance, school and 4-H partnerships, volunteer involvement, sense of local ownership	Builds public goodwill and political support; resonates emotionally
Data needed	Attendance counts, partner lists, surveys on community sentiment, anecdotes	Sentiment is hard to measure precisely; surveys need care to avoid bias
Who does the work	Station staff, local volunteers, sometimes a community survey partner	Feasible for most stations, but sentiment work benefits from outside help
What it misses	Dollar value, technical impact, whether belonging translates into real support (funding, advocacy)	Warm feelings don't always show up as votes, dollars, or policy wins

Can WRDC develop this instrument?

Yes, we can develop a first version of this instrument, but we will need to know how the stations interact with the community to design the instrument, i.e., what are the main contact points that already exist? (Field days, 4-H partnerships, school visits, board seats, land leases with neighbors, etc.). We will also need to partner with a sociologist.

Module B — Knowledge and Help

This module looks at the station as a source of answers, the questions producers actually bring in, the trials that get run because someone asked, and the problems that get solved for real operations.

Bottom line:

This module answers: "Did the station help solve a real problem or make a better decision?"

	Module B: Knowledge and Help	Strength / Limit
Shows	Research results applied on real farms/ranches, advice given, problems solved	Concrete, relatable stories; easy for the public to understand
Data needed	Producer interviews, testimonials, sign-in sheets, follow-up surveys, before-and-after comparisons, units affected	Time-consuming to collect well; relies on people remembering and sharing; needs multi-year data
Who does the work	Station staff and extension agents	Doable in-house, but easy to under-record
What it misses	Dollar value of the advice, long-term or indirect effects, silent adopters who never report back	Doesn't quantify scale. One dramatic story can't stand in for everyone helped

Can WRDC develop this instrument?

Limited. This falls outside WRDC's core area of expertise. If this module is pursued, it would need an expert on the research topic and a program-evaluation partner to design and run the instrument to measure change in knowledge, adoption, and production change/benefits. WRDC can provide a behavioral economist to support this instrument development.

Module C — Land and Resources

This module tracks the station's footprint on the land itself, water savings, soil health, and conservation practices it has tested or spread, and how those help the area hold up under drought, fire, or pests.

Bottom line:

This module answers: "Has the station made the local land and resources more resilient?"

	Module C: Land and Resources	Strength / Limit
Shows	Water and soil improvements, conservation practices adopted, resilience to drought, fire, pests	Ties directly to urgent regional risks; strong with agencies and grant funders
Data needed	Soil/water monitoring data, adoption rates of practices, before-and-after comparisons	Needs multi-year data and often lab or field testing to be credible
Who does the work	Station scientists, sometimes with NRCS, conservation districts, or university partners	Requires technical expertise; benefits from outside agency collaboration
What it misses	Immediate economic value, human relationships, whether practices actually spread beyond the station	Environmental gains can take years to show up and are hard to attribute cleanly to the station alone

Can WRDC develop this instrument?

No. This falls outside WRDC's core area of expertise. Even a "light" version depends on soil/water monitoring and field science that WRDC does not have in-house. It would require station scientists and outside partners (NRCS, conservation districts), multi-year field data collection, and interpretation.

Module D — Traditional Economic Impact Study (using a SAM)

A SAM, or Social Accounting Matrix, is a detailed map of how money moves through a local economy: who earns it, who spends it, and where it goes next. Analysts use it to estimate the ripple effect of the station's spending and jobs on the wider local economy: for every dollar the station spends, how many more dollars circulate in town.

Bottom line:

This module answers: "How much money does the station put into the local economy, once you count the ripple effects?"

	Module D: Economic Impact (SAM)	Strength / Limit
Shows	Dollars, jobs, and spending ripple effects	Very credible with economists and legislators
Data needed	Detailed financial and employment data; specialized modeling software (IMPLAN)	Needs technical skill and real budget/time
Who does the work	Usually an economist with experience in SAM	Hard for every station to do on its own
What it misses	Trust, pride, knowledge sharing, quality of life	Does not capture the human side of "benefit"

Can WRDC develop this instrument?

Limited. This requires converting station budget/spending data into a Social Accounting Vector. We can provide general guidance on how to do this conversion, but each experiment station will need to contract an economist with direct SAM/IMPLAN experience to work with their specific budget and spending data. It will also require buying access to IMPLAN data for the Experiment Station area of influence. WRDC can supply names of faculty with this expertise.

4. The Risk of Choosing "All of the Above"

It is tempting to say "let's measure everything." But "all of the above" creates three real problems, and it is worth naming them clearly before we go further:

- *Too big to finish*. A tool that tries to measure money, knowledge change, belonging, and land all at once, in full detail, for every station, is a multi-year research project, not something a director can fill out.
- *Stations will not be comparable*. If every station picks and chooses what to report, one station's "benefit" cannot be compared to another's. That weakens the case when talking to legislators, because the numbers won't line up region to region.

- *The message gets blurry*. A one-page story is powerful. A 40-page report with everything in it usually isn't read at all. More detail is not always more convincing.

5. Effort and Cost

There are two different paths, and it is worth naming both plainly so the choice is made on purpose, not by accident.

	A Lighter First Version	A Fully Tested Instrument
What it is	A well-organized set of questions covering the main areas of benefit	A rigorously tested tool, checked for accuracy and consistency across states
Timeline	Can be drafted in a matter of months	Realistically two to three years, start to finish
Team needed	WRDC plus input from a few directors and experts	Economists, sociologists, statisticians, Experiment Station Scientists, and a specialist in building and testing measurement tools
What it proves	Gives stations a solid, organized way to tell their story	Gives stations results that can stand up to real scrutiny, including the "compared to what" question
Main risk	May read as well-organized advocacy rather than proof	Costs more, takes longer, and needs a funding source

Neither option is wrong. But ag-Innovation West should choose on purpose which one it wants to build because the two paths lead to very different projects.

6. Questions to Help You Decide

We hope these questions will facilitate your conversation and help you decide which module(s) are most relevant for you.

1. Who reads this first? A state legislator, a county commissioner, a university leader, or the local community itself? Pick one main reader; you can still speak to others later.
2. What is pushing this request right now? Is there a specific worry, like a budget cut or a station closing, that this tool needs to help answer?
3. If you could only build and test one module this year, which would you pick first?

4. How important is the "compared to what" question? Do you need the instrument to show what would be lost without the station, or is showing current benefit enough for now?
5. Are you okay with every station reporting the same core set of items, even if it means leaving out something special about their own station? Or is it more important that each station tells its own unique story, even if that makes comparison harder?
6. Do you want a short, one-page result (a "snapshot") that a director can hand to someone in five minutes, or a longer, fuller report?
7. Should the evidence come only from the station itself (what it did), or also from the community (what people actually felt or noticed)?

7. One Real Example

Think of one specific producer, family, or event from the last year or two that best shows why your station matters. Describe it in a sentence or two. Real examples like this can shape the instrument more than any abstract discussion.

Item 10.0
Agenda Item: AWE Implementation
Presenter: Shawn Donkin
Action: Discussion

Alliance for Western Excellence: Implementation and Collective Action Recommendations for 2026-27

June 12, 2026

Introduction

The Alliance for Western Excellence strategic framework was adopted in January 2026. Throughout spring 2026, the academic programs, agInnovation and Extension sections facilitated discussions, surveys and other activities designed to surface specific proposals and projects for collective action.

The AWE steering committee reviewed and summarized this input to support discussion and decisions at the Western Region Joint Summer Meeting in June 2026 related to general implementation and specific collective actions.

This proposed approach for 2026-27 emphasizes accelerating progress through a small number of highly visible, shared regional priorities supported by coordinated action, common metrics and reporting, strong partnerships, and collective accountability. Achieving this will require leaders at all levels to actively champion and commit to a systems-change mindset grounded in shared leadership.

See proposed tracking sheet for an overall summary.

Implementation governance and recommendations at-a-glance

<table>
<tr><td>Outcomes</td><td colspan="3">Strategic imperatives: Increased awareness, support and capacity</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Collective work</td><td colspan="3">2026-27 recommended collective actions and initiatives</td></tr>
<tr><td>Innovation challenge for ag and food systems (Rec. 2)</td><td>Regional framework for shared metrics (Rec. 3)</td><td>Shared competency and outcomes framework for APS (Rec. 4)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Support</td><td colspan="3">Steering committee</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Catalog of existing resources, multistate projects, regional efforts, and promising practices that could scale (Rec. 1)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Decisions</td><td colspan="3">Shared leadership, shared governance
W-AHS, W-CARET, agInnovation-West, W-APS, WEDA</td></tr>
<tr><td>Foundation</td><td colspan="3">Alliance for Western Excellence strategic framework</td></tr>
</table>

Implementation recommendations

These recommendations establish a streamlined, sustainable framework for implementation and governance that minimizes administrative burden, promotes action-oriented decision-making, maintains shared awareness and visibility, leverages existing systems and processes, and enables sections to act consistently in alignment with AWE through leadership and membership transitions.

- Adopt proposed governance structure (Appendix A).
- Reach consensus on what requires formal approval (e.g., unanimous approval via section vote) vs. what sections are empowered to do on their own with expectation for visibility/coordination.
- Form and charge steering committee (Appendix B).
- Discuss how formal AWE initiatives will be resourced. If resources beyond in-kind are available, establish process for how those should be requested and approved.

Collective action recommendations

This section presents the highest-priority proposals for collective action beginning in summer 2026, identified through sections' spring 2026 planning efforts as having strong cross-section alignment, support, and momentum. These are summarized in the proposed tracking sheet. See also Appendix C for a summary of spring 2026 section input.

Recommendation 1: Maintain shared catalog of existing efforts.

Proposed lead: *Steering committee*

To start, this takes the form of a simple, shared spreadsheet (accessible by all sections) that briefly lists existing multistate or regional efforts, promising practices with potential to scale, and links to additional info if applicable. The purpose is to support broader awareness of existing efforts, reduce duplication and ensure connection. Extension's spring input provided a basis. Input from research and academics is needed to ensure it is reasonably complete.

Decision needed: Support (section chairs confirm)

Next step:

- Include in charge to steering committee.

Recommendation 2: Form a collective action team charged to design and implement a grand challenge/innovation challenge focused on "strengthening agricultural and food systems."

Proposed sponsor: *agInnovation-West*

This team would operate within the approved governance structure and have access to all relevant information from sections' spring planning.

Decision needed: Approve (section vote required)

Next steps:

- Section chairs approve sponsor recommendation; agInnovation-West names sponsor.
- All sections nominate potential team lead/co-leads and members.
- Sponsor to confirm team lead(s) and membership by September.
- All sections offer input on charge, expected outcomes and deliverables, and ideas for resourcing beyond in-kind.
- Team delivers scoping/action plan via sponsor to steering team for approval by November.
- Charge steering committee to support sponsor in formation of action team and maintain accountability for progress until team leads are confirmed.

Recommendation 3: Form a collective action team charged to establish a regional framework for shared metrics and collective impact tracking.

Proposed sponsor: *WEDA*

This team would operate within the approved governance structure and have access to all relevant information from sections' spring planning and state/national work. The framework should align with AWE as well as current APLU BAA efforts for national shared metrics, including the capacity funding initiative and pillars work. We recommend prioritizing a short list (1-3) of the highest-priority metrics across each of AWE's strategic imperatives and four signature areas. We further recommend working with existing process and systems to the extent possible. At this time, we do not see consolidation to a single reporting platform as a viable option, or something the West should tackle alone.

Decision needed: Approve (section vote required)

Next steps:

- Section chairs approve sponsor recommendation; WEDA names sponsor.

- All sections nominate potential team lead/co-leads and members.
- Sponsor to confirm team lead(s) and membership by September.
- All sections offer input on charge, expected outcomes and deliverables, and ideas for resourcing beyond in-kind.
- Team delivers scoping/action plan via sponsor to steering team for approval by November.
- Charge steering committee to support sponsor in formation of action team and maintain accountability for progress until team leads are confirmed.

Recommendation 4: Support a W-APS initiative to establish a shared competency and outcomes framework.

