



agInnovation Fall Business Meeting

Thursday, September 24, 2026 - 10:00 - 1:00 pm
Grand Junction Convention Center
Grand Junction, CO

Zoom Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83351268155?pwd=0Br1UXamZI4XNjGbaTJXg7CKYbo5kv.1>

One tap mobile

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AGENDA

Time	Item #	Topic	Presenter	Action Requested
10:00 am	1.0	Chair's Welcome and Introductions Adoption of the agenda Approval of 7/14/26 meeting minutes Honoring agInnovation Colleagues	Chandra Reddy	None Adoption by Acclamation Approval by Acclamation For Information
10:10 am	2.0	Lewis-Burke Associates Update	Bridget Krieger	For Information
10:20 am	3.0	FANR Update	Doug Steele	For Information
10:30 am	4.0	Chair Updates & Reflections - Adaptive Roots - Reimagining agInnovation - Alda Center for Communications Science Workshop	Chandra Reddy	Discussion
10:50 am	5.0	Operating Successfully in the Evolving Federal Funding Landscape	Rick Rhodes	Discussion
11:45 am	6.0	MRF Impacts	Sara Delheimer	Discussion
11:50 am	7.0	National Multistate Guidelines Revisions	Chris Hamilton	Vote
12:00 pm	8.0	NRSP-RC Whitepaper Proposal Request	Beth Gugino	Vote
12:10 pm	9.0	Incoming Chair's Initiatives	Gene Kelly	Discussion

12:25 pm	10.0	Financial Update and FY 2027 Budget	Gene Kelly	Vote
12:45 pm	11.0	agInnovation Chair's elect vote and 2027 meeting announcements	Northeast	Vote
12:50 pm	12.0	Welcoming New agInnovation Leadership: Gene Kelly, agInnovation Chair	Chandra Reddy	For Information
12:55 pm	13.0	Unfinished Business	Chandra Reddy	Discussion
<i>1:00 pm - Adjourn</i>				

Upcoming Meetings:

- APLU Annual Meeting, November 15-17, 2026, San Antonio, TX
- 2026 New Administrators Orientation, December 8 – 10, 2026, Washington, D.C. Metro Area
- 2027 CARET/BAA Washington Conference, March 1 – 4, 2027, Washington, DC.
- 2027 NERAOC, March 29 – April 1, 2027, Orlando, FL.

Briefs for Consent Agenda:

Only updates from the BAA Summer Leadership Meeting

- Finance Committee
- Budget and Legislative Committee
- Science and Technology Committee
- 501(c)3 non-profit Board of Directors



agInnovation Business Meeting

Tuesday, July 14, 2026 – 8:00 am – 12 noon PT

In attendance: Chandra Reddy (Chair), Sreekala Bajwa, Vagner Benedito, Desmond Mortley, Jason Hubbart, Chris Pritsos, Bret Hess, Bridget Krieger, Erdogan Memili, Gary Thompson, Jeanette Thurston, Rick Rhodes, Greg Goins, Jewel Bronaugh, John Blanton, Devaiah Kambiranda, Matt Hamilton, Lee Hecker, Anton Bekkerman, Chris Hamilton, Frank Casey, Marcus Bernard, Avinash Tope, Keith Howard, Tommeron Timmons, Catherine Hancock, Leslie Oliver, Latasha Everson, Jamie Lawson, Sara Delheimer, Linda Nagel, Glenda Humiston, Marikis Alvarez, Shibu Jose, Steve Lommel, Beth Gugino, Rose Ozbay, Olga Bolden-Tiller, Jose Toledo, Gene Kelly, Cindy Motley, Jennifer Horton, Lisa Williamson, Alton Thompson (Executive Vice-Chair and Recorder).

Meeting administration (Chandra Reddy)

- **The agenda for the meeting was adopted unanimously.**
- **The minutes from the agInnovation meeting of 3/5/2026 were approved unanimously.**

Following introductions, Chandra Reddy greeted the attendees and presented the progress on agInnovation and Chair's priorities, a summary of the Alda Center for Communicating Science Workshop to be held at the annual agInnovation Fall meeting in Grand Junction, CO, and the Reimagining agInnovation Fly-in to be held in Chicago, IL in August (slide deck attached).

Following Chair Reddy's presentation, a number of points were made, including but not limited to:

- NIFA clarified that matching funds may be staged over the five-year award period, reflecting stakeholder recommendations.
- ARS reorganization presents university collaboration opportunities, particularly as climate hubs may shift toward farm resiliency or profitability.
- Capacity funding delivers an estimated 6–8× return and nearly \$6 billion in aggregate impact. Stronger investment and messaging are needed to advance AI, robotics, biotechnology, climate adaptation, and human health.
- Adaptive Roots received a three-month no-cost extension to finalize advocacy messaging, testing results, benefit documents, background materials, and expert contacts.
- Integration among 1862, 1890, and 1994 institutions remains limited due to funding and capacity constraints, though joint projects and centers-of-excellence legislation offer potential pathways.
- The group emphasized cross-agency collaboration among NIH, NSF, and NIFA to connect food, agriculture, and human health funding with the land-grant system.

Beth Gugino presented the recommendations from the NRSP and responded to all questions during the discussion period. (See Agenda Brief).

Steve Lommel, BLC Chair) presented the BLC Report and responded to all questions during the discussion period. (See Agenda Brief).

Greg Goins, Chair-elect of the STC, presented the committee's recommendations for the national agInnovation awards, including the Lifetime Exemplary Leadership Award, Research Awards (Lifetime, Mid-Career, and Early Career), and the Multistate Award. Following a brief discussion, a motion to approve the recommended award recipients was seconded and passed unanimously. (See Agenda Brief).

