



Reimagining Initiative Survey Report

agInnovation

July 2026



Survey Report

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Introduction

The purpose of the agInnovation Reimagining Initiative Survey is to support thoughtful planning, organizational alignment, and the continued evolution of agInnovation as a national leader within the Land-grant agricultural research system.

In recent years, agInnovation has made meaningful progress, including its transition from ESS/ESCOP, the development of a modern national brand, and the establishment of a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. At the same time, the challenges affecting agriculture, food systems, natural resources, and rural communities are becoming increasingly complex, interconnected, and urgent.

This initiative was designed to take a deliberate step back and assess whether agInnovation is optimally positioned to respond to future opportunities and challenges. Rather than focusing solely on incremental improvements, the survey invited participants to consider broader questions about the organization's purpose, structure, influence, priorities, partnerships, and long-term direction.

Survey responses have been compiled and summarized for clarity and ease of review. The findings in this report are intended to identify areas of alignment, highlight opportunities for further exploration, and inform discussions during the upcoming fly-in. They will also help guide decisions about how agInnovation can become more nimble, influential, and strategically focused.

Through this process, agInnovation seeks to strengthen its ability to serve agricultural research leaders across the Land-grant system, expand and deepen partnerships, elevate the visibility and impact of agricultural research among stakeholders and policymakers, and secure increased investment to advance innovation, competitiveness, and societal impact.

Participants

A total of 20 anonymous participants completed the agInnovation Reimagining Initiative Survey. Their responses were compiled and analyzed to provide a clear understanding of participant perspectives while identifying areas of alignment, opportunities for improvement, and topics warranting further exploration.

Because some survey questions were optional, response counts varied by question. Average scores were calculated using only the responses submitted for each individual question.



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Section 1 – Current Value and Strengths

This section summarizes how participants assessed the importance of agInnovation's current functions at the national level.

Rating questions include the number of responses and the average score. Open-ended responses are listed as submitted, only correcting minor grammatical errors.

Rating Scale

Extremely Valuable – 5

Very Valuable – 4

Moderately Valuable – 3

Slightly Valuable – 2

Not Valuable – 1

Multiple Choice Questions

Question	Federal advocacy and representation	Multi-institutional research coordination	Regional collaboration
Extremely Valuable	15	9	9
Very Valuable	2	8	7
Moderately Valuable	2	1	2
Slightly Valuable	0	1	0
Not Valuable	0	0	0
Averages	4.65	4.25	4.30



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Question	National networking and peer relationships	Information sharing and communication	Leadership opportunities	National visibility for agricultural research
Extremely Valuable	11	16	9	18
Very Valuable	8	3	6	1
Moderately Valuable	0	1	3	1
Slightly Valuable	0	0	1	0
Not Valuable	0	1	0	0
Averages	4.55	4.80	4.15	4.85

Open-Ended Questions

What is the single most valuable function agInnovation provides today?

Summary:

Common themes: agInnovation's greatest value is serving as a unified national voice for agricultural research while connecting leaders, coordinating regional efforts, and advancing shared priorities.

- National advocacy and visibility
- Regional and national coordination
- Networking and peer connection
- Strategic priority-setting
- Leadership and professional development

Full Responses:

1. National visibility for agricultural research
2. Provide leadership opportunities to directors for their professional growth and maturation.
3. agInnovation's most valuable function is bringing all the regional associations together. The regional associations do lots of the work on managing multistate portfolios and sharing information etc. but agInnovation (through the ED's offices and committees) focuses all the regional efforts to create a national perspective.



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4. Networking and peer interactions.
5. The regional associations work well together to provide a national and international perspective on the grand challenges and emerging issues. The previous Roadmaps were well done, based on data and science and input from our stakeholders.
6. Science that feeds the world
7. Advocacy thru APLU
8. Networking and communication. Advocacy should be priority#1, but ability to effectively do so is inhibited by current structure and bureaucratic landscape within APLU.
9. Advocacy and Networking.
10. Coordinating regular communication between regional Experiment Stations; being a liaison to USDA; communicating Federal updates; coordinating and preparing draft responses to Federal agencies and NGOs; organizing and participating in regional and national meetings; supporting multi-state projects.
11. Collaborative approach to road mapping path for LGI research
12. Advocacy for Experiment Stations at the national level. This goes beyond advocacy just for capacity grant funding increases (although critical) but includes advocacy on issues critical to the management and operation of research facilities, reporting and identifying important research areas to focus grant opportunities.
13. Providing a national mechanism to aid in advocacy for federal ag research funding to our land grant ag experiment stations and colleges of ag.
14. Regional and national research coordination and advocacy
15. Advocacy and development of national strategic priorities
16. Networking among peers and professional development opportunities at annual meetings.
17. Public-facing recognition and context setting for Experiment Station research.
18. One of agInnovation's greatest strengths today is its ability to foster connectivity among Agricultural Experiment Station (AES) leaders across the nation. This national network, coupled with the strategic initiatives led by the agInnovation Chair and its standing committees, provides a valuable platform for collaboration, information sharing, and coordinated action on issues of national importance.
19. Regional and national advocacy for agriculture.
20. agInnovation members conduct the majority of publicly funded ag research. agInnovation (the organization) serves as the national voice. The role of the national voice is to attract resources supporting relevant, impactful research for the public good.