Proposed lead: *W-APS*

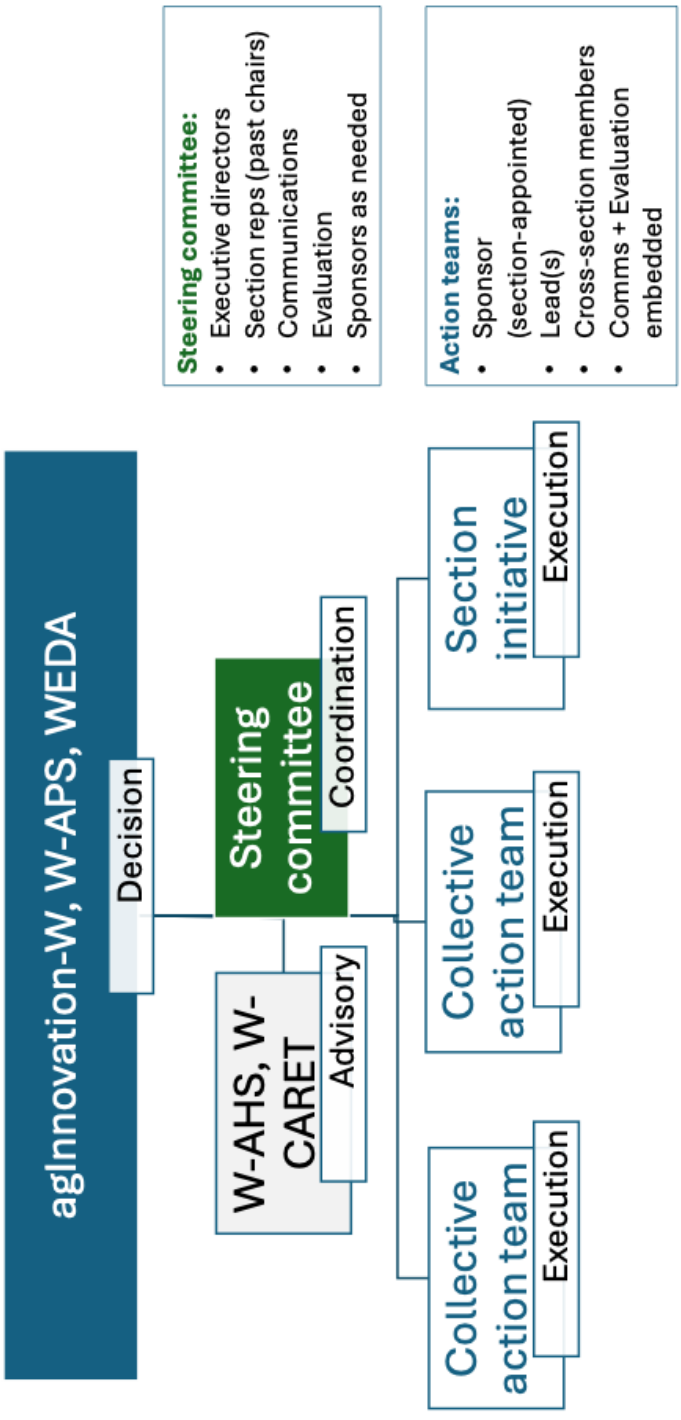
W-APS can strengthen regional collaboration by working from a shared definition of workforce readiness, aligned learning outcomes, and a consistent reporting framework. This effort is academic-forward but requires input from all sections, as well as evaluation and communication perspectives.

Decision needed: Support (section chairs confirm)

Next step:

- W-APS will continue internal section work, coordinate with their steering committee rep to solicit input from other sections, and provide progress updates.

Appendix A: Proposed governance structure



Appendix B: Steering committee charge (proposed for adoption)

Purpose

The AWE Steering Committee serves as the central coordinating body for implementation of the Alliance for Western Excellence (AWE) strategic framework. It ensures alignment, accountability, and momentum across sections and collective action efforts. This group provides recommendations and coordianted support; formal approval of collective actions remains with section leadership.

The committee should act with a bias toward action, clarity and simplicity and leverage existing systems and processes whenever possible.

Core Responsibilities

Coordinate implementation and communication

- Serve as the hub for AWE implementation, maintaining shared visibility of priorities, activities, and progress.
- Manage a common set of tools (e.g., tracking sheet, shared workspace) using existing platforms accessible to all sections.
- Develop and maintain a shared catalog of regional efforts, promising practices, and scalable initiatives to reduce duplication and strengthen collaboration.
- Maintain clear, consistent communication across sections through executive directors and designated representatives to ensure alignment across research, extension, and academic programs.

Support collective action, progress and accountability

- Provide guidance and coordination for approved collective action teams.
- Develop and maintain standard templates for team charters, including outcomes, deliverables, timelines, and reporting expectations.
- Support sponsors in forming teams and ensuring cross-section representation.
- Collect and review quarterly updates from action teams and section initiatives.
- Monitor overall progress against AWE priorities.
- Report regularly to section leadership to inform decision-making.

Leverage evaluation and communications capacity

- Meaningfully engage WREN to define shared metrics, establish baselines, and support evaluation planning aligned with AWE priorities.
- Meaningfully engage W-Comm to develop and implement a coordinated communications framework, messaging, and materials.
- Hold both groups accountable for deliverables and integration into AWE efforts.

Appendix C: Spring 2026 section input summary

Work underway

Extension began to catalog multistate, regional, and scalable state-level initiatives, organized by AWE *signature focus areas* and relevant *collective actions*. Currently maintained across four separate documents, the inventory is intended to increase visibility of existing work, foster collaboration, and reduce duplication. To fully realize its value, it will require additional input from research and academic partners and should be streamlined into a simple, shared format that is accessible and easy to maintain.

New or scaled efforts

agInnovation-West prioritized recommendations for **collective actions** *within the ag/food systems and natural resources signature focus areas*, along with *notes on regional practices to adopt and* a *starting list of experts who could contribute* to a team tasked to work on each of these.

- Collective innovation challenge
- Shared regional data and resource hubs
- Grand challenges task force
- Use impact narratives and storytelling
- Standardize and simplify reporting tools
- Outcome-oriented reporting

Following steering committee review, the "grand/innovation challenge" emerged as the strongest candidate for externally visible, high-impact collective action with broad cross-section support. The remaining elements — impact narratives, streamlined and outcome-oriented reporting, and standardized tools — are complementary and closely aligned with AWE strategic imperatives and national efforts. These are already in progress through W-Comm and WREN efforts; accordingly, they are incorporated into Recommendation #3 and reinforced through the steering committee's charge.

Extension surfaced a **"Top 10" list of projects/initiatives** with notes on *which strategic imperatives and collective actions they support* and *what involvement from research and academics is needed to make them successful*.

These inputs collectively highlight a set of overlapping priorities focused primarily on increasing awareness and building capacity across the region, with only a few tied to specific signature focus areas. Those with broad, shared support have been incorporated into the final prioritized recommendations.

WEDA Conference Top 11 list (in order/grouped)	WEDA Conference Top 10 themes (unordered/grouped/matched)
Establish a Tribal College Extension Workgroup (1) Full Integration of 1994 and Insular Institutions into AWE (4)	Tribal College & 1994 Extension Systems Strengthening Full Integration of 1862, 1890, 1994 & Insular Institutions
Use a Shared Reporting System or Shared Metrics (2) Shared Metrics for Shared Goals (6)	One Unified Regional Reporting & Evaluation System Shared Metrics with Regionwide Impact Goals AI-Enabled Impact Dashboards & Reporting
Identify Shared Core Topics Across Research, Academics, and Extension for Online Training (3) Western Region Online Certification platform for External Professional Development (11)	Western Region Online Extension Training & Certification Platform
Real research and Extension integration; find champions (5)	
Western Water Center (Water, Climate and Fire) (7) Western Region Agricultural Robotics Challenge (10)	Western Water, Climate & Fire Resilience Initiatives (Grand Challenges)
Standardize Impact Reporting and Training (8)	Comprehensive Impact Storytelling & Communications Infrastructure
Cross-State Extension Assignments or Exchange/Fellowship Program (9)	Regional Exchange, Sabbatical & Cross-State Appointment Programs
	Dedicated Regional Funding, Development & Advocacy Infrastructure

Academic programs section prioritized **four flagship initiatives**, and a supporting implementation strategy for APS to lead within W-APS, align with AWE, and deliver visible, scalable outcomes. This work is primarily contained in the *future-ready learners and leaders signature focus area*, with strong alignment to the *ag and food systems focus area*.

- Shared Competency & Outcomes Framework
  (Important note: Academic programs cannot collaborate regionally without a shared definition of 'workforce-ready', aligned learning outcomes, and comparable reporting structure.)
- Regional Internship & Workforce Consortium
- Shared Resource Hub (curriculum, labs, tools)
- Pilot-to-Scale Innovation Program (microgrants + pilots)

Implementation strategy: Standardize → Share → Connect to Workforce → Pilot → Scale → Demonstrate Impact

The steering committee envisioned the shared competency/outcome framework to be best accomplished by an APS working group with input from other sections. The pilot-to-scale concept has the greatest potential to include within Recommendation #2.

AWE Volunteers

Guam

1. Collective Innovation Challenge
Dr. Christianah Oladoye—Tropical Soil Science
Dr. Richard Singh— Pomology and hematology
Dr. Alfred Daniel Johnson—Entomology

2. Shared Regional Data and Resource Hubs
Dr. Gregory Hart—-Data Science and Bioinformatics

3. Grand Challenges Task Force
Dr. Bob Barber—Agricultural Economics and agriforestry
Dr. Glenn Dulla—Biosecurity, invasive species management, and plant pathology.

New Mexico

- Strengthening agricultural and food systems
  Kevin Lombard klombard@nmsu.edu Human Dimensions of Horticulture, Horticulture and Public Health, arid-land farming, soil chemistry
  Ivette Guzman ivguzman@nmsu.edu Vegetable Physiology and Biochemistry, Nutraceuticals and Functional Foods, Food Systems, and Organic Vegetable Production

- Stewarding natural resources

  Kelly Jones kwjones@nmsu.edu Human dimensions of conservation; Environmental economics; Evidence-based conservation; Social-ecological systems research
  Owen Burney reforestation oburney@nmsu.edu Resforestation, forest restoration, forest nurseries
  Alexander (Sam) Fernald afernald@nmsu.edu Water quality, hydrology, watershed management, Director of the Water Resource Research Institute at NMSU

Utah

1 Collective Innovation Challenge

Recommend an expert(s) who would be an effective contributor to a multi-institutional innovation challenge team that would focus on each of the two signature areas:

- Strengthening agricultural and food systems
  Melanie Stock

- Stewarding natural resources

Stefani Crabtree

2 Shared Regional Data and Resource Hubs

Recommend a data scientist(s) and/or information technology expert(s) who could work on a shared regional data and resource hub that would focus on each of the two signature areas:

- Strengthening agricultural and food systems
  Brent Chamberlin

- Stewarding natural resources
  Aishwarya Chandrasekaran
  Steven Wilcox

3 Grand Challenges Task Force

Recommend an expert(s) who could serve on interdisciplinary teams to address regional grand challenges that would focus on each of the two signature areas:

- Strengthening agricultural and food systems
  Grant Cardon

- Stewarding natural resources
  Alexis Ault
  Daniella Hirschfeld
  Wei Zhang

Item 12.1
Agenda Item: National Multistate Guidelines
Presenter: Bret Hess
Action: Discussion

Summary of Revisions to the Guidelines for Multistate Research Activities

The 2026 revisions to the Guidelines for Multistate Research Activities represent a general shift toward modernization, brevity, and operational usability compared to the current guidelines which were approved in 2006. The primary goal of these updates was to remove outdated and repetitive language while aligning the guidelines with current branding (agInnovation and its regional associations) along with current technological systems and business practices (NIMSS). **The most critical changes between the two sets of guidelines are detailed below:**

Branding and Organizational Identity

The 2026 guidelines reflect a transition in leadership and identity. While the 2006 document was developed by SAES directors in cooperation with NIFA and ESCOP (the Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy), the 2026 version is supported by agInnovation, the new national identity for the national organization and regional associations. This change is reflected throughout the document in updated references to regional associations and governance structures.

Review Form Consolidation and Consistency

As outlined in the guidelines, the number of review forms was greatly reduced, which is intended to improve the quality of proposal and project review. Review forms were also standardized across project types to ensure consistency across reviews. Many forms that were previously relegated to separate appendices (such as the proposal formats for Research Projects or Coordinating Committees) were renamed without the appendix designation to be understood more intuitively.