Shibu Jose, an agInnovation voting member, presented the BAA Board of Directors report and responded to questions during the discussion. This summer, agInnovation will conduct an email election to select two representatives—a primary and an alternate—who will serve two-year terms. Dr. Jose (University of Missouri) will appear on the ballot as the primary voting-member candidate, and Dr. Harsha Thippareddi (University of Georgia) will appear as the alternate candidate. Additional nominations will also be accepted through the ballot. (See Agenda Brief.)

Rick Rhodes, agInnovation Northeast ED, presented the Finance Committee Report and the TD Wealth Investment Report. agInnovation is good financial standing and agInnovation investment fund with Goldman Sachs is performing quite well (See Agenda Brief). Rick responded to all questions regarding agInnovation's budget, financial investments, and overall fiscal management. He provided clear and comprehensive explanations of the organization's financial position, addressed inquiries concerning budget allocations and investment strategies, and offered additional context where appropriate. His responses gave the membership confidence that agInnovation's financial resources are being managed responsibly and in alignment with agInnovation's strategic priorities.

Chris Pristos, agInnovation West, former agInnovation Chair, presented the agInnovation 501 (c)(3) Report. (See Agenda Brief). Rick responded to all questions regarding agInnovation's nonprofit with clarity and, similar to Rick, Chris stated that the nonprofit is being managed responsibly and in alignment with agInnovation's strategic priorities.

Chris Hamilton, agInnovation North Central, gave an excellent report and update on the revisions associated with the National Multistate Guidelines. Briefly, the 2026 Guidelines for Multistate Research Activities modernize and streamline the 2006 guidelines by removing outdated or repetitive language, adopting agInnovation branding and current governance structures, and aligning processes with NIMSS and the NIFA Reporting System. Key revisions include fewer, standardized review forms; clearer and more rigorous proposal criteria emphasizing stakeholder input and agInnovation Grand Challenges; better-defined responsibilities for regional associations, Administrative Advisors, NIFA representatives, and participating institutions; and final approval authority for regional associations on activities other than NRSPs. The revisions also strengthen accountability by requiring annual reports to synthesize collaborative group activities and demonstrate measurable outcomes and long-term impacts—such as technology adoption and economic benefits—rather than merely cataloging individual institutions' activities and research outputs.

Gary Thompson, agInnovation South ED, presented the report on the agInnovation Sponsored Session at the ACE Conference.

- Highlighted the growing role of regional communication networks in strengthening collaboration, increasing the visibility of research impacts, and supporting strategic priorities across the land-grant system.

- Provided an update on **S1095, Science Communication in Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources**, including a national communication survey focused on workforce development and strengthening communication research.
- Shared activities and priorities from regional communication networks, with common themes including regional collaboration, coordinated storytelling and impact documentation, increased visibility of land-grant contributions, and communication capacity building.
- Identified opportunities for greater cross-regional collaboration and engagement among communicators, regional associations, and USDA NIFA communication staff.

Gene Kelly, agInnovation Chair-elect, lead a discussion on “Looking Ahead.” Gene made a number of observations, including, but not limited to:

- The annual meeting's central message is "Headwaters to Tidewaters: New Coalitions to Finance the Next \$2B in Agricultural Innovation" — framing agInnovation itself as "an experiment in the science of reinventing organizations". The stated objective is to reposition agInnovation as a modern, high-performing regional innovation platform. The meeting organizes the agenda around three pillars:
 - Organizational design — clarifying agInnovation's value proposition, streamlining station/talent deployment, and aligning structures for cross-state, cross-disciplinary work.
 - Financial architecture — moving beyond reliance on incremental USDA appropriations and traditional advocacy alone.
 - Coalition and policy engagement — formalizing agInnovation's role as a trusted, value-based partner, prioritizing local/state/regional relationships to pilot scalable policy compacts on water, climate resilience, and land stewardship.

Finally, Gene covered the draft agenda and program as well as field trip to the Colorado River and the Colorado State University Western Campus.

Upcoming Meetings:

- **2026 agInnovation Annual Meeting**
Grand Junction, CO, September 21 – 25, 2026
- **2026 APLU Annual Meeting**
San Antonio, TX, November 15-17, 2026
- **2027 CARET/BAA Washington Conference**
Washington, DC. March 1-4, 2027

The meeting adjourned at 11:45 am Pacific Time.



FY 2027 agInnovation Budget Explanation

Budget Notes:

The attached budget will be presented at the agInnovation Business Meeting on September 24 in Grand Junction, CO. Approval of the budget will require two votes. The first vote will be a referendum on the assessment. The [agInnovation Rules of Operation](#) require that decisions made on assessments be completed by a referendum. A two-thirds (2/3) majority of those voting is required for adoption of an assessment referendum. Should the assessment referendum pass, a simple majority is required for budget approval.

If the assessment referendum fails, the budget would not be approved as presented. If this occurs, an electronic meeting of agInnovation will be convened, and an alternative assessment and budget would be discussed. If an alternative assessment is suggested, a second referendum would be held along with a vote on the budget.

As a reminder, the Rules of Operation allow the Chair of agInnovation to authorize the expenditure of assessed funds up to \$5,000 per request (up to \$20,000 over a calendar year) with approval by a simple majority of the agInnovation Executive Committee.

FY 2026 Approved and FY 2026 Actual/Encumbered: As a grounding and comparison exercise, we've included on the budget sheet columns that show the FY 2026 approved budget and FY 2026 actual expenditures/encumbrances.

