

Middle Managers Committee
August 24-26, 2010
Memphis, TN

Joe Schaefer welcomed everyone to the 2010 PLN Conference and presided at the meeting. The meeting started at 10:00 am on Tuesday, August 24. We had 27 members in attendance.

Connie Heiskell submitted minutes from the 2009 meeting. Alberta James recommended approving the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Ray Rice. The motion passed unanimously.

Joe gave an overview of schedule for the next three days and confirmed agenda items for the meeting.

Joe introduced the current leadership:

Joe Schaefer, Chair
Connie Heiskell, Vice Chair
Greg Price, Secretary
Ray Rice, PLC Representative
Jewell Hairston, PLC Representative
Celvia Stovall, 1890 Administrative Advisor
Tim Cross, 1862 Administrative Advisor

Ray Rice reported that he will no longer be in a district director position and will not be able to continue actively working with the committee. Joe said that the nominating committee would have to find a replacement for our 1862 PLC representative to fill Ray's term. Ray has served two years of a three year term. He has one year left in his term.

A call was made for volunteers or nominations to serve on a Nominating Committee to identify potential candidates to fill Ray's unfilled term on PLC, and the 2010-11 secretary position

A nominating committee was selected and approved:

Jewel Hairston, VSU
Shelvy Campbell, WV State
Lonnie Johnson, VT

Joe reviewed the committee's Plan Of Work from last year. Each item was reviewed and the status was reported. Joe acknowledged that MMs had a very productive year. Both of the committee's administrative advisors complemented the committee membership on a very productive year.

Dr. Celvia Stovall (NCAT 1890 Advisor) complemented the committee on our efforts to continue discussions throughout the year. She especially commented on our project to review staffing patterns.

- She reported 10 of the 18 1890 universities have committed to participating in our professional development training.
- Reported on Grants workshop that 1890 units conducted in Atlanta this year.
- She encouraged more use of the Journal of Extension. MM need to encourage county agents to submit materials.
- Encouraged MM to urge program leaders to be more aggressive on working together across state lines to measure and report on like programs.

Tim Cross, 1860 advisor complemented the committee on communication and engagement of committee members throughout the year.

- From a reporting prospective he believes “more is better” is not necessary the case. If we could just identify a few impact measures we could all agree to use. While MM cannot write those measures, we can influence others to move this agenda forward.
- Funding priorities are important discussions for the organization. We need to continue to sell capacity building as a platform for competitive grants.
- A national task force is being developed work on a national brand for Cooperative Extension. Need to balance state identity but national identity is important.

On the POW was an item to create a presence on eXtension for sharing information. Connie reported that we did establish a Wiki site on eXtension. The site was not used as much as hoped during the past year. Connie gave an overview of our intended uses. Discussion on the potential use of the site was conducted. Group consensus was to establish categories and encourage the collecting of documents within these categories.

There was discussion as the best location but everyone agreed we need to use some system to share documents across states. Discussions that a website might be better than using wiki were held. Some folks do not use wiki and find a non-password website friendlier. Rachel said she would be happy to manage the web links for us on behave of PLN.

Categories could include:

- Core Competencies
- Evaluation tools
- Performance tools
- Program planning
- Job Description/Staffing Patterns

Discussed what other PLN sites might have these items that we could link to within our site. The SEAL materials were suggested.

As a follow-up to the morning PLN program, our committee was asked to respond to three questions following a committee discussion period.

1. What challenges and opportunities does your state level program area need to consider in developing and implementing regional indicators for your committee area?
 - a> Opportunities
 - b> Challenges (obstacles)
2. What benefits will need to be realized by you (your state) before you are willing to fully develop and implement regional impact indicators?
3. What 3 indicator can your regional committee agree to track for each state?

Obesity Education
Water Conservation
Master Programs (Master Gardener)

Tim Cross joined the meeting.

