



U.S. Wheat & Barley
Scab Initiative

FY12 USWBSI Recommended Funding Process

Summary of the Process used by the USWBSI to Generate a Comprehensive Research Plan and Budget Recommendation for Federal Fiscal Year 2012 (FY12)

Each year, the U.S. Wheat & Barley Scab Initiative is charged with the task of developing a comprehensive research plan and budget recommendation that is aimed at achieving its primary mission: develop as quickly as possible effective control measures that minimize the threat of Fusarium head blight (scab), including the reduction of mycotoxins, to the producers, processors, and consumers of wheat and barley. The entire process followed to develop this research plan and budget is a product of deliberations overseen and approved by the USWBSI Steering Committee (SC). The composition of the SC is designed to give voice to all stakeholders in the operation of the USWBSI.

This year's review process was completed on December 6, immediately following the final session of the 2011 National Fusarium Head Blight Forum. The USWBSI's Networking and Facilitation Office (NFO) orchestrated this process in close consultation with the Executive Committee (EC). The process involved a call for pre-proposals and review of the submitted pre-proposals by one of ten Review Panels (RPs) or Coordinated Project Committees (CPCs) and the Executive Committee (EC). In a few instances, the nature of a pre-proposal dictated that it be reviewed by an External Reviewer. A total of 121 pre-proposals were submitted from 76 Principal Investigators (PIs) at 24 Land Grant Universities and the USDA-ARS.

Each RP/CPC delivered to the EC a review summary that classified each pre-proposal into one of three categories: 1) recommended for funding within the "working cap", 2) recommended for funding but not within the working cap, and 3) not recommended for funding. The working caps were derived from a process that involved the entire SC. For the "in-cap" category, the RPs/CPCs identified their highest priority pre-proposals and adjusted their individual award totals so their collective sum was equal to or less than the working cap. For the second category, the RPs identified pre-proposals they judged worthy of funding but none the less omitted from "in-cap" category. Pre-proposals in that category were assigned unique rankings (1 to n) by the RPs/CPCs. The RPs/CPCs evaluated all pre-proposals in the context of the Research Priorities and Program Descriptions, which are derived from the USWBSI's Action Plan.

The Executive Committee (EC) is charged with developing a draft of a comprehensive research plan and budget that is scientifically sound and minimizes imbalances among the tremendous range of geographical, commodity, institutional, business sector, and disciplinary interests held by the stakeholders who have made the USWBSI possible. After consultation

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with the Coordinated Project Committee/Review Panel Chairs on December 3rd, the EC constructed a comprehensive recommendation composed of 108 projects from 68 PIs. The sum of all recommended award amounts is exactly equal to the \$5,030,830 that was anticipated to be available to USDA-ARS for collaborative scab research for FY12.

On the afternoon of December 6, the EC's recommended research plan and budget was presented to the Steering Committee (SC) for its consideration. The SC was briefed on the details of the entire process and allowed to study the EC's recommended research plan and budget. Subsequently, a motion to endorse the EC's draft plan was passed by a unanimous vote of the SC.

In early January, following the December Steering Committee meeting, USDA-ARS instructed the USWBSI-NFO to hold off on sending out funding notifications to PIs until further notified. In early March, the USWBSI was informed by ARS that the FY12 budget allocation would be reduced by approximately 30% based on FY11 funding of extramural agreements. The purpose of this cut was to help offset the cost in closing 12 laboratories, including nine research stations and three units within one large research station, as mandated in the FY12 federal budget. In response to the budget cut, the USWBSI Executive Committee implemented the following six-point strategy:

1. ARS research projects being funded through the Initiative were funded at FY11 levels because ARS indicated its scientists had already undergone significant budgetary stress up to this point (e.g., vacant positions not being filled).
2. DON testing laboratories were funded at the lower of FY11 or FY12 levels as the labs are regarded as an essential service performed by the Initiative.
3. The FHB Risk Assessment (forecasting) Tool was funded at the lower of the FY11 or FY12 levels since it is the heart of the FBH Alert System, which is an essential service for our stakeholders.
4. The budget of the USWBSI NFO (Networking & Facilitating Office) was whittled down to an absolutely bare-bones level.
5. A 30% reduction was instituted for all remaining projects that had been funded in FY11 as core, ongoing, productive projects.
6. No research projects that were new as of FY2012 — even if those projects had received a “green light” following USWBSI's extensive review process — were funded.

The final FY12 Research Plan & Budget comprises 122 projects (including several multi-pi projects) from 69 PIs. The sum of all recommended award amounts is exactly equal to the \$3,566,057. The plan was submitted in April from the USWBS to the USDA-ARS as a *recommendation* for allocating the resources, awarded it by the U.S. Congress.