FY 2027 Income

With an assessment to the Section of \$100,000 (identical to the assessment of FY 2026), estimated cash carryover of \$120,000, and \$27,000 in income from the JP Morgan investment account, the FY2027 budget will have a total of \$247,000 in income.

- *Previous FY Carryover:* While the fiscal year has not yet closed out, we're estimating a cash carryover of approximately \$120,000.
- *agInnovation Assessment:* The budget includes a \$100,000 assessment to agInnovation to be invoiced through the APLU. Assessment payments will be due by June 30, 2027.
- *Other:* We plan to withdraw \$27,000 from agInnovation's JP Morgan investment account, per the guidance of the agInnovation directors who approved a 4% annual draw.

FY 2027 Expenses

Below is a line-by-line explanation of each anticipated expenses totaling \$247,000.

Unchanged Budget Lines

- *NCFAR Membership*: agInnovation has been a long-time member of the National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research (NCFAR) and seeks renewal of the NCFAR membership (\$1,000). NCFAR is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, consensus-based, and customer-led coalition that brings together food, agriculture, nutrition, conservation, and natural resource stakeholders to serve as a forum and unified voice supporting increased federal investment in USDA Research, Education, and Economics (USDA REE).
- *Operating*: \$1,500 is proposed to support agInnovation operations (e.g., Google listservs, Fathom, etc.).
- *agInnovation 501(c)(3)*: This line at \$3,000 provides support for annual legal and accounting expenses associated with the agInnovation 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.
- *Meeting Support (Annual Meeting)*: \$20,000 is requested to provide direct support to the agInnovation annual meeting as a means to offset escalating registration fees.

Funding Line Increases

- *Communications and Advocacy*: This line seeks \$63,000 to support an enhanced strategic communications effort (\$38,000) plus create a new Science Advocacy Academy (\$25,000) to expand visibility and reach of agInnovation. The \$38,000 for the proposed communications effort is to expand the agInnovation website contract. This initiative would entail targeted audience growth and strategic network expansion to enhance national visibility. The focus will be a content program that speaks meaningfully to audiences well beyond the university, people who have a stake in agricultural research, even if they don't yet know it. Stories will be intentionally framed for each audience segment: substantive enough for insiders, accessible enough for the public, compelling enough for funders and policymakers. Distribution channels and strategies will match each audience, so the right story reaches the right person at the right time. In addition to establishing an agInnovation LinkedIn page to share blog posts and create a hub for resharing content, strategic LinkedIn engagement will include analytics reviews to determine what's performing, who's reading, and content optimization recommendations for growing agInnovation's visibility in relevant communities. Media outreach will target agriculture, science, policy, and general interest publications. Press releases and media pitches will be tied to research milestones and agInnovation story highlights. The Science Advocacy Academy will enlist scientists throughout agInnovation to train and gain experience as advocates. The program will include a partnership with NCFAR to give the science advocates an opportunity to make Hill visits with staff members who sit on committees involved with agricultural and food research. The Hill visits will culminate with a showcase and reception (total estimated cost of \$25,000) for congressional delegates, staffers, and federal agency personnel.

- *Promotion (chair travel, initiatives, etc.):* This coming calendar year, we propose \$40,000 to support the development of all collateral materials (brochures, fact sheets, infographics, email campaigns, videos, press kits, merchandise, etc.) to be deployed during FY 2027. Also included in this budget line is support for the travel of the agInnovation chair and the chair's initiatives. The agInnovation chair anticipates significant travel to engage with various stakeholders who may support the chair initiatives.
- *agInnovation Awards:* This line, \$30,000, reflects cash awards, travel reimbursements, plaque charges, and anticipated inflationary costs of non-cash awards. Per the recommendation of the Science and Technology Committee, award expenses include presentation of three \$500 national research awards (\$1,500: early career, mid-career, and full career); and fifteen regional awards (\$15,000: early career, mid-career, and full career). The balance of this line, \$13,500, will be dedicated to offset plaque and engraving costs, miscellaneous award costs, and reimbursement of travel expenses of the national award winners as well as regional award winners who are not celebrated at a regional meeting. (In 2027, we anticipate presenting 24 awards: 1 Multistate Research award, 5 Leadership awards, and 18 Agricultural Research Innovation awards.)

Funding Line Decreases

- *Professional Development:* The proposed budget includes \$20,000 to support professional development opportunities for all station/research directors. This includes bringing in external speakers. Typically, the minimal cost to bring in an outside professional speaker is \$5,000 plus travel expenses (\$2,000). Likewise, providing travel (\$2,000) and a modest honorarium (\$1,000) to internal speakers is a minimum of \$3,000 each.
- *Website (agInnovation and ESCOP):* This line requests \$12,500 to support maintenance of the two websites of the Section including the [ESCOP website](#) (hosted by Clemson University), the Section's inward-facing digital archive, and the [agInnovation website](#), our outwardly-facing, promotional, digital gateway. As a follow-on to the FY 2026 website updating, we propose renewing the contract with our consultant to continue monthly blogs and assess the reach of the website (\$10,000).
- *agInnovation Committee Meetings:* This budget item had been used to assist with defraying meeting costs (e.g., meeting rooms, A/V, food and beverage, etc.) and some travel for standing or ad hoc agInnovation committee members to meet face-to-face. None of the committees have requested to utilize this budget line in FY26. However, this line item was not eliminated in case committees request financial support in the future.
- *NRSP Stakeholder (travel):* agInnovation budgets \$1,500 to reimburse the stakeholder member of the NRSP Review Committee for travel expenses to attend the annual face-to-face meeting of the committee. This committee has begun to meet virtually whenever possible and FY27 is no exception. However, the line was not eliminated as a reminder that there may be a need for an in-person meeting in the future.

