



**AMERICAN PECAN PROMOTION BOARD  
RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING  
October 16, 2024  
10 AM CST**

**MINUTES**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Trent Mason called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. CT after proper notice was given to the committee.

**Roll Call**

Philip Arnold – Co-Chair

Trent Mason – Co-Chair

Sally Arn

Guillermo Humphrey

Paul Quiros

Deb Walden Ralls

Molly Willis

Matthew Collins, USDA

Brandon Drummond

Emma Garner, APPB Staff

Joy Glass, APPB Staff

Serena Schaffner, APPB Staff

Anne Warden, APPB

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Arnold asked for a motion to approve the Research Committee Meeting minutes from July 1, 2024. With no discussion or question, Ms. Walden Ralls called for a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Molly Willis seconded the motion. The committee was in agreement and the motion passed unanimously.

**III. PROGRAM UPDATES**

**a. Scientific Pipeline Contract Status and Rollover Funds**

Ms. Schaffner provided an update on the five approved research studies from FY'24, noting that the contracting process has taken longer than anticipated due to back and forth between the terms, particularly related to intellectual property and what organization owns the findings. APPB staff was hoping to wrap up contracts by FY'24, however with the delays, won't be able to finish them until the end of October at the earliest, the beginning of FY'25.

Ms. Schaffner asked that the committee consider allocating the before agreed upon FY'24 funds for the research study to be rolled over into the FY'25 budget for use once contracts are signed, pending approval of the APPB Board. The committee discussed and agreed. Mr. Mason called for a motion to approve the allocation. Mr. Paul Quiros made a motion to approve an additional allocation of \$200K to nutrition research projects following Board approval of the FY24rollover funds. Ms. Deborah Walden-Ralls seconded the motion. After no discussion, the committee was in agreement and the motion passed unanimously.

- b. Funding for Tree Nut Council Nutrition and Research Education Foundation (INC NREF)  
Ms. Warden provided background in INC NREF, an organization supporting worldwide research of tree nuts and nutrition. The organization has previously been funded through APC, however, as research is now funded under APPB, Ms. Warden recommends moving the membership over to APPB, where the Committee will have the opportunity to weigh in on NREF research direction.

Mr. Mason asked for a motion to approve \$100K in funding INC NREF research. Mr. Phillip Arnold made a motion to approve the \$100K budget allocation to fund health benefits research for tree nuts, including pecans, worldwide. Ms. Molly Willis seconded the motion. With no discussion, the committee was in agreement and the motion passed unanimously.

#### **IV. NEW BUSINESS**

- a. National Pecan Research Symposium  
Ms. Schaffner shared with the committee an overview of a National Pecan Research Symposium idea that would gather together leading pecan researchers, academics and industry professionals to share new research and collaborate on future study directions. The symposium could help to prevent potential duplication of research efforts, saving resources across the industry as well as provide inspiration to up-and-coming young researchers and industry professionals to keep them in Pecans. The committee agreed it was an important step in getting people together to advance research around pecans. Ms. Warden also noted that there may be many researchers in Mexico who would like to take advantage of the symposium as well.

After the discussion, Ms. Schaffner asked the committee to consider allocating up to \$100K of the FY'25 research budget to facilitate the meeting. Mr. Trent called for a motion to approve the funding. Ms. Walden-Ralls made a motion to approve up to \$100K of FY'25 Research Budget to fund the symposium venue, logistics and potential speakers. Mr. Paul Quiros seconded the motion.

- b. APPB's Industry Spark Fund  
Ms. Schaffner then presented an idea around creating an Industry Spark Fund, supported by APPB that could empower anyone within the community to come up with new innovations, marketing initiatives or community solutions that would benefit the whole industry. She noted that it would be important to research an appropriate model and come up with a very regulated process and set of criteria for funding, but the

overall opportunity would encourage new ideas that could increase demand for pecans among consumers and bring new capabilities and solutions to the industry.

Ms. Warden also noted that ideas would need to be catalytic. The investment would need to spur others to develop similar solutions and strict processes would ensure that partners are thoroughly vetted. But, as a result, could help drive innovation as an industry.

The USDA mentioned other commodities have set up similar funds that encourage education and understanding of commodities, including one that focused on junior colleges to spark interest in commodity careers. However, Mr. Collins noted it would be important to work closely together to ensure everyone has a fair chance at funding.

Ms. Schaffner recommended as next steps, that APPB hold meetings with USDA and APPB's legal team to ensure the idea is properly vetted and put together a formal proposal for the committee to review that would bring the Spark Fund to life and suggest a process/protocol and qualification criteria and grading scales along with a proposed budget. Initial thoughts will be presented to the committee in February.

The committee discussed the idea and felt positively about the overall idea and next steps. Ms. Warden also added that the two new ideas discussed in the meeting focused on not just APPB's job to drive demand but also help unify the industry. These projects will provide the opportunity for others to get involved and have a stake while helping the whole industry head in the right direction. Committee members agreed with Ms. Warden's statement.

c. Final Discussion

Mr. Quiros asked APPB staff to consider putting together a dashboard of all research being funded to date with anticipated outcomes or steps needed to make claims so the industry can understand the purpose of the research and stay in-tune with timing and deliverables.

Ms. Schaffner noted APPB has compiled a comprehensive tracker that includes research in the nutrition and agricultural space, inclusive of state organization research so everyone has greater transparency of work being done. She also mentioned APPB would add columns on anticipated completion dates as provided as well as anticipated outcomes or hypotheses of the studies.

Ms. Schaffner also mentioned APPB will be working to formalize the grading criteria used to vet research proposals and share it out with the industry in an effort to standardize approval of research studies.

**V. ADJOURNMENT**

With no further discussion, Mr. Mason asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Phillip Arnold made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Mason seconded and the meeting. The committee was in agreement and the meeting was adjourned at 10:32 a.m.