



2021 ESCOP Meeting Agenda
February 25, 2021; 11 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. ET

Time	Agenda Item	Topic and Presenter(s)
11:00 a.m.	1.0	Call to Order – Moses T. Kairo, ESS Chair <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Approval of Agenda 1.2 Approval of Minutes (ESCOP Executive Committee Meeting, Oct. 27, 2020) 1.3 Approval of Interim Actions
11:25 a.m.	2.0	Dialogue with NIFA Director – Dr. Carrie Castille
11:45 a.m.	3.0	Ag Research Infrastructure Advocacy (ARIA) – Moses Kairo, Alton Thompson and Jeff Jacobsen Congressional Engagement – Caron Gala and Doug Steele
12:05 p.m.	4.0	Advocacy Report – Hunt Shipman, Jim Richards, Vernie Hubert and Maggie Earle
12:20 p.m.	5.0	Strategic Realignment Implementation Committee (SRIC) Marty Draper and Gary Thompson
12:30 p.m.	6.0	APLU Report - Doug Steele
1:25 p.m.	7.0	Committee Reports and Updates (New information only) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget & Legislative Committee (Glenda Humiston/Jeff Jacobsen ESS Budget and Finance Update Communications & Marketing Committee (J.F. Meullenet/Rick Rhodes/Doug Steele) Science & Technology Committee (Jody Jellison/Bret Hess) Diversity Catalyst Committee (Henry Fadamiro/Rick Rhodes) National Impact Database Committee (Steve Loring/Rick Rhodes) NRSP Review Committee (Doug Buhler/Jeff Jacobsen) NRSP1 Management Committee (Keith Owens/Jeff Jacobsen) REEport Research Working Group (Bret Hess)
1:35 p.m.	8.0	CARET – Katie Frazier
1:45 p.m.	9.0	ECOP Report – Wendy Powers
1:55 p.m.	11.0	ESS Fall Workshop, Squaw Valley, California, September 27 - October 1, 2021 Meeting - Chris Pritsos and Bret Hess, Hosts
2:00 p.m.	12.0	Final Remarks and Adjourn – Moses T. Kairo



Agricultural Research Infrastructure Advocacy (ARIA) Update ***(ESCOP Meeting – Agenda Brief 3.0)***

Thursday, February 18th 2021

Dear Experiment Station Section (ESS) Members and Colleagues,

The Agricultural Research Infrastructure Advocacy (ARIA) Advisory group for the Experiment Station Section (ESS) would like to thank the directors and administrators from each of the five regions for your feedback on moving our advocacy efforts forward in a very intentional and inclusive way. We appreciate your concurrent work on and support of the campaign, which is instrumental to our success.

At the national level, the ARIA Advisory group is also conducting meetings with key stakeholders and supporters to socialize the need and ask. Your concurrent efforts to provide information at the local level align strategically with our work at the national level. One is not useful without the other. Ultimately, all politics is local, so your efforts are critical to this effort. Now, the ARIA advisory group is laser focused on securing congressional champions (sponsors) and national support for the request. For example, some combination of the three of us have met with:

- American Farm Bureau Federation
- Science Societies
- Biden-Harris Administration
- Potential congressional champions
- NIFA leadership

As a result of input submitted during this period of socialization, the ARIA Advisory group has put together a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document. We will continue to update the document over the duration of the campaign. We urge you to send additional questions to ARIA@aplu.org. Once we have a set of champions for the campaign in Congress, we will be able to have more conversations to address the finer details that have arisen by the ESS membership. At the national level, we are also committed to meeting with USDA and other parts of the administration as appointees take office.

We are reaching the fourth phase of the campaign (ARIA Public Campaign and Release of Study). During this phase, we will use the Gordian Study to engage in discussions with members of Congress and the Biden-Harris Administration. This study will be released during a webinar on March 4th (**11:00 a.m. Eastern Time**) with the Rebuild Rural Infrastructure

Coalition. The event will outline the report findings and summarize the infrastructure request publicly. Please reserve this date. We will also send a separate invitation to you after the details are finalized. If you have influencers (supporters) who are willing to provide statements of support for the effort at the national level, please let us know via ARIA@aplu.org.

APLU Public Affairs and Forbes Tate are putting together a communications toolkit that your college communicators and others can use to publicly speak about the report. The toolkit will be made available a week prior to the report release taking place on March 4th.

We deeply appreciate the input of the ESS members throughout this process. This is a once-in-our-lifetime opportunity. We look forward to working with you to make this bold initiative a reality.

Thanks,



Moses Kairo

Experiment Station Section, Chair

Professor and Dean of the School of Agricultural and Natural Sciences, University of Maryland Eastern Shore



Glenda Humiston

ESCOP Budget and Legislative Committee, Chair

University of California System



Tom Coon

Board on Agricultural Assembly Policy Board of Directors, Chair

Vice President of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, Oklahoma State University

Addendum: ESS has assembled an **ARIA Advocacy Toolbox**, located [here](#). It includes a [leave behind](#), [slide deck](#), [talking points](#), and a [timeline](#). A Communications Toolbox will be provided a week before the Gordian final report is released.

Agenda Brief: BAA Strategic Realignment Implementation Committee (SRIC)

Presenters: Marty Draper and Gary Thompson

Action Requested: For Information

Committee Members: view a link to the membership [here](#).

In the FY 2019 appropriations report language, Congress requested a review of the NIFA budget lines expressing concern that “some of these programs are duplicative or can be executed under the broad authorities of the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative, Evans-Allen Program, 1890’s Extension, and Hatch and Smith-Lever Acts.” In essence, House appropriators wanted a simpler process for agriculture, food, and resource appropriations.

The initial Strategic Realignment Task Force discussed creating bill language that includes 17 accounts, six accounts, four accounts, and one account (line). The current bill language includes three accounts: Research and Education, Extension, and Integrated Activities. In the current appropriations bill, the programs within these accounts are put into three tables in the report, each with a top-line funding request.

The current SRIC is tasked with the job of identifying NIFA appropriations bill text and report structure that would result in opportunities for more effective APLU Unified Ask advocacy. The anticipated outcome of successfully executing this task is a growth in APLU priority lines via a legislative vehicle that is more receptive to BAA and stakeholder advocacy efforts.

The philosophy driving the APLU BAA strategic realignment project is based on the observation that National Institute of Health advocates were successful in securing a doubling of NIH between 1998 and 2005 and, more importantly, substantial growth in tight fiscal environments over the last several years. This success is rooted in the concept that all the groups advocating asked for a top-line increase. The guiding philosophy behind this effort assumes that reorganizing the appropriations lines will allow us to undertake more targeted advocacy to grow the over-all NIFA budget.

The SRIC proposes to combine the existing 3 accounts (Research and Education, Extension, and Integrated Activities) into a single paragraph of bill language for NIFA and a single table of report language for all Research and Education, Extension, and Integrated Activities. This will create for the first time a single top line number for NIFA in bill language, allowing for a unified ask along the lines of the successful NIH model. Thus, the proposal of one account for NIFA bill and report language would simplify the structure and associated ask, enabling the formation of a coalition (NIFA Coalition) among the various advocacy groups, stakeholders, professional societies, and others. The proposed bill language would ensure that no less than the amount appropriated in the previous fiscal year should be provided. Furthermore, in response to input, the SRIC is not considering the consolidation of any lines or suggesting elimination of any lines.

Recently, the SRIC requested input from the Experiment Station Section and ESCOP on the following questions.

1. Should the BAA SRIC pen a recommendation to the Budget and Advocacy Committee (BAC) that: encourages advocacy for the three accounts to be eliminated and all the underlying authorizations to be appropriated through one account—a NIFA account in the bill language?
2. If you agree that this should be pursued, do you also agree that the lines in the report table be in order from largest to smallest?

3. Should the BAA SRIC also make a recommendation to the BAC that the BAA pursue the formation of a NIFA coalition which allows us to advocate in coordination with outside stakeholder groups (after we establish our recommended funding requests)?

Marty Draper and Gary Thompson met with the ESCOP leadership during a Chair's Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting on February 18, 2021 and received productive feedback regarding the Strategic Realignment proposal. The responses below represent views of ESS leadership.

The general consensus from the CAC discussion was:

1. Support for the recommendation of a single NIFA account.
2. Opposition or no consensus to arranging the lines from largest to smallest in the report table. We believe there are several alternative approaches, such as ranking similarly to the current 3 accounts or by authorization number. Considerable concern was expressed that ranking from largest to smallest might put programs with smaller numbers in jeopardy as well as potentially losing support from those constituencies.
3. Support the formation of a NIFA coalition.

There was considerable discussion about the need for robust advocacy messaging on the value of our system to underpin the advocacy strategy allowed with a single top-line number for NIFA. Such advocacy should address the value of investing in our programs. We have a great story to tell. Making sure we have a united front with our stakeholders will be important.

Agenda Item 7.0 ESCOP Budget and Legislative Committee (BLC)
Presentors: Glenda Humiston and Jeff Jacobsen
Action: For Information

Committee Members:

<p>Chair: Glenda Humiston (WAAESD) Past Chair: Ernie Minton (NCRA)</p> <p>Delegates: Alton Thompson (ARD) Vernon Jones (ARD) Gary Pierzynski (NCRA) Shawn Donkin (NCRA) Puneet Srivistava (NERA) Anton Bekkerman (NERA) Steve Lommel (SAAESD) Saied Mostaghimi (SAAESD) John Talbott (WAAESD) Chris Pritsos (WAAESD)</p> <p>Executive Vice-Chair Jeff Jacobsen (NCRA ED) Chris Hamilton (NCRA AD; Recorder)</p>	<p>Liaisons: Jon Boren (ECOP) Katie Frazier (CARET) Doug Steele (APLU) Caron Gala (APLU) Jim Richards (CGA) Hunt Shipman (CGA) Vernie Huber (CGA) Maggie Earle (CGA) Katherine Fink (NIFA) Paula Geiger (NIFA) Kimberly Whittet (NIFA) Glen Hoffsis (BVM) Laura Jolly (BHS)</p>
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<http://escop.info/committee/blc/>

BLC Committee

The BLC Committee meets monthly on Zoom with good attendance and call notes regularly posted to the above BLC webpage. Infrastructure at the \$11.5B deficit has been a consistent topic of discussion as the advocacy plan with associated resources are developed and utilized. Chair Humiston and the Executive Vice-Chair have been participating in the Infrastructure core group and have been assisting in material/process development associated with the ESS Infrastructure priority. Chair Humiston has also been involved with some formal presentations. The national rollout of the Gordian report on Infrastructure will be part of the Rebuild Rural Coalition webinar on March 4 (time tbd). APLU and Cornerstone Government Affairs are working diligently to secure legislative champions and to socialize the Infrastructure needs with the Biden-Harris administration and NIFA. Concurrently, all directors are asked to engage with their institutions, local stakeholders, government affairs, communicators and others on the Infrastructure ask. The research focus on Infrastructure should address climate change and strongly related thematic topics to ‘fit’ within priorities of the Biden-Harris administration and others. Climate will be a future BLC discussion topic as a moonshot idea for ESS. Liaisons remain engaged and participatory.

The BLC Chair and Executive Vice-Chair have attended the scheduled BAA, BAC, and CLP meetings and conference calls. Over this timeframe, BAC discussions have addressed: the national election with implications for the Senate and House leadership/committees, Unified Ask and its Advocacy leave-behind for the annual budget, APS proposal to reach full authorization level of \$40M, COVID-related stimulus efforts, and the developing CMC processes to implement the Forbes Tate strategy.

Ultimately, the BAA FFY2022 Unified Ask will be an 8% increase for the capacity lines and competitive line, and include some additional emphasis on the 1994 LGU lines totaling ~\$100M. Minutes from these discussions can be found at: <https://www.land-grant.org/>.

Finance Committee

The transfer of \$600,000 from the APLU-managed ESS account to a conservative TD Wealth investment account is complete. This occurred in October 2020 and its current value as of February 21, 2021 is \$619,966. APLU has approved read-only access to this account for Jeff Jacobsen, BLC Executive Vice-Chair, to enable regular reporting to the Finance Committee and ESS membership. The Finance Committee will meet with TD Wealth about every six months to monitor our investment. APLU must ask for these semi-annual meetings with TD Wealth.

A two slide presentation on the ESS end-of-year budget and finances will be presented and attached to the meeting notes.

ESS FINANCIALS

➤ 2020 ESS assessments paid (71/77)		
and adjustments	\$ 4,175	
➤ ESS Accounts		
-TD Wealth Investment	\$616,808	\$619,966
-Cumulative Cash Reserve	~\$236,850	
	(12/31/2020)	(2/21/2021)

ANNUAL ESS BUDGET (CY2020 and CY2021)

CARRYOVER CASH RESERVES (end CY2019)		\$92,277	~\$236,850
INCOME	CY2020 BUDGET	CY2020 ACTUAL	CY2021 BUDGET
ESS Assessment	\$200,000	\$194,574	\$100,000
EXPENSES			
CMC (Forbes Tate CY2020)	\$133,333	\$28,333	tbd
Promotion (Ag on Hill, SoAR, Chair travel)	\$10,000	0	\$10,000
Diversity Catalyst (award, travel)	\$5,000	\$1,000	\$4,000
Training	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$15,000
Meeting Support (Joint COPs, ESS)	\$10,000	\$586	\$10,000
Website	\$2,000	0	\$1,000
National Impact Database (TAMU hosted)	\$12,500	\$12,500	\$12,500
National Impact Database Writing (travel)	\$5,000	\$2,582	\$5,000
NC-FAR Membership	\$1,000	0	\$1,000
Printing (APLU, other)	\$15,000	0	\$10,000
NRSP Stakeholder (travel)	\$1,500	0	\$1,500
NET BALANCE		~\$144,573	~\$30,000 (-tbd)

(12/31/2020)

Agenda Brief: Communications and Marketing Committee (CMC)

Date: February 23, 2021

Presenter: Karla Trautman (Chair), JF Meullenet (Incoming chair)

1. **Committee Membership** (as of February 23, 2021): see [ESCOP Communications and Marketing \(CMC\)](#)
2. **Meetings:**
 - The CMC met by teleconference on October 29, 2020.
 - The CMC met by teleconference on February 18, 2021.
3. **Accomplishments/Upcoming Plans:**
 - The Executive Committee of the CMC met biweekly with Forbes/Tate Partners (FTP) on November 10, November 24, December 8, December 22, January 5, January 19, February 2 and February 16.
 - The CMC has undergone leadership changes as a result of CMC Chair, Mark Rieger, leaving his current position (Dean, University of Delaware) to take on a new role as the Provost of Florida Gulf Coast University. Karla Trautman assumed the CMC Chair position. ESCOP nominated JF Meullenet as the incoming chair of the CMC and the Administrative Heads approved Steve Loring to serve out Mark's term as the past chair.
 - A working draft of BAA Roadmap is attached to this agenda brief. For the system this marks the transition from "how" to "what." FTP seeks broad-based input from across the system to add content to the plan. Suggestions on roadmap content should be forwarded to FTP at aplu_baa@forbes-tate.com.
 - FTP has also crafted a toolkit for directors and communicators (attached) and a proposed calendar of events (attached.) Both of these documents are in draft stage. Comments can be submitted to FTP at aplu_baa@forbes-tate.com.
 - A position description has been drafted for the expert that will be tasked with implementing the BAA Roadmap. The title of this APLU/FANR position is tentatively set as the "Executive Director, Communications, Outreach and External Partnerships." The position should be announced next week and will be out in the public for ~6 weeks. Distribution of the position description will be made using a multitude of channels including university educator listservs, ACE, online job posting boards, and through the Forbes/Tate network. Importantly, the CMC expects to conduct interviews in March/April and have the hire completed by May. To assist with the transition and onboarding of the new position, the FTP contract with APLU has been extended and its timeframe aligned with this goal. Extending the contract with FTP by the APLU was at no cost to the sections.
 - As reported in our previous ESCOP brief, the CMC requested to the BAA Policy Board of Directors (PBD) that the CMC be appointed as a standing committee of the BAA. On February 19, 2021, the PBD met and is moving forward on the request. According to the BAA Rules of Operation, the PBD needs to vote to put the initiative on a ballot for BAA consideration, the PBD needs to review and approve the ballot

measure, the PBD must observe a 30-day review process prior to calling a vote and the ballot must be approved by a supermajority of BAA members. The CMC seeks the support of the section on these measures.

4. **Action Requested:** For information only.
5. **Attachments:**
 - a. BAA Roadmap Plan 2021 02 05
 - b. APLU BAA toolkit
 - c. APLU BAA Content Calendar

To: BAA Communications and Marketing Committee (CMC)

From: Forbes Tate Partners (FTP)

Subject: Strategic Communications Roadmap Plan Outline

Overview

The following memo provides an initial outline for APLU-BAA's new strategic communications roadmap plan. The outline, informed by what FTP learned during the Phase I assessment, is designed to provide an overview of:

- The plan's objective and strategic considerations;
- Target audiences and suggested message frames;
- Internal processes, roles, and responsibilities within BAA to support execution; and
- Suggested tactics and an illustrative messaging calendar.

