



Cooperative Agreements Process Improvement Team



Final Report



February 2005

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
Executive Summary	1
Introduction	1
Methodology	1
Findings	1
Commitments made at the Stakeholder Workshop	2
Recommendations	2
Implementation	3
Introduction	4
Methodology	5
Stakeholder viewpoints:	5
Benchmarking with other organizations	6
APHIS documentation	6
Findings	7
Recommendations	15
1. Improve consistency across the Agency	15
2. Streamline the process	18
3. Explore other opportunities	19
Implementation	21
Appendix A Core Team and Steering Committee	24
Appendix B Answers to Open-Ended Questions	25
Appendix C Ratings	39
Appendix D Stakeholder Workshop Results	43
Appendix E APQC Benchmarking Study	56
Appendix F Preliminary APHIS Benchmarking	58
Appendix G Review of Sample Agreements	60
Appendix H APHIS Statistics	67

Executive Summary

Introduction

In response to complaints regarding the APHIS cooperative agreements process the Agency embarked upon a review of the policy, procedures, and practices used in agreements. A core team of APHIS employees led by Dr. Ulysses Lane created and executed a work-plan which achieved the objectives of the Agency's leadership. The team identified problem areas, explored opportunities for change, identified potential alternatives to the use of agreements, and developed a set of viable recommendations for Agency action. The culmination of the team's efforts and their findings and recommendations are contained in this report.

Methodology

The core team designed a methodology to look at cooperative agreements from a number of perspectives. First we created a steering committee comprised of agency and cooperator stakeholders who would guide and support the core team. The core team used interviews, focus groups, surveys, and a stakeholder meeting to identify, clarify, and prioritize those issues and possible solutions. The core team reviewed a benchmarking study from the American Productivity and Quality Center and did some preliminary benchmarking to begin to identify best practices of grant making and cooperative agreement processing. Finally we reviewed agency documentation and a sample of cooperative agreements.

Findings

There were six significant findings in our study:

1. Processing has become decentralized due to the increase in cooperative agreements. With numbers up, APHIS hired more specialists and went from a centralized approach to a decentralized approach to get the work done. Specialists are now working in all the major programs and in both regions. Also, some of the planning, negotiating and processing is done in State Director and Area Veterinarian offices as well as the regional offices, CEAH, CPHST, NWRC, Riverdale and Minneapolis.
2. Communication, guidance and follow up have not kept up with decentralization. With the move to decentralization and a continued heavy workload at headquarters, communication, guidance and follow up has not kept up.
3. APHIS cooperative agreements processes are inconsistent. Across the Agency, there are differences in the way planning is done, information is shared, communication occurs, paperwork is handled, working relationships are developed and how finances and results are monitored and reported. Though it is being resolved at this writing, VS Eastern Region contributed to the inconsistency by requiring information in reports that exceeds Office of Management and Budget guidance.
4. Training and guidance are poor or inconsistent. At the workshop, training and guidance was identified as the area most in need of improvement. Survey results show that both APHIS employees and cooperators consider APHIS and cooperator training and guidance to be mostly poor or fair. Some focus group interview participants reported that PPQ's Eastern Regions that their training was done well
5. Less time available to accomplish the work. There are three major factors that contribute to the insufficiency of time. The first is APHIS' lack of or poor planning, compounded by continuing resolutions. The second area relates to the paper-intensive process used. Finally, the restrictions on funding and length of time for agreements along with the delays caused by the planning and continuing resolutions often stops the work before it is completed.

6. Agency flexibility is considered a strength. While standardization and consistency are problems that need attention, flexibility should not be discarded where it provides a value-added to the process.

Commitments made at the Stakeholder Workshop

At the end of the Stakeholder Workshop Kevin Shea, Associate Administrator committed APHIS to the following actions:

1. The Agreements Services Center (ASC) will be given an additional position to develop and implement a training program and improve communication
2. An annual meeting for both Cooperators and APHIS will be developed and implemented to share information and conduct planning
3. APHIS will allow maximum time for agreements
4. No APHIS office will require cooperators to report results or financial information that exceeds OMB guidance without first receiving an OMB waiver.

Recommendations

We recommend that APHIS:

1. Improve consistency across the agency especially in training and guidance
 - a. Standardize APHIS practices
 - i. Follow calendar-year based cycle of planning and operating for most agreements
 - ii. Standardize formats
 1. Standardize the APHIS workplan.
 2. Develop a standard format for reporting.
 3. Incorporate forms in the articles of the agreement.
 - iii. Standardize the process for resolving issues promptly
 - iv. Revise Agency guidance
 - v. Standardize cooperator reporting
 - b. Get a consistent message out about expectations and practices
 - i. Clarify expectations
 - ii. Make guidance readily available
 - iii. Hold an annual meeting
 - iv. Make training mandatory for APHIS
 - v. Make guidance and training available to cooperators
 - c. Improve follow up
 - i. Ensure APHIS accountability
 - ii. Ensure cooperator accountability
 - iii. Expand reviews
2. Streamline the process
 - a. Implement APHIS e-approaches
 - i. Support USDA and Government approaches (for competitive agreements, follow US Government and USDA lead on e-approaches ensuring equal opportunity)
 - ii. Pursue APHIS e-solutions for APHIS for non-competitive agreements (try variety of approaches but ensure consistency)
 - b. Use more simplified approaches for getting work done

- i. Simplified acquisitions
 - ii. Fee-based type agreements
 - iii. Umbrella agreements
 - iv. Other agency agreements
 - v. Simplified agreements
 - c. Shift processing workload to regional staffs
 - i. Allow ADODRs to focus more on managing projects and measuring/reporting results
 - ii. Allow ASC to focus more on policy development, guidance and training
 - iii. Use PPQ ER as a 'model'
- 3. Explore other opportunities
 - a. Review sufficiency of current authorities for existing operations and the recommended changes
 - b. Exploit current authorities
 - c. Explore new authorities
 - i. Pass through funding
 - ii. Multi-year agreements
 - iii. Multi-year funding

The team recommends that APHIS retain the cooperative agreement as an approach to achieving program objectives and agency goals. We believe that if the identified problems are resolved, it will lead to enhanced program delivery and will address the needs of both APHIS and its cooperators.

Implementation

APHIS should create a Working Group to develop and implement the recommendations endorsed by the APHIS AMT and the commitments made by Mr. Kevin Shea. After decisions are made on what needs to be done, the working group would be formed to carry out the following:

1. Make the transition from this review to the working group (1 month)
2. Meet to develop the implementation plan (2-3 days early in second month)
3. Collect input from internal and external stakeholders involved in cooperative agreements (allow about 3 weeks from the time plan is posted)
4. Gain approval for the final plan from the Program Leaders Group (PLG) (Next meeting after plan is finalized)
5. Continue implementation with scheduled progress reports from the manager of the ASC and the leader of the working group to the PLG (other reports could be scheduled as needed). Priorities for implementation are as follows (ongoing for first year):
 - a. Improve consistency across the Agency
 - b. Streamline the process
 - c. Explore other opportunities
6. Ensure a smooth transition from working group to 'communities of practice.' First level of 'community of practice' to include the ASC and the specialists at the regions and science centers. The second level would include the program level specialists along with the ADOs and ADODRs for that program. (by end of first year)

Introduction

In the wake of complaints from cooperators in the fall of 2004, Dr. Lane, Associate Regional Director, Eastern Region, Veterinary Services (VS) was asked by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) Administrator's Office to lead a review of Agency's cooperative agreements process.

The review is timely in another way. In 1995 APHIS spent about 62.5 million on cooperative agreements or about 12 percent of its budget. By 2003, APHIS spent about 236.9 million on cooperative agreements or about 24 percent of its budget.

After establishing a core team of four Policy and Program Development employees, APHIS Management team was asked to assign personnel from around the agency and three cooperators were asked to participate to a project steering committee. The role of the committee was to identify people inside and out of the Agency who would participate in focus group interviews, a survey and a stakeholder meeting and review data collection instruments. In addition, the committee had the opportunity to review and comment on this paper. Together, Dr. Lane, the core team and the steering committee comprised the Cooperative Agreement Process Improvement Team or CAPIT. See Appendix A for a list of the core team and the steering committee.

CAPIT Project

Objectives

To gather information about and improve the processes for developing, entering into, and following up on Cooperative Agreements between APHIS and their cooperators.

The information about the Cooperative Agreement process will be gathered from several different perspectives: APHIS business and program, and Cooperator business and program. Also, best practices from other agencies will be reviewed.

Outcomes

Improve the process

1. Review the Cooperative Agreement Process.
2. Identify improvement opportunities, using data collection tools such as, meetings interviews and questionnaires.
3. Look at areas that relate to performance measures and determine if they are in place. Re: Work Plans & Financial Plans and Quarterly Reports from the cooperator.

Identify issues

4. Look at legal, regulatory and policy requirements that guide the Cooperative Agreement process to determine if any flexibility is present or if unnecessary barriers exist that hinder quality service

Best Practices

5. Look at other Agencies that use Cooperative Agreements to determine any best practices that can be used by APHIS in its process.

Methodology

The team collected several kinds of data (viewpoints, other organizations practices, data about the APHIS process) in number of ways (interviews, surveys, meetings, benchmarking and document review):

Stakeholder viewpoints:

Interviews – the core team interviewed 5 key people involved in the cooperative agreements process

Focus Group Interviews – the team conducted 9 focus group interviews with 54 APHIS employees involved in cooperative agreements. See Appendix B for summaries of the answers to the open ended questions we asked in both focus group interviews and surveys. The employees who participated represented APHIS headquarters and regional offices along with scientific support staffs for Plant Protection and Quarantine (PPQ), Veterinary Services (VS) and Wildlife Services (WS):

- Headquarters: We held the following focus group interviews with headquarters staffs (includes employees located in Riverdale and Minneapolis):
 - VS staff officers (6 employees)
 - PPQ staff officers (3 employees)
 - Agreements Service Center (10 employees)
 - Budget Execution Support Team (BEST) (3 employees)
 - Payments (3 employees)
- Eastern and Western Regions – We conducted two separate focus group interviews in each region. One consisted of program personnel and the other consisted of administrative personnel. This approach helped ensure that an overall view of the process was captured. Each interview consisted of PPQ, VS and WS employees. In the Eastern Region, the two focus groups consisted of 13 APHIS employees total including representatives from PPQ’s Center for Plant Health Science and Technology (CPHST). In the Western Region, the two focus groups consisted of 14 APHIS employees total including representative from VS Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH) and WS National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC).

Surveys – With input from the steering committee, the team developed cooperator and APHIS employee surveys. In all, 281 participants completed surveys. The surveys of cooperators were sponsored by cooperator organizations. The survey of PPQ cooperators was sponsored by the National Plant Board. The survey of VS cooperators was sponsored by the National Association of State Animal Health Officials. The survey of Wildlife Services cooperators was sponsored by the Berryman Institute. See Appendix B for summaries of the answers to the open ended questions we asked in the surveys (and in the focus group interviews). See Appendix C for summaries and analysis of how participants rated components of the Agreement process and how they answered the question about the worth of the process. The numbers of respondents for each component of the survey are listed below.

- Cooperator surveys (113):
 - 53 PPQ
 - 45 VS
 - 12 WS
 - 3 other
- APHIS employee surveys (168):

- 62 from PPQ
- 62 from VS
- 27 WS
- 18 Other
- 3 from the APHIS Management Team

Stakeholder Meeting – We held a stakeholder meeting on January 5 and 6, 2005 to discuss the cooperative agreement process and issues associated with it and to give participants an opportunity to recommend improvements. In all, 41 employees and 13 cooperators attended. See Appendix D for a summary of meeting results and list of attendees.

Benchmarking with other organizations

American Productivity and Quality Center (APQC) Study– The team reviewed the APQC benchmarking study. See Appendix E for a summary of the APQC study.

Preliminary APHIS benchmarking – the team reviewed documents on line including the USDA 2004 Report to Congress on the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act. (See Appendix F) In addition, the team made some preliminary inquiries into practices at some agencies and reviewed some on-line materials about cooperative agreements as time allowed. Some of the Agencies we learned about include:

- United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
 - Agricultural Marketing Service
 - Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service
 - Farm Services Administration
 - Food and Nutrition Services
 - Foreign Agriculture Service
 - Natural Resources Conservation Services
 - Rural Development
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Justice

APHIS documentation

Sample cooperative agreements and sample accomplishment reports – the team reviewed:

- 90 cooperative agreements and 7 “grants.”
 - VS 42
 - PPQ 44
 - WS 5
 - Other 6,
 - Total 97 grants/cooperative agreements.
- The team also requested copies of the accomplishment (quarterly or final) reports for 21 of the agreements. We received 7 reports and we reviewed these 7 reports along with the work plans we had received to try to determine, as our project plan states, if “performance measures” are in place.
 - See Appendix G for a summary of findings of the review

APHIS Statistics – See Appendix H for a summary of findings.

Findings

Our team has taken the data collected and the information analyzed and boiled it down to what we consider to be the 6 most important findings of the study:

1. Because of the increase in cooperative agreements, processing has become decentralized
2. Central policy making and guidance has not kept pace with the need
3. APHIS cooperative agreements processes are inconsistent
4. Training and guidance are poor or inconsistent
5. Less time available to accomplish the work
6. Flexibility is considered a strength

In this section we explain each of these findings and support it with data gathered in our study.

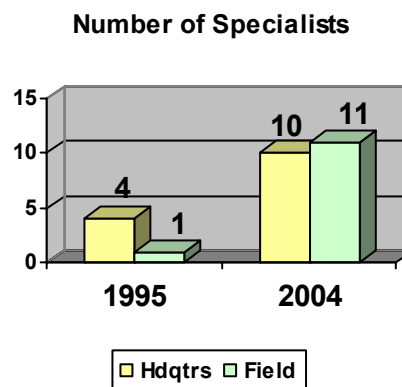
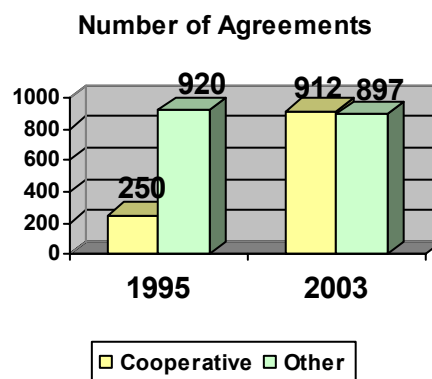
Processing has become decentralized due to the increase in cooperative agreements,

According to a former manager of the agreements staff (currently called the Agreements Service Center), in 1995 APHIS processed about 250 cooperative agreements and about 900 other agreements and grants per year. Now, APHIS processed about 900 cooperative agreements and about 900 other agreements. While a central APHIS staff of 4, one specialist in PPQ and others whose collateral duty involved agreements handled 250 in 1995, the processing of the 900 cooperative agreements in 2003 was more decentralized. Today, there is a central staff of 10 along with 11 specialists at Fort Collins and Raleigh.

Most of the processing is done today at the regional and state level in APHIS (some is done at PPQ's CPHST, VS's CEAH, and WS's NWRC too). Some are still handled and processed at headquarters through the Agreements Services Center and program staff officers. The Center also does some oversight work ensuring that the agreements done elsewhere follow APHIS policy. The recent increase in cooperative agreement work caused an increase in hiring at the regional level. For example, the Eastern Region of VS hired new specialists in April 2003, January 2004 and November 2004.

Communication, guidance and follow up has not kept up with decentralization

An unintended consequence of decentralization is that consistency is more difficult to achieve and maintain because there are so many people who are geographically dispersed who need to have the same information at the same time. With a small central staff, communication could be ongoing, guidance could be dispensed in a meeting and work could be monitored on a daily basis. With specialists in the regional offices of PPQ, VS, PPQ, some at CEAH, CPHST, and



NWRC, some at headquarters along with people involved in processing agreements in state director and area offices, as well as the financial, personnel involved in Riverdale and Minneapolis, new strategies are needed for communicating, providing guidance and monitoring work.

As cooperative agreements have become more decentralized in APHIS, central policy development and communication have not kept up with the need. In recent years, as the agreement processing workload has increased for the center (including a heavy workload during the recent END and BSE emergencies), policy development and communication, a core business process for the center, has suffered. Unfortunately this coincided with the influx of new regional agreement specialists in need of clear guidance, training and feedback on their work.

Even though APHIS has moved to decentralize cooperative agreement processing, according to our preliminary benchmarking, some of the Agencies we talked with have very centralized operations. For example, in one staff handling cooperative agreements at CSREES, they have 40 specialists processing agreements centrally. While their centralized approach works well for them, they have no field staff. Any central approach in APHIS will need to be modified to meet the Agency’s needs.

APHIS cooperative agreements processes are inconsistent

According to the surveys, focus group interviews, and the stakeholder workshop, cooperative agreements are handled very differently from one program to the next in APHIS. There are marked differences in the way planning is done, information is shared, communication occurs,

paperwork is handled, working relationships are developed and plans and finances are monitored and reported.

Inconsistency and Communication
<p>Without strong central communication, guidance, training, and follow up, practices develop that are not easily brought in line. Here is how programs, regions and states can easily become inconsistent.</p> <p>A recent push in the Federal Government is to focus on performance based budgeting, or closely tying results to expenditures. With that in mind, in 2004, the management in the Eastern Region of Veterinary Services began asking States for reports on cooperative agreements that required them to provide an object class (budget category) breakdown by goal of all expenditures before reimbursement can be made.” The Western Region of VS and the other programs made no such request.</p> <p>This was met with resistance from the states, so even in the region that initiated the practice, there were inconsistencies in reporting from state to state. After a review staff said the practice should be stopped because it exceeds OMB guidance, and at a workshop In January 2005, APHIS vowed to stop the practice, not everyone had gotten the word.</p> <p>A month later, as a follow up to the workshop, memos went out saying the practice should stop. At this writing, it is too early to tell if the practice has stopped completely.</p>

One issue that came up at the stakeholder workshop was the inconsistent way cooperator questions and concerns are handled in APHIS. For some cooperators, this is something that APHIS does well: their questions are answered fully and promptly. Others say that their questions go unanswered even though they ask repeatedly. One participant pointed out that the issue is not that Cooperators want the answer to be yes all the time, rather they want a full explanation of why the answer is no.

