

NERA Spring Teleconference Notes

March 28, 2019, 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Roll call: Jon Wraith (NH), Matt Wilson (WV), Fred Servello (ME), Mark Hutton (ME), Mark Rieger (DE), Indrajeet Chaubey (CT-Storrs), Ted Andreadis (CT-New Haven), Jan Nyrop (NY), Carol Thornber (RI), Jody Jellison (MA), Gary Thompson (PA), Maryellen O'Brien (PA), Adel Shirmohammadi (MD), Rick Rhodes (NERA), David Leibovitz (NERA)

Agenda

1. Approval of agenda, March 28, 2019 (Jody)
 - **The agenda was approved by acclamation**
2. Approval of minutes of December 6, 2018 (Jody)
 - **The 12/6/18 minutes were approved by acclamation**
3. MAC report (6 peer-reviewed NE_TEMP research project proposal, 2 NRSP renewals, outstanding AA assignments, multistate research award nominee) (Fred)
 - Peer-Reviewed Proposals (expanded details were circulated in the MAC report from March 1, 2019)
 - NE_TEMP1938 *Carbon Dynamics and Hydromorphology in Depressional Wetland Systems*
 - Strong project with an engaged team led by AA Jon Wraith (NH) and technical lead Mark Stolt (RI)
 - NE_TEMP1939 *Improving the Health Span of Aging Adults Through Diet and Physical Activity*
 - Many stations can identify faculty members who dedicate most of their effort toward this project
 - NE_TEMP1941 *Environmental Impacts of Equine Operations*
 - Significant issue dealt with in a number of states, modest funding area
 - NE_TEMP1942 *Enhancing Poultry Production Systems through Emerging Technologies and Husbandry Practices*
 - Potential 2019 NE Multistate Excellence Nominee
 - Many publications resulting from this project
 - NE_TEMP1943 *Biology, Ecology & Management of Emerging Disease Vectors*
 - Rewrite of a productive project with an engaged AA, Ted Andreadis (CT-New Haven)
 - NE_TEMP1944 *Management of the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug*
 - Technical team is functionally integrated, but outreach plan is weak
 - **A motion was introduced to approve the six peer-reviewed Multistate research proposals by Fred Servello on behalf of the MAC, seconded by Ted Andreadis, and approved unanimously by NERA. The six proposals will be moved forward to NIFA for final approval.**

- NRSP Renewals / NRSP Review Committee input (details were circulated in the MAC report from March 1, 2019)
 - The NRSP Review Committee is scheduled to meet on Tuesday, May 28, 2019 in Warwick, RI
 - The Northeast will continue to push for renewing NRSPs to submit funding plans / business models that have provisions for moving away from off-the-top funding. NRSPs have not typically moved away from off-the-top funding, and the Northeast has historically taken a strong position on working to move NRSPs away from off-the-top funding over time.
 - Collectively, each Northeast AES is involved with NRSPs in two contexts:
 - 1.) NRSP funds come directly off the top of the Multistate Research Funds
 - 2.) Every Northeast institution provides match to support the NRSPs:
 - If you are an institution who receives no NRSP funds (e.g. funds to support NRSP or “NE” projects like NERCARD), you likely have noticed a delta between your Multistate allocation and your Multistate match requirement (match # is greater than the allocation.) This delta represents the institutional (non-federal) match to the funds that support NRSPs.
 - In 2018, the NRSP Review Committee required mid-year reviews for the renewal projects, insisting on the submission of a budget plan which would wean the NRSP away from off-the-top funding.
 - Discussion ensued.
 - NRSP_TEMP3 *The National Atmospheric Deposition Program* (Northeast AA: Jon Wraith)
 - The project has a strong history of leveraging funds. Further, the \$50,000 from OTT MRF allows the host, to utilize a lower F&A rate on external grant funding that supports the efforts of NRSP3.
 - **Rick Rhodes will frame a set of comments on NRSP3 on behalf of NERA, for presentation to the NRSP-RC in May.**
 - NRSP_TEMP10 (Vacant Northeast AA) *National Database Resources for Crop Genomics, Genetics and Breeding Research*
 - Previously funded at \$500k/year, the NRSP10 team is seeking funding at the same level on the renewal.
 - Tools are changing in crop genomics and genetics, and as a result they are seeking level funding at \$500k/year.
 - No plan to move away from OTT funding, other than in the previous 5 years, NRSP10 received ~\$2M from other funding sources.
 - Two suggestions for NERA’s decision:

