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**Strategic Action Areas for AAEA Government Relations in 2019**

AAEA Government Relations activities cover four broad areas: 1) information gathering and advocacy of the interests of AAEA members, 2) coalition building to advance long-term advocacy positions, 3) planning of strategic initiatives of long-term value to AAEA, and 4) educating AAEA members in government relations. This document summarizes planned activities during 2019 in each of these areas.

**Information gathering and advocacy**

AAEA Operating Policies state that, “AAEA will not take a position on any public policy issue, with the sole exception of expressions of support for research, education, and outreach related to agricultural and applied economics” (AAE). Support can take the form of responding either to opportunities or to threats to research, education, and outreach. AAEA government relations work needs to gather information to identify opportunities and threats that may merit an advocacy response.

***Opportunities*** at the federal level chiefly involve funding and building recognition of the profession’s expertise. Funding is relevant for research, education, and outreach in AAE. The federal level offers several venues for AAE research funding. Specific target agencies include USDA (mainly), as well as DOE, NSF, NIH, EPA, USAID, and others. The AAEA can serve the nation by encouraging nominations of its members to positions where their expertise would be beneficial. Finally, the AAEA should explore how better to enable opportunities for members. For 2019, the AAEA government relations representative will:

1. Report on the President’s proposed budget for fiscal year (FY) 2020.
2. Connect with appropriations staffers to advocate for funding of USDA programs that have specific line items that chiefly benefit AAE. For 2019, USDA will be the primary advocacy priority, with information gathering for DOE, NSF, NIH, EPA, and USAID.
3. Contribute to the APLU One Ask process by encouraging support of AAE funding in NIFA.
4. Submit nominations of AAEA members to federal boards and panels.

In coordination with the AAEA government relations representative, the AAEA office should:

1. Survey NAAEA members about current sources & future priorities for federal funding.

***Threats***: While rare, threats to the AAE profession also merit vigilance. During 2018, the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) (the world’s largest concentration of AAE researchers) faced threats of a 48% budget cut, proposed relocation, and proposed reorganization. The AAEA will continue to remain abreast of the situation in 2019 and to advocate for maintaining the quality and integrity of the nation’s agricultural economics and statistics infrastructure. In gathering information about levels of support in other agencies, the AAEA will remain alert to threats to the profession elsewhere. For 2019, the AAEA government relations representative will:

1. Undertake advocacy and engagement with Congressional staff and the Administration a) to keep ERS in the national capital region until a rigorous benefit-cost analysis is completed that justifies relocation, and b) to keep ERS in the REE Mission Area.
2. Stay alert for any other threats to AAEA research, education, or outreach.

**Coalition building and maintenance**

Coalitions represent effective means both to gather information and to advocate for policy positions where needed. Coalitions are especially important for relatively small professional societies like the AAEA. Given its focus on research, education, and outreach in AAE, the AAEA’s natural coalition partners are universities, research organizations, and peer professional societies. During 2019, the AAEA government relations representative will

1. Maintain and strengthen coalitions with relevant partners, such as the [Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU)](http://www.aplu.org/policy-and-advocacy/agriculture-and-natural-resources/index.html), the [American Economic Association (AEA)](https://www.aeaweb.org/about-aea), the [American Statistical Association (ASA)](https://www.amstat.org/ASA/Science-Policy-and-Advocacy/home.aspx), the [Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA)](https://www.cossa.org/).
2. Participate in relevant formal networks, such as the [Friends of Agricultural Statistics and Analysis](https://agriculturalstatis.wixsite.com/fasa/activitiesevents), the [National Coalition for Food and Agricultural Research](https://www.ncfar.org/) (NC-FAR), and the [Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics](http://www.copafs.org/) (COPAFS).

**Strategic initiative planning**

Over the long term, a strategic initiative that attracts public investment could enable agricultural and applied economists to make contributions of greater public value. Strategic initiatives fall under the purview of the AAEA Board, but their planning and promotion can be facilitated by AAEA government relations activities, both educational and advocacy-oriented. During 2019, the AAEA will support activities through CFARE and its government relations representative through

1. Workshops and networking activities opportunities for strategic initiatives in a) big data management and analysis, and b) trade and innovation.
2. Networking with coalition partners and AAEA members.

**Education of AAEA members about government relations**

Public support for research, education, and outreach in AAE has enabled AAEA members to contribute their analytical skills to advance the public welfare. A sound grasp by members of the processes that affect that support, especially at the federal level, can promote member success in attracting government support for initiatives that could have public value. As an association, the AAEA has the ability to draw on the collective strengths of its members to build support for AAE professional contributions. AAEA members can benefit from learning about opportunities to seek government support through both legislative and executive channels. During 2019, the AAEA government relations representative will:

1. Train AAEA members to interact effectively with Congressional staff & executive branch officials, including via AAEA symposia led by experienced AAEA members. Programs to involve:
   1. General AAEA members interested in government relations
   2. Targeted AAEA members from key Congressional districts who can advance AAEA interests.
   3. NAAEA department chairs at their annual meeting in Washington, DC.

In parallel, the AAEA Membership Committee and staff Senior Membership Coordinator, with assistance from the government relation representative will

1. Strengthen AAEA ties to applied economists across the Federal government **[for AAEA Membership Coordinator in coordination with the Government Relations Committee]**
   1. Identify applied economists, both AAEA members and not, including i) USDA economists outside of the ERS (NIFA, AMS, FAS, FSA, RMA, NRCS, OCE, ARS, NASS, etc), ii) economists in agencies, such as EPA, EIA, BEA, BLS, NSF, NIH, and USAID, and iii) economists at CBO, GAO, OMB, CEA, and among Congressional staff.
   2. Connect federal economists to AAEA activities, both to strengthen their work and to create opportunities in profession via i) the mid-career mentoring workshop in July 2019 and ii) cooperative agreements with academic institutions.

**Outcome indicators**

Outcomes indicative of successful progress include ones that advance AAEA government relations objectives and are clearly attributable to AAEA government relations activities, such as:

* Introduction of beneficial Congressional legislation
* Improved Congressional appropriations and report language
* Beneficial new or changed Federal administrative actions
* Commencement of a rigorous benefit-cost analysis of the proposed USDA ERS relocation and reorganization (e.g., by the National Academy of Public Administration)
* AAEA government relations workshop or symposium
* AAEA workshop on big data
* New federal programs targeted at AAE