

# **Northeast Extension Directors Result Setting Workshops**

Baltimore, MD  
March 29-30, 2017

## **DRAFT SUMMARY AND ROADMAP**

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Reviewed by workshop participants*

with assistance from  
Lighthouse Consulting Group  
Warren, RI

# **Northeast Extension Directors Result Setting Workshops**

## **SUMMARY OF MAJOR DECISIONS:**

### **Through an open and honest conversation, we agreed that:**

1. There is not shared agreement within the members of NEED on the value of ECOP or being part of the national system.
2. We have failed at using the Executive Director's position as a vehicle for promoting agenda. This has led to tension around the Executive Director's reporting lines and allocation of effort.
3. Our meetings often lack depth and substance and focus on updates instead of discussing and making decisions on our agenda.
4. The ECOP Directors –which included representation by NEED members--- voted less than two years ago to adjust some of ECOP's functions, but confirmed its structure.
5. Our past approach to defining the role and attributes and hiring of the Executive Director did not yield the results we decisions.
6. The mechanism for hiring an Executive Director through a host institution requires that person work within the host institution's hiring and HR system; decreasing NEED's control over the person and its budget.

### **Therefore, to change NEED's direction, we made these decisions:**

1. It is our responsibility to drive the Executive Director's agenda. This agenda should reflect NEED's annual work plan that captures our annual results, decisions we make about our regions position on important issues and areas where we need national support. This agenda should be quantifiable so we can measure the Executive Director's progress.
2. We recognize that ECOP is constituted by our programs and, therefore, we are ECOP. If there are structural or functional elements of ECOP that we do not feel are serving our regional needs adequately, there are mechanisms to raise these and debate them within the broader governing body.
3. We need to spend more face-to-face time together if we are going to successfully set and manage a regional agenda.
4. We described an Executive Director as someone that has strong facilitation, leadership and management skill, who will be able to drive our agenda forward because they have the personal initiative and are politically perceptive and adroit.
5. The candidate is most likely someone early to mid-career, who has skills and experience that are complimentary to the work of extension. It is possible that a senior manager may be successful, but having deep experience is not required because we place higher value on finding someone with the necessary skills and attributes.
6. We agreed to place a priority on candidates that have experience as an Executive Director and in organizational leadership. Secondary to this is a background in public engagement, followed by extension experience. A successful candidate need not have a PhD. We recognize this is a divert path from what has been.
7. We agreed that an alternative to hiring an individual, as has been our practice, is to explore the services of association management companies. These companies provide for a fixed fee

a full range of services – from executive leadership to administrative support— against an agreed upon work plan.

## **NEED's VALUE PROPOSITION**

NEED brings value to my program and ultimately to the national extension network by providing a forum and venue for:

- Instigating and managing regional collaborative efforts on the ground, facilitating a cooperative approach to solving issues and an opportunity to work with regional peers.
- Advancing common interests of region, creating a regional purpose, improve impacts and avoiding unnecessary competition.
- Leveraging resources of the different programs to achieve greater impact.
- Learning and networking both formally and informally between professional colleagues.
- Amplify our voice at the national level
  - So that our benefactors understand the value of extension, understand our accomplishments and are willing to support our efforts.
  - So that our regional agenda is clearly articulated to ECOP and our national partners so that we realize the full benefits of being part of a national system.

NEED also provides:

- Federal reporting and administrative support
- Continuity between programs and opportunity to cultivate working relationships

## **NEED's PRIORITY RESULTS FOR THE NEXT THREE TO FIVE YEARS**

These priority results should get captured in an annual plan of work that establishes as least three measurable goals for implementation during the year. The plan should also include all of the operational and core functions of NEED, expectation of the Executive Director and a supporting budget. Initial task plans for each are provided in Annex A. These are meant to serve as the starting point for work planning, but were used to stimulate thinking on the specifics of how regional collaboration can happen.