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What should agInnovation stop doing, reduce, or spend less time on?

Summary:

Common themes: agInnovation should spend less time on bureaucracy, repetitive meetings, low-impact committee work, and partnerships or processes that dilute its ability to advocate and lead effectively.

- Reduce bureaucracy, committee work, and process-heavy activities.
- Cut redundant meetings, reports, and lengthy agenda briefings.
- Reassess low-value awards and longstanding activities.
- Reduce dependence on APLU and reevaluate joint work with Extension.
- Shift time toward advocacy, funding, visibility, and external impact.
- Create more candid discussions and broader stakeholder engagement.
- Eliminate activities that lack clear purpose, outcomes, or strategic alignment.

Full Responses:

1. Same people speak at all meetings, perhaps have a format where there are more open and frank discussions.
2. Ineffective activities associated with the BAA/FANR. The power dynamic needs to be changed. We spend a lot of time and energy formulating strategies, justifications, etc. only to be minimized.
3. Awards- there are too many and they don't really seem to mean anything to anyone. If keeping any, keep the multistate award since that is truly unique and no other organization can or will do one like it.
We should spend less time worrying about including Extension. Of course we should find ways to work better with them, but all of OUR initiatives do not have to be inclusive of Extension.
4. We have too many meetings. Form a committee to reduce the number of meetings.
5. agInnovation should reduce prioritizing process or organizational structure over impact, focus more on our stakeholders.
6. responding to federal leadership - rather than leading
7. Nothing
8. Committee work and bureaucratic endeavors with no clear intended outcome externally that will enhance ability to advocate for research funding.
9. Nothing
10. Too many in-person meetings with redundant content. The CARET meeting has low value. Too many consulting groups and surveys.
11. I think things are at the right tempo.



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12. There are two specific areas that agInnovation needs to reevaluate its interactions with. First and foremost is its relationship in APLU. APLU has dramatically changed since its first inception. Originally, APLU served as a strong advocate for the land-grant system and its research and outreach components. Over time, it has grown into an advocacy group for all Universities such that land-grant universities are now a minority in the organization. This has shifted APLU's priorities away from strong advocacy for land-grant university priorities such as capacity funding and opened up funding for non-land grant universities. APLU has also established several boards on special topics. All these boards and non-land-grant universities have representation and voting rights on committees that direct APLU on policy and budget advocacy, thereby reducing agInnovation to a very small minority member on these important decision-making committees. This situation has had a negative effect on agInnovation budgetary and policy issues becoming part of APLU's advocacy plan. APLU's structure has also hindered agInnovation's ability to conduct our financial business as their bureaucracy makes financial transactions slow and difficult. We would be better off greatly reducing our interactions and therefore dependence on APLU.
We need to further reevaluate how much we interact with Extension. While some interactions are very important, too often their vision and goals do not coincide with those of agInnovation. They tend to insert themselves in agInnovation activities that we develop and appear promising but will exclude us in their activities. Joint meetings tend to be geared towards Extension interests even if the majority of the organization falls on agInnovation. We should consider reducing joint meetings so that we can tailor our meeting to deal with our issues.
13. Bureaucracy. Too many committees engaged in activities that do not advance our goal of increasing the visibility of the work we do in an effort to increase funding for our member states. Some committees do things just because that's how we always have done it and lose sight of the purpose of agInnovation.
For instance, our science and tech committee spends an inordinate amount of time on awards and award management, rather than advancing their original purpose. Perhaps a separate awards committee could be formed to allow STC to do what they were meant to do. Do we even need as many awards as we have? We've added several new ones and it's unclear how they are adding to our goals. Awards are excellent to showcase our value, but perhaps we only need one or two, not five. Some regions do not even submit nominations for all categories or deadlines are extended because nominations are limited, which tells me that not all members value this extensive effort.
14. I do not have a sense of effort across the various activities but recommend that we collectively think how time can be dedicated to new initiatives that engage a broader group of stakeholders.
15. Current priorities are all important



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16. Stop relying on APLU BAA to lead limited federal advocacy efforts. Reduce time spent with other members of the BAA family to support seemingly futile efforts and/or stop trying to bring all members of the BAA family along or into the mix when all it will do is dilute agInnovation's efforts. Unlock the full potential of the 501(c)(3) non-profit by partnering with other NGOs and government agencies. Actively pursue philanthropic funding opportunities to enhance member services. Broaden reach by developing an enhanced communications strategy. Consider developing an independent advocacy effort and maybe hire a new firm to reach beyond USDA REE and NIFA programs.
17. Stop duplicating committee report-outs and longwinded committee agenda briefs for meetings. Briefs should be succinct and should be included in lieu of committee reports, they should not be drafted to be read at meetings like a script.
18. agInnovation should periodically evaluate its activities, committees, and priorities to ensure they continue to deliver meaningful value to the organization and its members. We should be willing to discontinue efforts that no longer have a clear purpose, measurable impact, or strategic alignment rather than maintaining them simply because they have existed historically. This would allow us to focus our limited time and resources on the initiatives that will have the greatest benefit for our members and the land-grant system.

