agInnovation Budget and Legislative Committee (BLC)/ http://escop.info/committee/blc/
April 22, 2025, Agenda – MEMBERS ONLY and LBA; 3 pm CT/4 pm ET/2 pm MST Call NOTES

Committee Members:

Chair: Steve Lommel (agInnovation South)

Past Chair: Anton Bekkerman (agInnovation NE)

Incoming Chair: Gary Pierzynski (agInnovation NC)

Members:

Alton Thompson (ARD) Ulises Toledo (ARD)

Derek McLean (agInnovation NC)
Wendie Cohick (agInnovation NE)
Scott Senseman (agInnovation South)
Sreekala Bajwa (agInnovation West)
Shawn Donkin (agInnovation West)

Liaisons:

Lisa Townson (Extension)*
Bob Mattive (CARET)
Doug Steele (APLU FANR)

Elizabeth Stulberg (Lewis-Burke, Advocacy)

Gary Mayo (NIFA) Kevin Cain (BVM) Laura Jolly (BHHS)

Executive Vice-Chair

Jeanette Thurston (agInnovation North Central, ED) Chris Hamilton (agInnovation North Central, AD)

*Bill Hoffman provides support for Lisa Townson

<u>Attendees:</u> Dominique Carter (LBA), Gary Pierzynski, Derek McLean, Alton Thompson, Jose Toledo, Wendie Cohick, Sreekala Bajwa, Christina Laridaen (LBA), Bret Hess, Bob Mattive, Shawn Donkin, Scott Senseman, Anton Bekkerman, Jeanette Thurston, Christina Hamilton (recorder)

Fathom AI recording: https://fathom.video/share/R5D7QuFxTLZm8YT3xx7BaYsZctfBuxKZ

Meeting Agenda and Notes:

- 1. Welcome and Introductions-Gary Pierzynski, Incoming BLC Chair (5 min)
 - Gary chaired the meeting in place of Steve Lommel who was unable to join.
 - Gary then introduced Dominique Carter (LBA) and then led introductions around the Zoom room.
- 2. Washington, DC Update- Dominique Carter, LBA (15 min)
 - Make America Healthy Again (MAHA): Dominique provided brief background information and recent actions around on the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) Commission to reduce ultra processed foods to improve children's health/fight chronic disease.
 - MAHA Commission Focus: Emphasis on regulatory actions, agricultural innovation, and transparent supply chains.
 - RFK Jr. advised against food-related actions initially.
 - Callie Means is leading the development of a report to be released in May with opportunity for public comment.
 - Proposed \$500M fund for initiatives highlights "farmer first" grants approach, details
 of which are unknown at this time.
 - Budget Cuts Impact:

