

BAA Process for Advancing New Budget Initiatives

Over the last several years, considerable effort was invested in two budget initiatives: Crop Protection/Pest Management and Water Security. The concept of addressing issues of great importance as described in the Water Security Initiative gained broad support of the Board on Agricultural Assembly (BAA), and at least some traction at U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute for Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA). Several valuable lessons were learned through these processes including:

- Communicating with a unified voice,
- Engaging topical experts in developing white papers,
- Vetting white papers at various levels including the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP), Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy (ESCOP), the Administrative Heads Section (AHS) Executive Committee, the Academic Programs Committee on Organization and Policy (ACOP), International Agriculture Section Committee on Organization and Policy (ICOP), the Budget and Advocacy Committee (BAC), and the Policy Board of Directors (PBD),
- Enumerating expected outcomes and impacts,
- Articulating how the initiative adds value to the potential funding agency's programs
- Involving the Executive Directors and Administrators (EDAs) in facilitating initiative development from the beginning to end

At least two years of lead time are needed to get an initiative “in the queue” for consideration by a federal agency. Every effort must be made to have federal partner(s) engaged in the “white paper” development process. The process, from idea to “white paper” development and approval, must be completed at least two years in advance of efforts to include in a federal budget request. In addition, it is essential to define important components of the advocacy campaign in order to establish a generic framework or checklist for future campaigns.

Finally, it is crucial that there is formal communication of the final initiative from the Policy Board of Directors to the specific federal agency Director, other appropriate agency officials, as well as distribution to BAA members and other partners.

Issue Identification/Workgroup Development Steps

1. Identify the big problem: What is the big issue of the day that can be addressed by the Land-Grant University System using integrated approaches? (Ideally only one issue would be selected to avoid potential mixed messages.)
2. Vet idea with Sections, BAC, BAA, other Boards, and other groups as appropriate.
3. Vet idea with Cornerstone Government Affairs (or advocacy team) for feasibility

4. BAC charges formation of a work group (WG) with scope of work to include “white paper” development
5. Deans and AES/CES/AHS/APS/CES/IAS/BoHS/BNR/BVMN Directors and Administrators identify WG members who agree to participate
6. Work group is created with the assistance of the EDAs; current Section Chairs serve as co-chairs
7. EDAs facilitate communication among partners and regions.

“White Paper” Development and Content

With the assistance of the EDAs and Section Chairs, the WG develops a white paper through an iterative process. The white paper:

- Clearly identifies the issue or situation and frames it in terms of its importance to a broad base of stakeholders nationwide.
- Identifies the needs, goals, and objectives of the initiative.
- Summarizes current efforts on the issue and identifies gaps.
- Identifies expected outcomes and impacts that would result from implementation
- Articulates tangible benefits to be realized by the public.
- Specifies time frames for milestones.
- Describes how conditions will change.
- Indicates how the initiative will add value to the federal agency’s portfolio.
- Articulates implications of failing to take action.
- Identifies budget information/implications (a mix of capacity and competitive funding with a larger portion of the funds provided on a competitive basis in support of integrated activities).
- Includes a logic model.
- Includes an Executive Summary.

Approval/Endorsement Steps

Once the WG completes what is considered to be a final draft of a “white paper,” that document is circulated and approved as follows:

1. Endorsed by Section Budget and Legislative Committees (it should be noted that the Boards on Human Sciences, Natural Resources, and Veterinary Medicine will be treated as sections in regard to this process)
2. Endorsed by the Board on Agriculture Committees
 - a. Budget and Advocacy Committee
 - b. Committee on Legislation and Policy, if necessary
3. Endorsed by the Policy Board of Directors

Internal Communications

EDAs and university communications specialists work with Kglobal and Cornerstone Government Affairs to develop messages that will resonate with targeted individuals/groups. EDAs work with Kglobal to develop aesthetically pleasing one-page briefs that succinctly encapsulate and highlight the primary conclusions of the white paper.

Communications to Federal Agency

After approvals, the Policy Board Chair formally distributes the “white paper” to the specific federal agency Director (e.g. NIFA) and other appropriate agency officials and partners. This communication is done by both electronic means with return receipt and registered mail.

The “white paper” also is distributed to all members of the BAA, other entities represented on the BAC, deans/directors who, in turn, distribute it to their faculty/staff as appropriate.

Strategic Communications Campaign

A strategic communications campaign is developed and designed to generate support for the proposed approach detailed in the white paper. A steering committee is authorized by the BAC and PBD and identified by the Deans, AES, CES, APS, and IAS Directors. The steering committee is responsible for coordination of the strategic communications campaign, including responding to questions, communicating with the interest groups, engaging in social media platforms, and providing news releases.

In partnership with Cornerstone Government Affairs, the Steering Committee will develop a timeframe for “the ask” and for generating buy-in from appropriate individuals, groups, and organizations. Kglobal will be engaged to develop a communications strategy that builds effective messaging by launching a media campaign, coordinating the process, and reaching out to elected officials.

Design an effective communications strategy:

- Consider who needs to be involved in the communications network and at what time or stage of the campaign. It is critical to communicate early on and involve federal agencies in the discussion (e.g., USDA-NIFA, NIH, etc.).
- Identify the target audience(s).
- Develop a complete inventory of stakeholders/coalition members (including affiliations and contact information).
- Identify people/organizations that may not necessarily support the issue and work to gain their support.

- Develop a broad and diverse cross-sector advocacy coalition that includes commodity groups, producers, industry, citizens, universities, NGOs, and politicians as appropriate.

Design a complete plan of action:

- Develop a statement of vision/goal/strategies and actions for the campaign.
- Create a campaign “brand” (name the issue) to help easily communicate to a broad audience (e.g., “We will cure cancer.”).
- Identify specific milestones, outline a timeline for achieving milestones, and who is responsible for achieving them.
- Develop a range of educational materials targeted at specific audiences.
- Create a mechanism to provide/receive feedback.
- Monitor progress and modify approach as needed.