

Meeting Notes
ESCOP Social Sciences Subcommittee Meeting February 18-19, 2014
Washington, DC

Location
APLU Building (Board Room)
1307 New York Avenue, NW
Phone: 202.478.6040 – <http://www.aplu.org>

Subcommittee Members Present

Abigail Borron (Purdue University), Dwayne Cartmell (Oklahoma State University), David Doerfert (Texas Tech University) Adell Brown (Southern University), Tracy Irani (University of Florida), Scott Loveridge (NCRDC Michigan State University), Phillip Watson (University of Idaho), Matt Fannin (Louisiana State University), Harry Boone (West Virginia University), Travis Park (North Carolina State University), James Connors (University of Idaho), Jack Elliot (Texas A&M University), Linda Lobao (Ohio State University) Bo Beaulieu (SRDC, Mississippi State), Don Albrecht (WRDC, Utah State), Dreamal Worthen (Florida A&M), Bobby Torres (Univ. of Arizona).

Liaison/Ad Hoc/Ex-Officio Members

Dan Rossi, Rutgers University, NE Regional Assoc of AES Directors ESCOP S&T Chair
Pat Hipple, National Program Leader, Division of Family and Consumer Sciences, NIFA, USDA

Ex-Officio (non-voting) Members:

Regional Rural Development Centers: Scott Loveridge, Bo Beaulieu, and Don Albrecht
Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI): Chuck Fluharty
Board on Human Sciences Liaisons: Soyeon Shim, University of Wisconsin
Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA): Wendy Naus

NIFA Employees Present for Tuesday Morning Session:

Megan O'Reilly, Beverly Samuel, Amy McCune, Falita Liles, Aida Balsano, Suzanne Le Menestrel, Peter Johnson, Sonny Ramaswamy

Tuesday, February 18, 2014

8:00 AM – Introductions, Review of Agenda, Committee Focus Subcommittee Membership Update

Bobby Torres, SSSc Chair, presided over the meeting that began at 8:00 am with introductions, then followed the agenda:

8:15 AM – NIFA & SSSc Overview: Pat Hipple, *National Program Leader, Division of Family and Consumer Sciences*

Pat Hipple conducted introductions of USDA NIFA staff in attendance and the growing importance of documenting social outcomes and impacts in funded projects.

8:30 AM – Social Outcomes and Impacts—A Tutorial: David Doerfert, *Associate Chair and Professor, Texas Tech University*

David Doerfert presented on the topic of social impact assessment and evaluation. Key points from his presentation included:

- *Impact assessments* are done before a project begins. This allows the proposed project to be modified to eliminate or minimize potential negative impacts.

- There are many types of impact assessments (e.g. social, health, ecological, cultural, cumulative effects, and strategic environmental assessment) that can operate at different levels in the pre-project decision-making—project or policy/planning decisions.
- Impact is typically reported in dollar amounts. This requires putting a dollar value on everything (including a life)
- *Impact evaluations are not impact assessments* but rather seek to determine the change that took place as a result of an intervention/project. The impact is determined by comparing the outcome resulting from the intervention to the outcome that occurs without an intervention.
- Involving the public (consultative or participatory models) in impact assessments and impact evaluation is often considered a critical component.
- *Social impact assessment (SIA)* is the process of assessing or estimating in advance the social consequences of a planned project, policy or program. *This is different from public participation.* Social impact evaluation would be determining the actual impact—challenging as consequences may not appear for some time.
- SIA variables commonly examined are reflected in five categories: (a) population characteristics, (b) community and institutional structures, (c) political and social resources, (d) individual and family changes, and (e) community resources.

9:15 AM – DISCUSSION – Expectations/Hopes Placed on NPL

USDA NIFA staff in attendance shared their thoughts and concerns. Their comments are reflected in the breakout session notes below.

10:00 AM – BREAKOUT SESSIONS – Discussed implications of social impact and outcomes on the social science disciplines. The following was shared from the discussion and are arranged by themes that emerged

Defining Social Impact Assessment & Evaluation

- Is there a role for SIA in fundamental research?
- SIA shouldn't be just about dollars as there are psychological impacts.
- What is defined as an impact may change with political climate. When change occurs, no one hands over the institutional knowledge or connects the dots.
- Should we look at impacts at the NIFA program level instead of by individual projects?

