

**Potatoes USA
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, December 8, 2025
Potatoes USA Boardroom
Recorded by: Chelsea Gray**

Welcome

Chairman Steve Elfering called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM MT and thanked everyone for joining.

Antitrust Statement

All attendees acknowledged and accepted the antitrust policy statement. A copy of the Antitrust Policy Statement was also provided to attendees before meetings on BoardEffect.

Roll Call and Introductions

Executive Committee members present included Steve Elfering, Kathy Sponheim, Cliff Shaw, Jess Blatchford, Wendy Dykstra, David Masser, Travis Meacham, Trever Belnap, and Hunter Gibbs. Shelley Olsen, ex-officio was also present. Nathan Bender was present via Zoom.

Steve Elfering acknowledged that a quorum was present.

Potatoes USA staff members Blair Richardson, Chelsea Gray, Kim Breshears, Megan Mulcahy, Monica Heath, Marisa Stein, Kayla Vogel, Caitlin Roberts, Riley Peterson, Martin von Ruden, Nick Bartelme, and RJ Harvey were present. Katie Cook from USDA-AMS, Tim Rendall and John Lundeen from Potatoes USA were present online.

Minutes Approval

A **MOTION** was made by Jess Blatchford and was seconded to approve the minutes from the Executive Committee Meeting held on August 6, 2025. There was no discussion, and the motion to approve the minutes passed.

Copies of the meeting minutes were emailed to attendees before the meeting and made available for Executive Committee members to view via BoardEffect.

Agenda Modification

A **MOTION** was made by Travis Meacham and seconded to move the agenda item, "Potential New Responsibilities for Potatoes USA," to after the end of the agenda. There was no discussion, and the motion passed.

Regional Reports

The Executive Committee members shared reports from their regions related to the 2025 potato crop and harvest.

CEO Report

Blair Richardson shared his recent and upcoming meeting schedule. A **MOTION** was made by Trever Belnap and seconded to approve Blair's travel schedule as presented. There was no discussion, and the motion passed.

Mr. Richardson emphasized the importance of Potatoes USA's presence at trade missions, drawing on his recent experiences in Mexico and Japan.

Blair also shared plans for the 2026 World Potato Congress, which will be held in Kenya. Grant funds will be used to send a trade delegation to explore market potential in 1-3 African countries following the event.

Program Reports

The following staff members provided reports to the Executive Committee:

- Tim Rendall and John Lundeen- Production Research
- Monica Heath- Finance and Policy
- Riley Peterson- Nutrition and Health
- Kim Breshears- Market Development
- Kayla Vogel- Market Development, Consumer
- Nick Bartelme- Market Development, Retail
- Meg Mulcahy- Communications
- RJ Harvey-Culinary

No action was taken during the reports.

Admin Update

Chelsea Gray shared an update on the board member nomination process for 2026.

Mrs. Gray also shared a proposal to host the 2027 Winter Meetings at the Potatoes USA office and the surrounding area. A **MOTION** was made by Jess Blatchford and was seconded to discuss the analysis with the National Potato Council, and, if not overly burdensome, host the 2027 Winter Meeting at the Potatoes USA offices and neighboring hotels.

USDA Update

Katie Cook stated that no nomination packages have been signed for any of the commodity boards, and the nomination process is stalled. Ms. Cook also shared that the board has a confirmed meeting with USDA Administrator Erin Norris on February 24, 2026.

Other Business

There was no other business to discuss.

Closed Session

At 3:28 PM a **MOTION** was made by Travis Meacham and seconded to go into closed session. The motion passed, and the Executive Committee went into a closed session. At 3:59 AM the committee returned to open session.

During the closed session, the Compensation Advisory Panel provided the following recommendations and guidelines to the Potatoes USA Executive Committee.

1. Merit raises shall be constrained within a range between 0% and 6% on an individual basis at the discretion of managers and approval by the CEO, with an objective average of between 3% and 4%.
2. A uniform Cost of Living base compensation adjustment was recommended at 1-1.5%.
3. Compensation adjustments related to promotions or substantially changed job responsibilities shall be based upon new benchmarking studies conducted by a third-party entity.
4. The supplemental bonus budget shall remain at \$70,000.
5. No changes have been recommended for non-compensation benefits.
6. No changes have been recommended for vacation/sick leave.
7. Potatoes USA will conduct a new benchmarking assessment during FY27.

The Executive Committee supported the recommendations unanimously and authorized the Potatoes USA CEO to implement the recommendations within the parameters summarized. A **MOTION** was made by Wendy Dykstra and was seconded to approve the recommendations made by the Compensation Advisory Panel as noted above. There was no discussion, and the motion passed.

New Business

Blair Richardson introduced the concept of "From Gene to Table", a state-of-the-art hub designed to link genetic discovery, production research, and culinary application in one coordinated ecosystem. Blair mentioned that the initial idea for the project arose at the 2025 Potato Industry Leaders Forum in September, as industry leaders raised concerns about the lack of resources allocated to potato research at universities, ongoing layoffs at USDA research centers, and a lag in variety development compared to other parts of the globe. Blair Richardson presented the cost, timeline, and scope of a feasibility study to the Executive Committee. Conducting a feasibility study would refine program requirements, evaluate real estate options, and develop complete project and operating cost models to support Executive Committee and Board decisions.

A **MOTION** was made by Trever Belnap and was seconded to recommend the full board approve to fund the "From Gene to Table" feasibility study up to \$175,000 utilizing special project funds. There was no discussion, and the motion passed.

Adjourn

Chairman Steve Elfering adjourned the meeting at 4:46 PM MT.

Approved by:

Signed by:

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Chairman

3/31/2026

Date

DocuSigned by:
Wendy Dykstra
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Secretary/Treasurer

4/3/2026

Date