**Social Science Subcommittee Virtual Meeting Agenda**

***March 26, 2021 • 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Eastern Time***

*Zoom*

***Attendees:*** *Rebekka Dudensing, Jeremy Falk, Matt Fannin, Curt Friedel, Kristina Hains, Erica Irlbeck, Tim Killian, Kevan Lamm, Becki Lawver, Nina Lyon Bennett, Brian Myers, Travis Park, Mike Retallick, Tracy Rutherford, Corinne Valdivia, Dreamal Worthen, Bret Hess (WAAESD Executive Director and ESCOP Executive Vice Chair) and Saige Zespy (WAAESD Recording Secretary)*

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| **Item** | **Topic** | **Minutes** |
| 1. | Review of 2020 Minutes | Tracy welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting that the agenda is available on Google Docs.  The 2020 meeting was a virtual meeting, and she asked if anyone had any questions/concerns with the minutes. She also noted that there were several group reports that were out for a May 15 deadline. However, it is likely that pandemic derailed many of those, and those action items can be pushed to this year. |
| 2. | Science and Technology Committee Report (Tim Killian) | The Science Technology Committee (STC) meetings were held over the fall and summer. One of the committee's priorities was the Infrastructure Advocacy development.  Similar to SSSC, the STC is interested in how the NIFA move to Kansas City will re-shape priorities, as well as the influence from COVID and the new administration. STC sees the shift as an opportunity to have input into the forward direction of NIFA.  STC is also working on a few white papers for distribution. The white papers support the Ag Infrastructure Request moving forward.  Tracy asked if there is anything SSSC should be doing to contribute to the conversation. Bret explained that the Climate Change topic discussed by Rick Rhodes would be desirable to be fleshed out as a recent and emerging opportunity that will be coming to STC soon. There may be opportunity for SSSC to frame that discussion further, and STC will likely be very interested in learning more and pushing the agenda on climate research.  Corinne suggested that an interdisciplinary process connecting the social and behavioral sciences will help in the processes of understanding climate change. That may be an area to think about. Tim agreed.  Tim asked how it would be best to cross-communicate ideas between STC and SSSC, beyond just taking notes and reiterating discussions. Bret suggested introducing any products created by SSSC that STC can bring forward would be useful. Then the Experiment Station Section (ESS) can move them forward further.  Additionally, Bret noted that it is helpful to also bring forward an ask to help the system pinpoint how much money needs to be infused in specific programs. |
| 3. | Impacts of Social Sciences | Tracy also noted that moving forward, a discussion on Standards of Operation and what the committee can do to move information forward, through the proper format will be useful. Bret added that the window of opportunity shrinks daily, so if something can be converted easily to a white paper, that approach is useful.  Matt asked about timelines for moving programs through the hierarchy, noting that processes can be six to seven years. Today, however, a decade-long policy strategy is no longer applicable, in lights of diametrically opposite political viewpoints. What kind of structure and hierarchical model can be used? Corinne asked for further clarification on the impact pathway from knowledge from SSSC through the system.  Bret noted that there is some talk about changing rules of operation to increase flexibility within the ESS/APLU system to allow committees to address timely topics. First, Bret noted that timely topics should be pushed through. At this point, Tim can push information through the STC (a standing committee of ESCOP). The Committee interacts with the Chair's Advisory Committee and Executive Committee. Items go through leaders of ESCOP for distribution to the system. For funding questions, information moves through ESCOP to the Board on Agriculture Assembly’s Budget & Advocacy Committee for consideration. Then, if defined as high priority, the Policy Board of Directors are asked to approve the priority. That type of process (such as the $11.5 billion infrastructure) made it through the system in 4-6 months. Bret projected the timeline could be shortened for more immediate topics.  For longer range topics, Bret suggested that the USDA Science Blueprint is still the foundational document for priorities, regardless of topics that fluctuate slightly around those priorities. The Science Blueprint will serve as the initial point to build all programs. The USDA Science Blueprint may be considered as a longer term strategy.  Tracy asked about looking at where Social Science Impacts have occurred in USDA funding, particularly in thinking about whether there is enough funding in social sciences to make an impact and communicating that information. Bret noted this ask, including funding increases and accomplishments that can be achieved through such an ask, can be routed through STC, as well as through NIFA leadership via the Regional Executive Directors.  