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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 (FHB or 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 research effort against FHB 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) facilitates and coordinates the funding process. As the "headquarters" of the Initiative, the NFO serves as the liaison between the USWBSI's administration and researchers, and USDA-ARS, including the USDA-ARS National Programs administration, USDA-ARS Budget Office, and USDA-ARS Grants and Agreements Management Branch (GAMB).

The USWBSI currently has 93 researchers working on 150 projects at 33 different institutions, including USDA-ARS facilities, across 31 states. A fundamental approach to achieving the primary objectives listed below is the operation of an USWBSI's administrative unit consisting of the Executive Director, the incoming Director of Operations, the outgoing Director of Operations, the System Administrator, and the Research Technical Specialist.

The NFO is 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 data and information. These activities are critical to helping the Initiative reach its goal of developing effective control measures that decrease the threat of FHB 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.

The specific FY21 objectives of the NFO are to:

- 1) Maintain and enhance the management and accountability of the Initiative's resources;
- 2) Facilitate and enhance communication within the Initiative and between the Initiative and its stakeholders;
- 3) Administer the process of developing the Initiative's annual research plan and budget; and
- 4) Manage and implement all meetings and conferences.