- Leaked HHS budget proposal would cut NIH by 42%, CDC by 44%, and eliminate several NIH institutional centers
- Proposal would move ARPA-H and combine it with BARDA into a new Health Innovation Agency
- OMB is planning to release a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) on F&A (facilities and administration) costs. A federal court issued a permanent injunction on Trump's proposed 15% cap at NIH on April 4 and a potential 15% cap on F&A would be devastating to universities.
- Kevin Droegemeier has assembled a group from the research community to address F&A rate issues. Reminder: USDA already has a flat F&A rate of 30%, so the proposed 15% cap would affect other agencies
- Dominique will investigate the legal process of injunctions vs. suits regarding OMB rulings and report back.
- USDA-NIFA Updates & Farm Bill Status Christina Laridaen, LBA:
 - Significant staff turnover at USDA as many have been transferred or accepted the deferred retirement option.
 - Discussion about USDA potentially closing DC headquarters and moving to three centers across the country.
 - Everything at NIFA is currently on hold or under review
 - NIFA funding levels expected to remain flat under the 2024 continuing resolution
 - o Potential changes to topic areas within NIFA solicitations, but not funding levels
 - Farm Bill is stalled with little movement due to reconciliation and spending cut requirements; Ag Committee staff open to tweaks but limited by budget constraints
 - From chat: Newly appointed Director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture stopped by the studio! Hamby stated that priorities for NIFA will align with Sec: 1) farmers--"Farmer first" 2) biosecurity 3) rural community prosperity
- 3. Follow-up Discussion: Continue exploring March BLC topics that were not addressed
 - 2 suggested BLC Actions in Response to USDA and Other Federal Research Funding Developments
 - BLC oversight of New Administration Impacts Document (sent with call invite and pasted below):
 - The group discussed a document compiled by the North Central region that tracks the impacts of recent federal actions and executive orders on agricultural research and innovation.
 - There was consensus that the BLC should take the lead on maintaining and updating this document, with Jeanette Thurston volunteering to spearhead the effort could be collected via Google doc for all to see/add to, with updated formal document every 2-3 weeks. Currently it contains only impacts that are publicly available through news sources. The group also suggested aligning this work with the VPR group under APLU and potentially involving Extension partners.
 - Also important to hear from farmers and ranchers (constituents) to influence policymakers more than just how it's affecting universities.
 - The group identified the need to distill the key priorities and impacts into a concise "leave behind" document that Steve Lommel can use in upcoming meetings with NIFA leadership (Dr. Hamby, new NIFA director).
 - Proposed BLC-Sponsored agInnovation All-Member Meeting:

- There was also discussion about the BLC potentially taking the lead on organizing regular national meetings of agInnovation Directors to share updates, best practices, and coordinate advocacy efforts. Steve has written an op-ed that could be discussed in these meetings and ECOP is holding similar sessions.
- It was proposed that a first meeting occur in May.
- The group decided by consensus that this meeting would be useful and BLC should lead it.
- Other actions BLC should be engaged in? None identified at this time.

4. Other business as time allows.

• Next meeting date: May 27, 2025, 3 pm CT/4 pm ET (Members and liaisons)

Summary of the Broad Impacts of Recent Executive Orders and Administrative Actions on Food, Agriculture, Nutrition, and Natural Resources Research April 1, 2025

This summary includes some of the broad impacts of recent Executive Orders and administrative actions on research at Land-Grant Universities (LGUs) and other institutions. Rather than evaluating individual states or institutions, it highlights overarching trends and challenges faced by those dedicated to addressing global food, nutrition, agriculture, and natural resource issues.

Recent actions by the Trump administration have placed significant financial and operational uncertainty and strain on research institutions, leading to anticipated faculty and staff layoffs due to funding reductions and terminations. Uncertainty surrounding research funding, programmatic priorities, and related policies has constrained faculty hiring, graduate student admissions, and overall institutional stability, generating widespread concern across campuses and communities.

The erosion of scientific expertise and key collaborations weakens the ability to address critical food, agricultural, nutrition, and natural resource challenges—ultimately impacting the nation's agricultural productivity, profitability, and environmental and public health. Additionally, new administrative directives have introduced inefficiencies by increasing compliance burdens. Further complicating matters, social media activity—both personal and institutional—has triggered reputational risks, necessitating administrative intervention to mitigate fallout and protect faculty and institutional integrity.

