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**Project Title: U.S. Wheat & Barley Scab Initiative's Networking and Facilitation Office.**

PROJECT 1 ABSTRACT

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The goal of the U.S. Wheat and Barley Scab Initiative is to develop as quickly as possible effective control measures that minimize the threat of Fusarium head blight (scab) to the producers, processors, and consumers of wheat and barley. In one sense, the Initiative is a self-organized "contact group" on scab. The organizational structure of the USWBSI is comprised of a Steering Committee (SC), an Executive Committee (EC), six research area committees (RAC) and the Networking and Facilitation Office (NFO). The composition of all committees is designed to ensure balanced input from all commodities, regions, disciplines, and institutions engaged in the battle against scab in the development of the annual recommended research plan and budget. Development of the annual recommended research plan and budget is a complex process. The Initiative's Networking and Facilitation Office (NFO), based at Michigan State University, facilitates and coordinates this process. As "headquarters" of the Initiative, the Networking & Facilitation Office (NFO) is the liaison between the USWBSI and USDA-ARS-NPS administration.

The USWBSI now has 79 researchers working on 113 projects at 24 different institutions across the U.S and in Mexico. A fundamental approach to achieving the primary objectives listed below is the operation of an administrative unit consisting of one full-time office manager and a half-time web programmer. The office manager is based at Michigan State University and reports to the PI. The half-time web programmer, who works under the direction of the NFO and is responsible for maintaining the Initiative's web presence, is based at USD-ARS, Albany, CA. The objectives of the NFO are: (1) Maintain and enhance the Resource Management/Accountability Center; (2) Facilitate Communication; (3) Manage and implement all meetings and conferences; and (4) Administer the process of developing the Initiative's annual recommended research plan and budget.

The NFO is also responsible for creating and implementing the annual performance reporting procedure, coordination of the annual Scab Forum, all committee meetings, and the dispersal and storage of information. These activities are critical to helping the Initiative reach its goals of developing effective control measures that decrease the threat of Fusarium head blight to the producers, processors, and consumers of wheat and barley. The NFO promotes communication among the varied parties interested in scab, and represents the Initiative's only 'fixed' asset. The NFO is continuing to develop methods that provide all stakeholders and interested parties with dynamic documentation of the Initiative's activities in order to minimize the gaps in knowledge and to provide a means of achieving a high level of accountability.