



Increasing 1890 Cooperative Extension Value through Partnerships

Issue:

The mission of 1890 Universities is learning, discovery and engagement. Championed by cooperative extension programs, the engagement function is structured as a partnership between federal, state, and local governments to address community needs with stakeholder and community input. Extension programs at 1890 Universities have relied heavily on federal support. The 2002 Farm Bill authorized 1890 Universities to secure 100 percent non-federal match for extension and research programs by 2007. To date many universities have yet to meet the matching requirement. The growth of federal funds for extension programs has not kept up with inflation. Coupled with recent economic downturn and fiscal austerities at the federal and state levels, the need for finding new partners and non-traditional resources to strengthen the value proposition of cooperative extension programs has never been greater for 1890 universities.

What has been done:

- Established relationships/partnerships with Allied Food Systems professionals
- Explored areas of common interests with partners and stakeholders
- Established 1890 Cooperative Extension as common broker for partners and stakeholders
- Collaborated in resource acquisition to support extension and engagement programs
- Developed, implemented, evaluated and reported program/successes/lessons learned

Impacts/New Partnerships:

Established partnership with National Crop Insurance Services (NCIS), representatives from the Crop Insurance industry, Farm Credit, USDA-Risk Management Agency and 1890 Institutions, including Delaware State University, Alcorn State University, University of Arkansas Pine Bluffs and North Carolina A & T State University. The partnership developed intensive educational training in agricultural risk management for limited-resource and African-American producers of specialty crops and underserved commodities and offered training in Arkansas, Mississippi and North Carolina. Project results were presented at the 2012 National Small Farm Conference in Memphis, TN; the 2013 USDA National Outlook Conference in Crystal City, VA; and the 2013 National Risk Management Conference in Denver, CO.

Outcome of Project (societal impact/measure of increased quality of life):

Limited-resource and African-American producers of specialty crops and underserved commodities developed personal risk-management plans for their family farms and farm business operations leading to savings on production resources, improved farm income, improved knowledge in estate planning and improved financial management. Participating 1890 universities gained resources to support outreach and extension programs for underserved producers. NCIS and allied food systems industry professionals gained better understanding of working with underserved audiences.

How has your project been aided by your FSLI experience?

FSLI experience helped develop my skills in forming and managing partnerships. Feedback from 360-degree and other assessments helped inform decisions making, team building and relationships building on project. Lessons in negotiations, goal setting and leading change from FSLI provided helpful guide.

Contact information:

Albert E. Essel, Associate Dean for Extension
Delaware Cooperative Extension, College of Agriculture & Related Sciences,
Delaware State University, Dover, DE 19901 aessel@desu.edu