Matt asked about funding and how it fits in program categories, because the social sciences don't necessarily see items like "equipment" defined by their needs. Equipment for social sciences work looks different than farm equipment and equipment used by benchtop scientists.  Tim explained that ERS is also rebuilding. Some of the "equipment" is foundational data for analysis. Matt agreed, noting that the infrastructure investment would go a long way in supporting social and behavioral science efforts, but often restrictions lock out social sciences. "Federal data center shortage areas" are a type of investment that is crucial, particularly since those centers are not centrally located. How can social science research be added to infrastructural plans?  Bret explained that the infrastructure request solicited information from Experiment Station directors on research and teaching facilities. Bret noted that 26% of the $11.5 billion was specifically on teaching space and 15% was on support structures. The Research Facilities Act does allow flexibility in the type of space allocated. Bret suggested putting in the minds of the Experiment Station directors concerns from Brian, who noted that social science researchers don't have AES appointments, asking what can be done to increase that capacity, which would in turn address needs in project proposals. Emphasizing social science is extremely important to the future to Experiment Station directors.  Tracy noted that other action items in the agenda all fit under the contributions of social and behavioral sciences, particularly looking at the impact assessment. The April 22 deadline might be overly ambitious, but it may be possible to develop a one- to two-pager to think about how is infrastructure defined in social sciences to move that quickly through with the infrastructure request. If SSSC can define those gaps as they impact social and behavioral sciences, they may be able to influence the infrastructure bill, which is a five-year approach. Bret noted that the information will be necessary in the next few weeks. Additionally, it would be helpful if the return on investment into the future on ag research and development or an ROI by investing in social and behavioral sciences infrastructure can be identified.  Rebekka noted that there is information on the returns from research stations and research, but actual ROI in social sciences is muddy. Corinne noted that George Norton did a lot of research in the area. She explained that, if the science is developed and it is not adopted, there is a huge loss. The role of the translational process (work of social sciences) is critical for research to contribute to decision making.  Kristina asked if ROI is related to the translation to hard science, and Bret noted that congressional members have specifically asked about ROI. Bret suggested developing a one- or two-pager and using examples of past data (even at the program level), and then possibly posing these questions.  Matt continued, market return in dollars, but non-market returns are also important. Sometimes they are very difficult to measure, and they may not transition to the decision-maker mindset. Many impacts are non-market-based, which can fall on deaf ears. Matt also challenged the committee to organize to communicate more effectively to decision-makers. Bret noted it is important to also point out realities of the field.  Corinne noted that the science and change of behaviors is important on the bigger scale. She suggested educating on impact to people, rather than just value in dollars.  Kevan suggested following up with the article [Measuring the Aggregated Public Value of Extension](https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/joe/vol58/iss6/6/). Kevan noted the manuscript is a starting point and it addresses some of the challenges.  Rebekka and Brian also noted that social sciences have value both on their own, but also in collaboration with counterparts in biological/physical sciences.  Kristina asked about the deadline. Tracy noted that the sooner the better will be important to influence the infrastructure effort. She suggested four weeks, rather than six. Kristina suggested a June/July timeline to get something to STC.  Kevan volunteered to be part of a team to develop a one-pager. Kristina volunteered to help facilitate the process. Corinne noted her short-term is really difficult, but she has some literature that can be referenced to help with justification. Matt and Rebekka noted they can contribute, as well, but not immediately. Tim noted that, in presenting the work, he should also participate so he can present the work to STC. Bret suggested that Tim prime the STC prior to the July paper presentation.  Kristina suggested a June 1 deadline. The team of five will move forward a white paper.  Bret further mentioned that, even if it doesn't come out in an infrastructure bill, the next step is to change authorization language in the Farm Bill, so these efforts have application beyond just the infrastructure bill. |
