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

## PROJECT 1 ABSTRACT

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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. The organizational structure of the USWBSI is comprised of various administrative and research-based committees, and the Networking & Facilitation Office. 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), currently 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's Administration and Researchers, and USDA-ARS-NPS administration.

The USWBSI currently has 87 researchers working on 140 projects at 32 different institutions including USDA-ARS across 31 states. A fundamental approach to achieving the primary objectives listed below is the operation of an administrative unit consisting of the Executive Director (Ruth Dill-Macky, Researcher Co-Chair, based at the University of Minnesota), the Director of Operations (formerly manager of the NFO), System Administrator (75% time) and the Research Technical Specialist (50% time). The NFO Director of Operations (DOO) is employed by and based at Michigan State University, and reports directly to the Researcher Co-Chair/Executive Director of the Networking and Facilitation Office. This project will provide financial support for the majority of the NFO's activities. Funding for the DOO's salary (two years) and small operating fund is provided by the research project submitted by Dr. James J. Kells titled "Hosting of the USWBSI's Networking & Facilitation Office." That project is funded by USDA-ARS through a Grant Agreement. The System Administrator (currently an Independent Contractor with UK), who works in close collaboration with the Director of Operations of the NFO, and is responsible for maintaining the Initiative's web presence, is based in Newark, CA. The Research Technical Specialist (currently an Independent Contractor with UK) provides support to the NFO and the Executive Committee on all research related activities/projects.

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 facilitation of the Annual Research Plan & Budget (RPB), 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.