

agInnovation Budget and Legislative Committee (BLC): <http://escop.info/committee/blc/>

Monday, July 6, 1 pm CT

Agenda – **Members only**

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://uwmadison.zoom.us/j/2726499338?pwd=IlmrhRR1mRsJC5ReG5Q0Xgwkm18z.1&omn=97010086402>

Meeting ID: 272 649 9338; Passcode: NCRA2023!\$

Committee Members:

Chair: Steve Lommel (agInnovation South) Past Chair: Anton Bekkerman (agInnovation NE) Incoming Chair: Shibu Jose (agInnovation NC) Members: Alton Thompson (ARD) Ulises Toledo (ARD) Rod Johnsom (agInnovation NC) Shibu Jose (agInnovation NC) Chris Smart (agInnovation NE) Scott Senseman (agInnovation South) Sreekala Bajwa (agInnovation West) Shawn Donkin (agInnovation West) BLC page with previous meeting notes	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) Matt Hammons (CGA, UNL) Executive Vice-Chair Jeanette Thurston (agInnovation North Central, ED) Chris Hamilton (agInnovation North Central, AD) *Bill Hoffman provides support for Lisa Townson
--	--

From Jeanette in advance of call to BLC:



DRAFT BLC FY2028
USDA Budget Request

Double click object above to open file

In preparation for our July 6th BLC meeting, please review the attached Draft FY2028 BLC Budget Request. A few notes before you begin:

- Pages 1–2 provide a brief summary of our strategy and justifications discussed at our June 23 BLC meeting, along with important revisions based on the thoughtful input many of you provided. Thank you to everyone who contributed.*
- Our discussion on July 6 will focus on Pages 1–2. If you have limited time, please prioritize reviewing these pages. Our goal is to leave the meeting with a well-developed FY2028 budget strategy and supporting justification. Steve will then share our draft strategy and rationale with the other BAC sections during the BAA Summer Leadership Meeting in two weeks. The purpose of that discussion is to exchange ideas and gather feedback across sections; there is no expectation that the recommendations presented at that meeting will be final.*

- *Beginning on Page 3 is the original internal discussion draft reviewed at the June 23 BLC meeting. It is included for reference because it provides the underlying framework, rationale, and supporting information that will guide future justification, communication, and advocacy efforts related to the final budget request.*
- *Please provide comments using Track Changes in Word or come prepared to discuss them during our meeting on July 6.*

Call Attendees: Steve Lommel, Ulises Toledo, Scott Senseman, Sreekala Bajwa, Shawn Donkin, Matt Hammons, Shibu Jose, Bret Hess. Anton Bekkerman, Chris Hamilton

Meeting Discussion Fathom AI Notes/Summary:

[VIEW RECORDING - 32 mins \(No highlights\)](#)

Meeting Purpose

[Review the BLC's 2028 agInnovation budget request for Hatch and AFRI.](#)

Key Takeaways

- [Dual-Scenario Hatch Request:](#) The BLC will present two scenarios for 2028 Hatch funding: a lean \$300M request (flat from 2027) and an aspirational \$375M request (a 20% increase). The choice depends on the November election outcome.
- [Strategic Justification Shift:](#) The strategy will pivot from broad ROI claims to specific, compelling narratives. These will include linking Hatch funds to USDA's local-focus goals and using concrete examples (e.g., True Armyworm) to prove impact and ROI.
- [AFRI Request Reduced:](#) The AFRI request will be a more realistic \$500M, down from last year's unsuccessful push for the fully authorized amount.
- [BAC Presentation Next Week:](#) The two-pager will be presented to the BAC at the summer BAA meeting in Portland as a first look, not a final decision.

Topics

2028 Budget Request Strategy

- [Hatch Funding:](#)
 - [Scenario 1 \(Lean\):](#) \$300M (flat from 2027).
 - [Scenario 2 \(Aspirational\):](#) \$375M (20% increase).
 - [Rationale:](#) The dual approach provides flexibility based on the November election, with the \$375M request serving as a long-term goal.
- [AFRI Funding:](#)
 - [Request:](#) \$500M.
 - [Rationale:](#) A more realistic figure after last year's request for the fully authorized amount was unsuccessful.

Justification & Narrative Refinements

- [Core Problem:](#) Inflation has eroded Hatch funds, leading to "forced retirements" and hiring freezes that diminish scientific capacity and the ability to leverage state dollars.
- [Strategic Narrative:](#)
 - [Align with USDA Goals:](#) Frame Hatch funds as the most cost-effective way to achieve Secretary Rollins' goal of positioning resources closer to agricultural communities and increasing profitability of farmers.

- **Emphasize Local Impact:** Highlight the network of research centers that deliver locally relevant science, putting "farmers first."
- **Focus on Outcomes:** Shift the narrative from program descriptions to the tangible impacts on producers and the nation.
- **Supporting Evidence:**
 - **Concrete Examples:** Use specific, high-profile cases (e.g., True Armyworm, state-specific plant breeding) to validate ROI claims.
 - **Human Capital Data:** Perhaps quantify the decline in FTEs (faculty, staff, students) due to flat funding to show the loss of human resources.
 - **Leveraging Data:** Reference the annual USDA-reported data on how Hatch funds leverage additional investments.

Next Steps

- **Steven Lommel:** Present the two-pager and dual-scenario Hatch request to the BAC at the summer BAA meeting in Portland (next week).
- **Jeanette Thurston:** Incorporate feedback into the full justification document and communications plan.
- **All Participants:** Send any additional feedback on the two-pager to Jeanette or Steven ASAP.