Similarly, we should engage our partners—including APLU and Extension—with openness, candor, and transparency. When concerns or challenges arise, they should be discussed directly and constructively rather than avoided. At the same time, these conversations should be solution-oriented, with all parties committed to identifying opportunities to strengthen the partnership. Our goal should be to establish a shared vision, clear expectations, and a mutually beneficial path forward.

At the same time, we must recognize that strong partnerships do not require complete agreement on every issue. There will inevitably be times when agInnovation and its partners have different perspectives or priorities. When consensus cannot be reached, agInnovation must be prepared to make thoughtful, and at times difficult, decisions that are in the best long-term interest of the organization and the Agricultural Experiment Station system it represents. Remaining committed to our mission and strategic priorities, while continuing to engage partners respectfully and collaboratively, will position agInnovation to be a stronger and more effective national leader.
19. Reduce the frequency of regional meetings.
20. Worrying about the little stuff. And most of its little stuff...



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Section 2 – Future Opportunities and Impact

This section explores participants' perspectives on where agInnovation should focus its future influence, priorities, and level of ambition.

For multiple-choice questions, results are presented by showing how many participants selected each option. Open-ended responses are listed as submitted, only correcting minor grammatical errors. Rating questions include the number of responses and the average score.

Rating Scale

Strongly Agree – 5

Agree – 4

Neutral – 3

Disagree – 2

Strongly Disagree – 1

Multiple Choice Questions

Question	Where should agInnovation have greater influence or impact over the next 5-10 years?
Federal research funding	18
Public awareness of agricultural research	18
Philanthropic funding	16
Industry partnerships	14
National policy engagement	14
State and regional policy engagement	5
Shared research infrastructure	4
International collaboration	2

Question	What areas of emphasis should agInnovation have greater influence or impact over in the next 5-10 years?
Food systems innovation	18
Climate resilience	13
Water resources	9
Technology commercialization	7
Workforce development	6
Other (please specify)	2



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Other:

- 1 New and emerging technologies 2 research translation/adoption 3 national research coordination...I'm not too fond of the siloed topics that we keep emphasizing.
- Personally, I don't think agInnovation should have any impact on these or other specific topic areas. These topic areas might be best left to the regions to focus on. One "topic" that I think agInnovation could and should focus on is the importance/need for science and research.

Question	The challenges facing agriculture and food systems require agInnovation to evolve beyond its current role.
Strongly Agree	13
Agree	5
Neutral	2
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	0
Averages	4.55

Question	How ambitious should agInnovation be over the next decade?
Transformational national leadership role	12
Significant expansion of influence and activities	6
Moderate evolution of current role	2

Open-Ended Questions

If agInnovation were highly successful in 2035, what would be different?

Summary:

Common themes: participants envision a more autonomous, agile, and influential agInnovation that is widely recognized as the national voice for agricultural research and is able to secure substantially greater investment, shape priorities, and accelerate impact.



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- Greater autonomy and organizational agility
- Stronger national advocacy and policy influence
- Substantially increased research funding
- Greater public and policymaker visibility
- Recognition as the leading authority on agricultural research
- Stronger partnerships and faster research-to-impact pathways

Full Responses:

1. Be more consequential.
2. Much more autonomous with a great degree of self-determination. Less of animal of the APLU/BAA. Spending our time doing things that have impact rather than clicking off boxes while passing time between meetings. Becoming an organization that matters both internally and externally. Effective advocates and programming.
3. The science needed to feed our population would be valued by the general public and lawmakers. The US would be deploying innovative agriculture practices to combat climate change and we would seriously expand the use of alternative energy sources.
4. We are all about research. Our bold research agenda "the research roadmap" was diluted by FANR/APLU by including extension and to a lesser extent, academic programs. To really push our agenda we need some autonomy, or at least more freedom to operate.
5. a much greater emphasis on advocacy...we need to have a well-defined schedule of visits to the Hill from all of the regions to be coordinated with Lewis Burke Associates or another contracted agency... i.e. every week that Congress in session, agInnovation need to be engaging our Senators and Representatives.. Somehow, and I don't know how, agInnovation needs greater influence on OMB.
6. Moving beyond the idea that research, extension, and policy engagement are separate functions; in the current context, they increasingly need to be designed and utilized as a single learning system.
7. Communications/messaging
8. A focused long-term advocacy effort to promote the societal relevance of food and agricultural research with clear outcome goals and involving diverse external partners will have resulted in a more than doubling of research funding, rather than celebrating flat funding as is the norm currently.
9. Significant increase in Capacity funding; renewed Federal investment in agriculture research infrastructure; a nimble organization capable of coordinating a rapid multi-state response(s) (i.e., research, development, and education) to emerging challenges. Well organized and impactful in-person meetings.
10. Success in increased funding for ag research.



