

WAAESD Summer Meeting Agenda
June 20-22, 2023
The Courtyard
Richland, WA

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Tuesday, June 20</i> WAAESD-WEDA Joint Meeting Marina Room 4:30 PM – 7:00 PM</p>				
Agenda Item	Time (min)	Description	Presenter	Pages
1	4:30-5:15	WRDC Discussion with WEDA	All	2-5
2	5:30-7:00	Opening Reception in Riverview Hall	All	-
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Thursday, June 22</i> WAAESD Business Meeting Fairway Boardroom 1:00 PM – 2:00 PM</p>				
Agenda Item	Time (min)	Description	Presenter	Pages
3	1:00-1:05	Call to Order, Welcome, Introductions	Hulbert	-
4	1:05-1:07	Approval of Business Meeting Agenda	Hulbert	1
5	1:07-1:10	Approval of 2023 Spring Meeting Minutes	Edgar	6-12
6	1:10-1:25	Chair's Interim Actions & Executive Committee Report	Hulbert	13
7	1:20-1:25	Treasurer's Report	Kelly	14-17
8	1:25-1:30	2024 Officers and Committee Assignments	Edgar	18-19
9	1:30-1:35	Western SARE Survey Results	Hess	-
10	1:35-1:40	Non-profit Ad Hoc Committee Recommendations	Pritsos	20-44
11	1:40-2:00	WAAESD to agInnovation- West?	Hess	-
12	2:00	Join CARET in Marina Room	All	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Thursday, June 22</i> WAAESD Business Meeting Fairway Boardroom 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM</p>				
Agenda Item	Time (min)	Description	Presenter	Pages
13	2:00-3:00	Joint Session with CARET	CARET/Edgar	45-48
14	3:00-3:15	Networking Break	All	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Thursday, June 22</i> WAAESD Business Meeting Point Room 3:15 PM – 6:00 PM</p>				
Agenda Item	Time (min)	Description	Presenter	Pages
15	3:15-4:00	AES-ARS Partnerships	Chandler/Hulbert/McGuire/Donkin	-
16	4:00-4:05	Western Water Network Progress	Hess	49-51
17	4:05-4:10	agInnovation Annual Meeting Reminder	Hess	52
18	4:10	Adjourn	All	-
19	6:00	WAAESD Dinner at Budd's Broiler	All	-

Item 1.0

Agenda Item: WRDC RFP

Presenter: Bret Hess

Action: For Discussion with WEDA

Background Information:

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR HOST INSTITUTION OF THE
WESTERN RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTER**

Institutions¹ headquartered in the Western Region² of the United States are invited to submit proposals to serve as the Host Institution for the Western Region of the United States for the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDCs) Program. General information and descriptions of the range of work that the Western Rural Development Center (WRDC) has been involved in are found at: <https://www.usu.edu/wrdc/> and on the NIFA website (<https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/programs/community-economic-development/regional-rural-development-centers>).

Approximately \$2,670,000 is budgeted for the USDA NIFA RRDCs Program.³ Base funding for the four Centers is through standard grants with NIFA and serves as the base funding. In federal FY24, each Center is expected to be awarded \$667,500.

The Host Institution is expected to provide an office infrastructure and to collaborate with the WRDC Board of Directors (BoD), Western Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors (WAAESD), Western Extension Directors Association (WEDA), and NIFA to select a Director to support the function of the WRDC. Facility requirements and Director functions are described below in the “Criteria for Selection of the Host Institution.” The WRDC program reports through the USDA REEport system, and the Host Institution is responsible for ensuring that this and any associated Congressional reporting requirements are met.

In consultation with their members, Executive Committees of WAAESD and WEDA will establish a Technical Review Committee to review and rank qualified Host Institution(s). The criteria for selection are included below in this call for proposals. Members of the WRDC BoD (excepting those with declared Conflicts of Interest) will provide recommendations to the Technical Review Committee. The Technical Review Committee makes its recommendations to WAAESD and WEDA Executive Committees leading to their final decision.

The Technical Review Committee is willing to entertain proposals from single institutions or those reflecting collaborative leadership by multiple institutions. However, proposals should be specific to identify the Host Institution with primary/lead responsibility for staffing and budgets. In addition, proposals that include multi-institutional partners should specify how resources will be allocated, institutional responsibilities shared, and how the cross-institutional decision-making processes will meet the expectations of the Center by WAAESD, WEDA, WRDC BoD, and NIFA.

Proposals, not to exceed 10 pages in total length, must be received by 5:00 pm, Friday, July 28, 2023.

Proposals should be submitted as one pdf to: Doreen Hauser-Lindstrom (doreen@wsu.edu) and Bret Hess (bhess@unr.edu). Applicants will receive confirmation of submissions within 24 hours. If you do not, please contact Doreen and Bret directly.

¹ Eligible entities are State agricultural experiment stations and cooperative extension services at land-grant colleges and universities.

² Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Micronesia, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Northern Marianas Island, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming

³ The authority for the RRDCs program is in Section 2(c)(1)(B) of the Competitive, Special, and Facilities Research Grant Act, of Pub. L. 89-106, as amended (7 U.S. Code § 3157) and Section 503(b)(2), title V, of the Rural Development Act of 1972 (Pub. L. 92-419) Title 7—Agriculture Subtitle A—Office of the Secretary of Agriculture PART 23—Subpart B—Regional Program § 23.9 General, § 23.10 Administration, § 23.11 Board of Directors § 23.12 Availability of funds, and § 23.13 Plan of Work.

The Technical Review Committee will review written proposals and invite finalists for Zoom presentations in August. The selection of a Host Institution is anticipated by early September, with the expectation that the selected institution assumes its responsibility on October 1, 2023.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF THE HOST INSTITUTION

Proposals should address each criterion fully under the appropriate headings that follow. Proposals should be based on the anticipated level of annual funding (approximately \$2,670,000 for the RRDC program and approximately \$667,500 per Center from USDA NIFA).

DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE: The WRDC was created in 1972 under the authority of the Rural Development Act of 1972. It is one of four RRDCs in the Nation. The RRDCs operate on the philosophy that the rural development activities of the four regions' land-grant colleges and universities can be more effectively leveraged through multistate coordination, facilitation, and cooperation. This commitment to collaboration and partnership-building guides the work of the four Centers within each region as they collaborate to assist the land-grant university system to respond to emerging issues and needs that span the four regions. In short, the mission of the RRDCs is to strengthen the capacity of land-grant institutions to address critical contemporary rural and economic development issues impacting the well-being of people and communities in their respective regions and across America.

The RRDCs play a unique role in USDA's service to rural America. They promote excellence in research, education, and Extension programs cooperatively with land-grant institutions regionally and nationally. Charged with developing and providing knowledge essential to assist rural development, they bring a scientific lens and skilled personnel to critical rural development issues and practices.

The RRDCs concentrate on high-priority knowledge, training, and personnel needs and devote their energies to the following:

- Stimulating the formation of multistate research/Extension teams.
- Organizing and delivering high-priority rural development research and educational workshops and conferences.
- Coordinating the development and revision of education materials and maintaining a centralized repository of educational resources.
- Leading the preparation of science-based rural development policy and information reports.
- Building partnerships that link the land-grant university system with key entities committed to rural community and economic development.
- Marketing the RRDCs and their partners as key instruments for addressing current and emerging issues in each region and the nation.
- Assessing the impacts and benefits of the Center's activities for the region's land-grant system and its stakeholders.
- Ensuring that all federal and congressional reporting requirements are met.

BASE FUNDING AND RESOURCES: The RRDCs' base funding is provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA NIFA). The funding is under "Integrated Activities: Other Legislative Authorities" and the Rural Development Act of 1972. Leveraging this base funding of \$667,500 per Center annually, the RRDCs are proactive in securing and targeting resources from extramural sources that can advance the research, education, and Extension work of the land-grant university system. They are committed to investing resources in research and Extension activities that are mutually supportive and closely coordinated, and to building the scientific knowledge base to underpin these activities.

SUBMISSIONS SHOULD SPECIFICALLY ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING WHICH WILL BE USED BY THE TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE TO EVALUATE PROPOSALS

INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT: The Host Institution assumes a minimum of a five-year commitment to managing the Western Rural Development Center. Documentation of support from all administrative units in which the program resides is essential. This section should also contain a discussion of financial and other support that will be provided by the Host. The RRDCs do not receive indirect costs (per legislative authority), so the Host Institution is typically expected to provide computers, laptops, office space and furnishings for five to ten staff, storage space, telephone and internet connections, IT support, website and website content management for both the WRDC and the RRDCs joint website (<https://www.usu.edu/rrdc/>), and heating, air conditioning, lighting, and other indirect costs.

INSTITUTIONAL QUALIFICATIONS: Describe the role of the institution in regional rural development research and Extension activities, including linkages with state, regional, and national rural development and related programs. Include a history and description of current rural development and related programs, and a statement about the institution's ability and commitment to support identification of high-priority knowledge, skills, and organization necessary for rural development programs and policy purposes in the region and as the region's situation may contribute to understanding current and emerging national rural development priorities. A statement of the institution's ability and commitment to incorporate rural development concepts into the implementation of the Farm Bill is strongly recommended.

INSTITUTIONAL CAPABILITIES: Describe the Host's familiarity and ability to administer the financial aspects of the program, including preparation of Plans of Work and grant agreements, contracts and subcontracts, payment systems for program grants, a system for paying and accounting for program operating expenses, and a record-keeping system capable of meeting federal audit requirements. Programmatic reporting to the USDA REEport system is required.

CHARACTERISTICS OF INSTITUTION: Describe the facilities available for the administrative aspects of the program, including accessibility and telecommunications capacity.

DIRECTOR AND STAFF: Describe how current WRDC staff will be managed and plans for how the Center will be staffed. This RFP is not a request for detailed position descriptions; rather it is a request for an explanation of how the positions of the Director and other core Center personnel will be staffed and structured within the Host Institution and collaborating institutions (if the proposal involves more than one institution). This description of Center structure should include topics such as tenured, non-tenured, and/or contract-supported positions.

In addition to the Director, core Center personnel may include an Associate and an Assistant Director, a Senior Program Officer, a Communications Director, a website designer and manager, a Budget Officer, and other supporting positions as needed. Typically, the RRDCs operate with less than ten staff persons per Center.

The Host Institution provides the Director for WRDC. The proposal should provide details of the qualifications of the Director and core Center personnel.

A close and on-going connection between the Director and land-grant university Experiment Stations (WAAESD) and Extension Directors (WEDA) is required, and a close connection to the other three RRDC Directors is strongly recommended. Plans to achieve these connections should be described. The Director is responsible for an engaged Center, actively involved with faculty, educators, students, and administrators in the 13 states and 4 Pacific territories of the Western Region. Specifically, proposals should describe how the Center will engage in collaborative priority setting efforts with these entities.