The recommendations below are based in part on message, schedule, and logistical assumptions subject to revision and adjustment and is contingent upon participation by Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP), Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy (ESCOP), and the Administrative Heads Section (AHS) representing Cooperative Extension, research, and academic programs. However, the inclusive approach taken to soliciting feedback and shaping these recommendations is meant to help build a foundation for an effort that will ultimately serve and support the entirety of BAA and beyond to embrace existing partners like the Commission on Food, Environment, & Renewable Resources (CFERR). Please note the recommendations are meant to serve as general guidelines for the CMC and participating entities to develop the specific components of a strategic communications plan, and do not include all possible tactics and messaging examples.

We imagine this plan will encompass not only agriculture, but other topic areas including public health, nutrition, youth and community development, and natural resources.

Objective and Strategic Considerations

Objective

The CMC works in concert with other entities in the land-grant university system, including the lobbying team at Cornerstone Government Affairs, Council on Government Affairs, various committee chairs, and individual Extensions, research programs, and institutions to protect and increase levels of federally appropriated and awarded funding. Accordingly, the primary objective of the plan is to help BAA successfully secure additional federal resources to support its critical research, Extension System, and education efforts. A secondary objective is to influence and engage key stakeholders through advocacy communications.

Strategic Considerations



As it pursues this objective on behalf of BAA, the CMC encounters a set of strengths, challenges, and opportunities that can be summarized as follows:

- **Strengths:** APLU has a compelling and popular story to tell about the value of the organization's work and the work and strengths of individual institutions, students, and graduates who represent a broad network of potential messengers. Furthermore, land-grant universities enjoy broad-based support from the communities they serve and have a unique connection to every county, parish, and sovereign tribal nation throughout the country. They bring hope and opportunity, serving urban and rural populations, first generation students, veterans, and beyond – providing unique value to students through partnerships between community, research, and teaching in a way that only land-grant universities can.
- **Challenges:** BAA's messaging efforts have been hampered by internal communication and coordination issues that lead to a lack of awareness or confusion about how to tell its story, and what is defined as agriculture, ultimately inhibiting the effectiveness of potential messengers and the message itself. Differences in the ability of individual institutions to participate, or reconcile priorities, have also been identified as a challenge that an overarching communications plan should address.
- **Opportunities:** BAA has the opportunity to revitalize existing platforms and a ready-made bank of achievements that, in combination with improved internal processes, will allow it to reboot, rather than rebuild, an effective communications effort. BAA can lean in on the existing national network it has and the local support those institutions receive.

Based on this assessment, the strategy proposed will achieve the objective by positioning the land-grant system as a unique, high-value resource that not only fulfills an educational mission but also effectively collaborates with national and local stakeholders, and by communicating how investments of federal dollars have, and will continue to, allow institutions and partners to deliver advances in critical fields. The communications plan will play a critical role by maintaining ongoing awareness of BAA activities year-round (as opposed to just around specific asks), and demonstrating broad-based support for, and benefits of, BAA activities. In doing do, the plan is designed to be continuously informed by, and supportive of, members of the Council on Government Affairs and Cornerstone Government Affairs as they make direct asks of policymakers.

Audiences

Audiences

The plan is designed to speak to three distinct but related audiences. By reaching these audiences with tailored messages consistent with the overarching framework, the plan will create a self-contained echo chamber in which policymakers are being directly persuaded while also hearing from trusted, influential, and reinforcing validators. These audiences include:

Decisionmakers: The primary audience for the plan will be elected and appointed officials and staff who are responsible for making federal funding decisions including those listed below, with emphasis in any given phase determined in conjunction with key internal groups such as the Council on Government Affairs and Cornerstone Government Affairs. This initial list will be reviewed and revised as circumstances change and new opportunities present themselves.



- Congressional leadership
- House and Senate Agriculture Committee members
- House and Senate Appropriations Committee and Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee members
- Additional relevant committees and caucuses
- Secretary of Agriculture
- National Institute of Food and Agricultural (NIFA) Director, budget, and relevant staff (for purposes of persuasion and enlistment as allies in advocacy to Congress)
- USDA Undersecretary for Research, Education, and Economics
- Office of Management and Budget

Amplifiers: A secondary audience for the plan should be comprised of “end-users” who benefit directly from BAA’s work and other natural allies, including:

- Farmers tied to local land-grant institutions
- Farmers market operators and restaurants
- Research beneficiaries
- State, Extension, and local government officials who will support federal requests
- Agriculture and commodity association advocates
- Local primary educators and civic organizations
- Affiliated agriculture organizations (such as the Farm Journal Foundation)
- 4-H members

Messengers: In order to successfully reach these first two audiences, CMC will also need to effectively educate and equip messengers within the APLU-BAA network. Specifically, CMC will need to not only provide CARET, policy committee, Extension, experiment station, and individual institution members with the messages they are intended to convey, but the rationale for those messages.

Messaging Frame

Given the Ag Is America account’s broad base of followers and established site, the plan does not envision a full rebranding. However, we do recommend that on these platforms, and across press and advocacy materials, BAA adopt a message frame that rests on these main proof points. We have also identified additional areas that could be built out more over time, including youth wellness, community health, food, and nutrition. While intended to drive toward a unified ask for federal funding, each one of these messages can and should be supported whenever possible by human faces – students, faculty, and community members. These real-world examples will help paint a picture of how the land-grant system is keeping its diverse graduates, and by extension the nation, competitive and prepared for the future.

The following suggested messages are representative examples to be considered for adoption in the final communication plan. Additional message frames may be considered at the beginning of the year, or as events warrant. We would recommend the messages represent the full breadth of BAA activities (including areas such as broadband deployment, non-agricultural innovation, and community investment) as well as highlighting the full geographic reach of the system as a whole.



Investments in agriculture and life science research and the Extension System result in safer, higher quality food systems.

- Example: "The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of a resilient food chain supply – from farm to table. Safeguarding America's food security relies on robust, predictable federal investments in land-grant university research projects, and in the partnership between farmers and ranchers and local Extension Systems. We encourage policymakers to prioritize federal funding in agriculture and life science research and the Cooperative Extension System to continue bringing cutting-edge discoveries to those who can put them into practice."
- Example: "Even before COVID-19 negatively affected global supply chains, rapid population growth was making issues like hunger, low crop yields, inadequate food storage, and nutrition more complicated – and more important than ever before – to tackle. American land-grant universities must be equipped with the federal funding required to be at the forefront of solving these pressing global problems."

Investments in agriculture and life science research and the Extension System make communities stronger and healthier.

- Example: "Land-grant universities make significant contributions to the resiliency of communities. Federal investments in the system generate a strong return for taxpayers by reducing public health costs, offering education and opportunity to their neighbors, and improving the quality of life."
- Example: "America's land-grant universities have the knowledge, expertise, and local presence needed to help influence the social, economic, and environmental determinants of health. Land-grant research makes Americans healthier by improving the nutritional quality of food, finding solutions to make food more available, and helping individuals to make healthy food choices. These institutions also contribute to social health by helping people to avoid opioid abuse, tackle learning challenges, or promoting positive youth-development. Federal lawmakers should prioritize investments in Cooperative Extension and land-grant research that have proven to benefit youth, family, and community health outcomes."
- Example: "Cooperative Extension is engaging millions of American youths through 4-H, the nation's largest youth development organization. 4-H programming brings young people and adults together to create community change and promote civic engagement, healthy living, and scientific understanding. These positive outcomes are directly tied to continued investment in the Cooperative Extension Section found within land-grant universities."

Investments in agriculture and life science research and the Extension System address critical challenges facing agriculture and the environment.

- Example: "America's agricultural sector knows firsthand the devastating impacts brought about by climate change and natural disasters, including fire, drought, hurricanes, and more. That is why land-grant universities, along with the nation's leading ag researchers and Cooperative Extension leaders, are teaming up with key federal research agencies, farmers, ranchers, and communities across the country to address this national security threat head on. Congress can play an integral role in this effort by approving funding increases for federal research programs designed to help farmers and ranchers – through agriculture and life science research and Extension – protect our environment and our precious natural resources."
- Example: "Investing in groundbreaking work to develop better biofuels seeds America's success by making sure we can power our economy and protect our climate. Only land-grant



universities have the knowledge, research, and Extension reach to deliver these returns for the American taxpayer.”

- Example: “When unanticipated crises strike, America needs expertise and ingenuity. Federal investments in land-grant university research help to create a resilient resource that can nimbly focus knowledge, creativity, and problem-solving power to deal with new threats, safeguarding public health and our economy.”

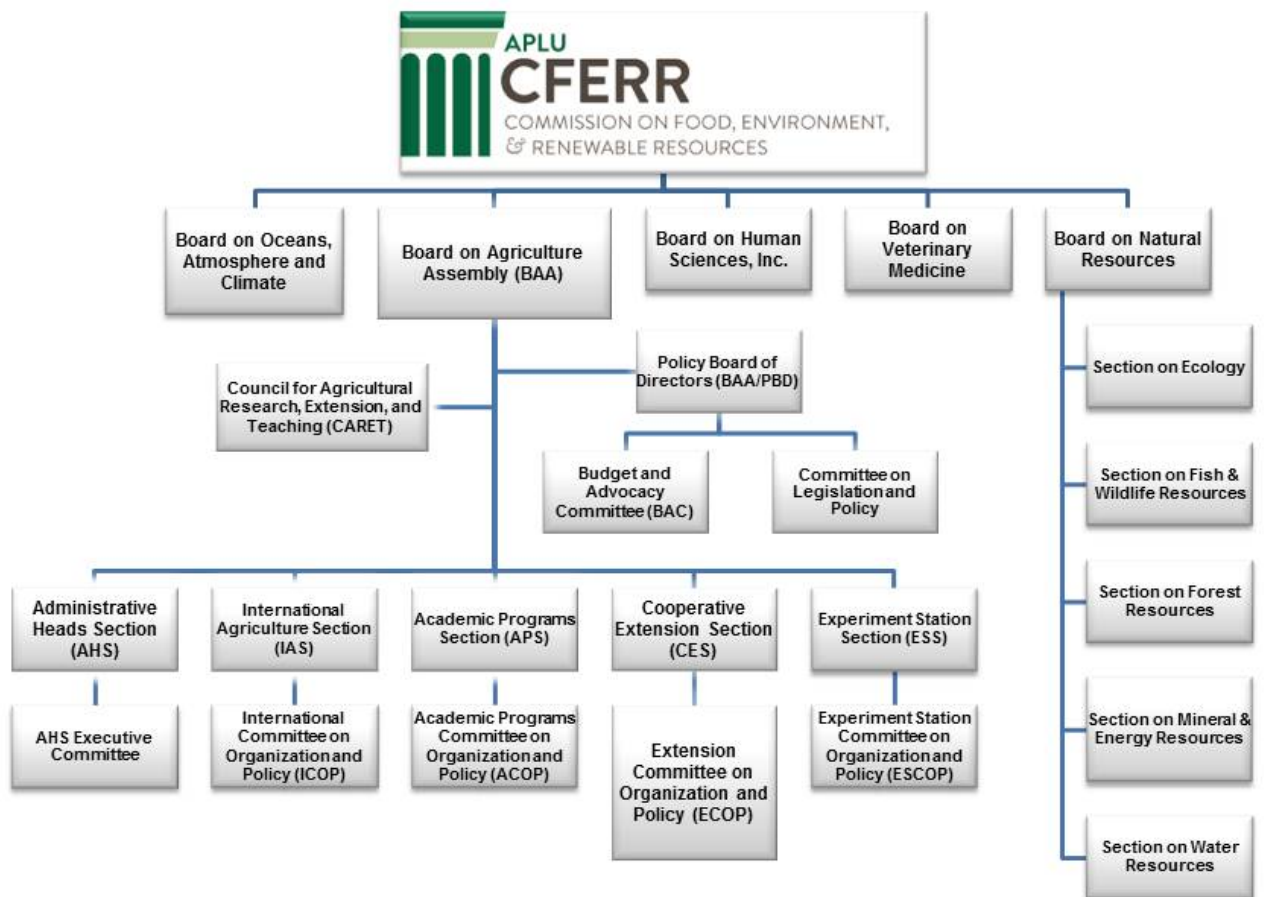
Investments in agriculture and life science research and the Extension System are vital to safeguarding America’s status as a global leader in innovation.

- Example: “Innovation has always been America’s most important competitive edge. Federal investments that enable land-grant universities to make the next generation of breakthroughs in areas like gene-editing technology, artificial intelligence, and precision agriculture are needed to ensure the US remains a global leader.”
- Example: “From undertaking life-saving antimicrobial research and tackling chronic disease through the lens of nutrition, to mapping our natural resources and preparing the next generation of the workforce, the agriculture and life science Extension departments at land-grant universities are essential to seeding America’s long-term success across a wide spectrum of issues and industries – not just agriculture. Federal investments in these programs must be robust and predictable to ensure American innovation continues at its highest potential.”

In addition to weaving these themes into topline messaging and materials, they should be used to guide the message calendar through the use of theme weeks/months that focus tactical execution around a specific land-grant contribution (e.g. food security, food affordability, energy independence, antimicrobial resistance, health and wellness, youth, family and community development, and environment stewardship). While the themes will provide a cohesive starting point for any pre-planned content, they can be coupled alongside relevant topics from the news cycle and emerging critical issues as needed in order to show the collective power of the system to rapidly address changing issues.

Internal Roles, Responsibilities, and Communications

In order to fully engage and mobilize the various entities whose participation will be required to make the communications plan a success, the plan recommends assigning each “communicator” entity within BAA’s organizational chart a specific communications responsibility to establish a regular cadence of internal communications and asks. This cadence of communications should be designed to provide members of the overall communications infrastructure, including those involved with direct advocacy and wider communications efforts (Council on Government Affairs, Cornerstone Government Affairs, APLU Communications), with a combination of standing, formal opportunities to contribute and coordinate as well as open channels to provide situational input.



CMC: CMC responsibilities will include internal coordination, overall management of the strategic plan and message calendar, execution of recurring daily and monthly communications activities (e.g. online platforms, social media content and posting, and clip compilations), and planning for “tentpole” communications activities. In order to create consistent internal engagement, CMC should send a twice monthly update report note throughout the “communicator organization” that includes items such as:

- Notification of the theme of the month, accompanied by talking points and message guidance
- Notable recent postings and clips
- Calls for internal action (e.g. submission of institution-specific coverage, accomplishments, or third-party engagement)

Policy Guides: The roles and internal reporting responsibilities for this group would include guidance on priority setting at the beginning of the year, regular (bi-weekly or monthly) updates on decisionmaker contacts and feedback, and recommendations on specific projects, priorities, or decisionmaker targets to be highlighted during thematic periods on the message calendar including food, agriculture, and environmental resources. Some participant group recommendations for consideration include:



- **Policy Board of Directors (supported by the Budget Advocacy Committee and Committee on Legislative Policy):** Set and communicate policy priorities to be highlighted within the “one ask” supported by the communications plan.
- **Council on Government Affairs:** In order to be effective, policy priority setting and communications efforts should be in sync from the outset of the process, and mutually inform adjustments to advocacy and public affairs activities throughout the year. In addition to providing direct policy input and content contributions for communications materials and engaging in regular coordinating discussions, communicators (represented by CMC) should be involved in the Council on Government Affairs’ initial priority setting discussions. In fact, it may make sense for CMC to have a seat on BAC.
- **Cornerstone Government Affairs:** Provide updates on advocacy needs and message targeting based on interactions with policymakers.
- **Land-Grant University Communicators:** Individual university communicators will play a critical role in shaping the communications strategy and leading its execution. Each institution has active, skilled communicators who will be able to provide real-time input into the plan direction as events unfold. Their expertise should be leveraged to, among other things, lead the development of locally targeted messages and responses to local concerns, while providing critical input on the national strategy and messaging and supporting the compilation and dissemination of communications materials as requested.

APLU Communications: The responsibilities of the APLU communications office will be to engage in ongoing message coordination through standing channels of communication including regularly scheduled consultation, provide ongoing technical advice in reaction to CMC updates and message planning, and assistance with planning, executing, and promoting “tentpole” communications activities.