Enhanced Proposal Criteria

To ensure higher scientific quality and relevance, the 2026 guidelines introduced standardized and expanded proposal criteria, including more rigorous checks on stakeholder input and alignment with agInnovation Grand Challenges.

Clear Roles, Responsibilities, and Authority

Responsibilities for regional associations, Administrative Advisors, NIFA representatives, and participating institutions are more clearly defined, reinforcing regional management and oversight of multistate activities. More specifically, regional associations have transitioned from

making "recommendations" to holding final approval authority. The 2026 guidelines establish regional associations as the ultimate governing bodies for multistate research activities (excluding NRSPs), streamlining the timeline from proposal to active research.

Shift in Reporting Systems

A major technical update involves the transition between federal reporting platforms. References to REEport and CRIS have been refreshed to reflect the NIFA Reporting System (NRS). The revised guidelines clarify how NIMSS (National Information Management and Support System) workflows now integrate with the NRS.

Emphasis on Collaborative Impact

The 2026 revisions substantially increase the accountability for multistate collaboration. Under the old guidelines, annual reports often functioned as an inventory of individual state or station reports. The 2026 guidelines explicitly state: 1.) reports must include a **synthesis of group activities** rather than an inventory of individual efforts, and 2.) there is a heightened focus on **measurable outcomes and long-term impacts**—such as the adoption of new technologies or economic benefits—rather than just listing research outputs. The section on impacts was expanded to include examples.

GUIDELINES FOR MULTISTATE RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Developed by the regional associations supporting agInnovation

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GUIDELINES FOR MULTISTATE RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

PURPOSE

These guidelines are intended to provide recommendations on the organization and operation of multistate research activities.

THE MISSION OF MULTISTATE RESEARCH

The mission of the multistate research program is to support collaborative research among the 1862 Land-grant University State Agricultural Experiment Stations (SAES), 1890 Association of Research Directors (ARD), the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Cooperative Extension Service (Extension) and other partners to address high-priority issues that are beyond the capacity of a single SAES. By leveraging expertise and resources across states and organizations, the program enables more efficient, comprehensive and impactful research and research outcomes.

Click here to view the History of the Multistate Research Program

ORGANIZATION OF THE MULTISTATE RESEARCH PROGRAM

The regional associations of SAES (located within 1862 Land-grant universities) and ARD (located within 1890 Land-grant universities) directors, known as agInnovation, serve as coordinating entities for multistate research activities. The intent is to bring institutions and other external partners (industry, federal agencies, non-Land-grant institutions, international partners, etc.) together to foster collaboration and coordination, identify regional research challenges and opportunities that can be addressed through multistate efforts, and facilitate the shared use of resources and expertise. These 5 regional associations are comprised of SAES and ARD directors of the following states and territories:

1. **agInnovation North Central**: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

2. **agInnovation Northeast**: Connecticut (two stations), Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York (two stations), Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and West Virginia.

3. **agInnovation South**: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

4. **agInnovation West**: Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Micronesia, The Northern Mariana Islands, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

5. **The Association of 1890 Research Directors** represents: Alabama A&M University, Alcorn State University, Central State University, Delaware State University, Florida A&M University, Fort Valley State University, Kentucky State University, Langston University, Lincoln University, North Carolina A&T State University, Prairie View A&M University, South Carolina State University, Southern University and A&M College, Tennessee State University, Tuskegee University, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Virginia State University, and West Virginia State University.

To learn more about the regional associations, including their membership, strategic initiatives, multistate research activities, and administrative procedures, please visit the websites below. Region-specific guidance on implementing multistate research activities is available from regional association offices. It's recommended to contact each office directly for instructions and deadlines.

North Central (NC)	https://www.aginnovationnc.org/
Northeast (NE)	https://www.aginnovation-northeast.org/
South (S)	https://aginnovationsouth.org/
West (W)	https://aginnovationwest.org/
Association of 1890 Research Directors (ARD)	https://wwwcp.umes.edu/ard/

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

NIFA

The Secretary of Agriculture has delegated responsibility for administering the multistate research program to NIFA. In addition to implementing regulations, providing program oversight, and funding, NIFA is also responsible for providing a NIFA representative for each multistate research project.

Regional Research Directors' Associations

Regional associations of SAES and ARD directors provide leadership for multistate research by establishing regional priorities, managing research portfolios, and building strategic partnerships. They ensure the quality and relevance of multistate research through peer review and are responsible for approving, overseeing, and managing regional research projects. Regional offices provide guidance throughout project development, implementation, and completion.

SAES and ARD Directors

SAES and ARD directors provide leadership for the multistate research program in their respective states and are responsible for determining the most effective use of federal and non-federal resources to advance multistate research priorities and activities. SAES and ARD directors also authorize their stations' representatives to multistate research activities and document associated expenditures through appropriate reporting mechanisms. The directors also submit research performance progress reports via the NIFA Reporting System (NRS) to NIFA's Planning, Accountability, Reporting, and Staff (PARS). These reports include project initiation, project financial reports, and annual and final progress reports to document their stations' participation in, and contributions to, multistate research projects and activities.

Administrative Advisors (AA)

AAs serve as liaisons among multistate research project members, the regional association, and NIFA. Appointment and qualification to serve is at the discretion of the regional associations for each multistate research project. AAs facilitate communication, provide prospective peer reviewer contacts, as appropriate, ensure compliance with national and regional policies, support effective governance, authorize annual and other meetings, monitor fulfillment of reporting requirements, conduct mid-term evaluations of project progress, and assist committees in carrying out their business effectively.

NIFA Representative

NIFA assigns a representative to each multistate research activity. These representatives provide a national perspective on the activity, offer guidance on federal priorities and funding opportunities, and serve as a key communication link between the project and NIFA.

Regional Multistate Research/Activities Committee (MRC/MAC)

Each regional association maintains a multistate research/activities committee (or subcommittee) responsible for identifying and approving regional priorities to be addressed through multistate research, reviewing and recommending proposed multistate research activities for approval, and evaluating their progress and effectiveness.

PROJECT MEMBERSHIP

Participating members of a Multistate Activity consist of, at a minimum, SAES and/or ARD scientists, with an AA and a NIFA representative as ex-officio members. Many projects also include Extension professionals, non-Land-grant professionals, public- and private-sector partners, and international collaborators. Members are selected based on the expertise needed to achieve the project's goals and objectives.

TYPES OF MULTISTATE RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Any of the following activities may be appropriate for integration with Extension and/or Academic Programs. Extension and academic professionals may participate in these activities when

deemed appropriate by the institutional administrator responsible for multistate research, typically the College of Agriculture Dean, Agricultural Experiment Station or ARD Director, or designee. See the multistate proposal template forms for more details on expectations for each project type.

National Research Support Projects (NRSP)

This type of activity focuses on the development of enabling technologies, providing support (such as collecting, assembling, storing, and distributing materials, resources and information), or sharing facilities needed to address high-priority research needs. While these activities support and enhance research efforts, they are not primarily research projects themselves. NRSPs are eligible for national off-the-top funding of the Multistate Research Fund (MRF). Specific guidelines and instructions for NRSPs, adopted by SAES directors, are found at https://escop.info/resources/.

Multistate Research Projects (MRP)

This type of activity involves collaborative, jointly planned research that uses multistate and multidisciplinary approaches. It brings together SAES and/or ARD members, along with other partners such as the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), other colleges and universities, Extension professionals, and representatives from industry and other organizations to address research challenges that affect multiple states and often multiple regions. An MRP proposal must demonstrate the following:

1. Clearly defined, focused, and independent objectives that are not sequential in nature.
2. Direct participation by project members in accomplishing one or more of the stated objectives.
3. Involvement of multiple SAES and/or ARD affiliates and a multidisciplinary team of collaborators.
4. Responsiveness to stakeholder needs and input.
5. Successful review and recommendation through the regional peer-review process.
6. Alignment with NIFA, USDA, agInnovation, and/or regional research priorities and goals.
7. Approval by the appropriate regional association.

Multistate Research Coordinating Committees (CC) and Education/Extension and Research Activity (ERA)

Both ERAs and CCs provide opportunities for scientists, specialists, and others to work cooperatively to solve problems that concern more than one state, share research data, and coordinate research and other types of activities. As integrated activities, the membership of an ERA must incorporate research, Extension, and/or teaching professionals. CCs do not have this requirement but are distinguished by their emphasis on coordination of activities and information exchange.

Rapid Response Research Activity (RRRA, formerly 500-series)

The purpose of an RRRA is to provide a mechanism for addressing urgent crises, emerging challenges, and other time-sensitive opportunities through the multistate research framework and MRF. Activities may range from formally organized research focused on specific objectives to more informal research coordination, collaboration, or information-sharing efforts, depending on the circumstances. To establish an RRRA, a minimum of two SAES, ARD, Extension, and/or Academic Programs directors must agree to sponsor the activity. A proposal consisting of, at a minimum, an issues and justification statement and project objectives must be submitted to the regional association office. Projects are reviewed and approved in accordance with regional policies and procedures. Rapid Response Research Activities are approved for a two-year period. If warranted, the activity may later be developed and submitted for approval as a multistate research project or another type of multistate research activity through standard review and approval procedures. These projects are designated in NIMSS under the 500-series for numbering purposes to distinguish them from other research activities.

Research Advisory Committees (AC)

An advisory committee is typically composed of university department heads/chairs, or other institutional leaders, along with an AA and, in some cases, a NIFA representative. ACs provide stakeholder perspectives, technical advice, and review multistate projects for their regional associations. Operating under the authority of the regional associations, ACs serve as regional subject matter experts and help ensure the quality, relevance, and impact of multistate research activities.

Development Committees (DC)

Development Committees are established for a period of up to two years and are charged with developing the justification and proposal outline for a new 5-year multistate research activity. At least one objective of the new committee must focus on preparing and submitting a proposal to establish either an MRP, CC, or ERA. Scientists from two or more states may initiate a proposal for a DC provided it is sponsored by at least two SAES, ARD, Extension, and/or Academic Programs directors within the region. Membership consists of a sponsoring director who serves as the lead AA and supports the committee through the development and submission of the proposed activity, along with members appointed by participating research, Extension, and Academic Program directors, as appropriate.

Nomenclature of Multistate Projects and Activities

Description	Northeast Region (NE)	North Central Region (NC)	Southern Region (S)	Western Region (W)	Association of 1890 Research Directors (ARD)
National Research Support Project (NRSP)	NRSP_xx	NRSP_xx	NRSP_xx	NRSP_xx	NRSP_xx
Multistate Research Project (MRP)	NE_xxxx	NC_xxxx	S_xxxx	W_xxxx	ARD_xxxx
Coordinating Committee (CC)	NECC_xxxx	NCCC_xxxx	SCC_xxxx	WCC_xxxx	ARDCC_xxxx
Education/Extension and Research Activity (ERA)	NEERA_xxxx	NCERA_xxxx	SERA_xxxx	WERA_xxxx	ARDERA_xxxx
Rapid Response Research Activity (RRRA; formerly 500-Series)	NE_5xx	NC_5xx	S_5xx	W_5xx	ARD_5xx
Advisory Committee (AC)	NEAC_xxxx	NCAC_xxxx	SAC_xxxx	WAC_xxxx	ARDAC_xxxx
Development Committee (DC)	NEDC_xxx	NCDC_xxx	SDC_xxx	WDC_xxx	ARDDC_xxx

*Designations of “OLD” in the project designation (e.g. NC_old229, NCERA_old101, etc.) refer to expiring or terminated projects/activities and “TEMP” refers to proposals in progress or under review (e.g. NE_temp2025, WCC_temp4125, etc.)

GENERAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

To facilitate the organization and operation of the national multistate research portfolio the directors of the regional associations have agreed to the following policies and procedures.

- The portfolio of multistate projects and activities should reflect the needs and priorities of the region's stakeholders while aligning with USDA priorities. Multistate activities are managed at the regional level and coordinated nationally to address shared priorities, leverage expertise, and minimize duplication of effort across projects.
- All funding is at the discretion of each participant's SAES/ARD office. Before proceeding, prospective participants should consult with their SAES/ARD director's office on these policies and funding availability.
- Participation is open to all individuals with relevant expertise and the ability to contribute to the activity, including representatives from Land-grant and non-Land-grant institutions, industry, federal agencies, and other stakeholder groups.

