Minutes of the January, 2024 NCAC-24 Meeting

Texas A&M University, College Station, TX

January 9-10, 2024

After a welcome dinner held January 8, the meeting was called to order at 9AM on January 9 by Chair-Elect Tracy Rutherford. Chair Brian Myers was present via Zoom due to travel difficulties and Dr. Rutherford facilitated the meeting.

**Dr. Cliff Lamb, Director of** [**Texas A&M Agrilife Research**](https://agrilife.tamu.edu/about/) **gave a brief presentation on his agency’s structure and activities.**

**Dr. Rutherford then asked last year’s working groups to reconvene and determine next steps/status updates.**  The working groups included (1) Messaging (focused on developing messaging to advocate for our discipline and the role of our expertise on scientific research teams and their funding proposals); (2) Evaluation (focused on developing a rubric for evaluating the evaluation plan included in funding proposals, strategies for dissemination and outreach); (3) Relationship between professional societies and aims of NCAC-24 (encouraging our professional societies to place greater importance on the research priorities of this group and communicate the importance of education, communication, and evaluation requirements in RFAs).

**After lunch, the full group reconvened for presentations on the purpose and impact of multistate projects.**

**Carlos Ortiz (National Program Leader, USDA-NIFA):** “introduced” new NIFA director (Dr Manjit Misra) and noted that NIFA has increased its workforce by 363 people in 2023 and is considered to be fully staffed at this time. He discussed current funding and NIFA priorities. These include supporting administration priorities laid out in the [2023-26 USDA Science and Research Strategy](https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/usda-science-research-strategy.pdf). He talked about their efforts to modernize the agency’s internal systems, improve the grant application and tracking system, and enhance the customer service experience for stakeholders and partners. Also mentioned [NIFA listens project](NIFA.USDA.GOV/NIFA-LISTENS) and reiterated that this is the time to provide input on the RFP process as the agency is interested in improvements.

**Jeanette Thurston, Executive Director, North Central Region Association**: Overviewed the value of multistate projects and what support her office can provide, including NCRA website resources (handbook, guidelines, etc). [Her slides](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1SgTtxtD13kQWw3n51L0FHgpZ_Z6arIdw/edit#slide=id.p1) contain a lot of detailed information about funding and structure – purpose of the NCACs, and guidelines that govern them. She noted that AES/ESCOP is now “AgInnovation” – how the system of experiment stations will be referred to going forward.

**Multistate Project Best Practices Panel**

NCAC25: Agricultural Communications – Jason Ellis: This project is using the administrative committees to create more team science. National multistate activity focused specifically on ag comm. The NACS Symposium came out of this. Society of Ag Communication Scholars is focused on application and relevance of communication research to physical and biological sciences. NCTemp1214 K-State, Ohio State, Nebraska – integrating and building out science communication as an element of team science. There was a DC project that was short-term for launching the Temp (now under review). Some discussion about merging NCAC-24 and 25? Kris Boone following up on this.

S1071: A framework for secondary schools agriscience education programs that emphasizes the STEM content in agriculture – Aaron McKim: Curriculum, teaching methods, professional development. 5 submissions, 1 funded in last 5-6 years

S1095: Science Communication in Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources: Human Science Research and Workforce Development – Jeff Miller: S1095 recruiting participants. See program website. Go through NIMS system to sign up as a participant. (Appendix E)

W3006: Multistate Agricultural Literacy Research – Brian Warnic: 7 funded projects

The committee had some questions about the specific activities of these multistate projects and each are seeking collaborators (register through NIMMS). After this discussion, the committee adjourned for the day and dinner.

**The meeting was called to order again at 9:00 AM on January 10 by Tracy Rutherford.**

**The working groups met once again and prepared summaries and next steps that are on the Google Drive for this meeting**.

Next, the larger group had some **discussion**. The Evaluation group is proposing regional offices/centers/ - model Rural Sociology Evaluation Centers and K-State College of Ed service. The model would require support initially but eventually become sustainable. Carlos: mentioned Va Tech, Purdue, existing centers. Raised questions of funding and financial stability/sustainability and emphasized that the business model would have to be clear and sound. He also suggested that the agency would only fund at the beginning if we could find way to do it in a non-competitive manner. Critical to determine exactly what the costs would be. How do we fairly select the site and the director? The working group will continue to develop the position paper to add the regional center component.

Tracy is asking members to look at Academic Analytics, work with our campuses, make changes where needed, work with Julie, and make sure our faculty are being represented correctly.

Officers/Election: Tracy Rutherford (Virginia Tech) is the incoming Chair and Jennifer Waldeck (University of Georgia) Chair-Elect. Michael Retallick (Iowa State) was elected Secretary. Reminder that each position is a two year term.

**Next meeting:** At AAAE in May – Manhattan KS. Next year’s January meeting will be in Knoxville afternoon of January 6-end of January 7.

The meeting was adjourned at noon.