



**MINUTES**  
**Project Management Committee**  
**Summer 2022 Meeting**  
**July 12-14, 2022**  
***Virtual Meeting***

**MOTIONS AND ACTION ITEMS**

**Motions/Consent Items:**

1. Motion by Alvin Simons to approve the Spring 2022 and May 5<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting Minutes; Seconded by Todd Scholz. **Unanimously approved.**
2. Motion by Todd Scholz to approve membership of Michelle Grainger of the North Carolina SweetPotato Commission onto the Commodity Liaison Committee; seconded by Matt Hengel. **Unanimously approved.**
3. Motion for approval of the 2023 project budget (as revised): Assuming funding of \$14.5 million and 10% indirect, provide Core \$8,387,756; Core Supplement \$600,000; Residue Field Trials \$2,500,000; Performance \$700,000; IS \$650,000; EHC \$650,000; TOTAL \$13,487,756, was made by Todd Scholz; seconded by Liwei Gu. **Unanimously approved.**
4. Motion that IR-4 Headquarters will maintain project-wide awareness and oversight of all GLP residue projects, while they are in the analytical phase. This includes the authority to make decisions regarding lab assignments/reassignments, prioritization of studies, establishing and adhering to timeframes for successful completion of studies, and determining a path forward for studies where difficulties are encountered. The lab directors will maintain oversight of the day-to-day operations in each lab. Because the ARS labs fall under a different authority structure and have funding independent of the IR-4 NIFA grant, IR-4 will work with the ARS Minor Use Pesticide Coordinator concerning the ARS labs, was made by John Wise; seconded by Liwei Gu. **Unanimously approved.**
5. A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 3:13 pm by Matt Hengel; seconded by Liwei Gu. **Unanimously approved.**

**Action Items:**

- **Action Item:** (Debbie Carpenter) Engage with the training committee to organize a session at the 2023 NEC to focus on harmonizing SOPs for universal GLP procedures.
- **Action item:** (Jerry Baron) IR-4 HQ will draft a process to provide input to regional directors on the performance of regional staff who directly interface with HQ leadership. Also for regional leadership and FRDs provide input on the performance of HQ study directors and program leads.
- **Action Item:** (Matt Hengel) Establish an adhoc committee to review the IR-4 lab guidance document, to enhance operationalization of a 3 month "panic button" for problematic studies and options for solving the problem.

## Members

Jerry Baron; IR-4 Executive Director  
Doug Buhler; Administrative Advisor-NC  
Liwei Gu; Regional Director-SOR  
Matt Hengel; Regional Director-WR  
Moses Kairo; Administrative Adviser – NER  
Michelle Samuel-Foo; USDA-NIFA  
Todd Scholz; CLC Chair  
Alvin Simmons; USDA-ARS  
John Wise; Regional Director-NCR/Chair PMC  
Simon Zebelo; Regional Director – NER

## Presenters

Michael Braverman; IR-4 HQ  
Debbie Carpenter; IR-4 HQ  
Krystal Chojnacki, IR-4 HQ  
Cristina Marchesan Marconi; IR-4 HQ  
Johanna Mazlo; IR-4 HQ  
Cristi Palmer; IR-4 HQ  
Venkat Pedibhotla; IR-4 HQ  
Dan Rossi; IR-4 HQ

## Tuesday Jul. 12<sup>th</sup> 10:30 am to 4:30 pm

-- John Wise called the meeting to order at 10:30 am—

### 1) Welcome/Introductions

- Dr. Wise welcomed everyone to the meeting, discussed ground rules, and made introductions via zoom.
- Dr. Baron noted that the meeting is open until executive session and that written reports were submitted by program leads so the in-session time will be used for questions and answers.

### 2) Approval of minutes, new agenda items

- **Motion by Alvin Simons to approve the Spring 2022 and May 5<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting Minutes, seconded by Todd Scholz; unanimously approved.**
- No new agenda items offered.

