

NERA Business Meeting

June 5, 2024, 8:00 AM

Omni Hotel, Bristol Room, Providence, RI

In attendance: Anton Bekkerman (Chair-New Hampshire), Puneet Srivastava (Past Chair-Maryland), Margaret Smith (New York-Ithaca), Leslie Parise (Vermont), Blair Siegfried (Pennsylvania), Beth Gugino (Pennsylvania), Kevin Kephart (USDA NIFA), Brian Farkas (Delaware), Angela Jagiello (Massachusetts), Chris Smart (New York-Geneva), Jason Hubbart (West Virginia), Rick Rhodes (NERA), David Leibovitz (NERA), Jennifer Horton (agInnovation West)

Call to Order / Meeting Administration

- The group went through a series of introductions.
- **The agenda as presented was approved by acclamation.**
- **The [minutes of the March 26-27 NERA Spring Meeting](#) were approved by acclamation.**

Follow-up from March meeting: Northeast Agenda and NERA Value Proposition (Anton Bekkerman)

- Areas for growth
 - Engagement with other regional organizations to promote the NE Agenda
 - Clear understanding of how Directors/stations can engage with the NE Agenda
- Concerns and discussion
 - NE Agenda may be too broad to guide a faculty member's research agenda, but it is worthwhile to share with faculty.
 - We should organize communicators around NE Agenda issues to generate regional products.
 - We want to support each other, we care about each other, and we want to believe in the document – but (much like Steve Sloman's research) all Directors needs to be able to explain “Why do you think the document is great? What makes the document different? What is the unifying vision?”
 - One function of the NE Agenda is to provide a unified vision of what NERA and NEED do and what their priorities are as a region. The NE Agenda should give way to an understanding of how everyone can be on the same page.
 - A takeaway from the biomedical research industry: different groups speaking with one unified voice across associations and organizations when engaging with legislators has proven to be successful.
 - Successes for the Western Agenda: Engagement with Western Governors Association and Western State Legislators Association
 - Documents like the NE Agenda and the Climate Roadmap should be promoted among grant panelists.
 - In working with legislators to promote the Research Facilities Act, there may have been missed opportunities to promote the Northeast Agenda to re-enforce the support from northeast states.
 - There has been success in using the Northeast Agenda as a “universal translator” to help legislators understand research projects at a higher level.

- Are we missing an opportunity to equip CARET delegates with the NE Agenda? Should we show up in March to the APLU meeting and promote internally?
 - Together, a Director and ED could make the case for regional priorities – hammer the point home that they do not conflict with state priorities.
- The NE Agenda helps build out ideas and communicate research in a palpable way.
- Do we need to invest in a point person for the region’s communications and/or government affairs? Could a dedicated person help us promote the NE agenda?
- Can we think beyond the Multistate Research Project to work on research as a region? Can we take on a regional project that brings in more money?
- We should generate more branded materials / “Swag” to promote ourselves. Helping to foster mutual affinities, helping to expose our brand, gives way to the “elevator pitch.”

Budget and Legislative Committee Discussion (a standing committee of agInnovation, Anton Bekkerman)

- 2024 Farm Bill language has been released.
 - House side includes \$2.5B in infrastructure funds for 5 years.
 - Senate side, \$100M over 5 years
- FY25 Budgeting is underway, not expected to pass by 10/1
 - Rumored cuts could affect capacity funds (potential 3-5%)
 - Lewis-Burke Associates (Gov’t affairs consultants) is helping institutions and APLU communicate why this is a bad idea.
 - **Directors are encouraged to share examples of why 3-5% capacity funds cut would be a bad idea for your institution. (Match or graduate tuition support can be used to make the case.)**
- FY26 Budget talk will not begin until after the presidential election.

