

agInnovation Northeast Call April 16, 2026

In attendance: Jason Hubbart, Puneet Srivastava, Josh Kohut, Anton Bekkerman, Antonio DiTommaso, Beth Gugino, Chris Smart, Jake Bowman, Jorge Atilas, Lee Hecker, Linda Prokopy, Lisa Townson, Ock Chun, Troy Ott, Rick Rhodes, David Leibovitz

Meeting administration

- Welcome and Chair's reflections – thanks for a successful spring meeting, PSU next year

Update Items

- Northeast Computational Research Initiative: inventory of data and computational needs – what steps can be taken by Directors to continue this initiative?
 - As a next activity, a regional inventory of infrastructure needs for data management could give way to a strategic whitepaper for the region.
 - Rutgers is surveying its faculty for data management needs, and the region could use that as a model. How can we help develop best practices for proper data management and accessibility? There could be an opportunity to engage with the 16 newly identified Department of Energy federal data hub sites being built across the country.
 - TILVA is Penn State's new AI Assistant for Extension, and it is designed in a way that can be branded for and adopted by Cooperative Extension services in other states via a subscription model.
- Graduate student research meeting status
 - We received 22 abstracts to date and the deadline for submission is being extended to April 25. The full announcement will be re-circulated to the region after the call.

Discussion items

- agInnovation Annual Meeting, September 2027. The Northeast region is hosting the meeting. A discussion revolved around identification of a site planning team and suggestions on where to meet and what major themes we might consider.
 - Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Cape May were suggested as potential locations for the fall meeting. Cape May is far from major airports and would require attendees to rent vehicles or hire a car service. **Jake, Josh, Beth, Rick, and David will hold a conversation about where to host the 2027 meeting.**
- President's budget: USDA, NIFA, Capacity funds, AFRI. Thoughts and advice? Background materials: [President's Budget](#), [USDA 2027 Budget](#), and [2027 USDA Explanatory Notes - NIFA](#)
 - Congress has assured its support for our programs despite the President's Budget request, but the consistent negative perception of ag research from the Executive Branch is a concern. From an advocacy perspective, we must

continue to emphasize what we are doing to benefit specific states and districts.

- We need to develop a narrative to create a clear distinction between capacity and competitive funding, they must be individually distinguished, and they are complementary – “one is not better than the other”; move away from “capacity what makes us competitive”
- Alda Center will hold a workshop at the agInnovation fall meeting in Grand Rapids, September 2026, to train Directors on how to “Communicate what we do in six seconds.” More to come.
- USDA Terms and Conditions: What's your current state of play? Background materials: [USDA General Terms and Conditions for Federal Awards](#) and [Complaint for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief: Plaintiffs versus USDA](#)
 - At Cornell, all USDA-related drawdown of funding are on hold; e.g. rent paid for office space by USDA ARS at Cornell AgriTech. Cornell has received counsel that any use of these funds is inherently acceptance of the new terms and conditions.
 - Penn State is not drawing down on any FY2026 awards.
 - UVM, URI, and UD are spending FY2026 awards.
- (Informational – topic tabled for another meeting) What current activities are your institutions undertaking in preparation for change in F&A? Background materials: [The Financial Accountability in Research \(FAIR\) Model](#)