New Funding Lines

- *Capacity Building Engagement*: \$50,000 is proposed to coincide with the communications effort. Currently, agInnovation tells a strong story about what Land-grant research delivers. What's missing is the specific ask that turns a reader, policymaker, or funder from interested to engaged. Thus, the plan is to develop a surveyed and prioritized set of private capacity-building funding opportunities aligned to advocacy, outreach, and public education. Moreover, the 501(c)(3) opens funding channels that were previously closed. Private foundations, family offices, and corporate philanthropy programs that fund advocacy, public education, and capacity building can now directly support agInnovation. What we don't know is which funders to approach first or how to position our network within their priorities. We propose that a firm be hired to conduct a focused review of the funding landscape, covering capacity-building grants, advocacy-focused philanthropy, food and agriculture funder collaboratives, and rural-development funders with aligned interests. The deliverable is a prioritized prospect list of fifteen to twenty-five funders with an alignment rationale, indicative grant size, application cadence, and recommended approach for each. Following identification and prioritization, depending on complexity, three to five proposals will be submitted to appropriate prospects.
- *Science Communications Survey*: \$6,000 annually for each of the next four years to survey members of the public regarding their perceptions of science in agriculture and natural resources to help improve our communication with the public, policymakers, and other key stakeholders.

TOTAL EXPENSES FY 2027

- The budget for FY 2027 estimates \$247,000 in expenses.

PROJECTED BALANCE-END OF FY 2027

- We are estimating a balanced budget for FY 2027.



Proposed Fiscal Year 2027 Budget

		FY27 Proposed	FY26 Approved	FY26 Actual/Encum
INCOME				
	Previous FY Carryover (estimate)	\$120,000	\$100,000	\$120,000
	agInnovation Assessment	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000
	Other	\$27,000	\$24,000	\$24,000
	TOTAL INCOME	\$247,000	\$224,000	\$244,000
EXPENSES				
Eliminated Budget Lines	None	\$0	\$0	\$0
Unchanged Budget Lines	NCFAR Membership	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
	Operating	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,400
	agInnovation 501(c)(3)	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$1,200
	Meeting Support (Annual Meeting)	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$12,000
Funding Line Increases				
	Communications and Advocacy	\$63,000	\$50,000	\$12,000
	Promotion (chair travel, initiatives, etc)	\$40,000	\$30,000	\$28,000
	agInnovation Awards	\$30,000	\$21,840	\$22,000
Funding Line Decreases				
	Professional Development	\$20,000	\$30,000	\$25,295
	Website (agInnovation and ESCOP)	\$12,500	\$25,000	\$2,500
	agInnovation Committee Meetings	\$0	\$10,000	\$0
New Funding Lines	NRSP RC Stakeholder (travel)	\$0	\$1,500	\$0
	Capacity Building Engagement	\$50,000	\$0	\$0
	Science Communications Survey	\$6,000	\$0	\$0
	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$247,000	\$193,840	\$105,395
	PROJECTED BALANCE-END OF FY	\$0	\$30,160	\$138,605

agInnovation Budget and Legislative Committee (BLC)

September 2026 Agenda Brief

BLC Activity since agInnovation 2025 Fall Meeting

Chair: Steve Lommel (NCSU)

Membership: [Budget & Legislative Committee \(BLC\) – ESCOP](https://escop.info/committee/blc/) (<https://escop.info/committee/blc/>)

Executive Vice-Chair: Jeanette Thurston (agNC)

Assistant Executive Vice-Chair: Christina Hamilton (agNC)

BLC Activities Since the agInnovation 2025 Fall Meeting

USDA Reorganization Input – Developed and submitted agInnovation's recommendations on the USDA Reorganization Plan to Secretary Rollins (September 25, 2025). The written recommendations reflected BLC's assessment of the proposal's potential implications for agricultural research and the Land-grant University system's partnerships with USDA agencies and scientists.

USDA NAREEE Advisory Board Engagement – Met with Dr. Deirdra Chester (September 23, 2025) to better understand the role and responsibilities of the USDA National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics (NAREEE) Advisory Board and to explore opportunities to strengthen agInnovation's visibility, engagement, and influence in informing USDA research, education, and Extension policies.

CGA Representation on BLC – Matt Hammons (UNL, Assistant VP for External Relations and Director of Federal Relations) joined the BLC as the new representative from the APLU Council on Government Affairs (CGA). Matt also serves as Chair of the CGA Agricultural Appropriations Committee, strengthening coordination between agInnovation and APLU's federal advocacy efforts.

Washington, D.C. Update Meetings – Established recurring update sessions (approximately every 4–6 weeks) for all agInnovation members to provide timely briefings on federal budget developments, agency activities, and congressional actions affecting agricultural research. These sessions, led by Elizabeth Stulberg (Lewis-Burke Associates) and BLC's CGA representative, also provide an opportunity for directors to ask questions and discuss emerging policy issues. Attendance has remained consistently strong.

2026 BLC Work Plan – Developed a comprehensive work plan to guide committee priorities and activities throughout 2026. Key focus areas include developing the FY2028 federal budget request, supporting the Land-grant University Call to Action, providing ongoing federal policy and Washington, D.C. updates to agInnovation leadership, and exploring an expanded stakeholder engagement role for the BLC.

