Item 3.0: 2025 Fall Meeting Minutes
Presenter: Jodie Anderson
Action Requested: Approval

agInnovation-West Fall Business Meeting
September 17, 2025
Westport Conference Center
Boardroom C
St. Louis, MO

Attendance: Shawn Donkin, Sreekala Bajwa, Leslie Edgar, Gene Kelly, Darrin Boss, Kevin Olival, Paul Johnson, Chris Pritsos, Frank Camacho, Manoj Nair, Glenda Humiston, Chris Kitalong, and Bret Hess

1. Call to Order, Welcome, Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Shawn at 2:20 pm CT. Shawn welcomed members to the fall business meeting then asked each person to introduce themselves since there were new members joining for their first time.

2. Business Meeting Agenda

Shawn asked for additions to the agenda, seeing none Shawn called for a vote to accept the minutes as presented. The agenda was approved by a unanimous vote.

3. Summer Business Meeting Minutes

Shawn noted that the summer business meeting minutes submitted by Jodie were included as the first agenda brief. Chris P. moved to accept the minutes as presented, Frank seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

4. August Bank Statement

Shawn asked Gene to provide an update on the status of the association's bank account as a way to inform the membership about the association's financial standing even though the report is for information only. Gene reviewed the August bank statement, noting recent expenses included the National Ag Law Center Conference ($26,614.37), annual website contractor ($2,846.25), and catering for the summer meeting in Laramie ($14,744). Reimbursement for the National Ag Law Center Conference is not reflected in the bank statement because it was received the day after the August closing date. The checking account balance in August was $200,079.72 and projections are to be at approximately $200,000 by year-end.

5. Chair's Interim Actions & Executive Committee Report

Shawn reviewed the actions listed in the agenda brief and asked if the members had questions. Hearing no questions, Shawn asked for a motion to approve the report. Leslie moved, Sreekala seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

6. Discussion of Adaptive Roots Presentation

Shawn noted that the region has expressed concerns about how the Roadmap has evolved, but it seems no one has listened. Now would be a good time to reflect on what is in the document and whether it is useful. Clarity on timeline also is needed. Leslie observed that the concept of guiding stars is great but each region is different. Perhaps taking a step back and focusing on agInnovation, the science that feeds the world then showing examples would avoid mission drift. It was agreed to support moving forward with whatever form evolves. However, the region has one more opportunity to express concerns about the current form and future direction of the Roadmap. Shawn, on behalf of agInnovation- West, will request an additional agenda item be added to the agInnovation business meeting agenda. Gene volunteered to speak on behalf of the region to indicate that the region is supportive of the concept, but clarity is needed on the process.

7. USDA Reorganization Letter

Shawn explained the premise behind the letter that has been drafted by the agInnovation Budget and Advocacy Committee. Glenda indicated that the letter reads as if agInnovation is supportive of the reorganization, which is not the case. Leslie suggested that clarity needs to be added regarding work places versus locations. Sreekala mentioned that the reorganization should not put additional burden on state partners. Leslie supported Sreekala by expressing that she is deeply concerned about the reorganization because of the unknown impacts on state agricultural experiment stations and research. Glenda recommended that the decision on where to locate the hubs needs study as does potential implications for research in the West. Shawn agreed to request to add this topic to the agInnovation business meeting agenda on behalf of the region.

8. Alliance for Western Excellence

Shawn explained that the steering committee has made progress on the document, which includes four signature areas of focus. He noted that as the steering committee worked towards completing a draft, it was discovered that collective actions to be taken by the region had not received much attention during the summer meeting. Glenda asked if the document would be ready for implementation soon, and Shawn replied that he needed input on the actions to be taken since he was not comfortable making that determination on behalf of the membership. Shawn then asked everyone in attendance to rank the collective actions within each heading and qualified with the question “what is most important to do first?” Following time for each individual to rank the collective actions, Shawn asked for a show of hands to

determine the membership's top two collective actions within each heading. The two collective actions within each heading with the most votes will be presented to the steering committee at their meeting on October 7.

9. Hot Topics Proposal

Bret described the opportunity for the region to have a table at the Homecoming on the Hill event that APLU is hosting on November 5. The invitation to participate has been limited to LGUs in states with members on the agriculture appropriations committees. The proposal included in the packet is to highlight impacts of collaborative and integrated efforts across the region within each of the signature areas of focus in the Alliance for Western Excellence document. The Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle project will also be included to demonstrate an integrated approach to solving a problem specific to members in the Pacific. Bret requested research impacts from each member that has not been invited to have their own table. Glenda shared that California will have a table. Washington State was originally the only LGU in the West that was invited to participate.