| 4. | Expansion on 2012 Gap Analysis | Mike noted that almost a decade ago, a gap analysis of RFPs identified gaps and challenges observed by social scientists. The analysis showed problems, and Mike believes some of these definitions (equipment, etc.) is another gap. Additionally, a chief scientist in social sciences may be another gap. He noted, however, that because of their past work, there is potential for impact to positively influence the way social science is woven into proposals in the future.  Peter also suggested revisiting the stakeholder feedback document from the 2012 gap analysis, so Tracy suggested that may be a piece to take a look at, then looking at the next gap analysis piece, as a follow up to the 2012 document. She asked for volunteers to take a look at this piece. Tracy will send the request to the broader group who were unable to attend.  Bret suggested that the next gap analysis could include some of the immediate priorities of the administration (climate change, economic recovery, COVID recovery, rural revitalization, and diversity, equity & inclusion) as part of the vision for the immediate future. |
| 5. | Rules of Operation | Tracy noted that the SSSC should revisit the topic of Rules of Operation. The conversation first began in May 2020, but it is imperative to do that in 2021 as the committee grows. She noted it is a good time to create the Rules of Operations and post them, along with updating information.  Mike had volunteered last May, and his tenure on the committee makes him an ideal candidate. Mike agreed to work with a committee to wrangle the topic. Becki agreed to help Mike.  Tracy pulled SOPs from other committees as a reference point. Mike also found another document that is a start.  Bret noted he is more than happy to provide insights to sub-committees. |
| 6. | Nominations and Suggestions to Fill Vacancies | Tracy noted there are vacancies in committee positions that should be fleshed out. She suggested reaching out to regional directors. She noted that the Northeast seems to be an area where they don't have representation.  The following positions are vacant currently:  - Ag Communications (Northeast & 1890 ARD)  - Ag Economics (Northeast)  - Ag Education (South)  - Human Sciences (Northeast, West, and At Large)  - Rural Sociology (Northeast & West)  - Ag Leadership (1890 ARD)  Bret suggested working with ARD Executive Director Alton Thompson to ask for potential names, as well as his fellow ED for Extension. Mike noted that the ARD Board prefer to work through their processes and Alton, rather than reaching out to specific individuals.  Bret also suggested putting a call out to Rick Rhodes for the open positions in the Northeast. He emphasized that Regional Directors are a great place to start.  Bret suggested that recommendations from current members of SSSc are also welcome.  Rebekka noted that she will be rotating off this year, but had a few suggestions to serve as her replacement. She will send those names to Tracy.  Nina suggested Dr. Tracy Dunbar, an ag economist at UAPB.  Corrine will email names for rural sociologists in the Northeast to Tracy. She also had a recommendation for human sciences, but she wanted to understand exactly what that entails. Nina said, human sciences represents (for some campuses) human ecology, family and consumer science, human development, family development, nutrition, dietetics, fashion merchandising, tourism and hospitality management. She suggested food science and textiles may also fall in the area. Nina added it is multi-disciplinary. Each institution varies slightly.  Brian Myers suggested Christopher Stripling at U of Tennessee as a potential good addition to the Committee.  Tracy noted that Rebekka is the only one scheduled to rotate off in 2021, but those folks who were scheduled to rotate off in 2020 will also leave this year, unless they desire to stay. |
| 7. | 2022 Meeting Dates | Tracy noted that, in 2022, leadership has suggested that it may be a good time to make a trip to Kansas City to build additional connections.  Tracy also noted that it may also be possible to meet with the Southern Association of Ag Scientists. That group will meet in Dallas in 2024.  Kristina asked whether the government individuals at NIFA are in Kansas City or in DC. Bret noted that Bill Hoffman is in DC, while the others are in Kansas City. |
| 8. | Website Updates | Tracy noted that, prior to 2022, all the information on the website should be updated, complete with all the meeting information. Bret suggested not putting the videos on the site, but suggested that the slide decks should be uploaded online. |

**Action Items:**

* Develop a one-pager on the value of social sciences by June 1 to present to the Science and Technology Committee. (Kristina, Kevan, Corinne, Matt, Rebekka, Curt, Tim)
* Look at the 2012 Gap Analysis to format a next gap analysis piece. Send out to the broader group to participate in the effort. (Tracy)
* Begin to develop Rules of Operation. (Mike, Becki)
* Provide suggestions for vacancies on the committee. (All)
  + Send a list of those people rotating off in 2021. (Tracy)
* Update the website and resources prior to meeting in 2022. (Bret and Tracy)