Long-term Sustainability

- How do we establish and sustain long-term impact monitoring and evaluation? Funding? Is there an indirect cost “tax” that provides the funding?
- What is each state doing already that can be used or expanded?
- Do other agencies have a grant projects funding system that collects impact evaluation data across projects or is it limited to an individual project?

Proposal Development Process

- Agriculture Risk Management Education competitive grants program – assessment of impacts is included in the RFA. Is this a good model for other programs to consider?
- What is the basic/common data or impacts and what is advanced/unique to individual projects?

Data Collection Challenges

- Impacts emerge over time; often after the project is over. How do we deal with this? When do we stop looking?
- What about discovery? Do we go back in time to find impacts?
- How do we connect the dots of impacts from multiple sources, projects, and time periods? May also deal with semantics as we may struggle with translation of previous impacts into “today’s” situation/context.
- Hard to get good data. USDA asked for standard indicators for Extension but limited to events and processes—not behavior change. 4-H has common measures but still hard to get “apples to apples” data.
- Impacts end up being economical. Challenge is getting the depth behind the economics.
- Complexity of impact statements for multi-state projects. Impacts may vary between and within states.
- Qualtrics—can it be a centralizing data collection and storage structure? Should this be regional versus national?

Reporting Challenges

- How can we share and learn from others (e.g. funders, grantees)?
- We could focus on key performance indicators that are common (e.g. economic factors, jobs) but a strong case study may better tell the whole story.
- CRIS Reporting – Need more meaningful information. Researchers/Extension don’t spend a lot of time thinking about quality of reporting. Increasing number of reports being asked for. Need to share models of good reporting.

Group Summary

- Need mixture of federal guidance and grassroots input for impact assessment and evaluation including output and outcome reporting.
- Data collection from outside of project/program is important—validity and reliability (standard metrics & measures?)
- RFA’s should include text on defining impact parameters in projects
 - activities → parameters → policy
 - some economic-based; some not

12:00 PM – Working Lunch

12:45 PM – ESCOP Science & Technology Committee Interface with SSSc: Dr. Dan Rossi, *Northeastern Regional Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors, Rutgers*

APLU is made up of a series of commissions including Food, Environment and Renewable Resources (CFERR) which has a subsection on Agriculture (Board on Agriculture Assembly) which as a section that includes Experiment Stations (ESS). Each section has a Committee on Organization and Policy (COP). ESCOP is the experiment station’s COP (<http://escop.ncsu.edu/>). Within this structure you will find a number of subcommittees including our Social Sciences subcommittee. Two subcommittees that Rossi highlighted to the group due to their relevance to the SSSc’s work were:

- *Communications & Marketing Committee*: is charged with providing guidance in the assessment of impacts resulting from SAES/ARD system; developing marketing strategies/initiatives, when appropriate; and leading ESCOP's advocacy efforts. Work includes Cornerstone (advocates who work with staffers and with budget process) and K-Global (marketers and external education efforts)
- *Science and Technology Committee*: is charged with promoting and enhancing science and technology in the Land-grant university system. Focused on emerging topics and give the larger body sense of direction. The *Science Roadmap for Agriculture* emerged from collaboration with this SSSC committee.

Additional ESCOP activities (beyond impact assessment) involved with:

- (1) Possible capital project funding but first are trying to understand the extent/need for this. New committee working with SightLine (a private sector company) who does estimates on deferred maintenance costs and issues. This study will look at 160+ universities/colleges and provide a report. Would sample all institutions.
- (2) ESCOP interested in a futuring activity/exercise. This to a degree will integrate all the “roadmaps” and strategic plans and then look a little further down the road. Task Force steering committee has been appointed. Group will meet and make recommendations on how this process will go forward including committee composition, charge of the committee, resources needed (including outside facilitation).

GROUP THOUGHTS: Discussion on impacts and relation to Rossi’s report hit on multiple areas of today’s discussion including the reporting of impacts both internal and external (i.e. policy maker, public). We have shared large aspirations for reporting and sharing outputs, outcomes and impacts but have little to no resources to realize this end.

