

**agInnovation Budget and Legislative Committee (BLC):** <http://escop.info/committee/blc/>  
**Tuesday, August 25, 2026, at 4 pm ET**  
**Agenda and Call Notes – Members Only**

**Committee Members:**

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| <p><b>Chair:</b> Steve Lommel (agInnovation South)<br/><b>Past Chair:</b> Anton Bekkerman (agInnovation NE)<br/><b>Incoming Chair:</b> Shibu Jose (agInnovation NC)</p> <p><b>Members:</b><br/>Alton Thompson (ARD)<br/>Ulises Toledo (ARD)<br/>Rod Johnson (agInnovation NC)<br/>Shibu Jose (agInnovation NC)<br/>Chris Smart (agInnovation NE)<br/>Scott Senseman (agInnovation South)<br/>Sreekala Bajwa (agInnovation West)<br/>Shawn Donkin (agInnovation West)</p> <p><a href="#">BLC page with previous meeting notes</a></p> | <p><b>Liaisons:</b><br/>Lisa Townson (Extension)*<br/>Bob Mattive (CARET)<br/>Doug Steele (APLU FANR)<br/>Bridget Krieger (Lewis-Burke, Advocacy)<br/>Kate Owens (Lewis-Burke, Advocacy)<br/>Gary Mayo (NIFA)<br/>Kevin Cain (BVM)<br/>Laura Jolly (BHHS)<br/>Matt Hammons (CGA, UNL)</p> <p><b>Executive Vice-Chair</b><br/>Jeanette Thurston (agInnovation North Central, ED)<br/>Chris Hamilton (agInnovation North Central, AD)</p> <p>*Bill Hoffman provides support for Lisa Townson</p> |
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**Meeting Agenda:**

1. Welcome and introductions, 5 min - Steve Lommel, BLC Chair
2. agInnovation BLC FY2028 NIFA Budget Request Options (BAC FY2028 Budget Request Due by September 15<sup>th</sup>)
3. Updates from DC – Bridget Krieger, Kate Owens, Matt Hammons
4. Other Business, as needed

**Action Items/Next Steps:**

- Steve Lommel: Will present \$375M/\$500M scenarios to BAC by Sept 9.
- Jeanette Thurston: Collect Evans-Allen draft feedback and pass along to Alton Thompson.
- Alton Thompson: Finalize the Evans-Allen proposal by Sept 4 using incoming member feedback.

**Call Attendees:** Matt Hammons, Steve Lommel, Shibu Jose, Rod Johnson, Anton Bekkerman, Matt Peterson, Alton Thompson, Chris Smart, Scott Senseman, Kate Owens, Bridget Krieger, Bret Hess, Sreekala Bajwa, Rick Rhodes, Jenn Horton, Shawn Donkin, Lisa Townson, Jeanette Thurston, Chris Hamilton

**Meeting Notes:**

\*FYI that both documents (BLC FY28 NIFA Budget Request and Evans Allen from Alton) discussed today are included at [BLC page with previous meeting notes](#) for call event/notes page.

1. **Welcome and Introductions:** Steve welcomed everyone to the call and noted that he was on vacation and would need to leave early. Shibu Jose as incoming chair led the call after Steve left. Shibu later led introductions around the Zoom room.
2. **agInnovation BLC FY2028 NIFA Budget Request Options:**
  - Dual Request Approved Unanimously by BLC Members: Presenting \$375M and \$500M scenarios to BAC Sept 9 for quick post-election adaptation.
  - 10-Year Plan: Framing \$375M as step one of a multi-year roadmap for state workforce and equipment.
  - Program Alignment: Coordinating agInnovation and Extension priorities to present a unified ask.
  - 1890 Evans-Allen Request:
    - Inflation Baseline (\$95M): Adjusted from \$89M to match CPI and protect purchasing power.
    - Transformational Ask (\$129M): Slight bump over previous asks to target recruitment and research capacity.
    - Feedback Deadline: Open call for comments on the proposal before the Sept 9 BAC meeting.
3. **Updates from DC:**
  - Farm Bill Stalled: Markup failed on partisan lines; floor action unlikely before the election. Another extension is likely.
  - Flat funding secured through December 12 via continuing resolutions.
  - USDA Reorg: ARS moving to thematic management Oct 1 alongside rollout of Uniform Guidance rules.
  - Roadmap/Call to Action: Tying current budget requests directly to long-term capacity goals.
  - Congressional Education: Maintaining ongoing outreach to account for heavy Hill staff turnover.
  - LBA is working on mandatory funding for capacity programs with Congress (as you know, this would be pretty fantastic as we wouldn't have to shake in our boots if Hatch will be funded each year...). Bridget asked us to keep this info close for now.
  - OMB is hamstrung on working on proposed Uniform Guidance (review of stakeholder input, making any changes, etc.) until the CR is over. This will push back the possible implementation by quite a bit. It is widely expected that there will be many lawsuits filed. However, some agencies are implementing certain aspects of the Uniform Guidance (e.g., NIH).
  - Bridget is meeting with NIFA/REE folks this week and will ask about when NOFOs (especially for capacity programs) will be released and awards made.
  - RFAP—NIFA will likely send out award notifications by end of September to get funding released by Oct 1.
  - There continues to be so much uncertainty regarding the election and what happens next. There is little time when Congress will be in session prior to the election and even after. Not a lot of floor time is available for the remainder of the year.
  - Bridget emphasized that a lot of \$\$ will be flowing in September from funding agencies to spend down FY2026 funding prior to Oct 1. Encourage researchers to be ready to respond. It's also a good idea for them to reach out to program officers with questions or opportunities.
  - No new information on updates to T&C (specifically, OPT/CPT). Recommended to make USDA aware of issues.