

ESCOPE Science & Technology: <http://escop.info/committee/scitech/>

02/01/2021

4 pm ET, via Zoom

(<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81648064495?pwd=VFZYMmtLNm1PWFBaMllzK05uZkh0UT09>) or
1 669 900 9128 Meeting ID: 816 4806 4495 Passcode: 103979)

Committee Members:

<p>Chair: <i>Jody Jellison (NERA)</i> Past Chair: Laura Lavine (WAAESD)</p> <p>Delegates: <i>Alton Thompson (ARD)</i> <i>John Yang (ARD)</i> <i>Joe Colletti (NCRA)</i> <i>Bill Barker (NCRA)</i> Indrajeet Chaubey (NERA) Mark Hutton (NERA) <i>Susan Duncan (SAAESD)</i> Nathan McKinney (SAAESD) Gene Kelly (WAAESD) <i>Chris Davies (WAAESD)</i></p> <p>Executive Vice Chair: <i>Bret Hess (WAAESD ED)</i> <i>Saige Zespy (WAAESD Recorder)</i></p>	<p>Liaisons: Robert Matteri (ARS) Wendy Powers (ECOP) <i>Tim Conner (NIFA)</i> <i>Jim Farrar (NIPMCC)</i> Tim Killian (SSCC)</p>
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Agenda:

1. [Welcome](#)
2. [Roll Call](#)
3. **Liaison Updates, as needed**
 - a. [ARS](#)
 - b. [ECOP](#)
 - c. [NIFA](#)
 - d. [NIPMCC](#)
 - e. [SSSC](#)
4. [Approval of meeting notes from 01/04/2021](#)
5. [Agricultural Research Infrastructure Advocacy](#)
 - a. [Status of Talking Points](#)
 - b. [Next Step - branch stations](#)
 - c. [How does the LGU agricultural research system differentiate itself from the private sector?](#)
6. [Next Scheduled Meeting\(s\)](#)

Minutes:

1. **Welcome** – Jellison
 - a. Jody welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanking everyone for making time to attend the meeting.
2. **Roll Call** – Zespy
 - a. Saige recorded the attendees, as presented in the Zoom participant's menu.
3. **Liaison Updates, as needed**
 - a. **ARS (Robert Matteri)**
 - i. Bob was unable to attend the meeting.
 - b. **ECOP (Wendy Powers)**
 - i. Wendy was unable to join the meeting.
 - c. **NIFA (Tim Conner)**
 - i. Carrie Castille is on board as the new director. She is working to learn the different stakeholders and get to know those people. Soon, she will be in touch with STC, and other groups as she introduces herself.
 1. Carrie has a different background than the last two directors, but she does bring 20 years of experiences and lots of leadership. Her personality is also different, but NIFA is excited because she may be the perfect person to move forward.
 - ii. NIFA continues to re-staff at the rate of about five people per pay period. While numbers are increasing, there is some loss by attrition due to retirements and people who stayed on temporarily to help with the transition.
 1. They continue to focus on training and building the organization. NIFA is also focusing on values around customer service and agency processes as well as programs to fit administration priorities.
 2. Several changes in systems have been seen, and Tim continues to send out updates as they are available. Some systems are moving forward, and they are making changes as they can. Stakeholders are also welcome to provide feedback.
 - iii. Chris commented that Extension is very frustrated with the idea of being required to submit project proposals because it doesn't work well in Extension. Utah is looking at huge umbrella projects that cover big areas, rather than individual people. He suggested reconsidering the move.
 1. Tim noted that ECOP is talking about that, as well. From NIFA's perspective, reporting and the ability to capture the return on investment is something that hasn't been available on the Extension side. NIFA is trying to figure out how to capture that.
 2. Chris noted that annual reports are also available, noting that the bigger question is knowing what they will be doing four or five years ahead of time.