- 1.) Approve, but technical team should provide a clear transition plan on how alternative sources of funding could be obtained
- 2.) Reject the proposal based on their lack of an alternative funding plan
- Does this project provide national support at a critical level?
 - Based on support letters from breeders that came in along with the proposal, there is critical support provided.
- Is “changing tools” an adequate justification for maintaining the funding level? Tools are always changing in science over time.
 - New software, analytical techniques, involvement of bioinformatics and other specialists are behind the justification of “changing tools”
- How does this compare to or interact with other National genomics databases in terms of value-add?
 - This NRSP should link to and have interoperability with other genomics databases, but is within a different content area.
 - This is parallel to the Animal Genomics database NRSP8. NERA voted no to the renewal of NRSP8.
- NRSP guidelines require projects that are undergoing renewal, to provide a clear and compelling transition plan to move away from off-the-top funding. This group has not engaged in a serious discussion on how they would function without NRSP support.
- NERA could provide a recommendation to the NRSP-RC to ask NRSP10 to revise the proposal, clearly define a transition plan away from off-the-top funding utilizing alternative sources of funding, and at mid-term review we would require a robust review of the transition plan. NERA’s comments should indicate potential consequences of a poor mid-term review.
 - **Rick will draft comments from NERA based on this discussion, for review by the NERA Exec Committee, and presentation to the NRSP-RC in May.**
- Can there be a consequence of a poor mid-term review?
 - Yes – immediately following a poor mid-term review, funding could be called for a reduction, an elimination, or the NRSP might not be allowed to renew for another term.

4. Discussion items

- National Impact Database (NIDB) and participation by NERA (Rick)
 - Project in conjunction with Extension, developed to share impacts from across the country in parallel with the Annual Report of Results and Accomplishments.
 - The quality of impact statements on the database is variable.

- Submissions of impact statements from the Northeast have dwindled – only one NERA station has provided impact statements in the past three years.
 - **Rick will frame a response to the NIDB and ESCOP, which will be reviewed by the NERA Exec Committee.**
 - **The recommendation from NERA will express to ESCOP its non-participation, going forward, in the NIDB. NERA will recommend that ESCOP re-examine the utility NIDB. Further, ESCOP should consult with NIFA to determine what the impact statement portal will look like in the rollout of the new Annual Report of Results and Accomplishments.**
 - Industrial Hemp research: ramifications of the 2018 Farm Bill (Jody)
 - Tabled by Chair Jody Jellison for discussion at the next NERA meeting
 - Rescission of the match waiver in the 2018 Farm Bill; what happened and the response of the system (Rick)
 - Some grants will not be able to be submitted as a result of the rescission of the match waiver
 - 2018 Farm Bill language states that LGUs cannot use waived overhead as part of 1:1 match on grant programs including SCRI and OREI.
 - Rick recommends NERA push for the widest possible interpretation of in-kind support for SCRI and OREI, along with an elimination of the need for 1:1 match in grant programs including SCRI and OREI.
 - Jan mentioned that unrecovered IDC as match is off the table. With regard to legislation, elimination of the match is the favorable route. Cornerstone's (APLU Government Affairs consultant) miss on this match waiver rescission language in the 2018 Farm Bill Cycle is a significant concern.
 - **Gary asked if NERA should draft a formal set of comments for delivery to Cornerstone?**
 - **Support from Jody, Jan, Adel**
 - The issue is in national focus. During the ESCOP meeting in March 2019, a robust discussion about match took place, during which Rick made a recommendation for elimination of the match requirement all together, and we should work on dealing with this issue head on.
 - Rick reached out to Cynthia Montgomery (NIFA), asking for a clear explanation of where the elimination of the delta between the negotiated institutional ICR rate and the set ICR rate of SCRI/OREI comes from.
5. Director action items
- Committee memberships: Sci and Tech (NERA is chairing, Adel is rotating off, John Kirby is the sole NERA member; need 2 more NERA members) (Rick)
 - **Rick asked NERA to reach out to him with willingness to serve on the ESCOP SciTech Committee. He will otherwise have discussions with strong candidates to serve on the committee.**

- NEED/NERA Ecosystem Ag/Ecosystem Services Conference (need 2 NERA director to serve on planning team; Mark Hutton [ME] has volunteered) (Rick)
 - **Rick will reach out to strong candidates for this ecosystem services conference.**
- 6. Updates (Rick)
 - Summer meeting (June 2 – 5; Washington, DC)
 - **Please send agenda items for the expanded NERA Business Meeting to Rick and Dave by email so that we can hold a robust discussion in DC.**
- 7. Adjourn

Upcoming meetings:

- NEED/NERA Joint Summer Meeting (includes NERA annual meeting), June 2 – 5, 2019, Washington, DC
- ESS/NEDA meeting (includes NERA regional meeting), September 23 – 25, 2019, Nashville, TN
- APLU Annual Meeting, November 10 – 12, 2019, San Diego, CA
- NERA Teleconference, December TBD, 2019
- New Administrators Meeting, December 10 – 12, 2019, Washington, DC