- Requests to join a current multistate research activity must be approved by the administrator of the proposed member's institution; in the case of a SAES or ARD, that would be the director or their designee (for ARD, these are often the regional NIMSS system administrator for the project or the potential participant). Non-SAES or ARD participants should contact the project's regional NIMSS system administrator, indicating desire to join a multistate committee and submit the information required via the Participation Form (formerly Appendix E).
- It is the responsibility of each SAES and ARD Director to monitor their scientists' active engagement in multistate projects.
- Roles, responsibilities, and eligibility for serving as AAs are guided by a multistate activity's host regional association.
- Changes to current multistate activities must be approved by the host regional association. It is recommended that there be one standard type of governance for all multistate committees with the election of a chair, a chair-elect, and a secretary. While not required, it is recommended that officers are to be elected for a two-year term to provide continuity. Administrative guidance is provided by the assigned AA.
- All decisions should be made in an open and democratic process at the discretion of the multistate activity.
- Decisions on regional off-the-top funding to support multistate activities are determined by the sponsoring regional association of the activity.
- Records for multistate research activities are maintained through the National Information Management and Support System (NIMSS), an electronic management system that houses project information, including proposals, goals, objectives, membership records, and annual reports. NIMSS can be accessed anytime at https://www.nimss.org/.
- All identifiers and titles of multistate activities are at the discretion of the hosting regional association.
- Requests for multistate research activity extensions beyond its approved term will not be considered. With exception of DCs, RRRs, and ACs, the maximum duration time allowed of a multistate activity is five years. The host regional association is ultimately responsible for monitoring the performance and outcomes of each multistate activity and may terminate an activity before the end of its approved term at its discretion.
- All multistate activities are required to meet annually (virtual or in person) via a fully authorized meeting in NIMSS and submit a corresponding annual report within 60 days after the meeting. Reporting should follow the Annual Report Format as closely as possible, although Advisory Committees may submit meeting minutes/notes in place of a full report. Reports must be created by multistate activity members who then upload the report to NIMSS and then submit for their Administrative Advisor's (AA) approval. Future meetings cannot be officially authorized in NIMSS until the previous annual report has been fully submitted and AA approved. Termination reports are no longer required.

PROJECT APPROVAL

Upon approval of a multistate research project by the sponsoring regional association, the regional office records the approval in NIMSS. This action automatically notifies NIFA and

requests the assignment of one or more NIFA representatives to the project. For all multistate activities except NRSPs, approval by the sponsoring regional association constitutes the final required approval.

REPORTING

All multistate activities are required to meet annually (virtual or in person) via a fully authorized meeting in NIMSS and then submit a corresponding annual report within 60 days after the meeting. Reporting should follow the Annual Report Format as closely as possible, although Advisory Committees may submit meeting minutes/notes in place of a full report. The report should provide a synthesis of the committee's collaborative activities and achievements during the reporting period; it should not serve as a compilation of individual member, state, or station reports. Annual meeting minutes should also be included and clearly outline the activity's leadership succession and any formal decisions made. Reports must be created by multistate activity members who then upload the report to NIMSS and then submit for their AA's approval. Future meetings cannot be officially authorized in NIMSS until the previous annual report has been fully submitted and AA approved. Termination reports are no longer required.

RECOMMENDED COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE

Chair: The chair of the committee is responsible for organizing the meeting agenda, conducting the meeting, and assuring that task assignments are completed. It is encouraged that the chair be elected for at least a two-year term to provide continuity. Chairs are eligible for reelection.

Chair-elect: The chair-elect normally succeeds the chair and is expected to support the chair by carrying out duties assigned by the chair. The chair-elect serves as the chair in the absence of the elected chair. Normally the chair-elect is elected for at least two years and succeeds to the position of chair. The chair-elect is eligible for reelection.

Secretary: The secretary is responsible for the distribution of meeting materials and maintaining records of key discussions, decisions and actions taken (meeting minutes). Working with the chair, the secretary prepares the NIMSS annual report. The Secretary succeeds to the position of chair-elect and is eligible for reelection.

Members: In addition to carrying out the agreed-upon research, collaboration, coordination, information exchange, or advisory activities, members are responsible for contributing to the achievement of the project's shared objectives. This includes reporting progress, collaborating with other project members, actively participating in committee meetings, and communicating project accomplishments and impacts to both the committee and their respective institutions.

HISTORY OF MULTISTATE RESEARCH

The Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act of 1998 (AREERA) amended the Hatch Act of 1887, the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, and sections 1444 and 1445 of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, and Teaching Policy Act of 1979 (NARETPA). The amendments require USDA-approved Plans of Work from each of the eligible SAES, prior to the distribution of the capacity funding provided under these authorities.

The AREERA also amended the Hatch Act to identify the Multistate Research Fund (MRF) (previously named the Regional Research Fund). The amendment specifies that:

> *Not less than 25 percent shall be allotted to the States for cooperative research employing multidisciplinary approaches in which a State agricultural experiment station, working with another State agricultural experiment station, the Agricultural Research Service, or a college or university, cooperates to solve problems that concern more than one state. The funds available under this paragraph, together with the funds available under subsection (b) for a similar purpose, shall be designated as the 'Multistate Research Fund, State Agricultural Experiment Stations'.*

Both the Hatch Act and the Smith-Lever Act were amended to require integrated research and Extension activities. The amount to be expended was set at not less than 25 percent, or twice the states' FY1997 expenditures for integrated activities. The Smith-Lever Act was also amended to require that each institution receiving funds under Sections 3(b) of that Act expend a portion of those funds for a multistate program, beginning in FY2000.

The AREERA also requires that all capacity-funded research (including multistate research) undergo scientific peer review. The multistate research peer review requirement is delegated to the regional associations from which a multistate activity originates.

The 1890 and 1994 Land-grant universities are not required in the AREERA to have any multistate research or any integrated research and extension activities. Also, the 1862 Land-grant universities of American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Micronesia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands are exempted from the integrated research and extension activity requirements. However, any of these institutions may voluntarily participate in these types of activities. The Association of 1890 Research Directors (ARD), representing 1890 Land-grant universities, has volunteered to be included as one of the regions participating in the multistate program.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AA	Administrative Advisor
AC	Advisory Committee
ARD	Association of 1890 Agricultural Research Directors
AREERA	Agricultural Research, Extension and Education Reform Act of 1998
ARS	Agricultural Research Service, USDA
CC	Coordinating Committee
CES	Cooperative Extension Service
DC	Development Committee
ED	Executive Director
ERA	Education/Extension and Research Activity
FFY	Federal Fiscal Year
FOS	Field of Study, from the USDA NIFA Manual of Classification codes
FTE	Full-time equivalent effort of a participant devoted to a project during one year. Represented as a decimal or a %. All FTE fields in NIMSS, SY, PY, and TY, are optional.
FY	Fiscal Year
KA	Knowledge Area, from the USDA NIFA Manual of Classification codes
MAC	Multistate Activities/Advisory Committee
MRA	Multistate Research Activity
MRC	Multistate Review Committee
MRF	Multistate Research Fund
NIFA	National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA
NIMSS	National Information Management and Support System
NRS	NIFA Reporting System
NRSP	National Research Support Project
NRSP RC	NRSP Review Committee

PY	Professional Year (represents the full-time equivalent (FTE) effort of a non-scientist professional staff member devoted to a project during one year)
SAES	State Agricultural Experiment Station(s)
SOI	Subject of Investigation, from the USDA NIFA Manual of Classification codes
SY	Scientist Year (represents the full-time equivalent (FTE) effort of a doctoral-level scientist (Ph.D. or equivalent) devoted to a project during one year)
TY	Technical Year (represents the full-time equivalent (FTE) effort of a technical support staff member devoted to a project during one year)
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

GLOSSARY

Activity - A generic term to indicate a research project or extension program.

Administrative Advisor - An administrator that has been delegated the responsibility by his or her regional association to provide guidance and oversight, on behalf of the regional association, to a multistate research project, coordinating committee, education/Extension and Research Activity, or advisory committee. The administrative advisor is typically a current director of an SAES or ARD institution, or, as allowed by individual regional associations, may be an Academic Programs or Extension director, a department head/chair/director, or other organizational senior leader.

agInnovation – The national organization representing agricultural research administrators from 1862 and 1890 Land-grant Universities. Its membership consists of research leaders from each of the affiliated regional associations of agricultural experiment station and ARD directors, who work collaboratively to advance the national agricultural research enterprise.

Capacity Funds - Annual federal appropriations distributed to states through formula-based programs authorized by legislation such as the Hatch Act of 1887 and the Evans-Allen Act of 1978. These funds provide the foundational infrastructure, scientific expertise, facilities, and partnerships necessary to sustain long-term research capacity and address both immediate and emerging agricultural challenges at local, regional and national levels.

Capacity funds serve as a catalyst for additional investment by leveraging substantial support from state appropriations, federal competitive grant programs, industry partnerships, and other public and private funding sources. By providing stable and predictable support, they enable

institutions to maintain critical research programs, respond rapidly to emerging issues, train the next generation of scientists, and generate innovations that benefit agriculture, communities, and society.

Coordinating Committee - An authorized group of research scientists and/or extension professionals working on a topic area of shared interests, with coordinated activities and the exchange of outputs.

Development Committee – An authorized group of scientists charged to evaluate the benefit of a new project idea and, if appropriate, develop a project/activity within the scope of the multistate research fund.

Education/Extension and Research Activity - An authorized group of scientists, Extension professionals, and/or teaching faculty working collectively (multifunctional) on a topic of shared interest and regional need, with coordinated activities and exchange of information, resources, and outputs.

Evans-Allen Funds - Payments to 1890 Agricultural Research Units authorized by the Evans-Allen Act of 1978 to provide support for carrying out the purposes of the federal-state partnership in agricultural research. Evans-Allen funding requires an equal state match.

Full-Time Equivalent - A management term used to express time commitment or appointment of people. For example, 0.5 FTE is a one-half-time (50%) appointment.

Function - Teaching, research, and Extension are the three functions of a land-grant university. In some uses teaching and extension are referred to as education. Extension and continuing education are often referred to as outreach.

Hatch Funds - Payments to State Agricultural Experiment Stations authorized by the Hatch Act of 1887 to provide support for carrying out the purposes of the federal-state partnership in agricultural research. Hatch funding requires an equal state match.

Impact - The economic, social, health, or environmental consequences derived as benefits for the intended users. These are usually quantitatively measured either directly or indirectly as indicators of benefits. An example of an impact would be improved human nutrition for a stated number of individuals through genetically engineering rice to contain the precursors to vitamin A.

Interdisciplinary Research – Integrates information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge. Interdisciplinarity analyzes, synthesizes and harmonizes links between disciplines into a coordinated and coherent whole.

Matching Funds - The Hatch Act of 1887 and Evans-Allen Act of 1978 (as amended) require that the capacity funds be matched one-to-one with non-federal funds.

Milestone - A timeline-linked accomplishment that needs to be completed before subsequent activities can begin or can be completed. As an example, to genetically engineer a crop by 2025 a transformation method needs to be reduced to practice by 2022 (a milestone).

Multidisciplinary Research - More than one scientific discipline represented in a project, program or activity. Multidisciplinarity draws on knowledge from different disciplines but stays within their boundaries.

Multistate Research Fund (MRF) - Formerly called the Regional Research Fund, this was renamed as the Multistate Research Fund in the Agricultural Research, Extension, and Education Reform Act (AREERA) of 1998. The AREERA requires that not less than 25% of all Hatch allocations must be used for multistate research activities and must be matched by non-federal funds.

National Research Support Project - Activities that support research needs, but are not research per se, are authorized as NRSPs. Examples include genomic sequencing, germplasm collections, and research management databases such as the Current Research Information System. NRSPs are governed by the "Guidelines for NRSPs."

National Information Management and Support System (NIMSS) – An electronic database of all multistate research projects and activities that serves as the official repository for all projects. The NIMSS system is administered by the regional association staff. Hosting and technical support for NIMSS is provided by Clemson University Learning Institute. NIMSS is owned by agInnovation and is not a federal database.