The Director reports to and is responsible for communications with the WRDC BoD. This includes planning and support for meetings and conference calls as well as reporting results to the respective associations and funding

agencies. The WRDC BoD serves as both an advisory and policy Board. It approves the annual Plan of Work, including the annual operations budget, establishes overall operating policies and procedures for the WRDC, and provides annual evaluation of the WRDC's operation. The Board is composed of not less than 13 appointed individuals and may not exceed twenty appointed members, including three representatives from WAAESD, three representatives from WEDA, two representatives from either indigenous or native peoples of the West or from one of the fourteen western 1994 tribal colleges, one representative from the Council of State Governments-WEST, at least two non-land-grant partners (NGOs, non-profits, state and federal agencies) with an active interest in, or affiliation with, rural development-related activities, two faculty or educator representatives from the land-grant universities of the Western Region, and ex-officio representation from USDA NIFA and USDA ERS. Members serve three-year terms with no more than two consecutive terms, with the exception that representatives from the Council of State Governments-WEST, other non-land-grant partners, and indigenous, native, or tribal communities or institutions may serve in an ongoing capacity. In consultation with the WRDC BoD's Executive Committee or the full WRDC BoD, the Host Institution establishes salary and other personnel matters pertaining to the Director. All other personnel of the Center are employed and supervised by the WRDC Director.

The Director must have the necessary skills for providing general personnel management of the staff, maintaining necessary databases, producing annual reports, publications and plans of work, developing and implementing regional outreach, research, and Extension activities, guiding the appropriate distribution of end results, as well as responding to numerous informational calls relating to the program. The Director must be qualified to provide oversight of the development and implementation of workshops, seminars, conferences, and other Center projects. The Director is expected to liaison with research and Extension personnel and Center partners in order to promote an exchange of ideas and promote collaborations. In addition, the Director is expected to actively seek extramural resources from public, private, and philanthropic organizations for the purpose of advancing the priority activities of the Western Region and be qualified to assess the impacts and benefits of these activities on the region's land-grant system and its customers.

BUDGET: Approximately \$2,670,000 is budgeted per year for the USDA NIFA Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDCs) Program. This base funding is through standard grants with NIFA and serves as the base funding for the four Centers. In FY24, the Regional Rural Development Centers are expected to receive about \$667,500 in federal funds. Proposals are encouraged to use a base budget "estimate" of \$667,500/year in NIFA funds. NOTE: this is an approximate base budget amount and recommended for consistency in evaluating proposals. Please provide a budget narrative describing how this base funding will be utilized for operations and programs of the WRDC. If a Host Institution determines that additional funding mechanisms are available, details should be offered to explain how leveraging and other partnerships will expand Center projects, services, and programs.

Please provide details of the management structure, including a detailed operations budget that identifies the administrative costs for each component. This includes the salary and benefits for the Director, the salary and benefits for support staff, the general support costs (telephone, fax, computer equipment, supplies, etc.) and other direct costs to the Host, including travel by the Director's office. Overhead costs are not allowed.

Item 5.0

Agenda Item: WAAESD Spring Business Meeting Minutes

Presenter: Leslie Edgar

Action: For Approval

Background Information:

WAAESD Spring Meeting

March 29-30, 2023

Attendance: Glenda Humiston, Chris Davies, Scot Hulbert, Mark McGuire, Shawn Donkin, Leslie Edgar, Jodie Anderson, Sreekala Bajwa, Claire Montoya (guest), Chris Pritsos, Eric Webster, Gene Kelly, Bob Godfrey (USDA NIFA guest), Justin Derner (guest), Tara McHugh (Virtual ARS Guest), John Dyer (ARS Guest), Amy Bibby (guest), Bret Hess, Larry Chandler (ARS guest), Jennifer Tippetts (recording secretary).

Willow Creek SPUR Campus, Wednesday Minutes

- I. **Announcement:** Amy Bibby shared information regarding the Research Center Administration Society (RCAS) and encouraged members to attend or send some of their center leaders. For general information contact Vaughn Skinner, RCAS Communications Officer Jskinner@uark.edu 479-841-3362 [HTTP://thercas.org](http://thercas.org)
- II. **Spring Meeting Location:** The group discussed a location. Mark volunteered Boise. The group also discussed meeting in Reno every other year.
- III. **Approval of the Agenda:** Motion to approve the agenda. Unanimously approved.
- IV. **Approval of the 2022 Fall Meeting Minutes:** Leslie reviewed and presented the meeting minutes and made the motion to approve. Shawn seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously.
- V. **Chair Interim Actions & Executive Committee Report:** The list of interim actions and executive committee report was presented as a seconded motion from the Executive Committee. The report was prepared by reviewing results of email balloting and minutes of the Executive Committee's meetings since the fall business meeting. In addition to signing on to several letters of support for agricultural research funding, the Executive Committee took several significant actions over the past 5 to 6 months. A written response was submitted to NIFA's call to inform their research priorities for the next five years. The response merged significant topics outlined in the ESCOP Science Roadmap and the Western Agenda, and concerns were expressed regarding NIFA's seemingly lack of interest in the partnership with LGUs and the burden some of their recent notifications have placed on the LGUs. Items included on the WAAESD business meeting agenda represented many of the other actions the board has taken. For example, the Executive Committee will have more discussion on Creating a Regional Voice, Farm Bill priorities, and the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists. The Executive Committee also encouraged Bret to attend the NCFAR annual meeting and reception on the Hill instead of attending the CARET/AHS meeting. Unanimous vote to approve.
- VI. **Excellence in Leadership Award Nomination:** After deliberations among the Executive Committee, Scot was pleased to report that Glenda Humiston is the Western Region's winner of the Excellence in Leadership Award. Congratulations, Glenda!
- VII. **MRC Update:** The agenda for last MRC meeting was included in the meeting materials. Bret provided a synopsis of the MRC deliberations.
 - a. W_TEMP_5002: Accepted with minor revisions.
 - b. W_TEMP_1198: Accept with major revisions. One suggestion was to convert to a WERA or the second suggestion was to join with W_TEMP_2188.
 - c. W_TEMP_1195: Accept with major revisions. Suggest moving to WERA, unless there is more coordination presented.

- d. W_Temp_2023: Accept with minor revisions. Recommend requiring Jacob Decker as AA for the project. Bret has spoken with Jacob, and he is agreeable.
- e. W_Temp_2188: Accept with major revision. One suggestion is to recruit members from W_Temp_1198.
- f. W_Temp_4009: Accept with minor revisions.
- g. W_Temp_5147: Accept with major revisions. The project requires major edits for clarification including updating the milestones.
- h. W_Temp_5186: Accept with minor revisions.
- i. WERA 1: Accept with minor revisions.
- j. WERA 1013: Review postponed.
- k. WERA 1014: Accept with minor revisions.
- l. WERA-1053: Evolution of WDC urban agriculture committee. Accept with major revisions. Recommendations include selecting more of a focus area.
- m. Reviewed nominations for multistate research award. W_TEMP_4045 was recommended to be moved to the national level. Nominators will be given an opportunity to revise the nomination to address concerns identified by MRC.

VIII. **International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists:** A presentation regarding the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) was presented by Bill Payne at last year's Western Region Joint Summer Meeting. The request from IYRP was to donate funds that would be used for production of a documentary on Rangelands in North America. The agenda brief in the packet described the documentary concept in greater detail. Also included in the packet was a draft of a letter that will be sent out under WAAESD's cover. The letter will include a link to a donation site. The WAAESD Executive Committee agreed to serve as a fiscal sponsor, so donations will go to an account for IYRP that is managed by WAAESD. Bret showed two videos that were made to promote donations. Members asked if there was a plan for additional fundraising if not enough funds are initially generated? Bret answered yes, the idea is to seek additional sponsorship beyond the first \$50,000 from corporate and industry sponsors. The project has already been discussed with several major science societies. Range Scientists may be interested in contributing personally. The only action needed is to donate with the request to distribute.

IX. **WAAESD Farm Bill Discussions:** Leslie shared that New Mexico has a Senator on the Farm Bill committee, Senator Ben Ray Lujan, who asked specifically what he can do to provide support to the West. Bret and Leslie made recommendations on behalf of the region. The highly specific set of changes recommended to the Farm Bill staffers were included in the meeting briefs. There were three main topics: conversation via access to EQIP and CIS; a comprehensive evaluation of germplasm; and rural prosperity via access to broadband, and creating of regional agricultural innovation hubs. The work Bret has been doing with WGA is also linked. As a region, trying to expand our voice is imperative. The staffers are engaging and asking questions that continues to build that relationship. Sreekala shared that their staffer called and asked directly about agricultural innovation associated with the Farm Bill. The Montana Senator met with three universities to determine how rural states can benefit. Leslie encouraged directors to share this information with their congressional delegates. It is encouraging to have WGA supporting these recommendations as well.

X. **AES-ARS Partnerships:** Scot shared AES centers that have shared space with ARS have been considering ways to work better together. Larry has been providing leadership from ARS. Larry shared the discussion and document are timely. The North Central region is meeting this week as well to have the same discussion. We have more and more issues with people who are not aware of the joint roles. There are also differences in ethics, financials, and facilities being utilized and shared. Tara McHugh is our new representative and has been involved in the conversations. Hopefully collectively there is a way we can continue to move forward. Shawn shared that he holds quarterly meetings with their ARS staff to help himself and ARS. Shawn requested to be on the working group. Leslie shared that they have the ARS leadership attend meetings twice a year. Leslie shared that we need some strategy to make sure everyone is at the table to discuss the value of ag and natural resources. Sreekala generated an onboarding process for their new staff but is still unsure that it will be successful with staff turnover. Glenda shared that they are including ARS in grant proposals and that makes the grants more competitive. Glenda is also a fan of the work completed by ARS. Larry encouraged ARS to attend more of our meetings to have these types of discussions. Shawn shared that we have the commonality of stakeholders that do not care where the information comes from, their perspective is that we are a team. Scot asked the group for suggestions on this process moving forward. Sreekala asked if there is mutual alignment with the congressional staff? Larry shared if there was more communication regarding the asks from the congressional staff, they would be happy to coordinate efforts. Jodie asked that the communication flow both directions. The group continued discussions and agreed to continue to move this initiative forward.

XI. Justin Derner has made the trip down from Cheyenne to deliver a presentation on the progress he and his colleagues have made on the [Long-term Production Datasets](#).

Chris P. questioned how often they are looking to acquire data sets? Justin said they do an annual evaluation and select data to upload. They look for approximately 100 years of data. The hope is that with increased awareness they could gain more data. Justin requested recommendations for future data points: Justin.derner@usda.gov. The Gund Ranch in Nevada is a great example. A zoom meeting is scheduled to determine what the data looks like and if they need help digitizing. Scanners can be loaned out, if you would like to maintain the integrity of the original files. Several members agreed to reach out to some of their contacts.

Shifting gears, a draft of recommendations for new leaderships and administrators was included in the meeting packet. This document evolved as experiment station directors from the West and Northcentral Region met with Larry Chandler and several other area director colleagues throughout the US. The main objective outlined in the document is to make an effort to meet leaders and learn about the partner relatively soon after starting in a leadership role.

XII. **ASCEND Presentation:** Continuing with the partnership theme, a presentation regarding an effort for USDA to be part of the cancer moonshot was shared. Bret shared <https://www.mrfimpacts.org/> as a data source for John and Tara. Bret also shared the crosswalk data showing that 141 multistate projects directly align with projects related to food & nutrition security as another great resource.



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- XIII. **Climate Horizon Scan:** The meeting materials included a description of the climate horizon scan that Gene and colleagues proposed to NIFA. Considering there has been a fair amount of interest in the subject, Gene was asked to provide an overview and update on progress that has been made to-date.



