

Minutes from the February 1, 2009 SERA 39 Meeting

Meeting participants: Brad Lubben, Jim Novak, Lisa Collins, Roland Smith, Alan Barefield, Amanda Smith, Larry Sanders, Vivian Carro, Mark Edelman, Geoffrey Habron, Nathan Smith, Janie Hipp, Judy Chambers, and Steve Smutko.

Jim Novak gave made some opening comments and gave an overview of SERA 39 as approved.

Lisa Collins mentioned the importance of bridging the research and extension gap.

During this discussion, Alan Barefield mentioned that the SERA 39 project needs to be broader than the Farm Bill and include sociology, family & consumer science and also include issues like nutrition and obesity.

Roland Smith discussed how the Farm Foundation has changed how it was supporting public policy efforts. He noted that the Southern Extension Directors were unlikely to fund public policy meetings like in the past. We may have to conduct meetings via video conference.

Officers were appointed:

- Lisa Collins represents the Experiment Stations.
- Maurice Dorsey is our CSREES Advisor.
- We may talk to Tim Cross about representing Extension.
- Brad Lubben was elected as Chair.
- Joe Outlaw was elected as Chair-elect and Alan Barefield will assist. (Note: Joe Outlaw was not present at the meeting).
- Amanda Smith was elected as Secretary

The next item of business was to discuss organization of the first meeting. Brad Lubben discussed trying to formally organize an annual meeting. He listed several goals that he had in mind for the SERA 39 project. These include:

- To have relevant information
- To continue teleconferences throughout the year
- To develop regional projects
- To create a presence and keep it going
- To develop a virtual policy center
 - The eXtension community is short on ag economics and public policy. We need a cohesive banner for farm policy. eXtension could be a primary output for this project. We could organize ourselves by topic and may need a virtual policy center coordinator.

Larry Sanders said that they have thought about doing a virtual policy center in the past and it is difficult to get this going.

Janie Hipp mentioned that there are new funding opportunities through AFRI that include eXtension. Also reiterated the need to get away from Farm Bill.

Alan Barefield mentioned that we need to figure out our audience. Is it internal or external? He also discussed that eXtension has professional communities of practice for the internal audience.

Janie Hipp also said that there are some of us who do not feel properly trained on public issues education.

Going back to the virtual policy center on eXtension, one section could be “Principles of Policy Education.” This can be done simultaneously with developing things for the external audience. Key issues in the Principles could be Farm, Energy and Health.

Alan Barefield noted a website called the Foundations of Practice at www.nacdep.net.

Geoffrey Habron mentioned the importance of citizen engagement. At Michigan State University, they have programs to train staff to develop skills in dealing with the community.

Steve Smutko noted that we need to define our audience.

Jim Novak suggested that public policy education needs to start with internal education.

Steve Smutko noted that we need topic based and process based education and research.

Brad Lubben summarized the discussion into 4 key points.

1. Establish an ongoing presence
 - Virtual policy center, eXtension Community of Practice, and a Public presence
2. Understand the Process of Public Policy Education
 - How do we incorporate research and extension?
3. Understand the Issues
 - External audiences and innovative projects
4. Prioritize Activity
 - Set priority 1, 2, 3, and move with it

There are some resources available from work that we do. The question is: do we post all that we have or sift through it?

Brad Lubben brought up that the Livestock Market Information Center (LMIC) is a successful virtual center for the livestock industry and they are now trying to expand into grains. There are established policy centers across the US. We could potentially tie into these nearly 40 centers and make one community.

Geoffrey Habron suggests that we pick topics for the virtual center.

Larry Sanders said that materials are available for process. Steve Smutko, Brad Lubbens, Larry Sanders, and Janie Hipp could put it all together.

Lisa Collins said she will try to find out what SERAs do for funding.

Brad Lubben was going to look into the eXtension Community of Practice to identify funding efforts. His stated that our first goal should be to organize and find all that we currently have. Steve has process stuff on a public issues education website.

Judy Chambers asked if we could go beyond collecting this information and disseminating it to the public.

Alan Barefield suggested that we develop a holding pen for these resources. This could be a dual level holding pen. There will be a lot of information and then an editor to make it into a more elevated public exposure.

Jim Novak said that the AAEE Outreach Committee is doing something similar.

We will conduct meetings every 2-3 months with most occurring by teleconference.

Next meeting will be Monday, April 6, 2009 at 2 pm EST. Hold up to 3 hours.

Preliminary dates for other meetings are Monday, June 1, 2009 and August 3, 2009.