

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

06/07/2021

4 pm ET, via Zoom

**Committee Members:**

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

1. **Welcome and Introductions** – Jellison
  - a. Jody welcomed everyone, thanking them for their time.
2. **Roll Call** – Zespy
  - a. Jody asked Saige to record the roll call in the background from the Zoom participant's list.
3. **Liaison Updates, as needed**
  - a. **ARS -- Bob Matteri**
    1. Bob explained that ARS has been busy since the President's budget has been released, and the budget is robust for research and development. He noted that Congress has the prerogative to accept, decline or amend the budget.
      1. Bob noted that all the research increases for USDA total \$340 million, including a large piece for the high-containment animal disease facility in Manhattan, Kans. (\$49 million).
      2. Additionally, there is a tight focus on clean energy and zero-carbon research (\$99 million).
        1. Climate science and climate hubs (\$97 million) attribute much of that.
        2. \$95 million is for the Advanced Research Projects Agency, which is a DOE program. ARS would get the

money and transfer it to DOE through an annual agreement. The move is a little unusual.

3. The budget echoes President Biden's priorities, which have been previously announced.
4. Facilities funding was not largely proposed. Usually, such funding comes through Congress.
5. In his years at ARS, Bob has never seen a budget that looks quite like this.
  1. Four years ago, USDA was looking at a 25% decrease, but the tide has shifted.
2. On the COVID front, Bob noted that numbers are looking really good, with a marked decline in new cases, as well as hospital bed occupancy. However, the department is proceeding cautiously.
  1. ARS labs are open to 25% occupancy, with the option for flexible work schedules.
  2. The policy is expected to be revised soon to get more people in the lab.
3. Joe Colletti asked about the DOE money, asking that it may be possible to see an ARPA-like piece of the budget. The funding would be advanced, cutting edge research, out of the norm, but with rapid development and deployment.
  1. Bob explained that, on an annual basis, a reimbursable agreement would be developed with ARPA, so it is outside of the agency. The tactic in creating a budget is unusual.

**b. ECOP -- Wendy Powers**

1. Wendy was unable to attend, but she relayed several messages through Bret.
2. ECOP is working on an advocacy tool kit to convey Cooperative Extension's work and impact around priority areas, including urban agriculture, workforce development, DEI, climate change, and urban Extension.
  1. The toolkit can be found at: <https://advocacy.extension.org/>
3. The annual meeting for ECOP is planned to be held virtually in mid-October.
4. In-person visits are planned with new and existing key partners.
5. ECOP has a number of liaison positions that are vacant due to turnover. The organization is looking for ways to fill those roles.
6. Jody asked whether Extension had an increase in its budget.
  1. Tim agreed, saying that Extension had a sizable increase last year, although that is a big area to move forward.
  2. Jody noted she asked particularly because of the focus on climate change and outreach Extension education
    1. Tim added that, as AFRI is enacted, there will be opportunities to see a boost there.

**c. NIFA -- Tim Conner**

1. The President's Budget for NIFA can be found at:  
<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/21NIFA2022Notes.pdf>
  1. There is a significant bump in some areas, with roughly \$100 million in capacity funding.
  2. A \$240 million increase has been proposed in AFRI.
  3. In looking at the budget, Tim noted that there is pressure to reduce the number of budget lines. However, that funding is often just "reassigned" to a different line, combined with other funding, to meet Congress' demands.
    1. The decreases seen are to re-apportion how and where funds come from.
  4. He noted that specialty groups, like potato and alfalfa research, will likely still see the funding.
  5. Tim suggested that possibly Parag would join the committee
2. NIFA deployed the in NRS, NIFA Reporting System, the Research Initiation Module.
  1. Now, Extension is under the same umbrella for the system. There is a hope that the system will bring improved simplicity.
  2. Tim noted there is at least one more module to deploy.
  3. While he believes the launch went smoothly, he noted there are still questions to address.
3. There is a major hiring push for NIFA and ERS. The agencies have been challenged to do another big push to get back to numbers enabling the agency to do its job more efficiently with a regional workload.
  1. The agency has committed to have 100 new people on board by the end of the fiscal year.
4. In looking at what NIFA looks like in the future, Tim explained that the agency has a lot more flexibility than many agency.
  1. NIFA is looking to USDA in terms of policies and guidance, but he sees the potential for a significant virtual workforce.
  2. A virtual workforce may enable the agency to recruit for positions as it continues its hiring push.
5. Jody asked if Tim would keep the Science and Technology Committee posted on what work looks like, since many institutions are seeking a hybrid dynamic for their positions. She noted that federal level models would be helpful in assessing what needs to be done on site and what can be done virtually.
  1. Tim noted that the most critical thing is to continue to fairly offer virtual work options.
  2. Bob noted that ARS has adopted a hybrid model for their hybrid work.
    1. In research, work must be in the lab, of course, but administrative support work is flexible. There have been very few problems in administrative roles, which