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- XIV. **Western Water Network/Congress:** The agenda brief is the narrative from a conference grant that the Finance Committee submitted to NIFA to host a congress and workshop. Also in the packet is a sponsorship flyer that was prepared by the Finance Committee. Bret shared the speakers and invited attendees. The idea is to produce manuscripts from each session to submit to the UCOWR publication. The final day will be a workshop, where the goal will be to generate a vision paper. Western SARE has provided a sponsorship grant for \$10,000. This grant is in addition to the NIFA funding and would be close to funding the entire conference. Bret asked for recommendations for additional sponsorship funds to pay for the remaining costs of the conference.

Thursday, March 30, 2023, Minutes

- I. **WAAESD Goals:** Starting last year, and due to overlap between when the Chair and Chair-elect take office, the two work together with the ED on establishing the organizational goals. Sreekala reviewed the UNR evaluation form that is required to be completed annually. The annual evaluation also requires goals for the next year. The three goals generated this year are as follows:
 - a. Strategic Direction 1. Strengthen functional relationships with regional and national partners.
 - b. Strategic Direction 2. Foster multistate collaborations.
 - c. Strategic Direction 3. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Chris Davies asked if there was a way to have representatives from the 1994s at each meeting. Bret agreed to speak with John Phillips, but each 1994 does not have a lot of capacity. Jodie liked the idea of going to the 1994s instead of having them come to us. Could we have a volunteer that would be involved in FALCON? Bret agreed to investigate some opportunities and bring options back to WAAESD. WAAESD members agreed that if we invite a 1994, we should pay their way. John Phillips will be invited to the Fall business meeting to help build a strategy for moving forward. Scot offered that this can also be a topic of conversation at the summer meeting when we meet with the tribal college to ask what WSU could do to engage.

Treasurer's Report: Gene reviewed the Profit & Loss statement for last year January-December 2022. We have received payment from all members. There was a net income of \$5,151.22 for the year.

WAAESD has been asked to serve as a fiscal sponsor for WRAOM (Western Region Administrative Officers Meeting). We help facilitate their annual meetings by signing hotel contracts and running the registration. This year, after receiving registration and paying the hotel bill, there are funds remaining in the amount of \$6,087.23. It was recommended that WAAESD hold the funds rather than the universities continuing to pass funds to the next host. A recommendation was made to move those funds into a separate bank account to follow best practices. A separate account for Western Region Administrative Officers Meeting for \$6,087.23 will be set up with Gene, Bret, and Jennifer as signatories on the bank account.

Gene reviewed the current financials for January and February 2023, we have a balance of \$231,981.75.

The treasurer's report was approved unanimously.

- II. **Approval of 2024 Budget Proposal:** Gene presented the 2024 proposed budget on page 18 of the meeting packet. The decision to reduce the balance is reflected with a proposed deficit of \$64,655. The projected account balance for 2023 will be \$137,550 because assessments will not be increased. Assessments may not need to be increased until 2025.
The seconded motion passed unanimously.
- III. **NRSP Proposals:** Every spring meeting, WAAESD has a chance to review NRSP proposals and offer comments to the NRSP-Review Committee before they meet. Mark welcomed Noelle Cockett to present on behalf of NRSP8.
- IV. **NRSP8 Presentation by Noelle Cockett:** Noelle is asking to extend genomics by including new and different members at upcoming meetings. Noelle asked what other opportunities there are? Shawn shared that there may be a great opportunity to incorporate with the multistate projects that do not have any genomics, could there be a connection? Glenda shared that she is grateful for Noelle's passion. Chris P. asked if there were different grant resources that would support this work. Chris' understanding is NRSP should be used to fund projects that are harder to secure funding. Noelle shared that the money is leveraged to secure greater funding. This would be a great opportunity to expand genomics into other areas. There are two paths moving forward: a) NRSP capacity project and b) a proposed RCN in NIFA. Bob Godfrey shared that would be a correct assessment. There is a lot of bleed-over of genomics into other animal projects. RCN is where the fundamental research will continue. Bob shared that NIFA is still working with NSF on an evolutionary biology program, the next meeting is April 12-13, at the NCBA office in Denver. Shawn asked what areas Noelle would like to work in. Noelle shared that reproduction would be a good start. Chris Davies shared that people think they know about genetics but that is not always the case.
- V. **NRSP11 presentation by Deanna Osmond:** Mark clarified that the request is \$212,000 for three years. This is an example of an emerging innovation project. Deanna would appreciate a response and suggested implementations for the project. Gene asked if nitrogen or carbon were included. Deanna shared with limited funding in the beginning they chose to start small. The hope is that the federal government would fund the project and then they could expand the elements. Gene shared a suggestion to strengthen the proposal to work on nitrogen because nitrogen directly correlates to climate change. Deanna shared that she has primarily worked with

nitrogen most of her life, and agrees with Gene, but it is much more challenging to work with nitrogen. Potassium and phosphorus are much easier to work with. Gene recommended connecting with Kevin Kephart for the opportunity of smaller grants that could establish some state labs. Deanna shared that the group has evaluated the labs and the algorithms they use, and they need more consistency. Gene is supportive of the project.

NRSP Proposal Review- Members recommended to approve both projects.

- VI. **Creating a Regional Voice**- Leslie introduced Claire Montoya, a regional communicator, to join for the work session discussion. Leslie also thanked WAAESD for their sponsorship to provide and co-host an afternoon workshop with the other regional research associations. The workshop seems like a reasonable follow-up to last year's presentation on the Western Region Strategic Communications Steering Committee rollout of the Strategic Communications playbook. This year's workshop will be an opportunity to begin implementation of the playbook. Claire has asked that members make sure their communicators are engaged. Claire also asked for five of the top topics from each institution to be submitted via communicators by May 1. The group asked for a copy of Claire's presentation so they can follow up. One of the challenges is staff turnover. The goal is that the outcomes generated will be reviewed at ACE, and presented at our summer meeting so we can have a list of the top regional topics. CMC tried to collect communicators' contact information in the West. The last update was about a year ago, and that is the list that Claire and Jennifer are working from for invitations to the communication's group. If you have developed a one-page flyer for your congressional delegates that would be a great example of work to submit for the top five topics. WAAESD paid a \$1,000 sponsorship to host the ACE conference, and this is AES focused.
- VII. **Review of Summer Meeting Agenda:** Gene recommended inviting his dean to join the advocacy panel for the west.
- VIII. **Spring meeting location:** Ivory volunteered to have Oregon host next year's spring meeting. WEDA is not in favor of rotating to Reno every other year.
- IX. **ESCOMP Committee Reports**
- Budget and Legislative Committee:** There are two representatives from each region, Sreekala and Shawn are the representatives from the West. There are more liaisons than members and the liaisons tend to drive the conversation. Anton Beckerman is the new chair, and they just held a meeting with members only to determine a strategy moving forward. Shawn has been on the committee from both NC and now the West. The long-term goal for the Section is 14% for capacity funds. BLC will continue to push advocacy for research funding and if the Farm Bill is passed then focus on implementation. Currently, the infrastructure bill has a requirement for matching that would limit participation by many states.
- Diversity Catalyst Committee:** Jodie shared that the meeting times are not the best, but it is a great group that meets. This past year they developed and adopted a mission statement and plan of work including initiatives for the year. The biggest piece is submitting nominations for DEIA awards. Jodie asked the members to think about how we can tell our story better when it comes to DEIA by submitting nominations from the West. There are both individual and team awards given.
- Science and Technology Committee:** Chris Davies reported that the committee has discussed the Blue-Ribbon results and recommendations on collaborations. Climate Horizon Scan has been a

wonderful collaborative network along with Western Water Network. There is discussion regarding new information for the website and how that can promote recognition for AES. STC will be selecting the winner for excellence in multistate research award. There is a need to produce collateral to launch the full brand beyond just the website.

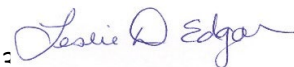
National Plant Germplasm Coordinating Committee: There are 20 locations, 8 of which are in the West. Each location is supported by multistate project funding. The last meeting was in June of 2022 and a new meeting will be scheduled soon. Some of the challenges include increased operation costs and the need for additional funding. The committee wants to increase exposure and create awareness. The committee recognizes a need for younger generations to be involved with the aging staff, however, there are not a lot of courses offered in the specialty. Managing GMO's and learning how to better categorize are continuous projects. In 2021, the Pullman location mailed out 220,000 packets of seed, 2/3 was mailed to public and primarily domestic.

Digital Marketing Committee: Chris P. shared this was an initiative he started as the ESCOP chair. The group reviewed the new website and how we are going to keep material current. Please check out the website: www.aginnovation.info.

Non-Profit Committee: Chris P. also started this initiative as ESCOP chair. Because of how well a non-profit has worked for WAAESD, it was questioned if we could have a non-profit on a national level. There was a lot of concern, and a committee was formed to explore the possibility and potential. The committee met with numerous groups to fully explore and focus on what we (ESCOP) would want a non-profit to look like. The committee can now say that they would like to have a non-profit and continue to define what that looks like. A presentation will be made at the fall ESS meeting. Gene shared that one aspect that was not covered yet would be the accessibility to take donations. The idea is to pilot the program for three years.

X. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Leslie Edgar, Secretary, June 9, 2023:



Item 6.0

Agenda Item: Chair's Interim Actions and Executive Committee Report

Presenter: Scot Hulbert

Action: For Approval

Background Information:

Interim Actions and Executive Committee Report

1. Invited John Phillips to join WAAESD at the fall business meeting in Grand Rapids, MI to continue exploring how to engage 1994 institutions.
2. Applied to US Fish and Wildlife Service to be approved as a third-party reviewer of grazing plans, under the 4(d) rule for the Northern DPS of the lesser prairie chicken listing.
3. Declined signing on to a letter in support of asking Congress to direct USDA's ERS to analyze financing gaps to support manufacturing and processing capacity for new or improved food and agricultural technologies.
4. Designed a survey instrument to learn why certain WAAESD members are more successful than others at receiving awards from Western SARE.
5. Requested top five messages be sent through communications staff for a workshop on "Creating a Regional Voice" at the 2023 annual ACE conference.
6. Sent the WAAESD ED to the NCFAR annual meeting and fly-in, resulting in Farm Bill recommendations for capacity, infrastructure, and regional priorities being shared with staff representing Chairman of the House Committee on Agriculture, Glenn "GT" Thompson, Representative John Duarte, Representative Gabe Vasquez, Representative Jill Tokuda, the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, Senator Lujan, and Senator Cortez-Masto.
7. Encouraged WAAESD members to share recommendations for assisting the western region in the Farm Bill with their congressional staffers.
8. Shared the document outlining the region's experiment station directors' Farm Bill requests with the Western Governors' Association's Executive Director and Policy Advisors.
9. Signed on to a letter in support of the America Grows Act.
10. Established new bank accounts as a fiscal sponsor for the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) and the Western Region Administrative Officers Meeting (WRAOM).
11. Entered into a contract on behalf of agInnovation with PIVOT Creative and Consulting on a rollout plan.
12. Co-signed a letter that was sent to the WRDC Board Chair expressing interest in recompeting for the WRDC host institution and hiring a WRDC Director.
13. Encouraged solicitation of proposals from resorts in Reno to host the 2025 NERAOC Annual Meeting.

