



IR-4 PMC MEETINGS MINUTES

Special Meeting

September 23, 2021

Zoom Virtual Meeting

PARTICIPANTS

Jerry Baron; IR-4 Executive Director
Michael Bledsoe; CLC/Chair
Doug Buhler; Administrative Advisor-NCR
Liwei Gu; Regional Director-SOR
Matt Hengel; Regional Director-Western Region
John Wise; Regional Director-NCR/Chair PMC
Simon Zebelo; Regional Director - NER

GUESTS

Debbie Carpenter
Jennifer Heiss
Dan Rossi
Venkat Pedibhotla

Thursday, September 23rd 2:00 to 3:00 pm

Jerry Baron welcomed the group at 2 p.m. No official call to order was made.

PMC members agreed to hold NRPM and PMC meetings in person in late October, with those who cannot attend calling in via Zoom.

1) Prospects of Continuing Resolution for 2022:

Jerry Baron began the discussion.

- There is a chance that Congress may default to a Continuing Resolution (CR) to keep government funded in the short-term. This would mean funding would be at 2021 levels.
- Priorities identified at the Food Use Workshop were done so at a reduced number in anticipation of a CR. The Environmental Horticulture team is prepared to do the same at their workshop later this month.
- Commodities impacted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) ban on chlorpyrifos are concerned that they will need to find resources to address this loss. IR-4 would be the go-to organization for alternative label uses.
 - Jerry suggested connecting commodity representatives with DCLRS.
- IR-4 was not included in the \$3 billion investment in agriculture proposed by the House Agriculture Committee.
- Liwei Gu announced that Regional Field Coordinator Janine Spies is preparing an application for a multi-state grant through the specialty crop multi state fund and plans to involve the Western Region.
 - Janine is also applying for funding from the Florida specialty crop block fund, which is similar to CDFA. Only projects in Florida would benefit from this fund.

2) ACAC Laboratory "Change" report

Jerry Baron began the discussion.

- Plan was to have the lab backlog recommendation report back to PMC by September 1, with a full recommendation back to PMC by the October meeting.
- Subcommittee (John Wise, Liwei Gu and Matt Hengel) have not gotten together to discuss the draft recommendation report Matt compiled.
- Jerry and John both noted that the recommendations are more of a bandaid and don't reflect the change that is needed in order to eliminate the existing lab backlog.
- The need for a culture shift in the labs was identified
 - Western Region was able to make changes. Lab staff in other regions are not as willing to change their ways.
 - Staff are currently changing (retirements and replacements) so PMC is hopeful that things will change soon.
- Subcommittee will meet soon to discuss the report. Jerry offered to participate in these discussions.

3) Rutgers/Penn State interpretation of Fee for Service

Jerry Baron began the discussion.

- Two university sub recipients in the Northeast Region are requesting indirect costs from our USDA operating grant, even though the grant does not include the 10% indirect costs for the first year of operation.
 - Penn State
 - Rutgers University
- Simon Zebelo added that the University of Maryland College Park also requested IDC.
- Other regions are not seeing this issue, but next year will be a bigger problem as IDC was only removed from the first year of the grant.
- Identified need for a unified approach next year with clear language.
 - Douglass Buhler noted that Tom Bewick has language from NIFA that may be appropriate for use in communications with subrecipient universities.

4) Quality Assurance Assessment

Jerry Baron began the discussion.

- IR-4 does not currently have QA resources in the right geographic locations to match up with ongoing research.
 - Work level for field QA unit team members are not equitable across the regions.
- Discussion on whether QA operations should officially be distributed out of HQ by the national QA director. Historically regions covered research in their own regions.

- Benefit of moving to a nationally-driven system includes more efficient and equitable assignment of work.
- Timing would be appropriate as IR-4 HQ at NC State is now the lead on the operations grant.
- Short term solution to be identified for the coming year
- Dan Rossi suggested that a long-term strategic solution is identified as part of the Path Forward process.

5) Food Use Workshop

Jerry Baron began the discussion.

- Jerry thanked Venkat and his team for their performance at the Food Use Workshop
- Documentation error with Integrated Solutions resulting in 14 high priorities for IS, rather than eight.
- Team was able to cover 12 of these 14 projects in addition to the seven carry-over projects.
 - No concerns if we end up at CR levels of funding.

6) Additional topics:

- John Wise shared that North Central lab director Sue Erhardt announced her retirement
- Liwei Gu announced that Janine Spies has identified a candidate to work with her as an assistant. The candidate is highly educated and has previously worked with IR-4. They are close to finalizing the hire.
- Jerry announced that the hotel registration meeting link for NRPM will be posted within a day.

--The meeting adjourned at 3:10 pm.