Local Actors: Local actors, which would include CARET, the Cooperative Extension Section, experiment station section, AHS, and others, would be responsible for providing updated lists of accomplishments, profiles, and stories on a quarterly basis, as well as engaging with local media periodically at CMC’s request and in partnership with land-grant university communicators. For example:

- **CARET:** As volunteer advocates involved in making policy recommendations to the Policy Board of Directors, helping to coordinate advocacy efforts for ECOP, ESCOP, and others, and carrying messages across institutions, CARET delegates are primed to play a key role in assisting with the communications plan at the local and institutional level. In their new, evolving roles as year-round advocates, they could serve as the primary “managers” of the communications plan at their institution, and assume primary responsibility for interacting with CMC, organizing communications outreach for other groups, reporting up accomplishments, and advocating for land-grant universities. These primary CARET delegates will be identified by working with land-grant universities.
- **Extension and Experiment Stations:** Designees within the land-grant university system (Extension and Research Stations across our 1862, 1890, and 1994 institutions) would have a responsibility to help generate primary content.
- **Additional Sections and Committees:** These groups would support general reporting on activities and provide other input as needed.



- **Expanded Opportunities for the Commission on Food, Environment, & Renewable Resources (CFERR):** We recommend that participation in this plan expand beyond the confines of BAA and extend participation to other APLU committees with a role to play in CMC's ultimate success.

For each entity, a communications liaison should be identified shortly after strategic plan adoption and trained during capacity development sessions in January within the guidelines of the institutions they represent. As the plan is further developed and implemented, additional participant groups may be added.

Tactics: Overview and Cadence

The tactics recommended in the strategic communications plan are envisioned to rely heavily on social media and online promotion to maintain a manageable, but consistent, daily drumbeat of communications activity, augmented by periodic earned media engagement, and punctuated by major communications pushes around "tentpole" events such as congressional visits or major report releases. Every tactical item also presents an opportunity to highlight student and faculty success stories that bring the land-grant mission to life.

Daily/Weekly

- Daily online posting of news stories featuring land-grant universities, with brief commentary on relevant topics, or promoting/engaging target audiences online
- "Land-Grant Success of the Week" post with picture or graphic highlighting the work of a specific institution, student, faculty member, or initiative
- Twitter/online poll soliciting engagement from target audiences ranging from specific policy questions (e.g. What is the most important thing agriculture can do to combat climate change?) or general questions to spark conversation (e.g. What's your favorite farm experience?)

Monthly

- Publication of online infographic highlighting BAA's past and future achievements (including any noteworthy achievements of students and faculty at member institutions) in monthly theme area
- Thematically tied essay authored by BAA member posted on Ag Is America or placed in local news outlet
- Monthly "reporter note" sent to press list of national and local reporters to keep media up to date on BAA developments and lay a foundation for future outreach (local institutions will be BCC'd on notes to reporters they have relationships with)
- Paid online promotion of social posts linking to Ag Is America web copy on issue of the month
- Paid online promotion of BAA "Champions" at the national, state, and local level who have been supportive of BAA priorities

Quarterly

Once per quarter, BAA should actively provide communications materials, promote online, and attempt to secure earned media coverage for a major "tentpole" event that involves multiple stakeholders and topics. For each of these events, CMC should engage APLU communications support in putting together promotional items that could include a press release, localized releases



or content for local communicators to use in engaging media, press availabilities with BAA leadership members, and paid promotions and online advertisements. Examples of “tentpole” events could include:

- Congressional “fly-in” meetings
- Release of a “Seeding Our Success” report building on the accomplishments in the impact database
- National 4-H Conference
- “Call on Congress” mini-campaign during the final stages of the appropriations season

Tactics: Social Media and Paid Campaigns

In order to maintain a manageable, consistent, daily drumbeat of communications activity, it is important to understand the value of posting on social media and how it can increase BAA’s communication efforts. By leveraging existing social media accounts, including the Ag Is America Facebook and Twitter accounts, BAA can increase its online presence and reputation, and promote member universities’ research efforts. It is the ideal place to tie together the work undergraduates, individual institutions, and Extension are doing, as well as the collective group, to show congressional targets the value land-grants have in their districts and nationwide.

Below are some best practices and how to implement them.

Post regularly

When content is posted consistently, it can increase BAA’s impressions, mentions, and overall online presence. Ag Is America’s social media outreach has been dormant for over a year. Varied content should be posted at least three times a week across all social media platforms to sustain and increase engagement rates.

Content can be scheduled ahead of time on the platforms themselves in order to maximize efficiency and a content calendar can be used to plan out content, whether it is around a certain event like a 4-H conference, or a national day of celebration like National Strawberry Day.

Own the content

An audit of existing resources found most social content engagement came from being tagged in member universities’ posts. To increase overall content, posting organic tweets with a variety of content (graphics, videos, appropriate and relevant hashtags, quote retweets and more) will increase overall social engagement and allow for more website and social traffic. Posting a variety of content throughout the week will enable followers to see new and engaging posts. *Ex: A tweet posted with just text should be followed by either a tweet with a graphic or video, or even a retweet.*

Additionally, staying in consistent contact with member universities’ communicators and asking them to send new research, announcements, or student successes to highlight will help with finding content to post. Communicators should also be given a heads up about any social media campaigns or hashtags you are trying to amplify so they can help extend the reach of that content to outside audiences.



Graphics or videos can be created by BAA, using free stock photos from royalty-free sites like [Unsplash](#) or [Pexels](#), from government agency databases, or member universities can share videos with BAA if permission is granted.

Be intentional with clickable items

Tools like hashtags can be useful to drive brand identity, latch onto topics that are trending online, or get noticed by your target audience. However, when incorporating items that can be clicked into your social content (i.e. hashtags, links, and tags) consider their purpose and be intentional. Every clickable item is an opportunity to drive someone away from your post. If you're driving them to something (or someone) else you want them to see and engage with, that's great, but a deluge of unnecessary hashtags can muddy the waters. Though not a hard and fast rule, we generally recommend limiting the number of clickable items to three.

Run paid campaigns

Paid promotions on Twitter and Facebook generate higher than normal bumps in impressions and engagement. Paid, cost-effective ads on Twitter and Facebook linking back to the Ag Is America website will allow users who do not follow the channels to see BAA's content and increase its online presence.

Depending on the target audience, budgets for these paid ads can run anywhere between \$25-\$200/day.

Evaluating Success

In order to establish whether the content is engaging and reaching the right audience, it is important to look at the analytics of each paid and organic post. Analytics can give unique insights into what is working by evaluating engagement rate for each post, followers gained, or likes and retweets. Although each metric of success varies across different social media accounts and organizations, there are some general baselines that should be considered.

First, consider overall engagement rate, which means how many people saw the post then chose to interact with it by either liking, sharing, or commenting on it. Looking across industries, the standard engagement rate on Facebook is about 0.1% and on Twitter it is about 0.045%. It is also important to understand how the average engagement rate for BAA's social properties will be used to set proper benchmarks. For example, Ag Is America's Twitter account has an average engagement rate of 0.1%, already higher than the industry benchmark. Setting a goal to increase the rate week over week will help create attainable goals.

Studying weekly or monthly analytics to evaluate the social content will help to determine long-term trends in engagement and website traffic. If the accounts are losing followers or dipping below the industry benchmarks, it means the content is not engaging users. To remedy this, switch up the various types of content that is being posted, change the tone of the social copy, and evaluate which previous posts got the most engagements.

How to Put A Week of Content Together

In thinking through content for the week, BAA could highlight:

- Notable calendar events
- Theme of the week or month
- News stories relevant to your priorities



- Pre-existing resources from APLU or member universities
- Individual institutions and their achievements
- Poll questions for followers (consider first what the poll results might look like)
- Evergreen content that is useful to regularly remind followers
- Trending hashtags or existing BAA hashtags
- Existing photos, graphics, or videos
- Young scientist features
- Undergraduate and graduate student features
- Faculty features
- Extension professional features
- Congressional targets

Using these categories as an outline, begin filling in draft posts. You may use the same across all of your social media accounts, but keep in mind Twitter has a 280-character limit (including links and spaces) and different platforms may attract different audiences.

Sample Social Media Content Calendar and Posts

Below are examples of a full week of social media posts, including a mix of member university highlights and events.

Monday

- This week is the National @4H Conference! Delegations of 4-H youth from all over the country are heading to Washington, DC for a week of learning and mentorship. #Opportunity4All 🍀

Tuesday

- Invasive species like bamboo 🌱 not only throw off the look of your garden or backyard, they can disrupt entire ecosystems. Learn more from @ISUEExtension on how they can be controlled 🙌 Quote RT: <https://twitter.com/ISUEExtension/status/1288938693202501633>

Wednesday

- Wonder how winemakers adapt to short growing seasons? Watch @UNHAlumni's Annasamy Chandrakala @UNH_GradSchool #3MinuteThesis presentation on how nutrient-packed grapes 🍇 can do just that. Quote RT: <https://twitter.com/UNHAlumni/status/1281341615798460416>

Thursday

- Poll time! What do you think is the most important way to address climate change? 🌍
 - Reducing emissions
 - Supporting renewable energy sources
 - Implementing a carbon tax
 - Using responsible farming techniques

Friday

- Today is the last day of the National @4H Conference. From learning about civic engagement to personal development, we hope this served as an invaluable experience for all our 4-H delegates. What was your favorite part of the conference? #Opportunity4All 🍀

- Did you know September is National Childhood Obesity Month? Research made possible by universities like @SouthernU_BR help teach our nation's children how to garden and offers nutrition-related technology to local schools.



Tactics: Earned Media

Traditional earned media tactics help BAA tell its story in its own words, not just in a longer form but to a more targeted stakeholder audience, namely reporters who might write about BAA priorities and members of Congress who keep up with Beltway papers and their local media outlets. BAA should work with LGU communicators to ensure the timing and topic of any earned media tactics do not conflict with local issues or media priorities, as well as to identify local voices (students, faculty, community members) whose research and educational successes within the land-grant system help make the case for more federal funding.

Press Releases

BAA should send a formal release for every major “tentpole” event or development. Releases can also be used to make statements regarding bill signings, important votes in Congress, and funds allocated for agriculture and life sciences. In addition to a short summary of the news the release calls attention to, it typically includes a quote from the organization’s leader. After a release is sent, the person quoted, or someone well-positioned to talk to media, should be prepared to handle any resulting interview requests. If needed, the request can be handed off to the APLU communications office.

Sending a release will require a press list of reporters who cover the topic. For BAA, this should include certain national reporters covering federal funding and/or agriculture, local reporters in states of relevance, and trade reporters at the types of outlets who exclusively cover these issues. Any reporters who receive regular communications from BAA (like the reporter notes listed below) should also be included in news releases.

Reporter Notes



A monthly “reporter note” sent to this targeted list of national and local reporters would help keep this important audience up to date on BAA developments and lay a foundation for future outreach. This tactic is about developing advantageous relationships and thought leadership, so that when news does break, reporters know to go to BAA for comment or background conversations, or if there is a story BAA hopes to place, a degree of familiarity already exists between the group and the reporter.

The note should provide information about BAA’s latest work and help reporters contextualize what is happening in the world of research and Extension that proves the value of federal investment.

Feature Articles and Letters to the Editor (LTEs)

Feature articles and LTEs go in-depth or make an argument and tell a story. They are some of the best traditional tools for putting a personal touch on an otherwise policy-heavy issue and getting the attention of members of Congress. Members’ staffs monitor the news daily, so when local voices criticize, praise, or even mention a member of Congress in a local paper, it gets noticed.

These pieces could be used to highlight major achievements – and by extension the return on federal investments – or to call on Congress to get a bill across the finish line. Features go deeper than the news of the day to examine personal stories or highlight examples from member institutions to drive home a clear and consistent message: the need for more federal funding.

Another benefit of getting BAA content published is that it can be reused and amplified across existing social media channels, in alerts to BAA members and members of Congress, or passed on to the government affairs team for their use on the Hill.

LTEs are typically no longer than 200 words and respond to an article in a publication by substantiating it or refuting it. Before pitching any opinion piece, check with the intended publication to establish submission guidelines and word limits and work with land-grant university communicators to ensure timing and the topic do not conflict with local issue or media priorities.

Tactics: Member Engagement and Advocacy

Fly-Ins

Although it is difficult to know when life might return to “normal,” a fly-in, be it virtual or in-person, is still a useful tool to build and reinforce the BAA brand on Capitol Hill and make members aware of its priorities. To ensure fly-ins are as effective as possible, it is essential BAA members are briefed on the “one ask” and have talking points to support core messaging.

Fly-ins are another opportunity to highlight activities on social media, reach out to reporters – particularly Beltway reporters – and potentially place opinion content immediately before or after to reinforce the importance of federal investment in BAA activities for a public audience.

Conferences

If BAA members are already planning to attend certain conferences, like 4-H, encourage them to leverage their participation by engaging in communications outputs, such as using a consistent hashtag at the conference to make their content easier to find and share. Strengthening internal communications will give BAA a better idea of who is already planning to do what (and where and



when), so that members can be encouraged to make use of BAA messaging at these types of events as appropriate, and enable BAA to strategically amplify their content.

Reports

The “Seeding Our Success” report would build on the accomplishments outlined in the impact database, tying them together in one place to tell one consistent story about the value of federal investment in agriculture and life science research and the Extension System. The report is an important piece of original, unique content that can be deployed using all the tactics mentioned above. For example, develop a relationship with a national reporter who has shown interest or writes about issues in the BAA policy space, then pitch the story to that reporter as an exclusive. Immediately after the article becomes public, disseminate the report broadly as a press release, amplify it on social media, and urge member institutions to do the same. Finally, write and place an op-ed in an outlet targeting multiple congressional targets, such as *The Hill*, or target an individual member using a local voice in a regional newspaper. That is the beauty of any single communications deliverable – they can often be used across multiple channels to provide more longevity and reach.

Illustrative Timeline of Activities

The following illustrative timeline is largely structured to mirror the congressional budget process, in order to sync major activities to key advocacy points. Ultimately, CMC should build a calendar that corresponds with planned conferences, events, announcements, and other key dates. CMC should also stay in constant contact with BAA to determine what individual institutions already have planned, so CMC can be ready to lift up those members and the broader group. Choosing these sorts of events strategically will ensure the main message and goal of these communications activities remain at the forefront.

Q4 2020

November

- Present roadmap for final adoption
- Incorporate remaining post-adoption feedback into final roadmap
- Specify and brief stakeholders on roles and responsibilities
- Establish internal communications channels, meetings, and calendar

December

- Consult on priorities, message frames, and calendar
- Deliver best practices guide
- Deliver collateral (i.e. template press releases, graphics, one-pagers)
- Conduct first capacity building session

Q1 2021

January



- Second capacity building session
- Priority, frame, and calendar finalization

February – Introducing Message Frame in Support of "One Ask"

- Initiation of daily/weekly activities
- Public release of policy asks
- Themed monthly activities (e.g. infographic, essay/column)

March – Congressional Fly-In

- Continuation of daily/weekly activities
- Promotion of fly-in and reports from Washington to local media

Q2 2021

April – Food Security

- Continuation of daily/weekly/monthly activities

May – American Leadership

- Continuation of daily/weekly/monthly activities

June – "Seeding our Success" Report

- Continuation of daily/weekly/monthly activities
- Promotion of "Seeding our Success" Report

Q3 2021

July – Climate and Energy Independence

- Continuation of daily/weekly/monthly activities

August – Education and Innovation

- Continuation of daily/weekly/monthly activities

September – 4-H Conference

- Continuation of daily/weekly activities
- Promotion of and support for national 4-H convention

Q4 2021

October – Health and Safety

- Continuation of daily/weekly/monthly activities

November – "One Ask" Closing Push

- Continuation of daily/weekly activities
- National and local paid and earned media promotion of "one ask," targeting key decisionmaker markets

December – Year in Review

- Continuation of daily/weekly/monthly activities
- 2022 Planning

■ SCO

Updated SCO Analysis

STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ BAA has a good story to tell about how its work is valuable and delivers results. ○ BAA has reach with institutions all over the country, making for a broad-based audience of potential champions. ○ Research enjoys strong public support and BAA has leaders to elevate it and give it a face. ○ LGUs have a strong base of skilled, professional communicators versed in key issues and connected to key media channels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Irregular internal communications limit awareness of activities and the ability to leverage members and assets. ○ Priorities and messages must be clear, streamlined, and durable. ○ Several internal constituencies need to be addressed and balanced. ○ Accomplishments and advocacy are communicated more through individual institutions than as part of a national identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ BAA already has a rich catalog of achievements to raise up. ○ Some existing platforms already have large followings that could be revitalized. ○ Land-grant universities have a unique identity as accessible public institutions that deliver elite results. ○ There are a variety of outside groups and organizations to partner with to raise BAA's profile.



**Board on Agriculture Assembly
Communications Toolkit**

Introduction and Overview

This toolkit is designed to support APLU BAA as it works to engage stakeholders and secure additional federal resources to support its critical research, Extension System, and education efforts. By presenting a united voice with a clear ask, BAA and its advocates can use communications tools to their advantage.

