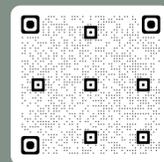


MARCH 2026

# THE NCSFR

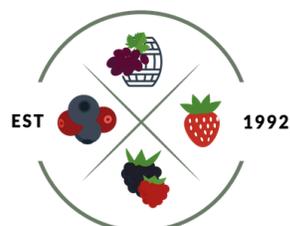
WINTER NEWSLETTER



## 2026 NCSFR ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**DATE:**  
NOV 16-18, 2026

**LOCATION:**  
The Discovery Center, The  
Dalles, Oregon.



**Northwest Center**  
FOR SMALL FRUITS RESEARCH

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)



## UPDATE FROM THE USDA

Now that another year has ended, it is time to reflect. Overall, it was a year of significant changes. Many of our processes have evolved and are likely to stay.

Despite all these changes, we were able to fund >\$1.2 million to support the remaining years of each existing NCSFR projects. We also funded the Plant Improvement Initiative for two years. However, this meant that we were unable to fund any new projects last year. Funding multiple years at once has repositioned us to revamp how the Center supports projects in the future and to reduce the workload associated with completing agreements on short timelines. Beginning this year, all projects will be funded for their full duration—no more annual renewals—with funding starting September 1 and continuing through December 31 of the final project year.

In the coming year, we hope to fill several ARS positions, including five open scientist positions in the Horticultural Crops Production and Genetic Improvement Research Unit and two in the Horticultural Crops Disease and Pest Management Research Unit. Our highest priorities are rehiring a plant virologist and securing a permanent RL for each unit. Additional priorities include hiring a food scientist and viticulturist in Corvallis, as well as hiring a precision agricultural engineer and weed scientist in Prosser.

We extend our sincere thanks to Abby Gearing for her insight and forward thinking, which led to the development of our new proposal management system, the Ag Research Information Educational Library. Recognizing that the previous system was often frustrating and unable to meet our needs, Abby took the initiative to design and code a new solution. We hope you were as pleased as we were with the beta version. In the coming year, you will see the full capabilities of the system with the 1.0 release. Please share any feedback with Abby regarding issues or suggestions for improvement.

Lastly, we would like to acknowledge Jungmin Lee, Jessie Mitchell, Suean Ott, and Inga Zasada, who retired this past year. Each played an integral role at the USDA Horticultural Crops Research Laboratory. Please join us in thanking them for their dedicated service and wishing them all the best in their next adventures.

Acting Research Leaders Walt Mahaffee, REE-ARS and David Bryla, REE-ARS



## UPDATE FROM THE NORTHWEST BERRY FOUNDATION

The first couple months of the year have flashed by! But last month the PNW research community had enough time to submit 30 new 2026 NCSFR proposals in the new project portal. Thank you to all individuals who maneuvered through the new application requirements to help alleviate bottlenecks for further processing at the federal level. We know these changes were not easy, but they were necessary and required so we appreciate the patience and understanding as you worked through the challenges. The hard work of reviewing these grape and berry related proposals are now ongoing. Thanks to both out of region academic reviewers and in region industry reviewers. Stay tuned for mid year announcements on new project awardees.

Along with the typical 2025 NCSFR funding metrics in this newsletter edition, we have also compiled examples of [how the 2025 continuing projects have collaborated with local stakeholders](#) in the PNW. It's always interesting to see joint industry stakeholder partnerships which NCSFR prides themselves in.

Julie Pond

## NCSFR ANNOUNCEMENTS

### UPCOMING EVENTS: THE ANNUAL NCSFR CONFERENCE

Since 2021, The NCSFR Annual conference date has been scheduled earlier than normal in an effort to work around more industry meetings while releasing the funding opportunity earlier in the subsequent year.

**NOV 16-18, 2026  
THE DISCOVERY CENTER, THE DALLES, OREGON.**

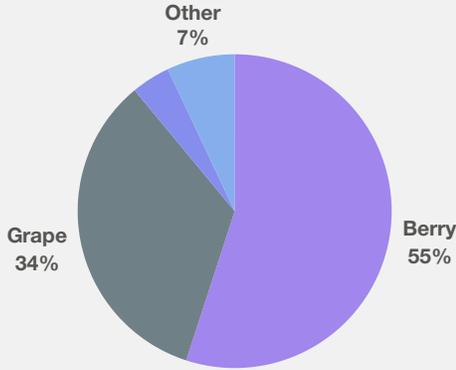
**COMPLETE OUR ANNUAL SURVEY BY 1 APRIL 2026 FOR A CHANCE TO WIN A GIFT CARD**



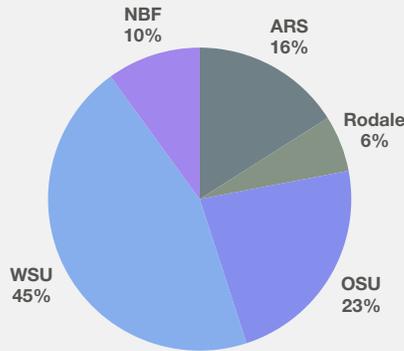
**SCAN QR CODE OR  
CLICK HERE TO  
COMPLETE SURVEY**

# 2025 FUNDING RECAP

## FUNDING BY CROP



## FUNDING BY INSTITUTION



**\$1,230,477**

COMPETITIVE PROGRAMS  
ANNUAL FUNDING

**\$331,348**

PII PROGRAMS  
(OSU AND WSU)



### BERRIES

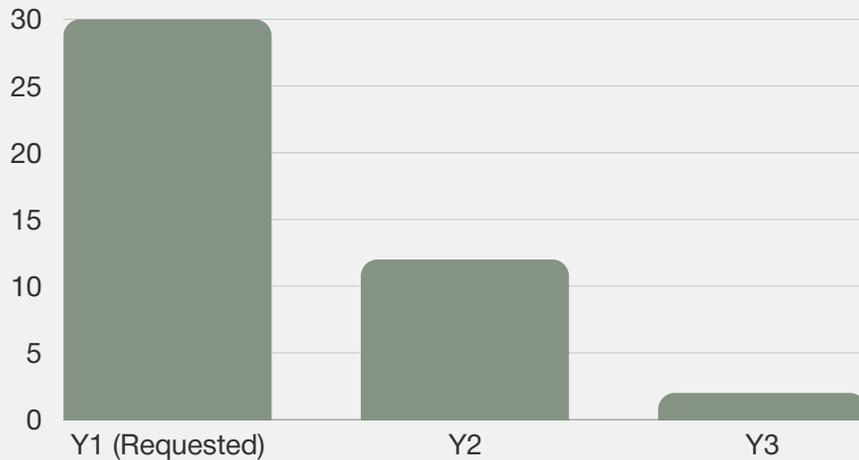
\$953,665



### GRAPE

\$635,110

## PROPOSALS FUNDED



## OUR LATEST FACT SHEETS



### BLACKBERRY

Impact of primocane management and plant spacing on planting performance and economic returns of 'Columbia Star' blackberry

[VIEW](#)



### STRAWBERRY

Development of advanced package for ensuring post-harvest storability of soft strawberry cultivars grown in the Northwest (NW) region

[VIEW](#)



### GRAPE (WINE & JUICE VITICULTURE)

Impact of *Pediococcus* on wine chemical and sensory properties

[VIEW](#)



### GRAPE (TABLE, WINE & JUICE VITICULTURE)

Optimizing Water Use for Winegrapes with Sensor-controlled Subsurface Irrigation

[VIEW](#)