Item 7.0**Agenda Item: Treasurer's Report****Presenter: Gene Kelly****Action: For Approval****Background Information:****WAAESD****Profit and Loss**

January - May, 2023

	TOTAL
Income	
Billable Expense Income	8,617.49
Event Income	38,392.98
Other Types of Income	
Miscellaneous Revenue	30.43
Total Other Types of Income	30.43
Total Income	\$47,040.90
GROSS PROFIT	\$47,040.90
Expenses	
Business Expenses	43.93
Business Registration Fees	500.00
Total Business Expenses	543.93
Contract Services	0.00
Accounting Fees	700.00
Communications	1,200.00
Event Coordination	2,400.00
Outside Contract Services	157.50
Recording Secretary	1,200.00
Total Contract Services	5,657.50
Operations	
Printing and Copying	167.00
Software and Software Subscript	991.75
Supplies	34.98
Telephone and Internet	16.00
Total Operations	1,209.73
Other Types of Expenses	31.25
Program Expenses	18,023.29
Conferences	8,701.96
ESS Meetings	14,242.49
Total Program Expenses	40,967.74
Travel and Meetings	20,889.49
Conference, Convention, Meeting	4,799.79
Travel	7,154.90
Total Travel and Meetings	32,844.18
Total Expenses	\$81,254.33
NET OPERATING INCOME	\$ -34,213.43
NET INCOME	\$ -34,213.43

WAAESD

Balance Sheet

As of May 31, 2023

	TOTAL
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
Western Assoc. Agric. Expt. Sta	219,090.66
Total Bank Accounts	\$219,090.66
Accounts Receivable	
Accounts Receivable	0.00
Total Accounts Receivable	\$0.00
Other Current Assets	
Undeposited Funds	0.00
Total Other Current Assets	\$0.00
Total Current Assets	\$219,090.66
TOTAL ASSETS	\$219,090.66
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	
Accounts Payable	0.00
Total Accounts Payable	\$0.00
Total Current Liabilities	\$0.00
Total Liabilities	\$0.00
Equity	
Unrestricted Net Assets	253,304.09
Net Income	-34,213.43
Total Equity	\$219,090.66
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$219,090.66



View Account Information for:

Current Account Information

[IYRP 5825](#) / WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF AGRICULTURAL

Other names on this account: IYRP

Current balance	1,215.75		
Available balance	1,215.75		
Last statement balance	582.65		
Date of last statement	5/31/23		
Date opened	4/25/23	Date of last deposit	6/02/23
		Date last overdrawn	



View Account Information for:

Current Account Information

WRAOM 1473 / WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF AGRICULTURAL

Other names on this account: WRAOM

Current balance	6,087.23		
Available balance	6,087.23		
Last statement balance	0.00		
Date of last statement	5/31/23		
Date opened	5/31/23	Date of last deposit	6/05/23
		Date last overdrawn	

Item 8.0

Agenda Item: 2024 Officers and Committee Assignments

Presenter: Leslie Edgar

Action: For Approval and Additional Nominations

Background Information:

2024 WAAESD Candidates and Committee Nominations

WAAESD Chair-elect

Shawn Donkin

WAAESD Executive Committee At-Large

Jodie Anderson

Walter Bowen

WAAESD Treasurer

Gene Kelly

WAAESD Secretary

Leslie Edgar

2024 WAAESD Officers & Regional Committee Appointments

WAAESD Past-Chair

Scot Hulbert

WAAESD Chair

Sreekala Bajwa

Western Regional Aquaculture Center

Shawn Donkin

Western SARE Advisory Council

Milan Shipka as Director Emeritus

Western Region MRC

Adrian Ares

Eric Webster

Mary Burrows

Holly Neibergs

2024 Regional Committee Vacancies

Western Region Rural Development Center

Chris Pritsos (2021-2023); *Vacant (2024-2026)*

Bret Hess (2022-2024)

Mark McGuire (2023-2025)

Western IPM Center Advisory Committee

David Gang; *Possible Vacancy*

2024 ESCOP Committee Appointments

ESCOP Members

Chris Pritsos, ECOP Liaison

Scot Hulbert (senior member, representative on ESCOP Executive Committee)

Mark McGuire (Policy Board of Directors and NRSP-RC)

Sreekala Bajwa

Shawn Donkin, if elected

Bret Hess as ED and Alternate

Chair's Advisory Committee

Mark McGuire, PBD representative

Bret Hess, Executive Vice Chair of STC

Budget & Legislative Committee

Sreekala Bajwa

Shawn Donkin

Science & Technology Committee

Chris Davies

Gene Kelly

Bret Hess as Executive Vice Chair

Diversity Catalyst Committee

Adrian Ares

Jodie Anderson

Bret Hess

NRSP-RC

Mark McGuire

National Plant Germplasm Coordinating Committee

Scot Hulbert

Bret Hess as Executive Vice Chair

ACOP Liaison

Bret Hess representing ESCOP



Recommendation to ESCOP: Establishment of the agInnovation 501(c)3 Non-profit Organization

Presented by: The ad hoc committee exploring the feasibility of establishing an agInnovation (formerly the Experiment Station Section) 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

Membership included: Chris Pritsos (chair, University of Nevada Reno), Marty Draper (Kansas State University), Gene Kelly (Colorado State University), Saied Mostaghimi (Virginia Tech), Puneet Srivastava (University of Maryland) and Jose Toledo (Southern University).

Support provided by: Bret Hess (WAAESD), Jennifer Tippetts (WAAESD), Alton Thompson (ARD), Gary Thompson (SAAESD), Cindy Morley (SAAESD), Jeanette Thurston (NCRA), Jeff Jacobsen (NCRA), Christina Hamilton (NCRA), Rick Rhodes (NERA), and David Leibovitz (NERA)

The charge:

During the 2022 ESS Business Meeting, ESCOP Chair Chris Pritsos introduced to the Section a proposal for the formation of an ESS Foundation. (The presentation [Appendix 1, Experiment Station Concept, ppt] and the introductory document [Appendix 2, Experiment Station Foundation Concept] are attached to this recommendation.) An ad hoc committee was subsequently convened to “explore the establishment of a 501(c)3 non-profit organization (Foundation) to support national and regional activities of the Section’s members...” The ad hoc committee met numerous times during the past seven months and shares the following recommendations based on the findings summarized below.

The ad hoc committee recommends:

- Establishment of an agInnovation 501(c)3 non-profit organization to be reviewed and evaluated after a period of 3 years of operation.
- The newly formed Finance Committee oversee the establishment of agInnovation’s 501(c)3 non-profit organization, with support provided by the regional association offices.
- Use of the agInnovation 501(c)3 non-profit organization to support and enhance current business practices at the national level (e.g., offset cost of professional development opportunities and accepting charitable donations) and to support regional association efforts (e.g., meeting contracts, payments, and accepting charitable donations).

- Approval by agInnovation of a funding amount to seed the 501(c)3 non-profit organization with carryover funds currently in the agInnovation operating account held by the APLU. Regional associations would not be expected to pay an assessment to support the agInnovation 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

Process used by the ad hoc committee:

The ad hoc committee was convened to explore the feasibility of establishing an agInnovation (formerly known as the Experiment Station Section or ESS and herein also called the Section) 501(c)3 non-profit organization. The rationale for establishing an agInnovation 501(c)3 non-profit organization was largely based on the lack of capacity of agInnovation (or ESCOP) to accept donations, sponsorships, and grants from entities that were seeking to make tax-deductible contributions. The ad hoc committee noted that there were not work-arounds for this lack of capacity. Foundations that are part of our Land-grant institutions were not interested in accepting funds for an entity (e.g., agInnovation or the regional associations) that was not directly part of a unit and/or initiative within their institution. Likewise, the APLU, a 501(c)3 non-profit, would not solicit or accept donations on behalf of agInnovation. Establishment of an agInnovation 501(c)3 non-profit organization would allow the Section to accept charitable donations, a philanthropic capacity that, at present, the Section does not have. (For example, the Section was unable to accept donations/sponsorships to support the 2021 annual meeting at Palisades Tahoe, as described in Appendix 2.)

In performing the due diligence for the Section, the ad hoc committee engaged in fact-finding by interviewing a series of non-profit organizations including the APLU, ACSESS (which oversees the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, Soil Science Society of America, Agronomic Science Foundation), and the Extension Foundation. The conversations with representatives from each of the organizations provided different takes on how the Section might proceed. The ad hoc committee also found that the APLU will provide conference services (e.g., contracting with a hotel and vendors, contracting with speakers, reimbursing speakers, etc.) for which the Section was not aware but as previously stated, would not solicit or accept donations on behalf of the Section. (These items are discussed later in this document.)

In the deliberations of the ad hoc committee, a number of additional issues and challenges, that could be addressed by a non-profit organization were identified. The issues and challenges are described in Appendix 3, Update: Exploring the Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 Non-profit Organization/ Foundation – January 13, 2023. The ad hoc committee examined each of the issues/challenges and updated the document on May 30, 2023, to indicate whether an issue/challenge was resolved, partially resolved, or unresolved. As this document indicates, agInnovation lacks the capacity to execute a contract on its own behalf. This has become more apparent and an issue as the Section re-engages in face-to-face meetings and negotiates with hotels, conference centers, A/V contractors, food and beverage provisioners, and speakers. Likewise, the Section lacks the capacity for accepting tax-deductible, charitable donations.

Findings that support the recommendations:

Historically, the Section had to depend on the conference services of an institution or more recently on the capacities of the WAAESD's 501(c)4. The ad hoc committee discovered during its conversations with the APLU, that the APLU can provide third-party conference services and execute contracts for agInnovation national meetings, but not regional meetings. The ad hoc committee concluded that the establishment of an independent 501(c)3 non-profit that could engage in the contract processes and assist with regional meeting negotiations did not unnecessarily duplicate capacities. The agInnovation 501(c)3 non-profit could assist regional efforts, efforts that the APLU's conference services would not cover, and that some institutions, especially our small- to mid-size universities might not have. Currently, serving as a conference host is a challenge for Directors at our institutions that do not have an accessible, in-house conference services team. Institutions are also reluctant to provide up front funding or commitment of funding for venues not in their specific area or state. Additionally, hosting a meeting is a disincentive for a director taking on a leadership position.

In continuing with challenges associated with agInnovation not being able to execute a contract on its own behalf, the ad hoc committee noted that either the APLU or an institutional host (e.g., the institution of the current agInnovation/ESCOP chair) would need to serve as the signatory. As previously noted, that subjects the Section to the policies and procedure posed by the APLU or institution. While both the APLU and institution pose options for signing contracts on behalf of the Section, that might not extend an optimal business strategy for agInnovation. The most frequently encountered obstacle is time for the complete execution of a contract. At many institutions this requires an evaluation by the office of the general counsel, a time-consuming step. The creation of an agInnovation 501(c)3 non-profit would allow representatives of the Section to execute contracts.