The content throughout this guide is part informational and part actionable. Each section contains instructions on how and when to deploy the tactic, along with templates that can be adjusted and used in practice. It is based on messaging from the final Roadmap Plan and a calendar of anticipated BAA-related events, and it can serve as a jumping off point for other topics and situations that emerge in real time.

This toolkit includes the below sections:

- **Messaging:** *Overview of the Roadmap messaging frame and how to adapt it*
- **Social Media How-To Guide:** *General tips and tricks on using social media effectively*
- **Social Media Content:** *Template posts and graphics available for your modification and use across social channels*
- **Paid Digital How-To Guide:** *Overview of the different platforms available and how to use them*
- **Earned Media How-To Guide:** *An overview of op-eds, letters to the editor, press releases, and pitching*
- **Earned Media Content:** *Template letter to the editor, statement, and pitch for your modification and use*

Navigation

Messaging3

Social Media How-To Guide5

Social Media Content.....9

Paid Digital How-To Guide 11

Earned Media How-To Guide 14

Earned Media Content 16

Messaging

The four core messaging pillars serve as a home base to tie back to in any communications product. While intended to drive toward a unified ask for federal funding, each one of these messages can and should be supported whenever possible by human faces – students, faculty, and community members. Real-world examples will help paint a picture of how the land-grant system is keeping its diverse graduates, and by extension the nation, competitive and prepared for the future.

CORE MESSAGE 1: Investments in agriculture and life science research and the Extension System result in safer, higher quality food systems.

Here's what a quote in a press release might look like on this topic:

“Even before COVID-19 negatively affected global supply chains, rapid population growth was making issues like hunger, low crop yields, inadequate food storage, and nutrition more complicated – and more important than ever before – to tackle. American land-grant universities must be equipped with the federal funding required to be at the forefront of solving these pressing global problems.”

CORE MESSAGE 2: Investments in agriculture and life science research and the Extension System make communities stronger and healthier.

Here's what a quote in a press release might look like on this topic:

“Cooperative Extension is engaging millions of American youths through 4-H, the nation's largest youth development organization. 4-H programming brings young people and adults together to create community change and promote civic engagement, healthy living, and scientific understanding. These positive outcomes are directly tied to continued investment in the Cooperative Extension Section found within land-grant universities.”

CORE MESSAGE 3: Investments in agriculture and life science research and the Extension System address critical challenges facing agriculture and the environment.

Here's what a quote in a press release might look like on this topic:

“Investing in groundbreaking work to develop better biofuels seeds America's success by making sure we can power our economy and protect our climate. Only land-grant universities have the knowledge, research, and Extension reach to deliver these returns for the American taxpayer.”

CORE MESSAGE 4: Investments in agriculture and life science research and the Extension System are vital to safeguarding America's status as a global leader in innovation.

Here's what a quote in a press release might look like on this topic:

"Innovation has always been America's most important competitive edge. Federal investments that enable land-grant universities to make the next generation of breakthroughs in areas like gene-editing technology, artificial intelligence, and precision agriculture are needed to ensure the US remains a global leader."

Social Media How-To Guide

Why run an organic social media campaign?

Even if you are running ads on social media, any strategic social media campaign should also include an organic component. Organic posts sent from your handle or other stakeholders ensure the content is seen by your “regular” audience (people already following you) in addition to any paid audience you might be trying to reach through targeting. Your follower audience is familiar with your mission already and is primed to click through to the landing page and learn more information. It also allows whatever content you put out to live on in perpetuity on your feed, unlike an ad.

Social media best practices

Keep character count down

On Twitter, you are limited to 280 characters for every tweet. This includes spaces and links (tip: use free websites like bitly.com or tinyurl.com to shorten links). While you are not so limited on other platforms, it is still best to keep posts on Facebook, LinkedIn, and elsewhere on the shorter side. People tend to scroll through social media without taking too much time to pause on any given post, so engaging your audience and getting your point across right away is important. Save longer thoughts for something like a blog post on your website.

Post regularly

When content is posted consistently, it can increase impressions, mentions, and overall online presence. In general, it is recommended that content should be posted at least three times a week across all social media platforms to sustain and increase an account’s engagement rates. Making sure your accounts are fairly active will ensure they are in a better position to be noticed once it's time to run a campaign.

When determining how to schedule the cadence of an organic social media campaign, start by examining how often your account is posting content under usual circumstances and consider the legislative time frame you have to work with. This will help you determine how much content you want to put out and how often to share it.

Be intentional with clickable items

Tools like hashtags can be useful to build a campaign’s identity, latch onto current events, or get noticed by your target audience. However, when incorporating items that can be clicked into your social content (i.e. hashtags, links, and tags) be intentional. Every clickable item is an opportunity to direct someone’s attention where you want it to go – but they are also an opportunity to drive clicks away from your post (ex. Is now really a time when you want audiences clicking on a general hashtag like “#agriculture” or do you want them focused on the hashtag for a specific campaign or event?).

Consider the purpose of each clickable item:

- Hashtags: When clicked, they allow audiences to see all content (posted by any account) participating in this same conversation. They can also function as a tagline, branding a campaign.
- Tags: Tagging an account means that person is notified of your post. These should be used only when you want the tagged entity to see your post, or you want your own followers to see that you are calling this account out (possibly to thank them, admonish them, encourage them to act, or solicit a response).
- Links: Links allow you to drive to an outside source. Have a landing page for your campaign or a news article that helps make your case? Great. Link it. Just make sure your accompanying copy is clearly connected to the purpose or summary of the linked item so that audiences know what they're getting into when they click on it – that will help lower bounce rates away from your site.

A deluge of unnecessary clickable items can muddy the waters. With campaigns in particular stay focused on the specific end goal you have in mind and what your audiences might need to see to achieve that goal. Though not a hard and fast rule, it is generally recommended to limit the number of clickable items to three.

Reach your audience when they're online

There's not a perfect science to the exact time of day when you should post content to have the most people see and engage with it. Different studies and media companies have come up with slightly different suggestions on this topic, and some even think that each social media platform has its own unique peak time. In general, you should think about it this way: Most people look at their social media accounts during the times when they're not too busy with their daily lives. That tends to be loosely mid-morning to lunch (9am – 1pm) or in the early evening (4pm – 6pm). Essentially you want to post when people aren't asleep, getting ready for work or commuting, in the middle of working, or making dinner and taking care of their family. Try out the 9am – 1pm and 4pm – 6pm windows for a few days and make note of any trends in impressions and engagement. Over time, you'll get a feel for when your followers are most active.

There's not a hard and fast rule for which days of the week you should post on either, though weekends (especially Sunday) are typically less active. Mid-week (Tuesday through Thursday) is a good range to default to when scheduling posts, but don't let that stop you from posting on Monday or Friday if you have news to share.

Repetition, repetition, repetition

In a campaign, don't be afraid to post content that is a version of the same thing you've said before. The whole point is to get a specific message across, convince your audiences, and inspire them to act. People generally need to be exposed to messages more than once for them to really stick.

Similarly, be consistent with your calls to action. Again, consider the goal of your campaign: What is the one or two things you really want audiences to do? Say that. Say it clearly. Then say it again.

Create a policy for responding to comments

How, when, and if you decide to respond to comments (especially negative ones) is ultimately up to you and your organization's comfort level. The benefits of responding are that commenters might feel more heard, and you have the chance to correct the record or engage in a dialogue that provides your followers with a new way to think about something. The downside is that commenters could become argumentative or impolite, you could come out of the interaction looking like you've "lost."

Creating an internal policy that's applied consistently can help navigate these challenges. Many organizations will prefer not to respond to comments at all, and that is perfectly acceptable. Letting your initial post speak for itself ensures you are never dragged off message or pulled into potentially combative situations.

Should your organization choose to weigh in on comments that are misleading or factually incorrect, it is best to stick to neutral, businesslike, explanatory language. Your responses should stick closely to the talking points and might look something like this:

- "It is our position that [X] because [Y]."
- "Hi, [X]. Here is a link to [an article, a website, a one-pager, etc.] that helps explain [Y]. Our stance on this issue is [Z]."
- "Thank you for participating in this important conversation. We support [X] because [Y]..."

When it comes to "trolls" – commenters who consistently seek to undermine what you're saying and may or may not even be a real person – it is generally not worth your time and energy to respond. Remember their goal is to pull you off message or make you look exasperated – two things you don't want to be.

Consider a paid campaign element

If you are not already running paid ads, it might be worth doing a little bit of targeting in the Beltway, around the state capital, or in key congressional districts. This could help your messaging get seen by stakeholder audiences – whether they follow your account or not. Digital campaigns can range from month-long table setting campaigns to a single-day ad blitz ahead of an important vote.

Evaluating the success of your posts

In order to establish whether the content is engaging and reaching the right audience, it's important to look at the analytics of each organic post. Analytics can give unique

insights into what is working by evaluating the engagement rate for each post, followers gained, or likes and retweets. Although each metric of success varies across different social media accounts and organizations, there are some general baselines that should be considered.

First, consider overall engagement rate, which means how many people saw the post then chose to interact with it by either liking, sharing, or commenting on it. Looking across industries, the standard engagement rate on Facebook is about 0.1% and on Twitter it is about 0.045%. But it is also important to understand what the average engagement rate currently is for your own social properties to set proper benchmarks (and then work your way up from there).

Studying weekly or monthly analytics to evaluate the social content will help to determine long-term trends in engagement and website traffic. This will help you understand whether campaign content is more or less successful than your average posts. You might also gain insights that can be folded into the design of a campaign – for example, does your usual content typically perform best at a certain time of day? Do your followers typically click more on posts with photos, or posts with links? Take what is already working for you and use that knowledge to set your campaign up for success.

Finally, if you are using several different message tracks or images in a single campaign, take note of which performs best. This is an easy way to do free and informal message testing to find out what resonates most with your unique audience.

How to Put A Week of Content Together

In thinking through content for the week, BAA could highlight:

- Notable calendar events
- Theme of the week or month
- News stories relevant to your priorities
- Pre-existing resources from APLU or member universities
- Individual institutions and their achievements
- Poll questions for followers (consider first what the poll results might look like)
- Evergreen content that is useful to regularly remind followers
- Trending hashtags or existing BAA hashtags
- Existing photos, graphics, or videos
- Young scientist features
- Undergraduate and graduate student features
- Faculty features
- Extension professional features
- Congressional targets

Using these categories as an outline, begin filling in draft posts.

Social Media Content

In all template content, placeholders are marked by brackets and example of how one might fill it in is given.

For talking about federal legislation and/or happenings in DC:

1. Why would Congress do well to [Insert action here, ex. “keep the agricultural community at the top of their agenda when appropriating funds for next year” or “pass the XX Act”]?
 - [Insert brief reason 1, ex. “Power the economy”]
 - [Insert brief reason 2, ex. “Protect the climate”]
 - [Insert brief reason 3, ex. “Safeguard public health”][LINK TO RELEVANT NEWS ARTICLE]
2. Congress must ensure #agriculture, life science research, and Extension remain a priority. [Tag committees with relevant upcoming hearings, ex. “@AppropsDems and @HouseAppropsGOP: Through XX Act, we will put our economy, climate, and public health first.”]
[INSERT LINK TO STATEMENT ON THE BILL]
3. 🚨 Breaking news alert: The president just [Insert action here, ex. “released his budget for FY21” or “signed an executive order on X”]. #Agricultural research, life science research, and the Extension System seeds America’s success. Read our statement on President Biden’s actions.
[INSERT LINK TO STATEMENT]

For tying into events or theme days/months on the calendar:

1. Today is the last day of the [Insert name of event here, ex. “National @4H Conference”]. [Insert takeaway here, ex. “From learning about civic engagement to personal development, we hope this served as an invaluable experience for all our 4-H delegates”]. What was your favorite part of the conference? [INSERT EVENT HASHTAG]
2. Did you know September is [Insert name of month, ex. “National Childhood Obesity Month”]? [Insert example of land-grant doing work in this area, ex. “Research made possible by universities like @SouthernU_BR help teach our nation’s children how to garden and offers nutrition-related technology to local schools.”]
[INSERT LINK TO THE EXAMPLE USED OR A GRAPHIC FOR THE DAY/MONTH]

For demonstrating the value of the land-grant system:

1. What does funding for [Extension/ agricultural research/ life science research] look like in practice? [Insert relevant stats, ex. "+32,000 university- and county-based employees and 2.8 million volunteers nationwide"].
2. [Create a thread starting with the post above by sharing links to specific local examples and stories.]
3. It starts with federal funding and it ends with [insert relevant example from land-grant tied to the core messages, ex. "life-saving research on antimicrobial resistance at @IowaStateU"]. Click to learn about their work that could [insert stat, ex. "prevent 23,000 deaths"]. It's clear investments in land-grants have a strong return.
[INSERT LINK TO EXAMPLE]

Paid Digital How-To Guide

Disclaimer: Before starting a digital promotion plan, it is highly recommended to check on what is allowable under current guidelines for each platform. One thing they currently have in common is the need to be verified before running ads. Rules regarding how to get verified to run ads and what sorts of political or cause-based ads are allowed differ by platform and have changed often in recent years. The process is slightly different for each, so it is best to check the Facebook, Twitter, and Google websites for the most recent information.

Digital ads will allow users not following your channels to see BAA's content and increase your online presence. Paid campaigns are a great tool because they can be launched at almost a moment's notice, run for any length of time from a day to a month and beyond, and they can suit many budgets (effective at as low as \$25 - \$200 per day).

Online tools also allow the advertiser to target the desired audience wherever they are in the country. Every platform has slightly different categories and ways of doing this, but they generally allow you to target zip codes or the radius around certain locations, types of people, and keywords. So, for example, during a week-long agricultural conference, you could run ads for seven days on LinkedIn targeting those with certain job titles and within a certain distance of the conference center.

The key to a successful campaign targeting and content is thinking through 1) Who needs to see the ad, 2) Why do you want them to see it, and 3) What will they gain from it? Answering these questions at the front end will help you figure out how to design a campaign.

Facebook

When to use: For short-term or lower budget campaigns; to reach a broad audience

Facebook is one of the most popular social media platforms out there, so it is a great place to be seen. It has the largest share (besides LinkedIn) of adult users, and (unlike LinkedIn) its purpose and content is broad, making it a versatile place to advertise. There is lots of flexibility in targeting and many types of content look at home on the site.

As a social media platform, Facebook lends itself just as well to shorter, low dollar campaigns as it does to larger ones. Note there can be a slight lag time of a couple hours to a day for Facebook ads to get fully up and running.

Twitter

When to use: For short-term or lower budget campaigns; to reach a D.C. audience

This is the power of digital advertising: In Q1 of 2019, the Ag is America Twitter page garnered 20 retweets, 95 engagements, and a 0.60% engagement rate from 20 organic tweets. Two paid promotions also ran in Q1 2019 (on Agriculture Day and Strawberry Day), resulting in 32,513 impressions, 2,214 clicks, and an 8.50% engagement rate. Putting a small amount of money behind these short campaigns led to massive boosts in the overall engagement rate with the content.

Like Facebook, Twitter lends itself well to shorter, less expensive spends and offers lots of flexibility in targeting. That said, it can also be used for longer-term, ongoing ads (for example, perhaps you want to devote a small budget to advertising each month to keep visibility consistently high).

Twitter is also home to many active journalists, thought leaders, and policymaking types, so it can be a good place to try to reach a D.C. audience. Though please note that in recent years, Twitter has taken some of the most sweeping steps to reform its political and cause-based ads policies. At the time of writing, Twitter does not allow ads to directly mention legislation or members of Congress, and 501c4 organizations are banned from advertising entirely.

Google

When to use: For longer-term or higher budget campaigns

Historically, the second most common way visitors arrived at the Land-Grant.org website has been through search engines like Google (13.83%). For the old Agriculture is America website, Google traffic accounted for 32% of visits. Clearly, Google is a place where people are looking for content from BAA and related sites, so advertising there makes a lot of sense and should be cost efficient.

Unlike on social media platforms where your ad will likely appear as an image or video, Google ads appear above (and look just like) search results with a paid disclaimer. You might purchase the keyword "agriculture," and then someone searching for that term on Google could be shown your ad as a search result. Generally, the broader the term, the more expensive it is to target because there is a higher chance other companies and organizations are also trying to target it. Thinking of specific keywords will help ensure better results. Still, Search campaigns often perform best given a decent amount of time and/or money – this is not the place to do a single day \$300 campaign.

LinkedIn

When to use: For events or professional audiences

Given the nature of the platform, content that does well on LinkedIn typically has some sort of business or professional tie-in. This could be a good place to advertise if you are trying to boost an event or reach only those within academic and industry circles.