- a. Jody noted that they see similar challenging issues. Some things that are easy for research are challenging for Extension. The difficulty comes in projecting four years out because Extension strives to be responsive to emerging issues. Extension professionals are also less "tied" to specific topics and ideas.
 - b. Tim noted he will bring the issue forward.
 - 3. Bret also noted that, after talking to Director Castille with the Research EDs, she noted that she is willing and receptive to meeting with STC.
 - 4. Bret asked whether ESCOP should consider positioning the organization on climate and helping NIFA with climate initiatives.
 - a. Tim noted that climate work took a dip recently. However, now, NIFA is working to understand what the Biden agenda is on climate and what it looks like, how it splits between adaptation and mitigation, and more.
 - b. Tim added that conversations about climate may need to be better synchronized to achieve impact-oriented results.
 - c. Tim further noted that anything related to equality, economy, and climate will be a focus for the Biden administration.
 - 5. Bret asked for a sense on how NIFA will utilize the USDA Science Blueprint or whether a change will be seen.
 - a. While Tim forecasts a change in the emphasis, he notes that the same scientists who developed the blueprint are still present. Climate will be a bigger focus.
 - 6. Bret asked about how NIFA perceives moving forward with the Ag Innovation Agenda. Is it something STC should continue to pursue.
 - a. Tim explained NIFA is continuing to move down the path. He doesn't see a change in the Agenda, but may see a change in allocation to something more in line with the administration.
 - i. He also noted that the same advisors are present and working, so it is likely that their viewpoints would continue to be reflected.
 - b. Tim suggested it may be three to four months before the agenda of the new administration comes forward.
 - d. **NIPMCC (Jim Farrar)**
 - i. Jim reported that the Executive Committee will be meeting Feb. 10 for their First Quarter meeting. He will have more to report next month, following that meeting.
 - e. **SSSC (Tim Killian)**
 - i. Tim was unable to attend the meeting.
- 4. **Approval of meeting notes from 01/04/2021 – Jellison**

- a. Chris Davies moved to accept the minutes. Bill and Joe seconded the minutes. The minutes were passed unanimously.
5. **Agricultural Research Infrastructure Advocacy – Jellison**
- a. **Status of Talking Points**
 - i. Bret provided a quick update on the talking points, noting that the Subcommittee worked over the holiday season before bringing the draft to the full committee for approval. The talking points were submitted to APLU. APLU re-worked the talking points. Then, the talking points were distributed as part of the materials shared with all participants of the Jan. 11 webinar.
 - 1. The talking points were simply re-organized to re-order priority points.
 - 2. [The talking points are available here.](#)
 - ii. Alton noted the talking points were well received and well done.
 - iii. Jody asked whether there has been resolution on the question on mandatory match or whether the funds will be tilted towards the shiny, competitive projects or projects like leaky roofs.
 - 1. Alton noted that APLU would not be advocating for matching funds. They hope to avoid a waiver from the Secretary, rather pushing for no matching funds.
 - iv. Jody also inquired as to whether a portion of funds may be set aside for those projects that are less competitive and exciting, as a result of projects that preserve capacity, rather than expand capacity.
 - 1. Alton explained BAA Leadership addressed the competitiveness and necessary projects in their letter. It is an issue that needs to be addressed (i.e. replacing a roof versus a shiny, new object)
 - 2. Alton also noted that this bill is something that everyone should be excited about, rather than having division.
 - a. Jody noted that her contacts have indicated "they would not oppose" such an ask. She noted that advocacy, rather than lack of opposition, will be important.
 - b. Alton agreed. He further presented the information to the 1890 administrators, noting that, though there wasn't opposition, there wasn't excitement, either.
 - c. Alton noted it is important to move beyond "not opposing" to "enthusiastic support." It is important to work with universities and 1890 institutions to secure names of potential advocates.
 - v. Bret said that Cornerstone noted the best likelihood of a program is to utilize what is already present and what is already authorized. Vernie also added that the language has everything from renovation to new construction.
 - 1. Vernie clarified for Bret that it is easier to modify existing language, rather than crafting new language.