Off-the-Top (OTT) Funding - Money set aside for approved activities prior to any distribution to the SAES. Agreement to take funding "off-the-top" requires the approval of the SAES directors, which is communicated to NIFA by the regional offices. Some regions refer to these as "regional trusts."

Outcome - Outcomes describe changes in awareness, behavior, and condition experienced by the end user resulting from a project or activity. For example, the outcome from release of a new cultivar would be publication to create awareness, then adoption might be increased production or greater profitability.

Output - Outputs are the results of research activities, such as data, information, biological or physical materials and observations. For example, the output from a plant-breeding program might be a named variety. The output from a survey might be the analyzed survey results.

Peer Review - Evaluation of a proposed set of research activities for scientific quality, relevance (i.e., scientific advancement and stakeholder needs), and technical feasibility by scientists fully knowledgeable and capable of conducting the research themselves.

Professional Year - This is the portion of time (as a percentage) for people who hold positions in professional categories and who are assigned to research activities of the project. Such professionals usually hold a bachelor's and/or master's degree(s). Graduate students, by virtue of their degree and acceptance in graduate school, may be categorized as "professionals."

Program - A well-defined set of projects or activities that share a common theme or purpose. Degrees of coordination for a program's activities range from very informal to highly structured.

Project - A well-defined set of research activities. Multistate Research Projects differ from typical Hatch Projects in that there are multiple participants at two or more institutions in a Multistate Research Project.

Project Proposal - A project or program document that sets out (usually for five years) the objectives of a project, the shared responsibilities for the planned activities, and the expected outputs, among other items. The approved project proposal serves as the contractual agreement among participating institutions.

Scientist Year - This is the portion of time (as a percentage) for scientists (Assistant Professor, Assistant Scientist, and above) who are responsible for creative scientific study, thought, originality, judgments, and accomplishments directly assignable to the activity reported.

Stakeholder - Individuals, or groups of individuals, or organizations/institutions with a direct interest in the outcome of public investments in agricultural research and education. This could be producers of agricultural products, consumers of agricultural products, agricultural industry, or sponsors of research activities from federal and state governments.

Technical Year - This is the portion of time (as a percentage) for technicians, aids, and laboratory assistants assigned in support of a project or an activity.

MULTISTATE PROJECT FORMS

NEW/RENEWAL PROPOSAL TEMPLATES
Format for Multistate Research Proposals
Format for ERA/CC Proposals

REVIEW TEMPLATES
MRP Proposal Review
ERA/CC Proposal Review
Midterm Review

ANNUAL REPORTING
Annual Report Form

For any additional information not covered in these Guidelines, please contact your regional office.

Format for Multistate Research Project (MRP) Proposals

(formerly Appendix A)

Project Number: To be assigned by the sponsoring regional association.

Project Title: A brief, clear, specific statement of the subject of the research. Do not use terms such as "Research on", or "Studies of", or "Investigation of," etc.)

Requested Project Duration: From October 1, ____ to September 30, _____ (usually five years). Appendix A/Research-type multistate projects normally start on October 1, the first day of the federal fiscal year (FFY) and terminate on September 30, the end of the FFY.

Non-Technical Summary: In lay terms, briefly describe the following: (1) the issue and why it is important, (2) your goal and objectives, (3) the target audiences and how they will benefit, and (4) how your activities lead to the outcomes described in the goal statement or objectives. Additionally, we strongly recommend including a brief statement on how this work aligns with USDA priorities.

Statement of the Issue(s) and Justification: This section should explain why the work needs to be done, and should include statements on the following points:

- The need as indicated by stakeholders. (That is, explain how the proposed research addresses national and/or regional priorities developed following stakeholder input.)
- The importance of the work, and what the consequences are if it is not done.
- The technical feasibility of the research.
- The advantages of doing the work as a multistate effort.
- Clearly describe how the proposed activity addresses and aligns with national (see agInnovation Science Roadmap Grand Challenges https://escop.info/roadmaptext/), USDA, and/or regional priorities.
- Identify the sets of stakeholders, customers, and/or consumers for whom the activity is intended.
- List of expected participants to help support this as a multistate activity.

Related, Current, and Previous Work: Conduct a brief review, using information from NIFA's current research search tools, NIMSS, and other relevant sources, of related research on the problem. Describe how the proposed work will build upon and advance existing research. Specifically identify related multistate research projects or other multistate activities. If there is any apparent duplication, clearly justify the need for the proposed work. If the proposal is for a replacement project, the accomplishments achieved under the previous project should be reviewed and those areas requiring further investigation identified. List essential, cited references. It is not expected that the proposal will include a comprehensive literature review.

Objectives: Clear, concise, one-sentence statements for each researchable objective. Include only objectives on which significant progress can be made during the life of the project with the resources committed. Do not specify the exchange of information, the coordination of research, the development of standardized techniques, or joint publication as objectives, as these are to be

organized under other types of activities. Each participant must indicate in their Participation Form (formerly Appendix E) those objectives in which he/she will participate.

Methods: Briefly summarize the research methods that will be used to accomplish each objective. Provide sufficient detail for reviewers to evaluate the extent of joint planning, collaboration, and coordination among project participants, including coordinated research activities, shared resources or equipment, data sharing and analysis, and the synthesis of findings across participating institutions. Clearly demonstrate that the proposed activity is a collaborative, multistate effort.

Measurement of Progress and Results: This section has three purposes. It is intended to show what the products of the research will be, how these products will affect the stakeholder or end user, and what critical points of achievement are needed for progress toward meeting objectives. To do this you should address the following items:

- Outputs: The results of collaborative research activities, such as data, information, biological or physical materials and observations. For example, the output from a plant-breeding program might be a named variety. The output from a survey might be the analyzed results.
- Outcomes or Projected Impacts: Outcomes describe the significance of the results, showing in what ways the end user will benefit. For example, an outcome from the adoption of a new cultivar might be increased regional production or greater profitability. Impacts are the broader economic, environmental, health or societal benefits realized by producers, communities, consumers, and other end users because of the outcomes. These are usually measured using quantitative indicators that directly or indirectly demonstrate the benefits of the research. An example of an impact would be measurable improvements to human nutrition through genetically engineering rice to contain the precursors to vitamin A.
- Milestones: Time-bound accomplishments that must be achieved before subsequent activities can begin or can be completed. For example, if the goal is to genetically engineer a crop by 2032, successfully establishing the transformation method by 2030 would represent a key milestone.

Outreach Plan: Briefly describe how results of the project will be accessible to the intended users of the information (e.g., refereed publications, non-refereed but peer reviewed publications, workshops, producer field days, etc.). If applicable, include descriptions concerning equality of service, ease of access to services/information, and any focus on broad access that may benefit from this proposed activity and what the plans are for disseminating information. Identify opportunities for the project/activity to interact with and/or deliver value to peer groups, stakeholders, clientele, and other multistate activities.

Organization and Governance: Provide a brief description of the technical committee's organizational structure, highlighting any unique governance features, such as an executive committee and its responsibilities, planned subcommittees, or designated program coordinators/managers and their roles. If the committee will use the standard form of governance

structure, please select the auto-fill function. Otherwise, describe the processes for selecting leadership, making decisions, and governing the committee.

Literature Cited: List all references cited within the proposal.

Attachments: Uploading attachments to the proposal such as charts, tables, and other materials to better clarify the information within the proposal is allowed.

Projected Participation: This section is generated automatically as participants join via NIMSS Participation Form (formerly Appendix E) submission. Any non-SAES participants should contact the project's regional NIMSS system administrator.

Authorization: Final submission and approval through NIMSS by the supporting regional association office serves as signature authorization for this information.

Format for Coordinating Committees (CCs) and Education/Extension and Research Activity (ERAs) Proposals

(formerly Appendix B)

Note to Reviewers: Coordinating Committees (CCs) and Education/Extension and Research Activity (ERAs) *are designed mainly for networking and information sharing between researchers, Extension professionals, and/or teaching faculty/instructors. Their accomplishments may not be as rigorous as research projects, so please keep this in mind when conducting your review.*

Project Number: To be assigned by the sponsoring regional association.

Project Title: A brief, clear, specific statement of the subject of the research. Do not use terms such as "Research on", or "Studies of", or "Investigation of," etc.)

Requested Project Duration: From October 1, ____ to September 30, _____ (usually five years). Appendix B (CCs and ERAs) multistate projects normally start on October 1, the first day of the federal fiscal year (FFY) and terminate on September 30, the end of the FFY.

Non-Technical Summary: In lay terms, briefly describe the following: (1) the issue and why it is important, (2) your goal and objectives, (3) the target audiences and how they will benefit, and (4) how your activities lead to the outcomes described in the goal statement or objectives. Additionally, we strongly recommend including a brief statement on how this work aligns with USDA priorities.

Statement of Issue and Justification (Limit this section to approximately one page): This section should explain why the work needs to be done, and should include statements on the following points:

- The nature and significance of the issue(s) for which multistate coordination is proposed.
- The advantages of doing the work as a multistate effort.
- Whether a NIMSS search was conducted to ensure this activity is not duplicitous of an existing project. If there is overlap, clearly state how this project is different and/or will complement other efforts.
- Clearly describe how the proposed activity addresses and aligns with national (see agInnovation Science Roadmap Grand Challenges https://escop.info/roadmaptext/), USDA, and/or regional priorities.
- Identify the sets of stakeholders, customers, and/or consumers for whom the activity is intended.
- Provide a list of expected participants to help support this as a multistate activity.

Objectives: Clear, concise, one-sentence statements for each researchable objective. Include only objectives on which significant progress can be made during the life of the project with the resources committed. Objectives for these types of activities need to emphasize coordination of activities and the exchange of information. They must not be generalized objectives, but rather they should be very specific. They may not necessarily be traditional research objectives. An

objective that would be “to prepare a multistate research project outline” is inappropriate, although research projects may evolve from a coordinating activity. If the objective of the activity is to write a multistate research project outline, a request should be made to the sponsoring regional association to create a development committee (DC) for that specific purpose. Each participant must indicate in their Participation Form (formerly Appendix E) those objectives in which he/she will participate.

Procedures and Activities: Describe the procedures and activities that will contribute to achieving each of the objectives.

Expected Activities: Briefly discuss the expected activities of the proposed project. Examples of possible activities include, but are not limited to:

- Coordination of specific research and extension programs.
- Exchange of ideas and/or information/data.
- Generate interest in a specific research and extension area (e.g., a symposium or workshop).
- Publication of joint research articles and/or review articles on a common issue.
- Evaluation and standardization of methods or techniques leading to the development of a common protocol.
- Identification of critical/key research and education issues.

Measurement of Progress and Results: This section has three purposes. It is intended to show what the products of the research will be, how these products will affect the stakeholder or end user, and what critical points of achievement are needed for progress toward meeting objectives. To do this you should address the following items:

- Outputs: The results of coordinated activities, such as compilation of data sets, information exchange, shared biological or physical materials and observations. For example, creation and distribution of a committee publication or hosting a symposium/webinar/workshop.
- Outcomes or Projected Impacts: Outcomes describe the significance of the outputs, showing in what ways the end user will benefit. For example, an outcome from the adoption of the recommendations resulting from a publication, symposium, webinar, and/or workshop. Impacts are the economic, social, health, or environmental benefits derived by the intended users. These are usually quantitatively measured either directly or indirectly as indicators of benefits. An example of an impact would be measurable improvements to human nutrition through genetically engineering rice to contain the precursors to vitamin A.
- Milestones: Timeline-linked accomplishments that need to be completed before subsequent activities can begin or can be completed. As an example, to genetically engineer a crop by 2032 a transformation method needs to be reduced to practice by 2030 (a milestone).

Educational Plan: If applicable, include descriptions concerning equality of service, ease of access to services/information, and any focus on broad access that may benefit from this proposed activity and what the plans are for disseminating information to these and other groups.

Identify opportunities for the project/activity to interact with and/or deliver value to peer groups, stakeholders, clientele, and other multistate activities.

Organization and Governance: Provide a very brief description of the organization of the Project Leadership/Editors with emphasis on unique items such as the formation of an executive committee and its functions, any subcommittees that are planned for specific functions, any anticipated program coordinators/managers and their responsibilities, etc. If you are using the standard form of governance, please select that for autofill. Otherwise, describe the processes that will be used for selecting leadership and for decision making.

