

233rd Meeting

Sheraton Westport Chalet Hotel in St. Louis, MO

Wednesday, September 17, 2025

2:15 to 5 pm CT

Meeting AGENDA

Time	Item #	Topic	Presenter	Action Requested
2:15 pm	1.0	Welcome and introductions	Shibu Jose, agNC Chair, FF25	
	2.0	Approval of today's agenda		Approval by acclamation
2:20 pm	3.0	Chair Reflections	Shibu Jose	For information, discussion
2:45 pm	4.0	agInnovation CY26 Budget	Jeanette Thurston	For information, discussion
3:00 pm	5.0	National Security Memo: Implications to LGUs	Elizabeth Stulberg, LBA	For information, discussion
3:30 pm	6.0	ARS Updates and Discussion (to include NACA agreements, USDA re-organization, etc.)	Larry Chandler, Rosalind James	For information, discussion
4:15 pm	<i>Break – 5 min</i>			
4:20 pm	7.0	Group Sharing/State Updates	All	Open conversation, discussion
4:50 pm	8.0	Appreciation for Shibu Jose and his leadership as agNC Chair	Jeanette Thurston, All	For celebration and recognition.
4:55 pm	9.0	Changing of the agNC Guard – Derek McLean takes over as agNC Chair for FFY26	Shibu Jose, Derek McLean	For information and recognition.
5:00 pm	<i>agNC Meeting Adjourns</i>			

Upcoming Meetings:

- [APLU Annual Meeting](#), November 9-11, 2025, Philadelphia Marriott Downtown.
- agNC/NCCEA Joint Spring Meeting, March 23-25, 2026, Tucson, AZ. More information to come.
- agInnovation National Fall Meeting, September 21–25, Grand Junction, CO. More information to come.

Meeting NOTES

Attendees: Shibu Jose (MO), Danny Singh (IA), Gary Pierzynski (OH), John McEvoy (ND), George Smith (MI), Kang Xia (MI), Jane Schuh (KS), Hector Santiago (NE), Troy Runge (Via Zoom, WI), Derek McLean (via Zoom, NE), Rosalind James (via Zoom, USDA-ARS), Larry Chandler (via Zoom, USDA-ARS), Elizabeth Stulberg (LBA), Jeanette Thurston (agNC), Chris Hamilton (agNC, recorder)

Time	Item #	Topic	Notes	Action(s) Taken
2:15 pm	1.0	Welcome and introductions	Shibu welcomed everyone to the meeting. No introductions were made since the group is familiar with everyone already.	None
	2.0	Approval of today's agenda		Approved by acclamation
2:20 pm	3.0	Chair Reflections	<p>Shibu reviewed the topics on his reflection document included below.</p> <p>Additional item: Due to the delay of the Capacity grants until Q2 (January 2026) at the earliest, Jeanette would like feedback from agNC directors on the impact of that issue to share with LBA. Please reach out to her ASAP with how it's affected your institution.</p>	<p>Send Jeanette information on the impact of the late Capacity grant (January 2026) release so she can share with LBA. (Note – we learned after the meeting that this information is incorrect. Capacity grant RFAs should be released soon,; the delayed “RFA” refers to the new Research Facilities Act. The RFA(s) for that will be released in January.)</p>
2:45 pm	4.0	agInnovation CY26 Budget	<p>Jeanette reviewed the national agInnovation CY26 budget which will be shared and discussed during the business meeting tomorrow. The formal vote will come later to allow for review and discussion and will be for the full budget and not done line by line. Some directors would prefer it be by line, but that's not the case right now. Also, new awards proposed would be in next year's budget if approved. Roadmap expenses will also drop off after this year.</p> <p>Additional item from Jeanette: Branch stations topic from Ron Turco, who suggests a survey to collect basic information and best practices on managing branch stations, perhaps at our spring meeting. The directors agreed that this would be a good topic and are supportive. Also perhaps discuss shared stations with USDA ARS and how those partnerships are managed. Derek suggested</p>	<p>None, for information, discussion only</p> <p>Jeanette will reach out to Ron and get started on this branch station survey effort.</p>