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11. agInnovation would be called upon by Federal Agencies to help develop research priorities and funding levels.
agInnovation would be in full control of its own financials and would be able to fully support Chair initiatives and other agInnovation priorities.
A robust 501 c 3 would be actively engaged in obtaining philanthropic support as well as obtaining grants to provide funding for various initiatives.
12. agInnovation needs to be lean and agile, an organization that can adapt quickly to change and public needs without spending so much time arguing with our partners over priorities.
13. Aginnovation will be implementing regional research engines rapidly reducing the time from R&D to adoption.
14. There would be adequate funding and excellent public knowledge of the importance of research and especially by policy makers to avoid situations like the one we are currently facing.
15. agInnovation would be viewed as the top resource for all things related to agricultural and food science. The footprint would be so large that philanthropists, corporate sponsors, NGOs, and government agencies would be seeking advice and support agInnovation-led initiatives.
16. Increase funding and use that to stimulate more creative or competitive research opportunities (e.g. solicit proposals in areas of interest)
17. A successful agInnovation would be recognized as the trusted national voice for the Agricultural Experiment Station system and a highly respected leader in advancing agricultural research, innovation, next gen science leaders, and the land-grant mission.

On Capitol Hill, agInnovation would be viewed as a credible and influential partner, helping secure the federal investments needed to address today's challenges while preparing for those of tomorrow. As an aspirational goal, federal investment in agricultural research should grow to represent at least 1% of total federal R&D spending in the near term, with a long-term objective of reaching 5% over the next decade. Achieving this level of investment would reflect a national recognition of agricultural research as critical infrastructure for food security, economic competitiveness, public health, environmental stewardship, and national security. agInnovation would become the organization that policymakers, federal agencies, industry leaders, commodity groups, foundations, and other stakeholders turn to for timely information, scientific expertise, evidence-based recommendations, and insight into emerging issues. It would serve as the primary convener for discussions on the future of agricultural research, fostering collaboration across sectors and ensuring the Agricultural Experiment Station system remains at the forefront of scientific discovery and innovation.

To achieve this vision, agInnovation would maintain a consistent and proactive



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communications strategy, engaging stakeholders, congressional offices, federal agencies, and partners on a regular cadence. Rather than communicating only in response to emerging issues, agInnovation would continuously demonstrate the value, relevance, and return on investment of public agricultural research through compelling data, success stories, and coordinated advocacy. Through these sustained relationships and strategic communications, agInnovation would strengthen support for the land-grant system and position agricultural research as an essential national priority.

18. agInnovation is the go-to, global, gold standard, ag research enterprise.

Section 3 – Organizational Design and Governance

This section examines participants' perspectives on agInnovation's current organizational design and governance.

For multiple-choice questions, results are presented by showing how many participants selected each option. Open-ended responses are listed as submitted, only correcting minor grammatical errors. Rating questions include the number of responses and the average score.

Rating Scales

Extremely Well – 5

Very Well – 4

Moderately Well – 3

Slightly Well – 2

Not Well At All – 1

Enable Significantly – 5

Enable Moderately – 4

Neither Enable nor Inhibit – 3

Somewhat Inhibit – 2

Significantly Inhibit – 1



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Multiple Choice Questions

Question	How well does the current agInnovation structure support the organization's future ambitions and opportunities?
Extremely Well	1
Very Well	5
Moderately Well	7
Slightly Well	4
Not Well At All	1
Averages	3.05

Question	To what extent do the current governance structure, bylaws, and operating procedures enable agInnovation to adapt and pursue new opportunities?
Enable Significantly	2
Enable Moderately	5
Neither Enable nor Inhibit	4
Somewhat Inhibit	5
Significantly Inhibit	2
Averages	3.00

Question	Which components of the current structure would benefit most from examination during this initiative?
Governance structure	8
Leadership rotation model	7
Chair term length	6
Committee structure	9
Voting and decision-making processes	4
Bylaws	4
Relationship with APLU	11
Relationship between national and regional organizations	5
Staffing and operational capacity	5
Funding model	8
Utilization of the 501(c)(3)	10
Communications and visibility	11
Other (please specify)	0



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Open-Ended Questions

If designing agInnovation from scratch today, what is the first thing you would do differently?

Summary:

Common themes: agInnovation's effectiveness is limited by unclear roles, short leadership terms, bureaucracy, and its current relationship with APLU, with many calling for greater autonomy and a more unified national structure.