At the stakeholder workshop, and in some of the responses from the survey, there were a number of people who pointed out inconsistencies with the VS Eastern Region. See sidebar on Inconsistency and Communication.

Start dates for agreements vary too. Note the number of agreements in January by PPQ in the table on the next page. According to our focus group interviews, PPQ is moving to a calendar year for most of its agreements. Also, note the number of starts in September for VS. While this can be attributed to a number of factors, it is important to note that starting late in the year causes some problems.

First, the only way to deobligate unused funds from a cooperative agreement and to use it elsewhere in the agency is to do so before the end of the fiscal year. There will be no way to know if all the money will be used when the agreement starts in the last quarter of the fiscal year. Second, APHIS is required to allow certain states the opportunity to properly vet the agreement with key personnel in the state. Starting late in the fiscal year often means that APHIS must request that States sign a waiver to circumvent this process in order for them to get the money appropriated to APHIS in that fiscal year.

Starting Month				
	VS	PPQ	WS	OTHER
Jan	1	10		
Feb		1		
Mar	3	7		1
Apr	1	6		
May	1	3	1	
Jun	3	1		
Jul	2	6		1
Aug	4	3		1
Sep	16	3		3
Oct	8	3	3	
Nov				
Dec	1			

Another indication of inconsistency is the difference in ratings by cooperators of the PPQ, VS and WS processes. See the table below of composite ratings:

	APHIS	PPQ	VS	WS
Cooperator Ratings	n=113 2.72	n=53 2.79	n=45 2.49	n=12 3.81
APHIS Ratings	n=168 2.45	n=62 2.64	n=62 2.11	n=27 2.61

Table 1: Ratings of processes by cooperators and APHIS employees
 Scale used was 1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=very good, 5=excellent
 Ratings below 2.5 are **highlighted**; ratings above 3 are in **bold**
 “n” is the number of survey respondents

Finally, cooperator reporting is inconsistent as well. In VS there is the issue of inconsistent reporting requirements in the Eastern Region (See the sidebar on page 8). In the workshop, participants acknowledged that reporting and monitoring can work well when there is 1) “good communication between the cooperator and the ADODR,” and when 2) “the cooperative agreement clearly spells out reporting requirements.” Often, however, reporting and monitoring does not work well.

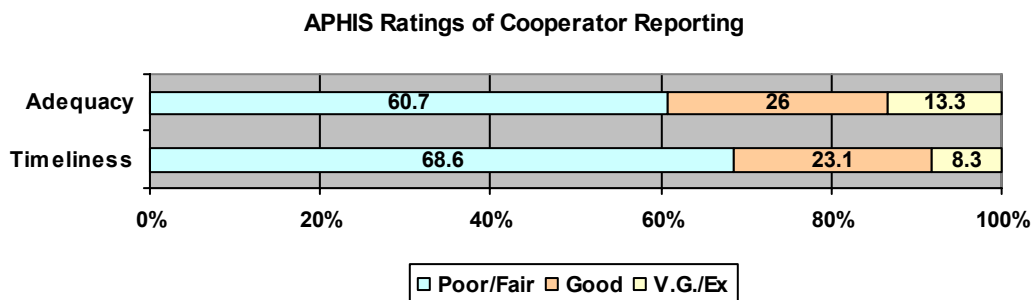
There is concern agency wide over the adequacy and timeliness of cooperator reporting. According to our focus group interviews, the surveys and the workshop, APHIS employees have three issues with the way cooperators report results:

1. Poor quality of the reports (Agreement managers are “unsure of true status of program due to the lack of data”)

2. Reports not done on time (late reporting ... “inhibits decision making regarding funding requirements, program business decisions or additional funding for cooperators”
3. Reports not submitted at all (PPQ had to send a letter saying that payment would not be made if reports are not submitted)

Also, APHIS employees rated cooperator reporting very low in the survey. The only part of the process that employees rated lower than timelines of reports was the adequacy of guidance and training that APHIS provides to cooperators. See Chart 1 below:

Chart 1: APHIS Ratings of Cooperator Reporting (Adequacy and Timeliness)



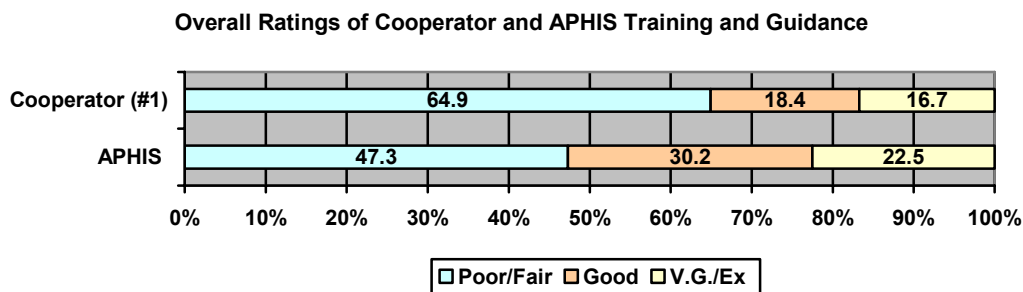
Training and guidance are poor or inconsistent

Participants at the workshop identified training overall as the number one area to improve. According to workshop participants, the areas most in need of work are listed below in order (See Appendix D for more details):

1. Training and Guidance
2. Planning and Budgeting
3. Application and Award
4. Monitoring and Reporting

Overall, respondents to the surveys rated cooperator training and guidance as the worst component of the APHIS agreement process (See Appendix C for more details of the ratings). Sixty four percent of all respondents rated it poor or fair. Ratings of APHIS training were low as well with over 47 % of the respondents rating it poor or fair. In the focus groups, however, some of the training offered, especially by PPQ’s Eastern Region, was regarded as pretty good. Also, inconsistencies in the agreements process mentioned in the previous finding are an indication of poor or inconsistent training and guidance

Chart 2: Ratings of Cooperator and APHIS training and guidance (combined from all the surveys)



Less time available to accomplish the work

There is an increasing squeeze on the time allowed for cooperators to complete their work. The beginning is rushed because of poor planning and a problem with continuing resolutions (when appropriation bills don't pass Congress before the beginning of the fiscal year, funding occurs through continuing resolutions making funding for the year uncertain and good planning problematic). Once planning is done, the process itself is cumbersome, paper-based and when the award is small, according to some cooperators, is not worth the effort. Finally, APHIS authorities prevent, in most cases, extending the funding and the time for completing the work beyond one year.

Front-end problems: Cooperators said that timeliness issues on the front-end of the process were among the poorest areas of the APHIS cooperative agreements process. See the table of cooperator survey ratings below (Rating based on average score on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=very good and 5=excellent)

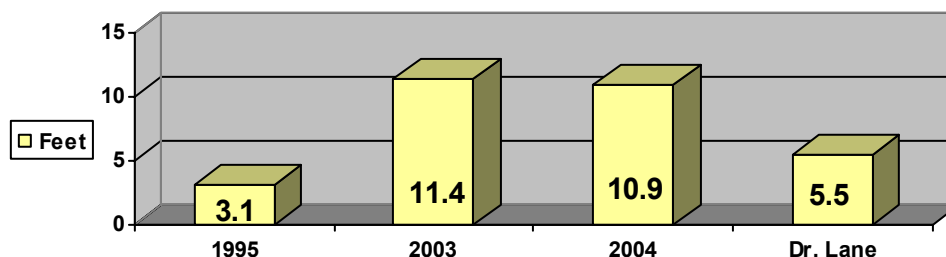
- Confusion and delays when the work and financial plans are being developed and negotiated
- Longer time to get agreements signed. (overall cooperators said the timeliness of approvals and denials is the lowest rated component of the process)

	TOTAL
# surveys/number who rated process=	113/83
Guidance and training for APHIS	2.74
Guidance and training for cooperators	2.46
Time from announcement to application deadline	2.43
Ease of applying	2.53
Ease of developing work plans	2.92
Ease of developing financial plans	2.89
Timeliness of approval/denial	2.22
Timeliness of payments	3.03
Appropriateness of reporting requirements	2.76
Adequacy of cooperator reports	3.08
Timeliness of cooperator reports	3.00
Appropriateness of ad-hoc requests for info	2.65

Paper-intensive process: Some of the factors that contribute to more time on the process and less time on the work that needs to be done:

- Using a paper process. There is a substantial amount of paper generated by these agreements. Based on the number of pages in the sample agreements we reviewed, we calculated the size of all of the agreements that APHIS entered into with cooperators in 1995, 2003 and 2004. Based on an estimate of 250 pages per inch, the height of the paper generated by agreements is shown in the graph on the next page.
- Requiring original signatures in ink (this means the paper documents are handed back and forth physically often requiring the use of couriers or the postal service which adds to the delays)

Height of Paper Generated by Agreements



- Having one process no matter how small the award. Even though cooperators who participated in the surveys said that the process is worth it (58 to 1). There were 18 who said that it the APHIS process is not worth it when the awards are 'small.' The thresholds given were as follows:
 - two at \$5,000
 - two at \$10,000
 - one at \$20,000
 - one at \$100,00
 - one at \$150,000

For 2003, here are the numbers of agreements and percentages according to size of the award:

Dollar Range	Number	Percentage
\$5 million (M) & above	7	0.7%
\$1,000,000 to 4,900,000	26	2.5%
\$500,000 - \$999,999	24	2.3%
\$100,000- \$499,999	217	20.5%
\$50,000- \$99,000	209	19.8%
\$10,001 – 49,999	356	33.7%
\$928—10,000	217	20.5%
TOTAL *	1056	100%

- Having to get the same cooperator to negotiate and sign multiple agreements with the same program in APHIS

One year restriction: Finally for most agreements, funding and the work must stop one year after the agreement is signed. According to APHIS agreements officials this is because authorities that allow other agencies to fund multi year agreements are currently not available to APHIS. Forest Service, for example, has the authority to write agreements that last for two years from the time of signing.

However, projects can be funded for more than 1 year if shown that it would take multiple years to produce anything of value. This is particularly true for some research projects that require multiple years to get results. These projects are considered to be “non-severable” and can be funded with appropriated funds in one year with the understanding that the funds will be used for more than 1 year from the date of the start of the agreement.

Flexibility is considered a strength

Even though the team identified a need for more consistency, our data also shows that many consider APHIS flexibility to be a strength. It is important that in resolving inconsistency issues and improving training, guidance and communication that when circumstances call for flexibility, APHIS programs have the ability to adjust so that Agency and cooperator needs are met.

Commitments made at the Stakeholder Workshop

At the end of the Stakeholder Workshop and based on participant findings and recommendations (See Appendix D Stakeholder Workshop Results), Kevin Shea, Associate Administrator committed APHIS to the following actions:

1. The Agreements Services Center will be given an additional position to develop and implement a training program and improve communication
2. An annual meeting for both Cooperators and APHIS will be developed and implemented to share information and conduct planning
3. APHIS will allow maximum time for agreements
4. No APHIS office will require cooperators to report results or financial information that exceeds OMB guidance without first receiving an OMB waiver.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, and keeping in mind the commitment made by Mr. Shea at the Stakeholder Workshop, the team makes the following recommendations:

1. Improve consistency across the Agency especially in training and guidance
2. Streamline the process
3. Explore other opportunities

1. Improve consistency across the Agency especially in training and guidance

In order to improve consistency, we are recommending three broad areas of action:

- A. Standardize APHIS practices
- B. Get a consistent message out about expectations and practices
- C. Improve follow-up

A. Standardize APHIS practices

The first recommendation consists of number of actions to take to develop standard practices and to document them. These include:

- 1) Follow calendar-year based cycle of planning and operating
- 2) Standardize formats
- 3) Standardize process for resolving issues promptly
- 4) Revise Agency guidance
- 5) Standardize cooperator reporting

1) Follow calendar-year based cycle of planning and operating: While improving the training and guidance will go a long way towards improving consistency the team also recommends that APHIS move to an APHIS-wide annual cycle for planning, signing and monitoring cooperative agreements. Based on the reported success of the PPQ Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) approach, we recommend that APHIS as a whole adopt that model for recurring activities that are funded through cooperative agreements. There are two things that stand out to us about the CAPS approach. One is the clear planning calendar and two is the clear guidance for both the program and associated cooperative agreements. Both of these are available in the CAPS guidebook which is on line at:

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/ep/pestdetection/CAPSGuidebookComplete.PDF>

While there would need to be some flexibility to meet the needs of each program and its cooperators, there would be a few things that would happen as a result of this recommendation:

- a. Move to a calendar-year cycle. This would mean that most routine, recurring cooperative agreements would be signed in January. Reportedly, PPQ has already begun this transition. This does not mean that every cooperative agreement should be signed in January. It is still important to maintain the flexibility of start dates when it is necessary to do so.
- b. Follow a planning calendar similar to the one developed for the CAPS program. See the sidebar on page 15. While this schedule does not need to be followed exactly, there are some principles to follow:

- 1) Hold a planning meeting sometime in the fourth quarter of the previous fiscal year.
- 2) Cooperators submit work and financial plans in advance and so they can be discussed at this meeting.
- 3) Involve budget and financial specialists to verify the initial funding availability, provide ongoing oversight, and assist in monitoring the spending of an agreement.
- 4) Take the opportunity to discuss at the meeting whether all of the monies associated with the previous agreement will be spent. Take steps to deobligate the money that will not be spent before the end of the fiscal year so it can be used elsewhere

Excerpt from the CAPS Guidance

CAPS is a combined effort by Federal and State agricultural organizations to collect and manage data on plant pests, weeds, and biological control agents. Survey targets have included weeds, nematodes, plant diseases, insects, snails, and other invertebrates.

Partial CAPS Planning Calendar:

- e. In January of each year, the NCC meets to outline national and regional goals and priorities for the subsequent fiscal year.
- f. During the spring, States prepare proposals to conduct projects which address the Regional goals.
- g. By June or July, individual States develop work plans that reflect State, PPQ, and regional interests as discussed in the regional meetings. The proposed work plans are considered and then approved, rejected, or returned with modifications by the Regional Office.
- h. In August, the State work and financial plans are submitted to the RSC for approval along with the Cooperative Agreement.
- i. In November, the RCC's meets to discuss program targets to set goals for the following survey year, and to evaluate the previous survey year.

This calendar year approach will help improve consistency. Since in most years, appropriation bills have passed and money is available to APHIS by the first of the calendar year, adopting this approach would also help alleviate problems stemming from the uncertainty of continuing resolutions.

2) Standardize formats: To help achieve needed Agency-wide consistency, we recommend three areas for improvement.

- a. Standardize the APHIS workplan. All workplans contain similar kinds of information. By providing a consistent template or format, the working group will help standardize the writing, reviewing and approving of the workplans.
- b. Develop a standard format for reporting. Review the formats used across the agency and consider how other agencies like USDA's Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service in determining the APHIS format and expectations.
- c. Incorporate forms in the articles of the agreement. Following PPQ's lead, make this approach standard for the Agency. This will help reduce the number of documents that need to be handled and signed by incorporating standard legal documents in the articles.

3) Standardize process for resolving issues promptly: When conflict occurs, it should be addressed at the lowest level possible. When issues are raised at the ADODR and cooperator level that cannot be resolved, the ADO or their staffs will intervene. If the ADO or their staff

cannot help resolve the conflict, a simple, but effective way to resolve it should be implemented. In these rare cases, the issue should be raised quickly to the Deputy's office or the Administrator's office as needed.

4) Revise Agency guidance: As policies and procedures are developed or revised, they must be documented. For example, the manual should be revised and updated and made more user-friendly. Included in the manual should be Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) to communicate clear, detailed policies and procedures, including new templates and revised formats. The SOP's should include roles and responsibilities for the cooperator business and program offices and the APHIS business and program offices.

5) Standardize cooperator reporting: Define reporting requirements in the cooperative agreements that identify needed data elements and a standard format (template) for all APHIS agreements. These defined requirements will clarify for cooperators the expectations of APHIS program managers. This will help provide consistency for our cooperators who do business with several APHIS programs. Also, cooperators will not be required to report results or financial information that exceeds OMB guidance without first receiving an OMB waiver.

B. Get a consistent message out about expectations and practices

1) Clarify expectations: Internally, all APHIS employees need to understand the expectation that when working on cooperative agreements, they will focus on customer service to those involved both inside and outside the Agency. This could be done in an annual update memo from the Agreements Service Center and reminders could be given at the Annual Meeting, but more importantly, it needs to be done through the supervisor/employee relationship. For example, supervisors would clearly require that questions asked by employees and cooperators will be answered courteously, promptly and fully. Frequently asked questions and answers will be available on the web site.

2) Make guidance readily available: Consider moving guidance to electronic formats. This will help with revising the information and getting the revisions quickly to everyone involved. A version of the manual should be available on-line so that both APHIS employees and cooperators have easy access. The web site needs to include an option to ask questions on-line and the expectation that all questions will receive a timely answer. The flow chart and the Frequently Asked Questions that are available now are a good start for the web site development. Updates to guidance should be posted promptly and be sent using a list serve (e-mails sent automatically to those involved in APHIS cooperative agreements—both inside and outside of the Agency).

3) Hold an annual meeting: Each year, a meeting will be held to provide the cooperative agreement community with updates, listen to stakeholder concerns and plan for the upcoming year.

4) Make training mandatory for APHIS: Everyone in APHIS who is involved in the cooperative agreements process should be trained. The training should be mandatory. The training should be tailored to meet the needs of all those involved by letting them know what to do and how to it. A review of the criteria for when and how to use assistance (e.g. cooperative agreements or grants) or procurement (contracts or purchase orders) instruments should be included.

