



**MINUTES**  
**Project Management Committee**  
**Special Meeting**  
**December 18, 2025**  
***Virtual***

**MOTIONS AND ACTION ITEMS**

1. A motion to approve Debbie Carpenter to serve as Acting Executive Director until a new Executive Director is hired was made by Todd Scholz, Seconded by Mary Hausbeck. **Approved by Majority, 1 abstention - A. Simmons.**
2. A motion was made to suspend the policy that limits IR-4 from starting additional new studies in 2026 was made by Todd Scholz, seconded by Alvin Simmons; **unanimously approved.**
3. A motion was made by Liwei Gu to approve the IR-4 Governance Document as proposed, to amend it as needed with the majority approval of the PMC, and for it to be signed by the Executive Director, Project Management Committee Chair and Administrative Advisor Chair, seconded by Todd Scholz. **Approved by Majority, 1 abstention - A. Simmons.**

**ACTION ITEMS**

1. **Action Item:** J. Baron to add language to the IR-4 Governance document that will allow amendments as needed by majority approval of the PMC.

**Members:**

Jerry Baron; IR-4 Executive Director  
Doug Buhler; Administrative Advisor NCR  
Liwei Gu; Regional Director - SOR  
Mary Hausbeck; Regional Director- NCR  
Matt Hengel; Regional Director-WR/PMC Chair  
Joseph Munyaneza; Administrative Advisor ARS  
Chris Phillips; USDA-NIFA  
Todd Scholz; CLC Chair  
Alvin Simmons; USDA- ARS  
Simon Zebelo; Regional Director – NER

**Staff:**

Deborah Carpenter; IR-4 HQ  
Krystal Chojnacki; IR-4 HQ

**Thursday, December 17, 2025 2:00 pm EST**

-- Jerry Baron called the meeting to order at 2:02 pm --

1. Approving Acting Executive Director to sign off on GLP Documents
  - J. Baron introduced the item, asked K. Chojnacki to provide an Executive Director update, and provided a background on why the request is being made to approve an acting Executive Director to comply with GLP requirements and keep work moving forward.
  - A discussion was held regarding the delays in hiring an Executive Director and if some of Debbie's other duties will be diverted to others while she is taking on these additional duties.
  - **A motion to approve Debbie Carpenter to serve as Acting Executive Director until a new Executive Director is hired was made by Todd Scholz, Seconded by Mary Hausbeck. Approved by Majority, 1 abstention - A. Simmons.**

2. Suspending the Policy that limits IR-4 from starting additional new studies in 2026.
  - J. Baron reported: at the October 2025 PMC a policy decision was made that any study that was lost coming out of the National Research Planning Meeting (NRPM) would not be replaced in order to provide additional resources for contract research laboratories to address the analytical backlog; however they are noticing that studies that have been done in the past are requiring additional data to move forward and that these were former "A" priorities; that this request is for permission to add these to the 2026 project list and not wait until 2027 to do this work; they have lost one study due to a manufacturer decision.
  - A discussion was held as to the number of trials terminated due to this manufacturer decision (7) and that this is the only one terminated after the NRPM thus far; funding will be coming from another project having a new funding source (TASC) and freeing up NIFA dollars; one trial would help complete projects currently under way; the high shipping costs associated with shipping samples to processing facilities; that the policy applies to 2026 trials only; the importance of getting results to the growers as fast as possible; and some larger studies may need to be spread over two years.
  - **A motion was made to suspend the policy that limits IR-4 from starting additional new studies in 2026 was made by Todd Scholz, seconded by Alvin Simmons; unanimously approved.**
  
3. Approval of IR-4 Governance Document
  - J. Baron reported: that this body requested he draft/compile a Governance document to pass long to the next Executive Director; comments were integrated into the most recent version
  - A discussion was held regarding if sections of the document were previously signed off on; expressed gratitude for Jerry's efforts to develop the document; and to add a sentence in the document that it can be amended .
  - **A motion was made by Liwei Gu to approve the IR-4 Governance Document as proposed, to amend it as needed with the majority approval of the PMC, and for it to be signed by the Executive Director, Project Management Committee Chair and Administrative Advisor Chair, seconded by Todd Scholz. Approved by Majority, 1 abstention - A. Simmons.**
  - **Action Item:** J. Baron to add language to the IR-4 Governance document that will allow amendments as needed by majority approval of the PMC.

**A motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:55 pm was made by Alvin Simmons, seconded by Todd Scholz. Approved by Majority (1 absent Matt Hengel).**