Literature Cited: List of all references cited within the proposal.

Attachments: Supporting attachments such as charts, tables, and other materials to better clarify the information within the proposal are allowed.

Projected Participation: This section is generated automatically as participants join via NIMSS Participation Form (formerly Appendix E) submission. Any non-SAES participants should contact the project's regional NIMSS system administrator.

Authorization: Final submission and approval through NIMSS by the supporting regional association office constitutes signature authority for this information.

New/Renewal Multistate Research Project (MRP) Proposal Review Form

(formerly Appendix H)

Each Regional Multistate Research/Activities Committee (MRC/MAC) member will receive this evaluation form via NIMSS or as an e-mail attachment (or via other electronic means) with the project proposal and comments from the peer reviewers or Advisory Committee members, as available.

Non-Technical Summary

1. In lay terms:
    a. Does this proposal describe the issue and why it is important?
    b. Does the proposal outline the goals and objectives?
    c. Does the proposal describe target audiences and how they will benefit?
    d. Does the proposal explain how activities lead to the outcomes described in the goal statement or objectives?

(Comment boxes in NIMSS after each section; yes or no options only for questions below)

Statement of Issue(s) and Justification

1. Does the proposal convincingly address the extent of the problem and the importance to agriculture, rural life, consumers and science?
2. Does the proposal explain what the consequences are if the research is not done?
3. Does the proposal adequately explain why this research should be conducted by multiple institutions and other entities (e.g., ARS/USDA) through a regional collaborative effort?
4. Does the proposal indicate how the proposed research addresses national (agInnovation Science Roadmap Grand Challenges, https://escop.info/roadmaptext/), USDA, and/or regional priorities?
5. Does the proposal describe the probable impacts from successfully completing the work?
6. Is there a list of expected participants included?

Related Current and Previous Work

1. Does the proposal adequately explain how this research relates to previous work in this area and how the proposed work will supplement and extend knowledge in this area? Was a search conducted using current NIFA search tools? Although a comprehensive literature review is not required, does the proposal cite appropriate literature?
2. If the proposal is for a replacement project, are the accomplishments achieved under the previous project adequately reviewed with identification of those areas needing further investigation?
3. Does this proposal duplicate research being conducted through other multistate projects? Did the proposal specifically address potential duplication and, if potential duplication exists, did the committee specifically address how duplication will be avoided?

Objectives

1. Are the research objectives clear and appropriate for the desired outcomes?
2. Can significant progress be made towards these objectives during the lifetime of the project?

Methods

1. Is a procedure or approach outlined for each objective stated in the proposal?
2. Is collaboration and/or interdependence such as the use of common protocols, central data collection or analysis, sharing of equipment, common use of research samples or data, or other evidence of direct collaboration described in the proposal?
3. Are research responsibilities of the expected participants clearly stated?
4. Is there a plan for how the research findings will be tied together in a collaborative manner on a regional basis?

Measurement of Progress and Results

1. **Outputs:** Does the proposal describe expected outputs from the research?
2. **Outcomes and Impacts:** Does the proposal describe the significance of the results, showing in what ways end users and others will benefit? Does the proposal adequately explain the potential benefits and impact of the proposed research?
3. **Milestones:** Does the proposal include clearly defined milestones- that is, time-bound accomplishments that must be achieved before subsequent activities can proceed?

Outreach Plan

1. Does the proposal describe how results of the project will be made available in an accessible manner to the intended users of the information (e.g., refereed publications, workshops, producer field days, etc.)?

Organization

1. Does the proposal include an adequate description of the planned organizational structure of the technical committee?

Scientific Quality

1. Does the proposal demonstrate scientific excellence?
2. If other reviews are available to the project Technical Committee, have they adequately addressed the concerns and comments? (This criterion only applies if regions expect projects to be revised prior to MRC/MAC review. Please check with your regional association before responding to this question.)

Comments:

Please indicate the primary revisions that should be made before final approval by the Regional Multistate Research/Activities Committee (MRC/MAC).

Recommendation:

_____ Approve
_____ Defer pending revision (Comments required above)
_____ Reject

Evaluation Form for New Coordinating Committees (CC) and Education/Extension and Research Activities (ERA)

(formerly Appendix J)

Regional offices will assign each of their Regional Multistate Research/Activities Committee (MRC/MAC) members this evaluation form via NIMSS or other electronic means as is appropriate for that regional office. All proposals, peer reviews and responses to peer reviews will be made available to review members.

Non-Technical Summary

1. In lay terms:
    a. Does this proposal describe the issue and why it is important?
    b. Does the proposal outline the goals and objectives?
    c. Does the proposal describe target audiences and how they will benefit?
    d. Does the proposal explain how activities lead to the outcomes described in the goal statement or objectives?

(Comment boxes in NIMSS after each section; yes or no options only)

Statement of Issue(s) and Justification

1. Does the proposal convincingly address the extent of the problem and the importance to agriculture, rural life, consumers and science?
2. Does the proposal explain what the consequences are if the research is not done?
3. Does the proposal adequately explain why this research should be conducted by multiple institutions and other entities (e.g., ARS/USDA) through a regional collaborative effort?
4. Does the proposal indicate how the proposed research addresses national (agInnovation Science Roadmap Grand Challenges, https://escop.info/roadmaptext/), USDA, and/or regional priorities?
5. Does the proposal describe the probable impacts from successfully completing the work?
6. Is there a list of expected participants included?

Objectives

1. Are the objectives clear and appropriate for the desired outcomes?
2. Can significant progress be made towards these objectives during the lifetime of the project?

Procedures and Activities:

1. Is a procedure or approach outlined for each objective stated in the proposal?
2. Does the proposal site milestones?
3. Does the proposal show the opportunity for joint planning and coordination by participants?
4. Are there concrete examples of how this project will coordinate activities?

Expected Activities

1. Does the proposal list expected activities?
2. Are the expected activities clear and appropriate for the desired outcomes?

Measurement of Progress and Results:

1. **Outputs:** Does the proposal describe expected outputs from the research?

2. **Outcomes and Impacts:** Does the proposal describe the significance of the results, showing in what ways the end user will benefit? Does the proposal adequately explain the potential benefits and impact of the proposed research?
3. **Milestones:** Does the proposal include statements related to milestones; that is, time-linked accomplishments that must be completed before subsequent activities can begin or can be completed?

Educational Plan

1. Does the proposal describe how results of the project are to be made available in an accessible manner to the intended users of the information (e.g., refereed publications, workshops, producer field days, etc.)?
2. If the proposed project is to become an integrated (multifunctional) activity involving participants from Cooperative Extension, is the nature of their involvement adequately described?

Organization and Governance:

1. If the organization of the technical committee is to be different from the recommended Standard Governance for Multistate Research Activities, does the proposal include an adequate description of the planned organizational structure of the technical committee?

Literature Cited:

1. Although a comprehensive literature review is not required, does the proposal cite appropriate literature?

Comments:

Please indicate the primary changes you believe should be made before final approval by the Regional Multistate Research/Activities Committee (MRC/MAC).

Recommendation:

_____ Approve
_____ Defer pending revision (Comments required above)
_____ Reject

Midterm Review of Multistate Activities (To Be Completed During the Third Year of Project)

Note to Reviewers: Coordinating Committees (CCs) and Education/Extension and Research Activity (ERAs) are designed mainly for networking and information sharing between researchers, Extension professionals, and/or teaching faculty/instructors. Their accomplishments may not be as rigorous as research projects, so please keep this in mind when conducting your review.

1. **Meetings, Attendance, and Minutes:** All multistate projects are required to meet annually (once per federal fiscal year, 10/1 to 9/30) and submit an annual report within 60 days of each meeting.
    - Are annual meetings held as required (virtually or in-person) and generally well attended? (Y/N)
    - Do the meeting minutes/notes provide a good sense of the activities and decisions made during the annual meeting? (Y/N)
    - Are leadership transitions clearly stated and the current chair listed? (Y/N)
    - Does project leadership match what is listed on the project homepage (review names under Editors/Technical Leadership on the project's homepage)? (Y/N)
    - Please provide in the comments box below additional comments and suggestions for improvement for future meetings, attendance, and meeting minutes, as needed.

(Insert open comment text box here in NIMSS)

2. **Accomplishments Toward Project Objectives:** Evaluate the project's progress (activities, milestones, outputs, and outcomes) since it was last approved (current 5-year iteration).
    - Are the presented activities, milestones, outputs, and outcomes clearly related to the original objectives from the outline since the project was last approved? (Y/N)
    - Are accomplishments presented in a multistate, collaborative fashion, showcasing interdependence and collaboration among project participants and not as lists of individual station reports? (Y/N)
    - Do members appear to be working together, cooperating, and/or collaborating towards the current project's objectives? (Y/N)
    - Do the presented activities, milestones, outputs, and outcomes clearly state which project members were involved? (Y/N)
    - Based on the presented activities, milestones, outputs, and outcomes, is the group making sufficient progress towards originally stated objectives? (Y/N)
    - If they are not making sufficient progress towards objectives, have they provided clear and acceptable reasons for not doing so? (Y/N)
    - Do the reported accomplishments demonstrate relevance to issues of importance to stakeholders and the broader public? (Y/N)
    - Please provide in the comments box below additional comments and suggestions for improvement of the project's work towards stated objectives and/or improvements to this section for future reports.

(Insert open comment text box here in NIMSS)

3. **Impacts: (**Remember: Impacts describe the difference the project has made regarding social, economic, and/or environmental condition as experienced by the project's intended stakeholders and/or the broader public. Impacts are usually quantitatively measured either directly or indirectly as indicators of benefits and should be distinct from Outcomes and Outputs.)
    - Are the stated "Impacts" actually impacts, as defined above? (Y/N)
    - Are these impacts built around the objectives in the project outline? (Y/N)
    - Has the committee described well the long-term benefits of the project? (Y/N)
    - Please provide in the comments box below additional comments and suggestions for improvement of projects **Impacts** and/or this Impacts section in future reports, as needed.

(Insert open comment text box here in NIMSS)

4. **Information and Technology Transfer:** Information and technology transfer and plans or accomplishments for delivering the results to users including other researchers, Extension, Industry, Producers, students, or other stakeholders are required for every project supported by Multistate Research Funds.
    - Has this project sufficiently delivered information to stakeholders? (Y/N)
    - Are the Publications listed from only the current project iteration? (Y/N)
    - Are the Publications listed in annual reports directly related to project objectives? (Y/N)
    - In the comments section below, please describe any concerns, potential improvements, and compliments to share with the project members regarding Information and Technology transfer.

(Insert open comment text box here in NIMSS)

5. **Grants, Contracts & Other Resources Obtained**:
    - Have outside funds been obtained from other federal and state agencies or the private sector to support project activities? If members worked collaboratively on a grant submission but it was not funded, it may be included, as well. (Y/N)
    - In the comments box below, describe the effectiveness of this project on leveraging outside funding to help address project objectives. Include any suggestions for improvement or additional funding sources possible available to the investigators.

(Insert open comment text box here in NIMSS)

Project Performance:

____ Continue - Meets Expectations
____ Continue - Needs Improvement (Reviewer: Be sure to describe these improvements clearly above)
____ Terminate at end of current federal fiscal year

Annual Report Format for Multistate Research Activity

(formerly Appendix D/SAES-422)

Important Notes on Annual Reports:
Annual reports should document the committee's collective progress toward achieving the project's objectives and should not simply be a compilation of individual station reports.
An annual report is required for each year of the activity and must be submitted within 60 calendar days following the annual meeting.

Committee members prepare and submit the report electronically through NIMSS, after which it is reviewed and approved by the Administrative Advisor. Once approved, annual reports for the Multistate Research Fund (MRF) projects are publicly made available in NIMSS for USDA-NIFA, stakeholders, and other audiences. These reports communicate the accomplishments and impacts of the multistate research program and showcase the value of agInnovation's multistate research enterprise program.

Annual Report Sections:

Period Covered (duration since last report):
Date of This Report:

Participants: Provide a list of those who attended each meeting, and their employing institution. As an alternative, provide an attachment containing this information. If available, add the address for the group list serve.