Programmatic Advertising and Other

When to use: For more expensive campaigns with broad targeting

Programmatic ads refer to the types of ads you might see embedded into a news article – the ones that seem to follow you around the internet. This method allows you to get your ads in lots of different places, but it's not as nimble of a process as advertising on social media. It is best to approach these campaigns with a bigger budget, bigger goals, and a longer lead time. You will need to work with a digital advertising vendor to do so.

Another option is to work directly with a particular news site to sponsor their newsletter or advertise on their site. This can be useful if you are trying to capture the attention of people within a certain town or district, though again, it is typically much more expensive and time consuming.

Earned Media How-To Guide

Letters to the Editor (LTEs)

Use when: It benefits you to respond to an article published by a reporter.

LTEs make an argument and tell a story. They are some of the best traditional tools for putting a personal touch on an otherwise policy-heavy issue and getting the attention of members of Congress. LTEs are typically no longer than 200 words and respond to an article in a publication by substantiating it or refuting it. For example, a local news outlet might publish an article about a congressperson's priorities after returning from recess – giving BAA an opportunity to draft an LTE explaining why at this moment, failure to prioritize investments in agriculture is a failure for the community, the state, and the nation.

Like with any opinion piece, the very first paragraph of an LTE should make clear the point you are trying to make. It should be to the point and indicate why you are a subject matter expert or someone whose voice belongs in the debate, and it should be substantiated with statistics and real stories as much as is possible in the limited word count. Whenever factual information is included, it should be sourced through links.

Before starting to draft any opinion piece, check the intended publication's website for submission guidelines and word limits and work with land-grant university communicators to ensure timing and the topic do not conflict with local issue or media priorities.

Op-eds and Feature Articles

Use when: You want to present a more thorough argument that ties your priorities to current events.

These are like an LTE, but they can be much longer and do not have to be in direct response to something that was already published by the outlet. Ideally, an op-ed should fall somewhere between 400-600 words.

Think of an op-ed like a news article you are providing to an outlet for them to run: It must be relevant and tailored to their audience, it must be timely, and it must be adequately sourced. For example, if the topic is federal investment in agriculture but the outlet is The State in Columbia, South Carolina, then the piece should call on South Carolina's congressional delegation and give examples of how federal investment would help the Palmetto State. It should also make clear why you are talking about the issue at this particular moment in time.

Just like an LTE, these longer opinion pieces should indicate why you are a subject matter expert or stakeholder (i.e., Why should people value your opinion?), and it

should be substantiated with statistics and anecdotes. Whenever factual information is included, it should be sourced through links.

Press Releases

Use when: You have breaking news to share.

A press release is a standard method for sharing news with a broad list of reporters and stakeholders. You might use a press release to praise the passage of legislation, announce a new initiative or grant, etc. The goal of a release is that a reporter will include your quote and information in a story they are writing. A press release always follows the basic format of:

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Insert Date

CONTACT

Insert Name

Insert Email Address

Insert Phone Number

Headline

Optional Sub-head

CITY, STATE – Today, insert the thing that happened here. Include no more than three or so sentences relaying the high-level facts (ex. Who was the bill sponsor? How much money is involved?).

“Insert a quote here about why the thing that happened is important to you,” said X.

Insert more background information about the thing that happened and your work related to it here.

About The Organization

Insert your about here.

###

Statements can be released in a similar format, but with just a brief introduction and quote. A statement is useful in reacting to someone else’s news, like when the president releases a budget or executive order you want to comment on.

Earned Media Content

Sample Statement

Agricultural Universities Urge Congress to Fund President's Budget Request for Research and Extension

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities' Board on Agriculture Assembly released the following statement in response the president's Fiscal Year 2022 budget. The budget outlines [\$] in funding for the agricultural sector, including [X, Y, and Z key components worth highlighting].

"A president's budget is an indicator of their priorities, and we are encouraged to see that President X has included the American agricultural community in his vision for the country's future. Investing in agricultural research, life science research, and the Extension System seeds America's success. It is through consistent and adequate funding in these areas that we can power the economy, protect the climate, safeguard public health, and rise to the technological moment.

"Congress would do well to follow the president's lead and keep the agricultural community at the top of their agenda when formulating the budget and appropriating funds for next year. Land-grant universities have a presence in every county in the nation, and the contributions they make through agricultural research and Extension strengthen not only our nation as a whole but the individual states, districts, and constituents these members represent. Congress can play an integral role in addressing the critical challenges their communities face by approving funding increases for federal research programs designed to help farmers and ranchers, protect our environment and our precious natural resources, promote youth-development and academic excellence, and improve our collective quality of life."

Sample Pitch

To pitch your opinion content to a local outlet, first you'll need to know who to contact. Try searching "[OUTLET NAME] + op-ed submissions" to find a submissions email address. Alternatively, you can check the outlet's staff directory on their website for the Editorial Page or Opinion Editor. For letters to the editor, there is often a submission form or email, though you can also search for the Opinion Editor.

Once you've found contact information, you can begin drafting a pitch email. You'll want to highlight what your op-ed or LTE is about and why you're a credible voice on the topic. Be sure to copy your piece below your signature as well! Your pitch email might look something like:

Subject line: Op-ed: Benefits of agricultural investment in [INSERT STATE]

Hi there,

Given the prominence of agriculture in [INSERT STATE], I wanted to reach out to [INSERT OUTLET NAME] with an op-ed I've written about the social and economic benefits of the land-grant system. As [INSERT JOB TITLE/ORGANIZATION], I've seen firsthand how Schools of Agriculture contribute to [STATE]'s economy, improve health outcomes, and prepare us for the future. Funding for agriculture is especially important now as [TIE TO SOMETHING HAPPENING IN THE NEWS].

I've shared my personal experience as well as what [INSERT LAWMAKER NAME] should do to put [STATE] and the nation at the forefront of agricultural innovation.

Would [OUTLET NAME] be interested in running the op-ed? I've copied it below my signature for your review.

Thank you,
Name

Sample LTE

In response to the [INSERT DATE] article titled ["INSERT NAME + LINK TO THE PIECE"], it must be noted that one critical area of funding was omitted: agriculture, life science research, and the Extension System.

Even before COVID-19 negatively affected global supply chains, rapid population growth was making issues like hunger, low crop yields, inadequate food storage, and nutrition more complicated – and more important than ever before – to tackle. American land-grant universities like [INSERT UNIVERSITY NAME] right here in [INSERT CITY] should be equipped with the federal funding required to be at the forefront of solving these pressing global problems.

As Representative [NAME] advocates for our community in D.C., he would do well to remember that [INSERT EXAMPLE OF VALUE ADDED BY THE UNIVERSITY]. We are proud of this accomplishment and are continuing to conduct groundbreaking research in the midst of a pandemic that will safeguard Americans' future, but we must be supported.

APLU BAA Content Calendar

This calendar can be used as a tool to support BAA's communications planning throughout the year. It is not intended to be prescriptive; it's a collection of possible starting points to build off of at your discretion. Many of the lighter-hearted items are best suited to social media content, while moments on the congressional calendar offer the opportunity to release a statement or place op-eds about the need for federal investment in agriculture.

A sample suggested actions are noted throughout.

January

Suggested action: On National Milk Day, share stories throughout the day on social media highlighting the impact of dairy farmers and milk related research.

Important Legislative Dates

- 3rd – Start of 117th Congress

Stakeholder Dates and Events

- N/A

National State Days

- 4th - National Missouri Day
- 11th - National Arkansas Day
- 18th - National Michigan Day
- 25th - National Florida Day
- 29th - National Kansas Day

National Food and Agriculture Related Days

- 6th - National Bean Day
- 9th - National Apricot Day
- 11th - National Milk Day
- 24th - National Peanut Butter Day

National Health Related Days

- N/A

February

Suggested action: Release a statement from BAA leadership on the need for the president's budget to reflect an investment in agricultural research, life science research, and the Extension System. Consider drafting an placing an op-ed in a Beltway outlet on the same topic.

Important Legislative Dates

- White House Fiscal Year Budget typically released this month
- 2nd - Senate Hearing on Nomination of Thomas J. Vilsack as Secretary of Agriculture
- 11th – Joint Session of Congress

Stakeholder Dates and Events

- 12th - NIFA FY 2021 Youth Farm Safety Education and Certification (YFSEC) Program Applications Deadline
- 16th - USDA Publication on Agricultural Projections to 2030
- 18th - NIFA FY 2021 Resident Instruction Grants Program for Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas (RIIA) Application Deadline
- 18th - NIFA Resident Instruction Grants Program for Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas (RIIA) & Agriculture and Food Sciences Facilities and Equipment (AGFEI) Application Deadline
- 26th - NIFA Applying for the AFRI Food and Agriculture Non-formal Education (FANE) and Civic Engagement Experience for Youth (CEEY) Program Areas

National State Days

- 1st - National Texas Day
- 4th - National Washington State Day
- 8th - National Iowa Day
- 12th - National Georgia Day
- 15th - National Wisconsin Day
- 22nd - National California Day

National Food and Agriculture Related Days

- 2nd - National Tater Tot Day
- 4th - National Hemp Day
- 7th - National Agriculture Week
- 13th - National Cheddar Day
- 17th - National Cabbage Day
- 22nd - National Cook a Sweet Potato Day
- 26th - National Pistachio Day
- 27th - National Strawberry Day

National Health Related Days

- Heart Month

March

Suggested action: Using the anniversary of the Affordable Care Act as a hook, place local op-eds in 2-3 key states focused on Extension offices' essential role in influencing the social, economic, and environmental determinants of health, which can help delay or prevent the need for medical care.

Important Legislative Dates

- 23rd - Anniversary of the Affordable Care Act signing (2010): Opportunity to tie into health and wellness messaging

Stakeholder Dates and Events

- N/A

National State Days

- 1st - National Minnesota Day
- 8th - National Oregon Day

- 29th - National Nevada Day

National Food and Agriculture Related Days

- 1st - National Pig Day
- 7th - National Cereal Day
- 16th - National Artichoke Hearts Day
- 18th - National Biodiesel Day
- 19th - National Poultry Day
- 20th - World Flower Day
- 21st - National California Strawberry Day
- 23rd - National Chia Day
- 24th - National Ag Day
- 26th - National Spinach Day
- 31st - National Tater Day

National Health Related Days

- Nutrition Month

April

Suggested action: Run a paid digital campaign during the National 4-H Conference.

Important Legislative Dates

- 15th - Deadline for Congress to pass a budget resolution (Note: this often takes longer or does not happen at all)

Stakeholder Dates and Events

- 1st - NIFA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative - Sustainable Agricultural Systems Application Deadline (Program Area Priority A9201)
- 1st - NIFA FY 2021 Food Safety Outreach Program Application Deadline
- 9th - 15th - National 4-H Conference
- 29th - NIFA Rural Health and Safety Education Competitive Grants Program (RHSE) Application Deadline
- 20th - 30th - USDA event: National Organic Standards Board Meeting (Virtual)

National State Days

- 5th - National Nebraska Day
- 12th - National Colorado Day
- 19th - National North Dakota Day
- 22nd - National Oklahoma Day
- 26th - National South Dakota Day

National Food and Agriculture Related Days

- 7th - National Beer Day
- 10th - National Farm Animals Day
- 14th - National Pecan Day
- 15th - National Banana Day
- 16th - National Orchid Day
- 19th - National Garlic Day
- 22nd - Earth Day

- 30th - National Arbor Day

National Health Related Days

- 7th - World Health Day

May

Suggested action: Remind social media audiences about the NIFA Community Food Projects (CFP) Competitive Grants Program deadline, then spend the rest of the month highlighted Schools of Agriculture stories about food and nutrition.

Important Legislative Dates

- N/A

Stakeholder Dates and Events

- 3rd - NIFA FY 2021 Food and Agriculture Service Learning Program (FASLP) Request for Applications
- 4th - NIFA Community Food Projects (CFP) Competitive Grants Program

National State Days

- 3rd - National Montana Day
- 17th - National Idaho Day
- 24th - National Wyoming Day
- 31st - National Utah Day

National Food and Agriculture Related Days

- 4th - National Orange Juice Day
- 17th - National Walnut Day
- 20th - National Pick Strawberries Day

National Health Related Days

- N/A

June

Suggested action: To mark the official start of summer, publish a blog post recapping the last academic school year and notable agricultural research.

Important Legislative Dates

- N/A

Stakeholder Dates and Events

- N/A

National State Days

- 14th - National New Mexico Day
- 20th - National Pennsylvania Day
- 20th - National Virginia Day
- 20th - National West Virginia Day
- 21st - National Arizona Day

National Food and Agriculture Related Days

- 1st - National Olive Day
- 3rd - National Egg Day

- 4th - National Cheese Day
- 10th - National Herbs and Spices Day
- 11th - Corn on the Cob Day
- 27th - National Onion Day

National Health Related Days

- N/A

Holidays

- 20th – First day of Summer

July

Suggested action: For National Hawaii, Delaware, and New Jersey Days, create and share infographics with facts about the impact of agriculture, the life science, and the Extension System in those states.

Important Legislative Dates

- N/A

Stakeholder Dates and Events

- N/A

National State Days

- 5th - National Hawaii Day
- 13th - National Delaware Day
- 27th - National New Jersey Day
- 31st - National Avocado Day

National Food and Agriculture Related Days

- 13th - National Cow Appreciation Day

National Health Related Days

- N/A

August

Suggested action: Draft and publish local letters to the editor or op-eds targeted at members of Congress while they are in district, focusing on the important economic contributions of in-state Schools of Agriculture.

Important Legislative Dates

- August Recess – Opportunity to engage members while they are in district

Stakeholder Dates and Events

- N/A

National State Days

- 10th - National Connecticut Day
- 17th - National Massachusetts Day
- 24th - National Maryland Day
- 31st - National South Carolina Day

National Food and Agriculture Related Days

- 3rd - National Watermelon Day

- 15th - World Honeybee Day
- 19th - National Potato Day

National Health Related Days

- N/A

September

Suggested action: Run a paid digital campaign relating the new findings from the USDA report to the work being done at Schools of Agriculture.

Important Legislative Dates

- 30th - End of the Fiscal Year

Stakeholder Dates and Events

- 8th - USDA report and statistics released on food security
- 10th - NIFA FY 2021 1890 Institution Teaching, Research and Extension Capacity Building Grants (CBG) Program Application Deadline
- 30th - NIFA FY 2020 NSF - NIFA Plant Biotic Interactions Program Request for Applications Deadline

National State Days

- 7th - National New Hampshire Day
- 21st - National New York Day
- 28th - National North Carolina Day

National Food and Agriculture Related Days

- 4th - National Macadamia Nut Day
- 13th - National Peanut Day
- 29th - National Coffee Day

National Health Related Days

- N/A

October

Suggested action: To tie into Halloween, share pumpkin related research on social media on National Pumpkin Day.

Important Legislative Dates

- N/A

Stakeholder Dates and Events

- N/A

National State Days

- 5th - National Rhode Island Day
- 12th - National Vermont Day
- 18th - National Alaska Day
- 19th - National Kentucky Day
- 26th - National Tennessee Day

National Food and Agriculture Related Days

- 6th - National Pumpkin Seed Day

- 12th - National Farmer's Day
- 15th - National Cheese Curd Day
- 26th - National Pumpkin Day
- 29th - National Oatmeal Day

National Health Related Days

- N/A

November

Suggested action: With both National Rural Health Day and Diabetes Month in November, there is an opportunity to pitch local press in a few key rural areas about the Extension System's role in helping to bolster the health of communities who are otherwise underserved.

Important Legislative Dates

- N/A

Stakeholder Dates and Events

- N/A

National State Days

- 2nd - National Ohio Day
- 9th - National Louisiana Day
- 30th - National Mississippi Day

National Food and Agriculture Related Days

- 1st - National Cinnamon Day
- 14th - National Pickle Day

National Health Related Days

- November Month-long National Health Observances: Diabetes, COPD, and Antibiotic Resistance
- 18th - National Rural Health Day

Holidays

- 25th - Thanksgiving

December

Suggested action: Use the anniversary of the Paris Climate Agreement to release a fact sheet on investments in research and innovation at Schools of Agriculture that is helping to combat the climate crisis.