<u>Immediate and Potential Long-Term Impact Examples</u>

Stop Work Orders for USAID Feed the Future Labs & Institutional Financial Strain

- USAID Feed the Future Labs operate worldwide to strengthen and stabilize food systems, which in turn
 contribute to regional stability and global security—including that of the United States. These programs
 not only enhance food security but also expand market opportunities for U.S. producers and support
 diplomatic efforts by fostering stronger partnerships with global allies.
- Significant returns have been made on this small investment, in one report, up to \$8.52 of benefits for farmers and consumers in low- and middle-income countries for every\$1 of cost to U.S. taxpayers, as well as human health and environmental benefits.
- At least 17 institutions lead USAID Feed the Future Labs and many others participate as collaborators.
 Loss from these important projects varies per institution, ranging from a few million to well over \$50 M.
- The loss of USAID Feed the Future Lab funding has created significant financial challenges for many institutions. Many universities have been covering salaries for project leaders and staff in hopes of funding restoration. Some institutions are facing costs in the hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars to maintain faculty and staff hired for these projects. Unfortunately, if funding is not restored, some of these individuals will be laid off this spring. Furthermore, it is uncertain whether all expenses will be fully reimbursed for all expenses incurred for these projects.
- The timing and communication of the new administration's decisions have created significant financial risks for institutions. Uncertainty surrounding initial executive orders, stop-work orders, and delayed final project termination notices has led to both false hope that projects might continue and increased financial burdens. Many institutions face additional costs due to Human Resources policies requiring a 30- or 60-day employment period after a position is terminated, creating salary liabilities. Furthermore, the ability to seek reimbursement for these costs from terminated projects remains uncertain, adding to the financial strain.

Critical research is being delayed and terminated. Research conducted by these labs is critical for food systems and the health and well-being of people across the world and for our own national security. Research included: developing practices and technologies to sustainably produce food across Africa, food safety in Africa and Southeast Asia, reducing post-harvest losses in stored crops, increasing water management and use efficiency, and improving policy and influencing policy change for sustainable and accessible agrifood systems. Research conducted directly benefits US agriculture and the people of this country, through expanded global markets for US grown commodities, access to novel genetics that facilitate crop breeding, and development of technologies that are also directly applicable to US agriculture.

Loss of ARS, USGS, USFS, NRCS, and USFWS Scientists & Disruptions to Collaborative Research

- The loss of federal scientists from, for example, Agricultural Research Service (ARS), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service scientists (USFWS), postdocs and research technicians has disrupted ongoing research programs and partnerships across multiple states. While some of these scientists have been called back to their agencies, research programs have been disrupted and there is an ongoing uncertainty of their future in their reinstated federal positions.
- Many of these individuals are key collaborators on ongoing funded projects led by university investigators and loss of staff impact ongoing research in a broader context.
- Many of these scientists mentor students, provide hands-on training in their labs, and play essential roles on graduate student committees. Their loss would significantly affect the development of the next generation of scientists.
- Some of these scientists have very specific expertise that is not easily replaced and are leading longterm projects that are now at risk.
- Some of these positions are co-funded by universities, resulting in unnecessary research disruptions and possible loss of critical expertise.
- At many institutions, USDA ARS and LGU researchers share research space within joint facilities. While USDA ARS is responsible for its portion of these facility costs, the current funding pause has delayed payments to some institutions. As a result, despite signed leases, institutions are having to cover the unpaid costs on behalf of USDA ARS.
- ARS Non-Assistance Cooperative Agreements (NACAs) are established at many institutions to provide financial support for collaborative research, including funding for graduate students. The current funding pause is jeopardizing these collaborations. During this pause, institutions are covering USDArelated costs to ensure students remain supported and their degree programs are not disrupted.

Cancellations & Pauses of Previously Funded Projects

Projects funded under the previous administration—particularly those incorporating Diversity, Equity,
Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) or climate research, as previously required—have been terminated or
put on hold. These grants, awarded by the U.S. EPA, USDA NIFA, and USDA NRCS, are now at risk,
disrupting research and program continuity.