### 3) Unit updates

- ARS (Alvin Simmons)
  - Reported on behalf of Joe Munyaneza that: support remains for IR-4 programmatic efforts, and that on June 13, 2022 new undersecretary for research education and economics Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young, was sworn and the event was live on zoom; and that domestic travel has opened but international travel is still restricted for the moment.
  - Reported that an offer is currently being made on a science technician position; in the process of amending the cooperative agreement with NC State to cover the Quality Assurance (QA) and Environmental Horticulture (EHC) for ARS; ARS continues to operate under current funding levels; the closeout with Rutgers and ARS is nearly complete; there is now a permanent research leader in Charleston; and updated on field and lab research activities at Tifton.
  - Addressed questions from the PMC on funding.
- CLC (Todd Scholz | PowerPoint)
  - Todd noted that the CLC voted to recommend the approval of Melissa Grainger as a members of the CLC.
  - **Motion by Todd Scholz to approve membership of Michelle Grainger of the North Carolina SweetPotato Commission onto the Commodity Liaison Committee; seconded by Matt Hengel; unanimously approved.**
  - Reviewed a PowerPoint Presentation of updates including: potential additional CLC committee members and replacements of outgoing committee members; reported on the activities of the Friends of IR-4 and DCLRS and actions to expand membership to registrants and work on the farm bill appropriation increase; reported that efforts on and Tactical Sciences are moving forward and IR-4/CLC members are at the table.

- Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance are working on their farm bill goals and they have put an increase to IR-4 funding at the top of their priority list.
- NIFA (Michelle Samuel-Foo)
  - Reported on the continuing application for the 2022 NIFA grant: that the initial internal reviews are almost complete and the approvals are underway; the timeframe to have the 2022 funds available is the end of August or Early September.
  - Reported that in November 2021 the IR-4 Program grant was approved to move from a competitive to a non-competitive grant program which would eliminate the duplicate reviews of IR-4 by NRSP and NIFA. Reported that they are in the information gathering stage to decide if aligning the NIFA with the NRSP review process will be the most advantageous pathway.
  - A discussion was held on when this would be enacted (through end of grant cycle and when new grant is submitted in 2025 it will be non-competitive); what is the ratio for the NIFA holdback (~7%); staffing for NIFA plant protection is fully completed and NIFA is at 90% staffing; and that some of the agency's workforce is working remotely.
- AAs
  - Doug Buhler (NCR): Reported on a conversation with NIFA regarding the non-competitive grant and how it might align with the NRSP process.
    - A discussion was held if there should be any concern about being in a non-competitive program, the need for frequent education for the NRSP membership about the IR-4 Project, and how to best ensure the continuity of the program.
  - Moses Kairo (NER): Reported that things are moving along positively from their regional and institutional level and expressed appreciation in working through indirect cost issues.

- Break at 11:44 am and reconvened at 12:01 pm –

- Northeast Region (Simon Zebelo | Handout)
  - Reported that the 2022 trials have been running smooth so far, but some researchers have requested early funding/pre-award funds; a no-cost extension has been approved by NC State and they are working to extend that to their subaward institutions; most FDBs from 2021 trials have been completed; and they are looking into paying for State Liaison Representative (SLR) travel.
  - A discussion was held regarding how the regions handle SLR travel.
- North Central Region (John Wise)
  - Reported that the field programs have been progressing; researchers are requesting adjustments to trial funding rates with new indirect costs (IDC) now being applied; and that Nicole Soldan was named as the interim Regional Field Coordinator (RFC) and she is doing a great job.
  - Reported on the closeout of the analytical laboratory; commended the staff for their professionalism during the difficult transition; closeout activities are on-track; and thanked everyone who supported the process.
  - A discussion was held regarding the field budget levels and IDC.
- Southern Region (Liwei Gu | Handout)
  - Reported that the move of the field research from Weslaco to Uvalde is underway and progressing; the field program is progressing as planned; an in-person priority session is scheduled in Atlanta in August; the lab is working to tackle some difficult method development; QA activities are on track; and the University of Florida has installed a new back-up generator for their operations.