1. Devise a system for program leaders and directors to facilitate multi-state collaboration and increasing multi-state internal and external funding. This process should include: ability to identify common issues, create strategies for how programs can address these issues and a priority setting process so that every state has the ability to participate in at least one multi-program team. As collaborative efforts are designed and selected, these guidelines should be considered:
  - a. Maintain state identity within region
  - a. Working as a group of 13 on initiatives is not necessary and may not even be preferred, however it is important that all programs are part of at least one initiative.
  - b. Use diversity and population as a regional strength to enhance our efforts
  - c. Create common, high quality regional programs to support and promote the success of extension at the ground level.

2. Amplify NEED's voice at the national level.
3. Identify new, more sustainable financial models.
4. Increase NEED's focus on students, creating a program-to-program exchange that acts as a forward pull for marketing the value of Extension programs.

Initiatives identified but not selected as priorities include:

- Improve NEED.com website
- Create program to mentor and train extension staff and faculty
- Formal learning and networking activities (it was noted that this happens organically)

## **STRUCTURAL AND FUNCTIONAL CHANGES REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE RESULTS**

### Meetings

1. Create a new standing agenda for phone calls. These calls should be used to focus on goals/results and tasks and should be used to make decisions receive input, not for updates. In addition to taking decisions/gathering input on goals, results and tasks, agenda items should include the following:
  - a. Actions necessary leverage with other partners
  - b. ECOP decision making
  - c. The Executive Directors near term agenda
2. Phone meetings should be scheduled yearly for the nine months when there is not a face-to-face meeting. We will hold these times on our calendar, but the Executive Director and Chair may choose not to have all nine meetings. The goal is to only have meetings when decisions or input is required. Updates can be sent in writing and do not require a meeting.
3. Face to face meetings will be held in February-March, June and October. The last two coincide with existing events. The March meeting should include time to define the region's agenda that can then be transmitted to ECOP for consideration as they set the national agenda. It should also include time for annual work planning and budgeting.
4. For face to face meetings, the standard agenda should be refined for each meeting depending on particular needs and issues by the Executive Director and Chairman. Additional agenda items may be sought from the Executive Committee and other members.
5. Face to face meetings should be eight hours. We recognize this may require arriving early to pre-existing meetings.
6. Agendas and subsequent minutes should be presented as: ACTION or DISCUSSION/WHO RESPONSIBLE/OUTCOME or DECISION MADE

### Ensuring region and programs are receiving value from ECOP

1. It is our responsibility to drive the Executive Director's agenda. This agenda should reflect NEED's annual work plan that captures our annual results, decisions we make about our regions position on important issues and areas where we need national support. This agenda should be quantifiable so we can measure the Executive Director's progress.

2. We recognize that ECOP is constituted by our programs and, therefore, we are ECOP. If there are structural or functional elements of ECOP that we do not feel are serving our regional needs adequately, there are mechanisms to raise these and debate them within the broader governing body.

## **DESCRIPTION OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SERVICES**

### Skills and attributes of the Executive Director

#### *Skills*

- Effective convener and facilitator; has the ability to listen, formulate issues, and create a plan of action.
- Effective leader (collaborates with board the strategic agenda) and manager (delivers on agenda) who is politically perceptive and adroit.
- Excellent written and verbal communicator, who can be both dynamic and articulate on wide range of leadership and management tasks.
- Strong organizational skills ensuring that the agreed upon actions are done on time, on budget and deliver the highest quality products and outcomes.
- Can successfully developed and implemented measurable work plans and budgets; able to track revenue and expense against budget to ensure transparent forecasting and financial reporting.
- Ability to serve as organization's "Face and voice" at local, state, regional and national scales; comfortable in presenting complex ideas to a wide range audiences.

#### *Attributes*

- Open minded, willing to innovate and motivate others.
- A team player who recognizes that the organization's success is their success; they are not driven by their own success and accomplishments independent of NEED.
- Successfully able to give and take feedback from a board of directors; recognizing that the board sets the strategic direction and they execute the work.
- Can work independently and without supervision to complete agreed upon work; has strong initiative and drive.

### Duties and Responsibilities

- Regional focus to support NEED's programs and institutions (75%)
  - Organize and deliver results as described in this three year Roadmap and the annual work plan.
  - Support NEED Chair, executive team and board by ensuring the smooth function and operation of the organization.
  - Facilitate multi-state learning and sharing.
  - Communicate what is happening at national scale to NEED members.
  - Maintain directory of members and web site.
  - Schedule, organize and facilitates meetings of NEED, including developing the agenda, tracking decisions and reporting to board.

