

ESCOP Chair's Advisory Committee
Monthly Conference Call
June 15, 2017
NOTES

Participants

Bret Hess (Chair, WAAESD)
Hunt Shipman (Cornerstone)
Gary Thompson (Chair-elect, NERA)
Clarence Watson (NRSP Review Committee/alternate to PBD)
Alton Thompson (ARD)
Jeff Jacobsen (NCRA)
Eric Young (SAAESD)
Mike Harrington (WAAESD)
Shirley Hymon-Parker (ARD)
Markis Alvarez (S&T Chair, ARD)

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS/ACTION ITEMS:

The request to provide \$5000 for the Breakthroughs 2030 was approved by the ESCOP Executive Committee. Payment has been made via SoAR

ESCOP signed onto the FY18 REE Funding Group Support Letter and FY18 FFAR Support Group Statement for June 15 Senate Ag Farm Bill Research Hearing

May minutes approved as distributed

Cornerstone Update

House Appropriations Committee will mark up FY '18 Bill before the July 4th recess. There was a recent call to action, (especially the blessed states) urging support of the One Ask proposal. All state should be contacting their delegations urging support.

The need for infrastructure funding was highlighted in several recent hearings by Secretary Perdue, Sonny Ramaswamy and Jay Akridge.

Cornerstone Report previously distributed:

- The [House](#) and [Senate](#) Appropriations Subcommittees on Agriculture, Rural Development, FDA, and Related Agencies held hearings over the last two weeks to hear testimony from Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue regarding the FY 2018 President's Budget Request. As reported to the BAA last month, the President's budget proposes to cut \$4.8 billion from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in FY 2018, which includes a roughly 8 percent reduction in the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

- Agricultural research received several mentions at the committee hearings. In the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, both Chairman Robert Aderholt (R-AL) and Ranking Member Sanford Bishop (D-GA) said the proposed reduction to USDA research activities is concerning. Secretary Perdue responded to the committee that his administration will take what the appropriators believe is in the best interest of the nation, and stretch it as far and as beneficial as possible. Representative Kevin Yoder (R-KS) credited agricultural research with the bountiful supply of food and agricultural products. Secretary Perdue agreed and said his administration will do everything possible to find ways USDA, private industry, and the nations' land-grant universities can improve collaboration.
- In the Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, full Committee Chairman Thad Cochran (R-MS) expressed support for agricultural research conducted at land-grant and public universities and asked if the level provided in the President's budget would be adequate. Secretary Perdue admitted that research is an area where the administration missed the mark, and promised to work toward improving it because, "research really is the basis of our agricultural productivity today." Subcommittee Ranking Member Jeff Merkley (D-OR) also expressed concern over the elimination of more than 20 agricultural research programs in the budget proposal.
- Secretary Perdue mentioned in both hearings that he believes if manufacturing had the basic research, applied research, and delivery systems like the extension service, we would not have seen the demise of the U.S. manufacturing industry, "that is how strongly I believe in research in our land-grants and research in our ARS. So, I hope that we can appropriately find the money to fund them to continue".

Infrastructure One Pager

A one pager on Infrastructure Repair and Maintenance was developed by Mike with input from Ian Maw, Jay Akridge Tom Coon and the other EDs. Sarah Lupis created the final one pager which has a blank back for individual institutions to insert their own needs.

Capacity Funds One Pager

Mike created an initial draft one pager on the TEconomy Capacity Programs Review that was distributed to the AES and CES EDs with comments due last Friday. Ron Brown and Rick Klemme have provided comments Alton Thompson provided position comments during this call. Sarah Lupis will be developing the formatted one pager early next week.

Time and Effort Reporting

Fred Schlutt talked with Sonny recently about this issue, Sonny suggested a joint ESCOP-ECOP-NIFA committee that would develop a set of best practices. Virtually all institutions have some form of T&E reporting but some of these may lack sufficient detail to satisfy the requirements set forth in the Uniform Guidance. There seems to be considerable misunderstanding as to what will be required.

Mike reported on the salient points from the NERAOC meeting session on this topic (see below). He has sent them to Maggie Ewell for verification. Mike will distribute any additions or clarifications after a response from Maggie.

Science and Technology Committee report

S&T reviewed 4 applications for the National Multistate Research Award. NC1186 - Water Management and Quality for Ornamental Crop Production and Health was selected. The committee also worked on minor revisions to the Award Guidelines and updated the call for 2018. These modifications will be brought to ECOP at the J-COPs meeting for approval.

ESCOP Annual Meeting

Plans are well underway for the Philadelphia meeting with all but one session fully organized and all details. The meeting website will go live very soon.

ESCOP Website

Good progress is being made. David L is populating some areas. There is agreement on file nomenclature. Regional offices will assume responsibility for species pages, e.g. S&T, B&L etc. There will be a live demo at J-COPs

ESCOP Meeting at Joint Cops (3.5 hrs.)

Send possible discussion topics to Bret and Mike

Possible topics

- ESCOP Website

- T&E reporting

- Involvement in NIFA budget development process

- Ag Outlook Forum (see <https://www.usda.gov/oce/forum/> for this year's topics)

- Participation in Breakthroughs 2030 discussion panels

- Farm Bill

Other

Louie Tupas, a NIFA liaison to ECOP, is planning a joint meeting between NIFA, NRCS, ESCOP and ECOP leadership – Stay tuned for details

Time and Effort Reporting Summary

NERAOC Conference, May 2017

The real problem is that the OMB and OGC folks have come down on NIFA for failing to adequately track T/E for their program funds. Virtually all institutions have some form of T&E reporting but the granular detail may be insufficient to accurately capture how faculty/staff spend their time and to which accounts salaries should be charged. Annual reporting doesn't provide the sufficient detail while monthly reporting is onerous for all involved.

There is quite a bit of misunderstanding floating around about what is required to meet the Uniform Guidance. Tim Nesbitt (New Mexico State) has been responding to requests from around the country.

Requirements:

- The institution needs to have a written T/E policy
 - There may be need for additional attention in the college given how our faculty simultaneously work on different projects and/or programs
- There is a person who is responsible for the program
- T/E is recorded and certified by [faculty/staff/employee](#) as specified in the policy
- T/E is certified by the responsible person (PI in the case of a grant or a supervisor)
- T/E is documented and records are maintained
- There are internal controls to assure that reporting does, in fact, occur.
- The Policy, implementation and records are subject to review and audit

The records should withstand a desk audit. If there is an instance where an audit finding is issued, a first time finding will result in recommendations from NIFA for system improvements. A second finding would likely result in disallowance of charges and request for repayment. Of course, institutions would be able to appeal or rebut any findings.

Off the table is judgment of outcomes and impacts for a particular project or program. Initially we were told that if these were insufficient for time and funds invested, a finding would be issued and funds would need to be repaid. ESCOP took a very strong stance against this since it would be unlikely that auditor would have the expertise to make such a judgement.

Quarterly reporting would be acceptable to capture detail (from Cynthia Montgomery OGFH head)