- Grants have been terminated because the word "diversity" appeared in the title, despite these projects not being explicitly DEIA-focused. Even grants using the term "biodiversity" have been flagged for review/pause.
- 1890 LGU institutions have been told that letters will be going to each institution's AOR, Director or Administrator to request changes to capacity program-funded projects that do not comply with the DEI EO. A brief pause in funding of these programs occurred for a couple of 1890 institutions (in the southern region). All institutions are expected to respond quickly to the USDA's requirements to maintain funding from these programs.
- Pausing certain grants will result in the loss of an entire year of field research. Missing a full season of work not only increases grant costs—such as extending salary support for an additional year—but also causes significant setbacks for graduate students and postdoctoral researchers, delaying their career progress.
- Publicity of grants singled out in these areas is leaving investigators involved subject to potential public scrutiny and doxxing and additional steps are being taken to protect faculty who competed for and won projects sponsored by the federal government under the previous administration.

o Financial Uncertainty & Institutional Responses

- Universities are preparing for potential additional funding reductions, including a proposed decrease in indirect costs (IDC) for NIH grants, which could lead to losses ranging from tens to hundreds of millions of dollars.
- o As a result, institutions are implementing cost-control measures, such as:
 - Limiting travel for faculty and administrators, reducing opportunities for professional development, scientific collaboration, and relationship-building essential to food, agriculture, and natural resources research.
 - Exercising caution in admitting graduate students to ensure financial sustainability and continued support for current students.
 - Delaying or pausing hiring of new faculty, staff, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers.
- o Many faculty have not yet received noncompeting renewals of previously funded grants, creating significant financial risk and uncertainty for affected faculty and institutions and hampering productivity on funded projects.
- Delays in research program funding will disrupt time-sensitive activities, such as scientific conferences, which may be missed due to lack of funding and uncertainty about when programs will resume.
- The lack of information on USDA programs, particularly those administered by NIFA, has raised concerns about the future of agricultural research and the national research agenda. With the NIFA grants portal unavailable and applications not being accepted, uncertainty continues to grow. At a minimum, a clear timeline for when program operations will resume is needed.
- o Pausing expenditures on grants set up to be reimbursable awards has forced universities to burden the cost of funding graduate students at various stages of degree completion.

 During funding pauses for USDA or other federal agency reviews, support for faculty, staff, and students under previously approved grants is also suspended. University administrators are then faced with the challenge of securing alternative funding to bridge these gaps. With a growing number of grants being paused or terminated, the financial burden on institutions can be substantial.

Impact on Early-Career Faculty & the Future Scientific Workforce

- Early-career faculty who rely on external research grants for tenure and promotion face heightened uncertainty. The funding pause and potential decline in research funding have raised significant concerns about their opportunities for career advancement and long-term prospects.
- Institutions have either paused or are cautiously accepting graduate students and postdocs due to funding uncertainty.
- Reduced research funding and a perceived deprioritization of science and innovation are discouraging students and prospective students from pursuing research careers, exacerbating workforce challenges.

Broader Consequences for Advancing Agricultural and Natural Resources Research & Innovation

 Decreased federal funding for food, agriculture and natural resources research may result in the loss of critical scientific expertise, limiting universities' ability to address urgent societal challenges within our states and across our regions, threatening food security, biosecurity, human health and ultimately national security.

Administrative Challenges, Compliance Burdens & Other Impacts

- Recent changes to federal grant policies, including new gender name requirements, have led to additional Institutional Review Board (IRB) approvals, increasing inefficiencies and delays of critical research efforts.
- During funding pauses for USDA or other federal agency reviews, support for faculty, staff, and students under previously approved grants is also suspended. University administrators are then faced with the challenge of securing alternative funding to bridge these gaps. With a growing number of grants being paused or terminated, the financial burden on institutions can be substantial.
- o For one terminated award, a disparaging social media post from the new administration announced the cancellation of a DEIA-focused grant—along with details about the researcher—and triggered significant repercussions. The affected institutions and the funding agency (USDA NIFA) had to spend time removing publicly available research summaries from the agency's website. Beyond the administrative burden, the post also had personal consequences for those targeted, including emotional distress, the deletion of social media accounts, and further fallout from public reactions.