RFP from the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (Leslie Parise)

- Should a Brick and mortar “value added training center for dairy processing” be constructed in New England?
- The award would include \$125k in phase 1, \$125k in phase 2
- Could be either a new or existing facility.
- The RFP is seeking an unbiased contracting institution to take the lead.
- **NERA will work with Leslie Parise and Eric Bishop von Wettberg to share the RFP.**

Multistate Activities Committee ([report with recommendations is posted on the web](#), Puneet Srivastava)

- Request to approve Peer Reviewed Multistate Activities
 - NE_TEMP2443: *Biology, Ecology & Management of Emerging Disease Vectors*, 10/2024-09/2029 [Renewal of NE1943, AA: Jason White – Connecticut, New Haven]
 - NE_TEMP2442: *Improving Sustainable Poultry Production through Collaborative Research and Outreach*, 10/2024-09/2029 [Renewal of NE1943, AA: Kumar Venkitanarayanan – Connecticut, Storrs]

- **The two-peer reviewed multistate projects were approved unanimously. NERA OED will contact the project leadership and make the final approval in NIMSS.**
- Award and Workshop nominations
 - 2024 agInnovation Award for Excellence in Multistate Research: NE1834 *Genetic Bases for Resistance and Immunity to Avian Diseases* (drafted by AA Bob Taylor, West Virginia)
 - NE nomination for 2024 Multistate Research Fund Impacts writing workshop, a component of NRSP1: NE2335 *Resource Optimization in Controlled Environment Agriculture*
 - Visit MRFImpacts.org to learn more about the Multistate Research Fund impacts program.
- MAC membership change
 - **Cindy Fitch (WVU) has rotated off the MAC and Bill Miller (UMass) has been nominated by NEED to replace Cindy. Bill will rotate off the NRSP1 Management Committee as the Northeast AA.**
- Administrative Adviser Assignments
 - NE1938 (intends to renew 9/30/24 as NE_TEMP2438): *Carbon Dynamics and Hydromorphology in Depressional Wetland Systems*
 - Nominee: Puneet Srivastava (Maryland)
 - NE2201: *Mycobacterial Diseases of Animals*
 - Nominee: TBD
 - NE2249: *Sustainable and Inclusive Rural Economic Development to Enhance Housing, Health, Entrepreneurship, and Equity*
 - Nominee: Anton Bekkerman (New Hampshire)
 - NE2333: *Biological Improvement of Chestnut through Technologies that Address Management of the Species and its Pathogens and Pests*
 - Nominee: Beth Gugino (Pennsylvania)
 - NRSP1: *Multistate Research Information Management and Impact Communications Program*
 - Nominee: David Leibovitz (NERA)
 - NRSP8: *Genomic Capacity: Building Applied Genomic Capacity for Animal Industries*
 - Nominee: TBD
 - **The slate of nominated Administrative Advisers (NE1938, NE2249, NE2333, NRSP1) was approved unanimously. Those assignments will be made in NIMSS following the meeting.**

NERA Operations Discussion (Anton Bekkerman)

- NRSP Review Committee Northeast Representative – Blair Siegfried was nominated to serve as the new Northeast representative on the NRSP RC. **Blair's appointment was approved unanimously.**
- NERA Officer-at-large nomination – This person will rotate into the NERA Executive Committee. Jason Hubbart was nominated to serve as the officer-at-large. **Jason's appointment was approved unanimously.**

- NERA Spring Meeting location 2025 – NERA has met at the APLU Building in the spring of 2023 and 2024. There was discussion this past March about meeting on an agricultural experiment station.
 - **Central Maryland Research and Education Center in Clarksville, MD was selected for the 2025 NERA Spring Meeting.**
 - **NERA OED will work with the University of Maryland to set up this meeting.**
- NERA Budget discussion
 - Rick led a discussion of the NERA budget for FY25. While NERA is in good financial shape, the association has not increased its assessment in the past 8 years as benefits have progressively increased. In order to continue delivery of services and maintain a 25% carryover as designated by NERA, the ED is suggesting a 4% increase in the assessment. While the business meeting was convened with a quorum, the proposed FY25 budget and budget narrative will be sent as a ballot to all NERA directors next week. – **Voting on the FY25 budget will be conducted electronically.**

The NERA business meeting adjourned at 11:18 am ET.

NERA then met with representatives from CARET and Northeast communicators in an ensuing session.