1:30 PM – Social Impact Assessment and Evaluation: An organic discussion

Discussion focused on today’s activities as well as reflected on the work completed the past two years (e.g. Gap Analysis of AFRI RFAs two years ago). The general sentiment expressed is that this will be an investment of time by this group. Specific points expressed included:

- This is a chance to educate NLA’s on what is happening and the critical investment issues we have in the field—a more proactive role by this group while demonstrating the value of social sciences.
 - Uncertain as to the reactions/barriers to this. Does NIFA need to be more self-educating including in the social sciences? Environment though is such that it is hard to get everyone in the same room with some telecommuting. The ones that show up for something like today are those that are already passionate about this. As such, is this the best use of this group’s time.
- Do we start with the committed group? Get to engage these more, then a webinar, etc. The goal is to better understand what NLA want to hear about social sciences.
 - Need to teach instead of preach. Need to listen instead of talk. Need to lead instead of follow.
- What is our end? What do we want to contribute to society?
- Along the lines of the gap analysis, do we need to do a second-tier evaluation of the proposals funded as to how close they really are to impact assessment and evaluation?
 - Perhaps “baby steps” – focus on impact evaluation standards/best practices now and assessment down the road.

- How do we best define what is a good impact?
 - We are still on reporting activities, inputs and outputs/products. Can't even get to outcomes much less impact.
 - We are also still driven by the people that want us to report numbers. We don't get to the true change that we would like to see.
 - We can't agree on impact of programs like HeadStart when we have research showing results. As such, what do they want to see in terms of impact?
 - Part of this might be better able to communicate what we will do for them tomorrow. NIH says they will cure cancer. What is it that we will do?

3:00 PM – Agency/Organization Updates

- **Dr. Meryl C. Broussard, Deputy Director, National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)**

Exciting times – appropriations bill, Farm Bill. Some good news with some previous cuts restored including discretionary funds and funding lines in the farm bill. There is a farm bill implementation team (most are in Title 7 the research section). New 1890 institution added in farm bill so they can complete for facilities building and capacity building funds. Overall pleased in funding including increase in AFRI funding. Some are one-year funds that need to be obligated by September so some pressure there but doable. Also working on the 2015 budget already (President's budget by March).

Last farm bill called for establishment of NIFA. Now working on some realignment. Had director and two deputy directors (both with operational responsibilities). New realignment is an associate director of programs will have oversight over all four program areas (Bioenergy, Climate and Environment, Food Production and Sustainability, Food Safety and Nutrition, and Youth, Family and Community – as well as Center for International Programs, and Planning, Accountability, & Report—this will be Broussard). Other will be associate director of operations (budget, communications, information technology, financial management). This position will be announced in two weeks.

NIFA is also working on a new strategic plan. OMB asked for evidence-based approaches in the next budget cycle. Trend for more accountability, evaluation, and evidence-based reporting is not going away. Already being asked to monitor patents that emerge from projects (not to the depth of what has been commercialized). Program evaluation may be a focus within NIFA to help re-examine what is being done in programs—more for the point of improvement and organizational learning. This seems to be a more internal, reflective process than external—may not need SSSC assistance (yet). Is meeting with Planning and Accountability staff a next step (an evaluation of NIFA's evaluation process)?

- **Wendy Naus, Executive Director, Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA)**

Naus provided handout on membership (www.cossa.org). She started position seven weeks ago. Presentation highlighted history, presence of social science leadership in different federal agencies (including White House), and COSSA's activities including lobbying, testimony, work through coalitions, hold briefings and receptions on Capital Hill. COSSA Washington Update (22 issues a year can sign up for this – add link to minutes) and annual Colloquium are signature activities for COSSA.

Future of COSSA centered on bringing the entire community together to defend against threats and promote social science. COSSA hopes to be more proactive going forward not sure how yet.

New in 2014, Action Alerts issued to COSSA members to engage them in the advocacy process (more of a member benefit).

4:30 PM – Reflection/Implications/Next Steps

1. Lots of good ideas shared; we need to reflect. Maybe executive group discerns action items tonight.
2. How do we stay & keep everyone more informed about social sciences?
3. Need to create and share our success stories with sufficient depth/facts to be effective.

4:48 PM – Meeting Recessed until 8:00 AM Wednesday, February 19, 2014

Wednesday, February 19

8:00 AM – Nominal Group Activity: Using a nominal group technique, Torres asked everyone to use individual notecards to identify three recommendations that we should advance to USDA for their consideration. A voting process was used to narrow the individual input to final group recommendations which were further discussed at the 10:30 session (below). This nominal group process was paused for speakers at 8:58

9:00 AM – Chuck Fluharty, *President and CEO Rural Policy Research Institute*

The Rural Policy Research Institute has worked on two major inter-related items – regional collaboration within Farm Bill and poverty. Towards regional collaboration, there is a new initiative on spatial analytics to create the story on what rural regions bring to the nation (less on needs). This will focus on three issues: prosperity, resiliency and security.