Related Resources

USAID Impacts

- Young Scientists See Career Pathways Vanish as Schools Adapt to Federal Funding Cuts
- <u>Labor groups sue to halt Trump admin's dismantling of USAID as workforce is expected to be slashed to under 300</u>

- https://www.linkedin.com/posts/mhartt-usaid-announces-sweeping-moves-to-sideline-activity-7292838083794780160-eibg
- https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/06/politics/labor-groups-sue-trump-usaid/index.html
- https://kansasreflector.com/2025/02/15/usaid-shutdown-would-halt-research-grants-to-state-universities/
- https://www.dtnpf.com/agriculture/web/ag/crops/article/2025/02/12/soybean-research-projects-shutting
- https://www.chronicle.com/article/trump-plans-to-shutter-usaid-heres-what-that-could-mean-for-higher-ed/
- Costs, Benefits, and Welfare Implications of USAID Investment in Agricultural Research through U.S. Universities | Journal of Agricultural and Applied Economics | Cambridge Core

Science Advancement Impacts

- White House Budget Office Orders Pause in All Federal Loans and Grants
- What Trump's Funding Freeze Could Mean for Universities, Nonprofits and More
- Is your research on Trump's spending hit list? | Science | AAAS
- As data goes off-line under Trump, researchers upload backups
- https://www.science.org/content/article/exclusive-nsf-starts-vetting-all-grants-comply-trump-sorders
- https://www.wsj.com/us-news/education/trump-dei-ban-federal-funding-higher-education-8ae81c40
- https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/science-research-policy/2025/02/03/howtrumps-executive-orders-are-disrupting
- https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/science-research-policy/2025/02/03/how-trumps-executive-orders-are-disrupting
- https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-00365-z
- https://www.reddit.com/r/skeptic/comments/1iiq0tc/as nih grant reviews resume nsf hunts for flagged/
- https://www.linkedin.com/posts/natali-helberger-2473901 here-are-the-words-putting-science-in-the-activity-7294672310794420227-zosT
- https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-00367-x
- https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/11/politics/trump-chips-contracts/index.html
- https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2025/02/trump-science-data-gender-dei/681698/
- CHIPS Act: What changes could mean for AI growth, consumers | AP News
- https://www.ft.com/content/e5ae9e28-3823-4429-a144-af70c38f4bcb
- https://www.reuters.com/world/former-us-security-officials-say-funding-federal-science-researchcritical-race-2025-02-25/
- https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-00562-w
- https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/science-research-policy/2025/03/12/usda-freezes-federal-funding-maine-university
- https://www.wsj.com/articles/bioscience-funding-confusion-threatens-u-s-innovation-ab0efc30
- https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-00827-4

- https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/mar/19/epa-fire-scientists-staff-environmentalprotection-agency-remove-research-office
- https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-025-00827-4
- https://www.insidehighered.com/news/quick-takes/2025/03/20/trump-admin-questions-canadian-australian-researchers
- https://www.wilx.com/2025/03/25/msu-president-releases-letter-federal-research-funding-shakeups/
- These US labs risk imminent closure after Trump cuts

