Internal Compliance Review Best Practices For Program Year 2007

Maryland Cooperative Extension (MCE) Internal Compliance Review (ICR) was conducted in the month of May 2008. Internal Compliance Reviews are structured procedural methods used to monitor MCE organization performances based on its Affirmative Action (AA) plan. The following counties best practices should be utilized as benchmarks to improve parity, minority participation and disability access in all MCE counties and regional offices. The counties reviewed for program year 2007 are:

- Carroll County
- Frederick County
- Montgomery County
- Somerset County
- Washington County
- Wicomico County and
- Worcester County

Best Practices-Overall Themes

1. Broadening agricultural and natural resources program content generally results in greater program participation by minorities and women.

2. EAC committees that include minorities and both genders result in better program participation by a representative cross-section of the community than when there is no committee or when that body is homogenous.

3. Having diverse volunteer groups tend to result in greater participation by minorities.

4. Faculty and staff that collaborate with other agencies or entities are likely to expand their audience reach and increase participation in MCE programs.

Best Practices by County

Carroll County

- The county-wide diversity report for MCERS indicated that the overall county programs exceeded parity for all minority groups. The basic need initiative attracted large numbers of African Americans and Hispanics (27.2% and 6.3% respectively).
• Good minority numbers are noted for African Americans in the Conserve/Improve the Environment outreach programs. The General Population outreach programs also demonstrate appropriate outreach for Hispanic clients.

• Programs are taught in buildings or areas that are accessible to the disabled and handicapped individuals.

• Two African American farmers and one active African American Master Gardner are included in the county’s program contacts.

• Articles are submitted on a regular basis to the local newspaper. Efforts were made by educators to include affirmative action statements in their articles and correspondence.

• Agriculture and Horticulture educators collaborated with 4-H and FCS educators in schools and social services audiences. The county was able to reach more diverse clientele as a result of this practice.

• Recipes provided to the disabled in the county’s EFNEP program effectively utilized graphics to enhance their clientele’s learning and development.

• The county collaborated with the Health and Human Service Department to provide train-the-trainer programs.

• A program referred to as DAD-WORK was implemented to increase male participation in EFNEP activities.

• County out of office programs always utilized sites that are handicap accessible.

Frederick County

• County exceeded parity for every targeted group. The basic needs initiative attracted large numbers of African Americans and Hispanics. Good minority numbers are noted for African Americans and Hispanics in The Ag-Business and Environmental Education initiatives.

• The Ag educator reaches out to part time farmers by offering beginning farmer classes. These classes are offered during business hours to accommodate farmers who are unable to attend Ag classes and those who are unable to attend night classes.

• The Healthy Eating on the Go classes are offered at the community library to increase, encourage, and improve minority participation and easy access to its programs.
• Most 4-H clubs meet in community buildings rather than homes to improve and attract minority participation and provide easy access to 4-H activities.

• The county office is working with the FCS educator to transport senior citizens to events being held at the senior centers.

• The Ag educator conducts day-time farming classes to accommodate those with small children and the elderly who are unable to drive at night.

• Brochures include information to enable those individuals with disabilities to call the office to make prior arrangements so they can participate in classes and enjoy the same learning atmosphere and experience with their peers.

• TTY phone number is included on all flyers.

• Collaboration with public service agencies to increase racial and gender parity has been implemented.

• 4-H afterschool partnerships with Police Activity League (PAL) and Hope Six Community Center have succeeded in reaching Hispanic and African American audiences.

• County program activity planning is very diverse which encourages and attracts youth interested in a variety of popular projects to include computer technology, reading, quilting and gardening.

Montgomery County

• The Ag educator offers some newsletter articles and public announcements in Spanish.

• The FCS Strong Women Program offers scholarships to financially disadvantaged clientele.

• The 4-H camp offered seven scholarships, of these; two were awarded to Hispanics and four to African American children.

• The Aging in Place Program session was moved to a facility with an elevator, and transportation was provided for Rockville residents to attend. A break-out session was provided in Spanish and front seats were reserved for hearing impaired participants.
• Hispanic 4-Hers created PSAs in Spanish to advertise Extension shows on local cable Channel 21 and Access Montgomery Television Program.

• The office recently hired someone to update its web pages.

• The Back Forty Newsletter contains the Affirmative Action statement in the body of the newsletter as well as in the pre-printed portion of the letterhead.

• The Ag educator teamed up with Maryland Department of Agriculture to bring more female and Spanish translators to the county office turf-grass programs.

• The Master Gardener program provided older and less mobile Master Gardeners opportunities to volunteer in less strenuous jobs so they can accrue their volunteer hours.