The ad hoc committee found that many of the challenges and obstacles observed at the national level were also prevalent at the regional level. Indeed, regional associations (ARD, NCRA, NERA, SAAESD, and WAAESD) are experiencing difficulties related to holding regional meetings. For instance, an institutional host for one of our regional associations won't allow pre-payment for hotels and conference centers. As we note in the supporting materials, the regional associations lack the capacity to reimburse travelers, speakers, or award winners on a timely basis. This is due to the constraints posed by the university host of a regional association event. (For example, a travel reimbursement for a leadership award winner was rejected by a university host because a traveler who was not from the hosting university had not sought prior approval for the travel to receive the award.) Further, with each change in regional association leadership, the regional associations have had to transfer funds and re-establish accounts and relationships with the new host institution, in addition to spending time learning new purchasing and accounts payable procedures that could be better spent conducting valuable association business. Moreover, each time the host institution changes business practices and systems, the regional office needs to be trained on these new institutional systems. For example, the NCRA Assistant Director has undergone several rounds of training for new

purchasing and invoicing systems throughout the past few years and will need to do so again as the University of Wisconsin transitions to WorkDay.

Over the past two years, both agInnovation and the regional associations have depended on the WAAESD 501(c)4 to pay bills when university hosts or the APLU were unable to make a payment in timely fashion. Establishment of an agInnovation 501(c)3 non-profit organization would reduce reliance on the WAAESD 501(c)4 and provide the Section and the regional associations with access to business processes that are timely, responsive, and efficient.

On a regional basis, the 5 associations that support agInnovation are each challenged to undertake the activities related to hosting regional association meetings. As noted previously, this requires contracting with hotels, conference centers, audio/visual contractors, food and beverage provisioners, and external speakers. Associated challenges are magnified at institutions that are reluctant to accept the responsibilities for hosting a regional meeting due to the lack of conference support capabilities and funding. The regional associations are limited by the regulations of their host institution. As a work-around, NERA has used the Northeast Extension Directors' host organization, Lighthouse Consulting Group, to assist in business practices in circumstances where NERA's host institution either limited an activity or posed onerous obstacles. All 5 regional associations have developed workarounds, which meet an outcome need, but don't address the inherent business inefficiencies.

Last, none of the regional associations, like agInnovation, have the capacity to accept donations that are a tax write-off to the donor. Establishment of a 501(c)3 could allow for the acceptance of charitable contributions on behalf of agInnovation and the regional associations.

Conclusions:

Establishing an agInnovation 501(c)3 non-profit organization would not unnecessarily duplicate capacities that are currently provided by the APLU, the host institutions of the regional associations, or the institutions of the membership of the Section. Alternatively, creating a 501(c)3 non-profit organization has the potential to streamline business services when needed and would complement current capacities as well as expand the ability to accept charitable donations.

At the time the agInnovation 501(c)3 organization was proposed, there was discussion of the establishment of a foundation. The ad hoc committee evaluating feasibility concludes that formation of a 501(c)3 non-profit organization is more likely to meet the needs of the Section versus formation of a 501(c)3 foundation. Typically, a 501(c)3 foundation is created to generate income which is then dispersed to individuals or other charities in accordance with the foundation's purpose. A 501(c)3 non-profit is an organization that is dedicated to a single cause (e.g., support of agricultural research stations), and that cause is the target of all income of the non-profit.

We recommended that the Finance Committee undertake the formation of a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Based on input to this ad hoc committee, we share the following suggestions for consideration by the Finance Committee.

- Choose an official name for the 501(c)3 non-profit: we'd suggest "agInnovation".
- Engage a law firm to assist in the application process.
- Form the board of directors of the non-profit organization.
 - agInnovation past chair, chair, incoming chair, and two at-large members, appointed by agInnovation and from a region not represented by agInnovation chair, incoming chair, and past chair, constitute the "founding" board members.
 - Founding board members will serve a three-year term to provide continuity during an initial period of the 501(c)3 non-profit organization.
 - The five regional Executive Directors would serve as "sustaining" board members.
 - The Board would be constituted of 10 members (5 founding, 5 sustaining).
 - It's commonly recommended that non-profits have between three and twenty-five board members.
 - The agInnovation past chair would serve as the President of the non-profit and the agInnovation chair would serve as the Vice President.
 - One of the sustaining members would serve as Treasurer and one would serve as Secretary, initially appointed by the President with approval of the board.
 - Each of these terms would be for three years with the opportunity to be re-appointed by the President with approval of the board.
 - Following the initial three-year period of the non-profit, the founding members would be replaced by a group of agInnovation directors including the agInnovation past chair, chair, incoming chair, and two at-large members, appointed by agInnovation and from a region not represented by agInnovation chair, incoming chair, and past chair.
 - The agInnovation past chair would serve as President of the non-profit, for a one-year term.
 - The rotation of the director membership of the non-profit would be consistent with the rotation of the leadership of agInnovation as defined in the current Rules of Operation (ARD-WAAESD-NERA-NCRA-SAAESD).
- By-laws are to be drafted by the initial board (as previously described).
 - The day-to-day operations of the 501(c)3 non-profit will be performed by the regional offices under the direction of the board and consistent with the bylaws of the 501(c)3 non-profit.
- Completion of SS-4 to secure EIN.
- File articles of incorporation.
- Apply for IRS tax exemption (complete form 1023, Application for Recognition of Exemption of 501(c)3) expected not to exceed \$5,000, including attorney fees and fees associated with filing articles of incorporation.

- Completion of the Form 1023 requires a \$600 filing fee. Nationally, the average cost for filing a Form 1023 is \$595.
- Apply for state tax exemption (if applicable).
- The annual cost of operating the 501(c)3 non-profit is the cost of auditing the account and filing of tax returns (estimated at \$2,000).

Initially, the 501(c)3 non-profit would be established with a three-year horizon to assess effectiveness. Effectiveness might be assessed quantitatively by comparing the number of business transactions, the value of the transactions, the number and value of charitable donations versus the cost of operating the 501(c)3 non-profit (accounting and tax returns). Likewise, a qualitative assessment could be made by evaluation of the efficiency provided by the 501(c)3 non-profit's business processes.

Appendix 2, Experiment Station Foundation Concept

DRAFT



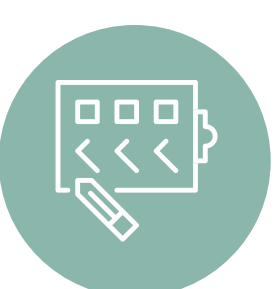
EXPERIMENT STATION FOUNDATION CONCEPT

Purpose

Explore the establishment of
a 501(c)3 non-profit organization
(Foundation) to support national
and regional activities of the
Experiment Station Section.

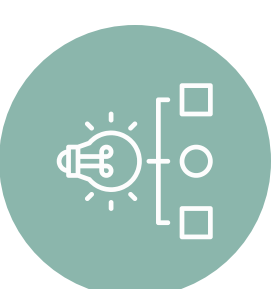


Reasoning



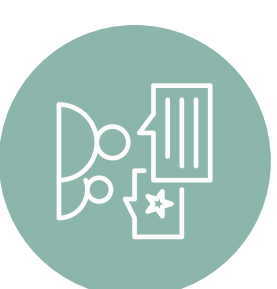
Eligibility to Accept Donations

Offer the ability to accept donations, sponsorships, and grants from corporations, organizations, and grant makers seeking tax deductible charitable contributions.



Grant Donations

There are also grant opportunities from entities seeking tax deductible charitable contributions in which eligibility is limited to 501(c)3 non-profit organizations.



Flexibility

Ability to enter into contracts and conduct business without University constraints or going through APLU.

OBJECTIVES

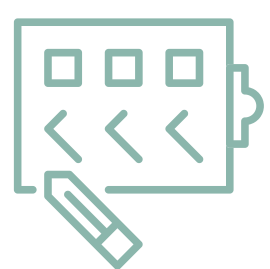
Create a Foundation responsible for securing funds to support program services to benefit members of ESS.



Ability

The magnitude of funding will ultimately depend on the Foundation’s ability to identify and persuade relevant sponsors to make charitable contributions.

Context



The list generated when sponsorship was pursued for the 2021 ESS Annual Meeting had 124 possible sponsors offering donations ranging from \$500 to \$5,000.

Sponsorship Levels



Sponsorship levels up to \$25,000 are possible for non-profits successful at raising funds.



Program Services



Primary Objective

To support educational and professional development opportunities through a variety of current and future events offered by ESS and the regional associations.



Secondary Objective

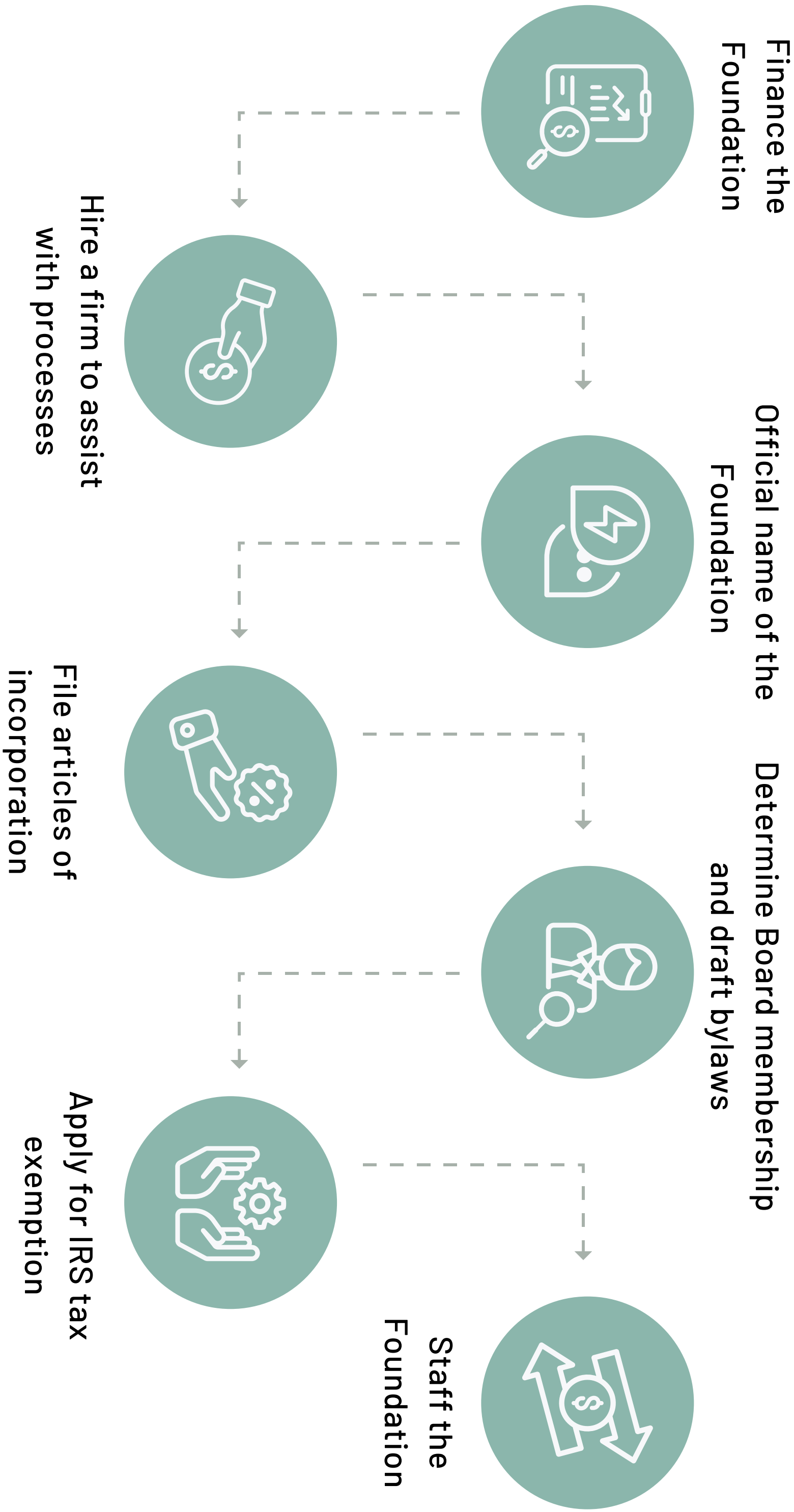
To expand overall capacity to support education and advocacy efforts which enhance the section’s position as a global leader in agricultural and food systems research.



