

Response to reviewers on NE1836 proposal:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the reviewers' evaluations of the project 'Improving Quality and Reducing Losses in Specialty Crops through Storage Technologies'. The recognition of the strength of the team, representing almost all postharvest scientists in North America, in terms of past performance and future plans is gratifying. It is particularly pleasing to see the reviewer responses to inclusion of sensory evaluation within the project.

Two reviews rated the project as 'excellent', and we believe that the suggestions to work across national boundaries were appropriate and beneficial for the US, and to focus on cross-fruit to deliver on objectives, are well taken. A portion of research is focused on apples, but the project continues to expand to other fruit crops and now has a significant effort toward pear, berry and stone fruit research. The inclusion of partners across the US, and especially in areas where apples are absent, has contributed to our ability to achieve these goals.

The one review that has rated the project as good in a number of categories, while commending us for our track-record of impact, has raised three concerns:

1. Health/nutritional aspects. To address this, we now include Subobjective 4 under Objective 2, which is to collaborate with human nutritional biochemists in research on bioactives in order to improve interpretation of results from the perspective of impact on the human diet. This change will also help us address reviewer comment 2 regarding program scope.
2. Evolution of program scope. This suggestion can be added to the meeting agenda where it can be discussed on an annual basis. Because the individual projects are primarily conducted in different locations, it is more feasible to identify the future scope during a meeting. In addition, adding a subobjective will encourage the group to discuss how the research actually addresses the problem of postharvest losses and quality improvement.
3. Capability development. This project is building capacity by training postharvest researchers to take on positions in academia and industry. There is a shortage of individuals with postharvest training that is being met by graduate school enrolment of 5-10 students across our universities in any given year. These students are given the opportunity to attend the annual project meeting to present their work and develop a sense of community. We deliberately plan our meetings in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Society for Horticultural Science to maximize these opportunities.