- Clarify roles, authority, and decision-making.
- Increase autonomy from APLU and FANR
- Extend Chair terms to support continuity.
- Reassess the regional and national structure.
- Simplify bylaws, committees, and processes.
- Strengthen stakeholder engagement and communications
- Position the 501(c)(3) as a stronger organizational foundation.
- Create a more unified national advocacy structure.

Full Responses:

1. clearly defined roles
2. Everything possible to give the organization increased functional autonomy. The regional and national structure is interesting and works to a large degree. The regional associations are autonomous and serve the regions well. The national organization is subservient to APLU/BAA and is reliant on regional leaders that have differing priorities based on their constituent members. National leadership may be required but should not in any way be linked to FANR.
3. agInnovation was designed when communication was more challenging and breaking the nation up into regions worked well. In today's day and age, which isn't an issue and honestly, I question the need for the regional associations beyond managing the multistate portfolios (and even that I wonder about!). Representatives (ED offices) from different parts of the country would still be highly useful and needed for diversity of thoughts/priorities but have them all be one organization with someone at the head to help guide the entire organization who could speak with one unified voice.
4. Change the term length of the chair. The continuity is provided by the EDs, but there is no continuity or ability to push multiyear initiatives by the chair or leadership. As mentioned previously, I'm frustrated by our relationship with APLU. Not sure how to change, but as long as I've been a director it seems agInnovation has been suppressed relative to extension.



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5. Length of the Chair---at least two years
6. Be extended into a stronger regional innovation model that treats agInnovation not simply as a coordinating body, but as a modern platform for convening talent, infrastructure, and coalitions around the hardest or even wicked agricultural and environmental problems.
7. Governance Structure
8. Separate advocacy effort for research funding outside of the current APLU structure. Competing interests, lack of leadership and the unnecessarily complicated current structure driving funding requests lacks vision, responsiveness and our contribution programmatically and financially is diluted under the guise of the system and family harmony. The current Sr VP of FANR is too influential, does not facilitate well and is often not responsive to agInnovation concerns. Structural reorganization and or a transparent review process are lacking but needed.
9. Better coordination with Extension. Leading role in coordinating multi-state responses to emerging challenges--facilitate acquisition of resources to address problems.
10. Change the relationship with APLU.
11. Take it all down. Develop a clear mission and include efforts that ONLY address this mission. Eliminate bureaucracy. One website, not several, showcasing our work an impact.
12. Not necessarily a start from scratch item, but the formation of a committee structure focused on external partner engagement and coalition building.
13. Probably nothing
14. Reorganize the organization to put the 501(c)(3) as the base with all other components managed within. Treat APLU BAA and corresponding sections as partners rather than extended members of an organizational family.
15. National election for Chair selection process; remove the one-year terms and regional rotation for national leadership. Rotation comes along with an obligatory feeling.
16. Building on my previous response, I believe our first priority should be establishing agInnovation as the trusted national voice for the Agricultural Experiment Station system and a highly respected leader in advancing agricultural research, innovation, the next generation of scientific leaders, and the land-grant mission. Achieving this vision will require a deliberate focus on building and strengthening relationships with policymakers, federal agencies, industry, commodity organizations, foundations, and other key stakeholders. We also need a more intentional and coordinated communications strategy that clearly articulates agInnovation's value, demonstrates the impacts of the Agricultural Experiment Station system, and reinforces the return on investment of public agricultural



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research. Dare I ask that we hire or establish an agInnovation communications team (I do not mean borrowing our AES comms folks but a dedicated team)? To accomplish this, agInnovation should develop and implement a strategic stakeholder engagement plan. This engagement effort should be led by the Budget and Legislative Committee (BLC), coordinated closely with the Science and Technology Committee (STC) to ensure our messaging is grounded in scientific priorities and emerging issues, and guided by the oversight and leadership of the agInnovation Chair. A communications plan will also be necessary, guided by communications specialists who would also have a voice in the engagement plan. A coordinated, organization-wide approach will strengthen our national presence, build credibility with external audiences, and position agInnovation as a trusted source of information, expertise, and leadership.

17. Identify strengths of various institutions and develop collaboration opportunities with other institutions with similar research needs and interests.
18. Draft new bylaws to reflect the wants and need of agInnovation. I feel like we're stuck in the past.

Are there any specific bylaw provisions, governance practices, or organizational processes that you believe limit agInnovation's effectiveness or future potential?

Summary:

Common themes: agInnovation should reduce outdated governance practices, frequent leadership turnover, and structural dependence on APLU so it can operate with greater continuity, speed, and national influence.

- End strict regional leadership rotation.
- Extend leadership terms for continuity.
- Establish a national Executive Director
- Strengthening coordination between the Chair and BLC
- Streamline shared governance and decision-making.
- Increase agInnovation's independence from APLU.
- Use the 501(c)(3) as a stronger organizational foundation.
- Reexamine outdated bylaws, rules, and committee structures.