			<p>reaching out to Joleen, as that's a lot of what she does. We'll reach out to Ron first and take it from there.</p> <p>The group also briefly discussed the status of the NC Mini LGU Meeting, which has been postponed until 2027, due to lack of dean engagement and dissatisfaction by our CARET reps with the current format. There is a team working on this right now and will be having a conversation very soon with the deans.</p>	
3:00 pm	5.0	National Security Memo: Implications to LGUs	<p>Elizabeth Stulberg, LBA, joined the meeting to discuss the National Security Memo and its implications to LGUs. She first mentioned that the Farm Security Action plan and indicated that LGUs do not need to worry about it; it's nonpartisan and has been in the works for a while, meant to keep our farms safe.</p> <p>In contrast, the research security one might be an issue and isn't clear on restrictions to partnering with foreign entities – in general, it's not clear what constitutes an "entity of concern," countries, people, etc.? Unclear how it will be implemented and initially, USDA-NIFA did not know anything about it and now say they are awaiting guidance from REE. All Chinese ARS graduate students and post-docs were fired in July because of this, which is very concerning to universities.</p> <p>Form for collecting information, security training? Justify funds to foreign students...generally slow down the process a lot and is a deterrent for both international students and universities. Will other agencies besides USDA be affected and in what order? Sec Rollins has been very active doing as President Trump requests and this memo is focused on agriculture, so USDA affected first and likely to be the most affected, other agencies may be in the future. So many unknowns around this memo.</p>	None, for information, discussion only
3:30 pm	6.0	ARS Updates and Discussion (to include NACA agreements, USDA re-organization, etc.)	<p>Larry Chandler and Rosalind James joined via Zoom to provide the ARS update and discuss other items. It is confirmed that ARS is waiting on REE guidance on implementation of the National Security Memo.</p> <p>They don't yet have information on the LGU/ARS NACA agreements, as they don't yet know what the USDA reorganization will look like, although Rosalind expects it to mainly affect DC and area offices, not ARS staff on campuses. It's also unknown if the re-organization comments will be made public. The ARS budget looks pretty good right now, though.</p>	None, for information, discussion only

			<p>NACAs changed to cooperative agreements for pass-through funds. Several other agreement types still exist, but hoping they change to cooperative ones soon, to help with current NACA restrictions on things like tuition remission cost-sharing, etc.</p> <p>Rosalind emphasized that they truly value the relationship they have with LGUs and feels that Secretary Rollins also values the agricultural research we do, which is why USDA hasn't experienced cuts quite as deep as others. Larry also stated that our collaborations are very important, and we should work together to solve issues as they arise. agNC directors concur and appreciate the relationships with ARS partners. Let's keep having these open conversations going.</p>	
4:20 pm	7.0	Group Sharing/State Updates	<p>Several states report stable or increased enrollment in agriculture programs. Some facing budget constraints and scrutiny on new hires. Nebraska is moving forward with new ARS Center for Resilience facilities. Ohio State building new \$50-60M Multi-Species Animal Learning Center</p> <p>*For spring meeting 2026 - discussion on management of branch station, perhaps develop a data collection survey first. Jeanette will reach out to Ron Turco about setting this up.</p>	None, for information, discussion only
4:50 pm	8.0	Appreciation for Shibu Jose and his leadership as agNC Chair	Shibu was recognized and celebrated as our outgoing agNC Chair. Jeanette showed Shibu an example of the clock/frame gift she will be shipping to him after the meeting.	None, for information only
4:55 pm	9.0	Changing of the agNC Guard – Derek McLean takes over as agNC Chair for FFY26	Derek was welcomed as our new agNC Chair for 2026/2027.	None, for information only
5:00 pm	<i>agNC Meeting Adjourns</i>			

Key Takeaways

- [USDA's July 8 memo on research security has created uncertainty; institutions await guidance on implementation](#)
- [ARS is undergoing reorganization but aims to maintain strong partnerships with land-grant universities](#)
- [Budget outlook for ARS appears positive, but final appropriations are still pending](#)
- [Several universities report stable or increased student enrollment in agriculture programs](#)

Topics

USDA Research Security Memo

- [July 8 memo requires justification for research collaborations with "countries of concern"](#)
- [Creates uncertainty around international researchers/students from those countries](#)
- [NIFA and other agencies still awaiting guidance on implementation from REE](#)
- [ARS had to dismiss Chinese contract staff immediately after memo](#)
- [Universities taking varied approaches, some cutting ties with programs like China Scholarship Council](#)
- [Concerns about impacts on past/ongoing collaborations and publications](#)

ARS Updates

- [Reorganization plan still being finalized after extended comment period](#)
- [No major impacts expected for on-campus ARS locations or existing agreements](#)
- [New process for approving agreements through "government efficiency team"](#)
- [Budget outlook positive based on House/Senate proposals, but final appropriations pending](#)
- [ARS leadership emphasizes continued importance of university partnerships](#)