Research Facilities Act Program (RFAP) Recommendations – Responded to NIFA's request for stakeholder input on implementation of the Research Facilities Act Program (RFAP) in February 2026. Recommendations were provided “in-person” during a virtual NIFA Stakeholder Input session and in writing. agInnovation's recommendations were presented during a USDA stakeholder webinar and submitted directly to USDA leadership to help inform program implementation. The RFAP NOFO

incorporated several changes suggested by BLC, including inclusion of planning grants, range of award sizes, and eligibility for institutions who received funding from the FY2026 RFAP.

FY2028 USDA agInnovation Budget Request: On September 9, incoming BLC Chair Shibu Jose presented the BLC's FY2028 funding recommendations for AFRI and the Hatch Act to BAC. Alton Thompson also presented the FY2028 recommendation for the Evans-Allen program. The recommendations and supporting materials are available on the BLC webpage.

Upcoming BLC Activities

Develop Strong Justification for FY2028 and a Five-Year USDA Funding Strategy: Develop clear, data-driven justification for FY2028 funding requests and a longer-term, five-year funding strategy for AFRI, Hatch, and Evans-Allen.

LGU Roadmap Collaboration – Expect to partner to advance the LGU Roadmap—particularly in shaping a cohesive budget strategy.

Continuing BLC sponsored DC Update Meetings

Exploring an expanded stakeholder engagement role for the BLC

AS ALWAYS, FEEL FREE TO REACH OUT TO STEVE (slommel@ncsu.edu) OR JEANETTE (Jthurston@ksu.edu) ON TOPICS OR ACTIVITIES YOU BELIEVE BLC SHOULD BE ADDRESSING.



Science & Technology Committee (STC): <http://escop.info/committee/scitech/>

Committee Members:

Chair: Nathan Slaton (South) Incoming Chair: Gregory Goins (ARD) Delegates: Alton Thompson (ARD) Fulya Baysal-Gurel (ARD) Frank Casey (NC) John Blanton (NC) Diane Rowland/Lee Hecker (NE) Vacant (NE) Tom Zimmerman (South) Jerry Fankhauser (South) Gene Kelly (West) Lara Prihodko (West) Executive Vice Chair: Bret Hess (agInnovation- West ED)	Liaisons: Tara McHugh (ARS) Rachel Melnick (NIFA) Lara Iles (NIPMCC) Kevan Lamm (SSCC)
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Science and Technology Committee Meetings: Virtual meetings are scheduled the 2nd Monday each Month (1 pm PT/2 pm MT/3 pm CT/4 pm ET).

STC Activities Since the agInnovation on July 14, 2026

Excellence in Agricultural Research Innovation and Multistate Research Awards

The committee elected to increase the future cash prize from \$500 to \$1,000 for each regional award winner in lieu of \$500 plus a 4-year silver membership to the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS; silver membership is currently valued at \$89/year). Primary reasons for the change were that most award winners are already members of AAAS and tracking up to 60 individual memberships each year would become overly burdensome. The committee also proposed to utilize unspent funds in the agInnovation budget line to reimburse travel to the agInnovation Fall Meeting for regional award winners who did not receive their award check at a regional meeting.

National Integrated Pest Management Coordinating Committee (NIPMCC)

<https://escop.info/committee/nipmcc/>

The [IPM Coordinator Handbook](#) has been posted on the NIMPCC website. The handbook is a resource for IPM coordinators as well as the broader IPM Enterprise. NIPMCC will lead a formal review and update of the handbook every three years, which will coincide with the International IPM Symposium.



agInnovation Nonprofit 501(c)(3): <https://escop.info/committee/nonprofit/>

2026-2027 Board Members on July 15

President: Chris Pritsos (West)
Vice President: Vacant
Treasurer: Rick Rhodes (Northeast)
Secretary: Bret Hess (West)

Delegates:

Alton Thompson (ARD)
 Jose Ulises Toledo (ARD)
 Jeanette Thurston (NC)
 Gary Thompson (South)

Vacancies:

Northcentral
 Northeast
 South

2026-2027 Board Members on July 30

President: Chris Pritsos (West)
Vice President: Jose Ulises Toledo (ARD)
Treasurer: Rick Rhodes (Northeast)
Secretary: Bret Hess (West)

Sustaining Members:

Alton Thompson (ARD)
 Jeanette Thurston (NC)
 Gary Thompson (South)

New Members:

Kang Xia (NC)
 Anton Bekkerman (NE)
 Cliff Lamb (S)

Meeting

A virtual board meeting was held on July 30, 2026 to welcome newly appointed members to the Board and to elect a Vice President.

Board Actions

The virtual meeting was held to fulfill minimum requirements of non-profits established in the state of Nevada. Ulises Toledo was elected to serve as Vice President of the Board.



Whitepaper Request: Informing a National Framework for Digital Agriculture, AI and Research Data Infrastructure

Background

Digital agriculture is the convergence of agricultural science, data science, engineering, and advanced digital technologies to collect, integrate, analyze, and communicate information across the agricultural value chain. Through technologies such as precision agriculture, remote sensing, unmanned aviation systems, artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics, data analytics, cyberinfrastructure, interoperable data systems, and decision-support platforms, digital agriculture is transforming the ability of the research enterprise to generate discoveries, deliver solutions, and address the nation's most pressing agricultural, environmental, economic, and food system challenges. The nation's Land-grant universities and their affiliated state agricultural experiment stations must be positioned to lead this transformation.