means they are likely to have the option to remain remote.

**d. NIPMCC -- Jim Farrar**

1. Jim noted there is buy-in was for the idea of working on an IPM Research and Extension Enterprise Strategic Plan. The NIPMCC Executive Committee, four regional IPM Centers, and four regional technical committees all agreed, on the broad sense, to participating.
  1. The groups will start working on a strategic plan. They are working to have a draft before the International IPM Symposium in Denver, Colo. in March 2022.
2. The second quarter Executive Committee meeting is set for Wednesday, June 9.
  1. Jim is exploring the idea of having the third quarter meeting in person in October this year.
  2. However, he has had trouble communicating with his APLU contact in D.C. He asked for any input from colleagues about the best person to contact.
    1. Bret noted he can help make contacts.
    2. Gary Thompson also noted that APLU is working on whether to have a hybrid meeting or not, so the state of the APLU meeting is uncertain. There is also a potential to have a compressed meeting, with two days, cutting out much of the awards ceremony and highlighted speeches.
    3. Bret explained that APLU is not certain whether they will be able to have in-person meetings. APLU is following some very stringent guidelines, more strict than current CDC guidelines.
      1. Bret suggested that APLU is likely not in a position to host conferences or even small meetings in their space.
      2. Gary agreed, noting that offices will not be staffed until Labor Day, at the earliest. It is likely, even then, that work in the office will only be several days a week.
      3. Rick added that APLU is far behind guidelines seen across the country. Rhode Island, for example, is in the third phase of opening up, as are many states.
  4. Jim suggested he might plan on an alternative meeting venue.
    1. Bret suggested putting the item on the meeting for the Executive Committee.
    2. Gary also suggested sharing notes from APLU's meetings.

**e. SSSC -- Tim Killian**

1. Tim noted there were not any updates from the Social Science Subcommittee.
- f. **SAAESD -- Gary Thompson**
  1. Gary reported he went to his first face-to-face meeting, the Southern Region NASDA meeting, noting that it was strange to be back together, without masks. However, the news is positive and things are opening up.
4. **Approval of meeting notes from 05/03/2021 – Jellison**
  - a. Jody thanks Saige for preparing the minutes. She asked for suggestions or changes to the minutes.
  - b. Susan moved to approved the minutes. Alton seconded the motion. Motion passed.
5. **Review of Climate Survey Infographic – Rhodes**
  - a. Jody explained the last meeting notice included an infographic, which related to the climate survey results.
  - b. The infographic is a follow-up item from the presentation offered last time on the results of the Climate Survey.
    1. Rick briefly explained the survey was initiated by the Executive Directors, and the entire Experiment Station Section was polled.
      1. The survey was filled out by 80 percent of Experiment Stations, and the results of the survey were shared with the group. A video of Rick's presentation can be found here:  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/rjnvbjj03gnwu7t/ESS%20Climate%20Research%20Survey.mp4?dl=0>
    2. The infographic was created to be used on behalf of the system to provide a leave-behind on the results of the Climate Survey, which expressed both the problem and the capacity of the Experiment Station system, highlighting areas that are ripe for investment.
    3. An infographic has been prepared and is in the draft stage. The infographic has been hand edited, and additional suggestions are sought to improve the infographic.
      1. Rick noted that there are four or five important messages.
        1. Land-grant universities have a growing climate research portfolio. 93% of land-grant institutions noted that they had climate research in their portfolio, with 64% having large-scale projects.
        2. There is additional capacity across the country for climate research.
        3. Thirdly, facilities, instrumentation and social sciences are ripe for investment.
        4. A conclusion will note that Experiment Stations have the expertise to address the challenges of climate change.
      2. There are some proposed changes (including dropping the second column on the bottom 1/3 of the infographic).

