

NERA Business Meeting Minutes
August 10, 2023, 8:30 am ET

In attendance: Anton Bekkerman (Incoming Chair / New Hampshire), Wendie Cohick (Officer-at-large / New Jersey), Lynne McLandsborough (Massachusetts), Jody Jellison (Massachusetts), Margaret Smith (Cornell University), Matt Wilson (West Virginia), Leslie Parise (Vermont), Kumar Venkitanarayanan (Connecticut-Storrs), George Criner (Maine), Blair Siegfried (Pennsylvania), Jason Hubbart (West Virginia), Olga Padilla-Zakour (Cornell AgriTech), Calvin Keeler (Delaware), Rick Rhodes (NERA), David Leibovitz (NERA)

Welcome and Meeting Administration – Anton Bekkerman (NERA Incoming Chair)

- Anton called the meeting to order, and the group went through a series of introductions.
- **The agenda for this meeting was approved by acclamation.**
- **The minutes of the June 07, 2023, NERA meeting were approved by acclamation.**

Multistate Activities Committee Report and Recommendations – Matt Wilson (MAC Chair)

- The MAC recommends to NERA approval of two peer reviewed multistate activities:
 - NE_TEMP2338 *Weed Emergence in a Changing Climate*
 - Reviews were generally positive and the team responded to reviewers' comments.
 - In its previous 5-year cycle, NE1838 did not hold any authorized annual meetings or submit annual reports. Upon inquiry, the MAC found that the technical team had met on an annual basis and filed yearly reports at Cornell.
 - **The MAC recommends approval of this project proposal, conditional upon the submission of annual reports for the previous project cycle.**
 - NECC_TEMP2312 *Northeast Coordinating Committee on Soil Testing*
 - Reviews were positive and the team responded to reviewers' comments.
 - This group has been active over its previous 5-year cycle.
 - There is a new National Research Support Project (NRSP11) proposal undergoing review. The goal of the project is to develop a user tool for fertilizer application. The intent is for NRSP11 to be complementary to, not collaborative with, NECC2312. The Northeast Soil Testing group supported a recommendation to approve the NRSP11 proposal.
 - **The MAC recommends approval of this coordinating committee proposal.**
 - Other MAC-related business
 - Faculty, staff, and Extension personnel may participate on Multistate Research Projects. Graduate students are excluded as "participants".
 - The MAC members representing Extension have been charged with developing some resources to assist technical teams with drafting outreach plans for multistate activities.
 - **The Multistate Activities Committee recommendations as presented were approved by acclamation.**

Update on NERA Operations – Rick Rhodes and David Leibovitz (NERA)

- The NERA budget for FY2024 and final accounting for FY2023 were presented.
- The largest expenditures in the NERA budget are salary and fringe. David Leibovitz's salary increase (approved by NERA, June 2022) was approved at the University of Rhode Island in July 2023.
- Travel costs were high in FY2023. Rick supported Matt Wilson as the agInnovation Chair at several engagements, David Leibovitz traveled to the LEAD21 program, NERA engaged in new initiatives such as the Association of Communications Excellence and the Urban Agriculture Multistate Project writing team meeting.
- The budgeted amount for Northeast communications has been increased. This is intended to support the rollout of the Northeast Agenda and associated activities undertaken by institutional communicators as a region.
- The proposed final net balance for FY2024 constitutes 27% of expenditures; in accordance with the carry-forward policy set by NERA.
- Keeping with previous years, the planning grants line has been retained in its full amount. These funds may be used to support planning grant submissions as well as workshops led by NERA to stimulate new activities (e.g., Urban Agriculture Multistate Project writing team).
- **A motion to approve the NERA budget as presented was approved by acclamation.**

Expectations of NIFA

- Dr. Manjit Misra (formerly Iowa State University) has been named as the new NIFA Director. Manjit will attend the agInnovation meeting this fall and will be invited to the NERA meeting.
- What are the issues NERA wishes to push forward when we meet with the NIFA Director?
 - Manjit wants to travel and see LGUs/Experiment Stations across the country. The Northeast is geographically well-positioned to facilitate several meaningful visits to Experiment Stations in one trip.
 - Since the reorganization of NIFA, what is the best way to communicate with NIFA? What is the pathway of communication? How do Experiment Station Directors or faculty facilitate and embark on conversations with NIFA?
 - Concerns about questions not being answered and information not being delivered in a uniform manner. Depending on who one approaches at NIFA, guidance and answers can be varied.
 - **The next NERA Newsletter will include a simple SurveyMonkey form to gather feedback and suggestions for engagement with the NIFA Director.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:31 am ET.