Important Legislative Dates

- Look out for Farm Bill renewed every five years (current one expires in 2023)
- 12th - Anniversary of the Paris Climate Agreement (2015): Opportunity to tie into climate messaging

Stakeholder Dates and Events

- 9th - USDA Publication: America's Diverse Family Farms, 2021 Edition

National State Days

- 11th - National Indiana Day

- 14th - National Alabama Day
- 21st - National Maine Day

National Food and Agriculture Related Days

- 1st - National Eat a Red Apple Day
- 17th - National Maple Syrup Day

National Health Related Days

- N/A

DRAFT

Agenda Item 7.3: Science and Technology Committee (STC)

Presenters: Jody Jellison and Bret Hess

Action Requested: For Information Only

Committee Members:

<p>Chair: Jody Jellison (NERA) Past Chair: Laura Lavine (WAAESD)</p> <p>Delegates: Alton Thompson (ARD) John Yang (ARD) Joe Colletti (NCRA) Bill Barker (NCRA) Indrajeet Chaubey (NERA) Mark Hutton (NERA) Susan Duncan (SAAESD) Nathan McKinney (SAAESD) Gene Kelly (WAAESD) Chris Davies (WAAESD)</p> <p>Executive Vice Chair: Bret Hess (WAAESD ED) Saige Zespy (WAAESD Recorder)</p>	<p>Liaisons: Wendy Powers (ECOP) Jim Farrar (NIPMCC; Pest Mgmt Subc) Tim Killian (SSSC; Social Sci Subc) Tim Conner (NIFA) Robert Matteri (USDA ARS)</p>
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ESCOP Web: <http://escop.info/committee/scitech/>

<http://escop.info/committee/national-integrated-pest-management-coordinating-committee-nipmcc/>

<http://escop.info/committee/social-sciences-subcommittee-sssc/>

S&T Committee (STC)

Regular STC business encompasses reviews, reactions, and feedback to relevant national-level reports and findings. Following approval by the ESCOP Executive Committee on October 27, 2020, STC requested to have ESCOP Chair Kairo submit a letter to advise USDA leadership about several important points STC identified regarding input on the USDA Agriculture Innovation Agenda. Subsequent work by STC to-date has been to provide content in support of the Agricultural Research Infrastructure Advocacy (ARIA) effort. Two pages of content were submitted to APLU for inclusion as [Talking Points](#) in the ARIA materials toolbox. STC Chair, Jody Jellison presented the two documents attached as the last two pages of this agenda brief during the most recent ESCOP Chair's Advisory Committee (CAC). The CAC subsequently recommended requesting approval by the ESCOP Executive Committee to provide the documents to APLU for inclusion in the toolbox of materials being utilized to support the Agricultural Research Infrastructure Advocacy and other system-wide advocacy

efforts. STC prepared the content with the understanding that professional communicators within APLU will convert the content into more attractive communication pieces for a variety of audiences. Initially, the one-page document on branch stations is intended for each LGU to append their information for the upcoming Hill visits (see attached pdf as an example). The longer-range goal is to create an inventory/map of the national system to illustrate AES (and possibly Extension) extend well beyond campus. Doing so may help congressional delegates “see” their district will benefit from supporting a bill that includes Agricultural Research Infrastructure. It is important to note that the current map of LGUs on the NIFA website only shows the location of LGUs campuses.

National Integrated Pest Management Coordinating Committee (NIPMCC)

The NIPMCC Executive Committee held a virtual quarterly meeting on February 10, 2021. Longer versions of issue papers on Emerging and Invasive Pests, Pesticide Resistance Management, Communication and Stakeholder Engagement are nearly complete. Regional IPM Center communicators or other communicators will be enlisted to help make all three issue papers parallel in format layout. The writing committees also will attempt to incorporate phrases that resonate with USDA and administration plans, such as climate-smart agriculture, climate resilience, revitalizing rural America, COVID recovery, and equity. The next step will be to cut down the issue papers into action-oriented one-pagers (front and back) for policy makers and legislators. The documents will be submitted to ESCOP and ECOP to help frame the importance of IMP. NIPMCC also is interested in developing a strategic vision for the IPM research and Extension enterprise. Design Thinking may be utilized to tie the strategic vision to the National IPM Roadmap.

Social Sciences Subcommittee (SSSC)

Leadership of SSSC held a virtual meeting on February 12, 2021 to discuss initial plans for an annual SSSC meeting. A poll of current SSSC members indicated March 24, 2021 and March 26, 2021 are the best dates for the virtual meeting. There is interest in learning how SSSC would effectively interact with NIFA science liaisons as well as staff in Kansas City to advance social and behavioral sciences in agriculture. Additional unfinished business includes official membership, discipline team status, and the SSSC Rules of Operation.

Land-Grant Agricultural Research Facilities Are Distributed Throughout the Country to Solve Multiple Challenges in Food and Agriculture

The system of agricultural research programs at Land-grant Universities and historically black and tribal colleges and their affiliated state agricultural research stations (AES) represents an on-going partnership between local, state, and federal governments, conducting research to provide evidence-based information in support of local, regional, national, and global communities across a range of areas, including agriculture, health and nutrition, and economic development. Similarly, these research activities form a core educational experience for the next generation of agriculture research professionals, and the extension outreach activities not only transmit this new knowledge directly to the farmer but provide direct feedback from engaged stakeholders to help target the research to the most pressing regional issues. This remarkably coordinated system meets the diverse and changing needs of communities, particularly related to food and agricultural systems.

With continuing programmatic and targeted infrastructure support, AES will continue to address challenges in food and agriculture more efficiently than any other system in the world. Filling current gaps and needs requires funding to maintain current facilities and to provide infrastructure and facilities for cutting edge research. Many solutions to the grand challenges facing agriculture and food systems rely on bioinformatics, data analytics, and other modern technologies. Modern facilities with appropriate instrumentation, laboratory infrastructure and greater broadband bandwidth will be necessary for the Land-Grant University system to maintain the capacity for effectively addressing current and future grand challenges.

Agriculture is place-based and a “one-size fits all” approach is not possible because infrastructure and technology must be appropriate at all levels across the country to accommodate the vast differences in the local components of our food system. A strength of the Agricultural Experiment Station system and their numerous field outreach and research stations is their diversity. Differences occur across the U.S. and within each state. What happens in the West does not translate to the North Central, Northeastern, or Southern regions of the U.S. Climate, soils, and other natural resources are very different from location to location even within each state. While all pieces are interconnected and serve to support one another, the place-based system must be maintained and further developed. Threats are wide-ranging and disruptive (e.g., COVID-19 and climate change).

Land-grant universities direct agricultural research that reflects a diverse U.S. population and varied needs. Institutions in all 50 states and many U.S. territories operate research and outreach sites both on and off campus representing diverse ecosystems, communities, and food production systems. Each state’s agricultural research, teaching, and extension outreach requires adequate infrastructure. An investment in maintaining and enhancing the agricultural infrastructure associated with our state-based Land-grant University system is the most effective way to ensure our great Land grant University system can meet territorial, state, regional, and national needs. Branch Experiment Stations are located in regions of states and territories where they can have the most impact helping local stakeholders (e.g., agricultural producers, agricultural industries, food processing industries, other allied industries, and community partners) address the critical issues specific to that locale. Stakeholder-driven processes are utilized to develop site-specific research leading to impartial, verified science, technology, and recommendations suitable to meet the local, state, and national needs. These not-for-profit centers perform experiments to determine the applicability and viability of new developments for their local agricultural and food industries, support rural communities, and develop strategies for harnessing advances by communicating information with a focus on benefits to the communities they serve. Overall, the Branch Experiment Stations play meaningful roles in economic development efforts in communities by providing local jobs and by responding to urgent and emerging issues in the agricultural economy and food supply chain and delivering practical tools, technologies, and information to a variety of community stakeholders.

Where are the Branch Experiment Stations operated by your Land-grant University and what do they do for your state or territory?

Facility Locations



- Research farms
- Extension offices

Units:

Massachusetts Agricultural Experiment Station

Massachusetts Water Resources Research Center

UMass Cranberry Station

UMass Extension

Facilities:

Research and Education Farms:

- Cold Spring Orchard Research and Education Center, Belchertown
- Joseph Troll Turf Research Facility, South Deerfield
- Crops Research and Education Farm, South Deerfield
- Equine and Livestock Research and Education Center, Hadley

Cranberry Station, East Wareham

Diagnostic Laboratories, Amherst:

- Environmental Analysis Laboratory
- Plant Diagnostics Laboratory
- Soils and Plant Nutrient Testing Laboratory

Water Resources Research Center, Amherst

Extension Off-Campus Offices:

- Cape Cod Cooperative Extension, Barnstable
- Central Extension Center, Worcester
- Greater Boston Nutrition Education Office
- Lawrence Nutrition Education Office
- Extension Office at Mount Ida Campus, Newton
- Plymouth County Office, Plymouth
- Raynham Nutrition Education Office
- Springfield Nutrition Education Office
- Walpole 4-H Office

The Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment at the University of Massachusetts

Amherst integrates research and outreach education in agriculture, food systems and the environment.

The Center is the contemporary standard bearer of the university's land-grant origins. It provides linkages from the University with vibrant business, policy and public interest sectors in the state, including agriculture, the horticultural 'green industries,' environmental decisionmakers and food system interests.

Agenda Brief: Diversity Catalyst Committee (DCC)

Date: October 27, 2020

Presenter: Henry Fadamiro (Chair)

1. **Committee Membership** (as of February 25, 2021): See [ESCOP Committee Diversity Catalyst Committee \(DCC\)](#)
2. **Meetings:**
 - The DCC met via teleconference on December 15, 2020.
 - The DCC met via teleconference on February 16, 2021
3. **Accomplishments/Upcoming Plans:**
 - Since meeting in December, the DCC welcomed new members John Dieffenbacher-Krall (representing NERA from the University of Maine), Majed El-Dweik (representing ARD from Lincoln University) and Nina Bennett (representing 1890 APS programs from the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff.)
 - The 2020 ESS DCC Excellence Award winner, the University of Florida's Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences (FYCS) Diversity and Inclusion Committee, was profiled in [NIFA's newsletter of November 11](#).
 - A synthesis report from the ESS Meeting Opening Session, *Inclusive Excellence: Systematic Approaches to System Change Summary Report* (attached) is being used to frame a call to action by the DCC.
 - The DCC has issued the call for 2021 nominations for the National Experiment Station Section Diversity and Inclusion Award (attached). Directors are encouraged to nominate outstanding exemplars.
 - The DCC has moved from meeting quarterly to monthly and is slated to meet on the third Tuesday of each month at 4:00 PM ET. The next meeting of the DCC is scheduled for March 16, 2021.
4. **Action Requested:** For information only.
5. **Attachments:**
 - a. DCC_AWARDCALL_20210205
 - b. ESS Opening Session Synthesis Report 2020 09 28

National Experiment Station Diversity and Inclusion Award

2021 Call for Nominations

The Call

The Experiment Station Section (ESS) seeks nominations of individuals, teams, or programs for the National Experiment Station Diversity and Inclusion Award. This award recognizes research team efforts that supported the creation of diverse and pluralistic teams at the local, state, regional, or national level. Such efforts could impact one or more of the following areas: administration, advisory and decision-making groups, audiences, coalitions, educational materials and delivery methods, funding, initiatives, policies, programs, staff, and stakeholders.

Background

Beginning in 2015 with the establishment of the [ESCOP Diversity in Research Leadership Task Force](#) (now the permanent [Diversity Catalyst Committee](#)), the Experiment Station Section (ESS) forged a commitment to increase diversity across its constituencies and foster inclusive environments which empower all groups within organizations to work better collectively. **Diversity** is defined as differences among people with respect to age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, sexual orientation, spiritual practices and other human differences. An **inclusive organization** is defined as having a culture which empowers all members to continually innovate, assess and redesign programs, policies and practices to support the success of the full range of its membership. ESS through its individual and collective efforts aspires to be a futuristic body that consistently and holistically models and practices inclusive excellence. Importantly, the National Experiment Station Diversity and Inclusion Award supports efforts that go beyond simply meeting EEO/AA program requirements.

Award Presentation

Dependent on the pool of nominations, up to two recipients may be recognized with this award. The recipient(s) of the National Experiment Station Diversity and Inclusion Award will be recognized at the annual AES/SAES/ARD Meeting held in September/October each year with a commemorative plaque and \$1,000 cash award from ESCOP. Travel reimbursement to attend the awards event will be provided for the primary recipient(s). The recipient(s) will be asked to submit photos and a project summary for the ESCOP websites, the NIFA Update and for integration in the Award Program. The awardees will also be asked to submit an impact statement for the [Land-Grants Impacts](#) database which describes research impacts to the public.

Past Winners

- 2020 Tracy Irani, Jenny Jones, Sharon Austin, Keith Diem, Kelly Moore, Dale Pracht, The Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences (FYCS) at the Institute of Food Agricultural Sciences of the University of Florida
- 2019 Jeff Jacobsen, North Central Regional Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors (NCRA)
- 2018 Levon Esters and Neil Knobloch, The Mentoring@Purdue Team, Purdue University

Eligibility

The nominee can be an individual or a team or organization composed of Experiment Station faculty and scientists, staff, students or post-docs. An Experiment Station faculty or scientist is defined as having at

least 25 percent FTE university AES or ARD appointment as of May 1st of the year of the nomination and responsibility for AES programming for a minimum of four consecutive years.

Criteria for Nominations

Nominations can be submitted from any area of the Experiment Station Section. Nominations can be made by anyone, including self-nominations. When writing nominations, special attention should be given to efforts that have the potential to be sustained over time or can be replicated in other comparable situations.

Six weighted elements will be considered in the review process and should be described clearly in the nomination. These include:

Purpose: Why was this effort undertaken? Describe the efforts by a person, group or organization to achieve diversity/pluralism in an experiment station project/program (e.g., Hatch, Hatch Multistate, Evans-Allen, McIntire-Stennis). How does the project achieve pluralism with its advisory and decision-making groups, audiences, staff, and stakeholders? (10%)

Basis: Why is this effort worthy of recognition? (10%)

Effort: Are actions and activities in support of diversity appropriate and fundamentally sound? How do the actions and activities demonstrate impact? (20%)

Impact: Have efforts led to positive, sustainable programmatic and/or organizational change? If so, how? (30%)

Scope: How broadly did (or likely will) this effort affect the success of the operations of the Experiment Station Section? (20%)

Innovation: How did (or will) this effort enhance existing models or create new or models for positive change? (10%)

Nomination Package Guidelines

Nominations must not exceed word limits below, and must contain the following elements.

1. Name, title, address, phone number and e-mail of nominee(s).
2. Name, title, address, phone number and e-mail of person making nomination.
3. A brief synopsis of nomination (30 words or less)
4. A narrative explaining the six elements in the criteria given above (400 words or less per element).

Limitations

Incomplete applications or applications in excess of size limitations will not be considered. Please do not forward DVD's, bound publications or other support materials with the nomination. Only electronic submissions will be considered. Nominations can include links to supplemental materials that clearly demonstrate one or more of the nomination elements.

Selection Process

An Award Review Panel is appointed by the ESCOP Diversity Catalyst Committee to review nominations and may recommend up to two recipients to the ESCOP Chair. The process would be completed by June 1, 2021.

Due Date

The due date for nominations is April 1, 2021. To be considered, nominations must be submitted as a single pdf file to Dr. Rick Rhodes (Executive Vice-Chair, Diversity Catalyst Committee) at rcr3@uri.edu.

Inclusive Excellence: Systematic Approaches to System Change

September 28, 2020 Opening Session to the 2020 ESS/AES/ARD Annual Meeting
Summary Report

Session Objectives – Participants will:

- Explore how inclusive excellence can strengthen existing Experiment Station efforts.
- Engage in a series of conversations that will identify obstacles to affect inclusive excellence and strategies to overcome the obstacles.
- Be challenged to implement at least three actionable steps that lead to inclusive excellence at their home institutions.

If we do wonders with one set of eyes, imagine seeing the world from various other set of eyes.

~Session Participant

Survey Highlights

In a survey to ESS members prior to this session, several assets as well as challenges to inclusive excellence were identified. During this session, participants explored potential strategies to leverage assets to address the four top challenges identified. The section that follows documents potential strategies to address these issues:

1. Recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce; developing a pipeline to support inclusive excellence
2. Strengthening partnerships among 1862/1890/1994 institutions
3. Addressing funding challenges/disparities across the three LGU systems
4. Reaching/working with underserved populations

Call to Action

This report serves as a summary of thoughtful input on what ESS could do in order to vastly impact Inclusive Excellence. The charge to the reader is this:

How will this input be translated into CONCRETE ACTION that will have the greatest positive impact in Inclusive Excellence in 5-10 years?

In a changing world, a diversity of ideas will better help us find solutions to new problems that are not predictable with past understanding.