The curriculum would include courses from Management Concepts Incorporated, train-the-trainer approaches, face-to-face training and include cooperators whenever possible. The curriculum should provide for regular, required, refresher training for APHIS employees.

5) Make guidance and training available to cooperators: As agency guidance is updated, it will be made available to cooperators through various venues such as meetings, mailings, web, etc. APHIS will create specific cooperator guidance on roles and responsibilities and agency processes designed to be used parallel to the agency guidance documents. Also, APHIS will make training for cooperators available in a variety of training modes (classroom, on-line, interactive etc.) and will encourage all of its cooperators to participate.

C. Improve follow-up

1) Ensure APHIS accountability: New behaviors will not take effect consistently without management support. While clarifying expectations is important, consistency requires that managers also hold their employees accountable. Holding employees to Agency customer service standards as well as individual employee performance standards would help with accountability.

2) Ensure cooperator accountability: It is important that cooperators get their reports done well and in on time. Clear expectations, including a standard reporting format and a timeline for progress and final reports will be documented in the agreement. This being said, the agency needs to decide what the consequences will be, if any, when the cooperator fails to adhere to the terms of the agreement.

3) Expand reviews: It is important to check regularly on progress. Reviews that are currently being done by the Financial Management Division, Review and Analysis Branch should continue. In addition, the Agency should plan for regular regional level (include regular CEAH, CPHST and NWRC reviews) and Agency level reviews too.

2. Streamline the process

To gain more time for the work to be done, another recommendation is to streamline the current process. As part of any streamlining initiative, it is important to begin tracking the process so that data will be available so the Agency will know if the streamlining efforts have had any effect.

1) Implement APHIS e-agreements: The President's e-Gov initiative is outlined in a long-term plan under PL106-107 and includes many electronic options for agreements. These initiatives focus not only on streamlining the process for competitive cooperative agreements and grants but also on increasing the ability of interested parties to easily obtain information on opportunities to participate in APHIS assistance. Even though implementation has been slow, we applaud APHIS participation in these efforts to pursue electronic solutions and in ensuring competition when appropriate.

Since most of APHIS agreements are not competitive, the Agency should actively pursue electronic solutions to meet its own needs apart from the Department and government-wide efforts. We suggest electronic solutions include using e-mail to exchange revised plans as the agreements are being negotiated, more use of electronic signatures, exploring collaborative writing environments, using fill-in-the-blank workplans and financial plans, developing electronic reporting formats and even faster electronic payments. While there is room for experimentation, any solutions that prove to be helpful should be adopted Agency wide.

2) Explore simplified approaches to getting work done: The Agency should look into when and how the agency could make broader use of approaches such as, but not limited to the following:

- Simplified acquisitions – sometimes cooperative agreements are being used when a simple acquisition would be quicker and easier to use
- Fee-based type agreements – These are not exactly an acquisition and not exactly a cooperative agreement and are being used in VS for BSE surveillance. These are being used successfully for about 80% of BSE surveillance program.
- Umbrella agreements – One cooperative agreement that includes more than one work plan. These have been used successfully in the PPQ CAPS program. These may work best when the projects are related. As this approach is implemented, Agency financial personnel need to address issues raised about tracking and shifting money from one project to another.
- Other agency's agreements – sometimes it may be worth it to have another agency process the agreement so that APHIS concentrates on the work that needs to be done
- Simplified agreements – With a substantial number of small awards (more than 20% under 10 K in 2003), it may be time to explore a simplified process that is easily and quickly approved when the risk, complexity and dollar amounts are all low.

3) Shift agreement processing workload to regional staffs: All of the processing of agreements currently done at the state and area level should shift to the Agreements Specialists who work on the regional staffs. Any processing that is done at the Agreement Service Center (ASC) that is more appropriately done regionally should shift to the regional staffs too. PPQ's Eastern Region is a model for the others in APHIS to follow. Shifting the processing workload to the regional staffs in all of APHIS will allow the ADODR's and their staffs to concentrate on the program side of the agreements and allow them to focus their efforts on working with cooperators in managing the projects and measuring and reporting results.

The Agreements Service Center (ASC) will always be responsible for some agreement processing (for agreements initiated by headquarters staffs and for those agreements with cooperators who represent national organizations such as NASDA) and is the source of definitive advice for the specialists in the regional offices. Even though the ASC will always play those roles, it is also responsible for policy development, guidance, training and communication. These roles are the ones that have suffered in recent years due to the expansion of the use of agreements, the hiring of new staff and the response to several emergencies. With the hiring of the new staff person (One of Mr. Shea's commitments) and the regional staffs taking more of the processing burden, the ASC should be able to handle these roles more easily.

3. Explore other opportunities

The CAPIT team identified 3 final areas that require attention. These recommendations are listed last because they are more long term solutions to some of the issues raised. These areas are extremely important to explore to be able to extend work beyond the current one-year limit.

A. Review sufficiency of authorities

While we believe that APHIS has the authority to adopt all of the recommendations in this paper so far, implementers should ensure that authorities and policies are in place to support the changes.

B. Exploit existing authorities

The current APHIS policy of starting agreements at any time during the fiscal year and continuing for 1 year after the start date was developed in the mid 1990's. Some we talked with thought that APHIS could run agreements for periods of time that exceed the currently acceptable one year (in addition to the exception for non-severability). It also may be that APHIS could use authorities available to other USDA agencies (such as the more flexible authorities given to the Forest Service). The implementers should explore these possibilities further.

C. Explore new authorities

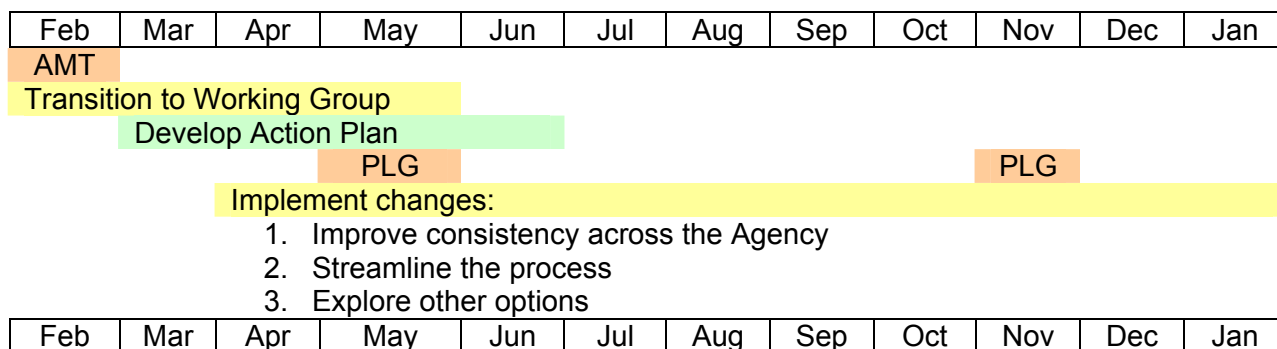
1) Pass through funding: APHIS should explore possible authorities that would allow the Agency to pass earmarked funding directly to the recipient. This would eliminate the administrative burden of working through the cooperative agreement process.

2) Multi-year agreements: APHIS should consider multi-year agreements tailored after contractual vehicles which have a base year with optional periods of contract extension. This approach will reduce the administrative burden, increase the planning horizons of both APHIS and its cooperators, and retain the flexibility of work and spending plan changes required in the optional periods.

3) Multi-year funding: APHIS should seek multi-year funding authority sufficient, not to exceed 5 percent of the program appropriation line, to enable programs to continue cooperative efforts during continuing resolutions.

Implementation

We suggest that within a month after decisions are made on what needs to be done to improve the process, there be a formal transition from the team responsible for this review to the working group responsible for implementation. Within a month after that, there should be a plan developed to lay out the steps for accomplishing the decisions of the APHIS Management Team. The working group should present the plan to the Program Leaders Group for approval and should report on progress 6 and 12 months after the plan is approved. See the time line below:



Create a working group

We recommend that the APHIS Management Team create a Quality Improvement Implementation Working Group to ensure the commitments made by Mr. Shea and additional recommendations endorsed by the APHIS Management Team are fully developed and implemented. The group will work in concert with the Agreements Services Center, and will report directly to Mr. Shea and the Program Leaders Group. In order to effect change in the Agreements process and carry out the specified recommendations, a separate, empowered group, would need to be dedicated to the effort.

In doing this, the employees of the Agreements Services Center and others in the Agreements community in APHIS remain free to continue their day-to-day assignments while their counterpart systematically implements improvements and enhancements. See sidebar on the next page for our suggestions on work group composition. After the group members are assigned, we envision that there would be 6 key steps:

1. A transition from this review to the working group (1 month)
2. A meeting of the working group to develop the plan (2-3 days early in second month)
3. A time for people involved in cooperative agreements to comment on the plan (about 3 weeks from the time plan is posted)
4. Approval for the final plan from the Program Leaders Group (PLG) (Next meeting after plan is finalized)
5. Continued implementation with scheduled progress reports from the manager of the ASC and the leader of the working group (other reports could be scheduled as needed) (rest of first year)
6. A planned transition from working group to communities of practice. (by end of first year)

1. Transition from CAPIT to the Quality Improvement Implementation Working Group

Once the Implementation Group has been identified and established, the CAPIT team will meet with them to provide a smooth transition of the work. CAPIT members are familiar with the data collected from the interviews, focus groups, surveys and workshop as well as the recommendations and rationale. The meeting will provide the knowledge transfer necessary for continuity.

2. Working group develops a draft implementation plan: The working group would meet for a few days to develop a plan for implementing the changes endorsed by the AMT.

3. Working gives stakeholders an opportunity to comment: Using the safeguarding model, the working group would give stakeholders an opportunity to comment on the plan. The group will finalize the plan based on those comments

4. The PLG approves the plan: The PLG approves the final plan from the working group.

5. The working group implements the plan: The working group will help implement but the changes will require buy-in and support from all those involved in the cooperative agreements process. Communication and managerial support will be key at this stage

6. Transition from Quality Improvement Implementation Working Group to communities of practice

As recommendations are implemented, the Implementation group will need to fully transition the new procedures or processes to the Agreements Services Team and other Agency employee affected by such changes. This would be greatly enhanced by encouraging an APHIS Community of Practice. Communities of practice as described in Communities of Practice: A New Tool for Government Managers provide the benefits of centralization while maintaining a geographically and programmatically dispersed work force. They are ultimately a way to better and more consistently share information, best practices and to learn from one another.

Working Group Composition

The working group leader should be given enough time to work full time until the plan is complete and then enough time after that to ensure that the project stays on track. Members should be given enough time for a planning meeting (few days) and then enough time to ensure that decisions are implemented. Members report to the Group Leader.

Core Working Group

Group Leader—will lead the group and serve as the Project Leader. Must possess project management skills; have the ability to analyze and assimilate information quickly; and be skilled in leading people and facilitating change. A working knowledge of administrative processes, including agreements and the finance, is not necessary, but may be helpful.

Agreements Specialist Liaison—a member of the Agreements Services Center should be a core member of the group to provide specific agreements insight and advice on tasks.

Program Liaisons—each major program must be represented on this group. Their role is two-fold. First, they must ensure the interests of their program are conveyed to the Implementation group and second, to assist in the transition of new processes and procedures in their program area

Adjunct Working Group Members

Adjunct Working Group Members are those employees that are brought on for specific tasks and only remain on the group until the completion of the task. For example, during the development of an enhanced training program, the newly hired training and communications specialist will be brought on to the group. In the same vein, an IT specialist will be needed to assist with electronic forms and Web page development.

We envision two levels of communities. More specifically, the Agreements communities of practice should include agency employees and stakeholders from the agreements area to solve common problems, share ideas, set standards, build tools and develop relationships with each other. We envision two levels of communities. The first is a larger, global community, which could include anyone working on APHIS agreements (for example, stakeholders, ADODR's ADO's, etc), but must include all APHIS Agreements and Grant specialists throughout the Agency. This community's coordinator and core group should initially be a combination of the Agreements Services Center, specialists in the regions, CEAH, CPHST and NWRC and the Quality Improvement Implementation Working Group. The Working Group will eventually transition the work entirely over to ASC. Through this community, Agency policy and guidance will be centralized at the ASC, but the process of analyzing changes and sharing knowledge will be a collaborative effort among all parties. The cornerstone of conveying a consistent message lies in a single, centralized unit that is part of a community of practice.

The second level would be an off-shoot of the first and would be coordinated by Regional Agreements and Grants Specialists. This group would include field personnel involved in Agreements and Grants. The community would be program specific and would be used to exchange and share information specific to the needs of that program.

Communities of Practice participation is generally voluntary as it creates an environment where members are more likely to seek and share knowledge, build trust and reciprocity with others; and apply the community's knowledge in practice. However, we recommend that APHIS employees who are involved in agreements be strongly encouraged to participate. Success of the Community will engender more participation.

In addition to the Annual Meeting recommended earlier, the Community should use an assortment of the following tools to facilitate the exchange of tacit and explicit knowledge: face-to-face conferences; teleconferences; projects, on-site visits; informal one-to-one interactions in person, email and by phone; websites and listservs (a communication tool that offers its members the opportunity to post suggestions, comments or questions of large number of people at the same time that share a common interest).

Project Leader

Ulysses Lane, Associate Director, Eastern Region, Veterinary Services

Core Team

Stephen Kidd, Budget Analyst, Policy and Program Development

Kim Ogle, Program Analyst, Policy and Program Development

Cheri Oswald, Program Analyst, Policy and Program Development

Mike Panchura,* Program Analyst, Policy and Program Development

Ken Waters, Program Analyst, Policy and Program Development

Also, Mattie Bocchi provided administrative support, Julie Marquis, PPD, provided support on the survey work, Kathy Schrack, PPD, conducted and documented the Western Region focus group Interviews and Mary Thornhill conducted and documented the Payments staff focus group interview

Steering Committee**Laura Andrews, The Berryman Institute**

Stacie Cain, Plant Protection and Quarantine

Margaret Crabtree, Plant Protection and Quarantine

Irene Fernandez, Animal Care

Richard Gaskalla, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

Judy Garrison, Biotechnology Regulatory Services

Cindy Gordon, Plant Protection and Quarantine

Inez Hockaday, Veterinary Services

Aretha Johnson, Marketing and Regulatory Programs – Business Services

Lee Myers, Georgia Department of Agriculture (Dr. Myers involved Drs Halpern, Hartmann and Thain to represent from the National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials to represent the four USAHA regions in working on this project.

Michele Nicol, Wildlife Services

Linda Schepers, Plant Protection and Quarantine

Steve Shelor, Civil Rights Enforcement and Compliance

Mary VanDenk, Marketing and Regulatory Programs – Business Services

Introduction

This appendix includes summaries of the combined answers cooperators and employees gave to the open-ended questions in the surveys and focus group interviews. This appendix is divided into three sections. The summary of answers to the questions that we asked in both data collection methods are listed first:

- What are some alternatives to cooperative agreements?
- What about the APHIS cooperative agreements process works well?
- What about the APHIS cooperative agreements process needs improvement?

The summary of answers to the questions we asked only in the surveys are listed next:

- What could APHIS do to improve the process?
- What could cooperators do to improve the process?

Finally, the summary of answers to the question that we asked only in the focus group interviews are listed:

- What would you change about the process if you could change something?

Synopsis of Alternatives

When asked the question, “what are some alternatives to the cooperative agreement process”, we learned the following from survey data and focus group sessions. Out of 98 responses to the question, the most common responses were:

Cooperative Agreements with Modifications (31 responses)

- The method is not the issue, how the method is carried out is the issue
- Merge all legal requirements into one form that the Cooperator can sign and keep on file for the year to be copied and returned on any coop agreement or any addendums to agreements, one legal form for each state/cooperator
- Pursue multiyear availability for cooperative funds
- Umbrella agreement with each state, model CAPS agreements
- Best vehicle and, in theory, can provide the easiest process to get money to the cooperator for mutually beneficial work
- Use calendar year in lieu of fiscal year
- Funding should be sent to the states directly from headquarters; unnecessary delay when funds are routed through regional office
- Agreements similar to fee basis agreements
- Use regional committees to review proposals prior to approval of cooperative agreements. The committee system weeds out the weak proposals
- Having money available in a NO YEAR END ACCOUNT for the funding of annual projects would avoid the timeliness problem and would be customer friendly
- Research US Forest Service authority for `Third Party Funding` and also their 2 year funding authority
- BSE agreements with slaughter plants are a potential model: biggest area of concern is/was can we use a bill (like the Farm Bill) for our authority or do we need a contract or agreement to make the payment from an appropriation law perspective? 3rd authority (contracts, agreements are the first two), OT (other transaction) authority and is widely used in other agencies (for example DOD). Concern is if it would stand up to the GAO.
- Hold the funds and then pay the costs when submitted to APHIS. APHIS is limited by their own policies and guidelines at this time to be able to put in place another means of disbursement of funds to cooperators that would still allow agency involvement.
- Check the models used by CSREES and TSWG; they seem to do a good job of funding work
- Pre-award letters
- Partially funded agreement
- Implement incentive: have a percentage of all available federal funds go to those cooperators who got their work and paperwork done in a timely manner as well as accomplishing what was in the agreements/grants.
- Improved payment process/system
 - Draw down accounts
 - Consolidated payment process
 - Automatic payments to cooperators
 - Implement the President’s e-Gov initiative outlined in a long-term plan under PL 106-107 and have all payments made electronically
 - Use PMS or ASAP, both are good ways of getting money to the cooperator only taking 3-5 business days instead of 30-60 days

- Using DPM, Smartlink Division of Payment Management with DHHS, you key reimbursement request on website and payment is received next day in Dept. checking account
- Once requirements of agreement have been fulfilled, write a check for reimbursement to the cooperator the following week

Contracts (18 responses)

- Because it can go over one year
- Preparing a contract generally takes longer, but for a five-year option it may be worth the upfront work requirement
- Requires competition and the concern is if our target is the states and/or tribes (in most cases), there is no guarantee they would win in a competitive process.
- Contracting rules don't generally allow for sole sourcing and this would mean that any contract with a state or university would have to be competed and would defeat the purpose of a cooperative relationship, it would take control away from the regions and put it in the hands of MRPBS
- Contracting rules would require notifications (if the contract amounts were large enough) to the public, which would cause huge delays - Note: this is one reason MRPBS makes the cutoff dates for contracts so early
- Don't need to be mutually beneficial.
- Contracting would work well for small amounts of money and specific short-term projects.
- Contracts work well, but people don't like to consider them mainly because they view the process as taking a lot of time and going through a lot of hoops. Also, most managers think in terms of not wanting competition. Though contracting is more work upfront, it's less work over the life of the project since they don't have to apply every year (multiyear projects are the norm)
- Simple contracts with states like the ones used with USDA-BLM for selected services

Grants (16 responses)

- Grants might be a possibility; however, we would lose some of the control and involvement in the process that we feel is valuable.
- No 10% cap overhead limit like under a cooperative agreement
- Definition of grant seems more appropriate for CAPS than cooperative agreement
- Grants specific to emergency programs
- Research current regulations and authorities and update APHIS interpretation in order to use grants more effectively
- No year end funds and CCC funding allows more flexibility via grants or coop agreements
- Direct grants based on demographics
- Direct grants with less paperwork and turn over animal disease programs and surveillance to the states and fund with broadly restricted resources instead of specifying how each dollar is spent
- Grant process similar to USFWS with a reimbursement process capable of electronic funds draw downs
- Block grants

Purchase Order/Invoice (11 responses)

- For lab tests, etc
- Sometimes it's not monetary, it's equipment and vehicle
- Federal funds would be better spent by keeping the funds `in-house` and have the Area Office submit purchase orders for supplies/contracts. This force the states to create

new programs and hire employees rather than use funds to pay salaries for existing employees that are not performing any extra duties. Would keep falsification of reports from happening.

