



## **501(c)(3) Board of Directors meeting notes (03/11/2025)**

### **Quick recap**

The Board discussed the financial stability of the organization and the potential for consolidating funds into the Chase checking account. Proposals for website maintenance were reviewed and a firm was selected. Further discussion entailed the process of soliciting proposals for a strategic communications plan. Lastly, the Board discussed the potential risks and challenges of using a 501(c)(3) organization as a conference service provider for multistate committees and the need for a test case to understand how this approach works.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Treasurer Rhodes reported that the organization is financially stable, with a current cash balance of \$29,000. He discussed the annual transfer of funds from the TD Wealth account to a Chase account, which will be invoiced to APLU. Rick also mentioned the initiation of tax filing for 2024 and the pending transfer of \$20,000 for website work. He noted that the final tally on carryover is still pending. Rick also highlighted the challenges they faced with TD Bank, which required a transfer from the TD Wealth account to another TD account.

Rick also expressed concerns about the peculiar business practices at the APLU and suggested that they could be improved. Rick presented a detailed invoice from the APLU to the TD Wealth account, explaining the process and the need for documentation. Jeanette highlighted the time-consuming nature of the process. Jeanette suggested agInnovation open their own TD Wealth account, which Rick agreed could be possible. Rick added that agInnovation is not a signatory on the TD Wealth account. The Board then discussed the potential to change signatories due to Mark Becker's departure.

Rick proposed to explore the possibility of consolidating the organization's funds into a Chase account, managed by the organization itself, to simplify the process of transferring funds. The group agreed to this proposal, with Rick taking the lead to initiate discussions with Chase and APLU. The aim is to ease the burden of management by APLU and to have more control over the funds. The next steps include Rick discussing the proposal with APLU and then sharing the details with the group.

### **Board Roles**

The Board then moved on to discuss the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Directors and the Finance Committee, with Bret explaining the standard operating procedure document. The Board further discussed streamlining processes and balancing responsibilities between the Board and the chair. They agreed on the roles and responsibilities outlined in the standard procedures document, with the Board President being the one to execute contracts on behalf of the organization.

## **Website Maintenance Proposals**

Jeanette requested an overview of the proposals. Bret provided the following information about the two proposals. The Summit View Communications proposal included an initial brand review costing \$5,000, with bi-monthly website review and recommendations costing \$1,200 to \$1,800. The proposal also included an additional \$1,500 for annual reports. The overall cost was in the \$20,000 range, with an additional \$150 per hour for any updates outside the proposed scope. The other proposal was by Pivot Creative and Consulting. Bret explained that the proposal submitted by Pivot was for regular website review and content refresh. The cost was estimated at \$400 per month or \$4,800 per year for the base review and regular reporting, with an additional \$200 per hour for any significant updates. He concluded by stating that the key differences between the two proposals was that one offered to re-evaluate our brand and was more expensive. Steve and Jeanette agreed that the proposal by Pivot Creative and Consulting was reasonable, given Pivot's understanding of the company's ethos and culture. Rick also expressed his approval, citing Pivot's previous work for the Northeast Regional Aquaculture Center. The Board unanimously agreed to proceed with entering a contract with Pivot Creative and Consulting.

## **Strategic Communications Plan Proposal Process**

The Board discussed the ongoing process of soliciting proposals for a strategic communications plan. Gary had already interviewed a few firms and sent out a request for proposals (RFP) to some firms. The Board approved a document outlining the scope of the project and the budget, which was set at \$50,000 for agInnovation's share. Jeanette raised a question about including the dollar amount in the document, but Bret clarified that the \$50,000 had already been approved by the Finance Committee and was included in the budget approved by the membership. Steve also noted that the membership agreed to a commitment of \$50,000. Should the project's cost exceed this amount, it might require a special budget referendum.

The Board also discussed the importance of selecting the right communications group for the project and explored options for entering a contract with a firm. Jeanette mentioned the formation of a governing committee with representatives from agInnovation, ECOP, and ACOP to review bids and make recommendations. Rick suggested two options for handling the contract: either the Extension Foundation or agInnovation could serve as the signatory, or both could be co-signatories.

## **Conference Services for Multistate Committees**

Bret inquired about the possibility of offering conference services to multistate committees, potentially charging a fee for the service. Concerns were raised about liability and the need to ensure that agInnovation's bases are covered. There specific issue at hand was related to risks of being financially responsible with economic or travel-related uncertainties. It was agreed to hold off on this approach and instead, Bret will provide the multistate committee with the contact information of a firm that provides such services.

The Board then discussed the need for a test case to understand how contracting for events works. Rick suggested that the regional associations should use the 501(c)(3) as a conference service provider first to establish a set of business practices. Relatedly, the Board approved a motion to consolidate expenses and use a single subscription for various platforms across all regional offices, aiming to increase efficiency and reduce business transactions.

### **Specific Actions**

- Rick to visit local Chase branch and initiate conversation about transferring TD Wealth account funds to a Chase account.
- Rick to share findings from Chase conversation with the group and then initiate discussion with APLU about closing TD Wealth account.
- Bret to reach out to Erica with Pivot Creative and Consulting to enter into a contract for website review services.
- Gary and Steve to move forward with issuing the RFA for the communications firm to develop a strategy for communicating the roadmap.
- Bret to send the multistate committee contact information for a contractor that provides conference services.