10. Preparation for agInnovation Business Meeting

Bret indicated that there will be a few items on the agInnovation business meeting agenda that may be of particular interest. The Science and Technology Committee is recommending to add two categories to the Agricultural Research Innovation Awards. The early and mid-career award categories will be added to the lifetime/distinguished career category. STC is recommending a $4,560 budget increase to cover the costs of the awards; only national award winners' travel is proposed to be covered by agInnovation. The other item to be brought forward by STC is the Rapid Response Committee, W525. The Chair of STC will be asking members to populate the multistate committee.

Chris P. described the request to move funds invested with TD Wealth to JP Morgan. He noted that funds are not under agInnovation's control and that the process to draw funds from the account is laborious and time consuming because the account is held by APLU. Moving the funds to JP Morgan would streamline the process of drawing funds because they would be held at the same bank as the agInnovation checking account. Kevin asked how much money was in the investment account. Chris answered a little more than $600,000. There was no further discussion.

Bret reminded everybody that they should have received information about the Bayer tour if they were signed up to attend. More details were included in the agenda brief.

11. Membership Check-in

Shawn implored members to actively participate in future Zoom discussions. Bret received information indicating that the RFA for capacity funds would not be released until the second quarter. He asked what affect such a delay would have on members. It was noted that many cannot budget because of the risk of not receiving funds, which is equivalent to a shutdown.

Capacity equals people, and most members do not have reserves to back fill if federal funds are not available. It would be like a furlough for some. Leslie explained that the threshold for implementing a furlough in Idaho is a 5% budget decrease. Trust in the federal government/agencies has eroded, so universities are more risk adverse. This situation also puts the state match in jeopardy. The bottom line is the delay would amount to layoffs of faculty, staff, and trainees and possibly tough decisions about which units to shutter.

12. Upcoming Meetings

Shawn reminded members to be prepared for at least two virtual meetings to take care of business in the spring. The virtual meetings will be in lieu of meeting in person. Two meetings will be held later in the day for most or early in the morning for some in an attempt to accommodate the region's different time zones.

Kevin explained that next summer's joint meeting in Hawai'I, June 22-25 will be structured similar to the one held in Laramie. Expect a reception on Monday evening, joint programming on Tuesday, a tour on Wednesday, and a combination of joint programming and business meetings on Thursday. He mentioned that a contract had been signed so lock the dates on the calendar then asked Bret for more details. Bret confirmed that the contract had been signed with the Grand Naniloa Hotel in Hilo.

Gene pointed to the Save-The-Date in the agenda briefs noting that the 2026 agInnovation National Meeting will be September 21-25 in Grand Junction, CO. He explained that Grand Junction is the largest city between Salt Lake City and Denver, and the city serves as a hub for many rural communities in that region.

13. Other Items from Members

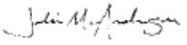
Darrin indicated that the Western SARE RFA is expected to be announced soon. Chris K. asked to change the map of branch stations on the agInnovation website to properly show the vastness of the region and the Pacific territories. He noted that changes he sent to Bret are a much better illustration of the territories.

14. Changing of the Guard

Bret served as the Master of Ceremony since the Executive Committee has agreed to serve another term in their positions, with the exception of Greg Cuomo who was replaced by Glenda Humiston. Bret thanked the Executive Committee for their steadfast commitment and stated that the gavel will need to be handed to Shawn at the dinner.

15. Adjournment

Shawn noted that he is celebrating a monumental birthday before he adjourned the meeting.



The minutes are respectfully submitted by Jodie Anderson, Secretary.

Item 5.0: Interim Actions
Presenter: Shawn Donkin
Action Requested: Approval

Chair's Interim Actions and Executive Committee's Report

Hosted the members virtual check ins.

Executed the contract to host the summer meeting at the Grand Naniloa Hotel.

Supported the agInnovation BLC request to advocate for the fully authorized amount for AFRI.

Provided input on the agInnovation response to USDA regarding the department's reorganization plan.

Approved the content for the Homecoming on the Hill that was postponed due to the government shut down.

Contributed to the Adaptive Roots strategic communications plan through providing feedback to the Governance Committee.

Incorporated suggestions and approved the Alliance for Western Excellence document.

Arranged for members to join the Western Extension Directors Association for presentations on The Intermountain West Transformation Network and Western SARE.

Signed on to a 302(b) Ag Allocation letter to the House and Senate Appropriations leadership encouraging them to increase the allocation for the ag appropriations bills.

Declined to sign on to a letter requesting to the House and Senate Appropriations leadership to invest no less than $1M in the Agriculture Advanced Research and Development Authority (AGARDA).

Signed on to the FY27 USDA AFRI community support letter requesting at least $500 million, but no less than $455 million for AFRI for FY27.

Reviewed the text and synopsis of the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2026.

Approved the year-end financials and the 2026 operations budget.

Prepared the agenda for the spring business meeting.

Completed the annual performance review of the ED.

Supported the nomination of Chris Pritsos for the Excellence in Leadership Award.