On behalf of agInnovation, the National Research Support Project (NRSP) Review Committee, recognizes that digital agriculture represents a major long-term research priority in the agricultural sciences. The digital agriculture priorities is reinforced by the nation's priority to ensure and enhance American AI dominance, USDA's research agenda, and by the evolving needs of producers-centered decision tools, and the increasing importance of shared data systems, reproducible research workflows, and coordinated national research infrastructure.

To ensure Land-grant Universities are the national and global leaders in digital agriculture and the trusted source for digital agriculture innovation, advancement, and transformation, we must work collaboratively to establish shared standards, data management expectations, organizational structures, governance models, and supporting infrastructure. These foundational elements are essential to enable agricultural data, artificial intelligence, and other digital tools to be developed, validated, integrated, shared, reused, and continuously improved across institutions. By aligning our efforts, we can accelerate innovation, maximize the value of public investments, and create a more connected and impactful digital agriculture ecosystem.

agInnovation has identified a need for clear, expert-driven guidance to define a national framework for the future research landscape for digital agriculture, with particular emphasis on artificial intelligence, data sharing, software interoperability, and research data governance. Specifically, there is a need to articulate:

- The most pressing, foundational research gaps in digital agriculture and artificial intelligence over the next 10 years;

- The data management requirements, including the FAIR Data Principles (findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable) and including, data sharing, metadata expectations, programming practices, data access, interoperability requirements needed for AI, and data governance should be structured to enable transformative agricultural research;
- What cyberinfrastructure, software architecture, partnerships, and institutional capacities are required to support a national digital agriculture research enterprise;
- How Land-grant institutions and State Agriculture Experiment Stations, USDA and other federal agencies, commodity groups, industry partners and other stakeholders can collectively and efficiently support and leverage current resources supporting shared research and data infrastructure, and
- How future NRSP proposals, competitive grant programs, and institutional investments can support the development of a coordinated digital agriculture and AI research ecosystem.

To address these critical questions, agInnovation is issuing this “Request for Proposals” inviting a qualified team of thought leaders, researchers, data scientists, technology experts and practitioners to develop a comprehensive whitepaper. The whitepaper will assess the current landscape and identify the research, data, software, infrastructure and governance needs required to advance digital agriculture and artificial intelligence applications in agriculture. The resulting framework should provide a strategic roadmap that positions LGUs as national and global leaders in digital ag innovation, transformation and impact.

Proposals

The selected team will develop a forward-looking whitepaper that provides agInnovation with a foundational reference document for future planning, investment and coordination. The document should not simply summarize current digital agriculture activities. Instead, it should define what is needed to create a coordinated national research framework that supports artificial intelligence, shared data resources, reproducible workflows, interoperable systems, and multi-institutional collaboration in agriculture.

The whitepaper should provide actionable guidance on the standards, structure, and investments needed to support AI-enable agricultural research across the land-grant system. This includes both technical and institutional recommendations.

Proposals should not exceed 3 pages (excluding CVs) and must include the following:

- Cover page with team lead, institutional affiliation, and contact information;
- Project narrative describing the team's approach to the whitepaper, proposed structure/outline, and key themes to be addressed;
- Description of team qualifications and experience,
- Brief biographies or CVs (2 pages per person maximum) for each proposed contributor;
- Statement describing how the proposed work extends beyond the ongoing research activities of team members and their home institutions;

- Description of how the team will engage relevant stakeholders, including Land-grant researchers, data scientists, USDA Experiment Station leaders, industry partners, and other appropriate groups
- Budget narrative describing how the stipend will be used.

Proposals must be submitted electronically to Rick Rhodes, agInnovation Northeast Executive Director (rcrhodes@uri.edu) by **TBD**, at 5:00 PM ET. Late submissions will not be considered. The team selected to draft the whitepaper will be notified on **TBD**, 2026.

Desired Team Expertise

AgInnovation is seeking a team with demonstrated expertise across several areas essential to the future of digital agriculture and artificial intelligence. Competitive teams should include, or demonstrate access to, expertise in the following areas:

- Agricultural research systems, including crop, livestock, natural resources, environmental or food system research;
- Artificial intelligence, machine learning, predictive analytics and computational modeling;
- Research data management, data governance, metadata standards, and data stewardship;
- Software development, programming standards, reproducible workflows, and open-source or shared-code environments.
- Cyberinfrastructure, cloud computing, high-performance computing, data storage and secure data access;
- Precision agriculture, robotics, remote sensing, sensory systems, automation or decision-support tools;
- Multi-institutional collaboration, research networks and national research infrastructure;
- Extension, producer engagement or applied decision support systems.

Funding

agInnovation will provide a stipend of \$50,000 to support the selected team in the whitepaper development effort. This is a stipend award, not a research grant and hence, there is no associated indirect cost return. The proposal should include a description of how funds will support the effort (e.g., personnel time, travel for team coordination, writing support).

The stipend is intended to support development of the whitepaper and associated deliverables. It is not intended to support primary research, software development, equipment purchase, or creation of a functioning data platform.

Whitepaper Objectives and Deliverables:

agInnovation is seeking a select team that can provide strategic, technical, and institutional guidance for the future of digital agriculture and artificial intelligence management and sharing in agricultural research.