- Western Region (Matt Hengel)
  - Reported that the field program is on track; there is a new Field Research Director (FRD) in New Mexico; updated on the search for a new RFC to replace Michael Horak; QA is progress as expected; the lab has completed most of 2021 work and validated a fair number of 2022 projects; they've successfully generated CBD extract and will be conducting their first processing trials; and their current facilities are scheduled for upgrades.
- HQ (Jerry Baron | Slide)
  - Reported on staffing levels, open positions, staff role changes, and staff awards; updated on the conference room (Markle Conference Room) project; opportunities for space expansion; reviewed new funding opportunities; and reported that the IR-4 Project Borlaug grant is planned for May 2023.

#### 4) Program updates Q&A

##### a) Food Program

- Residue Studies/submissions (Debbie Carpenter | Handout)
- Quality Assurance Unit (Johanna Mazlo | Handout)
- Product Performance (Venkat Pedibhotla | Handout)
- Integrated Solutions (Venkat Pedibhotla | Handout)
- International/Minor Use Foundation (Michael Braverman | Handout)
  - A discussion was held regarding increased number of trials switching regions/protocols/funding and the challenges associated; Interim RFC Nicole Soldan was commended for her great efforts and for stepping in seamlessly; and the QA unit was commended for their coverage of gaps.

##### b) Environmental Horticulture (Cristi Palmer | Handout)

- A discussion was held regarding overcoming supply chain challenges with getting plant material.

##### c) Biopesticides Regulatory Support (Michael Braverman | Handout)

- A discussion was held regarding biopesticide and integrated solutions funding opportunities; new peptides in the pipeline and the increased use of CRISPR technology; and new proposed legislation on biostimulants.

##### d) Communications Update (Krystal Chojnacki | Handout)

- Provided an update on: 60th year logo, economic impact report and infographic, and the NRPM/PMC meeting proposed schedule.
- A discussion was held regarding 60<sup>th</sup> year logo and economic impact report.

##### e) Training Committee (Cristina Marconi | Handout)

- A discussion was held regarding whether we would have full participation by field and lab personnel and attendance was encouraged; and modifications to the agenda to focus time on the electronic field data notebook.

- Break at 1:25 pm and reconvened at 1:45 pm –

- A brief discussion was held regarding the format of program reports, and moving to a hybrid format with annotated discussion.

#### 7) Detailed laboratory discussions (Carpenter & Hengel | Excel)

- Debbie Carpenter introduced the item and noted that quality has been a concern in the labs; suggested moving toward shared/consistent SOPs in the lab; and Dr. Gu's suggestion to have grad students work on new method development.
- Matt Hengel reviewed the backlog report and status of projects in each of the labs.
- A discussion was held regarding the Florida lab and issues with difficult method development, software issues with new instrumentation, new hires, and enhancing the GLP training for new hires. Further discussion was held regarding the importance of meeting deadlines, and working to standardize lab SOPs to ensure consistent quality, and balancing workload.
- Liwei Gu suggested having a grad student spend the time developing a method as their thesis assignment (will be published) and the chemist will verify the method using IR-4 criteria; this would be a time savings for the chemist. An in-depth discussion was held regarding whether or not registrant chemists could assist with method development; the use of grad students; setting parameters for balancing working on methods and working projects; working within the parameters of the EPA; asking for insights from retired chemists or from the EPA; and the use of contract labs. This will be discussed further in Executive Session.

8) Proposed parameters of 2023 field research program (Pedibhotla | Slides)

- Venkat Pedibhotla reported on two scenarios for funding: 1) at our current funding level, and 2) in the event of funding increase; the number of trials budgeted and the cost per trial; regional updates and red A trials.
- An in-depth discussion was held regarding how the program allocation increases were determined – specifically Environmental Horticulture; that stakeholders are requesting the performance data first before moving to residue projects; and that there should be equitable distribution of funding across programs. A suggestion was made to increase EHC by \$50k and reducing IS (by \$50k). This will be discussed further in Executive Session.