Potential Board Members

- ESS Board Members
 - Past-Chair
 - Chair
 - Chair-elect
- Regional Association Board Members
 - Chair
 - Treasurer
 - Other appointed officers
- Sustaining Board Members
 - Regional Association Executive Directors

Recommendations for Establishment



Supporting Experiment Station Directors!



NERA

Northeastern Regional
Association of State Agricultural
Experiment Station Directors



NCRA

North Central Regional
Association of
Agricultural Experiment
Station Directors



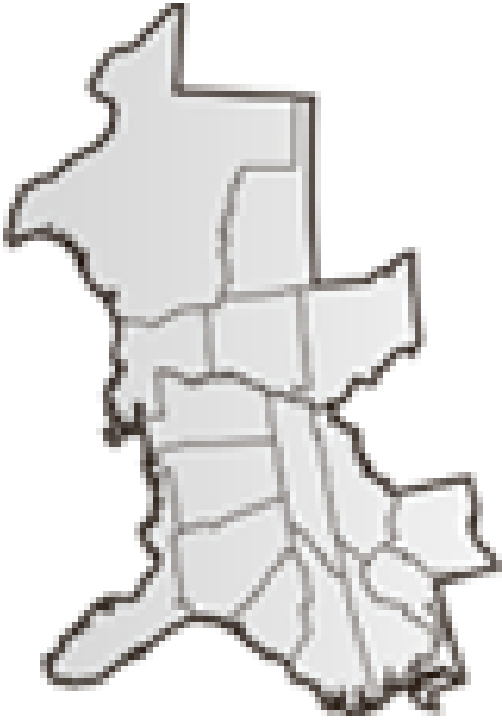
WAAESD

Western Association of
Agricultural Experiment
Station Directors



SAAESD

Southern Association of
Agricultural Experiment Station
Directors



ARD

Association of Research
Directors

Appendix 2, Experiment Station Foundation Concept

DRAFT

Experiment Station Foundation Concept

Purpose: The Experiment Station Section (ESS), a unit of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) Commission on Food, Environment, and Renewable Resources (CFERR), Board on Agriculture Assembly (BAA) seeks to explore the establishment of a 501(c)3 non-profit organization (Foundation) to support national and regional activities of the section's members throughout the United States and U.S. protectorates.

Reasoning: Offer the ability to accept donations, sponsorships, and grants from corporations, organizations, and grant makers seeking tax deductible charitable contributions. For example, many corporations and organizations identified as potential sponsors for the 2021 ESS Annual Meeting did not provide sponsorships because their programs were restricted to making charitable contributions to 501(c)3 non-profit organizations. There are also grant opportunities from entities seeking tax deductible charitable contributions in which eligibility is limited to 501(c)3 non-profit organizations.

Objective: Create a Foundation responsible for securing funds to support program services to benefit members of ESS. The magnitude of funding will ultimately depend on the Foundation's ability to identify and persuade relevant sponsors to make charitable contributions. As a point of context, the list generated when sponsorship for the 2021 ESS Annual Meeting was pursued had 124 possible sponsors offering donations ranging from \$500 to \$5,000. Sponsorship levels up to \$25,000 are possible for non-profits successful at raising funds.

Program Services: The Foundation's primary benefit to members will be to support educational and professional development opportunities through a variety of current and future events offered by ESS and the regional associations, such as conferences, meetings, seminars, webinars, workshops, and other forms of training. A secondary benefit will be to expand overall capacity to support education and advocacy efforts which enhance the section's position as a global leader in agricultural and food systems research.

Membership: The Experiment Station Section is comprised of members who belong to one of five regional associations. Each 1862 land-grant agricultural experiment station director and 1890 land-grant research director participates in a regional association: Northeastern Regional Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors (NERA), the official representative body of the

agricultural experiment station directors in the Northeast Region; North Central Regional Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors (NCRA), the official representative body of the agricultural experiment station directors in the North Central Region; Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors (SAAESD), the official representative body of the agricultural experiment station directors in the Southern Region; Western Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors (WAAESD), the official representative body of the agricultural experiment station directors in the Western Region; and Association of Research Directors (ARD), the official representative body of the agricultural research administrators of the 1890 Land-grant institutions.

Foundation Board Membership: Board members are most likely to be hosting or otherwise planning the ESS annual meeting and annual meetings of regional association. Potential Board members for consideration may, for example, include the Past-Chair, Chair, and Chair-elect of ESS and the Chairs, Treasurers and/or other suitable elected officers appointed by each regional association as rotating board members. Sustaining board members should be the Executive Directors of the regional associations to maintain consistency and continuity across multiple years.

Establishment: ESS Chair Pritsos will introduce the concept to each regional association's Executive Committee. If the response is positive, Chair Pritsos will request approval from ESCOP to charge an *ad hoc* committee to develop recommendations for establishing the Foundation. In addition to considering the above information, the *ad hoc* committee will provide recommendations for the following next steps and required actions:

- Choosing an official name of the Foundation.
- Hiring and paying a firm to assist with the application processes.
- Determining the composition of the Foundation Board.
- Filing articles of incorporation.
- Applying for IRS tax exemption.
- Applying for state tax exemption if applicable.
- Drafting bylaws.
- Obtaining licenses and permits as applicable.
- Hiring and paying for appropriate staff to execute the functions of the Foundation.
- Financing the short-term and longer-term operations of the Foundation.

- Determine if an assessment should be utilized to support the start-up of the Foundation, and if so, the duration and amount of the assessment should be indicated.
- Evaluate the use of ESS accounts, including the annual operations account held at APLU and/or some ESS investment funds from the TD Wealth account to support the start-up of the Foundation.

**Appendix 3, Update: Exploring the Establishment of an Experiment
Station Section 501(c)3 Non-profit Organization/ Foundation – January
13, 2023, including resolved, partially resolved, and unresolved
issues/challenges – May 30, 2023**

DRAFT

Update: Exploring the Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 Non-profit Organization/ Foundation – January 13, 2023

Resolved, partially resolved, and unresolved issues/challenges – May 30, 2023

Background:

During the 2022 ESS Business Meeting, ESCOP Chair Chris Pritsos introduced to the section a proposal for the formation of an ESS Foundation. (The introductory document is attached.) An ad hoc committee was subsequently convened to “explore the establishment of a 501(c)3 non-profit organization (Foundation) to support national and regional activities of the section’s members...” That ad hoc has met multiple times and shares the following reflections.

May 30, 2023, update:

After examining each of the issues/challenges, the ad hoc committee provides thoughts on resolution of the issues/challenges. These are shown in italics for each of the issues and were not part of the original document on January 13, 2023.

Original Reasoning for Establishing a Non-profit Organization:

As presented in September, the reasoning behind forming the non-profit organization revolved around accepting donations, sponsorships, and grants to offset the costs of an annual meeting.

Identification of Additional ESS and Regional Association Business-related Issues:

As the subcommittee examined the establishment of an ESS non-profit organization, a number of ESS and regional association business-related challenges were identified as needing remediation. Below we describe the challenges for both the ESS and the regional associations.

Issues/Challenges

National-Experiment Station Section:

- The ESS is experiencing difficulty in executing activities related to holding a national meeting. This frequently requires contracting with hotels, conference centers, audio/visual contractors, food, and beverage provisioners, and external speakers.
 - *Resolved: The APLU has the capacity to provide conference services similar to those provided by institutions. Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 non-profit organization would add capacity while not unnecessarily duplicating available services.*
- The ESS must rely on an institution or other entity’s conference/meeting services unit to fully support the execution of activities related to holding events.
 - *Resolved: Employing institutional conference services is one of two current means to support execution of event activities. The APLU has the capacity to also provide conference services. Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 non-profit*

organization would add a third capacity while not unnecessarily duplicating available services.

- The ESS lacks the capacity to make pre-payments to hotels and/or conference centers. This is a limitation posed by a university host of a regional association office.
 - *Resolved: The APLU has the capacity to provide such conference services. Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 non-profit organization would add capacity while not unnecessarily duplicating available services.*
- The ESS lacks the capacity to execute an independent contract. The ESS can engage in contracts through a university host or the APLU. In doing so, the ESS is subject to the policies and procedures posed by either the university or APLU. Depending on the city and state of venues/vendors with which ESS does business, the section may not be eligible for tax exemption, as the ESS is not a legally recognized organization.
 - *Resolved: While the APLU and institutional hosts may sign contracts on behalf of the Experiment Station Section, establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 non-profit organization would add capacity while not unnecessarily duplicating available services.*
- The ESS lacks the capacity to reimburse travelers, speakers, or award winners on a timely basis. This is due to the constraints posed by either the university host of a regional association or the APLU.
 - *Unresolved: The speed of reimbursement reflects the burden of bureaucracy in both an institutional host and APLU. Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 non-profit organization would add capacity while not unnecessarily duplicating available services.*
- The ESS lacks the timely capacity to pay an invoice for which a competitive bid has not been secured. For example, the ESS has dedicated \$50,000 to support the establishment of AG-NGINE, a graduate student recruitment commons, hosted by the University of Florida. While the ESS approved the expenditure, we expect difficulty deploying the approved funds due to APLU's policies on contracting for services.
 - *Resolved: The APLU has paid the University of Florida as requested by the Section. Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 non-profit organization would add capacity while not unnecessarily duplicating available services.*
- The ESS lacks timely reporting on ESS funds held by the APLU. In essence, the ESS does not currently have access to regular financial reports on ESS operating accounts.
 - *Resolved: The Experiment Station Section has established a new standing committee, the Finance Committee, and that committee collaborates with the APLU to secure regular financial reports.*

- The ESS lacks timely payment of invoices submitted to the APLU, who in turn, pays the invoice. While the APLU is a 501(c)3 organization, their rules of operation frequently pose financial administrative burdens similar to those posed by university hosts. For example, WAAESD recently submitted some 100+ pages of documentation to support reimbursement of costs incurred while the chair of the ESS was from the west- the process was laborious and duplicative since ESS does not have direct access to its operating account.
 - *Partially resolved: The lack of timeliness of payment reflects burden of bureaucracy in the APLU. Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 non-profit organization would add capacity while not unnecessarily duplicating available services.*
- The ESS lacks an independent means to invest reserve funds. Currently, ESS has invested reserve funds through TD Wealth using the non-profit status and oversight by the APLU.
 - *Unresolved: As the Experiment Station Section is not an independent entity, the Section has no other means to invest reserve funds other than utilizing the non-profit status and oversight by the APLU. Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 non-profit organization would add capacity while not unnecessarily duplicating available services.*
- The ESS currently lacks a mechanism to accept donations, sponsorships, and grants from corporations, organizations, and grant makers seeking tax deductible charitable contributions. Many corporations and organizations interested in or mandated to making tax deductible charitable contributions can only contribute to 501(c)3 nonprofits.
 - *Unresolved: Neither the APLU nor institutional host will accept tax deductible, charitable donations on behalf of the Experiment Station Section. Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 non-profit organization would add this new capacity.*

Regional Experiment Station Organizations:

Many of the challenges identified as “national” in nature are also faced by the regional associations. With the exception of WAAESD, a regional association that has an established 501(c)4 non-profit organization, the four remaining regions typically operate under the fiduciary authority of a hosting university (ARD-North Carolina A&T University/Tuskegee University, North Central-University of Wisconsin/Michigan State University/Kansas State University, Northeast-University of Rhode Island, South-University of Arkansas).