Workforce Impacts

- Young Scientists See Career Pathways Vanish as Schools Adapt to Federal Funding Cuts
- U.S. early-career researchers struggling amid chaos | Science | AAAS
- Early career scientists in Rhode Island consider leaving the U.S. | WBUR News
- Postdocs and PhD students hit hard by Trump's crackdown on science
- https://www.politico.com/news/2025/02/04/science-funding-agency-layoffs-threat-00202426
- https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2025/02/grad-school-admissions-trump-cuts/681848/
- https://www.chronicle.com/article/this-years-ph-d-admissions-cycle-is-leaving-students-in-the-lurch
- https://www.science.org/content/article/nsf-downsizes-summer-research-program-undergraduates
- https://federalnewsnetwork.com/workforce/2025/02/trump-administration-tells-agencies-to-begin-conducting-reductions-in-force/
- https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/science-research-policy/2025/03/03/researchers-remain-limbo-trump-battles-courts
- https://www.npr.org/2025/03/12/nx-s1-5324496/universities-hiring-freezes-federal-funding
- https://apnews.com/young-scientists-see-career-pathways-vanish-as-schools-adapt-to-federal-funding-cuts-000001959e23d0e3addddf3fa7cc0000
- Source: At least 28 NBAF employees fired as part of USDA's cuts | News | themercury.com
- Axed once, USDA employees anxiously await potentially being fired again Investigate Midwest
- USDA ordered to reinstate nearly 6000 fired workers | Science | AAAS
- Many USDA researchers working in the Northwest are fired, worked on everything from hops to potatoes OPB
- USDA Layoffs Derail Projects Benefiting American Farmers | WIRED
- And Just Like That: Eight Fired USDA Wine Grape Scientists Back on the Job After Terminations
 Rescinded
- USDA says it accidentally fired officials working on bird flu and is trying to rehire them
- <u>USDA scientists terminated from Cereal Disease Lab in St. Paul | MPR News</u>
- Nearly 6,000 USDA workers fired by Trump to get jobs back, MSPB rules: NPR
- Mass firings decimate U.S. science agencies | Science | AAAS
- Postdocs and PhD students hit hard by Trump's crackdown on science
- Trump's upheavals worry job-hunting postdoctoral researchers
- US Scientists Grapple With the Growing Impacts of Trump's Cuts Bloomberg
- U.S. early-career researchers struggling amid chaos | Science | AAAS
- Early career scientists in Rhode Island consider leaving the U.S. | WBUR News
- Young Scientists See Career Pathways Vanish as Schools Adapt to Federal Funding Cuts

- Universities freeze hiring over federal funding concerns: NPR
- https://apnews.com/young-scientists-see-career-pathways-vanish-as-schools-adapt-to-federal-funding-cuts-000001959e23d0e3addddf3fa7cc0000
- These US labs risk imminent closure after Trump cuts

Financial Uncertainty Impacts

- https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/mar/26/universities-columbia-trump
- https://www.redwingportauthority.org/news-and-media/p/item/61569/with-federal-money-at-risk-minnesotas-public-colleges-stress-high-stakes-of-state-budget-debate
- https://www.npr.org/2025/02/12/nx-s1-5292359/what-cuts-to-nih-funding-could-mean-for-american-universities
- Colleges Take Financial Precautions Amid Uncertainty From Trump Administration
- https://www.pinejournal.com/news/minnesota/with-federal-money-at-risk-minnesotas-public-colleges-stress-high-stakes-of-state-budget-debate
- https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/science-research-policy/2025/03/12/usdafreezes-federal-funding-maine-university
- https://www.pressherald.com/2025/03/12/usda-reverses-decision-to-pause-funding-to-umainesystem/
- https://www.npr.org/2025/03/12/nx-s1-5324496/universities-hiring-freezes-federal-funding
- Universities freeze hiring over federal funding concerns: NPR
- https://www.npr.org/2025/03/12/nx-s1-5324496/universities-hiring-freezes-federal-funding

Administrative Challenges/Compliance and Other Burdens

- A freeze on federal funding has been paused, but many facets of American life are left in limbo. Here's what we know | CNN
- What Trump's Funding Freeze Could Mean for Universities, Nonprofits and More
- https://apnews.com/article/trump-dei-college-university-9f26a51617744de5c3f929a293027758
- https://www.yahoo.com/news/president-trump-eliminates-dei-programs-100938256.html
- https://www.chronicle.com/article/its-creating-chaos-college-presidents-weigh-responses-to-trumpsupheavals
- https://www.npr.org/2025/02/12/nx-s1-5292359/what-cuts-to-nih-funding-could-mean-for-american-universities
- https://www.axios.com/2025/03/02/trump-universities-dei-research-funding
- https://apnews.com/article/dei-trump-administration-appeals-courte7de20bbd41a6d5225c3c005efd0bec5
- https://apnews.com/article/6f5f6a66306ec2467fc346b993e87a50