Discussion Questions from Morning program:

Discussion on who should give leadership for regional or national indicators. Top down or bottom up. Neither system seems to be working. Getting national agreement on indicators and local participation of data collecting from local agents is difficult.

A discussion with the county staff stating data collected will be used would encourage more counties to participate and collect data.

If each county decides to participate we can address local needs with national issues. We do not have to have the same curriculum we just need to measure a few standard indicators.

Common program titles are difficult for everyone to agree upon. We could use a national title even if we customized the title locally.

Top down banner programs are being done in some states. Georgia has several banner programs. Several states (most states) are doing these. The next step could be to coordinate these programs across state lines.

Georgia: Water Smart & Walk Georgia
Georgia put together marketing plans and evaluation data for statewide impact.

Extension Directors need to take leadership by making sure discussion take place and those programs are identified. MM can support process and help implement. Encourage a short timeline and maybe look at programs that already exist.

It was agreed our committee will position ourselves to give input into the process of collecting data toward impact. We will encourage our program leaders to move this process forward. We agree to add this as a discussion item to our quarterly conference calls. All MM committee members will identify by October 1 who is the accountability person and have a discussion about this issue. We will express the support of MM committee in collecting national indicators.

Upcoming MM Conference

Claude Bess reported on site planning for the conference.
Texas and Oklahoma will co-host
Site – Arlington TX

The conference dates are April 5 to April 8, 2011. To get best accommodations it was agreed to shift the conference dates from Monday-Thursday to Tuesday-Friday.

Hotel – Sheraton Arlington Hotel
Single/Double Rate is \$109 plus tax. Based on 60 attendees

Darrell Dromgoole reported on tour options and working with sponsors.

- Texas horse industry
- Frito-Lay Processing Plant
- Urban Solutions Center (Extension Center)
 - Turf
 - Human Science
 - Water Programs
 - Housings, etc.
- Lockheed Martin
- Fort Worth Mint
- Southfork
- Texas Stadium
- Area Museums
- Fort Worth Stockyards

Joe acknowledged appreciation to Claude and Darrell on site planning and securing local arrangements. A planning conference was established for the program content.

Program Committee

Greg Price, Chair
Connie Heiskell
Joe Schaefer
Darrell Dromgoole
Claude Bess
Shelvy Campbell
Louise Moore
Dee Cooper
Joan Jacobsen

A question was asked about reporting systems in Tennessee. Connie shared the Tennessee reporting system (SUPER). System has been successful. Tennessee Extension contracted with an outside agency to develop. The system allows for reporting of plans, program, and impact. Used for multiple reporting including performance reviews.

Staffing Models

Joe shared the results of the staffing survey the committee conducted.

As we reviewed the data collected some information was updated by members present as noted below.

Appendix A - Updated

Appendix B – had to summarize data, agreed to table

Appendix C – Updated
Appendix D – Updated
Appendix E – Updated

It was agreed that we will continue to update this data for a few more months.

After reviewing data an in-depth discussion of the data was conducted. Comments included:

- District program leaders/coordinators. It was discussed that this role is important for leading programs. They are not seen as supervisor but can help with agent development and motivation. Everyone agreed the positions are important but many states are cutting back on these programs. They are important for making connections between agents and specialist.
- Most organizations start their reorganization by cutting district program faculty. Virginia just cut district positions in each district.
- District program positions are important to support agents in trouble. They can save agents and save organization turnover cost.
- District Directors are a priority position to keep county funding. If we cut DED positions we could not maintain relationships with county governments and could lose funding.
- Program subject matter expertise comes from state specialist in most states. Some states (OK) use area specialists to supplement state specialists. Some of these answer to the DED while others are accountable to the state program leader.

Specialist issues:

- How to make them more accountable to agents. Some states ask agents to evaluate specialists.
- Specialists bypass county system when client calls directly.
- More defined role for specialist to train agents
- Seeing the graying of the line with agents helping specialist with research and specialist going directly to clients.