Meeting Minutes: Reports should include meeting minutes/notes that provide a good sense of the activities and decisions made during the annual meeting, as well as clearly outline any changes to project leadership (Chair, Incoming Chair, etc.). Provide these updates to the project's administrative advisor or regional system administrator so they can update the technical leadership/editor list on the project's NIMSS homepage.

Collaborative Accomplishments Toward Project Objectives (two or more states/institutions): This section focuses on achieved and/or ongoing/in-progress activities, milestones, outputs, and short-term outcomes. Committees should organize accomplishment information around the project's objectives, as identified in the original proposal.

Annual reports should demonstrate the committee's collaborative progress toward achieving the project's objectives and should not simply be a compilation of individual station reports.

The report should communicate accomplishments in a manner that is meaningful to stakeholders and other external audiences. Clearly identify the participating institutions and key contributors involved in the work and emphasize the collaborative nature of the activity. Describe significant partnerships and linkages within the committee, as well as collaborations with external stakeholders, peer organizations, clientele, and other multistate activities.

Activities: Organized and specific functions or duties carried out by individuals or teams using scientific methods to reveal new knowledge and develop new understanding.

Milestones: Measurable, time-bound accomplishments that mark critical progress toward achieving a project's objectives and outputs. Milestones represent key intermediate targets that must be completed before subsequent activities can proceed and are useful for planning, tracking, and managing complex projects. For example, a milestone for a biotechnology project might be "Develop and validate a genetic transformation protocol by December 2026."

Outputs: Defined products (tangible or intangible) that are delivered by a research project. Examples of outputs are reports, data, information, observations, publications, and patents.

Short-term and Medium-term Outcomes: Quantitative, measurable benefits of the research outputs as experienced by those who receive them. Examples of short-term outcomes include gains in knowledge and awareness whereas medium-term outcomes would include such things as the adoption of a technology, the creation of jobs, reduced cost to the consumer, less pesticide exposure to farmers, or access to more nutritious food.

Impacts: This section focuses on long-term outcomes and benefits. Committees should build information around the activity's objectives as identified in the original proposal.

Impacts describe the difference the project has made (changes in knowledge; attitude; behavior; social, economic, and/or environmental condition) as experienced by the project's intended stakeholders *(See example 1 below)* and/or the broader public *(See example 2 below).* Impacts are usually quantitatively measured either directly or indirectly as indicators of benefits.

If the impact is the result of work by certain participating institutions/individuals, please indicate which participating institutions/individuals were involved in the work *(See suggested format options in examples below. Example 1 shows a full committee collaboration, while 2 and 3 illustrate collaborations between two or more stations).*

Example 1: All project participants collaborated to develop and release [a new pesticide product] that makes it easier and more affordable for soybean growers to effectively manage [pests]. In 2026, farmers using this pesticide increased yields by % while spending $ less per acre on pest management.

Example 2: Project participants at the University of Arkansas and Louisiana State University genetically engineered rice to contain the precursors to Vitamin A. Consumption of this rice is expected to improve human nutrition.

Example 3: Genetically engineered rice that contains the precursors to Vitamin A has been released to consumers and could improve human nutrition. *Louisiana State University, University of Arkansas*

Information and Technology Transfer: Describe information and technology transfer and plans or accomplishments for delivering the results to users including other researchers, Extension, Industry, Producers, students, or other stakeholders. What is the project's benefit to broader society? This section should be brief and concise, no more than one or two short paragraphs.

Grants, Contracts & Other Resources Obtained: List any grants, contracts, and/or other resources obtained by one or more project members ***because of the project's activities***. Include the recipients, funding source, amount awarded and term if applicable. If the group worked collaboratively on a grant submission but it was not funded, you may include that here as well.

Publications: List the publications for the **current project year (since last annual report)** only (with the authors, title, journal series, etc.) that are related directly to the project objectives.

Item 12.2
Agenda Item: NRSP RC Whitepaper on Digital Agriculture
Presenter: Gene Kelly
Action: Discussion

Whitepaper Request:
Informing a National Framework for Digital Agriculture, AI and Research Data Infrastructure

Background

Digital agriculture is the convergence of agricultural science, data science, engineering, and advanced digital technologies to collect, integrate, analyze, and communicate information across the agricultural value chain. Through technologies such as precision agriculture, remote sensing, unmanned aviation systems, artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics, data analytics, cyberinfrastructure, interoperable data systems, and decision-support platforms, digital agriculture is transforming the ability of the research enterprise to generate discoveries, deliver solutions, and address the nation's most pressing agricultural, environmental, economic, and food system challenges. The nation's Land-grant universities and their affiliated state agricultural experiment stations must be positioned to lead this transformation.

On behalf of agInnovation, the National Research Support Project (NRSP) Review Committee, recognizes that digital agriculture represents a major long-term research priority in the agricultural sciences. The digital agriculture priorities is reinforced by the nation's priority to ensure and enhance American AI dominance, USDA's research agenda, and by the evolving needs of producers-centered decision tools, and the increasing importance of shared data systems, reproducible research workflows, and coordinated national research infrastructure.

To ensure Land-grant Universities are the national and global leaders in digital agriculture and the trusted source for digital agriculture innovation, advancement, and transformation, we must work collaboratively to establish shared standards, data management expectations, organizational structures, governance models, and supporting infrastructure. These foundational elements are essential to enable agricultural data, artificial intelligence, and other digital tools to be developed, validated, integrated, shared, reused, and continuously improved across institutions. By aligning our efforts, we can accelerate innovation, maximize the value of public investments, and create a more connected and impactful digital agriculture ecosystem.

agInnovation has identified a need for clear, expert-driven guidance to define a national framework for the future research landscape for digital agriculture, with particular emphasis on artificial intelligence, data sharing, software interoperability, and research data governance. Specifically, there is a need to articulate:

- The most pressing, foundational research gaps in digital agriculture and artificial intelligence over the next 10 years;

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- The data management requirements, including the FAIR Data Principles (findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable) and including, data sharing, metadata expectations, programming practices, data access, interoperability requirements needed for AI, and data governance should be structured to enable transformative agricultural research;
- What cyberinfrastructure, software architecture, partnerships, and institutional capacities are required to support a national digital agriculture research enterprise;
- How Land-grant institutions and State Agriculture Experiment Stations, USDA and other federal agencies, commodity groups, industry partners and other stakeholders can collectively and efficiently support and leverage current resources supporting shared research and data infrastructure, and
- How future NRSP proposals, competitive grant programs, and institutional investments can support the development of a coordinated digital agriculture and AI research ecosystem.

To address these critical questions, agInnovation is issuing this "Request for Proposals" inviting a qualified team of thought leaders, researchers, data scientists, technology experts and practitioners to develop a comprehensive whitepaper. The whitepaper will assess the current landscape and identify the research, data, software, infrastructure and governance needs required to advance digital agriculture and artificial intelligence applications in agriculture. The resulting framework should provide a strategic roadmap that positions LGUs as national and global leaders in digital ag innovation, transformation and impact.

Proposals

The selected team will develop a forward-looking whitepaper that provides agInnovation with a foundational reference document for future planning, investment and coordination. The document should not simply summarize current digital agriculture activities. Instead, it should define what is needed to create a coordinated national research framework that supports artificial intelligence, shared data resources, reproducible workflows, interoperable systems, and multi-institutional collaboration in agriculture.

The whitepaper should provide actionable guidance on the standards, structure, and investments needed to support AI-enable agricultural research across the land-grant system. This includes both technical and institutional recommendations.

Proposals should not exceed 3 pages (excluding CVs) and must include the following:

- Cover page with team lead, institutional affiliation, and contact information;
- Project narrative describing the team's approach to the whitepaper, proposed structure/outline, and key themes to be addressed;
- Description of team qualifications and experience,
- Brief biographies or CVs (2 pages per person maximum) for each proposed contributor;
- Statement describing how the proposed work extends beyond the ongoing research activities of team members and their home institutions;

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- Description of how the team will engage relevant stakeholders, including Land-grant researchers, data scientists, USDA Experiment Station leaders, industry partners, and other appropriate groups
- Budget narrative describing how the stipend will be used.

Proposals must be submitted electronically to Rick Rhodes, agInnovation Northeast Executive Director (rcrhodes@uri.edu) by **TBD**, at 5:00 PM ET. Late submissions will not be considered. The team selected to draft the whitepaper will be notified on **TBD**, 2026.

Desired Team Expertise

AgInnovation is seeking a team with demonstrated expertise across several areas essential to the future of digital agriculture and artificial intelligence. Competitive teams should include, or demonstrate access to, expertise in the following areas:

- Agricultural research systems, including crop, livestock, natural resources, environmental or food system research;
- Artificial intelligence, machine learning, predictive analytics and computational modeling;
- Research data management, data governance, metadata standards, and data stewardship;
- Software development, programming standards, reproducible workflows, and open-source or shared-code environments.
- Cyberinfrastructure, cloud computing, high-performance computing, data storage and secure data access;
- Precision agriculture, robotics, remote sensing, sensory systems, automation or decision-support tools;
- Multi-institutional collaboration, research networks and national research infrastructure;
- Extension, producer engagement or applied decision support systems.

Funding

agInnovation will provide a stipend of $50,000 to support the selected team in the whitepaper development effort. This is a stipend award, not a research grant and hence, there is no associated indirect cost return. The proposal should include a description of how funds will support the effort (e.g., personnel time, travel for team coordination, writing support).

The stipend is intended to support development of the whitepaper and associated deliverables. It is not intended to support primary research, software development, equipment purchase, or creation of a functioning data platform.

Whitepaper Objectives and Deliverables:

agInnovation is seeking a select team that can provide strategic, technical, and institutional guidance for the future of digital agriculture and artificial intelligence management and sharing in agricultural research.

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The selected whitepaper team is expected to develop a comprehensive white paper that will:

- Define the scope and boundaries of digital agriculture as a research discipline, including the role of artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics, automation, sensing systems, decision-support tools and data-driven research;
- Identify the most critical unanswered research questions in digital agriculture
- Recommend data standards, metadata expectations, documentation practices, and data quality requirements needed to support AI-ready agricultural research data;
- Address data management, data sharing, data access, data governance, data security, data ownership, intellectual property, and ethical use of agricultural data;
- Recommend programming and software development practices that support reproducible research, shared code, model validation, interoperability and long-term reuse;
- Identify the infrastructure needed to support AI-enabled agriculture, including high-performance computing, cloud systems, data repositories, sensor networks, model hosting, and secure data environments;
- Describe how agricultural datasets, AI models, decision-support tools and software resources should be archived, cited, versioned and maintained;
- Assess current capacity, human capital, infrastructure, and institutional collaboration with the agricultural research community.
- Identify gaps in expertise, infrastructure, governance, and coordination that limit national progress.;
- Recommend structures for multi-institutional collaboration that go beyond current activities of any single institution;
- Identify opportunities for coordination with USDA, federal agencies, commodity groups, industry partners and other stakeholders;
- Provide actionable recommendations that could inform future NRSP proposals, competitive grant priorities, institutional investments and national research coordination.

The selected team is expected to deliver the following within 6 months of award:

- A draft whitepaper submitted to agInnovation for internal review;
- A revised final whitepaper incorporating reviewer feedback, suitable for public distribution and publication;
- A concise executive summary (2–3 pages) highlighting key findings and recommendations, formatted for distribution to agInnovation;
- A proposed framework for digital agriculture and AI research data standards, including recommended metadata, documentation, interoperability, and data-sharing practices;
- A prioritized roadmap for future NRSP proposals, competitive grant opportunities and institutional investments;
- A presentation of findings to be delivered; and
- All data, references, and supporting materials in a format suitable for archiving.

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The whitepaper and associated materials will become the property of agInnovation and may be made publicly available. The writing team will be recognized as authors.

Review Criteria
Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

1. Relevance to the Purpose of the RFP
   The proposal clearly addresses the need for a national framework for digital agriculture, artificial intelligence, data standards, software practices, data governance, and research infrastructure

2. Team Expertise and Qualifications
   The proposed team demonstrates appropriate diverse scientific, technical, and institutional expertise, including agricultural research, AI or machine learning, data management, software systems, cyberinfrastructure, and multi-institutional collaboration.