University Updates

- [Several report stable or increased enrollment in agriculture programs](#)
- [Some facing budget constraints and scrutiny on new hires](#)
- [Nebraska moving forward with new ARS Center for Resilience facilities](#)
- [Ohio State building new \\$50-60M Multi-Species Animal Learning Center](#)
- For spring meeting 2026 - discussion on management of branch station, perhaps develop a data collection survey first. Jeanette will reach out to Ron Turco about setting this up.

agNC Changing of the Guard

- [Shibu Jose recognized for service as outgoing chair](#)
- [Derek McLean welcomed as incoming chair for 2024-2025](#)
- [Group praised for strong collaboration and regular engagement compared to other regions](#)

Next Steps

- [Await further guidance from USDA on research security memo implementation](#)
- [Continue monitoring ARS reorganization developments](#)
- [Derek to share new chair initiatives at next meeting](#)
- [Maintain open communication between ARS and universities during transition period](#)

Item 3.0: Chair's Reflections

Presenter: Shibu Jose, agNC Chair FFY25

agInnovation Chair's Initiatives and Progress

Beginning in 2024, under the leadership of agInnovation North Central (agNC) Chair Dr. Shibu Jose, and with the vision and commitment of our agNC Directors and Office, we launched a bold slate of initiatives that reflect the strength, diversity, and innovation of our region.

The North Central Region—America's heartland—is far more than farmland. It is a powerful driver of inclusive research excellence, advancing solutions to some of the nation's most pressing challenges. From our fields to our campuses, our universities and communities are shaping a future where agriculture not only feeds the world but fosters resilience, sustainability, and shared prosperity.

These impactful initiatives strengthen our leadership and elevate our visibility—across the region and on the national stage—positioning the North Central Region as a leader in agricultural innovation and collaborative discovery.

2024–2025 Initiatives | agNC Chair: Dr. Shibu Jose (University of Missouri)

1. Strengthening Regional Partnerships

Advancing shared priorities across diverse agricultural landscapes and communities.

- Joint Science Priority Planning with Extension Directors
- Expanded engagement with 1862s, 1890s, and 1994s

2. Celebrating Research Excellence in the North Central Region

Honoring groundbreaking research and individuals driving innovation through regional awards and recognition.

3. Showcasing Our Impact

Elevating the visibility of our research strengths and regional contributions through strategic communications and national platforms.

- *NCR Communicators Consortium*: Increase engagement, collaboration and coordination amongst the regions LGU communicators to leverage regional expertise to amplify impact through collaborative, innovative communication strategies.
- [National Impact Database](https://landgrantimpacts.org) (*landgrantimpacts.org*): Publish at least 48 new stories (4 per institution) highlighting the North Central Region's research excellence.

2024–2025 Initiatives Progress

1. Strengthening Regional Partnerships

- Deepened engagement with the region's 1890 Land-grant Universities.

- Enhanced engagement with North Central Extension Directors, including plans to co-host a joint regional Spring Meeting in 2026.
- Facilitated collaboration among all regional LGUs (1862, 1890, and 1994 institutions) in the development of the inaugural agInnovation [North Central Research Impacts Report](#).
- Strengthened partnership with the North Central AHS and CARET delegates to reimagine the North Central mini land-grant conference

2. Celebrating Research Excellence in the North Central Region

- Launched a new regional awards program to recognize outstanding agricultural research innovation across career stages—early career, mid-career, and for engagement and accessibility.
- The first recipients were honored in August 2025, spotlighting groundbreaking research.
- These awards are now under consideration for national adoption through agInnovation.

3. Showcasing Our Impact

a. NCR Communicators Consortium

Now established as a formal regional group, the NCR Communicators Consortium connects communicators across the North Central region to elevate visibility of shared research priorities. The group has identified its first chair and meets quarterly to coordinate strategies and respond to regional communication needs and opportunities.

b. National Impact Database

North Central institutions significantly increased their contributions to the [National Impact Database](#), with a total of 938 submissions as of August 2025—including 396 research-specific stories. This marks a more than 100% increase in research-related entries since goal-setting began (submissions were less than 40 at beginning of Chair’s term).

c. agNC Research Impacts Report

In partnership with regional LGUs, agNC developed its inaugural [Research Impacts Report](#), which highlights significant outcomes supported by a variety of USDA-funded programs. This report captures the breadth, relevance, and real-world value of North Central research efforts.

d. USDA Agricultural Outlook Forum (February 2025)

agNC leaders and faculty participated in USDA’s flagship annual forum, engaging with USDA leadership and national stakeholders to showcase the region’s research-driven innovations in food, agriculture, and natural resources.

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