- The regional associations are experiencing difficulty in executing activities related to holding regional meetings. This frequently requires contracting with hotels, conference centers, audio/visual contractors, food, and beverage provisioners, and external speakers.
 - *Unresolved: Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 non-profit organization that serves as an umbrella for the regional associations would add capacity.*

- The regional associations must rely on an institution or other entity's conference/meeting services unit to fully support the execution of activities related to holding events.
 - *Unresolved: Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 non-profit organization that serves as an umbrella for the regional associations would add capacity.*
- The regional associations lack the capacity to execute an independent contract. The associations can engage in contracts through a university host. In doing so, the association is subject to the policies and procedures posed by the university host. Depending on the city and state of venues/vendors with which the regional associations do business, the associations may not be eligible for tax exemption.
 - *Unresolved: Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 non-profit organization that serves as an umbrella for the regional associations would add capacity.*
- The regional associations lack the capacity to reimburse travelers, speakers, or award winners on a timely basis. This is due to the constraints posed by the university host of a regional association. (For example, a travel reimbursement for a leadership award winner was rejected by a university host because a traveler who was not from the hosting university had not sought prior approval for the travel to receive the award.)
 - *Unresolved: Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 non-profit organization that serves as an umbrella for the regional associations would add capacity.*
- The regional associations lack the timely capacity to pay an invoice for which a competitive bid has not been secured. While the associations appreciate the value to competitive bidding, there are situations for which it's not practical (e.g., when a planning committee identifies a "known" speaker for their specific capabilities).
 - *Unresolved: Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 non-profit organization that serves as an umbrella for the regional associations would add capacity.*
- The regional associations lack the capacity to make pre-payments to hotels and/or conference centers. This is a limitation posed by the university host of a regional association.
 - *Unresolved: Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 non-profit organization that serves as an umbrella for the regional associations would add capacity.*
- The regional associations have depended on the WAAESD to pay bills when university hosts have blocked payments.
 - *Unresolved: The regions appreciate the largesse of WAAESD. Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 non-profit organization that serves as an umbrella for the regional associations would add capacity.*

- The regional associations currently lack a mechanism to accept donations, sponsorships, and grants from corporations, organizations, and grant makers seeking tax deductible charitable contributions.
 - *Unresolved: Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 non-profit organization that serves as an umbrella for the regional associations would add capacity.*
- With each change in regional association leadership, the regional associations have to transfer funds and re-establish accounts and relationships with the new host institution, in addition to spending time learning new purchasing and accounts payable procedures that could be better spent conducting valuable association business. Moreover, each time the host institution changes business practices and systems, the regional office needs to be trained on these new institutional systems. For example, the NCRA AD has undergone several rounds of training for new purchasing and invoicing systems throughout the past few years and will need to do so again when UW Madison transitions to WorkDay next year.
 - *Unresolved: Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 non-profit organization that serves as an umbrella for the regional associations would add capacity.*
- Changes in upper administration and accounting systems pose a threat to retention of funds in accounts utilized by the regional associations. University officials may consider sweeping the accounts or redirecting the funds.
 - *Unresolved: Establishment of an Experiment Station Section 501(c)3 non-profit organization that serves as an umbrella for the regional associations would add capacity.*

Experiment Station Section/Regional Association Goals:

- Gain operational efficiency, reduce administrative burden. Both the ESS and the regional associations have depended on the largesse of WAAESD to assist with remediating financial challenges.
- Have instantaneous access to ESS operating funds, which will reduce redundancy in executing financial transactions and improve efficiency of business operations.
- Seek financial independence to secure flexibility, accountability, and reasonable timeliness of payment of bills.
- Seek capacity to execute contracts and deploy funds as stipulated by contractors, including payment of deposits.
- Seek capacity to attract donations from organizations looking to contribute funds to non-profit organizations.
- Reduce the cost of meetings pass-ons to attendees.

- Protect ESS funds through good financial stewardship.
- Exploit the potential of a partnership among the regions with the ESS on a financial management strategy that works for all.
- Develop reasonable, timely, and responsible strategies for hosting national and regional meetings.
- Reduce the burden on the region and institution of the ESS incoming Chair for hosting the national meeting and Chair performing the tasks related to ESCOP priorities and the Chair's initiatives.

Farm Bill Modification Request

May 9, 2023

Broadband

Background: Big data analyses and precision agriculture, which we expect our academic institutions to inform and our producers to use as conservation practices, cannot be performed without high-speed internet. Currently, big data are being collected, but for many researchers on main campus to access it, they must drive to remote locations and download data manually. There are multiple research stations among the Agricultural Experiment Station system, and due to their rural locations, most have limited access to broadband, including those near main campuses. It is impossible to receive data from weather stations located throughout the states due to the lack of broadband.

Request: *Expand the Rural Broadband Access Program priority list to include State Agricultural Experiment Stations conducting research on cropland and ranchland for use in precision agriculture and/or that will benefit community stakeholders and waive the service area restriction and matching funds for grant applications submitted by State Agricultural Experiment Stations.*

Justification: If broadband were provided to the SAES, there would be instant access, enabling scientists to more quickly and efficiently perform research, a benefit to the agricultural community throughout the United States. Current grants, such as the National Telecommunications and Information Administration grants program, come close by providing broadband and renewable energy to certain communities, but these grants will not fund external broadband to the experiment or weather stations.

Reference: Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 SEC. 6201; [7 U.S. Code 950bb\(c\)\(2\)\(B\)](#)

“After giving priority to the applications described in clauses (i) and (ii) of subparagraph (A), the Secretary shall then give priority to applications—

(i) for projects to provide broadband service to rural communities—

(I) with a population of less than 10,000 permanent residents;

(II) that are experiencing outmigration and have adopted a strategic community investment plan under section 2008v(d) of this title that includes considerations for improving and expanding broadband service;

(III) with a high percentage of low income families or persons (as defined in section 1471(b) of title 42);

(IV) that are isolated from other significant population centers; or

(V) that provide rapid and expanded deployment of fixed and mobile broadband on cropland and ranchland within a service territory for use in various applications of precision agriculture;

(VI) that provide State Agricultural Experiment Stations conducting research on cropland and ranchland for use in precision agriculture and/or that will benefit community stakeholders; and”

Conservation

Conservation Innovation Grants

The Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) are a subset of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) that empower farmers to make conservation-focused decisions on working lands. Many of the practices producers use are developed by State Agricultural Experiment Stations (SAES), which operate a network of experimental farms within and across states. SAES are trusted partners of agricultural producers, so they are in a unique position to collect research data, demonstrate conservation practices, and guide producers as they implement the most appropriate conservation practices. Community colleges carrying out demonstration projects are eligible for these grants, but SAES, which perform the same function, are currently ineligible.

Request: *Make State Agricultural Experiment Stations (SAES) eligible for Conservation Innovation Grants.*

Justification: If SAES were eligible for conservation innovation grants, producers would have more information and tools to more accurately determine the impacts of the conservation practices they implement.

Reference: Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 SEC. 2307; [16 U.S. Code 3839aa-8](#)

“(a)(2) Use

The Secretary may provide grants under this subsection to governmental and non-governmental organizations and persons, on a competitive basis, to carry out projects that—

(A) involve producers who are eligible for payments or technical assistance under the program, **State Agricultural Experiment Stations (SAES)**, or community colleges (as defined in section 3319e(a) of title 7) carrying out demonstration projects on land of the community colleges **or SAES;**”

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

Background: The **Regional Conservation Partnership Program** empowers partnerships among eligible partners to carry out important conservation activities, such as water enhancement and soil erosion prevention. Such conservation projects are regularly carried out by regional, multistate committees of State Agricultural Experiment Stations (SAES), which were originally created with capacity (Hatch) funding to tackle regional agricultural issues and prevent duplication of efforts. The Regional Conservation Partnership Program is not currently authorized to utilize these regional, topical partnerships that already work on important conservation projects.

Request: *Add State Agricultural Experiment Stations (SAES) and multi-state agricultural experiment station committees to the list of eligible partners that may propose research and be included in regional conservation partnership programs.*

Justification: Multistate committees of SAES are designed to answer questions on a regional scale and are uniquely positioned to address the very purpose of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program. If the Regional Conservation Partnership Program could tap into the resources of SAES multistate committees, it could leverage partnerships already in place.

Reference: Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 SEC. 2301; [16 U.S. Code 3871\(a\)](#)

“(4)Eligible partner

The term “eligible partner” means any of the following:

(A)An agricultural or silvicultural producer association or other group of producers.

(B)A State or unit of local government.

(C)An Indian tribe.

(D)A farmer cooperative.

(E)A water district, irrigation district, acequia, rural water district or association, or other organization with specific water delivery authority to producers on agricultural land.

(F)A municipal water or wastewater treatment entity.

(G)An institution of higher education.

(H)An organization or entity with an established history of working cooperatively with producers on agricultural land, as determined by the Secretary, to address—

(i)local conservation priorities related to agricultural production, wildlife habitat development, or nonindustrial private forest land management; or

(ii)critical watershed-scale soil erosion, water quality, sediment reduction, or other natural resource issues.

(I)An organization described in section 3865a(3)(B) of this title.

(J)A conservation district.

(K)A multistate research program administered by a multistate committee of State Agricultural Experiment Stations.”

Request: *Waive the cost contribution of multistate committees of State Agricultural Experiment Stations for the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.*

Justification: State Agricultural Experiment Stations receive a portion of their operating costs through formula, or capacity, funding, which means they must already match their operating costs one-to-one. The Hatch Act specifies that a minimum of 25 percent of these funds, which already require a match, must be spent on regional research activities. This matched funding is the only funding available for multistate committees of State Agricultural Experiment Stations, which perform important regional agricultural research. Because these funds have already been matched at a minimum of one-to-one, further matching requirements are onerous and should be waived. Moreover, the multistate committees have no recourse for finding further matching funds as there are no regional governments to petition to provide such funds.

Reference: Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 SEC. 2301; [16 U.S. Code 3871b\(c\)](#)

“(1)In general

Under a partnership agreement, the eligible partner shall—

(2) Contribution

(A)In general

An eligible partner shall provide a significant portion of the overall costs of the scope of the project that is the subject of the agreement entered into under subsection (a), as determined by the Secretary.

(B)Form

A contribution of an eligible partner under this paragraph may be in the form of—

(i)direct funding;

(ii)in-kind support; or

(iii)a combination of direct funding and in-kind support.