3. Quality of Proposed Approach
   The proposal presents a clear and feasible approach for developing a thoughtful, technically informed, and actionable whitepaper.

4. Breadth and National Perspective
   The proposal demonstrates an ability to address the needs of the broader agriculture research community and emphasized value of a collaborative, synergistic approach, rather than focusing primarily on the activities or priorities of a single institution.

5. Actional of Expected Product
   The proposal demonstrates that the final whitepaper will provide clear recommendations that can inform future NRSP proposals, competitive funding priorities, institutional investments, and national coordination.

6. Feasibility
   The proposed timeline, team structure, and use of funds are appropriate for completing the required deliverables.

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Item 12.3
Agenda Item: Proposed FY27 agInnovation Budget
Presenter: Gene Kelly
Action: Discussion

FY 2027 agInnovation Budget Explanation

Budget Notes:
The attached budget will be presented at the agInnovation Business Meeting on September 24 in Grand Junction, CO. Approval of the budget will require two votes. The first vote will be a referendum on the assessment. The agInnovation Rules of Operation require that decisions made on assessments be completed by a referendum. A two-thirds (2/3) majority of those voting is required for adoption of an assessment referendum. Should the assessment referendum pass, a simple majority is required for budget approval.

If the assessment referendum fails, the budget would not be approved as presented. If this occurs, an electronic meeting of agInnovation will be convened, and an alternative assessment and budget would be discussed. If an alternative assessment is suggested, a second referendum would be held along with a vote on the budget.

As a reminder, the Rules of Operation allow the Chair of agInnovation to authorize the expenditure of assessed funds up to $5,000 per request (up to $20,000 over a calendar year) with approval by a simple majority of the agInnovation Executive Committee.

FY 2026 Approved and FY 2026 Actual/Encumbered: As a grounding and comparison exercise, we've included on the budget sheet columns that show the FY 2026 approved budget and FY 2026 actual expenditures/encumbrances.

FY 2027 Income
With an assessment to the Section of $100,000 (identical to the assessment of FY 2026), estimated cash carryover of $120,000, and $27,000 in income from the JP Morgan investment account, the FY2027 budget will have a total of $247,000 in income.

- *Previous FY Carryover*: While the fiscal year has not yet closed out, we're estimating a cash carryover of approximately $120,000.
- *agInnovation Assessment*: The budget includes a $100,000 assessment to agInnovation to be invoiced through the APLU. Assessment payments will be due by June 30, 2027.
- *Other*: We plan to withdraw $27,000 from agInnovation's JP Morgan investment account, per the guidance of the agInnovation directors who approved a 4% annual draw.

FY 2027 Expenses
Below is a line-by-line explanation of each anticipated expenses totaling $247,000.

Unchanged Budget Lines

- *NCFAR Membership*: agInnovation has been a long-time member of the National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research (NCFAR) and seeks renewal of the NCFAR membership ($1,000). NCFAR is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, consensus-based, and customer-led coalition that brings together food, agriculture, nutrition, conservation, and natural resource stakeholders to serve as a forum and unified voice supporting increased federal investment in USDA Research, Education, and Economics (USDA REE).
- *Operating*: $1,500 is proposed to support agInnovation operations (e.g., Google listservs, Fathom, etc.).
- *agInnovation 501(c)(3)*: This line at $3,000 provides support for annual legal and accounting expenses associated with the agInnovation 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.
- *Meeting Support (Annual Meeting)*: $20,000 is requested to provide direct support to the agInnovation annual meeting as a means to offset escalating registration fees.

Funding Line Increases

- *Communications and Advocacy*: This line seeks $63,000 to support an enhanced strategic communications effort ($38,000) plus create a new Science Advocacy Academy ($25,000) to expand visibility and reach of agInnovation. The $38,000 for the proposed communications effort is to expand the agInnovation website contract. This initiative would entail targeted audience growth and strategic network expansion to enhance national visibility. The focus will be a content program that speaks meaningfully to audiences well beyond the university, people who have a stake in agricultural research, even if they don't yet know it. Stories will be intentionally framed for each audience segment: substantive enough for insiders, accessible enough for the public, compelling enough for funders and policymakers. Distribution channels and strategies will match each audience, so the right story reaches the right person at the right time. In addition to establishing an agInnovation LinkedIn page to share blog posts and create a hub for resharing content, strategic LinkedIn engagement will include analytics reviews to determine what's performing, who's reading, and content optimization recommendations for growing agInnovation's visibility in relevant communities. Media outreach will target agriculture, science, policy, and general interest publications. Press releases and media pitches will be tied to research milestones and agInnovation story highlights. The Science Advocacy Academy will enlist scientists throughout agInnovation to train and gain experience as advocates. The program will include a partnership with NCFAR to give the science advocates an opportunity to make Hill visits with staff members who sit on committees involved with agricultural and food research. The Hill visits will culminate with a showcase and reception (total estimated cost of $25,000) for congressional delegates, staffers, and federal agency personnel.

- *Promotion (chair travel, initiatives, etc.):* This coming calendar year, we propose $40,000 to support the development of all collateral materials (brochures, fact sheets, infographics, email campaigns, videos, press kits, merchandise, etc.) to be deployed during FY 2027. Also included in this budget line is support for the travel of the agInnovation chair and the chair's initiatives. The agInnovation chair anticipates significant travel to engage with various stakeholders who may support the chair initiatives.
- *agInnovation Awards*: This line, $30,000, reflects cash awards, travel reimbursements, plaque charges, and anticipated inflationary costs of non-cash awards. Per the recommendation of the Science and Technology Committee, award expenses include presentation of three $500 national research awards ($1,500: early career, mid-career, and full career); and fifteen regional awards ($15,000: early career, mid-career, and full career). The balance of this line, $13,500, will be dedicated to offset plaque and engraving costs, miscellaneous award costs, and reimbursement of travel expenses of the national award winners as well as regional award winners who are not celebrated at a regional meeting. (In 2027, we anticipate presenting 24 awards: 1 Multistate Research award, 5 Leadership awards, and 18 Agricultural Research Innovation awards.)

Funding Line Decreases

- *Professional Development*: The proposed budget includes $20,000 to support professional development opportunities for all station/research directors. This includes bringing in external speakers. Typically, the minimal cost to bring in an outside professional speaker is $5,000 plus travel expenses ($2,000). Likewise, providing travel ($2,000) and a modest honorarium ($1,000) to internal speakers is a minimum of $3,000 each.
- *Website (agInnovation and ESCOP)*: This line requests $12,500 to support maintenance of the two websites of the Section including the ESCOP website (hosted by Clemson University), the Section's inward-facing digital archive, and the agInnovation website, our outwardly-facing, promotional, digital gateway. As a follow-on to the FY 2026 website updating, we propose renewing the contract with our consultant to continue monthly blogs and assess the reach of the website ($10,000).
- *agInnovation Committee Meetings*: This budget item had been used to assist with defraying meeting costs (e.g., meeting rooms, A/V, food and beverage, etc.) and some travel for standing or ad hoc agInnovation committee members to meet face-to-face. None of the committees have requested to utilize this budget line in FY26. However, this line item was not eliminated in case committees request financial support in the future.
- *NRSP Stakeholder (travel)*: agInnovation budgets $1,500 to reimburse the stakeholder member of the NRSP Review Committee for travel expenses to attend the annual face-to-face meeting of the committee. This committee has begun to meet virtually whenever possible and FY27 is no exception. However, the line was not eliminated as a reminder that there may be a need for an in-person meeting in the future.

New Funding Lines

- *Capacity Building Engagement:* $50,000 is proposed to coincide with the communications effort. Currently, agInnovation tells a strong story about what Land-grant research delivers. What's missing is the specific ask that turns a reader, policymaker, or funder from interested to engaged. Thus, the plan is to develop a surveyed and prioritized set of private capacity-building funding opportunities aligned to advocacy, outreach, and public education. Moreover, the 501(c)(3) opens funding channels that were previously closed. Private foundations, family offices, and corporate philanthropy programs that fund advocacy, public education, and capacity building can now directly support agInnovation. What we don't know is which funders to approach first or how to position our network within their priorities. We propose that a firm be hired to conduct a focused review of the funding landscape, covering capacity-building grants, advocacy-focused philanthropy, food and agriculture funder collaboratives, and rural-development funders with aligned interests. The deliverable is a prioritized prospect list of fifteen to twenty-five funders with an alignment rationale, indicative grant size, application cadence, and recommended approach for each. Following identification and prioritization, depending on complexity, three to five proposals will be submitted to appropriate prospects.
- *Science Communications Survey:* $6,000 annually for each of the next four years to survey members of the public regarding their perceptions of science in agriculture and natural resources to help improve our communication with the public, policymakers, and other key stakeholders.

TOTAL EXPENSES FY 2027

- The budget for FY 2027 estimates $247,000 in expenses.

PROJECTED BALANCE-END OF FY 2027

- We are estimating a balanced budget for FY 2027.

Proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Budget

		FY27 Proposed	FY26 Approved	FY26 Actual/Encum
INCOME				
	Previous FY Carryover (estimate)	$120,000	$100,000	$120,000
	agInnovation Assessment	$100,000	$100,000	$100,000
	Other	$27,000	$24,000	$24,000
	TOTAL INCOME	$247,000	$224,000	$244,000
EXPENSES				
Eliminated Budget Lines	None	$0	$0	$0
Unchanged Budget Lines	NCFAR Membership	$1,000	$1,000	$1,000
	Operating	$1,500	$1,500	$1,400
	agInnovation 501(c)(3)	$3,000	$3,000	$1,200
	Meeting Support (Annual Meeting)	$20,000	$20,000	$12,000
Funding Line Increases	Communications and Advocacy	$63,000	$50,000	$12,000
	Promotion (chair travel, initiatives, etc)	$40,000	$30,000	$28,000
	agInnovation Awards	$30,000	$21,840	$22,000
Funding Line Decreases	Professional Development	$20,000	$30,000	$25,295
	Website (agInnovation and ESCOP)	$12,500	$25,000	$2,500
	agInnovation Committee Meetings	$0	$10,000	$0
	NRSP RC Stakeholder (travel)	$0	$1,500	$0
New Funding Lines	Capacity Building Engagement	$50,000	$0	$0
	Science Communications Survey	$6,000	$0	$0
	TOTAL EXPENSES	$247,000	$193,840	$105,395
	PROJECTED BALANCE-END OF FY	$0	$30,160	$138,605

Item 13.2
Agenda Item: WRJSM & WROAM
Presenter: Jenn Horton
Action: Discussion

Item 14.0
Agenda Item: Leadership Changes
Presenter: Bret Hess
Action: For Information Only

2027 agInnovation- West Officer Nominations

agInnovation- West Past-Chair
Shawn Donkin

agInnovation- West Chair
Leslie Edgar

agInnovation- West Chair-elect
Gene Kelly

agInnovation- West Secretary
Jay Lillywhite (2-year term)

agInnovation- West Treasurer
Jodie Anderson (3-year term)

agInnovation- West Executive Committee At-Large
Kevin Olival
Paul Johnson

2027 agInnovation- West Regional Committee Appointments

Western Regional Aquaculture Center
Shawn Donkin

Western Region MRC
Frank Camacho
Lara Prihodko
Holly Neibergs
Troy Bauder

2027 Regional Committee Vacancies

Western SARE Administrative Council
Milan Shipka as Director Emeritus

Western Region Rural Development Center
Bret Hess (regional EDs are permanent BOD members)
Jodie Anderson (2024-2026)
Darrin Boss (2026-2028)

2027 agInnovation Appointments

Chair-elect

Gene Kelly (national chair term begins in September)

Executive Committee Members

Shawn Donkin (senior member, representative on Executive Committee)
Bret Hess as ED and Alternate

Chair's Advisory Committee

Gene Kelly, agInnovation Chair
Bret Hess, Executive Vice Chair of agInnovation and STC

Budget & Legislative Committee

Sreekala Bajwa
Shawn Donkin

Science & Technology Committee

Gene Kelly
Lara Prihodko
Bret Hess as Executive Vice Chair

NRSP-RC

Gene Kelly (2026-2030)

National Plant Germplasm Coordinating Committee

Sieglinde Snapp
Bret Hess as Executive Vice Chair

ACOP Liaison

Bret Hess representing agInnovation