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Full Responses:

1. Most of them. Reorganize from the ground up based on need, vision, and priorities rather than tackling specific bylaw provisions, governance practices, or organizational processes. Most are archaic and have been written/developed by generations of committees as modes of internal organizational agreement...ugh!
2. The "rotation" of leadership amongst the regions. We focus so much on who's region should be in charge next, that we may not be getting the best leaders. We may have a great leader who could step up this year or next but may not even be in our region by the time it cycles back around 5 years.
Another issue I see is one ED office in charge of a committee. Some committees carry a much larger burden than others. I think there should be a structure that allows at least two ED offices to be in charge of each committee. This can relieve the burden as well as providing continuity when ED offices change staff or if the committee needs to rotate to a different region.
3. I'm not happy with the level of synergy and interactions between the chair and the BLC. It seems the BLC operates on its own with little or no input from the chair. That may be specific to who is in the chair's role.
4. Need a national level Executive Director while Chairs rotate by region to provide consistency and effectiveness.
5. Too much turnover in leadership (national chair). There is a learning curve involved. Also, one-year rotating position across regions does not provide sufficient timing for implementation of meaningful initiatives and turnover limits effective implementation of those initiatives that do progress.
6. We need a physical presence in DC - A national ED (or similar - this could be a non-PhD role, even, someone with advocacy/communications/fundraising training/experience and experience) who can provide continuous organization visibility and support to a national chair consistently to avoid institutional and initiative loss with each annual rotation. EDs have regional activities that can limit the time they spend on national efforts, so having a national rep would eliminate these conflicts.
7. None that I am aware of. I think effort can be adapted within the existing organization.
8. At times of rapid change where decisions need to be made quickly, current shared governance structures can slow progress.
9. The organization is tied too closely to APLU BAA and the other sections. The 501(c)(3) offers an opportunity to become less dependent on the existing family. The organization should re-consider operating as two separate, yet closely tied organizations, and restructure under the 501(c)(3) umbrella. This would provide the independence necessary to achieve agInnovation's full potential.



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10. Chair term limits and strict regional rotation.
11. Several organizational factors currently limit agInnovation's effectiveness and long-term impact.

Leadership continuity. The relatively short term of the Chair, coupled with the number of new priorities often introduced by each incoming Chair, can make it difficult to sustain momentum on long-term initiatives. As a result, important efforts may lose focus, remain incomplete, or be replaced before achieving their intended outcomes. Developing a mechanism for maintaining continuity across leadership transitions would strengthen the organization's ability to achieve strategic goals.

Organizational agility. While our policies and procedures provide important governance and accountability, they can also create unnecessary bureaucracy that slows decision-making and implementation. Identifying opportunities to streamline processes and provide greater flexibility would allow agInnovation to respond more quickly to emerging issues and strategic opportunities while maintaining appropriate oversight.

Limited and inconsistent engagement in Washington, D.C. agInnovation would benefit from a more consistent presence and engagement with national partners and policymakers in Washington, D.C. For example, Extension's national Executive Director regularly participates in APLU and other Washington-based meetings, providing ECOP with early awareness of emerging issues, policy priorities, funding opportunities, and key relationships. A similar level of sustained engagement would enhance agInnovation's situational awareness, strengthen strategic partnerships, and increase its influence in shaping national agricultural research priorities and federal investment. This may be accomplished through the recommended heightened engagement effort and plan mentioned previously.
12. Current bylaws should be reexamined for their efficacy and how well they accomplish the objectives/goals of the agInnovation.
13. We have lots of rules and regulations that don't support what the organization could be: the go-to, global, gold standard, ag research enterprise.

Section 4 – Financial Architecture and the 501(c)(3)

This section examines participants' views on agInnovation's future funding strategy, the potential role of its 501(c)(3), and any concerns related to expanding that role.

For multiple-choice questions, results are presented by showing how many participants selected each option. Open-ended responses are listed as submitted, only correcting minor grammatical errors. Rating questions include the number of responses and the average score.



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Rating Scales

Essential – 5

Very Important – 4

Moderately Important – 3

Slightly Important – 2

Not Important – 1

Multiple Choice Questions

Question	How important is it for agInnovation to pursue funding sources beyond traditional federal appropriations?
Essential	13
Very Important	5
Moderately Important	1
Slightly Important	0
Not Important	0
Averages	4.60

Question	Which opportunities should agInnovation prioritize through its 501(c)(3)?
Corporate partnerships	18
Foundation funding	16
Public-private partnerships	16
Multi-institutional collaborative initiatives	11
Dedicated staff capacity	10
Innovation funds	7
Coalition building	5
Shared services	5
Policy education activities	4
National grant administration	2
Other (please specify)	1

Other: I would lump foundation, corporate, and public-private into a single selection that should be prioritized.



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Question	Which statement best reflects your view?
The 501(c)(3) should become a major strategic platform for future growth.	13
The 501(c)(3) should play a targeted supporting role.	5
The 501(c)(3) should remain limited to its current role.	1
Unsure.	1

Open-Ended Questions

What concerns, if any, do you have regarding expanded use of the 501(c)(3)?