Discussion - How do you distribute agents?

- How do you balance the number of agents? TN used a computer program to put counties in groups and then used 20 variables to evaluate if counties were in the correct group.
- Which audience is more important? Do we reduce programming for middle income/non-ag clients?

Multicounty agent issues

- Politically unattractive to local politicians and local funding.
- Difficult job for agents to be successful
- More political support for county based system. Less local support for regional agents or multicounty agents.
- Hard for multicounty agents to participate in the local fair, local events, which hurts local support.

- Reduces the “local county team” concept. Less teamwork or programming together. Less supporting each other.
- Windshield time takes away from programming time
- Alabama has been regional for 6 years. Agents answer directly to program leaders. Less team work. More difficult situation for county issues to bubble up in the system. Positive is a more specialized agent working closer to the client.

Majority of state legislatures start in county government. Strong county relationships lead to strong state relationships.

All states use advisory systems. Some are program area, some are county level, some states use a combination of both.

Paying faculty/staff with county dollars, discussion on pros and cons of county paid employees verses contract with university

- Which is the best way to fund employees?
- Texas pays all employees and collects money from the counties.
- County employees do not always want to take leadership from the state.

Urban issues

- Job descriptions in urban areas need to be evaluated.
- We need to focus on funding and impact of urban areas because that is where the majority of state political leaders are located.
- Extension programs in Urban areas are different from rural areas.
We need to identify what describes an urban county
- We need to be able to deliver to the citizens even though we have less agents
- We need transitional agents that can change with the changing educational needs of the community.
- In urban counties, we need full time administrators. Whatever program area is assigned to the urban coordinator suffers.
- There is no pattern among states as to the balance of state/county funding. In most states, the amount of county dollars
- Some states are trying to get money from city government in urban areas. In urban areas the role of city government is growing.

The MM committee agreed to share these comments with administrators in their county. As we finalize data collected we will create a staffing report that can be shared. While the PLC would like a report, the MM committee believes the most important message for the PLC is that MM committee members are much more prepared to go home and involve themselves in conversations with administrators after participating in these discussions.

Several states were identified as facing the possibility of reorganization.

1. Georgia
2. Virginia

3. South Carolina

Many states are evaluating the number of agents per secretary:

4 or 5 agents to one secretary seemed to be a norm but numbers were varied. Young agents use support staff a lot less. The need for secretary position is decreasing.

Using technology such as internet phone systems can also reduce the need for support.

POW

The committee reviewed items for next year's plan of work and informational items for the PLC.

Continue Conference Calls

Continue with Urban Task Force

Webinars

Pre-conference

Biannual Conference

Working with Agent Association National Meeting to encourage MM networking.

Urban Task Force Discussion

Joan Jacobsen is going to take Steve Mullen's place as co-coordinator

PLN approved of establishing an Urban Task Force that reported to the Middle Management Committee instead of a separate Urban Committee. The Urban Task Force and MM Committee sent invitations to the other committee's for membership on the Task Force. We have little response. We should strive to make this Task Force successful and productive so that it will be something that more people across committees will want to be a part of.

Should we offer a new conference or join forces with NC Region. Should we join the NC Region? It was agreed that we support the National Urban Conference in the NC region. Joan Jacobsen is on the planning committee.

Maybe we could add conference calls. The group will plan for four urban task force seminars/meetings online. Charles Vavrina is going to review the PLN membership to the Urban Task Force. He is then going to poll states for potential urban County Coordinators to participate in these conference calls. We need to generate a group of people.

We discussed adding an urban managers component to the MM conference. It was agreed to support an urban session for the upcoming MM conference in Texas.

Working with legislature in urban areas was discussed. Ideas included:

- Legislative tours
- Directed PR efforts – Videos, customizing messages toward legislative district rather than county lines.

Middle Managers/Program & Staff Development Joint Meeting

Reviewed the learning modules

We have successfully uploaded multiple training modules on the PLN website.