9) Standardization of SOPs at field sites

- Debbie Carpenter reported that each field site has separate/unstandardized SOPs and that this causes additional time delays in writing and reviewing SOPs for both field scientists and QA personnel; there is pushback that people prefer using their own SOPs; suggested starting with easy items like an EPA audit; and implementing consistent SOPs with new FRDs over time and also with the eField Data Notebook.
- Johanna Mazlo reported that all SOPs have to be tracked at HQ for QA purposes; and suggested starting standardization with management SOPs that should be the same across all sites anyway (such as with EPA inspections, archiving, calibrations).
- A discussion was held regarding the varying climate limitations (tropical environments versus temperate) or equipment limitations; if EPA has requested standardization across regions; if this topic can be tackled by FRDs at the NEC; the Canadian program has standard SOPs on every instrument and eQA could be used as a repository for the SOPs; and balancing identifying common SOPs to standardize and site specific SOPs that do not need standardization.

The meeting recessed for the evening at 4:16 pm.

**Wednesday Jul. 13<sup>th</sup>: 10:30 am to 4:00 pm**

-- John Wise called the meeting to order at 10:31 am --

10) Concerns and regulatory challenges - impacts for future (Debbie Carpenter | Slides)

- Reported on regulatory challenges including: difficulties of filling residue studies slate; internal performance issues from backlogs and delayed field data notebooks (FDB) that delay submissions; how the Endangered Species Act (ESA) will impact how IR-4 can make

submissions to EPA; and that IR-4 may want to consider how we need to adjust to address these challenges.

- A discussion was held regarding required data to get an “A” priority; circumstances for why residue studies were not able to be completed; listening sessions on the ESA are underway and there groups opposed to pesticides and mitigation tools are being developed that we should keep apprised of; how IR-4 has adjusted or progressed to-date toward addressing challenges (backlog, FDBs, etc); and how Regional Directors can assist with ensuring deadlines are met.

#### 11) Path Forward Implementation plans (Jerry Baron | Document)

- Jerry Baron thanked the Task Force members for their time and work; reviewed the implementation plan for each recommendations:
  - Performance Expectations: retain consultant to draft expectations; annually review.
  - Field Funding Reimbursement: increase field, performance and EHC standard funding rates in 2023.
  - Communications: regional meetings, holding an “All Hands Meeting” after each PMC meeting, Executive Director will visit each region once a year and conduct a listening session, establishing an internal intranet site/app, have the National Information and Communications Officer to attend regional meetings, and establish relationships with commodity communications outlets.
  - Training: leadership development, and sabbaticals.
  - Technology: electronic Field Data Notebook, and taskforce.
  - Backlog: laboratory coordinator.
- Philip Moore provided a report of the status iAdvantage electronic Field Data Notebook.
  - A discussion was held regarding: if this system may be able to integrate into eQA or other electronic systems; estimates of the final cost for a national program; how to ensure there is a back-up of the data; and if there are failsafe’s for calculations and data input/protocol compliance.

-- Break at 12:17 pm and reconvened at 1:02 pm--

#### 12) Executive Session

- The members of the Project Management Committee moved to the Executive Session at 1:00 pm.

The meeting recessed for the evening at 4:19pm.

#### **Thursday Jul. 14<sup>th</sup>: 10:30 am to 4:00 pm**

-- John Wise called the meeting to order at 10:31 am --

#### 13) Executive Session

The members of the Project Management Committee continued Executive Session at 10:31 am.

-- Break at 12:42 pm and reconvened at 1:02 pm—

The members reconvened from Executive Session at 3:12 pm with the following reportable motions and action items out of Executive Session:

- **A motion for approval of the 2023 project budget (as revised): Core \$8,387,756; Core Supplement \$600,000; Residue Field Trials \$2,500,000; Performance \$700,000; IS \$650,000; EHC \$650,000; TOTAL \$13,487,756; was made by Todd Scholz, seconded by Liwei Gu; Unanimously approved.**

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**A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 3:13 pm by Matt Hengel seconded by Liwei Gu; unanimously approved**