Summary:

Common themes: supportive of expanding the 501(c)(3), but want clear governance, dedicated capacity, legal and financial oversight, and safeguards to ensure it complements rather than competes with member institutions.

- Clarify its purpose, scope, and governance
- Define how funds will be managed and distributed
- Ensure adequate staffing and financial oversight
- Maintain legal and compliance expertise
- Avoid competing with member institutions for donors
- Protect equitable value for institutions of all sizes
- Keep administrative costs and overhead controlled
- Treat the 501(c)(3) as one part of broader reform, not a complete solution

Full Responses:

1. I like the idea of using this as a major strategic platform for future growth but am concerned that there may be undue emphasis on creating a non-profit foundation that takes away from solving the structural problems of this organization. I would like to see it be a "both and" situation but have concerns that nonprofit will be viewed as the fix all in this initiative.
2. My only concern about expanded use will be who will manage it? Will we need a dedicated finance person?



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3. The 501(c)3 is pretty new, do not see any issues now, and its expansion will be good, but issues could emerge in the future. Will the 501(c)(3) be of equal value to both large and small LGUs? I could see the large institutions with a history of obtaining corporate and philanthropic funding having undue influence over the 501(c)3. This influence would come from the large LGUs bringing their traditional donors to contribute to the 501(c)3.
4. I do not have any concerns. We need to evaluate our 501(c)(3) in five years.
5. I do not have enough information to understand what this would mean. However, how would it be managed? How would funds be distributed? How would it be set up to ensure low overhead (administrative costs).
6. None. We should use it to its full potential.
7. There needs to be clear scope and communication of its expanded activity.
8. The governance structure.
9. Limited capacity without additional personnel resources.
10. Adherence to legal compliance activities associated with the 501(c)(3); we do not have that expertise in-house.
11. As has been discussed previously, the development of the 501(c)(3) and efforts to secure funding from industry, foundations, or other external partners should be approached thoughtfully. Many of these organizations already have strong relationships with individual land-grant universities and Agricultural Experiment Stations. As a result, there is potential for perceived or actual conflicts, or at least uncomfortable situations, for agInnovation directors whose institutions are cultivating partnerships with the same organizations.
It will be important to clearly define the role of the 501(c)(3) and establish guiding principles that complement—rather than compete with—the fundraising and partnership activities of individual institutions. The national organization should focus on pursuing opportunities that provide collective value to the Agricultural Experiment Station system while avoiding situations where agInnovation could be viewed as competing with its member institutions for the same resources or partnerships.

Section 5 – Coalitions and Partnerships

This section explores participants' perspectives on the external partners that offer the greatest opportunities for agInnovation and identifies partnership opportunities the organization may not yet be pursuing.

For multiple-choice questions, results are presented by showing how many participants selected each option. Open-ended responses are listed exactly as submitted. Rating questions include the number of responses and the average score.



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Multiple Choice Questions

Question	Which external partners offer the greatest opportunity for agInnovation?
Industry	15
Foundations	14
Commodity groups	10
Venture capital or impact investors	8
Federal agencies	7
NGOs	4
Regional policy organizations (WGA, CSG-West, etc.)	2
State governments	2
Other (please specify)	2

Other:

- I really don't know how to answer this question. Success has been limited with so many of the external partners listed. Individual universities have success with many of the listed groups, often as a result of proximity. Not sure if this is the right question to ask.
- It depends on the goal of the partnerships and coalitions... is the goal someone we can solicit funding from or is the goal more policy related so we can encourage additional funding that way.

Open-Ended Questions

What partnership opportunity is agInnovation currently missing?

Summary:

Common themes: agInnovation is missing significant opportunities to build coordinated partnerships with industry, food-sector organizations, NGOs, investors, and other external stakeholders beyond its current federal relationships.



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Full Responses:

1. Industry
2. opportunities with food industry
3. There are many industry groups and NGOs vested in the importance of ag research and the work of our scientists, but we are not engaged and there is not a coordination of efforts. Yearly turnover in leadership at national level makes this challenging. We can't rely on APLU/FANR to be sole voice for reasons stated above.
4. agInnovation as an entity is missing most of the partners listed above.
5. venture cap
6. Almost all of the above should be included! agInnovation is currently only fully engaged at the USDA REE and NIFA levels.
7. As an organization, all the above...

Section 6 – Fly-In Priorities

This section identifies the topics participants believe should receive the greatest attention during the fly-in and captures the key questions and desired outcomes they hope the initiative will address.

For multiple-choice questions, results are presented by showing how many participants selected each option. Open-ended responses are listed as submitted, only correcting minor grammatical errors. Rating questions include the number of responses and the average score.