- Have cooperators/states invoice for services and pay using a visa or purchase order. This would both save on time and administrative costs for small projects.
- Because of the small dollar amounts involved in our workshops, we have now gone to the procurement process to pay the universities rather than a grant. There's less paperwork involved.
- Allow them to complete 1164s for expenses
- Use a purchased service processed like DHHS-FDA that pays the state for specific types of inspections.

Interagency Agreements (6 responses)

- Piggy back on other agencies that have set up agreements or contracts with cooperators and APHIS would provide the funds to the cooperator through an interagency agreement, very quick, but hard to account for spending. Especially advantageous for small amounts of money where the effort is not worth the cumbersome process.
- Solicit cooperators with other federal agreements...to use interagency agreements
- Interagency agreements work well for other government entities
- Make use of the Stafford act for FEMA reimbursement, during emergencies

Other suggested alternatives included:

APHIS does the work themselves (4 responses)

- Hire more employees and construct and new labs to handle work that is currently being done through Cooperative Agreements
- Hire LA's (temporaries)
- Why not utilize the resource within the federal system and remove the inefficiency of 3rd party work and administrative fees.
- Review number of agreement specialists to be sure we have enough people to help the ADODR; they could help manage technical and financial part.

Legislation Changes (4 responses)

- Pass money through the line item, but require it to be used to fulfill very specific cooperative goals and objectives with very clear performance measures
- Appropriations language from Congress, where money is earmarked
- Lump sum amounts to each state specific for funding events that crop-up unexpectedly

Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) (3 responses)

- MOUs with states
- Develop standing MOU's where we agree to exchange money for "X" whenever we need it. Ex. Farm Service Agency

Personal Service Contracts (3 responses)

- Some agreements are with universities to provide someone working on their PhD for our research benefit. This situation does not fit appropriately under Cooperative Agreement guidance and contracting direct with the individuals and not with the university may be an option.
- Good fit for a thesis since it is a multi-year project needing multi-year funding

Research Support Agreement (2 responses)

- Model ARS

Synopsis of Comments for What Works Well

Miscellaneous (107 responses)

- Communication between States and Cooperators (38 responses)
- APHIS help and guidance (16 responses)
- Getting money to States (9 responses)
- Electronic forms, unspecified (4 responses)
- Bypasses contracting or other vehicles (3 responses)
- Unhappy, unimpressed with system, almost nothing works (3 responses)

Planning and Budgeting (25 responses)

- Flexibility in use of funds when used by state (6 responses)
- An efficient way to accomplish program goals by using State resources (5 responses)
- Allows States to perform critical programs which they can not pay for (5 responses)
- A way to get money to States to perform tasks (4 responses)

Payments (19 responses)

- Minneapolis and payment speed (12 responses)
- Agreement specialists or experienced person checks SF-270 (1 response)
- Automatic payment plan (1 response)

Monitoring and Reporting (11 responses)

- APHIS providing assistance (3 responses)
- Ease of using electronic forms (2 responses)
- Routine processes make system work better (2 responses)

Training and Guidance (10 responses)

- When proper training is given to people involved (position related) (5 responses)
- Training books and manuals (3 responses)
- Application (62 responses)
- Streamlined paperwork or electronic forms (22 responses)
- When clear guidelines are provided and followed (6 responses)
- When trained people work on applications (6 responses)
- Checklists and user guides assist everyone in process doing things correctly (3 responses)
- Interaction between States and APHIS (2 responses)

Synopsis of Comments for What Needs Improvement

Planning and Budgeting

There were 71 comments concerning Planning & Budget--25 from the APHIS survey, 16 from the Cooperator survey and 30 from the Focus Groups. Suggested needed improvements fell into the following categories:

- Timing of funds being made available for agreements due to Continuing Resolutions (33 comments)
 - Windows of opportunities for work is lost
 - Never sure if money will be made available or not
 - Delay reduces the time we have to carry out the program
- Use of multi-year agreements, multi-year funds and no-year funds (20 comments)
 - Would solve part of the problems brought on by Continuing Resolutions.
- Getting the Federal timeline aligned with the States (calendar year vs. fiscal year) (7 comments)
 - Would help alleviate problems, including end-of-year rush to get agreements in place.
- Additional comments addressed the need for better planning (11 comments)

Training and Guidance

Eighty comments were recorded and addressed the issue of Training & Guidance—35 from the APHIS survey, 2 from the Cooperator survey and 34 from the Focus Groups. Four areas emerged from these comments:

- Training for the Cooperators (30 comments)
- Training for APHIS employees (27 comments)
- Need for better written guidance (12 comments)
- Training specifically for ADODR's (11 comments)

All comments in these four categories stressed understanding responsibilities, completion of forms, subtle nuances of the process, consistency in training and guidance, and contacting training out with a company such as Management Concepts.

Application

Eighty-nine respondents had comments about the application process, which included the forms and paper work, the work plans, financial plans, negotiations and the overall standardization of the process.

Twenty-five comments came from the APHIS survey, 39 comments from the Cooperator survey and 36 comments from the Focus Groups. The following areas were commented on:

- Required forms and paperwork, including work and financial plans (26 comments)
 - too many forms, too many signatures, overall too complex
- Language and format needs to be standardized (18 comments)
- Application process takes too long (16 comments)
- Overall process needs to be streamlined to ensure consistency (14 comments)
- Need for electronic solutions (12 comments)
- Better check of accuracy with regards to completion of all forms (3 comments)

Announcement of Opportunity/Availability

Nine respondents addressed the issue of announcements of opportunities and the availability of Federal assistances. Three comments were from the APHIS survey, five from the Cooperator survey and one from the Focus Groups. One area emerged under this topic:

- Timing of the announcement of when funds are available (9 comments)
 - not enough time from when the announcement is made to when paperwork is due.

- One comment specifically addressed that enough time is not given by APHIS to notify Native American tribes about the availability of Federal assistance from APHIS.

Monitoring and Reporting

Thirty-six surveyed addressed the matter of monitoring and reporting. There were 17 comments from the APHIS Survey, 1 comment from the Cooperator survey and 18 comments from the Focus Group. The comments were:

- Cooperator reporting (18 comments)
 - Respondents wrote that Cooperators should be held more accountable for reporting on the use of the Federal funds they receive.
- Need for ADODR's to be more involved and accountable for the agreements they were responsible for (5 comments)
- Standardize the reporting process (5 comments)
- Completion of the accomplishment reports (4 comments)
- Simplify the reporting process (3 comments)
- Give more authority to APHIS (1 comment)

Payments

Eleven comments were collected regarding the need to improve the payment process. All comments were from APHIS employees – 6 from the survey and 5 from the Focus Groups. There were no specific comments from the Cooperators. The comments were split between the following:

- Need for the paperwork to be submitted without errors and in a timely fashion (7 comments)
- Need for information and guidance to be consistent (4 comments)

Closeout

Six comments on the closeout process were submitted by APHIS employees – two from the survey and four from Focus Group.

- Overall need to improve the close-out process (6 comments)
 - Improve process of deobligating of funds
 - End of year agreement revisions

Miscellaneous

Eighty-three comments were received that did not fit into the categories listed above. Thirty-one comments came from the APHIS survey, 16 from the Cooperator survey and 36 from the Focus Groups. Listed below are the categories of comments:

- Communication (18 comments)
 - Timely
 - Consistent
 - Organized
- Staffing and Grade Disparity (16 comments)
 - APHIS specialists graded lower than other agencies
 - Hard to fill positions
 - Increase in agreements, but not enough employees to handle
- Staff Coordination and Working Relationships (9 comments)
- Use of correct instrument (9 comments)
 - Concern over use of agreements when contract is correct tool
- Overall APHIS management of process needs improvement (8 comments)
- Use of one agreement to cover all APHIS programs for a given Cooperators (8 comments)
- Other issues were confidentiality agreements, too much overhead for the level of benefit, APHIS authority needs to be extended and more flexible, State review process, more OGC involvement, clarify Congressional intent and earmark clarification (15 comments total)

Synopsis of Comments for What APHIS Can Do Better

Miscellaneous (50 responses)

- More and better communication between APHIS and cooperators (8 responses)
- Overall consistency, standardization, and streamlining (7 responses)
- Central or single point of contact. Reduce number of people in communication chain (6 responses)
- More APHIS staff to manage Cooperative Agreements (4 responses)
- Fewer agreements, more grants (2 responses)

Application (48 responses)

- E-solutions (9 responses)
- Paperwork reduction/simplification (7 responses)
- Pre and post application notifications, availability and results (4 responses)
- Limit changes and edits during negotiations (3 responses)
- Ample timing of notice and award to allow work to be completed/consistent deadlines (3 responses)

Training and Guidance (38 responses)

- Training of cooperators (23 responses)
- Training of APHIS employees (18 responses)
- Concise and consistent instructions (4 responses)
- Process change highlights and calendar every year (3 responses)
- Samples of properly completed forms (1 response)

Planning and Budgeting (37 responses)

- Duration and flexibility of funding (11 responses)
- Timing of release of funds (7 responses)
- Improved planning APHIS (5 responses) State (1 response)
- Standardization over all (2 responses)

Monitoring and Reporting (20 responses)

- Streamline and/or combine paperwork (10 responses)
- Greater accountability of cooperators (2 responses) of APHIS personnel (1 response)
- Greater extensions (3 responses)
- Reduce unanticipated requests for information (1 response)
- Payments (3 responses)
- Regular billing cycles
- Deadlines for document signing
- Do not split months. Begin and end on first and last day of month

Announcement of Opportunity/Availability (10 responses)

- Timing of announcements allowing for cooperators to apply and complete work (5 responses)
- Communicate types of projects APHIS needs (1 response)
- E-solutions for announcements (1 response)
- Ensure level playing field (1 response)

Synopsis of Comments for What Cooperators Can Do Better

Monitoring and Reporting (61 responses)

- Timely submission of required reports/documents (26 responses)
- Accountability and proper reporting (12 responses)
- Meet deadlines (7 responses)
- Follow the reporting requirements (7 responses)
- Communicate with AHPIS on problems or changes (3 responses)

Application (35 responses)

- Prepare more effective, comprehensive documents that meet APHIS needs (11 responses)
- Be cognizant of, and adhere to due dates and deadlines (11 responses)
- Be more diligent in cost estimates and financial plan formulation (6 responses)
- Ask questions, communicate (2 responses)

Training and Guidance (22 responses)

- Be better informed of processes, requirements etc. (9 responses)
- Attend training (9 responses)
- Have better understanding of cooperative agreements and the Federal budget process etc. (3 responses)

Miscellaneous (16 responses)

- Collaborate with APHIS (5 responses)
- More and better communication between APHIS and cooperators (4 responses)
- Dedicate sufficient resources (3 responses)
- Single point of contact (3 Responses)

Payments (3 responses)

- Emphasis on detail for SF-270 (2 responses)
- Timely invoice submission (1 response)

Synopsis of Changes

When asked the question, “what would you change in the cooperative agreement process, if you could,” we learned the following from focus group sessions with APHIS program managers and administrative specialists. There were 108 responses to the question and the most common responses were:

APHIS Training and Guidance (33)

- Need more training and guidance for APHIS employees and our cooperators
- APHIS needs to be better engaged and understanding of process and requirements
- General guidelines from disease programs on what activity should be under cooperative agreements
- Make training for cooperators and APHIS employees involved in the process mandatory
- Need consistency throughout agency and across regions within same program
- Need better guidance from staff, but they need to involve ADODR up front.
- Need training with APHIS perspective and background yearly to ADODRs on roles and responsibilities with practical and useful applications, not geared to “big picture” and agreement specialists’ perspective
- Staff officers who manage programs need formal training, knowledge of process is learned on the job, not necessarily the correct information or correct way of doing the process
- Use agency training experts and create agreements training program
- Training should include all available instruments to include grants, purchase orders, and contracts
- Train the trainer method may help meet training needs
- Need to understand reasons for requirements so we can better explain to cooperators
- Best practices group recommends training of cooperators first
- APHIS programs need to share experiences and learn from each other
- Need to follow through with continuing education with cooperators, especially when people change jobs
- MCI training is good, but we need APHIS perspective and application
- Personal training course for cooperators is preferred to allow for specific questions and examples. Electronic training may not be paid attention to and we need to make sure right people come to training from the organizations that need it. Would help if APHIS could provide some travel funding or use cooperative agreements for funding travel.
- Create a checklist for what to do in different situations
- Suggested that Management Concepts get involved in CAPIT
- Templates online
- Current procedures for entering into many of our cooperative agreements do not seem appropriate for the type of work we do, especially with universities who we want to conduct research for us. These cooperators are not supplicants bidding for a government contract or looking for government aid. Rather they are entering into a mutual agreement to conduct collaborative research that is to the benefit of the government.
- Define what a manager of a cooperative agreement is and what level of responsibility and accountability lies at what level in the process
- Program manager initiating the cooperative agreements is not necessarily the person that oversee the execution of the work plan - primarily because the number of agreements that each of the program managers issue each year
- Clear, written policy on what authorities lie with the program manager v. the agreement manager because there is confusion when the program manager is ultimately

accountable for program, but does not have control over the agreement once it has been signed.