(C)Treatment

Any amounts expended during the period beginning on the date on which the Secretary announces the approval of an application under subsection (e) and ending on the day before the effective date of the partnership agreement by an eligible partner for staff salaries or development of the partnership agreement may be considered to be a part of the contribution of the eligible partner under this paragraph. **The Secretary may waive the required contribution for multistate committees of State Agricultural Experiment Stations.”**

Request: *Expand the list of priorities for applications to the Regional Conservation Partnership Program to include research to address regional questions about conservation practices and to specify regional research, in addition to local, State, and national efforts.*

Justification: To ensure the Regional Conservation Partnership Program solves regional conservation challenges, a priority for this program should be to assess the effectiveness and impacts of conservation practices across a region. For this reason, priority should be given to projects that address the assessment of conservation practices and that leverage regional partnerships and resources, in addition to local, State, and national.

Reference: Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 SEC. 2703; [16 U.S. Code 3871b\(e\)](#)

“(4)Priority to certain applications

The Secretary may give a higher priority to applications that—

(A)assist producers in meeting or avoiding the need for a natural resource regulatory requirement;

- (B) have a high percentage of producers in the area to be covered by the agreement;
- (C) significantly leverage non-Federal financial and technical resources and coordinate with other local, State, **regional**, or national efforts;
- (D) build new partnerships with local, State, **regional**, and private entities to include a diversity of stakeholders in the project;
- (E) deliver a high percentage of applied conservation—
 - (i) to achieve conservation benefits **or assess conservation practices**; or
 - (ii) in the case of a project in a critical conservation area under section 3871f of this title, to address the priority resource concern for that critical conservation area;

Retirement of land-grant college employees

Background: Upon the establishment of the land-grant college system, it was specified in statute that colleges of agriculture were authorized to use federal funds to support retirement systems for their employees. It was further specified that employer contributions to these retirement accounts could include no more than five percent from federal capacity funds. Today, universities are authorized to use the facilities and administrative (indirect) funds from grants, including federal grants, to contribute to retirement accounts, but they are still prevented from using 95 percent of their capacity funding for this purpose.

Request: *The five percent cap on the use of capacity funds for employer contributions to retirement accounts should be eliminated.*

Justification: Capacity funding is the only university revenue that maintains a five percent cap on employer retirement contributions. University accountants, who already track and submit paperwork to demonstrate the one-to-one match required of capacity funding, must create a third pool of funds for retirement contributions, with its own tracking and submission of paperwork to demonstrate adherence to the five percent cap. This administrative burden is replicated across the country at every university that receives capacity funding. Eliminating this cap would significantly streamline accounting.

Reference: [7 U.S. Code 331](#) Retirement of land-grant college employees

“Provided, That there shall not be deducted from Federal funds and deposited to the credit of retirement accounts as employer contributions, amounts in excess of ~~5 per centum of that portion~~ **the qualifying institution’s approved federal composite benefit rate** of the salaries of employees paid from such Federal funds:”

Item 16.0

Agenda Item: Western Water Network Progress

Presenter: Bret Hess

Action: For Information

Background Information:

LEAD PROJECT DIRECTOR (PD)

Sam Fernald (Director, New Mexico Water Resources Research Institute (NM WRRI); and Professor, Department of Animal and Range Sciences, New Mexico State University (NMSU), afernald@nmsu.edu)

COLLABORATING INVESTIGATORS

Richard Herema (Professor and Extension Pecan Specialist, Extension Plant Sciences Dept., NMSU)

David Dubois (State Climatologist and College Associate Professor, Plant and Environmental Sciences Dept., NMSU)

Staci Emm (Professor and Extension Educator, Extension, University of Nevada-Reno (UNR))

Robert Heinse (Associate Professor, Soil and Water Systems Dept., University of Idaho (UI))

Upmanu Lall (Professor, Dept. of Earth and Environmental Engineering, Columbia University; and Director, Columbia Water Center, Columbia University)

Emile Elias (Director, USDA Southwest Climate Hub)

Ginger Paige (Professor, Dept. of Ecosystem Science & Management, University of Wyoming)

Holly Brause (Research Scientist, Stakeholder Ethnography Program, NM WRRI and Assistant Professor, Dept. of Anthropology, NMSU)

Bret Hess (Executive Director, Western Association of Agricultural Experiment Stations, UNR)

Salim Bawazir (Professor, Civil Engineering, NMSU)

Connie Maxwell (Research Scientist, Water and Community Collaboration Lab, NM WRRI)

Lara Prihodko (Associate Director, NMSU Agricultural Experiment Station, NMSU)

Jay Lilywhite (Assistant Dean, Economic & Rural Development, College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences (ACES), NMSU)

Robert Sabie (Research Scientist, Spatial Analysis Program, NM WRRI)

Sujay Kumar (Research Physical Scientist, Earth Sciences Remote Sensing, NASA Goddard Space Flight Center)

Huidae Cho (Associate Professor, Civil Engineering, NMSU)

PROGRAM AREA

Program Code – A9201, Sustainable Agricultural Systems

i. Descriptive title: Thriving agriculture with resilient river-connected aquifers in a drying West: Transcending water scarcity caused by climate change with strategic community water management solutions connected to regional planning scenarios in a cross-scale support network.

ii. Rationale: Water is the foundation of thriving agriculture and communities in the western US. Climate change is causing a cascade of scarcity, from reduced snowmelt runoff to increased evaporative demand and increased groundwater pumping, that is threatening the current and long-term viability of irrigated agriculture and associated communities supported by river-connected aquifers. Along the Rio Grande in southern New Mexico (NM), for example, groundwater pumping has increased to offset reduced surface water inflows associated with drought and climate change since 2002. Impending settlement of interstate legal issues caused by dropping groundwater levels may compel farmers to reduce groundwater pumping to increase groundwater storage and river conveyance to meet downstream delivery targets. Similar stories are playing out across the western US. The challenge is to maintain thriving agriculture while also managing for sustainable aquifer storage. Collaborative community-based approaches are required to develop effective long-term solutions. Despite the importance of transdisciplinary work to address the challenge, many applied research projects are focused on specific scientific interests or narrow agency priorities. A comprehensive system-based approach is needed, focusing on the issues faced by each community to generate a portfolio of innovative climate-smart management options buttressed by supportive regional policy.

iii. Overall hypothesis: We hypothesize that integrated, flexible land and water management portfolios developed with community-directed research and system-science modeling will enable targeted local interventions and effective regional policy that maintain thriving agriculture while providing sustainable groundwater storage in NM and throughout the western US.

iv. Specific objectives: This project will address the specific program goal: Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry. Our overall objective, supporting our overall hypothesis, is to develop strategies for productive climate-smart agriculture that simultaneously support sustainable groundwater in water limited systems. Our short, medium and long-term objectives correspond with spatial scales of: 1) individual agroecological systems (thirteen initial sites with additional sites to be added), 2) distinct states of NM, Idaho (ID), and Nevada (NV), and 3) the western US.

Phase I. Our short-term objective in years 1-3 of the project is to synthesize key drivers and feedbacks in individual system dynamics models of thirteen existing collaborative **Sustainable Agricultural and Water Partnerships (SAWPs)** that have on-the-ground projects with agriculture and communities in connected upland watersheds and river valley irrigated landscapes in NM, ID, and NV. The sites represent a diverse range of agricultural, cultural, and hydrological dryland conditions. Upstream watershed resilience analyses will include rangeland grazing and forest land uses, while irrigated valley crop analyses will include alfalfa and other forages as well as more specialized tree orchard, grain, and vegetable crops. We will work with underserved communities including Hispanic traditional irrigation acequia communities, Navajo National tribal communities, and western tribal programs. Deliverables are system dynamics-based **Resilient Agriculture, Water and Community (RAWC) models** for each SAWP that will be the basis of customized flexible management portfolios.

Phase II. The mid-term objective in years 2-4 is to integrate the SAWP sites in each state to inform statewide policy that captures the agriculturally, culturally, and hydrologically diverse range of sites within the common land management and water rights context of each state. In addition to variables captured in the RAWC models, the regional system science analyses will incorporate reservoir operations, water law, economics, and regional planning that link the

individual SAWP sites. The main deliverables are: 1) a **cross-network support system for each state** that will allow sharing of successes and challenges, and 2) a regional analysis that builds on the data from the cross-network support system and provides state wide **system science policy synthesis** for climate-smart agriculture and water management.

Phase III. Our long-term objective beginning in years 4-5 and extending beyond the project is to use climate forecast tools and market demand/price tools that will be integrated to make climate-smart decisions. We will use the techniques developed for NM, ID, and NV to build a cross-network support system for the western US and inform a framework for innovative policy to support thriving agriculture with resilient groundwater. Exemplars from NM, ID, and NV will enable analysis of the SAWP systems and validation of the RAWC models for distinct state land and water management contexts. The cross-network support system for the western US will utilize the infrastructure being developed for the Western Water Network, a fledgling effort to connect stakeholders, researchers, and decision-makers across the West. Deliverables to be informed by and delivered through the Western Water Network will be: 1) a **Western US framework to build on stakeholder needs to generate climate-smart agriculture options** for farmers, community members, water managers, and policy makers, and 2) a **Western US cross-network support forum** to address climate-smart agriculture with sustainable groundwater in river connected aquifer systems in the western US.

v. Approach: Each selected SAWP site includes an ongoing project led by NMSU ACES, NM WRRI, UI or UNR. Funding is provided by the State of NM, the USDA, the US EPA, BOR, or the county soil and water conservation district (SWCD). Stakeholder connections are supported by the states' Agricultural Experiment Stations and Extension Outreach programs. River and aquifer systems for anticipated SAWP sites in NM will include the Rio Grande and three tributaries, the San Juan River, and the Canadian River; NV sites will include the Walker River and Humboldt River, and the ID site is the Snake River. The USDA SW Climate Hub will synthesize science, provide decision support, and convene scientists and stakeholders to provide education. The project will further integrate each of the following aspects: 1) **Research.** We will build on specific SAWP projects with faculty and research scientists from NMSU, NM WRRI, UI, and UNR to assess innovative water for agriculture management and policy options; we will collaborate with Columbia university and NASA for regional climate smart assessments; we will on faculty participants from all western states to develop a meaningful western water framework and increase effectiveness of the western Water Network; 2) **Education.** we will enhance and expand course offerings at each state university, build on existing interactive games for stakeholder education, and use K-Grey community education to interface between researchers and partners working at each SAWP location; and 3) **Extension.** Extension will help provide a network of stakeholders and collaborators to facilitate the building of relationships between stakeholders, researchers, and University educators. An outreach model created in this project could be utilized throughout the West and build upon the work in the Western Water Network. Extension programming will also provide research results to stakeholders through the West.

vi. Potential impact and expected outcomes: Potential impacts are critical for agriculture and water in the west: Short term – more climate-smart SAWP-style projects to impact major rivers and aquifers; Medium term – better state policy to support thriving agriculture and resilient river connected aquifers under climate driven water scarcity; and Long term – western water framework and forum to create innovative practices and policy to guide climate adaptation for agriculture with sustainable groundwater along irrigated river valleys.

Item 17.0

Agenda Item: 2023 AgInnovation Annual Meeting

Presenter: Bret Hess

Action: For Information

Background Information:

