

agInnovation Northeast Business Meeting December 18, 2025 (Zoom)

In attendance: Jason Hubbard (Chair), Chris Smart (Vice Chair), Anton Bekkerman, Jorge Atilas, Puneet Srivastava, Tsakani Ngomane, Vagner Benedito, Bill Miller, Anna Katharine Mansfield, Toni DiTommaso, Beth Gugino, Carol Thornber, Diane Rowland, Eric von Wettberg, Gretta Tritch Roman, Gulnihal Ozbay, Jason White, Josh Kohut, Lee Hecker, Lisa Townson, Marikis Alvarez, Ock Chun, Troy Ott, Tyler Messerschmidt, Mingyu Qiao, Rick Rhodes, David Leibovitz

Meeting administration

- The group went through a series of introductions.
- The agenda for this meeting was approved unanimously.
- The minutes of the agInnovation Northeast Business Meeting of September 17, 2025, were approved unanimously.
- A directory of agInnovation Northeast Directors is housed on the association website for reference: <https://www.aginnovation-northeast.org/directory>

Association Business

- Discussion and vote on the revised Rules of Operation
 - Changes reflect the new name of our organization from “NERA” to “agInnovation Northeast”, and of our national organization from “ESCOP/ESS” to “agInnovation”.
 - The draft of these rules was presented 30 days prior to this meeting. A motion was introduced to approve the rules of operation.
 - Directors expressed concerns about removing USDA personnel (NIFA Director and ARS Regional Director) as defined non-voting, ex-officio members of agInnovation Northeast.
 - The draft of the rules of operation as presented will be modified to retain the list of non-voting, ex-officio members as defined in the currently approved version of the document.
 - **The motion to approve the rules of operation, with the modification to retain the non-voting, ex-officio members, was approved unanimously. The approved Rules of Operation will be posted on the agInnovation Northeast website.**
- Nomination and selection of agInnovation Northeast Officer-at-Large
 - The floor is open for nominations for the next agInnovation Northeast Officer-at-large. No nominations were received during the call.
 - **Nominations (self or others) may be submitted electronically to the Office of the Executive Director.**
- Nomination and selection of a Northeast Multistate Activities Committee member
 - Jason White’s term on the Multistate Activities Committee has ended and there is an opening for agInnovation Northeast volunteers to serve on this committee.
 - **Nominations (self or others) may be submitted electronically to the Office of the Executive Director.**

Discussion Session: The Computational Research Initiative Whitepaper

- The agInnovation Chair reflected on his presentation in St Louis in which he noted that there is strong rationale for developing a regional agenda around computational research. The follow-up to that presentation was the drafting of a whitepaper on a computational research initiative by Rick Rhodes and Jason Hubbard.

- Jason shared a few pertinent resources on the funding climate around computational research:
 - “Genesis Mission” US Executive Order of November 2025, calling for robust investment into “AI-enabled science” <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/11/launching-the-genesis-mission/>
 - NSF Directorate for Technology https://www.nsf.gov/tip/latest?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery https://nsfmap.services.elsevierpure.com/map?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery
 - Visualization of investment associated with the NSF Directorate for Technology https://nsfmap.services.elsevierpure.com/map?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery
- Where to from here? Directors recognized that this is a timely opportunity to organize an initiative around computational research, in collaboration with Administrative Heads, targeting multiple federal research funding agencies. Administrative Heads can elevate these discussions to the BAA level to drive a future-focused CARET engagement strategy.
- Institutions are evaluating and implementing different enterprise AI systems across the region. UNH developed an internal enterprise system that is based on Meta’s Llama large language models. Cornell and Penn State are incorporating Microsoft Copilot into its enterprise systems.
- Is it time for Agricultural Experiment Stations to build a shared cloud research infrastructure for our system? Is that even conceivable?
- **Directors expressed interest in forming a group to discuss the computational research concept. Josh Kohut volunteered to serve on that group, and Gulnihal Ozbay encouraged the inclusion of an 1890s/ARD representative on that concept group. This opportunity will be shared in the agInnovation Northeast News to be released on December 22.**

New Regional Initiatives

- Emerging Research Newsletter (Anton Bekkerman)
 - There is a missed opportunity for Experiment Stations to promote new and emerging projects that are starting up across the region. Would it be worthwhile for all our stations to promote two big, emerging projects for compilation into a quarterly or biannual newsletter?
 - This initiative could seed new collaborations and connections for researchers across state lines.
 - The Directors agreed that this could be undertaken as a pilot program. More details to come.
- Regional Research Summit (Anton Bekkerman)
 - There is a missed opportunity for early career researchers to gather and share initiatives across discipline areas.
 - Can we, as a region, bring together graduate students, post-docs, and perhaps undergraduates (peer and near peer), to showcase success stories and promote a regional approach to continued research?
 - An awards program could incentivize participation in a prospective summit.
 - The summit should be held as a face-to-face event. What are the best strategies for supporting the event and attracting participation by grad students?
 - Both the Newsletter effort and the Research Summit could serve to strengthen regional connections.

NRS Critical Issues: How best to address those initiatives that NIFA no longer supports?

- MAFES received an offer from NIFA to close its critical issue in the area of climate change, and they elected to take advantage of this opportunity. The critical issue will be closed in September 2026, and nothing will need to be reported against it in NRS.
- All are encouraged to share challenges, issues, and correspondence related to NRS with the Office of the Executive Director.

Ongoing Issues and Initiatives:

- Northeast Ag and Food Tech Corridor
 - An in-person engagement will be held in Philadelphia at the beginning of the year (February 5-6, 2026). More details will be circulated to the association after the holidays.
- F&A, where are you and what are you going?
 - Rutgers Central Administration is evaluating the impact of transitioning to the FAIR model. (The AAU has posted [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) on JAG Effort and FAIR Model.](#))
 - PSU has calculated the current effective F&A rate across the entire portfolio, which comes in under the negotiated rate. Under any new model, they expect that there will be a decrease in the returned funds to units.
 - UMass Boston central administration is examining what F&A rates will look like under different scenarios.
 - At Maine, new models for F&A are a consideration of FY2027 budget targets.
 - Rhode Island is implementing a new university budget model in FY2027 that relies heavily on F&A.
- Capacity Funds Release
 - Rick is having a conversation with Kal Kalavacharla (NIFA) and Ali Dunigan this afternoon. One of the questions for Kal will be the timeline for delivery of FY2026 Capacity Funds to the Land-grant institutions.

Upcoming Face-to-Face Meetings:

- agInnovation Northeast Spring Meeting, Geneva, NY, 3/16-18, 2026
- Joint Summer Meeting, Shelburne, VT, 6/1-3, 2026
- agInnovation Annual Meeting, Grand Junction, CO, 9/21-25, 2026

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 am Eastern time.