- Area offices need training in financial management, financial rules, and processes
- More attention to detail on payment request (ensure that it matches the SF-270)
- Consistent reporting requirements, including attention to the new programs – they are less clear

Current Process Complexity (24)

- Simplify, less paperwork, develop and use one consolidated all inclusive form that would show everything
- Implement electronic process, process via e-mail: paperless system for agreements
- Forms more user friendly
- Complete forms last in the process because when changes are made to the work plan, such as money, the forms have to all be re-done – the change process needs streamlining
- Learn from other agencies to see how APHIS can learn from their processes. Suggest HHS.
- Administratively the region would like the paperwork 2 months before the beginning of the next period and they expect proposals in July and proposal and funding approved then paperwork. Paperwork is then expected in October and then has to send them back and forth for last minute changes – this process needs re-negotiating.
- Assign alternate as well as normal ADODR which may improve the process or state position instead of name because alternates need letter of ADODR sent to MPLS and this creates extra paperwork and holds up payment. May be easier if someone from the program, other than the the ADODR, could sign the form. People designated as ADODR are not necessarily the people filling out the forms and can often be hard to reach, travel status, etc.
- Remove additional reporting requirements in addition to those mandated, cooperators said other Agencies required only a basic paragraph and not this level of detail
- Need consistency/standardization APHIS wide as to process such as who should complete 434
- No cost extensions
- Contract out employees for agreement processing
- Need to eliminate a step or some information that is requested... do we really need all the information we ask for? One program a 6-page outline of what's required... (that's by the book)...
- Implement e-Solutions - need an electronic digital system. Too much faxing going back and forth.
- Electronic versions much easier and quicker. (Animal ID one worked well) Can we make states get everything to us electronically and do we have IT capability to make this happen?)
- Process to request and get approval for changes is cumbersome.
- Need flexibility in reporting based upon program needs
- Need standard APHIS approaches; regions have two completely different philosophies
- Need standardized data across Agency programs
- Merger all legal requirements into one form that the Cooperator can sign and keep on file for the year to be copied and returned on any coop agreement or any addendums to agreements

- Explore super agreement format where specific program's agreements can be added as addendums
- Shorten the process
- Work plans are too complex; make a standard work plan where cooperator can select those items which they intend to accomplish for the award
- Complete all the work, don't accept that the state is the only entity that can perform a certain task and force the agency to think what are we're getting for our money

Funding (15)

- Requirements when we have **continuing resolutions** are a sore point with cooperators - 3 or 4 sets of paperwork and a full package for 12% of funding for period of continuing resolution and similar packages for each period (number of days) of continuing resolution. We don't have authority to give them any more than we are authorized.
- Year end distribution of remaining funds creates log jam of agreements at the regional offices
- If there is a delay in getting budget authority there is a delay in getting the cooperative agreement process started, creating delays in awarding the cooperative agreements
- Change cooperative agreements to calendar year avoid getting caught in continuing resolution funding problem. This does not work with universities who have different fiscal years.
- Stop doing the funding wrong! APHIS (Administrator) can change the locked "12-month period" funding to what the actual project funding needs are for the appropriate term needed. According to Management Concepts Training Instructor, Comptroller General Decisions, etc., APHIS is in violation by not funding projects correctly for the term that is needed, up to five years by limiting the project funding to one year.
- Flexibility with CA funds; option to be able to provide extensions or making the funds no-year funds - no-year funds would benefit projects that are for more than one year, appropriated funding should be for the length of the project; i.e., up to five years.
- A major problem was all the new money on short notice.
- The main problem with the current process is obtaining funding from Congress in a timely manner. While we currently use pre-award letters, these are not obligating documents and have no funding behind them. To Congress, "Get your job done on time"
- Changing the start and end dates of the agreements to coincide with the states' fiscal year would help, but it could also raise other funding problems particularly with deobligating funds which are annual money. Annual funds which are deobligated in a year other than the year they are appropriated are no longer available for use.
- Address the funding terms of the agreement when we receive the funding. APHIS should address and change how the cooperative funding is being done from year to year.
- Flexibility to obtain no-cost extensions of agreements. We most often enter into agreements with cooperating universities for researchers or students to conduct research related to our mission. Generally the study is expected to last longer than one year, and it is difficult to predict exactly how much will be spent within each 12-month period (e.g., hiring takes longer than expected, universities are on different fiscal years, and they are subject to their own internal spending guidelines). Even if the research is completed within the specified period, expenses related to preparing reports and completing dissertations may be incurred past that point. Federal regulations allow for this ("bona fide needs rule"), but APHIS does not.
- How to deal with earmarks. The number and amounts of money continue to increase. Are they just "give aways" where programs have no control?
- Two year money instead of one-year money... would make it much easier for everyone

- Stop attempts to move money across Object Classes by the Cooperator
- Programs are not getting unused money back so that it can be reallocated

Internal APHIS Coordination (9)

- Create a Close-out list from Minneapolis... flag list
- Budget people need to be taking a more active role to avoid carry over money from one-year to next (not always one-year money)
- End of year money went to new cooperators who did not have vendor numbers and MRP-BS would not input without banking numbers. We did not have anything official to request this info. It was a problem to go back to the cooperator at the last minute for this information. Issue is setting up vendor code in FFIS. Risk was getting obligation made in a timely fashion – no official form. Issue is whether MPLS should contact vendor directly or if they should ask region or area to do.
- Stop upper management from making deals with people then being forced into agreements that agreement service center knows isn't right
- Payment process—revisit process to have as many automatic payment schedule without 270 submitted – this requires periodic reporting by ADODR
- Program managers not getting reports and this inhibits decision making regarding funding requirements, program business decisions (are program objectives being met/how well it is doing), or data to base additional funding for cooperator
- When program managers do not receive reports they are unsure of true status of program due to lack of data and it is difficult to ask, support or defend budget increase requests
- Some ADODRs are not asking for information from cooperators, or are not sending it to program managers because they are responsible for too many agreements. Example is New England ADODR: multiples states, each with multiple agreements

Cooperator and APHIS Internal Accountability (7)

- ADODR accountability. Need performance standards and consequences and understanding that they are accountable for the quality of the paperwork being submitted.
- Consider report card to ADO on ADODR for report timeliness, etc., including consequences
- Need penalties for failure to perform (we don't terminate for cause)... if they don't perform or perform to our expectations
- Getting caught using the wrong tool is 'no big deal'
- Need accountability on part of the cooperator; reasonable requirements and verification are needed

Better Planning (6)

- Improve planning process by having states apply with a work plan before \$ figure assigned would help. Submit work plans in advance. Right now we should be receiving all work plans for 2005. (At same time don't know how well 2004 funds are being used.)Once state has spent all the money, should be able to start new agreement period. Some agreements may have specific things that are not on a year long basis, like supporting hunting season work.
- Make all agreements calendar year. Having a mixture of those and fiscal year ones are a problem.
- Move to a 24 month agreement so have time to get something done. Extending agreement lifespan would help.
- Animal ID agreements an example of a problem. We are out of picture and don't collaborate and duplicate work. Some of it is basic manager's interaction at local level.

- Get people at local level who are technical experts to get together to define objectives would help to define. (General comment from region – state says people may not be in those roles) Some times states know money is coming before AVICs are told money should be given.

Level of Legal Guidance (6)

- Lawyers in APHIS, not OGC, that we can go to for advice and that know agreements law
- Or deal with OGC lawyers that understand agreements – lawyers we deal with have a lack of knowledge
- One of the problems in when Center gets circumvented... center is technically the liaison with OGC... Since Center writes policy, they need all opinions or responses from OGC to ensure interpretation is for agency and Center knows... field talks directly to OGC... take improper actions based on their understanding of what OGC says... doesn't always agree with what Center says.... Need to go through appropriate channels.... Sometimes program people with go directly to OGC... cannot leave the Center out of the loop when it comes to an agreement or perceived agreement
- An on site contract officer would reduce many problems experienced
- Proper guidance if program manager chose to use contract rather than cooperative agreement
- Congress can tell us we can ignore the Act... maybe we need to look closer and get authorities that would allow us to use agreements where we usually don't... agency needs to set a course

Resources (3)

- Review number of agreement specialists to be sure we have enough people to help the ADODR manage the technical and financial components of agreements
- Have more than one ADODR assigned to an agreement to help alleviate workload burden because ADODRs cannot possibly monitor all of them, especially those ADODRs from headquarters to oversee field agreements
- More of a performance and workload issue than an training issue – ADODRs often have too much else to worry about – it a manpower issue – need more help to monitor the growing number of agreements

Regulations (3)

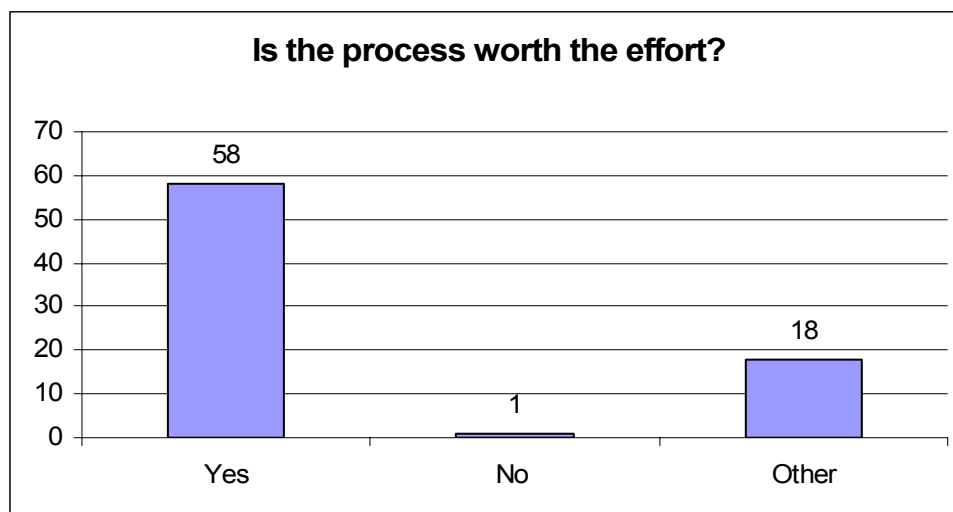
- Changes to the process will be a problem because most of the procedural steps are in CFR and so they cannot be or it will be difficult to change
- OMB cost sharing requirement is a problem – 50/50
- State clearinghouse for intergovernmental review requires states to submit packages internally before we sign the agreement - process takes 30 days for continuing and 60 days for new. This regulation is time consuming; some states have waiver, not all.

Communication (2)

- Better and more communication with cooperators. They need to understand our process better and we need to understand theirs.
- Increased communication across all levels; need to keep everyone in the loop. Stop thinking of each other as "Oh, that's that group's responsibility over there." Or, the old "Them vs. Us" mentality. Missing communication links need to be identified and bridges built to establish communications between all APHIS groups; i.e., as is being done in this focus group but should be included the programs and administrative types together in one meeting.

This appendix contains the results from two questions from the surveys:

- Is the process worth the effort? The results are shown in the table below and the comments from those who answered “other” are listed beneath the table.
- Please rate the following components of the APHIS cooperative agreements process:
The results are summarized on the following three pages:
 - First, there is a table showing the average ratings (using the scale of 1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=very good and 5=excellent) by cooperators of the PPQ, VS, WS and Other APHIS processes.
 - Second is a chart showing overall how cooperators rated each component of the process. It shows the percentage of cooperators who rated each component as 1) poor or fair, 2) good, or 3) Very good or excellent
 - Third is a table showing the average ratings by APHIS employees of the PPQ, VS, WS and Other APHIS processes.
 - Fourth is a chart showing overall how APHIS employees rated each component of the process. It shows the percentage of cooperators who rated each component as 1) poor or fair, 2) good, or 3) Very good or excellent
 - Fifth and last is a chart showing overall how APHIS employees and cooperators *combined* rated each component of the process. It shows the percentage of cooperators who rated each component as 1) poor or fair, 2) good, or 3) Very good or excellent



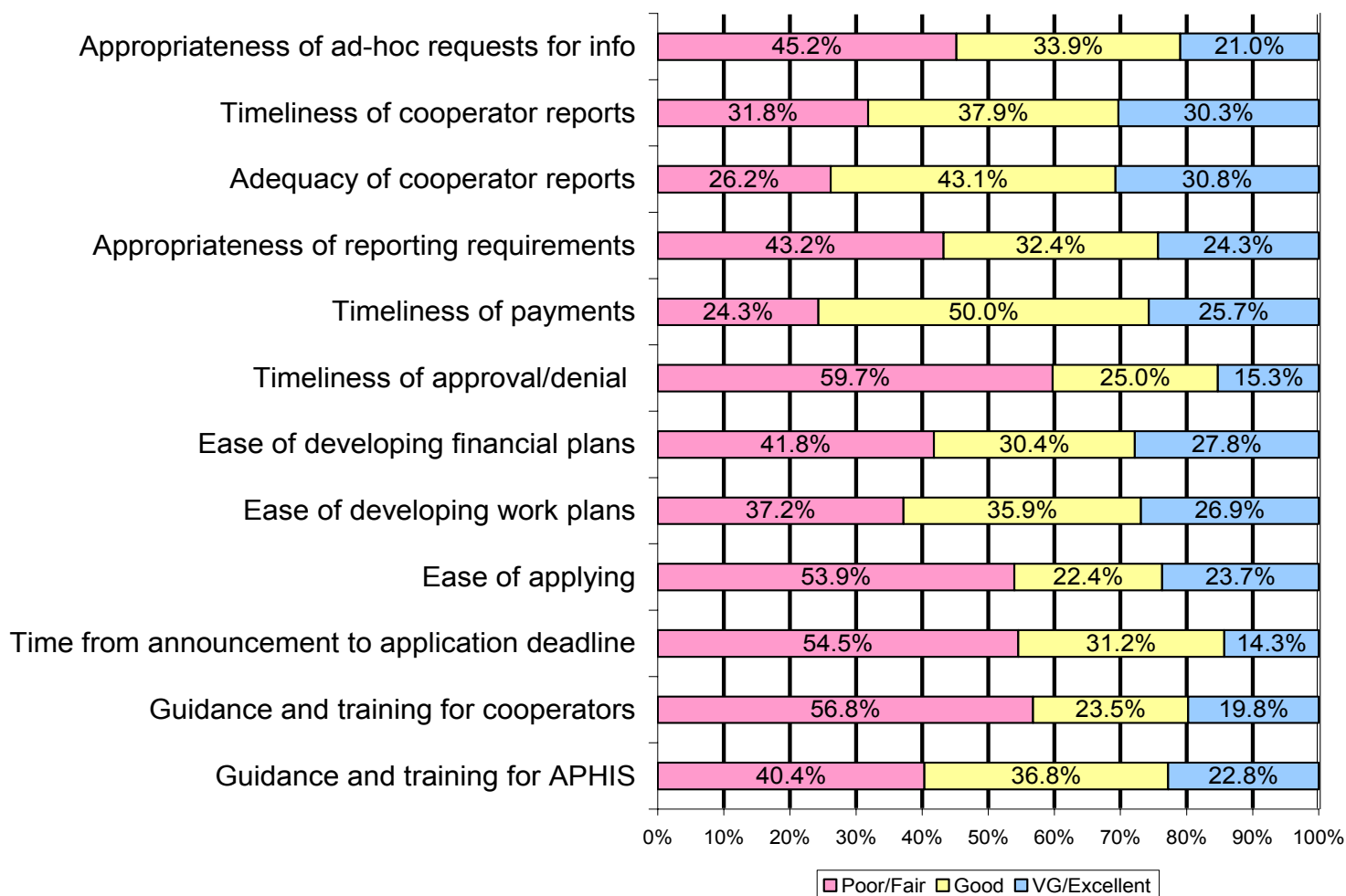
Main comments when answering "other":

- When the awards are 'small' it is not worth the effort
- Several gave thresholds:
 - two at \$5,000
 - two at \$10,000
 - one at \$20,000
 - one at \$100,00
 - one at \$150,000

**Overall Cooperator Ratings of the Process
Average Scores (Scale of 1 to 5)**

# surveys/number who rated process=	PPQ 53/42	VS 45/32	WS 12/7	Other 3/2	TOTAL 113/83
Guidance and training for APHIS	2.89	2.62	3.00	2.00	2.74
Guidance and training for cooperators	2.60	2.16	3.17	2.00	2.46
Time from announcement to application deadline	2.51	2.03	4.50	2.50	2.43
Ease of applying	2.35	2.59	3.80	2.00	2.53
Ease of developing work plans	2.86	2.80	4.75	2.50	2.92
Ease of developing financial plans	2.81	2.77	4.40	2.50	2.89
Timeliness of approval/denial	2.16	2.07	3.75	2.50	2.22
Timeliness of payments	3.22	2.82	3.25	2.00	3.03
Appropriateness of reporting requirements	2.87	2.43	3.60	3.00	2.76
Adequacy of cooperator reports	3.29	2.73	3.67	3.00	3.08
Timeliness of cooperator reports	3.19	2.65	3.67	3.00	3.00
Appropriateness of ad-hoc requests for info	2.74	2.27	4.25	3.00	2.65

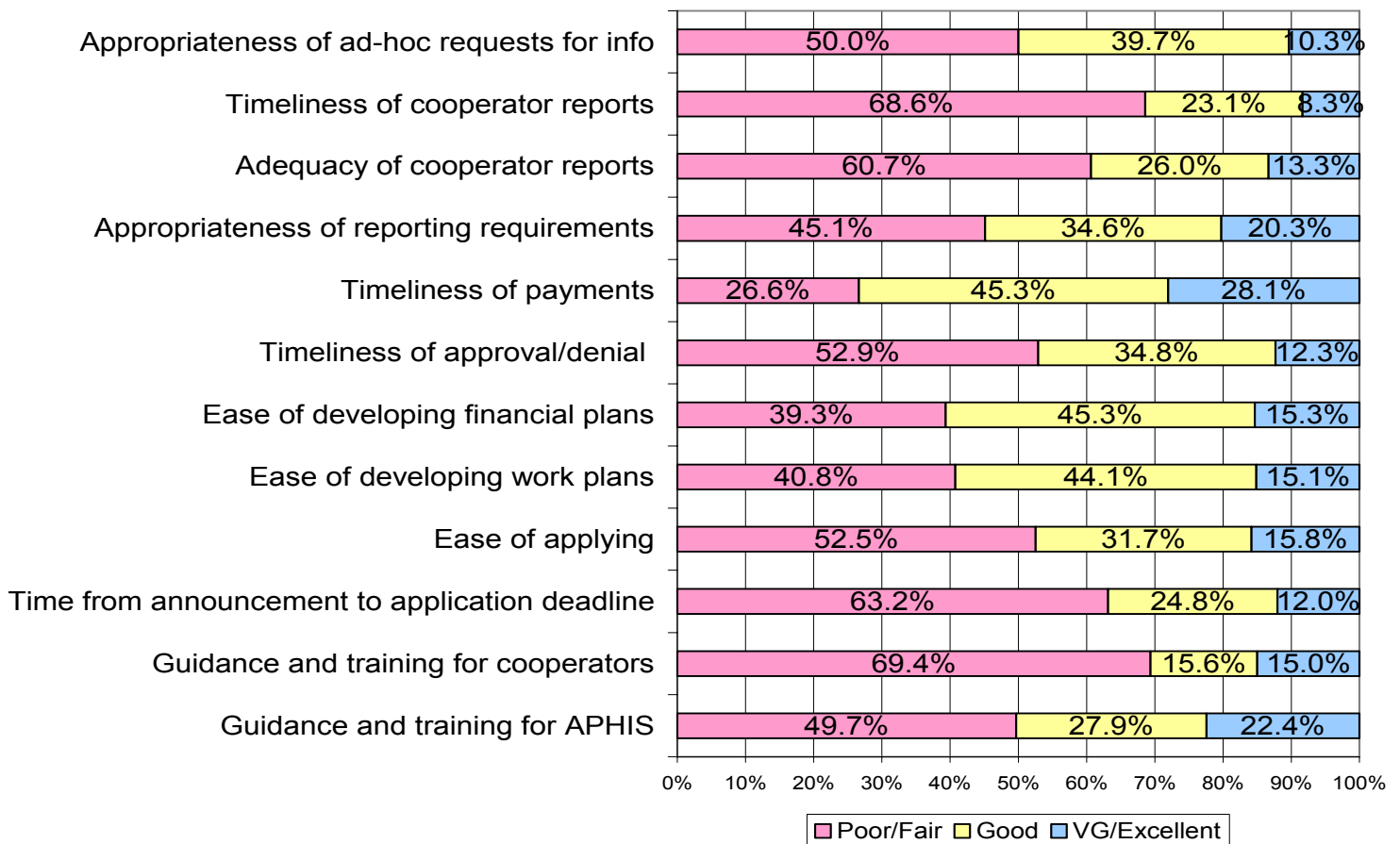
Legend: Numbers highlighted in **red** = score below 2.5. Numbers in **bold** = score of 3 or above