• The county concentrated its efforts on needy audiences from different minority background by collaborating with local service agencies such as public schools and government agencies which resulted in a diversity that reflects the county as a whole.

• Faculty and staff have been recruited and trained specifically to meet the needs of minority clients. Some of those recruited are bilingual and fluent in Spanish language.

• Class materials including entry and exit forms, are available in both Spanish and English.

• Close Encounters and numerous program activities in schools allowed good teamwork and collaboration and the introduction of new MCE audiences.

• The 4-H Honor Flights Project is a new cross-generational leadership and community service project targeting adult volunteers and 4-H seniors. The 4-H leaders welcomed visiting veterans at area airports and provided services at the World War-II Memorial. Scholarships were provided to interested disadvantaged youth and adults.

• The county CED and 4-H educator supported the formation and development of a new 4-H Quatro Haches Club with enrollment of youth from Asian, African American and Hispanic backgrounds. The club held its events at a convenient location and club leaders provided transportation to the youth as needed.
Somerset County

- Central files were well organized.
- Signage is prominently displayed on the outside of the building to indicate that the MCE office is functional and ready to serve the community.
- The Ag educator worked directly with the County Farm Bureau, Soil Conservation District and EAC to strengthen the economic agricultural base for all to include minorities such as African American and Hispanic clients.
- Faculty worked directly with the school board, health department, department of social services and county EAC to strengthen the quality of life base in the community.
- Faculty worked with day care providers to provide nutritional meals to children of all background including African American, Hispanic and Asian toddlers.

Washington County

- The Ag educator reached out to part time farmers and is working with two new minority farmers. He offered a seminar on meat and goat production which attracted minority participation.
- There is a Health and Nutrition education program offered in nine Title -1 elementary schools. There is high minority participation in this program.
- The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition education program has high numbers of minority clientele.
- A Kids Growing with Grains program was offered on site to a high minority population school that couldn’t afford transportation for its field trip.
- The after school program on how to prepare foods worked directly with an autistic child.
- All faculty and staff kept an AA-AF 15 form in the central file listing all trainings attended. This practice promotes and shows great and equal opportunity for all.
- The CED would close the office if necessary or employ a part time staff to cover the telephones and front office in order to allow all employees to attend workshops and training.
• The county’s Ag educator conducted classes during the day to reach older farmers who are unable to drive at night and repeated recertification training at night to reach farmers who work during the day.

• The Ag educator alternated monthly Master Gardener meetings between day and night to include those volunteers who work during the day.

• The Economic Prosperity program shows good outreach to African Americans. The FCS educator teaching the Economic Prosperity program met parity by gender and race in all areas.

• 4-H has partnered with the Fountaindale Elementary Afterschool Program run by the YMCA to introduce youth to 4-H projects. This group includes African American and Hispanic youths. This outreach effort has resulted in reaching more diverse youth audiences.

Wicomico County

• The Ag-agent and CED worked directly with the Wicomico County Chamber of Commerce to strengthen the economic agricultural base of its county. These two individuals provided educational and business opportunities to all of its county citizens.

• The chamber in collaboration with the county office also assisted economically challenged and disadvantaged minority businesses and communities within the county.

• The county has worked with new special interest agriculture groups such as the Landscape and Ornamental Horticulture Industry (LOHI) which resulted in a more diverse clientele.

• In order to address the issue of difficulties in identifying volunteers, the county Office recruited and utilized senior citizens to assist with teaching farm tours. 4-H fliers and curriculum material are provided in Spanish to recruit both volunteers and youth clients.

Worcester County

• The county’s annual Harvest Breakfast is always held in a location in the county central to the general population.

• The CED worked directly with the County Farm Bureau, Soil Conservation District and Lower Eastern Shore Sustainable Organic Network (LESSON) to strengthen the economic agriculture base in the county and provide educational and business opportunities to all county citizens.
• The CED continues to work with new special interest agriculture groups in the organic vegetable, fruit, and wine industries. As a result, a more diverse clientele continues to evolve in the county.

• The county collaborated and publicized programs with Bienvenidos, a Hispanic organization, Daily Times newspaper and Delmarva Farmer newspaper informing them about finance programs that are available to the general public and Hispanic population to encourage economic prosperity and education for all county residents.

• The county identified child care providers and schools interested in implementing finance programs to pre-school and elementary age children. The collaboration of Worcester and Wicomico County public and private schools in the county’s Extension programs has resulted in reaching more diverse clients.

• The county made all reasonable efforts to contact public schools that exhibit large numbers of African American and Hispanic population to make them aware of Extension programs and activities.