The selected whitepaper team is expected to develop a comprehensive white paper that will:

- Define the scope and boundaries of digital agriculture as a research discipline, including the role of artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics, automation, sensing systems, decision-support tools and data-driven research;
- Identify the most critical unanswered research questions in digital agriculture
- Recommend data standards, metadata expectations, documentation practices, and data quality requirements needed to support AI-ready agricultural research data;
- Address data management, data sharing, data access, data governance, data security, data ownership, intellectual property, and ethical use of agricultural data;
- Recommend programming and software development practices that support reproducible research, shared code, model validation, interoperability and long-term reuse;
- Identify the infrastructure needed to support AI-enabled agriculture, including high-performance computing, cloud systems, data repositories, sensor networks, model hosting, and secure data environments;
- Describe how agricultural datasets, AI models, decision-support tools and software resources should be archived, cited, versioned and maintained;
- Assess current capacity, human capital, infrastructure, and institutional collaboration with the agricultural research community.
- Identify gaps in expertise, infrastructure, governance, and coordination that limit national progress.;
- Recommend structures for multi-institutional collaboration that go beyond current activities of any single institution;
- Identify opportunities for coordination with USDA, federal agencies, commodity groups, industry partners and other stakeholders;
- Provide actionable recommendations that could inform future NRSP proposals, competitive grant priorities, institutional investments and national research coordination.

The selected team is expected to deliver the following within 6 months of award:

- A draft whitepaper submitted to agInnovation for internal review;
- A revised final whitepaper incorporating reviewer feedback, suitable for public distribution and publication;
- A concise executive summary (2–3 pages) highlighting key findings and recommendations, formatted for distribution to agInnovation;
- A proposed framework for digital agriculture and AI research data standards, including recommended metadata, documentation, interoperability, and data-sharing practices;
- A prioritized roadmap for future NRSP proposals, competitive grant opportunities and institutional investments;
- A presentation of findings to be delivered; and
- All data, references, and supporting materials in a format suitable for archiving.

The whitepaper and associated materials will become the property of agInnovation and may be made publicly available. The writing team will be recognized as authors.

Review Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

1. Relevance to the Purpose of the RFP

The proposal clearly addresses the need for a national framework for digital agriculture, artificial intelligence, data standards, software practices, data governance, and research infrastructure

2. Team Expertise and Qualifications

The proposed team demonstrates appropriate diverse scientific, technical, and institutional expertise, including agricultural research, AI or machine learning, data management, software systems, cyberinfrastructure, and multi-institutional collaboration.

3. Quality of Proposed Approach

The proposal presents a clear and feasible approach for developing a thoughtful, technically informed, and actionable whitepaper.

4. Breadth and National Perspective

The proposal demonstrates an ability to address the needs of the broader agriculture research community and emphasized value of a collaborative, synergistic approach, rather than focusing primarily on the activities or priorities of a single institution.

5. Actional of Expected Product

The proposal demonstrates that the final whitepaper will provide clear recommendations that can inform future NRSP proposals, competitive funding priorities, institutional investments, and national coordination.

6. Feasibility

The proposed timeline, team structure, and use of funds are appropriate for completing the required deliverables.

Annual Science Communication Survey

Overview

After conducting a pilot run this year, we are proposing an annual survey of members of the public to track key metrics in their knowledge, trust, and opinions related to agricultural sciences and scientific institutions for four more years. Without this understanding, it is difficult to efficiently improve public support of agricultural research in the United States. Examples of similar studies by S1095 members include assessing [biotechnology attitudes](#) and [trust of agricultural and natural resources organizations](#).

We are asking for \$6,000 annually for four years (\$24,000 total). This will cover the cost of surveying at least 1,000 people each year who are representative of the U.S. population based on Census data. The team members leading this effort represent six states and have a variety of survey and science communication research experiences to ensure the viability of the project.

Benefits of the Research

For researchers, the results will provide **scholarly value** through publishable data on knowledge, trust, and beliefs related to agricultural sciences. This will go beyond one-time snapshot studies to provide **longitudinal insights**, including comparisons between regions, rural and urban populations, and other demographic characteristics. This can help **develop research priorities** long-term.

For communication professionals at agricultural universities, the scholarly results will help **improve science communication** through the development of evidence-based messages and toolkits. This includes creating materials related to the subjects the public cares the most about and **enhancing risk and crisis communication** for critical issues facing the country, such as water, food safety, and biotechnology.

For administrators, the results can help **demonstrate the need for research** on agricultural issues the public cares about, **improve Extension and stakeholder programming** by meeting the public's concerns, **justify public investment** in agricultural experiment stations and land-grant university work in general, and help protect the long-term health of land-grant universities by **improving the transparency** of agricultural sciences through improved communication and engagement with the public the institutions serve.



Explanatory Notes for agInnovation Northeast from Rick Rhodes, Executive Director

This summarizes OSTP Director Michael Kratsios' newly released report, [Science: A New Golden Age](#), and flags the elements most relevant to the State Agricultural Experiment Station system and Land-grant research enterprise. While the report celebrates the creation of Land-grant universities it simultaneously advances an investment framework that differs fundamentally from the rationale on which those Land-grant institutions were created. Herein, I highlight the report's central omission: a coherent rationale for science conducted for the public good rather than for a defined commercial or mission payoff. This gap has direct implications for how we position our (agInnovation and agInnovation Northeast) advocacy over the coming year.

What the Report Is?

- The report was released on July 21, 2026, by OSTP Director Michael Kratsios to President Trump; 123 pages.
- It's billed by the White House as the first comprehensive rethinking of U.S. science policy in over 80 years, explicitly positioned as this generation's answer to Vannevar Bush's 1945 report, [Science, the Endless Frontier](#) (this is the reprinted version in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the writing of the document).
- The report is organized around four pillars tied to a March 2025 presidential directive to Kratsios.
- It was released alongside a [White House Fiscal Year 2028 R&D Priorities Memorandum](#), co-signed by Kratsios and OMB Director Russ Vought, which converts the report's recommendations into directives to federal agencies. Agencies must submit implementation action plans within 90 days (roughly mid-October 2026) and reflect the guidance in FY2028 budget submissions.
- The report articulates a new core policy direction: shift federal research agencies toward operating more like venture investors than grant administrators, with a flagship AI-for-science initiative (e.g., the "[Genesis Mission](#)"), a reallocation of funding toward individual investigators and mission-driven organizations, and de-emphasis of traditional peer review and life sciences funding relative to AI and the physical sciences.