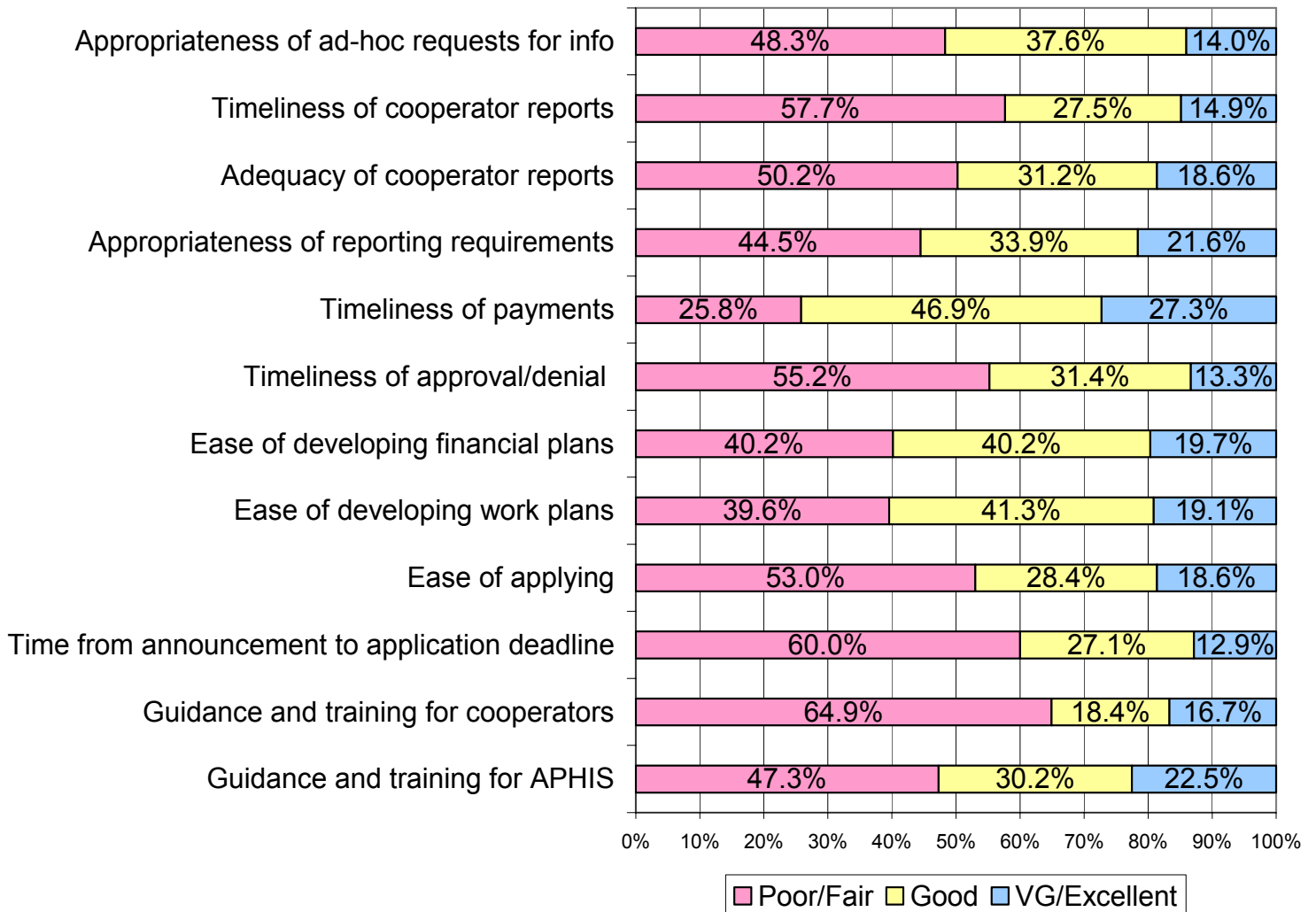
**Overall APHIS Ratings of the Process
Average Scores (Scale of 1 to 5)**

	PPQ	VS	WS	Other	TOTAL
number who rated process=	62	62	27	18	169
Guidance and training for APHIS	2.95	2.08	2.63	3.00	2.59
Guidance and training for cooperators	2.50	1.65	1.65	2.17	2.04
Time from announcement to application deadline	2.57	1.66	2.64	2.58	2.18
Ease of applying	2.58	2.31	2.42	2.92	2.48
Ease of developing work plans	2.77	2.41	3.00	2.69	2.66
Ease of developing financial plans	2.74	2.54	2.92	3.08	2.72
Timeliness of approval/denial	2.49	2.23	2.56	2.55	2.40
Timeliness of payments	3.14	3.00	2.73	3.25	3.04
Appropriateness of reporting requirements	2.72	2.40	2.63	3.14	2.63
Adequacy of cooperator reports	2.51	1.64	2.81	2.58	2.22
Timeliness of cooperator reports	2.15	1.43	2.70	2.33	1.98
Appropriateness of ad-hoc requests for info	2.64	1.98	2.65	3.00	2.42

Legend: Numbers highlighted in **red** = score below 2.5. Numbers in **bold** = score of 3 or above



Overall Ratings



Introduction and Process

As part of the overall Cooperative Agreement Process Improvement project, a stakeholder workshop was held to collect further data and information about APHIS agreements process and to discuss the current process in APHIS identifying what works well, what needs improvement, and to develop specific recommendations on how to implement improvements. The project steering committee invited representatives from APHIS and their Cooperators who worked in both the program area and the business/administrative area. A total of 54 participants attended the 2-day workshop, 13 cooperators and 41 APHIS employees.

The meeting was divided into two parts – information sharing and issue development. Meeting participants were provided information from a number of sources. Mr. William Kenney, from Rural Development Administration, presented an overview of the Federal Government e-Grants Initiative and provided information on the Department's participation and current status. A panel presentation, "Federal Assistance or Procurement?" was made by Anita Ridley, Manager of the Agreements Services Center and Bob Crowther, APHIS Contracting Specialist. This facilitated discussion gave meeting participants an overview of the differences between Cooperative Agreements and Contracts and the situations that would dictate each tool's use. In addition, Steve Shelor, Assistant Director of APHIS' Civil Rights Enforcement and Compliance staff made a presentation on his staffs' findings during a compliance review of the Cooperative Agreements and Grants process. His presentations stressed the need to make APHIS federal assistance opportunities a more competitive process where possible, and ensure opportunities are advertised to the largest possible audience.

Finally, a summary of all data collected from the Cooperator survey, APHIS survey, focus groups, and interviews was presented to the meeting participants.

The remainder of the meeting was spent identifying alternatives to the Cooperative Agreement process, identifying major areas for improvements, and developing strategies and recommendations for each improvement.

Exercise – What are the Alternatives to the Cooperative Agreements Process?

In this exercise, meeting participants were asked to talk briefly with other participants at their table and report out on what they saw as alternatives to the Cooperative Agreement process in getting outside organizations and entities Federal Assistance. The intent of the exercise was to expand the list of Federal assistance alternatives beyond contracts and grants. However, the report out from the tables focused on areas needing improvements to the system (this was a strong indicator that both APHIS employees and cooperators were more interested in improving what already existed, rather than developing alternatives).

The results of this exercise were:

- Improve process/reduce paperwork
- Improve consistency
- Enhance communication
- Provide more training
- Allow for carryover funding and multi-year funding
- Adjust budget cycle to coincide with States
- Integrate Cooperative Agreements team with Contracting team
- Create umbrella agreements

- Extend agreement period beyond one year

Exercise – Areas for Improvement – What’s Most Important

Prior to the meeting, the CAPITeam reviewed the data collected from the surveys and focus groups and identified the following eight categories of information:

- Planning and Budgeting
- Training and Guidance
- Announcement
- Application and Award
- Monitoring and Reporting
- Payments
- Closeout
- Miscellaneous

Because of the size of the meeting and the limited time, it was determined that these categories should be ranked by the participants as to what was most important to them. The top four would be developed further for improvement strategies. Each table was asked to rank the categories in order of importance and then table scores were combined for a final ranking. The top four categories were, in order of importance:

- Training and Guidance
- Planning and Budgeting
- Application and Award
- Monitoring and Reporting

Top Ranked Categories for Improvement

Workshop participants were asked to self select one of the top four areas identified for improvement to develop additional details in a breakout group. (Note: After final report out, meeting participants were asked how they wanted to handle the remaining four groups—Announcements, Payments, Closeout & Miscellaneous. The consensus was that all categories were covered in the various recommendations, as there was much overlap).

Each breakout group was asked to:

1. Determine what worked well in their respective area and needed to stay
2. Identify areas for improvement
3. Brainstorm strategies to address these improvement areas
4. Develop recommendations on implementing these strategies

1. Training and Guidance

What works well and needs to stay

- One-on-one communication
- MCI Training with APHIS training attached
- APHIS training – program specific

Areas & Strategies for Improvement

This group identified two over-arching problems within the Training and Guidance area. Based on the strategies they identified to deal with the problems, four recommendations were developed that would address all.

Problem Statement: Both APHIS employees and cooperators could carry out their responsibilities more effectively and efficiently with more expanded training opportunities and materials

Strategies

1. Develop and deliver regularly scheduled training for both
2. Develop multi-level training for APHIS employees and cooperators that includes basic agreement training for new employees and cooperators through refresher courses for seasoned employees and cooperators
3. Communicate and educate APHIS employees and cooperators on the various training opportunities
 - a. In-house (APHIS)
 - b. Management Concepts Inc.
 - c. USDA Grad School
 - d. National Association of Grants Managers

Problem Statement: Sharing of information and guidance among the community is not consistent or sufficient and better communication is needed.

Strategies

1. Hold annual meeting (APHIS and cooperators) for information sharing
2. Develop/maintain improved web page(s) to include
 - a. Links to manuals
 - b. Contact information (name, phone, program served, email, backup)
 - c. Basic guidance
 - d. FAQs
 - e. Forms
 - f. Checklist
3. Develop Quick Reference Guides – hard copy and web
4. Provide regular updates on changes and developments in policy and manual as they occur
5. Provide annual summary letter that includes (as attachments)
 - a. Year's change notices
 - b. Status quo details
 - c. Availability of information and guidance sources
 - d. Guidance materials and training opportunities

Training & Guidance Recommendations

1. Establish new position(s) on ASC staff dedicated to training and communication. Position will:
 - Coordinate training
 - Create training materials

- Update web page
 - Develop guidance materials
 - Ensure consistent and regular communication with APHIS and cooperators
2. Establish and develop a Train-the-Trainer Program
 - Establish criteria for position
 - Develop qualifications (e.g., MCI certification, shadow detail to ASC)
 - Incumbent can provide more timely training to new APHIS and cooperators and support other APHIS training courses
 3. Mandatory training for new APHIS employees working with agreements, including ADODR's
 - Develop specified time period
 - Develop alternatives for meeting requirement (MCI, State Directors meeting, one-on-one, outside contractor) based on position and level of agreement activity
 4. Make new cooperator training available in multiple formats and encourage participation

2. Planning and Budget

What works well and needs to stay

The workgroup group identified five areas in the planning and budget phase that, if changed, would jeopardize the cooperative agreement approach to achieving program objectives.

- Receiving Federal funds: From a planning perspective cooperators believe that there is significant flexibility in achieving their program objectives by receiving Federal funding. Without Federal assistance, the distribution of the cooperator's scarce fiscal resources may not provide enough funding to perform various program functions.
- Wildlife Services: The research planning process within Wildlife Services works well. The requirements of research are far different than those found in other divisions of APHIS. The research requires several years of effort by the cooperator to achieve a final goal. Requiring this area to conform to cooperative agreements found in other APHIS divisions diminish Wildlife Services to achieve their objectives.
- Fund disbursements: Region's having the decision making authority related to dispersing program cooperative agreement funds achieved the greatest impact.
- Agreement cycle: PPQ's switch of the cooperative agreement cycle from the fiscal year to the calendar year has addressed many problems caused by appropriation delays that occur during continuing resolutions.
- Web based forms and templates: PPQ currently uses several web based form templates. These templates are accessible to cooperators for use. Both the cooperators and PPQ staff believe that these templates are a valuable resource and should be considered a model for the other divisions of APHIS.

Areas and Strategies for Improvement

The workgroup identified four areas within planning and budgeting that were in need of improvement.

Duration of agreements: The 12-month duration is limiting the potential to achieve programmatic objectives and goals efficiently and effectively. Many activities that cooperators undertake are recurring from year to year. The group felt that there is an opportunity to streamline the process and achieve greater returns by creating multi-year agreements. It was agreed that using the model of base year service contracts that have multiple year extension options would provide APHIS and cooperators with a better planning horizon. The downstream effect of multi-year agreements would be a shift from the administrative burden associated with agreement formulation and approval process (especially with routine, annual activities) to a focus on the programmatic achievement of the agreement objectives. The agreements could be modified in the base and option periods to reflect any changes in program needs by either the cooperator or APHIS.

Consistency of APHIS guidelines: The workgroup agreed that there must be consistency in agreement guidelines as they are applied to cooperator budgeting. The cooperators in this workgroup stated that there needs to be flexibility by APHIS in allowing cooperators to alter the initial financial plan to reflect changes in needs and work required to achieve the agreement goals.

Planning timelines: A major obstacle identified in the current agreements process is the inconsistency of the timelines for cooperators to submit agreement packages. Cooperators are faced with complex planning decisions related to their resources. These resources are often assigned tasks related to multiple agreements. The workgroup felt that the PPQ CAPS model enables cooperators to produce effective work-plans that reflect the funding available through several agreements.

Strategic planning: The workgroup identified a need to enhance strategic planning on the part of APHIS. Incorporating strategic planning that includes both APHIS and the cooperators would be beneficial. This strategic planning would involve each functional discipline such as APHIS and cooperator program representatives, APHIS agreement specialists and APHIS contracting officers (similar to PPQ's CAPS 3-tier system). This approach to strategic planning would identify potential alternative solution opportunities which could enable cooperators to achieve the program objectives with greater effectiveness and efficiency. The potential opportunities suggested by the group included breaking out requirements within agreements that may be better suited by contracting, grants or other vehicles. Activities occurring in multiple States may present a contracting opportunity where APHIS could capture economies of scale not available to States individually. This would increase the efficiency in spending program funds. The group agreed that the most important aspect of the strategic planning is that decisions and outcomes need to be communicated outward to the regions, program support functions, and the Administration.

Planning and Budget Recommendations

1. Institute Strategic Planning into the Agreements Process. The primary focus on the strategic planning recommendation centered on approach to planning rather than 'how to' plan.
 - Involve all disciplines, including cooperators, program leadership, procurement specialists, agreements specialists and budget specialists
 - Use standard planning mechanisms and methodologies to achieve an agency-wide approach to cooperative agreements

- Planning process must begin early and take place at all organizational levels
2. Hold Annual APHIS agreements meeting.
 - Use as a strategic planning session
 3. Use PPQ CAPS model as the planning and budget standard
 - Will assist in achieving standardization within APHIS
 - Will allow internal benchmarking to take place, enabling the Agency to monitor the process and allow for the identification of potential areas in need of improvement.
 - Provides opportunities for strategic planning.
 4. Standardization/Consistency
 - Seek to standardize requirements and processes specific to APHIS divisions.
 - Standardize those processes that are agency wide, including form standardization, application requirements, and timelines. Cooperators need greater consistency in information and direction provided by APHIS. Electronic forms, templates, and samples for guidance greatly assist cooperators in providing timely and accurate submissions to APHIS.
 5. Extend agreement periods
 - Recurring agreements should be made to cover several years. One benefit to this would be the cooperator's ability to hire and retain quality staff
 - Extend the length of agreements on a case by case basis. As an example, the group felt that when there is an emergency that requires a cooperator to shift resources away from agreement requirements, that an affected agreement should be extended in order to allow the cooperator to complete the tasks required
 - APHIS should build a business case for identifying a specific percentage of agreements funding that would be available over multiple years. This strategy would enable programs to a continuity of effort during periods of continuing resolutions as well as enhancing the consistency in program delivery.
 6. Use partial agreements
 - Use during continuing resolutions if multi-year funding is not available. The use of partial agreements would allow cooperators to continue critical program activities as well as the ability to retain staff that may otherwise be reduced due to a lack of fiscal resources (note – PPQ is already doing this to some extent).

3. Application and Award

What works well and needs to stay

- The funding itself: Cooperators in the group wanted to emphasize how much they appreciate the funding given them from APHIS to accomplish mutual goals.
- Availability to answer questions: Several participants mentioned the fact that many (though not all) APHIS employees are willing to answer questions from cooperators and other employees about the cooperative agreements process. Some participants mentioned that cooperators get good assistance from APHIS employees.

- PPQ pre-review process: PPQ conducts pre-reviews on some of its continuing projects that cooperator and APHIS participants agreed was helpful. This process consists of a one-page document that helps the two parties focus on what should ultimately be in the work plan and agreement.
- Flexibility in the process: Even though inconsistency was seen as an issue, some participants recognized that the flexibility in the system was often helpful in getting appropriate work plans and agreements in place.
- VS hiring: While there were many comments about issues with the way VS handles the cooperative agreement process, many participants agreed that recent hiring of cooperative agreement specialists in each of the regional offices was a positive move.
- Negotiation: Many participants suggested that negotiating the work and financial plans results in healthy discussions among cooperators and APHIS employees around expectations and deadlines.
- Forms incorporated in the articles of the agreement: Recently, some of the lengthy and repetitive forms have been incorporated as articles of the agreement so they only need to be signed once.
- Signatures: While the need for signatures was seen by some as sometimes unnecessary and time consuming, others mentioned that requiring signatures was a way to make sure key personnel were involved.