Multiple Choice Questions

Question	Which topics should receive the greatest attention during the fly-in?
Leveraging the 501(c)(3)	14
National visibility and communications	13
Governance and leadership	11
Organizational redesign	10
Coalition building	8
Funding strategy	8



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Relationship with APLU	8
Industry partnerships	7
Relationship between national and regional organizations	6
Philanthropic partnerships	5
Policy engagement	4
Staffing and operational capacity	1

Open-Ended Questions

What is the most important question you want the fly-in to answer?

Summary:

Common themes: participants want the fly-in to clarify agInnovation's future mission, structure, relationship with APLU, use of the 501(c)(3), and willingness to pursue bold changes with clear ownership and accountability.

Full Responses:

1. Where do we go with the next white house administration?
2. What is possible and can we break out of ties of our long history?
3. I have serious questions about the relationship with APLU. In my hypothetical redesign answer above, I mentioned not having the regional associations... I don't think that is terribly realistic for a variety of reasons, but I DO think having a single person at the national level guiding the regional associations would be highly useful. agInnovation is the only leg of the stool that does not have someone in Doug's office. We all know how useful those daily around-the-water-cooler conversations can be. Extension and Academic Programs HAS that opportunity, but we don't. Extension always seems to get some preferential treatment and I wonder if it is because they have Doug's ear.
4. Internal governance and relationship with APLU.
5. More effectively align Research, Extension and Teaching efforts to deliver on our shared land-grant mission --- increase collaboration.
6. Become change agents for Ag.
7. Visibility and Communications
8. Is there the political will to be bold and try something different versus relying on the strategies of the past that are not conducive with future success. If so, how do you



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get there and what is the strategy to deal with the naysayers within the current system?

9. How committed will agInnovation be in pushing back against policies that hurt our institutions over the next 2+ years.
10. From the outset, the focus has been on the 501(c)(3). Why? For what purpose? How?
11. How can agInnovation and its relevance be better emphasized in our society?
12. Relationship with APLU
13. What is the mission of agInnovation?
14. Regional and national coordination and coalition building.
15. How we ensure sustainability and impact.
16. How should we reorganize to become a modern organization with the non-profit serving as the foundation of the organization?
17. What should growth look like for agInnovation? (money, personnel, activities, influence)
18. Once we agree on our strategic priorities, who will own each priority and be accountable for driving it forward?
19. Leveraging the 501(c)(3).
20. What are we willing to do to meet the vision of the future?

Complete the sentence: If this initiative succeeds, agInnovation will...

Full Responses:

1. be more consequential.
2. be an organization where its members are enthusiastic participants and wields influence over the issues that are important to the research mission.
3. focus less on procedure-for-procedures-sake and will be more nimble and adaptable to the changing political landscape.
4. double federal funding and create significant other funding for ag research at the LGUs.
5. become a high-performing organization that accelerates innovation, strengthens food systems, addresses global food and agricultural challenges, and delivers exceptional value to its stakeholders.
6. have a stronger policy role, but that role should be framed as policy support and policy co-design rather than narrow advocacy.
7. have better impact and influence with public and policy makers.
8. See answer to prior question regarding vision for success in 2035.
9. be stronger collaboratively and offer greater impact and visibility to member institutions.



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10. be recognized for its critical role increasing investments in agricultural research and coordinating high impact Federal and regional research across Agricultural Experiment Stations.
11. become a common part of conversations about relevant research to address our most complex problems.
12. become a dynamic force for agricultural innovation in the world.
13. be aligned strategically to maximize its efforts for showcasing the critical research we do/support and allow us to be nimble/agile to seek funding opportunities and partnerships for our members quickly without getting bogged down in bureaucracy and squabble with our partner organizations. Ideally, these opportunities would be outside of the standard federal funding ecosystem, thus not competing with partner orgs (such as Extension).
14. demonstrate its adaptability in redirected effort that engages a broader set of stakeholders.
15. be more nimble and responsive in unpredictable environment.
16. become recognized as the primary resource for agricultural and food science.
17. have a clear vision for where the ORGANIZATION wants to go - not just a vision for the future of ag research.
18. see my answer to the previous question on our success by 2035...
19. be a nimble organization that supports functions of each of the component organizations (Universities) to accomplish their land grant mission.
20. be the go-to, global, gold standard, ag research enterprise.

Additional Comments

Do you have any additional comments, ideas, examples, or concerns you would like the planning team to consider? Responses:

1. I know there is a lot of discontent with APLU recently, but I don't want us to throw the baby out with the bathwater... their national voice is powerful and while it doesn't always align with ours perfectly, I think changing how we work with them will be better in the long run than breaking away from them entirely.
2. Let's stop trying to patch our fairly ineffective organization and TRULY re-imagine it from the ground up. Let's not miss this opportunity - it's been a long time coming and we owe it to ourselves and our members to stop doing the same things over and over without significant impact.
3. Let's consider a complete transformation of the organization versus working as two separate organizations.
4. Start the process with a clean slate and come out of the planning process with a map, not a finished product.