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E-Extension ASRED Taskforce White Paper

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Purpose: On behalf of ASRED, frame a strategy related to E-Extension. More specifically, develop a brief white paper that responds to the paper by King and Boehlje, "E-Extension/USA Business Plan Development," and arrange a one-day workshop to be held early in 2002 to refine the strategy from the perspective of the Southern Region.

Summary of the King/Boehlje Proposal:

The King/Boehlje proposal is to develop a business plan for an on-line educational service that provides access to land grant university expertise for an audience that is larger and more diverse than currently served. The business plan would include components that commonly comprise a corporate business plan: organizational analysis, industry analysis, customer analysis, competitor analysis, marketing plan, operations plan, management strategy, and a financial plan. If the business plan suggests moving forward, the authors propose two deliverables: an Access Platform and a Protocol. The Access platform will be designed to facilitate user/learner navigation, and the protocol is a procedure for defining what information will be accessible through the platform.

Key concepts included are:

1. The value of information is increasing; private and public providers are refining and tailoring information and marketing it to specific audiences. The Extension Service is not a sole-source provider.
2. Information must be provided that meets customer needs as opposed to distributing whatever information the provider has.
3. Use technology to expand "reach" (reach a larger audience) and use the capability of information technology to increase "richness" (interactivity, personalization).
4. With the amount of information available, sorting information and helping people navigate it is critical. Extension historically has served a navigation function.
5. The authors raise the question, with so many recent dot com failures, is now the time to create E-Extension?
6. Viability, defined as long-term survival and a positive impact on society, will require a broader audience base made up of individuals who place higher value on lifelong learning than current Extension audiences.
7. The proposal evades the question of a national system or a model that can be adopted by states, and expresses the intent to address "communities of interest."
8. Land-Grant universities have the expertise to develop content and Extension has the tradition and history of providing information and education to learners away from campus.
9. Rather than reinventing from inside, the authors propose to create from scratch a new virtual Extension Service. They infer that the current Extension Service is a supply-

DRAFT

- oriented distribution system and that the virtual Extension Service would be a demand-oriented, anytime, anyplace, any-source access system.
10. The new virtual Extension Service will build on the positive brand identity of the Cooperative Extension Service and will utilize Land-Grant university faculty/specialists to develop educational modules focused on identified customer needs.
 11. On-going audience analysis will pinpoint the needs of "communities of interest" beyond traditional audiences.
 12. "E-Extension/USA" will be a separate, public/private joint venture, but with clear public accountability and identity.
 13. There are some parts of the proposal that suggest that E-Extension would be a consortium-based effort with a board of directors and management personnel, but this is not clear.
 14. The authors believe that the traditional Cooperative Extension system may not remain viable in its current configuration and infers that the virtual Extension Service being proposed for analysis may provide an opportunity for survival.

Southern Region Extension Opinions (from ASRED Meeting, September, 2001):

Reactions to the King/Boehlje proposal and related ideas about E-Extension have been collected from the ASRED Fall meeting, and will be collected from PLC Chairs and other PLC members, from members of PODC, and from additional review by the E-Extension Taskforce appointed by ASRED. Key points are:

- CES needs a national E-Extension system, but with a plan that preserves and utilizes the identity of institutions and states. The general concept is that E-Extension would be a national system with agreed upon standards and protocol. In addition, states would have portals through which their respective "customers" could enter to access information from or specific to the state, as well as access "E-Extension."
- State Extension Services could contribute by subject matter specialty/expertise
- There is a need to show that local agents can be contacted for additional information/assistance.
- In building a national E-Extension system, there is a need to expand to engage the total university to participate in the system with information more broad in scope than Extension may now be noted for, and to engage non-traditional audiences with the broad resources of the total Land-Grant system.
- The plan should account for sustainability.
- The plan should include the idea of "growing into" or increasing interactivity as the capabilities and bandwidth of users increase.
- The needs of commercial agriculture should be recognized.
- Different (tiered) delivery for different audiences should be planned.

DRAFT

Questions for Consideration

1. Who should be invited to attend? SR Directors? 1890 Administrators? Extension Information Technology representatives? David King? Janet Poley (ADEC)? Communications and Information Technology Chair and representatives (PLC)? Southern Region members of PODC? Chairs/ reps of PLC committees? Others?
2. What dates are available for a workshop? March 5-6, 6-7, 12-13, 14-15, 19-20, 20-21, 26-27, 28-29?
3. What location is best? Memphis? Atlanta? (Assuming a “fly-in” meeting)
4. What should the program include? A workshop-type program where we can focus on our chore, agree on a vision, identify assumptions, set goals, develop action steps, timeline??
5. Do we need a facilitator? Can one of us (or someone from your states) do it?
6. Would we want someone like Jan Poley to be on the program and tell us lessons learned from ADEC?
7. Do we need someone to brief us on the E-Commerce initiative being requested by NMSU?