- vi. Bret also explained that an additional idea is around the mechanism for helping smaller, less competitive schools. The current thought is to use EPSCoR as the mechanism for smaller institutions. Bret asked for input from the group about using that mechanism.
 1. Bret further explained EPSCoR is a federal program where a certain portion of funds in the pool can be set aside for states that do not receive a certain percentage of competitive dollars for science and engineering. NIFA uses the list and sets aside a percentage of funds, specifically set aside for the smaller, less competitive schools. Bret clarified it is a three-year rolling average.
 2. Jody added the designation is based on a statewide assessment versus individual institutions. Tim clarified that the scoring looks at the entire state.
 - a. Tim further added that EPSCoR targets underrepresented schools.
 - b. Jody asked whether EPSCoR is calculated differently for different agencies.
 3. Alton noted that he had working in states and between schools can be complicated.
 4. Bill asked why the language continues to be tied to Farm Bill language when this bill is to be included in emergency funding.
 - a. Bret said it may be important to use language that has been funded in the past. Alton added it can be easier to attach language to existing authorizations, such as the Farm Bill, while adding conditions.
 5. Alton further clarified that, if APLU sees an opportunity to attach this language to an Infrastructure Bill or the Farm Bill, whichever will be more expeditious, will be sought.
 6. Bret asked Chris Davies about EPSCoR status, noting that USU had trouble with EPSCoR because of the University of Utah's medical school.
 - a. Chris explained that EPSCoR penalizes those institutions with medical schools, and he recommended staying away from the model, particularly since EPSCoR provides a "moving target."
 - b. It was also pointed out that EPSCoR is a statewide assessment, and states with multiple institutions see wide variation among their institutions.
 - c. It was recommended that distributing funds using a formula, like ear-marked dollars in the past
 7. Several members were concerned about equitable distribution of funding for projects, noting that preserving capacity (i.e.

maintaining buildings, replacing plumbing/roofing, etc.) is just as important as increasing capacity.

- a. Jody and other members noted that there should be an effort to ensure that smaller institutions aren't left behind in the infrastructure improvements.
 - b. Further, smaller institutions from schools where specialty crops outweigh large-scale agriculture is less prevalent fear the possibility that they may be overshadowed by bigger players in the commodity world.
- vii. Alton will relay these thoughts and considerations to the larger group, noting that this effort must be a tide that rises all boats.

b. Next Step - branch stations

- i. Bill noted that the stations do outreach, extension and teaching at the stations, as well, which is not included. That should be a point of pride for stations.
 - ii. Chris asked whether this would accompany the infrastructure initiative or as a separate issue. Jody noted the request was within the context of the initiative, while being careful to not overwhelm the ask.
 1. Chris agreed that the tri-partite mission of LGUs should be emphasized.
 - iii. Bill further added that, one serious issue with the deluge of data being provided by digital agriculture is bandwidth. Stations that are even just 20 miles from town require hundreds of thousands of dollars to support fiber installation, etc. to facilitate research.
 1. Bret asked whether the center served as an access hub during the COVID pandemic.
 - a. Bill didn't recall that the Experiment Stations experienced use of their facilities for Wi-Fi during pandemics, but it has been anecdotally reported in other places.
 - b. Chris added, however, that access to the physical facilities was shut down to reduce transmission risks.
 2. Susan noted that her stations advertised that people could park in parking lots for internet access.
 - iv. Susan noted that several of their off-campus centers are applying for grants around AI, machine learning, etc. but are unable to download their data.
 1. Secondly, if there are advances in technology, they must be able to demonstrate those, which is also very difficult or impossible without the internet.
 - v. Jody asked for modifications and edits by Wednesday at close of business.
 1. Then, an updated document will be provided.
- c. How does the LGU agricultural research system differentiate itself from the private sector?**

- i. Field Days and Extension come to mind as differentiators for Chris.
 - 1. Jody added that field days are very careful to not advocate. Instead, they provide comparisons and scientific data, as well as share choices that growers might make.
- ii. Bill noted that a greater emphasis on equity, diversity and inclusion are a priority for LGU agricultural research systems. He is unsure whether those same efforts are seen in private industry.
 - 1. Bret suggested LGUs are more inclusive.
 - 2. Bill noted that, if an Experiment Station was asked for a sign language interpreter, they would do everything they can.
 - a. John noted that they hire Hispanic language teachers, so all programs are offered bilingually. Bill added they have Mung populations farming ginseng, and they have documents translated.
- iii. Jody asked for other examples to be send to herself and Bret by the end of the day on Wednesday.

6. New Business

- a. Bill thanked everyone for their work and support on the infrastructure projects.

7. Next Scheduled Meeting(s) – Jellison

- i. 4-5 pm Eastern March 1, 2021*
- ii.* Chris moved to adjourn the meeting. Bill Barker seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.