- Work with the executive team to develop and finalize a budget that supports the work plan for approval by the board.
- Comes to understand each institution its strengths, weaknesses, capacity and abilities in the context of how best it can contribute to NEED's success.
- Connect region with national activities (25%)
  - Articulate regional needs as defined by regional Directors at national scale
  - Identify opportunities (people, funding, etc.) to leverage existing investments; Scan the landscape to identify opportunities, synergies and connections with partners and sources of funding.
  - Work as an effective team member with the other regional and the national Executive Directors to deliver work of ECOP
  - Attend meetings as defined by work plan including ECOP meetings, ECOP Executive Committee meetings, ECOP staff calls, and NERA spring meeting.
  - Provide staffing for ECOP and other national committees when an Extension Director from the Northeast provides a leadership role to the group.
  - As requested from the national office for budget or legislative issues, collect data on what is happening in the region and share that for national use.

## **HIRING MECHANISMS**

NEED has several options for securing Executive Director services

1. NEED may consider hiring an individual that is embedded in a host institution (one of NEED's programs). This is the model that has been used previously. Consequences of this approach may include an Executive Director who has split responsibilities, whose pay and benefits are defined by host institution and changes (hiring, firing, etc.) has to be done through institutions HR system.
2. NEED could use UVM as a "bank" to contract Executive Director Services. By contract, we mean a comprehensive fee for services agreement that includes all costs to deliver the work. Rule changes at UVM *may* prohibit them from doing this in the future. Consequences of this approach may include the need for more financial resources to attract a suitable contractor given that their fee would have to cover all expenses plus their overhead and profit.
  - a. Hire an individual on a fixed fee contract to deliver services and products as defined by NEED. This would be one fee to an individual to deliver everything that needs to be done.
  - b. Hire an association management company to deliver services and products defined by NEED. An association management company typically has a range of skilled staff that can be accessed through a fixed fee contract. It is possible for the association management company to work with clients (NEED in this case) to hire an Executive Director on their behalf as well as providing support staff (administrative, IT, marketing, editing, layout and financial management and reporting).

3. Looking longer term, NEED should consider creating a not for profit (501C) to serve as the bank for the organization. This not for profit would hire the individual or the association management company instead of the one NEED programs.

## APPENDIX A

### TASK PLAN FOR PRIORITY RESULTS

These are meant to serve as the starting point for work planning. The exercise to develop these was used to stimulate thinking on the specifics of how regional collaboration can happen.

*Devise a system for program leaders and directors to facilitate multi-state collaboration and increasing multi-state internal and external funding.*

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>WHO</b>	<b>WHEN</b>
1. Identify participants from each institution who needs to participate. This is an internal function.	Directors	3 Mo
2. Regional meeting of participants. If all participants can't attend/too many, have internal meeting first. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Identify issues (at least three)</li> <li>b. Identify issue champions</li> </ul>	ED/Directors	6 Mo
3. Identify strengths by institution	Participants, Directors	9 Mo
4. No institution left behind; pick three <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. NEED grants to seed initial activities</li> </ul>		1 Yr.
5. Create database based on issues and strengths	ED/Directors	1 yr.
6. Strategy to solve issue and acquire resources	Champions/ Teams	2 yr.
7. Evaluate and assess	ED/Directors	3 yr.
8. Maintain database/update and use to initiate next cycle		

*Amplify NEED's voice at the national level.*

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>WHO</b>	<b>WHEN</b>
1. Annually Identify regional goals for national to consider in their agenda		March F2F mtg
2. Action item agenda – regional issues for national		Ongoing
3. Amplify external voice re: what is value of Extension to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. University Administration</li> <li>b. Stakeholders</li> <li>c. Related organizations</li> </ul>		
4. Align regional and national goals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Identify points of agreement; focus here</li> </ul>		June mtg



5. Funnel issues to rapid response team		Ongoing
6. Ensure ED is advocating for NEED's issues; NEED is contributing to the national agenda and being heard.		

