



Review and Funding Recommendation Process for USWBSI's FY26 Request for Pre-Proposals (RFP)

All pre-proposals received by the assigned deadline are sent for review to the applicable and designated review panels (comprised of the Research Area and Coordinated Project Committee members). The Executive Committee reviews all the review panels' recommendations and if necessary, modifies the requested amounts to conform to the FY26 Congressional budget and the overall objectives of the Initiative. The final step is approval of the EC's recommended Research Plan and Budget (RP&B) by the Steering Committee. All PIs whose pre-proposals are recommended for funding by the USWBSI will be asked to compile and formalize their proposed research into a USDA-ARS Final Funding Application for inclusion in the USWBSI's recommended research plan.

Please note that all pre-proposals will be regarded as confidential documents. Distribution will be limited only to parties involved with the review process.

Summary of FY26 Review Process

Step 1: Review of Pre-Proposals for all Categories by the USWBSI NFO

An initial review is conducted by the Networking & Facilitation Office (NFO) for conformance to instructions provided in the FY26 Request for Pre-Proposals. The NFO may return, without panel review, any Pre-Proposal that is not consistent with the instructions detailed in the RFP.

Step 2: Review of Pre-Proposals by Review Panels for all Categories

The USWBSI Research Area and Coordinated Project Committee members and if warranted, external reviewers whose interest and expertise is related, make up the Review Panels for the pre-proposals. Each pre-proposal assigned to a review panel is first reviewed individually by each panel member addressing the following:

- Do the stated objectives of this pre-proposal address the current scientific needs of this research category within the overall goals of the U.S. Wheat and Barley Scab Initiative?
- Are the proposed objectives and methods appropriate for this research category, and likely to be attained withing the funding period?
- Overall strengths of the pre-proposal
- Identified weaknesses of the pre-proposal
- If applicable, has reportable progress been made in previous funding cycles?
- Is the budget reasonable?

In addition to the proposal concept review, each category is assigned a funding working cap set by the Steering Committee.

Following the completion of review by individual panel members, each review panel then convenes to reach a consensus and classifies each pre-proposal into one of the following funding categories with recommended funding allocations:

- **Recommended for Funding within Working Cap**
Funding Priority is for pre-proposals recommended for funding within the Working Cap. The combined budgets of all pre-proposals in this category shall not exceed the Working Cap.
- **Recommended for Funding outside Working Cap**
Funding Priority is for any remaining pre-proposals recommended for funding but not within the Working Cap.
- **Recommended for Funding both within and outside Working Cap**
Funding Priority provides option for partial funding from within Working Cap and remainder of funding requested from outside the Working Cap.
- **Not Recommended**

For each pre-proposal, the review panel chair and vice-chair, based on the consultation with the full Review Panel, then complete an Overall Consensus Summary for the Executive Committee that reflects the consensus of the panel. This approach is designed to provide the Executive Committee a peer-reviewed set of pre-proposals that are highly recommended for funding and also charges the review panels with ranking pre-proposals recommended for funding outside the working cap.

Step 3: Review of Pre-proposals by the Executive Committee (EC)

The EC will regard the recommendations of the review panels as advisory and retains the ability to:

- Increase or decrease the actual amounts recommended for individual pre-proposal; and
- Change the Review Panel's recommended funding category for any given individual pre-proposal.

The percentage that is held back from the Working Caps will be allocated by the EC in a manner aimed at achieving overall balance in the final Research Plan & Budget (RP&B). Any changes made to the funding recommendation will be based on the EC's own reading of the Pre-Proposals, the advice from the Review Panels, and any other factors which influence the soundness of the final comprehensive research plan submitted for recommendation to USDA-ARS.