

**Maize Genetics Cooperation Board of Directors/Advocacy Committee joint meeting  
Mar 7, 2025 on Zoom and in person at Maize Genetics Meeting  
Meeting Minutes**

**BoD members present:**

Wojtek Pawlowski (Chair)  
Erin Sparks (Treasurer)  
Laurie Smith (outgoing Secretary)  
Norman Best (incoming Secretary) norman.best@usda.gov  
John Fowler (At Large Member)  
Marna Yandea-Nelson (Outgoing Chair)  
Matt Hufford (Incoming Chair)  
Andrea Eveland (At Large Member)  
Jeff Ross-Ibarra (At Large Member)  
Mike Muszynski (Communications Director)

**Vistors Present (Zoom):**

Jack Okamuro USDA  
Karen Cone, NSF  
Diane Jofuku Okamuro, NSF  
Michelle Facette (new MGAC member)  
Anne Sylvester (MGAC member)

**Meeting began 12:15pm CST**

**Motions in blue**

**1. Approval of Minutes from the February meeting**

Motion made and seconded to approve February meeting minutes. Unanimously approved

**2. Welcome to new BoD and MGAC members**

Welcome to new BoD members: Mark Lubkowitz (incoming Chair) Norman Best (incoming Secretary) Tom Slewinski (incoming Member At Large)  
And one new MGAC member: Michelle Facette  
Thank you to those rotating off!

**3. Discussion with NSF and USDA program officers**

NSF perspective: programs are functioning as normally as they can, with panels still meeting, proposals still being accepted and reviewed, and awards being made. No programs have been canceled. NSF grant review criteria have not changed (Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts) but might be modified in light of EOs. NSF is still interested in broadening participation in science, but encourages applicants to avoid targeting participation by members of specific groups. Urges scientists to be active advocates for the importance of their research, also train lab members to do that. NSF has a website where people can find out how NSF is responding to Executive Orders (<https://www.nsf.gov/executive-orders>). Fact sheet. Can submit questions here.

USDA representative echoes recommendations from the NSF re talking about the impacts of your work, urging applicants and grant holders to speak in terms of priorities that the current administration can relate to e.g. rural prosperity and economic growth.

**USDA and NSF visitors departed at 1PM before proceeding with the following**

**4. Discussion of MGAC and BoD goals for the coming year (2025-2026)**

- a. Update from Treasurer on conference budget: assuming we are able to use NSF conference grant funds, meet hotel minimum occupancy stipulated in our contract, and do not issue refunds to USDA and NSF employees who were unable to attend but found that out after the deadline for reimbursement, we will have a modest surplus. We could not even come close to reimbursing all USDA and NSF employees without going into the red.
- b. Discussion of reimbursements for cancelled MGM attendance by NSF and USDA employees. Discussion of possible priorities for reimbursement; various perspectives voiced and debated.

Motion made and seconded that the BoD respond to all enquiries for conference fee refunds saying that we are sticking with established refund policy that would make it too late to reimburse anyone. Approved unanimously.

- c. Discussion of moving MGC website, including conference pages, off USDA server and out of USDA employee's hands. If we don't do this, we will need to censor the content to comply with Executive Orders and are vulnerable to loss of federal staff and government shutdowns preventing them from working on the site(s). Many issues remaining to be resolved discussed.
- d. Incoming BoD Chair's priorities:
  - Protection of generational resources that are now at risk, e.g. MaizeGDB data, Stock Center. Has already started talking to Corn Grower Association about how they can partner with us. Also talking to Iowa State about the possibility of creating an IA-state supported maize center to offset some of the federal support losses.
  - Continuation of the most critical activities of MaizeGDB and GRIN with drastically reduced funding (loss of staff, etc.) Discussion of whether the maize community can and should try to shore up the losses (e.g. individuals chipping in to do a share of the germplasm maintenance work). Maize Genetics Advocacy Committee has a role to play here fighting for continued support.
  - Formalizing relationships with organizers of maize meetings in other countries, especially coordination of awards.
  - Securing a conference grant or RCN for financial support of 2027 Maize Meeting. Need to better understand the new federal funding landscape to determine the best strategy. Brainstorming ensued about how to build in components that fit with current administrative priorities.

**Meeting adjourned 2pm**