*Identify new, more sustainable financial models.*

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>WHO</b>	<b>WHEN</b>
1. Define current business models. Be clear on what we are looking for; stay focused on what's useful a. Verify it aligns with goals b. Identify actions needed to align	ED/Directors	ASAP
2. Identify viability of current models; look at trajectories	ED/Directors	ASAP
3. Identify alternatives, new models	NEED	6-12 Mo
4. Share ideas across region to inform; provide "field vision"	ED	12 Mo
5. Identify and apply what ECOP is doing at national level	ED	

*Increase NEED's focus on students, creating a program-to-program exchange that acts as a forward pull for marketing the value of Extension programs.*

<b>ACTION</b>	<b>WHO</b>	<b>WHEN</b>
1. What exists, inventory and assess internal and external programs	Directors	3 Mo
2. Deep think on commitment a. Funding resources b. NEED Fellows c. MOUs between institutions	Directors	1 year
3. Fellowship announcement, use as a marketing tool		

## APPENDIX B

Workshop Agenda

### Northeast Extension Directors Result Setting Workshops Baltimore, MD March 29-30, 2017

#### By the end of the event, we hope to achieve the following outcomes:

- Clarify each organization's value proposition by defining why you would *want* to be a member.
- Detail the important results that NEED will achieve in the next three to five years.
- Identify and describe changes to the structure and function of NEED so that it can successfully achieve these results.
- Define what is the role and authority of Executive Director, given the described results.
- Characterize the skills and attributes of the Executive Director that are required so that he/she can be successful with NEED.

**Output:** By the end of the event, we will develop an outline of a “road map” that captures the outcomes of these conversations and organizes them into a short (2-5 page) document that can be used by NEED to guide its actions and decision making.

### Agenda

Wednesday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
DAY 1

- 1:00 Introductions, Mike O’Neill
- Self-introductions
  - Why we are conducting this process
- 1:15 Goals, flow and agenda, M. Amaral
- 1:30 Clarify each organization’s value proposition – why are you a member?  
*Exercise: Each participant will be asked to individually answer: why are you a member? Each will share their answers with the group and we will identify similar replies. We will then ask what value they would want from NEED to feel excited about participating. This exercise is meant to challenge member’s view of why they belong and what they want out of their participation.*
- 2:00 What are the important results that NEED will achieve in the next three to five years.  
*Exercise: This exercise seeks to define those results that NEED should strive to achieve over the next three to five years. These should, when combined, deliver on the value*

*statement. We will start with a group exercise to define results and then prioritize them. Once results are selected, we will break into smaller groups to define how the result will be achieved. By the end of this exercise, we will have an action plan that defines results and how they will be achieved (what, who, when).*

4:00 Identify and describe changes to the structure and function of NEED so that it can successfully achieve these results.

*Exercise: Discussion that reaches beyond content results and considers those functional, areas of the organization that need to be changed to achieve those results and ultimately provide true value to the participants. This is an opportunity to forget about the way things have always been done –recognizing that Extension is steeped in tradition.*

6:00 Break for day

*Exercise: Before leaving each participant complete a snap poll to measure two aspects of the future Executive Director that participants feel are requisite to achieving the results discussed during the day.*

**Thursday, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017**  
**DAY 2**

8:00 Continental Breakfast

8:30 Day One Review

*Exercise: What was achieved on Day One, with a focus on value and results discussion. If these are the things you wish to achieve, what kind of person do you need as Executive Director?*

9:00 Who is your next Executive Director, given the described results.

*Exercise: Work as a group to define the skills and attributes and role and authorities of the Executive Director. Start with a review of the survey results and summary of what facilitator heard in the interviews, recognizing several of NEED members are not present but did express their views. From these draw some initial conclusions. Instead of starting with a clean slate, facilitator will present a proposition for reaction. This proposition will build on survey results and interviews.*

10:30 Practical next steps for hiring

*What are the specific next steps for funding, posting, hiring and placing Executive Director position.*

11:30 Next steps for meeting follow-up

Noon Adjourn

## **APPENDIX C**

Workshop outputs captures on flip charts

*These will be provided as a separate PDF file because of file size.*