

agInnovation Budget and Legislative Committee (BLC)

<http://escop.info/committee/blc/>

March 25, 2025, NOTES – ALL MEMBERS and LIAISONS

3 pm CT/4 pm ET

Committee Members:

<p>Chair: Steve Lommel (agInnovation South) Past Chair: Anton Bekkerman (agInnovation NE) Incoming Chair: Gary Pierzynski (agInnovation NC)</p> <p>Members: Alton Thompson (ARD) Ulises Toledo (ARD) Derek McLean (agInnovation NC) Wendie Cohick (agInnovation NE) Scott Senseman (agInnovation South) Sreekala Bajwa (agInnovation West) Shawn Donkin (agInnovation West)</p>	<p>Liaisons: Lisa Townson (Extension)* Bob Mattive (CARET) Doug Steele (APLU FANR) Elizabeth Stulberg (Lewis-Burke, Advocacy) Gary Mayo (NIFA) Kevin Cain (BVM) Laura Jolly (BHHS)</p> <p>Executive Vice-Chair Jeanette Thurston (agInnovation North Central, ED) Chris Hamilton (agInnovation North Central, AD)</p> <p>*Bill Hoffman provides support for Lisa Townson</p>
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Outstanding Action Items:

- All: Consider compiling a "hot sheet" of local impacts from federal pauses/changes to share with Hill staff
- (Done) Steve and Jeanette to gather clear examples explaining F&A costs in layman's terms
 - See: https://www.cogr.edu/sites/default/files/FA%20Slide%20Deck%20-Nov2019_v3graphicsforwebsite_0.pdf and [Facilities & Administrative Costs Explainer](#)
- Next meeting date: April 22, 2025, 3 pm CT/4 pm ET (For members only)

Attendees: Steve Lommel, Gary Pierzynski, Kevin Cain, Bret Hess, Jose Toledo, Lisa Townson, Scott Senseman, Shawn Donkin, Elizabeth Stulberg, Cindy Morley, Alton Thompson, Derek McLean, Jeanette Thurston, Chris Hamilton

Zoom recording (valid for 150 days from 3/25/2025):

https://uwmadison.zoom.us/rec/share/KVCroDTiCHPOuO-rRTJ6CMPULxjHOs_KShCrAYyxsstghiO9kjVPSPbsxp2eD9Ao.MzQs1gLoxYbgjTnq?startTime=1742932099000
Passcode: pTg^9e3k

Meeting Agenda (Call Notes in Italics for clarity):

1. Welcome and introductions, as needed – Steve Lommel, BLC Chair
 - *One of our NIFA reps, Paula Geiger, former NIFA Budget Officer, has retired. Gary Mayo, NIFA Legislative Affairs Officer, will continue to serve as our NIFA rep to BLC.*
 - *Thank you to Gary Pierzynski for agreeing to represent BLC on the Committee on Legislation and Policy (CLP). CLP meets this Wednesday.*
2. Washington, DC Update – Elizabeth Stulberg, LBA (15 min)

- *Continuing Resolution (CR): Elizabeth Stulberg discussed the recent passing of the CR through September 30 and some of the reasons behind it passing, along with the Democrats' concerns. No earmarks included, so technically, a budget cut, although the 1% across the board cuts were avoided. No NIFA or ARS programs cut, but also no facilities funding.*
 - *Debt ceiling is likely to be increased as neither party wants default and potentially paired with spending cuts. Elizabeth also explained the relationship of the debt ceiling to the deficit to the group.*
 - *Reconciliation aims for \$1.7T in spending cuts to reduce deficit but also with \$4.5T in tax cuts over 10 years.*
 - *Ag Committee tasked with finding \$230B in cuts, likely impacting mandatory programs like SNAP. Reconciliation is a republican priority and will be tackled prior to addressing the FY26 budget.*
 - *Overall, there seems to be good support for LGUs and Capacity funds, but there's still no Farm Bill and it appears it will be difficult to pass one at this time without funding for new admin's initiatives. NIFA lines are difficult to touch/target for cuts—there are many lines and are in statute. This is unlike NSF, where the new administration may decide to focus their funding on specific programs without Congressional approval.*
 - *For those projects under review or terminated, RFPs during the Biden admin requested priorities including Climate and DEI, so researchers were responding to these priorities in their proposals. This administration will release new RFPs in alignment with this admin's priorities, but it will take some time to transition, causing grant delays.*
 - *Further group discussion ensued on the federal budget, new admin's activities, and personnel/leadership changes. FYI: All federal agency employees, including NIFA, ARS and NSF, probationary staff that were fired have been re-instated.*
 - *Jun Park appointed as acting ARS administrator*
 - *Dionne Toombs moved from NIFA to head ARS Nutrition section*
 - *Kevin Kephart now Associate Director for Programs at NIFA*
 - *New NIFA Director, Jaye Hamby, announced late last week. Doug Steele and LBA have plans on meeting with him soon.*
3. Group Sharing/Discussion/Brainstorming (35 min, may not address all discussion topics during this meeting)
- February DC CARET/AHS Meetings and Hill Visits:
 - What was heard regarding our primary funding lines, other funding agencies, reconciliation, appropriations, and the farm bill? *See Elizabeth's advocacy report above.*
 - Are there any questions that agInnovation and BLC can answer for staff and members (communicate through LBA)?
 - *Lisa Townson: Staffers seeking info on local impacts of federal pauses/changes*
 - *Derek McLean*
 1. *NE congressional member:*
 1. *Questions on high-path avian influenza, supply chains, researcher morale*
 2. *Interest in listening sessions with faculty on grant delays, project cancellations, and overall morale of faculty. These discussions were held with the member/staff.*

3. *Suggested a need for clear explanations on LGU structure, ARS vs university roles*
 4. *Discussed ARS versus university, how training and facilities are used, other impacts to ag research.*
 5. *Plan to follow up in June with the same group.*
2. *There's a need for effective ways to explain F&A costs to congressional staff (i.e., getting an oil change to maintain your car). **Action Item:** Steve and Jeanette will find these materials from FANR and other sources and then share them with the group. These were shared with BLC members:*
 - https://www.cogr.edu/sites/default/files/FA%20Slide%20Deck%20-Nov2019_v3graphicsforwebsite_0.pdf
 - [Facilities & Administrative Costs Explainer](#)
 - What have been the USDA and other funding agency actions in the last few weeks that may impact support of ag research--both amount and research direction? *Not discussed today.*
 - Are there any actions or information BLC (in collaboration with other agInnovation committees) can provide in response to requests of the impacts to these actions (certainly the Hill but also non-profit organizations/professional societies who are requesting impacts, others)?
 - What are the new administration priorities and how are our agInnovation Roadmap pillar area priorities aligned? *Not discussed today.*
 - How should we begin developing the budget strategy for the Roadmap in consideration of the flurry of changes and activity? *Not discussed today.*
4. Liaison Reports, as needed (10 min)
 - Lisa Townson (Extension)
 - *Extension, research, and LGU academic partners developing unified messaging through the Roadmap Pillars document*
 - *Not the right timing to ask for additional capacity funds, though*
 - Bob Mattive (CARET) – not on call
 - Gary Mayo (NIFA) – not on call
 - Kevin Cain (BVM)
 - *Hill day is April 9, AAVMC to collect specific grant delay examples from deans for Hill Day*
 - *F&A is a hot topic on the cost of animals, labs, animal care and research.*
 - Laura Jolly (BHHS) – not on call.
 5. Other Business, as needed – None identified.

Call adjourned at 4:01 pm CT.