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**Research Category: EC-HQ**

**Duration of Award: 1 Year**

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

## **PROJECT 1 ABSTRACT**

(1 Page Limit)

The mission of the U.S. Wheat and Barley Scab Initiative is to enhance food safety and supply by reducing the impact of Fusarium Head Blight (scab) on 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), four research area committees (RAC), six coordinated project committees (CPC) 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 the University of Kentucky and 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 currently has 82 researchers working on 131 projects at 25 different institutions including USDA-ARS across 27 states. A fundamental approach to achieving the primary objectives listed below is the operation of an administrative unit consisting of the Director, the Manager and a half-time web programmer. The Manager is employed by and based at Michigan State University, and reports directly to the PI who is the Director of the Networking and Facilitation Office. This project will provide financial support for the majority of the NFO's activities. Funding for the Manager's salary and small operating fund is provided by the research project submitted by Dr. James J. Kells titled "Hosting of the Manager of the USWBSI's Networking & Facilitation Office. That project is funded by USDA-ARS through Extramural Agreement No. 59-0206-4-001. The half-time web programmer, who works in close collaboration with the Manager of the NFO, and is responsible for maintaining the Initiative's web presence, is based at USDA-ARS in Albany, CA working under the direction of Dr. Ann Blechl. The objectives of the NFO are: 1) Maintain and enhance the Resource Management/Accountability Center; 2) Facilitate and enhance communication within the Initiative and with its stakeholders; 3) Administer the process of developing the Initiative's annual recommended research plan and budget; and 4) Manage and implement all meetings and conferences.

The NFO is also responsible for creating and implementing the annual performance reporting process, coordination of the annual FHB 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.