What needs improvement?

Problem or Issue

This group described three broad issues that affect the processes of applying and awarding APHIS cooperative agreements. They were:

Inconsistency: Participants identified a number of areas where there were inconsistencies in the way cooperative agreements are handled in APHIS. Among the areas that were seen as inconsistent:

- Some required more signatures on the work plan than others
- More justifications were required
- Some regional offices were requiring more justifications than others for the same changes
- Overall conflicting feedback from within the regional office with no explanation
- When someone does something inconsistent with common practices there is no explanation as to why
- Hard to hold someone accountable for inconsistencies
- Examples of reviewers in APHIS being unusual in 'nit picking' about the language used in the agreement. Some agreements sent back for changes many times. One participant said that there was one that was sent back over 40 times.
- Inconsistent start dates
- While many of the participants described procedures in PPQ and WS that were more cooperator friendly and transparent and more internally consistent (among states and between regions), some described procedures in VS that were not so open and transparent and were widely inconsistent especially between the two regions

Handling conflict: Some participants were concerned that there is no consistently easy way to resolve conflict between a cooperator and the primary APHIS employee with whom the cooperator is working out the agreement. In PPQ, when there is a conflict on an administrative issue between a State Plant Health Director (SPHD—APHIS employee) and a State Plant Regulatory Official (SPRO—State employee) or other cooperator, the regional cooperative agreements specialist intervenes and helps to resolve the issue. In VS, on the other hand, the resolution of issues is not so easy or straight forward. Some participants cited examples when the issues went unresolved and even when a cooperator looked for an explanation, was unable to find someone willing to explain or take responsibility.

Timing issues: Participants in this work group said that more and more the time allowed for completing the work is getting smaller and smaller. Originally, cooperators and APHIS employees expected the cooperative agreement to be in place for one year and the cooperator would have the full 12 months to complete the work expected. The time available to complete the work has been squeezed by:

- Continuing resolutions: Congress, in recent years, has not passed their spending bills in time to ensure that money is available to agencies in time for the start of the fiscal year. Instead, continuing resolutions make only some money available for a short time (usually a few weeks or a month). With the uncertainty, APHIS is not able to get cooperative agreements in place as early as they would like, thus squeezing the time on the other end.
- Poor planning: Though this is not the case across the board, the perception in the group that APHIS planning is taking time away from the amount of time available to complete the work.
- Lengthy processes: The process of negotiating an agreement is perceived to be unnecessarily long especially for the agreements with smaller dollar values. The process for reporting is perceived by some as being too long as well
- Not enough time: To get all that needs to be done, including the planning, the negotiating, reporting and of course the work itself (which can be constricted by biology and life cycles) some said that the amount of time available to complete the work needs to be longer. This could be accomplished through changing the constriction on using the funds for a 12-month period.

Application and Award Recommendations

1. Improve Training and Guidance: While improving the training and guidance for both APHIS employees and cooperators was seen as an important fix, the group deferred to the training and guidance work group.

2. Improve communication: Improving communication can help in each of these issue areas. Participants pointed out that good communication starts with an agency-wide expectation.

- Agency and program leaders need to clearly communicate the expectation that work on agreements will be done in a team-oriented approach with an emphasis on customer service.
- There needs to be a higher priority on answering questions and resolving concerns. So, when questions are raised, APHIS employees will respond to each other and cooperators promptly.
- Use performance standards and daily interactions of supervisors with employees to help ensure that communication does improve.

- Use a list-serve to send regular updates and changes to everyone involved inside and outside of APHIS

3. Develop an appeal process: It is important that when there is a stalemate between an APHIS employee and a cooperater that the issue get resolved as quickly as possible. Without having a formal appeal process, PPQ resolves issues by involving others at a higher level. This is done step by step until the issue is resolved. According to one participant, most of these issues are resolved at the regional level. Most agreed that approach works best but a few suggested that a clear formal appeal process might be useful to have even if it is used rarely.

4. Improve web site: An easy to navigate web site can help both APHIS employees and cooperators get information and answers to questions in a consistent and timely fashion. Some participants suggested that the web site include the capability of sending by e-mail questions and concerns.

5. Welcome feedback: In addition to the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the web site, the regional offices should be responsible for soliciting feedback from both APHIS employees and cooperators in their programs and regions.

6. Conduct regular reviews: Regular reviews of regional, area and state level operations in APHIS can help to uncover and resolve inconsistencies. Also, regular APHIS-wide reviews can help programs learn from each other and resolve issues. Some participants suggested that more regional personnel become involved in reviews of cooperative agreements that are conducted by the APHIS Review and Analysis Branch.

7. Extend time for agreements: Having more than 12 months to do the work would be very helpful and add to the flexibility of the APHIS process. Suggestions included having no-year money and having multiple year agreements (at least 2-year agreements like Forest Service)

8. Streamline process: To really streamline the application and award process requires that the current system is regularly assessed and reviewed redundancies and inefficiencies, the process is clearly laid out, and the time needed for each portion of the process is tracked and monitored. Only with good information about the current process can changes be made that will have an impact. Electronic solutions (forms and signatures and the use of an electronic collaborative writing environment for the work plans) would seem to help reduce the time involved since passing the documents back and forth seems to take up much of the time.

- Continue to incorporate forms into the articles of the agreement and do this across APHIS
- Develop a fill-in-the-blanks work plan form, in either paper or electronic versions

Other comments to AMT

The group had some other comments they wanted to make outside the structure of the work group:

Staffing: Many of the changes recommended require that staff be available to accomplish them. Add staff if needed.

Learning curve: Recognize that cooperative agreements are complicated and that it takes some time to learn how to use them effectively

Don't scrap system: It is not completely broken, it just needs to be tweaked and improved

Explain why VS is requiring info not required by OMB: there was a sense of the group that the reporting requirements of the Eastern Region of VS exceeded the requirements of the OMB. If this can't be changed, at least an explanation is needed.

Overall mindset of cooperation: this involves addressing problems as they arise and not waiting.

Don't forget the reason for regional hubs: there is a great opportunity to work cooperatively across program lines at the regional hubs. This may help with resolving issues of inconsistency and helping programs learn from each other.

4. Monitoring and Reporting

What works well and needs to stay

The group had difficulty identifying what in the process was working well. The group agreed that there are instances when monitoring and reporting works well when there is:

- good communication between the cooperator and the ADODR, and
- the cooperative agreement clearly spells out reporting requirements

What Needs Improvement

Interestingly enough, what works well is also noted as needing improvement.

Communication between the cooperator and the ADODR

Improving communication as it relates to monitoring and reporting requires clear, consistent guidelines and expectations on how and when APHIS wants the work being performed under the cooperative agreement reported. Often the details of the agreement are buried in the structure of the cooperative agreement package.

Communication and improved working relationships between the business and program offices

There is a major disconnect between the budget offices and the program managers. This exists both within the cooperators organization and within APHIS.

Established reporting that is spelled out in the cooperative agreement

Cooperators often do not know what is expected in terms of reporting format and data requirements and APHIS program managers are often disappointed with the quality or lack of reporting from the cooperator.

Need for standardizing the paperwork

Components of the cooperative agreement package are prepared different throughout APHIS. This is a challenge to the cooperators who do business with several programs in APHIS. The requirements and processes are inconsistent.

Financial management of agreement monies

Earmarked money (or line item funding) is a challenge for the program managers. Even though the monetary decision has been pre-determined before it gets to APHIS, APHIS still has to use the cooperative agreement instrument to deliver the funds to the state. This is a paperwork burden for a program manager and administrative staffs and APHIS has little influence.

The entire amount of money is often unused in cooperative agreements. Sometimes this is because the cooperator received the funds so late in the year due to the federal budget process (continuing resolutions). But more often it is due to poor oversight and lack of analysis on the rate of spending. Unspent money is not being redirected and the money is lost at the end of the fiscal year.

Monitoring and Reporting Recommendations

1. Standardize the APHIS workplan
 - Develop simple, minimal standards applied to all APHIS cooperative agreements with minor program flexibility as it relates to the program delivery.
 - Define reporting requirements, include desired elements and format in the article. Include in the benchmarking section reporting requirements and detailed expectations for progress and final reports.
2. Write and publish SOP's
 - Communicate clear, detailed policies and procedures, including templates and formats.
 - Include roles and responsibilities for the cooperator business and program offices and the APHIS business and program offices.
3. Research legislation to identify alternative ways to deliver funds that are earmarked for a cooperator to avoid having to use the cooperative agreement process.
4. Incorporate regional budget and financial specialist into the cooperative agreement process
 - Verify the initial funding availability
 - Provide ongoing oversight and assist in monitoring the spending of an agreement.
 - Provide analytical assistance to program managers on trends in spending
 - Project fund use for the remainder of the award period.
5. Establish an annually, mandatory process (in July)
 - Business and program managers for the cooperator and APHIS discuss the remaining work to be accomplished
 - Status of the funds report

Meeting Wrap-up

The meeting ended with final words from Kevin Shea, APHIS' Chief Operating Officer. Mr. Shea made the following commitments to the meeting participants:

1. The Agreements Services Center will be given an additional position to develop and implement a training program and improve communication.
2. An annual meeting for both Cooperators and APHIS will be developed and implemented to share information and conduct planning.
3. APHIS will explore the possibility of extending the timeframe for agreements wherever possible.
4. No APHIS office will require cooperators to report results or financial information that exceeds OMB guidance without first receiving an OMB waiver.

**COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT PROCESS IMPROVEMENT TEAM
WORKSHOP ATTENDEES
January 5-6, 2005**

Cooperators

1. Mark Andrews, Texas A&M Univ.
2. Ron Stinner, NC State Univ.
3. Dale Scott, Texas Dept. of Ag.
4. Joanne Shimada, California Dept. of Food and Ag.
5. Lisa Macias, California Dept. of Food and Ag.
6. Connie Riherd, Florida Dept. of Ag. & Consumer Services
7. Betty Gautier, North Carolina Dept. of Ag
8. Barbara Troyer, Minnesota Bureau of Animal Health
9. Laura Andrews, Berryman Institute, MS State
10. Kacey Strickland, Mississippi State Univ.
11. Bob Ehart, NASDA, Washington, DC
12. John Hunt, Arizona Dept. of Ag.,
13. Anne Pierok, New Jersey Dept. of Ag

APHIS Employees

1. Paula Flather, PPQ, Ft. Collins, CO
2. Lynda Been, VS, Ft. Collins, CO
3. Cara Castle, VS, Raleigh, NC
4. Dave McNeal, PPQ, Boise, ID
5. Cindy Gordon, PPQ, Ft. Collins, CO
6. Judy Allen, FMD, Riverdale, MD
7. Kelley Gentry, VS, Gainesville, FL
8. Irene Hess, VS, CEAH, Ft. Collins, CO
9. Marie Hatter, WS, Ft. Collins, CO
10. Patty Douglass, PPQ, CT/MA/RI
11. Linda Schepers, PPQ, Raleigh, NC
12. Margaret Crabtree, PPQ, Raleigh, NC
13. Michael Carter, VS, Riverdale, MD
14. Adam Grow, VS, Riverdale, MD
15. Michael Greenlee, VS, Albuquerque, NM
16. Mark Tobin, NWRC, Ft. Collins, CO
17. Debra Lisk, WS, Raleigh, NC
18. Lennis Knight, VS, Springfield, IL
19. Ginger Akin, VS, Lincoln, NE
20. Mike Stefan, PPQ, Riverdale, MD
21. Stacey Musser, PPQ, Carlisle, PA
22. C.P. Nettles, VS, Jackson, MS
23. Roger Sloop, WS, Ft. Collins, CO
24. David Santelman, FMD, Minneapolis, MN
25. Donna Ford, FMD, Riverdale, MD
26. Bob Crowther, MRPBS, Minneapolis, MN
27. Anita Ridley, FMD, Riverdale, MD
28. Melanee Miller, FMD, Riverdale, MD
29. Susan Murphy, FMD, Riverdale, MD

30. Eileen Berke, FMD, Riverdale, MD
31. Linda Stevens, FMD, Riverdale, MD
32. Heather Trainum, FMD, Riverdale, MD
33. Tammie Long, FMD, Riverdale, MD
34. Daphne Reid, FMD, Riverdale, MD
35. Stacie Cain, PPQ, Riverdale, MD
36. Irene Fernandez, AC, Riverdale, MD
37. Judy Garrison, BRS, Riverdale, MD
38. Michele Nicol, WS, Riverdale, MD
39. Aretha Johnson, FMD, Riverdale, MD
40. Mary VanDenk, FMD, Riverdale, MD
41. Steve Shelor, CREC, Washington, DC

Workshop Facilitators & Others

1. Ulysses Lane, VS, Raleigh, NC
2. Ken Waters, PPD, Riverdale, MD
3. Kim Ogle, PPD, Riverdale, MD
4. Cheri Oswald, PPD, Riverdale, MD
5. Stephen Kidd, PPD, Riverdale, MD
6. Mattie Bocchi, PPD, Riverdale, MD
7. Mike Panachura, Riverdale, MD

Summary of 'Federal Grants Management Benchmarking Study'

1. Quality improvements initiatives and activities

- a. Strategic planning and mission implementation –does Agency grant making map to the strategic priorities?

Fannie Mae and Robert Wood Johnson did this well. Fannie Mae is moving from program/geography basis to strategic initiatives. Fannie Mae has quarterly “check and adjust” meetings with grantees. A dedicated research and evaluation unit at Robert Wood Johnson evaluates the foundation’s success against the strategic areas.

- b. Staff training – How are training needs of staff and applicants addressed?

Most addressed applicant training and assistance before staff training. USDA FNS used Management Concepts to train its staff. HUD used Web cast training sessions for staff. The purpose of these is to familiarize staff with new programs, amounts of funds available, due dates and any changes from previous years. NSF invested in online program management system tutorial.

- c. Grantor improvement plans and methods – How have lessons learned been documented and used?

Robert Wood Johnson commissions outside writers to evaluate and develop a report on the grantee’s performance and management of the award. Information is posted to an Intranet. Fannie Mae shares best practices through its “knowledgeplex.”

NSF does a variety of things to capture lessons learned. They look for how they compare to best practices and conduct a customer satisfaction survey. Texas Commission on the Arts has grantees complete an evaluation report online. Robert Woods Johnson has a Roots and Wings program to help grantees leverage funds to accomplish strategies.

2. Macro grant life cycle practices

- a. Grant program planning and evaluation – How are grant programs planned and evaluated?

NSF has a strong objective program evaluation program through its external advisory committee structure. They also follow the GPRA. RWJ has an office of Research and Evaluation.

- b. Announcement development and publishing – How are grantees notified about grant and cooperative agreement opportunities?

HUDs Super NOFA is a good example of using a single publication for listing all funding opportunities. Federal and State orgs use Federal and State registers.

- c. Applicant assistance – How does APHIS help its applicants with the application process?

Some use webcasts (HUD and Texas Education Agency) and conferences (Robert Wood Johnson and NSF) and some use one-on-one outreach (Texas Commission on the Arts). HUD uses its call center to answer questions (86,000 calls in 2002). Help needs to be balanced with fairness and those who provide help also try to be fair.

- d. Applicant review and evaluation – How strong are the procedures to clearly specify eligibility criteria and to ensure equity?

Review processes are listed in the report for those that are competitive.

- e. Post award monitoring and grant closeout – How do Agencies ensure that the work is completed and the objectives are achieved?

HUD uses a logic model to guide grantees in what is expected of them in monitoring and closeout. NSF uses a risk based system that points to certain organizations that may need to be monitored more closely (they only have about 40 employees to monitor 20 to 30K grants). Several have web-enabled many aspects of grantee monitoring and reporting.

3. E-grant systems – What is being done to streamline and move to electronic processing?

NSF is considered the standard for electronic processing

Preliminary APHIS benchmarking – In our effort to look at other Agencies that use Cooperative Agreements to determine any best practices that can be used by APHIS in its process, our team found the following information in the USDA 2004 Report to Congress on the Federal Financial Assistance Management Improvement Act (FFMIA) of 1999 (PL 106-107):

"USDA has multiple committees at the agency and Department levels working on grants streamlining. This interaction and the products of these committees have led to incremental improvements in program delivery and information sharing. The business processes used to administer and deliver grant programs have benefited from new guidance and products issued by these interagency committees." (page 20)

(Note: "The term grant as used in this report includes cooperative agreements." (page 2)

"Currently, the six largest USDA agencies have Web sites with information relating to their Federal financial-aid programs. Other agencies are developing such sites. USDA is planning to centralize grant information at a single Departmental Internet portal for grants." (page 23)

"To create an environment conducive to grants streamlining, some agencies reviewed their grant award packages. These reviews resulted in the elimination of redundancies in paperwork, streamlining of special terms and conditions, and the removal of outdated requirements. Additional changes were made...that reduced the length of the award package significantly." (page 23)

"Constituents have begun to receive notices of USDA's commitment to electronic grants processing...USDA continued to highlight streamlining and implementation plans. It also solicited feedback from potential grantees through workshops and a variety of outreach activities. These workshops target agency officers, private sector participants, and other agency personnel." (pages 23-24)

Work Groups in which USDA participates & some goals of the group:

<u>Work Group</u>	<u>Some Goals</u>
1. The Pre-Award Work Group ("Discretionary" sub-Work Group) ("Mandatory" sub-Work Group)	-Have award terms and conditions that speak clearly to recipients -Streamline and simplify award requirements as much as is possible consistent with maintaining responsible stewardship of Federal funds. (page 13)
2. The Post-Award Work Group	-Develop proposals that include standard data elements and common business processes for post-award reports (page 15)
3. The Audit Oversight Work Group	-Make audit results a more useful tool for Federal agencies to monitor recipient compliance (page 18)

Agencies & Some Accomplishments to date:

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Some Accomplishments (pages 24,25,26)</u>
CSREES	-Established its own E-grants working group -The administrator releases e-grant info thru CSREES update articles.
FAS	-Conducted workshops with private voluntary organizations. -Developed a new electronic application package
AMS	-Senior AMS officials support the E-Grants initiative and have directed agency staff to assist in USDA's implementation of E-Grants policies.
FNS	-All GMD staff have received training on the new grants requirements
RD/FSA/NRCS	-Managers have issued memoranda indicating their support for grants.gov and expectation of staff members.

Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Grants Management System (GMS)

Summary of the GMS:

The objective of the Grants Management System is to provide a user-friendly, timely, efficient and accurate way to process grants (and cooperative agreements and other forms of financial assistance). The GMS is "connected" to the <http://www.grants.gov> portal and it interfaces with OJP's other systems such as their Financial Management System. GMS is supposedly a candidate to support OMB's Grants Line of Business. GMS replaced OJP's paper-based system and supposedly provided improvements to the business process as follows:

- increased the number of qualified grants applications;
- reduced the paperwork burden on the applicants;
- ensured faster "time to award";
- reduced administrative costs;
- enhanced mission fulfillment;
- reduced grant cycle time by 30-40% (grant cycle time = the time it takes to process a grant/agreement);
- reduced turnaround time for earmark grants to as little as 3 days;
- reduced paper used in the process by 2-3million pages per year.

Findings from the 97 Cooperative Agreements/Grants Reviewed by the Team.

1. Timeliness of approval/denial of application.
 - a. 50 percent (19 of 38) of the applications submitted to VS were “approved” after the proposed start date of a project.
(According to the cooperator survey data, 58 percent of the VS cooperators who answered the survey indicated that the timeliness of approval/denial of the application in VS is either “poor” or “fair.”)
 - b. 79 percent (35 of 44) of the applications submitted to PPQ were “approved” after the proposed start date of a project.
(According to the cooperator survey data, 62 percent of the PPQ cooperators who answered the survey indicated that the timeliness of the approval/denial of the application in PPQ is either “poor” or “fair.”)
 - c. 75 percent (3 of 4) of the applications submitted to WS were “approved” after the proposed start date of a project.
 - d. 67 percent (2 of 3) of the applications submitted to “Other” APHIS programs were “approved” after the proposed start date of a project.

2. Project Performance Objectives & Measures.
 - a. 100 percent of the packages that we reviewed had performance objectives (or at least a “purpose” of the project) listed somewhere, either in the work plan or in the articles. (Note: A work plan was not included in a large number of the packages that we received. I didn’t count how many).
 - b. 25 percent (24 of 97) of the packages that we reviewed had some performance measures specified in writing or performance measures that could at least be “gleaned” by sifting through the work plan or articles.
 - c. Examples of some of the performance measures that we found are listed below in this appendix.

3. Accomplishment Reports.

We had requested reports for 21 cooperative agreements. In response to our request, we received 7 reports or partial reports. Of the seven reports that we reviewed, one was created using Microsoft Excel, one was created using Adobe Acrobat, one was created using Microsoft Word, and four others were faxed to us. The various software and media used for the reports seems to indicate that the cooperators reporting to APHIS have a vast amount of flexibility in how they submit their reports. Unfortunately, for someone trying to review those same reports, that flexibility enjoyed by the cooperators translates into a lot of cutting and pasting and re-typing of the data in order to collate and summarize the reports. We can only imagine that the overseers of the APHIS CA process had a similar but larger difficulty in trying to judge the effectiveness or the results of each and every one of APHIS’ 3000+ cooperative agreements in 2004.

We compared the “accomplishments” or “performance measures” that were listed in each of the few reports to the performance objectives listed in the work plan for each applicable cooperative agreement. All of the measures that we found in the few reports involved “counts” of things, e.g., number of personnel trained, number of tests performed, etc. No measures related to any achievements in the way of timeliness, diseases prevented, cost-efficiency, or anything else.

4. Period & Start Date of Agreements/Grants.

There was some discussion at our Jan 18 meeting regarding the month when a project was approved to start, i.e., do they all start at the beginning of the fiscal year in October or what? Here's a count of the Number of Projects "approved" to Start (by start month). As you can see, they all didn't start in October.

	VS	PPQ	WS	OTHER
Jan	1	10		
Feb		1		
Mar	3	7		1
Apr	1	6		
May	1	3	1	
Jun	3	1		
Jul	2	6		1
Aug	4	3		1
Sep	16	3		3
Oct	8	3	3	
Nov				
Dec	1			

5. APHIS CA Process Performance Measures.

We attempted to determine the average cycle time for the CA process in each APHIS program. By cycle time, we mean the number of calendar days between the date the application is received in APHIS and the date of award; unfortunately, the "Date (on which the application was) Received by APHIS" is missing from the SF-424 in 67 percent (65 of 97) of the packages; therefore, we believe we have insufficient data to create a meaningful comparison of the average cycle times in each program for all of the 97 CA's reviewed.

6. Paper Generated for Cooperative Agreements

In order to fully grasp the volume of paper generated by Cooperative Agreements, we estimated the amount of paper used for agreements in 1995 and 2003. Below is a table that shows the number of agreements in APHIS in 1995 and 2003 and our estimate regarding the corresponding height of the paper stack of agreements in feet.

	<u># of Agreements</u>	<u>Height of Stack*</u>
1995	250	3.1 feet
2003	912	11.4 feet

*The average height of a one-story building is 12 feet.

Examples of Performance Measures found in Work Plan or Reports.

VS PERFORMANCE MEASURES FOUND

04-9613-0132-CA

- Number of Johne's disease seminars offered to producers.
- Number of producers attending Johne's disease seminars.
- Number of training sessions offered to Georgia veterinary practitioners.
- Number of Johne's Certified Veterinarians trained to perform risk assessments.
- Number of completed risk assessments and farm management plans.

- Number of farms completing initial testing and herd classification.
- Number of test negative farms at each level of the program.
- Number of test positive farms at each level of the program.

04-9613-0228-CA

- Number of personnel/practitioners trained.
(Reported: Number (5) of state personnel/private practitioners trained to collect BSE samples.)
- Number of on farm samples collected.
(Reported: Number (2) of adult cattle submitted for diagnostics to the Athens or Tifton Lab.)

01-9645-0031-CA

- Number of tests, with a breakdown of positive and negative tests .
- Infection Rates.

04-9651-0021-CA

- Number of negative samples for preceding week.
- Number of samples unfit for testing.
(Reported: Number (8,469) of porcine pseudorabies tests performed under the slaughter surv. program.)

04-9672-0225-CA

- Percent scratches for larvae, nymphs, and adults on all premises.
(Reported:
 - Number (1,078) of animals searched for Tropical Bont Tick.
 - Number (1,002) of cattle, sheep, goats & horses sprayed with araicide.
 - Number ("several") of public service announcements on the TBT program.
 - Number (770) of premises found in territory.
 - Number (10,226) of donkey, cattle, sheep goals found in St. Croix.
 - Number (820) of donkey, cattle, sheep goals found in St. John.
 - Number (2,899) of donkey, cattle, sheep goals found in St. Thomas.)

03-9729-0007-CA

- Laboratory Results
(Reported:
 - Number (0,0,0) of newly found brucellosis infected herds
 - Number (0,0,0) of Accumulative infected herds.
 - Number (0,0,0) of Brucellosis reactors disclosed.
 - Number (2,2,1) of Brucellosis withheld disclosed.
 - Number (15,20,17) of Brucellosis suspects disclosed.
 - Number (0,0,0) of Brucellosis quarantined cattle herds.
 - Number (289,288,286) of Brucellosis certified cattle herds.
 - Number (133,134,134) of Brucellosis validated swine herds.
 - Number (7,349) of PCFLA tests.
 - Number (9,009) of APA tests.
 - Number (50,097) of RAP tests.
 - Number (14) of BBA tests.
 - Number (277) of BRT tests.
 - Number (3,993) of PRV g1 tests.
 - Number (10) of SPT tests.

- Number (28) of FP tests.

03-9715-1128-CA

Number of contacts that were provided educational assistance and FAD information.

- Number of reports of non-compliance to garbage feeding regulations and licensing requirements by field investigations of newly identified waste feeders.
- Number of market inspection reports by veterinarians and livestock inspectors.
- Potential for an adverse animal health incident relating to international waste.
- Waste generator database aimed at identifying waste being supplied for swine production.

04(03?)-9719-0306-CA

- Improved probability of early detection of disease
- Number (various) of training courses conducted.
- Number (various) of meetings/seminars held.

04-9735-1194-CA

- Number of dairy herds tested

PPQ PERFORMANCE MEASURES FOUND.

04-8351-0434-CA

- Number of samples taken

(Reported:

- Number (16) of Virginia nurseries and garden centers surveyed.
- Number (41) of Lowe's garden centers surveyed.
- Number (956) of samples screened using ELISA test kits.)

- Number of positives

(Reported:

- Number (93) of samples screened positive for *Phytophthora ramorum*.)

- Number of negatives

(Reported:

- Number (265) of plants destroyed from 1 nursery.
- Number (774) of plants destroyed from 9 nurseries.)

03-8450-0729-CA

- Yield Losses

01-8100-0719-CA

- Predator abundance, plant growth parameters, SBA establishment.

02-8110-0854-CA

- Establishment success of the agent.

02-8450-0598-CA

- Confirmations of soybean diseases?

03-8523-0733-CA

- Number of acres surveyed?

03-8592-0701-CA

- Number of moths identified?

List of Cooperative Agreements/Grants Reviewed. The following is a list of the 90 “cooperative agreements” and 7 “grants” reviewed. These are identified by the “Federal Identifier” and by the “Descriptive Title of Applicant’s Project” that we found on the SF-424, the Application for Federal Assistance.

<u>VS</u>	<u>Descriptive Title of Applicant’s Project</u>
1. 01-9104-0670-GR	Foreign Animal Disease Preparedness Program
2. 02-9113-0731-GR	Distribution of pseudorabies virus and brucella suis in feral swine populations in Georgia
3. 03-9112-0844-GR	Epidemiology of Epidemic and Endemic WNV in Florida
4. 04-9100-0791-GR	Field evaluation of best management practices for Johne's disease
5. 03-9618-0006-CA	Cooperative Animal Disease Detection Control and Eradication Program
6. 03-9647-0023-CA	Cooperative Brucellosis Eradication Program
7. 03-9625-0073-CA	Homeland Security, Animal Disease Surveillance and Response
8. 03-9610-0163-CA	Johne's Cooperative Agreement (Program Start up)
9. 03-9655-0190-CA	Scrapie Eradication Program
10. 03-9628-0243-CA	FMD, Swine garbage feeding
11. 02-9625-0048-CA	Low pathogenic avian influenza in live bird retail markets
12. 02-9678-0070-CA	Homeland Security
13. 02-9651-0086-CA	Johne's Disease Education, Management, and Research Program in Virginia
14. 01-9645-0031-CA	Microbiologist I
15. 04-9651-0021-CA	Pseudorabies Testing
16. 04-9613-0228-CA	BSE
17. 04-9623-0009-CA	Cooperative Agreement State/Federal Cooperative Programs Record Keeping
18. 04-9626-0285-CA	Exotic Newcastle Disease Monitoring
19. 04-9627-0034-CA	Control and Eradication of Scrapie
20. 04-9637-0141-CA	CWD Surveillance
21. 04-9672-0225-CA	Tropical Bont Tick
22. 03-9637-0307-CA	Scrapie Eradication Program
23. 03-9208-0095-CA	1. Web based Program Diseases Training for VS Employees; 2. Web based FAD Training for VS Employees; and 3. Two Modules for Vet Accreditation
24. 01-9208-0058-CA	Equine Specialist for Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH)
25. 04-9208-0039-CA	Development and Refinement of Risk Assessment Methodology for International Trade and Animal Health Issues
26. 01-9830-0007-CA	State/Federal Cooperative Brucellosis Laboratory Activities
27. 02-9756-0091-CA	Strain 19 Biobullet Vaccination of Free-Ranging Elk on

28. 02-9740-0003-CA	Winter Feedgrounds in Western Wyoming
29. 01-9830-0124-CA	Federal Brucellosis Eradication Program
30. 03-9729-0007-CA	Bison Operation
31. 03-9732-0516-CA	Brucellosis Testing Activities, Missouri
32. 03-9748-0613-CA	Eradication and clean up of exotic Newcastle disease from Nevada
33. 02-9769-1116-CA	Cooperative Tuberculosis Eradication Program
34. 03-9715-1128-CA	Foreign Animal Disease & BSE Surveillance & NAHEMS Cooperative Agreement
35. 03-9740-1143-CA	Swine Health Protection/ Surveillance of Garbage Feeding Operations
36. 03-9704-1176-CA	Homeland Security Program: Rural Area Communications Enhancement within the Cherokee Nation
37. 04-9719-0306-CA	Emergency Preparedness and Surveillance for the Fort Apache Indian Reservation
38. 04-9735-1194-CA	Homeland Security/Emergency Response and Surveillance Cooperative Agreement
39. 04-9729-1347-CA	Tuberculosis Surveillance
40. 04-9706-1309-CA	Swine Health Cooperative Agreement
41. 04-9756-1343-CA	Low pathogenicity avian influenza & control in the live bird markets
42. 04-9613-0132-CA	To enhance knowledge and the use of genetic resistance for disease control
	Veterinary Bovine Johne's Disease Control Program

PPQ

	<u>Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project</u>
1. 01-8313-0166-CA	Survey for Giant Salvinia
2. 02-8328-0246-CA	Tropical Soda Apple
3. 03-8312-0174-CA	Imported Fire Ant-Regulatory
4. 03-8345-0115-CA	Gypsy Moth Program
5. 04-8312-0389-CA	Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey Program?
6. 04-8337-0421-CA	Gypsy Moth 50/50 Cost Share
7. 01-8235-0266-CA	Gypsy Moth Slow the Spread (STS) Project
8. 02-8233-0203-CA	Asian Longhorned Beetle 25 Mile Survey
9. 02-8251-0305-CA	Mass Rearing of Laricobius Nigrinis
10. 03-8220-0193-CA	Survey and eradication of goatsrue (Galega officinalis)
11. 03-8239-0365-CA	Emerald Ash Borer Survey
12. 04-8251-0434-CA	National Sudden Oak Death Survey
13. 04-8236-0013-CA	Development and release of potato varieties resistant to the golden nematode
14. 00-8100-0617-CA	Evaluating the use of Phorid Flies for Biological Control of Red Imported Fire Ants
15. 01-8100-0719-CA	Ecology of Natural Enemies and Their Impact on Soybean Aphid
16. 01-8100-0801-CA	Study of exotic plant pathogens, detection and characterization work on plum pox and citrus canker.
17. 02-8100-0077-CA	National Agricultural Pest Information Systems
18. 02-8110-0854-CA	Introduction of the Parasitic Mite "Aceria matherbae" into South-western Oklahoma for Suppression of Field Bindweed and Evaluation of its Limits of Adaption.
19. 03-8100-0886-CA	Early Detection of Invasive Plant Pests: Development of

	Targeted Survey Techniques and Improved Sampling Protocols.
20. 04-8100-0784-CA	Determining the Host Status of Tobacco Blue Mold on Eggplant and Pepper
21. 04-8100-0987-CA	Development of Management Tools for the Cactus Moth
22. 02-8434-0022-CA/GR	Imported Fire Ant
23. 03-8434-0022-CA	Imported Fire Ant
24. 02-8450-0598-CA	Homeland Security Program
25. 03-8456-0685-CA	Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey Program
26. 03-8434-0691-CA	CAPS Surveys - Pink Hibiscus Mealy Bug
27. 04-8462-0076-CA	Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey Program
28. 03-8450-0729-CA	Pest Detection
29. 04-8434-0691-CA	Pink Hibiscus Mealy Bug Survey
30. 01-8553-0041-CA	Gypsy Moth
31. 02-8511-0009-CA	Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) Program
32. 02-8511-0009-CA	Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS) Program
33. 02-8553-0523-CA	Plum Pox Virus Survey
34. 02-8580-0307-CA	Imported Fire Ant Survey Program
35. 03-8523-0733-CA	Citrus Canker Survey
36. 03-8500-0648-CA	Action Plan for Pierce's Disease Research in Texas
37. 03-8576-0706-CA	Gypsy Moth Programs in Nevada
38. 03-8592-0701-CA	Gypsy Moth
39. 04-8580-0814-CA	Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS)
40. 04-8523-0746-CA	Cereal Leaf Beetle survey in California
41. 04-8584-0519-CA	Grasshopper Survey
42. 04-8510-0586-CA	Hawaii Invasive Species Detection
43. 04-8586-0812-CA	Grasshopper Programs
44. 03-8564-0573-CA	Sudden Oak Death Detection Survey

WS

	<u>Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project</u>
1. 04-7100-0121-GR	IAWFA - 94th Annual Conference
2. 03-7100-0104-GR	Livestock Depredation Summit
3. 04-7233-4169-CA	Wildlife Damage
4. 04-7488-0465-CA	Animal Diseases and Control
5. 04-7438-0020-CA	Development of Bird Damage Control Measures in Sunflower

OTHER

	<u>Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project</u>
1. 04-1001-0438-CA	Conference on Tamarisk Management
2. 04-1001-0418-GR	Linking Bugwood and USDA Digitop
3. 04-1001-0453-CA	Agricultural Internet Monitoring System
4. 04-1001-0463-CA	?Biotechnology for Agricultural Products?
5. 04-1001-0384-CA	?National Association of State Depts of Agriculture
6. 04-1001-0464-CA	?Various Outreach activities pertaining to animal identification