The Public Good Gap

The report's framing device is worth considering: it explicitly invokes the establishment of Land-grant universities alongside the founding of DARPA and the emergence of venture capital as a precedent for the kind of institutional reinvention it is now calling for. That's notable, because Land-grant universities and the Hatch Act/experiment station system were built on precisely the premise the report seems to sideline: that publicly funded research whose value is diffuse, regional, and non-proprietary is a legitimate and necessary category of federal investment in its own right, not merely a feeder for commercializable IP. The experiment station system exists not because public research is morally preferable to private research, but because markets consistently underinvest in research whose benefits are broadly shared, long-term, and difficult to privatize.

A venture-investor model answers the question “will this generate a return?” It does not answer “does the public need this even if no one can capture the return?” More fundamentally, the report leaves largely unanswered a different question: “why does federal science funding matter when the benefits cannot be privately captured?” Unlike time-limited mission programs, the agricultural experiment stations maintain long-lived scientific capacity as demonstrated by the nearly 140 years of continuous Federal investment in the Hatch Act of 1887. This long-term, capacity funding preserves people, facilities, datasets, research farms, and institutional memory: national assets.

Independent commentary on the OSTP report has converged on a related critique: several reviews describe the report's core recommendation as shifting research dollars from universities toward industry, primarily technology and AI firms. Likewise, the report does not reconcile with the administration's own proposed FY2027 budget, which would cut NSF funding by roughly 53 percent alongside reductions at other science agencies. One review went further, characterizing the document as a blueprint that reads less like Bush's public-interest case for federal science and more like a private-equity justification for restructuring an institution around what a management consultant would call inefficiency with the university system. The university-based research model, including the Land-grant system, is among the institutional structures most directly challenged by the report's recommendations.

None of this means the report lacks merit. Its emphasis on cutting administrative burden, diversifying funding mechanisms, and taking on ambitious mission-driven science tracks with things we've said for years. The concern is narrower and more structural: without an explicit “public good” rationale sitting alongside the venture-capital rationale, our stations' work risks being read by OMB and appropriators as a legacy cost center rather than the category of research the venture model was never designed to fund.

The future federal science enterprise requires both venture-oriented investments that accelerate breakthrough technologies and sustained public investments that maintain the scientific infrastructure markets cannot provide. These are complementary, not competing roles.

Implications for agInnovation Northeast

- Messaging: our advocacy this year should make the “public good” case explicitly and by name, rather than assuming it's understood. “Public good” and “regional public value” are not currently load-bearing terms in the administration's own framework, we need to supply them.
- Timing: the 90-day agency action-plan deadline (~mid-October 2026) is a real near-term forcing function. USDA/NIFA's implementation plan is worth watching closely and may be an opening for direct engagement before it's finalized.
 - How will the NIFA interpret the venture-investor model?
 - Will NIFA redefine merit review?
 - What is the fate of capacity funds? Will capacity funds be viewed as strategic investment or as legacy funding?
 - Will NIFA implementation plans distinguish “public good” research from commercially oriented research?
- Budget context: the report's silence on the proposed FY2027 NSF cuts is a genuine vulnerability in the administration's own narrative useful to flag in Hill conversations, since it undercuts the report's credibility on its own terms.
- Coalition: this is a natural point of alignment with APLU and other Land-grant-adjacent associations, who are likely reading the report the same way.

Suggested Next Step

I'd propose drafting a short statement (two to three paragraphs) that makes the “public good” argument directly, anchored in the report's own Land-grant reference, for use in future conversations and possibly as a formal response if OSTP opens a comment channel during the 90-day implementation window.

Independent Commentary:

Nietzel, Michael T. 2026. White House Science Report Calls For Reducing University Research Funding. Forbes, July 23, 2026. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelt Nietzel/2026/07/23/white-house-science-report-calls-for-reducing-university-research-funding/>

Flavelle, Christopher and Stolberg, Sheryl G. 2026. Trump's Plan for Science: More Money for A.I., Less for Universities. New York Times, July 22, 2026. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/07/22/us/politics/trump-research-funding-artificial-intelligence.html>

Mervis, Jeffrey. 2026. White House report calls for big changes to ‘calcified’ U.S. science system. Science, July 22, 2026. <https://www.science.org/content/article/white-house-report->

[calls-big-changes-calcified-u-s-science-system? cf chl tk=f6ivs5ugRjAw.g3KjCWkbnkAgFmB2jvn83vBH H5ZWY-1784811145-1.0.1.1-dJnMdht12yZ1l.NFo7Gq.KJ2vtDim2LaLzeVtwrFvGM](https://arstechnica.com/science/2026/07/white-house-report-says-trump-can-usher-in-a-new-golden-age-of-science/)

Timmer, John. 2026. White House report says Trump can usher in a “new golden age” of science. ARS Technica. July 23, 2026. <https://arstechnica.com/science/2026/07/white-house-report-says-trump-can-usher-in-a-new-golden-age-of-science/>

Oza, Anil. 2026. White House offers its science blueprint: More AI, less life sciences. Stat, July 24, 2026. <https://www.statnews.com/2026/07/24/science-new-golden-age-report-draws-mixed-reaction/>