

Guidance for Onboarding new USDA-ARS and Land-grant University (LGU) Leadership

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Background: This onboarding guidance, targeting USDA-ARS and LGU leadership, provides a framework for developing and strengthening the long-standing and critical partnership within our states, regions, and nationally. Like USDA-ARS, each LGU has their own processes, protocols, rules, and state practices. These differences can create challenges in working together on shared priorities. With dialogue that results in understanding each organization's policies and practices, workable solutions are always possible. Based on the input from USDA-ARS and Agricultural Experiment Station leaders, the following guidance is meant to establish a collaborative atmosphere between ARS and LGU leadership:

- Begin by having a meeting between the new Dean and/or the new Agricultural Experiment Station Director (Note: this person may or may not be the same leader), as well as other college or university leaders including Center Directors, Department Chairs, VP for Research, Provost, Univ. Admin. Leader, etc., and new USDA ARS Center Directors, Research Leaders, Laboratory Directors, or Administrative Officer housed at a LGU or ARS facility on a campus, research station, worksite, etc., preferably within the first 2 months of appointment.
- Schedule regular follow-up meetings to address the following recommended topics for understanding the respective organizations and identifying opportunities for collaboration:
 - General introductions, background, vision, and goals for the unit/organization
 - Share organizational charts with key contacts coupled with roles and responsibilities (leaders, scientists/faculty, HR/finance/budget professionals, safety, and facility engineers, etc.)
 - Share leader contact information and best method for communication and scheduling meetings (i.e., share administrative assistant information).
 - Discuss any existing or past agreements, review and update as needed.
 - Share unique institutional and federal guidelines, rules, policies, required trainings, and procedures applicable to partners, for example:
 - Documentation to help avoid conflicts of interest, such as the USDA ARS document on *Avoiding Misuse of Position for Scientists with Official Duties at Universities* (USDA Ethics) and *University Codes of Conduct*.
 - LGU and ARS information should be shared that addresses relevant workplace policies, such as: safety, emergencies, fire alarms, laboratory and greenhouse use, general laboratory safety, the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC), animal care and use, the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), COVID, and so on. Notably, this may apply to all employee levels depending upon the exact nature of their work responsibilities.
 - Discuss whether LGU and ARS share any fee-for-service, space charges, maintenance, and renovation practices, and share information related to office, lab, greenhouse, and field facilities.
 - Tour applicable facilities across location(s) and discuss shared equipment, operations and support personnel, maintenance requests, etc.
 - Explore opportunities for enhanced or new collaborations and partnerships:
 - Unique facilities, equipment, scientific expertise
 - Identify relevant academic units and explore courtesy or otherwise appointments and build relationships between academic units and ARS personnel and vice versa.
 - Discuss organizational initiatives and priorities where collaboration would be valuable.
 - Share current and future personnel and facilities changes.
 - Discuss budget management for flow-through funds and personnel management for university staff working on these funds.
 - Discuss training protocols and opportunities:
 - LGUs and USDA ARS should provide mechanisms for access to training opportunities for co-located employees across all classifications. For example, electronic access to LGU online training likely requires some official status and unique identifier (NETID) to access training. Similarly, University student and employee access to ARS computer systems and data requires background checks and training.

- Address new and reoccurring challenges and solutions with the partnership as soon as possible (don't let issues fester).
- Develop onboarding procedures for new ARS scientists working within university facilities and university scientists, students and post-docs access and training for working within ARS locations.
- Identify ARS scientists to mentor new ARS scientists at university sites if the new scientist does not have a research leader at that site.
- Develop protocols for addressing problems/issues/irregularities, etc. between organizations.
- Create a document specific to conversations with USDA ARS scientists and LGU unit heads/faculty.

USDA ARS Policies to Review:

- Full Ethics Issues List at: [09-1 Ethics Issues Related to USDA Scientists | USDA](#) and in particular review the following:
 - Specific Duties and Activities Involving the University
 - Guidance Related to Co-Located Scientists
 - Guidance on ARS Scientists Serving on Graduate Student Committees
 - Participation in Grants on Behalf of Universities and other non-Federal Entities
 - Adjunct professor

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