

**Western Governors' Association Work Session  
With WEDA & WAAESD Senior Leadership**

*March 25, 2020 • 9:00 - 9:45 a.m. PT*

*Zoom (<https://wsu.zoom.us/j/378766419>)*

**Attendees:** *Jon Boren, Cody Stone, Lauren Cloward (WGA), Lauren DeNinno (WGA), Kevin Moss (WGA), Michael Gaffney, Jeff Goodwin, Glenda Humiston, Mark McGuire, Blake Naughton, Barbara Petty, Chris Pritsos, Ashley Stokes, Alan Sams, Bret Hess (WAAESD Executive Director), Lyla Houghlum (WEDA Executive Director), and Saige Zespy (WAAESD Recording Secretary)*

**Summary:**

*Agriculture Experiment Stations (AES) and Extension have networks within the rural West. How can WGA leverage that network to improve services (nutrition, communication, broadband, tele-health, etc.)*

**State-led Initiatives**

Colorado:

Identifying weak points in the food system with Colorado Department of Ag and Governor's Office; develop links between availability of food services (such as from food banks, etc.) and vulnerable populations (seniors). Colorado AES is increasing production and/or redirecting the destination of certain crops (dry beans, potatoes) and directing any surplus to the Community Food Alliance, in addition to providing housing to an Americore volunteer that works in the Farm to School food program.

California:

COWs (Cell on Wheels) and COLTs (Cell on Light Trucks) - partnering with USDA Rural Development (Rural Utilities and Rural Broadband programs); deploy at Research & Extension Centers operated by the Experiment Station, county fairgrounds and other anchor institutions

Questions: Obtaining COWs and COLTs? Best locations?

Funding: RUSDLT (USDA), USDA Rural Development Rural Utilities and Rural Broadband programs

Use of Crop Mobster (basically farmer's Craig's List) connects food producers with consumers and food banks

Idaho:

Faculty working in textiles have partnered with faculty in the College of Engineering on utilizing equipment to 3D print N95 masks for medical use

Research projects on human milk have been immediately adapted to include transmission of COVID-19 studies

### Montana:

Zoonotic disease research faculty serve on a response team to provide scientific information to agencies at the city and county level

Microbiology and Immunology faculty and staff are developing COVID-19 screening assays, ways to inhibit the virus, understand infection mechanisms, PCR and ELISA assays to monitor progression and are studying epidemiology

Ag economists are studying the impact of a stimulus package on SNAP, farm and ranch programs, and the food sector.

### New Mexico:

Extension partners with EOC and state agencies to distribute food; Extension is being mobilized to provide delivery

### Nevada:

Partnered with the UNR Medical School for laboratories to provide protective PPE gear to hospitals and others.

### Oregon:

Extension and the Experiment Station's Research & Extension Centers (REC) in rural communities may be able to serve as a distribution hub; volunteer networks are already available

Extension and REC have the capacity to produce food; potential for supporting food banks, helping with production and distribution.

AES is donating PPE locally and to the state and offering equipment such as PCR and other testing capacities to the state.

### Washington:

No social distancing: Provide conference room access to WSU students to access broadband off-campus

Social distancing: Partner with Extension facilities, rural libraries and school districts to provide parking-lot access to broadband for WSU students for online learning and other purposes; includes EduRoam platform

Questions: How much public access? Ensuring bandwidth? County facilities versus university facilities?

Funding: RUSDLT (USDA)

Master Gardener volunteers already supply food and are interested in helping: How to mobilize them safely? How to continue food supply/supply of food plants?

Connections: WSU connected Master Gardeners and food systems team with State Emergency Operations Center; other potential options to look at system for food delivery

### Western Extension Directors Association (WEDA):

Regional working groups to coordinate activities around large issues related to COVID-19; working groups address Master Gardeners and at-home food production, food

safety, community development and small business assistance, farm and ranch stress, and 4-H Youth Development  
Small Business Development: federal budget includes funding for regional rural development centers; additional funding could be useful.

## **Large-scale, System-wide Challenges for AES/Extension**

### Federal Funding:

Draft language is being prepared in Plan 3 or Plan 4 of the COVID Response Plans for \$40 million to utilize the Extension networks and mobilize various projects for COVID response and recovery. (Lyla will send language when available.)

### Capacity Funding:

Description: USDA funds that are provided to Cooperative Extension Services and Agriculture Experiment Stations in every state; specifically, Smith-Lever funds, the Hatch funds, the 1890 Extension funds

### Importance:

Enables a quick response to emergency situations. Relying on federal grants would take three to six months at a minimum. Capacity funds allow field personnel to begin working with partners immediately. "it would be a shame to solve today's problem six months from now."

Boots on the ground in states and field offices allow responsiveness

4-H Youth Development programs provides at-home, hands-on learning activities

### Challenges:

Capacity funds have spending deadlines. With this shutdown/social distancing, research at universities is dramatically slowing, meaning funds would not be expended by the September 30 deadline. Rather than encouraging institutions to spend money on less important or less high priority items, a spending extension would be helpful.

Approval is required for equipment purchases with capacity funds; NIFA is not providing movement on those requests, leaving them hanging in the balance, which halts research and inhibits necessary expenditure of funds; Relief from that requirement would be helpful.

### Actions:

Lyla and Bret will work with WGA on drafting a summary of the work session for inclusion in the WGA weekly newsletter to Governors.