Titled: Leading the Total Extension Program

These have been on the website for 6 months. No one has used these at this time.

We need to market these modules to the appropriate people within our state.

Link the SEAL training modules to these training materials.

There is a link on the eXtension website to this material.

Action items

- Market these training items to states. These are not canned programs but they are intended to be foundations/template for building local training curriculum. We need to add to the agenda of each conference call a reminder about using these modules.
- Post an evaluation tool for these modules and collect feedback on the use of these modules.
 - Add state to survey question so we can track input by state.
 - Look at Instant Survey within eXtension to use in place of survey monkey.
- Each state should develop a goal to use these materials at least once sometime during the year. All participants should complete an evaluation that will be collected.

Meeting of MM/PSD/Communications

There was discussion of working together on communicating impacts. Need to bring communication faculty in early so they are part of the process and not just delivering the message.

We have so many different projects on collecting data at different levels that we are too fragmented to tell our story. Faith Peppers shared about the national research project working on the impact database. Go to the collaborative site of the eXtension site for more information.

Action Item:

Pull together a cross committee sub-committee from each committee to discuss impact reporting and multiple databases currently being used.

Sharon Reynolds
Bobby Fletcher

ECOP Report - 2010 Leadership Advisory Council Report

Charles Vavrina served on this national committee are reported to the MM committee reported:

This report may not be shared widely; we encourage members to share with others in our district.

Report from the Nomination Committee:

1862 PLC representative – One year – Martha Ray
Middle Managers Committee Secretary – Shelby Campbell

Martha Ray will serve as member of the executive committee

Joe reminded the committee we have funds in the NC for MM Conference of around \$7000.00. It was suggested that we should request a financial report for the agenda next year.

Information Technology/Middle Managers Joint Meeting

This meeting was a discussion on the use of technology.

Use of interactive communication – Polycom (and similar) technology. Several states shared success in using video stream for teaching.

States are saving recording and are receiving more views on the archive than the original meeting.

How do we capture the impact of the electronic communication such as websites, etc?

We need to encourage agents to collect online impact data when they use electronic tools. Many agents are getting into developing programs and are not including information for impact. Texas example: agent pushing a Google questionnaire out at the end of the video.

Comments at the end of a U-tube video are a great place to collect information. Agents should not only monitor the blog but participate in the conversation.

Pod casting - is not really the future because people can connect real time. Recommend upload video to u-tube and we connect through the website such as eXtension.

State Extension for cost reason has to use university technology. This often creates different technologies and confusion across state lines.

Cloud solutions may be the future.

Social media – concerns/best practices

- Guidelines – some states have them, growing concept. Some states use social media for recruiting and education.
- Suggest publishing best practices rather than rules no one can enforce. Most agents want to do it right.
- NC Extension developed a BMP document for social media.
 - No private conversations, no private emails, should not follow kids but instead have a fan page.
 - Do not send emails directly to kids without copying another adult. NC has published these guidelines on eXtension.
 - Texas also has a document on eXtension.

One should not involve in new technologies without first thinking about why or what goals are you going to accomplish. Create a plan for using the new technology. This makes the organizational approve and support more easily obtained.

There were discussions around concern of Middle Managers giving leadership while staying up to speed with technology. Discussed ways MM can learn while still giving leadership.

MM committee should engage IT in the MM conference.

- National Extension Technology Conference - MM should encourage cutting edge agents to attend this conference. Early adopters.
- Will send link of conference out to group.

Integrating reporting into a calendar system was identified as a need. Reporting should be part of everyday life and not a week end or month end activity.

Agenda item for next year. Ask IT to report on reporting technology being used for impact.

Final Plan of work was reviewed and submitted.

Dates for Upcoming MM Conference Calls were suggested:

October 5

December 2

February 9

June 8

July 13

The committee adjourned on Friday, August 27 at 11:00 am.