

agInnovation Budget and Legislative Committee (BLC)

September 2026 Agenda Brief

BLC Activity since agInnovation 2025 Fall Meeting

Chair: Steve Lommel (NCSU)

Membership: [Budget & Legislative Committee \(BLC\) – ESCOP](https://escop.info/committee/blc/) (<https://escop.info/committee/blc/>)

Executive Vice-Chair: Jeanette Thurston (agNC)

Assistant Executive Vice-Chair: Christina Hamilton (agNC)

BLC Activities Since the agInnovation 2025 Fall Meeting

USDA Reorganization Input – Developed and submitted agInnovation's recommendations on the USDA Reorganization Plan to Secretary Rollins (September 25, 2025). The written recommendations reflected BLC's assessment of the proposal's potential implications for agricultural research and the Land-grant University system's partnerships with USDA agencies and scientists.

USDA NAREEE Advisory Board Engagement – Met with Dr. Deirdra Chester (September 23, 2025) to better understand the role and responsibilities of the USDA National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics (NAREEE) Advisory Board and to explore opportunities to strengthen agInnovation's visibility, engagement, and influence in informing USDA research, education, and Extension policies.

CGA Representation on BLC – Matt Hammons (UNL, Assistant VP for External Relations and Director of Federal Relations) joined the BLC as the new representative from the APLU Council on Government Affairs (CGA). Matt also serves as Chair of the CGA Agricultural Appropriations Committee, strengthening coordination between agInnovation and APLU's federal advocacy efforts.

Washington, D.C. Update Meetings – Established recurring update sessions (approximately every 4–6 weeks) for all agInnovation members to provide timely briefings on federal budget developments, agency activities, and congressional actions affecting agricultural research. These sessions, led by Elizabeth Stulberg (Lewis-Burke Associates) and BLC's CGA representative, also provide an opportunity for directors to ask questions and discuss emerging policy issues. Attendance has remained consistently strong.

2026 BLC Work Plan – Developed a comprehensive work plan to guide committee priorities and activities throughout 2026. Key focus areas include developing the FY2028 federal budget request, supporting the Land-grant University Call to Action, providing ongoing federal policy and Washington, D.C. updates to agInnovation leadership, and exploring an expanded stakeholder engagement role for the BLC.

Research Facilities Act Program (RFAP) Recommendations – Responded to NIFA's request for stakeholder input on implementation of the Research Facilities Act Program (RFAP) in February 2026. Recommendations were provided “in-person” during a virtual NIFA Stakeholder Input session and in writing. agInnovation's recommendations were presented during a USDA stakeholder webinar and submitted directly to USDA leadership to help inform program implementation. The RFAP NOFO

incorporated several changes suggested by BLC, including inclusion of planning grants, range of award sizes, and eligibility for institutions who received funding from the FY2026 RFAP.

FY2028 USDA agInnovation Budget Request: On September 9, incoming BLC Chair Shibu Jose presented the BLC's FY2028 funding recommendations for AFRI and the Hatch Act to BAC. Alton Thompson also presented the FY2028 recommendation for the Evans-Allen program. The recommendations and supporting materials are available on the BLC webpage.

Upcoming BLC Activities

Develop Strong Justification for FY2028 and a Five-Year USDA Funding Strategy: Develop clear, data-driven justification for FY2028 funding requests and a longer-term, five-year funding strategy for AFRI, Hatch, and Evans-Allen.

LGU Roadmap Collaboration – Expect to partner to advance the LGU Roadmap—particularly in shaping a cohesive budget strategy.

Continuing BLC sponsored DC Update Meetings

Exploring an expanded stakeholder engagement role for the BLC

AS ALWAYS, FEEL FREE TO REACH OUT TO STEVE (slommel@ncsu.edu) OR JEANETTE (Jthurston@ksu.edu) ON TOPICS OR ACTIVITIES YOU BELIEVE BLC SHOULD BE ADDRESSING.