Prosperity – Beyond GDP, focusing on new metrics of wealth. One example was the transition of eastern TN communities from mining to a new future through a regional strategic planning process. These activities sought to envision how new innovations can be launched to revitalize rural communities. In new Farm Bill, Secretary has 10% discretion to move efforts like these to regional centers — up to five possible. In addition to these regional innovation centers, a relationship between SNAP and regional community foods is now in view and understanding by a group of policy makers.

Resiliency - 1/3 of rural kids are living in poverty. Resiliency and rural health care is a growing concern as the health-related service base may be leaving many of our rural communities. Especially true in Western U.S. that will also deal with climate change which may be creating new or additional health issues.

Security – What does rural contribute to GDP? This will also need governors to care about rural. Working with Matt Fannin (LSU) and others to define need new rural wealth indicators/metrics—a different accounting matrix. Social science will be key in creating this is new metric. This will expand the measure beyond current use of GDP to an 8-category system of measures (still quantifying some of these factors) that more accurately communicates actual wealth.

9:30 AM – Caron Gala, Executive Director, The Council on Food, Agricultural and Resource Economics (C-FARE)

Gala is the third Exec. Director and has been on board for two months. She presented an overview of organization and distributed handout of steps in C-FARE review process and highlighted the organization's primary goals, composition of Advisory Board, and the Blue Ribbon Panels that focus on issues (somewhat align to grand challenges as well as Ag Econ content specializations; www.c-fare.org).

Following her presentation, the members of the subcommittee present expressed that they would welcome (a) the opportunity to serve as ex-officio members of the C-FARE Blue Ribbon Panels (specifically the one related to Economic Opportunities in Rural Communities, chaired by Mike Wood of Oklahoma State University); (b) inclusion on all C-FARE outreach notifications re: webinars, reports, etc. (with the option to unsubscribe individually); and (c) the possibility of serving in an advisory/ex-officio capacity to the C-FARE Board of Directors.

10:30 AM – Summary Discussion/Implications/Next Steps

This nominal group process that started the morning was concluded with three recommendations, two action steps, and a motion that was passed.

Recommendations

1. Draft a discussion paper on IA and SIA with recommendations – route through Science & Tech Committee (Dan Rossi) who will take it through ESCOP then (if approved), onto NIFA and Sonny Ramaswamy.
 - a. Impact assessment and evaluation is important and we need to move our RFA programs to that end.
 - b. Potential barrier to rejection of this paper is if we too narrowly focus on SIA
2. Develop/publish guidelines and standards for SIA (IAIA's guidelines?)
3. Establish a program area/effort on IA infused through NIFA portfolio

Action Steps

1. Establish a multistate project on SIA (this may be an action step instead of recommendation).
2. Training for all stakeholders

Motion

- Chair will appoint a subcommittee to create a discussion paper that reflects recommendations and action steps. Draft, send for review by whole SSSC, revised and then for approval. (Travis Park moved; Jack Elliot seconded). Motion passed

11:10 AM –Remaining SSSc business

Membership Roster

- Forward recommendations for replacements to Bobby.

Announcements/Concluding Thoughts

- Will try to schedule 2015 meeting to avoid the meeting that conflicts with the Human Sciences representatives.
- Do we need to add other social science organizations located in D.C. to expand our understandings, connections, and collaborations? The ASA (American Sociological Association), ASSA (Allied Social Sciences Association), and ASG (Association for American Geographers) were mention. While a good idea, the group also doesn't want to fill agenda with reports with little time for SSSC to do work/discussion.
- The question of whether we need to do the Gap Analysis on a regular basis was raised. General response was probably but uncertain as to when and the frequency.
- The question of how do we advance experiment station discussions (Roadmap, priorities, etc.) was raised. Perhaps a panel discussion that reflects the different disciplines (C-FARE's Blue Ribbon Panels chairs, representative from other multistate projects (like rural health)) is in order. NIFA might have small amounts of funds to bring folks together.

11:25 AM – Meeting Adjourn

Respectfully submitted by

David Doerfert, Secretary/Chair-elect Spring 2014

Next Meeting: February 2015 (tentative)