TACTICAL SCIENCE ASSESSMENT: STAKEHOLDER RELATIONS

PROGRAMS WITH SHARED CONCERNS:

- » National Plant Diagnostic Network (NPDN)
- » National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN)
- » Inter-Regional Project #4 (IR-4)
- » Minor Use Animal Drug Program (MUADP)
- » Crop Protection and Pest Management Programs – Extension Implementation Program (EIP)
- » Regional Integrated Pest Management Centers (RIPMC)
- » Agricultural Research and Development Program (ARDP)
- » Extension Disaster and Education Network (EDEN)

OVERVIEW OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Across the tactical science portfolio, stakeholders consistently recognize the value these programs bring in advancing their missions. Among them, IR-4 stands out as the most closely aligned with its stakeholder base. Its structured advisory panel plays a pivotal role in guiding annual funding decisions, ensuring that pressing issues are addressed collaboratively. While not every stakeholder's top priority may be funded, the inclusive decision-making process ensures their voices are heard.

MUADP follows a similar model, though with less formal structure. Its strong alignment with the FDA enhances its credibility and reach. NAHLN, like MUADP, maintains a close relationship with APHIS-Veterinary Services and benefits from consistent funding through APHIS and advocacy from the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD). NPDN also engages with APHIS-Plant Protection and Quarantine, as well as State Departments of Agriculture, reinforcing its regulatory connections.





O— Stakeholders and issues that drive the relationships.

Beyond these well-established relationships, other programs exhibit more variable stakeholder engagement. Crop Protection programs, for example, are highly state-centric, often linked to state commodity organizations, Departments of Agriculture, and State Plant Regulatory Officials. In some cases, regional coalitions align with national commodity boards. A notable example occurred in the early 2000s, when soybean-producing states collaborated through EIP projects, Regional IPM Centers, and soybean checkoff boards to prepare for Asian soybean rust.

EDEN occupies a unique niche. Unlike other programs focused primarily on biosecurity, EDEN's stakeholders include public safety and disaster response organizations. Their involvement varies depending on the nature of the biosecurity event — livestock depopulation versus plant disease outbreaks — but EDEN's educational role remains critical in preparedness efforts. As a communication network, EDEN is well-integrated with its stakeholder base.



COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION CHALLENGES

Timing is a critical factor in stakeholder engagement—both in proactive education and reactive outbreak response. Communication overlaps among tactical science programs can lead to fragmented messaging. EDEN, with its national reach and strong stakeholder ties, could serve as a central conduit for disseminating biosecurity information. However, its current funding and resource limitations constrain its potential. With enhanced support, EDEN could significantly amplify outreach for pest and disease programs, though its utility may be more limited for regulatory efforts.

Federal and state agencies also serve as stakeholders, but their full engagement often hinges on inter-agency buy-in — a challenge compounded by budgetary competition. Industry stakeholders present a different set of hurdles. While individual companies may express interest, proprietary concerns and competitive dynamics can limit collaboration. It remains unclear whether industry partners fully understand the tactical science landscape or see value in cross-program coordination.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NIFA

- » Enhance Communication Infrastructure: Create funding opportunities to strengthen messaging and outreach across tactical science networks and with government and industry stakeholders.
- » Establish a Unified Stakeholder Forum: Convene an annual stakeholder workshop and form a crossprogram advisory committee to foster broader awareness and collaboration.
- » Refine ARDP's Strategic Focus: Ensure ARDP solicits highly applied research that benefits industry, regulatory bodies, and producers. Implement a mechanism for public input to guide program priorities.



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