3. Rick asked for changes on the infographic or whether a final draft should move forward.
  4. Gary noted the infographic is a positive communication tool. He asked who the intended audience is for the infographic. He suggested, however, identifying a specific audience (i.e. Congress, CGA, funding agencies, etc.), noting that specific direction for a specific audience may be useful.
    1. Rick noted that the graphic is slanted more towards Congressional delegates as the audience, as well as influencers of the congressional delegates.
      1. These influencers are defined as those people who could help ESCOP share its message with Congress and to clearly indicate that ESS has the capacity to combat this existential threat.
    2. Gary asked whether CARET could use this tool.
      1. Rick agreed that CARET could find this piece very useful in conversations with congressional delegates.
      2. Gary suggested sending the graphic to the CARET Executive Committee for feedback.
    3. Rick suggested that he will modify the document, send it the CARET Executive Committee, send it to CGA, and then bring it back to the Science and Technology Committee.
  4. Bret explained that the Communications Professional concept was outlined and endorsed at SCITECH's last meeting. The concept was also endorsed by the Chair's Advisory Committee and has been released for a vote by the ESCOP Executive Committee for final approval.
    1. Rick moved through the process outlined in this concept, which involved sharing communications pieces with STC prior to moving them forward.
6. **Next Scheduled Meetings – Jellison**
- a. **Proposed dates for the remaining meetings for the year: 4-5 pm Eastern July 5?, August 2, September 6**
  - b. **9 am – 12 pm PT September 30 at the 2021 ESS Meeting**
  - c. Jody asked anyone to make STC aware of any potential conflicts. Any specific concerns can be emailed to Jody or Bret.
    1. Chris asked whether a July 5 meeting will be held, since that is a national holiday.
      1. Jody suggested an alternate date, either that same week or the following Monday (July 12). Alton suggested moving the meeting forward one week, and Chris agreed.
    2. Jody directed Bret to look into the date as an alternative.
      1. Bret noted the meeting would be one week in advance of Joint COPS.

2. Jody noted she is hesitant to cancel to avoid kicking the can down the road with the other work of STC.
- d. The Sept. 30 meeting is concurrent with the ESS Meeting.
  1. On Sept. 30, all standing committees of ESS will meet in person to develop a broad work plan for the year. This year will mark a change in chair-ship, as well as the opportunity to present ideas for what should be accomplished in the next year.
7. **2021 Excellence in Multistate Research Award Selection** – Jellison
  - a. Jody thanked Bret for summarizing comments, even though some of them were disjointed. She noted that she benefitted from reading through all the comments to incorporate the different perspectives of the committee members.
    1. She noted the differences in applied vs. basic research, project duration, participating units, products, metrics of change, etc.
    2. Jody suggested providing folks the opportunity to pull up the summary documents sent out earlier. She noted that there will be an opportunity to re-evaluate rankings after the conversation, prior to the final decision-making.
    3. After a robust discussion, the overall consensus was to move forward with the project on Soil Physics.
      1. Bret asked whether or not each reviewer is comfortable providing the summary documents to help projects improve.
      2. There was consensus among the group to provide summary information compiled from reviews.
      3. Bret and Jody will work on a summary draft document from provided review notes to submit to the individual projects. The communication will be distributed to projects for improvements.
    4. Bret noted the STC's recommendation will move forward to the ESCOP Executive Committee. The ESCOP Executive Committee will then decide whether to support the decisions of the committee.
  - b. Jody thanked everyone for their careful review of the documents.
    1. A re-scheduled meeting will be set for the second Monday of July. Bret will email everyone about the re-scheduled date.
    2. Rick moved to adjourn the meeting. Gene Kelly seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned.

**Action Items:**

- Look at July 12 as an alternative date for SCITECH's next meeting and provide notice to committee members. (Bret)
- Let Jody and/or Bret know if there are scheduling conflicts or concerns with the proposed meeting schedule for the remainder of 2021. (All)
- Work to develop a generalized summary of comments (not the summarized comments provided to the committee) to provide to nominees. (Bret and Jody)