

Recently, Deb Hamernik (ESCOP Chair), George Hopper (Incoming ESCOP Chair), Jeff Jacobsen (ESCOP Vice-Chair), Eric Young (Incoming ESCOP Vice-Chair), Ed Jones (ECOP Chair) and Rick Klemme (ECOP Executive Vice-Chair) met with NIFA administrators over two days. With the dynamic and fluid nature of 'all things NIFA', we felt that it would be beneficial to communicate with all AES and CES directors. Feel free to customize this message as appropriate. While some issues seem obvious, these issues are real and should be considered and implemented to greatly assist NIFA during the transition to Kansas City. Feel free to circulate widely and to contact any of the above with questions.

General

- All levels of the LGU system should be patient! NIFA's response time may not be as timely as the LGU community has previously experienced.
- One of NIFA's highest priorities is to obligate and release funds (capacity and competitive) to states. NIFA does not want to return funds to the US Treasury.
- Review all paperwork submitted to NIFA for accuracy and completeness (e.g., *follow the directions provided by NIFA*).
- The likelihood of delays in release of funds is real.
- **As a best practice in preparation for funding delays, directors are encouraged to explore internal funding mechanisms or other tools to "bridge" NIFA funds, if there is a significant gap. A continuing resolution or a government shutdown will likely cause further delays in release of NIFA funds.**
- NIFA email addresses will be changing in the near future: firstname.lastname@usda.gov

Interacting with NIFA

- Do not try to arrange site visits for faculty with NIFA in DC or KC for the next year.
- Do not expect that NIFA will be able to participate in multistate committee meetings (in person or by remote connection).
- When NIFA administrators are present at regional or national meetings, fully engage with them as their schedule allows.
- If NIFA administrators will be present at a regional or national meeting, contact them in advance of the meeting and communicate your interest in scheduling a meeting with them to discuss a specific topic.
- Delay or minimize requests for presentations from NIFA NPLs or other NIFA administrators over the near term, even if remote mechanisms are an option.
- NIFA is developing a plan to re-assign NPLs as state liaisons. Stay tuned for updates as this information becomes available.

NIFA Competitive Grant Programs

- Faculty and LGU administrators should readily accept invitations to serve on review panels. Note: scientists cannot serve on a review panel, if they submit an application (as a PD or Co-PD) that will be reviewed by that panel.
- If faculty or LGU administrators have not yet served on a NIFA review panel, they are encouraged to contact NPLs to volunteer to serve on a panel and send a copy of their CV.
- If individuals who served as Panel Managers in the past desire to serve as Panel Managers again, they are encouraged to provide this information to NIFA NPLs.
- Read and follow directions in RFAs and requests for additional award documents before contacting NIFA with questions.

- If a no-cost extension (or other time-sensitive request from NIFA) is needed, do not wait until the deadline is near to contact NIFA. Requests for no-cost extensions (if allowed in the terms and conditions for that award) can be made up to 6 months before the award termination date.
- Remind eligible New Investigators that submit AFRI applications to “check the box for New Investigators” on the application form (refer to the RFA for eligibility details).

NIFA Hiring Plan

- NIFA employees have until September 27 to decide if they will move to KC. The NIFA website will be updated sometime after September 27 with the current list of NIFA employees.
- Position announcements for NPLs will be written in a generic manner to recruit a wide range of expertise. Several NPLs will be hired from one position description. A broad range of qualified individuals should apply for these positions.
- NIFA will release position announcements for several Division Directors and Deputy Directors after the NPL positions are filled.
- There may be opportunities for LGU faculty or administrators to take sabbaticals to serve in temporary positions at NIFA (similar to NSF Program Officers who are rotators).
- Additional opportunities for student internships may also be available at NIFA.