~Session Participant

Strategies for Addressing Top Challenges

Recruiting and Retaining a Diverse Workforce; Developing a Pipeline to Support Inclusive Excellence

- **Internships**
 - Targeted internships
 - Internships leading to permanent positions at slightly better the entry-level salaries (e.g., incentive)
 - Reserve internships for minority serving inst.
- **Mentorships - strong peer-to-peer mentorship for underrepresented groups**
- **Pipeline development**
 - Industry pipeline program (industry scholarships/internship opportunities)
 - Grow the diverse workforce that you want to see by grooming students from freshman through graduate school for those w/ graduate programs
 - Use capacity funds to recruit diverse graduate students (will end up as faculty hopefully)
 - Postdoctoral programs to bridge to faculty
 - Work with your institutions MANRRS groups as a pipeline for employees <https://www.manrrs.org/>
 - Develop a program from diversity scholarships in undergrad and grad.
- **Training**
 - Training own diversity PhD students
 - Identifying unconscious or systematic biases currently causing attrition within the pipeline
- **Start with youth development**
 - Start early with 4H in creating the foundation for a diverse workforce
 - Change the perspective of high school students about what Agriculture is, most of the best talent is going to a pre-med pathway
 - Campus experiences for 3rd graders from URMs
 - Target students in 7-12 for scholarships in Ag programs to build the pipeline
- **Exchange programs/shared programs/cross training/collaboration**
 - Graduate student swap between 1862s, 1890s, 1994, like a clinical rotation, for a semester research project.
 - Develop summer experiential exchanges for students between the LGU system
 - Student opportunities to exchange across campus
 - Create regional research exchange programs to provide greater experience for grad students and post docs
 - Station scientists from other organizations at our experiment stations

- Cross training of students from diverse institutions - summer internships at diverse locations - all institutions involved
- Dual degrees from more than one institution/program
- Providing learning opportunities to each other's students within a region.
- Multiyear faculty exchanges across institutions
- Develop bridge research programs with 3 LG types
- **Incentivize - Incentives for minority faculty and students**
- **Identify successful examples**
- **Examine/reshape recruitment and hiring practices**
 - Aggressive search locally and internationally
 - Reduce the number of non-essential required qualifications in job ads
 - Improve recruitment strategies.
 - Strengthen hiring practices
 - Strong start up packages
 - Reactive and proactive work environment- vetting in hiring for sensitivity
 - Train all personnel involved in any aspect of hiring training in recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce
 - Dedicated funding to assist in hiring diverse faculty.
- **Collaboration**
 - Shadow AES/ARD Directors and get them to regional/national meetings
 - Encourage and build through regular monthly/weekly meetings with Admin
 - Build Regional strategic relationships with 1890s and 1994's to do target hires at faculty or staff
 - Joint travel to relevant sites
 - Change the climate so that different people with different life experiences can feel at home

Strengthening Partnerships among 1862/1890/1994 Institutions

- **Building relationships**
 - Physically visit other institutions
 - Faculty exchanges across the three LGU family members.
 - More face to face get-togethers with faculty working in related areas and administrators across these institutions
 - Effective partnerships begin with building strong relationships!
 - Regular collaborative sessions
 - Faculty "internships" or mini sabbaticals at institutions of different land grant groups
 - Virtual exchanges
 - University alliance formation among 2-3 other university partners
 - Reach out to one of each institution type different from your own and invite to 1) a meeting, 2) a research proposal.
 - specialty listing
 - Names of 1862/1890/1994s into a hat and matchmake to outcomes and/or speed dating.
 - Partnership building grantsmanship workshops
 - Create shared appointments within and across states that have scientists from both institutions at each of the universities
 - Hold meetings at more affordable locations for larger participation or meet at an 1890 or 1994 institution's campus for major meetings.
- **Target collaboration on issues**
 - Targeted meetings focused on joint challenges or common stakeholders
 - Link common interests at grass roots level, not admin.
 - Organize mixed research teams around a given area and provide funds
 - Targeted special collaborative initiatives
 - Think tanks that will connect researchers/expertise with targeted outcomes
 - Identify common goals.
 - Develop statewide or regional joint research programs to include all types of institutions
 - Collaborative projects
- **Funding/grants**
 - Dedicated competitive funding
 - Seed grants to form or strengthen teams between 1862/1890/1994 institutions and facilitation of these partnerships
 - Fund cooperative projects with faculty at other LGU types
 - Create grants in AFRI, NSF, NIH, etc. that requires partnerships with 90 and 94
 - RFAs that require or at least favor collaborations among LGUs

- Funding that not only rewards diverse granting participants, but also highlights different cultural perspectives in presenting research results
- Expand Hatch Multistate type funding to 1890 and 1994 institutions
- National funding programs requiring programs that include all partners
- Dedicated funding for collaborative projects for mixed research teams
- Require collaborations across institutions for more grant sources.
- Shared grants requiring multiple diverse land grant institutions.
- USDA-funded graduate student and post-doc exchange programs
- Financial Benefit should go primarily to the 1890 and 1994 partners, 1862 faculty should be rewarded internally from the effort and time.
- Dedicated competitive 1890 funding for the 1890 LGUs, and dedicated competitive 1994 funding for the 1994 LGUs that is separate from new and existing dedicated competitive funding for all LGUs
- **Expand leadership opportunities**
 - Invite 1890's and 1994's to lead on projects and not just follow
 - Provide funding to 1890s & 1994s to lead the strengthening partnership efforts
 - Allow 1890's to lead programs with 1862s as participants
 - 1890/1994 lead interdisciplinary proposals
 - Due to external funding having a long history of moving extraordinarily slow at some 1890 LGUs, in some instances, take that into consideration when determining which institution will be responsible for managing external financial resources as it relates to 1890/1994/1862 collaborative partnerships
- **Strengthen multi-state opportunities**
 - Create a program that allows for more participation from the 1890s and 1994s in Multistate projects
 - Take better advantage of multistate opportunities
 - Collaborations are personal - invest in more involvement of 1890/1994 in multistate research projects
 - Multistate research projects / research teams
 - Joint multi-disciplinary research initiatives
 - Joint research and extension programming
 - Encourage faculty to include project partners from these universities
- **Cross institution pipeline development**
 - Joint degree programs and grant program collaborations
 - Automatic adjunct faculty appointments with institutions within each state
 - Building partnerships around recruitment of faculty and staff for 1862, 1890 and 1994
 - Share facilities, human and other resources
 - Co-advise students

Addressing Funding Challenges/Disparities across the Three LGU Systems

- **Join together/ collaborate (3) for significant request for all ag research**
 - Joint programs/research projects
 - Collective pipeline directed to UG and MS programs at 1890/1994 institutions leading to PhD program at 1862 so all institutions benefit at their strengths.
 - Collaborate to be unified and make a concerted effort on behalf of all.
 - merge the different institution types to reduce segregation in higher education
 - true long-term partnerships. not one-time funding that encourages last minutes request.
- **Collaborative grant development**
 - public private partnerships
 - grant and project cooperation across 1890/1862/1994
 - Shared grants across diverse institutions with equal sharing of resources.
 - Designated pools of funding (collaborations)
 - develop funding opportunities targeted specifically to joint submissions from the 3 LGU systems focused on developing solutions to meet global challenges
 - Commit to submitting a proposal with at least one other institution AND commit to allowing the minority-serving institution to be the host of the project.
 - set asides in OREI, SCRI and other competitive funding opportunities
 - Partnerships between institutions strengthen research grant applications!
 - funding opportunities that require meaningful roles/budgets for all 3 LGU
 - national initiative stimulating ag research to the level of NIH; all LGU benefit
 - Collaboratively developed research proposals
 - partner across LGU systems to find grants together and foundation support
 - Joint projects/grant programs that require participants from more than one land-grant category: 1862 + 1890 + 1994
 - develop joint grantsmanship workshops and proposal development activities, preferably with accompanying seed funding committed from the institutions
 - build extra power in grants including commodities for partnerships
 - grant subcontracting
 - meaningful participation of 1890s and 1994s with the 1862s, not as add-ons
 - collaborative grants with dedicated funding and long-term partnerships
- **United approach to funding/advocacy**
 - Joint advocacy for more funding
 - All land-grant Universities advocate for equitable funding at the federal level
 - 1890's and 1994's need to have the fully funded match just as the 1862's do.
 - Do the state-based work to ensure equitable match availability
 - Focus on increasing 1890 and 1994 \$ BEFORE 1862 after IDing the goal that works.
 - Joint lobbying to minimize competition amongst institutions

- work with state legislatures and Congress to highlight the benefits of leveraging resources across systems
- Better aligned requests to Congress
- Joint efforts in seeking state matching funding.
- Join forces for advocacy as ONE
- Advocacy for funding increases of underfunded programs
- Willingness of 1862 institutions to equitably share increases in funding (based on need) with 1890 and 1994 institutions
- Expand advocacy efforts
- Expand Capacity Funds - and have student and faculty demographics as part of the formula for allocating dollars
- Local and state representation, federal reps in the corner as well- part of this also means a diverse representation to represent a diverse constituency
- **Share resources**
 - Share AES research stations which some lack.
 - willingness to share resources
 - Share resources
 - Pooling internal funding across different institutions
 - Create opportunities for leveraging

Reaching/Working with Underserved Populations

- **Listen and identify needs first; develop true long-term partnerships**
 - Include multiple members of those populations in advisory groups to set priorities.
 - Collaborate on research projects addressing underserved populations to include a needs assessment.
 - intentional outreach and inclusion in advisory groups
 - match making process to identify underserved populations and their needs, then facilitation process to make connections with LGU that have resources and want to assist
 - Use/revise/enhance/change frameworks to engage underserved populations
 - Firstly, define and identify the populations
 - Working with advocacy groups for underserved populations to identify needs
 - Engage the stakeholders directly in setting the research and outreach agenda
 - Get out more and find stakeholders and address their concerns
 - ID some problems and then sign up to do
 - listen first and be there for long haul.
 - Show genuine interest
 - listen to needs, and create intentional collaborations with clear measures of accountability
 - Underserved populations aren't always overlooked, but not considered in the plan. Be interesting and try hard. Nobody wants to partner with you if you are boring and not in tune with culture!
 - Listen carefully to what your target population says is important to them.
 - identify shared issues (e.g., use of public lands)
 - shared stakeholder communication activities- both to gather input into our programs and delivery of results
 - Include underserved perspectives in interpretation of research results and sharing those perspectives as a way to enhance conversations and include diverse audiences.
 - targeted programs in the poorest counties in each state/ long-term and intentional
- **Understand, respect and build on the strengths of each other**
 - Working with underserved populations with limited resources is what 1890's and 1994's do well. This is a case where 1890s/1994's could lead the conversation
 - Partner with the experts, Extension, especially 1890 Extension
 - Partner with 1862s, 1890s, and 1994s to deliver instructional and research programs in underserved areas/populations
 - Increased collaborations
 - Use Extension partners to reach out across state/region/nation
 - Build on linkages that have already been established

- collaboration with institutions that focus on underserved populations
- identify the best communicators - then build the team who has the scientific expertise to solve issues
- **Strengthen understanding/training around working with underserved audiences**
 - Special training for reaching the underserved
 - Build a greater understanding to learn how to become more effective.
 - reach out to NGOs and other non-university entities (e.g. advocacy groups) to learn best practices in how they engage underserved populations
- **Grow the pipeline of students and faculty from underserved groups**
 - Dual and joint graduate degrees across all LGUs
 - Provide internships for underserved populations.
 - scholarships
 - Summer camps/interns/faculty sabbaticals for underserved groups
 - recruiting employees/students from the targeted underserved population
 - Create shared internships to focus on this area
 - Create programs and funding for teachers in target schools to develop familiarity. Match the faculty to the population
 - Student exchanges/mentoring across diverse institutions.
 - scholarships/ internships - multi-year commitments
 - Hire faculty with this as a major job expectation and hold them to this through T&P process. or create an endowed chair with this expectation
 - Student internships that target underrepresented groups within the state and region - do this as a regional/joint activity rotating across universities or joint effort
 - employing a diverse faculty and staff
- **Purposeful inclusion/ prioritization**
 - Make it a priority, rather than an afterthought.
 - Field days that facilitate bringing in underserved populations
 - Increase the focus on urban populations, food islands, linkage of food with health outcomes.
 - Community service/open classes and community events, schools
 - Better funding for these types of programs

Addendum: Participants provided other rich content to the session through a series of related discussion prompts. These are included below for reference.

Discussion Prompt: How would we (ESS) be better if we truly worked under a banner of Inclusive Excellence?

- Then we will value the opinion of others who train of thought is not of the same cannon (our view), from a traditional way
- ESS would produce more innovative programs and products and of more practical value to a larger number of people in our communities
- We will be able to more freely share our resources and truly bring 1862, 1890, and 1894 institutions together.
- Working under a banner of Inclusive Excellence would yield broader perspectives on existing issues.
- We would be better equipped to approach problems (both internal to the university and external) in more meaningful ways, and ultimately provide solutions that are more robust.
- We need to ask our advisory groups, stakeholder groups, and commodity support groups to better embrace DEI as a relevant system of increasing market share and consumer support.
- build more trust and confidence among ourselves
- Bring a broader set of experiences that would challenge our assumptions of “the way” to solve or approach issues
- also a better set of outcomes for our students and adult learners
- Fresh, more efficient processes across the board that don't follow, "We do it this way because it's how we've always done it."
- It would help to enhance inter-institutional cooperativity
- If we embrace inclusive excellence, we would expand both the diversity of ideas in addressing research questions while also expanding our potential impact.
- reach more people more effectively
- Inclusion of different viewpoints and experiences can spark innovation.
- All voices would be heard and valued, leading to a better working climate, increased productivity, and innovation.
- Examples of best practices or new programs that work at other institutions that could be modeled at our institutions
- Through IE, we would be able to more effectively engage stakeholders whose
- Research questions and answers that address the needs - limitations of all those who live in our borders to ensure safe, food, feed, and fiber
- If we do wonders with one set of eyes, imagine seeing the world from various other set of eyes.
- Reach a broader audience
- It would change the perspectives we all harbor, to open minds to see problems more broadly.

- Chance to hear perspectives you might not consider, or might have misconstrued, and learn issues that are outside your normal thinking.
- Richer experience for all involved.
- Diverse world experiences bring very different ideas on how to approach a problem — both research challenges and institutional challenges.
- We will be able to more freely share our resources and truly bring 1862, 1890, and 1994 institutions together.
- Broadened perspectives and horizons.
- In a changing world, a diversity of ideas will better help us find solutions to new problems that are not predictable with past understanding.
- Provide more role models and motivation to strive for leadership positions for marginalized people.
- Problems which ESS aims to address and respond to impact a diverse group, answering these challenges will require a diverse team
- Inclusive Excellence would provide for stronger, more meaningful and impactful multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional collaborations: leveraging of resources.
- Empowering and welcoming a diverse community of scholars will improve the quality of everything we do, from teaching to the quality of our research questions and solutions.
- Being inclusive doesn't just make us better, it makes us relevant to more people.

Discussion Prompt: What is ONE THING I could change or do this year that would have the greatest positive impact in Inclusive Excellence in 5-10 years?

- Reach out to other institutions that we have not connected with as yet.
- Work on regional strategies with Alton Thompson and ARD Directors
- I will reach out to 1890s and 1994s to recruit my graduate students.
- Network with people who are not just like me. Build my circle with people outside my box.
- Intentional communication and engagement.
- support shared internships
- Focus on audience when developing materials to report data
- be proactive in reaching out to other groups
- Hire faculty members of color and support them with quality start-up packages.
- Incentivize my faculty to collaborate with 1890 universities on research projects
- Be strategic and intentional about inclusivity
- Recruit faculty from 1890 and 1994
- collaborate with 1890s on internships in agriculture fields
- Try to carve out seed funding for new collaborative efforts between our faculty (1862) with 1890 or 1994 partners
- Try to institutionalize the concept of inclusive excellence with faculty and administration and establish a pilot program to foster interactions between ESS 1862 and 1890s.

- I think my "one new idea" is also the answer for this one: Building an advisory committee that will better connect communicators from 1862, 1890 and 1994 institutions so we can benefit from their input and they can benefit from learning about each other, their audiences and their cultures.
- Establish meaningful relationships with other institutional members of the LGU family.
- Reach out to build trust with 1994 institutions
- Helping others (students, high school teachers, Madea, etc.) to understand all that "Agriculture" is. That is the best way to recruit and will lead to positive change in the years to come. [Madea--the person who is raising those students who should major in agriculture, but because of the view of agriculture, these students are majoring in other areas.]
- Facilitate meaningful conversations among minority and majority students for deeper understanding of challenges and opportunities of DEI
- This has been an amazing thinking and reflecting time. THANK YOU!
- Our 1862 HSI has some of the same challenges that our 1890 and 1994 institutions are facing, so I will seek ways to collaborate at a higher level.

Discussion Prompt: What are 2-3 action steps I could take in the next 30 days to advance toward this ONE THING?

- Identify funding opportunities to enable these interactions and collaborations to become a reality.
- I sure would love to think through how the SRDC could help with these ideas.
- Agriculture can be so much more than its historical image, data sciences, gene editing, innovation and entrepreneurship, we need to embrace those traits
- Plan for seed funding for collaboration with 1890 universities
- Talking to everyone I meet about agriculture:
- Flip the narrative that education is the pathway away from Agriculture.
- Pick up the phone and start networking!
- Establish a regular monthly meeting with my counterparts in 1890 and 1994 universities.
- Target faculty from 1890 and 1994 to participate in AFRI grants
- I love the emphasis on conversation...that's where it starts!
- As was mentioned earlier, I will work with Gary Thompson to plan and implement joint programs, proposals with ARD and the Southern region

Respectfully submitted by:

- *Woody Hughes, Jr., Fort Valley State University*
- *Brian Raison, The Ohio State University*
- *Rachel Welborn, Southern Rural Development Center*

Agenda Brief: National Impact Database (NIDB) Committee

Date: February 25, 2021

Presenters: Steve Loring and Karla Trautman (Co-Chairs)

1. **Committee Membership** (as of February 25, 2021): Steve Loring, Karla Trautman, Debby Lewis, German Bollero, Sara Delheimer, Johnnie Westbrook, Faith Peppers, Ron Brown, Rick Rhodes; Ex-officio – Scott Cummings, Bret Hess, Jeff Jacobsen
2. **Meetings:**
 - The NIDB Committee met via teleconference on December 15, 2020.
3. **Accomplishments/Upcoming Plans:**
 - Co-chairs Karla Trautman and Steve Loring reported to the system on January 7, 2021 that the overall quality of impact statements has improved since the committee implemented a review system. During 2020, 383 impact statements were submitted. Of these, 182 were tagged as having COVID-19 related impacts. They also noted that 966 entries have been submitted to the new database platform in the last two years.
 - USDA NIFA’s Director of Communications, Faith Peppers, has reported that the NIDB is an important source of information when USDA administrators (e.g., Secretary, Under Secretary) quickly need high-quality impacts to report. This is especially valuable when showing our institutions have responded (research and Extension programming) to the COVID-19 pandemic. Faculty and communicators should be aware that their reporting efforts are noticed, appreciated, and are used by our federal partners to advocate for our needs.
 - The Writing Team of the NIDB held its 2021 annual meeting virtually on February 3-4, 2021. Communicators from across the system gathered and reviewed almost 400 impact statement submissions from 2020. The 2020 submissions were crafted into 93 products including 74 web stories, 18 fact sheets, and 1 video to be posted on the [NIDB frontpage](#).
 - The NIDB Committee is anticipating the implementation of the strategic marketing and communications roadmap (now called the BAA Roadmap) and a decision on the disposition of the NIDB Committee. Should the NIDB Committee continue as is or evolve into subcommittee of the Communications and Marketing Committee?
4. **Action Requested:** For information only.
5. **Attachments:**
 - a. none

Agenda Item 7.0 NRSP Review Committee (RC)
Presenters: Doug Buhler and Jeff Jacobsen
Action: For Information Only

NRSP-RC Committee Members:

Chair: Doug Buhler (NCRA)	Delegates:
Past Chair: Fred Servello (NERA)	Shirley Hymon-Parker (ARD)
	Mark McGuire (WAAESD)
	Keith Owens (SAAESD)
	Matt Wilson (NERA)
Executive Vice-Chair:	Don Latham (CARET, Stakeholder)
Jeff Jacobsen (NCRA ED)	Tom Bewick (NIFA)
Assistant Director, Ex-officio:	Mike Schmitt (ECOP)
Chris Hamilton (NCRA AD, Recorder)	Bret Hess (WAAESD ED)

Website: <http://escop.info/committee/nrsp-rc/>

The revisions to the NRSP Guidelines were approved in October 2020 and posted to the ESS website at: <http://escop.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/NRSP-GUIDELINES-NRSP-RC-Two-Track-FINAL-20200824.pdf>. As a reminder, a two-track system of NRSPs was created to support and catalyze important research efforts via *Capacity NRSPs* and *Emerging Innovations NRSPs*. In addition, the required changes in NIMSS were made to reflect content and process changes, and evaluation form approaches. Following the votes during the ESS Annual Meeting, FFY21 NRSP (NRSP1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10), Regional (NC 7; NE 9 and 59; S 9; W 6 and 106), and the 2020 Excellence in Multistate Research Award winner (W4001, Washington State University) Off-the-Top budget distributions were communicated to NIFA. This is the terminal year for NRSP6.

At this time, the only anticipated 2021 business for NRSP RC will be the midterm review of NRSP8 the National Animal Genome Research Program. The following year NRSP1 Multistate Research Information Management and Impact Communications Program will be a renewal in the *Capacity* NRSP track.

Agenda Item 7.0 NRSP1 Management Committee
Presenters: Keith Owens and Jeff Jacobsen
Action: For Information Only

NRSP1 Management Committee Members – as of 2/22/2021
Keith Owens (AA; Chair), SAAESD Paula Agudelo, (Incoming Chair), SAAESD Jeff Jacobsen (lead AA), NCRA William Miller (AA), NERA Bret Hess (AA), WAAESD
Chris Hamilton (NIMSS lead), NCRA Rick Rhodes, NERA Gary Thompson, SAAESD David Leibovitz, NERA Cindy Morley, SAAESD Alton Thompson, ARD Julie Estrada (NIMSS User), Purdue University Robin Williams (NIMSS User), Clemson University Lynn Khadiagala (PARS Office), NIFA Liaison Sara Delheimer (ESS Impact Writer), Ex-officio Faith Peppers (NIFA Director of Communications), NIFA Liaison
Email list: nrsp1@escop.info Committee Page: http://escop.info/committee/nrsp-1-management-committee/

The NRSP1 Management Committee last met in-person on September 23, 2019 during the Fall ESS/AES/ARD meeting and workshop in Nashville, TN. Since then, the committee held Zoom meetings on July 15, 2020, and January 8, 2021. In between these two meetings, the committee prepared and shared written quarterly reports on NIMSS and the national impact writing program. All NRSP1 quarterly reports are available on NIMSS at: <https://www.nimss.org/meetings/project/18457>. These reports routinely consist of updates to NIMSS as required and summaries of the impact writing activities. The 2020 summary of the impact writing program is at the end of this Agenda Brief. NRSP1's midterm review in 2020 was favorable and continuation with normal operation was recommended.

Moving forward into 2021, the committee decided to hold virtual meetings every quarter to provide requested additional support and topical guidance to our impact writer, Sara Delheimer. The next NRSP1 meeting is scheduled for April 12, 2021, via Zoom. The summer 2021 Zoom is expected to include a virtual meet and greet and NIMSS updates from our Clemson development team. The NRSP1 team will begin working on its renewal proposal this fall, for submission to the NRSP RC in January 2022. The committee has decided to keep NIMSS and the impact writing program together in this NRSP model for the next renewal as a Capacity NRSP. Finally, Sara has been working with the regional association offices to select multistate projects as recipients of her impact writing training, which will be held virtually in 2021.

Regarding NRSP1 membership, with Steve Loring's retirement (long-term member of NRSP1) WAAESD, Bret Hess will serve as their member. Keith Owens agreed to serve as NRSP1 chair until

his retirement this coming summer 2021. Paula Agudelo from Clemson University volunteered to serve as a SAAESD representative, as well as incoming chair to take over the chair role when acting chair Keith Owens retires this summer. Faith Peppers remained with the NRSP Management Committee as a NIFA Liaison which we are appreciative of her continued engagement.

MRF IMPACTS PROGRAM 2020 ANNUAL REPORT
Prepared by Sara Delheimer

2020 ACTIVITIES & IMPACTS

- Faith Peppers began serving as the MRF Impacts Program's NIFA Liaison in June 2020. Integration with NIFA has helped us tackle important topics with wider reach.
 - We have seen more reach and engagement on social media this year as Faith and NIFA retweeted our content (see Twitter link clicks and retweets in table below).
 - We took advantage of opportunities to feature multistate projects on the NIFA blog, in talking points, etc. Projects featured in 2020 (that we tracked) included:
 - W2009 on [NIFA blog](#)
 - W3147 in *NIFA Update* newsletter
 - W3004 shared in talking points for Secretary and Under Secretary
 - *NOTE: Western Region projects were not shown particular preference; these projects were selected based on topic and impacts. That said, we will make an effort to ensure other regions are featured throughout 2021.*
- Sara delivered all required Impact Writing Workshops.
 - Two workshops were conducted in person in early 2020 before travel restrictions; three workshops were delivered via Zoom (see table below for details).
 - All feedback received through post-workshop surveys and follow-up emails was positive. A majority of respondents increased their knowledge of impact statements and how to write and use them; all respondents indicated plans to change their behavior or take a new action that will improve their impact statements/impact reporting. All respondents were confident in the presenter's (Sara's) knowledge and delivery of the material.
 - We gained some insights about doing virtual workshops and plan to expand on this in 2021 to provide more workshops to more multistate groups.
- We launched Researcher Spotlights to provide a closer, more personal look at multistate research projects.
 - Scientists who participated were excited and appreciative.
 - Our team enjoyed doing the interviews.
 - Researcher Spotlight videos and associated content did well on social media.
 - For example:
 - We gained new followers with each release.
 - Our Researcher Spotlight with Lori Yancura (University of Hawaii, NC1171) had 47 views on YouTube. Q&A clips from the interview had 76 views on

Instagram and 39 likes/shares on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. (As of the time of this report).

- Our spotlight with Dina Fonseca (Rutgers University, NE1443) had 24 views on YouTube. Q&A video clips had 110 views on Instagram and Facebook. Spotlight content was retweeted 15 times. (As of the time of this report).
- Our Researcher Spotlight with Daniel Leskovar (Texas A&M, W3168) were featured in *AgriLife Today* and *The Eagle* (Texas A&M publications).
- These videos helped establish our YouTube channel.
- Sara launched our MRF newsletter as a new way to distribute Impact Statements, Researcher Spotlights, and other content.
 - The newsletter performed on average or higher than peers in our “industry” (see details in table).
- We updated our website to provide a clearer overview of the program and make Impact Statements easier to find.
 - Website visits were up this year, with many stemming from social media links, direct email links, and links on NIFA and Regional AES Association webpages.
- We increased our Social Media Specialist’s hours to 15 hours per week (up from 10 hours per week) in order to allow more time for planning and engaging with content.
 - Sunday created a Linked In account for MRFimpacts, so that users can discover and connect with our team and program description and key resources.
 - Sunday brainstormed and scheduled weekly content for @MRFimpacts on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Linked In; collected quarterly insights on social media performance; and engaged with our followers.
 - Sara created numerous series of graphics to feature multistate projects on social media in conjunction with specific themes, holidays, or trending topics.
- Sara and Faith participated in numerous meetings with opportunities to introduce MRF Impacts and share our resources.
 - In January, Faith and Sara participated in the National Impact Database writing team meeting.
 - Many multistate projects were featured in the impact stories and summaries that were written and shared on the website.
 - Faith attended the National Agricultural Communicators Symposium and promoted MRFimpacts to research and academic faculty.
 - Faith led a focus group conversation on how to improve communications and marketing across the system and was able to highlight MRFimpacts and encourage engagement with our content, particularly social media.
 - In March, Faith attended the AHS/CARET meeting and distributed MRFimpacts postcards for all delegates to include in their packages for Congressional visits.

- In May, we put out a request for contact info for ag research communicators at LGUs. We received contact info from 22 LGU ag research communicators.
 - This list enables us to increase the reach of our social media and Researcher Spotlights through direct contact. Many also signed up for our newsletter.
- During one-on-one meetings with communications directors and Congressional relations directors at land-grant universities, Faith directed them to MRF impacts materials and resources.
- Faith encouraged AFRI and SoAR partners to follow us on social media and sign up for our newsletter.
- In December, Faith and Sara highlighted the MRF Impacts program and resources during two impact writing trainings for the University of Arkansas and Virginia Tech University.

TABLE 1. MRF IMPACTS ANNUAL PROGRESS TRACKER

		2019	2020
Impact Statements	number	11 (including 2 rolled over into 2020)	9 (including 2 rolled over from 2019 and 1 rolled over into 2021)
	projects	NC1200, NE1336, S1054, W2009, NC2169, S1032, NCERA210, NEERA1306, S1056, W3147, NC2040	W3147, NC2040, W3168, NC1171, NE1443, W3004, W4001, NCERA137, W3190
Twitter	impressions	125900	125848
	likes	404	419
	retweets	91	247
	link clicks	128	224
Facebook	reach	4614*	4618
	engagements	840*	476
Instagram	weekly reach	~240**	~300**
Website	users	1729	2763
	time/session	1:49	1:59

Workshops	number	5	5
	projects	W3009, NE1710, S1063, NC2172, W2006***	W3173, NE1731, SER46, NCERA137, NC1193****
Researcher Spotlights	number	N/A	4
	projects	N/A	Ali Missaoui (UGA, NE1710), Lori Yancura (UHawaii, NC1171), Dina Fonseca (Rutgers, NE1443), Daniel Leskovar (TAMU, W3168)
Newsletters	number	N/A	4
	subscribers (at year end)	N/A	70
	open rate (average for year)	N/A	49.40%

** We ran a few promoted (paid) posts in early 2019 that likely affected these numbers; we did not do any paid promotions in 2020, so it's great to see similar number relying on organic reach.*

***Instagram analytics currently do not let us view specific time ranges, making reporting and comparison difficult (for part of the year, we could only see metrics for the previous one-week period; by the end of 2020 we could see metrics for the previous 30-day period).*

****This workshop was originally planned for 2018, but occurred in 2019 due to scheduling issues.*

*****This workshop was done as a special mini virtual "reminder" workshop (it also helped Sara test our remote workshop setup).*

Agenda Item 7.8: NIFA Planning, Accountability, and Reporting Research Working Group

Presenter: Bret Hess

Action Requested: For Information

New Member: Katherine Webb-Martinez, Associate Director, UC ANR, katherine.webb-martinez@ucop.edu

1890 Research Directors -

- Dr. Ami Smith, Associate Vice President & Director Of Gus R. Douglass Land-Grant Institute, West Virginia State University, 304-204-4305, smitham@wvstateu.edu
- Ms. Tracie J. Bishop, Program Manager and REEport Site Administrator, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, 410-651-6383, tjbishop@umes.edu

North Central Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors –

- Dr. Casey Hillmer, Assistant Director for the Wisconsin Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 608-262-2397, casey.hillmer@wisc.edu
- Ms. Lynn Laws, Experiment Station Research Programs Coordinator, Iowa State University, 515-294-4544, lynnlaws@iastate.edu

Northeast Regional Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors –

- Ms. Rubie Mize, Research Coordinator, Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station, 301-405-4049, rgmize@umd.edu
- Dr. John Dieffenbacher-Krall, Assistant Director, Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment Station, 207-581-3211, john.dieffenbacherkrall@maine.edu

Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors –

- Dr. Susan Duncan, Associate Director of Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station, Virginia Tech, 540-231-3724, duncans@vt.edu
- Ms. Cynthia Nichols, Budget Director for AgResearch, University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, 865-974-7122, cnichols@utk.edu

Western Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors –

- Ms. Ellen Yeates, Program Coordinator for REEport and NIMSS, Washington State University, 509-335-9811, eyeates@wsu.edu
- Dr. John Talbott, Associate Director Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station and Director, Sun Grant Western Regional Center, 541-737-2194, John.Talbott@oregonstate.edu

Other Members -

- Ms. Chris Hamilton, NCRA Assistant Director and NIMSS System Administrator, 484-716-7645, christina.hamilton@wisc.edu
- Mr. David Leibovitz, Coordinator, NERA, University of Rhode Island, 401-874-4801, david_leibovitz@uri.edu
- Dr. Bret Hess, Executive Director, WAAESD, University of Nevada, 307-760-3319, bhess@unr.edu

NIFA Research Working Group Notes from 02/23/2021

Launch of the Research Initiation module was placed on pause per a NIFA communication received on February 12, 2021.

The decision was made based upon concerns expressed by LGU partners, including participants of the usability test. However, the project is still moving forward. The contractor is conducting analyses of workflow to ensure the system is ready and viable, especially with the transition of data in REEport. The approach will be to re-examine priorities and gain consensus on what is needed. There will be slight pivot from project initiation while reviewing feedback. The internal team will be evaluating data that LGUs need to capture from the new reporting module while continuing to build and adjusting according to input received. The desire is to have a system that is useful, so expect another round of usability testing. The team is still working under the agile principle. The focus remains on AREERA and the system will be built out from there. It is recommended to be thinking of Hatch and Evans Allen at the POW level, not necessarily at the PD and specific project level. Projects and programs will fill gaps/details in the POW overarching strategies. This approach is in response to the Panel of Experts recommendation to reduce redundancy. The goal is to help assemble the POW with project and programs at the critical issue level. Hence, there is a need for quality inputs at project initiation.

Members of the Working Group have been asked to continue meeting every two weeks until the project is finished. The next meeting was cancelled to give the group time to answer a list of questions about what is needed as the new reporting system is built. Although the NIFA contract with Booz Allen is close to being executed, the new module may not be launched until early May.