**Internal Compliance Review Best Practices for Program Year 2008**

University of Maryland Extension (UME) Internal Compliance Review (ICR) was conducted in the month of May 2009. Internal Compliance Reviews are structured procedural methods used to monitor UME organizations 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 UME counties and regional offices. Please note that in all of the reviews conducted in May of 2009 for program year 2008, MCE and UME may be used synonymously as a result of the recent name change from MCE to UME because this annual review was written by individual review team members and leaders prior to the name change. The counties reviewed for program year 2008 are:

**Baltimore County**

**Charles County**

**Harford County**

**Howard County**

**Prince George’s County and**

**St. Mary’s County**

**Best Practices –Overall Themes**

1. Broadening Agricultural and Natural Resources program content generally results in greater program participation by minorities and women.
2. Extension Advisory Committees (EAC), 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 a 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 all UME programs.

**Best Practices by County**

**Baltimore County**

* An Affirmative Action topic is included at each monthly faculty/staff meeting to keep everyone updated.
* The county office has a lot of joint programming across different departments. The faculty and staff worked together to reach diverse audiences and developed an easy method to reach them by communicating their programs via Newsletters.
* Because of the limited Space in the office, the Master Gardner training relocated the county’s training from the UME office to a community college which has increased the diversity of participants as well as increased the numbers of participants.
* The county office faculty and staff worked cooperatively to reach additional minority audience by providing “Extension programs” at Farmers Market, which is held at a community parking lot.
* Collaborative efforts were made to reach many individuals with diverse backgrounds in Nutrition, Agriculture and Youth programs.
* All Initiatives are advertised using large Posters displaying the diversity of programs and participants, which are posted in the office front entrance.
* Faculty and staff worked with Baltimore County Council members and community to select small communities of low-income areas to reach intended audiences with FCS, 4-H and Agricultural programs.
* The county’s RED shares findings of Interim Reviews with all faculty and staff and all training logs were completed and filed for the calendar year.
* Educators used a variety of methods for announcing programs by posting the county’s educational information on the county’s office website, Newsletters and Flyers.
* Mailing lists are updated regularly.
* Press releases are sent out via a media list. This list is up to date and the list allows the county office to target specific minority communities to improve and increase parity.
* Some meetings are held off site to accommodate individuals with disabilities.
* FCS and Ag educator collaborated to increase access to fruit and vegetables to underserved communities by creating two new Farmers’ Markets.

**Charles County**

* The county office collaborated and publicized programs with Farm Bureau, Farm Credit and Farm Suppliers, MDA, LaPlata Journal Newspaper and Baltimore African American Newspaper by informing them of Agricultural , Master Gardner, Landscaping and Horticultural programs available to the general public to encourage Environmental Stewardship and Quality of Life education to all county residents.
* The county office identified and taught landscaping and livestock parasite management program that attracted a diverse audience because of the growing number of minority farmers in the county. More public and private business organizations are reaching consumers that have increased interest in Extension programs.
* All reasonable efforts were made to contact and change program venues to a central location to accommodate a more diverse audiences. Specifically, the program’s county annual conference was changed to fit the needs of agricultural communities from a day meeting to a night meeting as well as to accommodate part-time farmers such as African American and Hispanic populations.
* The Program Assistant worked with an assisted living home for mentally challenged men and women of diverse backgrounds. After observing that not all participants used the educational materials that were provided, she simplified the language , increased the font, and reduced the amount of text, and the participants started using the materials and posted them in their kitchen and living areas and asked questions relating to the provided literature.
* The Program Assistant partnered with the Judy Centers in Waldorf where there is large Hispanic and Latino Population. She utilizes the bilingual parent of participants to translate as needed and she utilized culturally relevant visuals and educational resources, such as Spanish print materials, canned foods and pictures of foods to communicate nutrition and food safety messages and concepts to her audience.
* Faculty and staff met the parents of “a title school’s children” and requested contact information to send additional educational information/booklets.

**Harford County**

* The county office has a large sandwich board outside the sidewalk. The sandwich board contains the EEO statement informing the general public that UME is an equal access and equal opportunity program. The office has two signs; one facing the street and the other hanging on the wall so that people working or driving can easily locate the Extension office.
* The office has a quality Survey postcard available at the reception area to encourage clients to respond or comment about issues regarding the quality of service and what program Extension can offer to educate the community.
* The office works closely with the Harford Office of Special Education to offer work experience opportunities to handicapped individuals.
* Educators used a variety of methods for announcing programs, including using Community Access Cable Television.
* 4-H camp is well advertized and flyers are distributed to different areas within the community to recruit minority youth.
* The county has a partnership with public schools to help special needs youth by giving them the opportunity to work in 4-H office and by providing resources such as sign language assistant and workforce readiness.

**Howard County**

* The county diversity report indicated that the countywide program exceeded parity for all minority groups. The basic needs initiative attracted a large number of black and Hispanic clienteles.
* Good minority numbers are reported for African American and Hispanic 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 the day to accommodate farmers who are not interested in attending night classes.
* The Healthy Eating on the Go program is offered at community libraries to make the program convenient for all minority audience.
* Most 4-H clubs met in community building rather than homes to improve Extension access to all groups across race and gender lines.
* The County is working in collaboration with with FCS educator to transport senior citizens to programs at Senior Centers.
* Proper filling system was in place for committees and Extension activities and documents supporting Affirmative Action efforts were placed in appropriate filing cabinets for easy access.
* The office established 4-H club activities and programs at Columbia Teen Center by reaching youth between ages 9 -18 from all culturally diverse backgrounds. Youth met twice every month.
* The office recruited male participants to be part of EAC committees and EAC committee members are diverse with regards to their age and gender.
* 4-H promotional packets are distributed at the county fair to attract a diverse audience.
* All reasonable efforts are made to promote Ag safety, with advertising at grocery stores, community centers, banks, Libraries, and Southern States to reach a diverse audience.

**Prince Georges County**

* Ag educator is reaching Asian and Pacific Islander populations via the Landscaping classes that are being offered in the county office.
* Ag educator is collaborating with neighboring counties to conduct the Southern Landscaping Conference. This conference has low registration fee, which encourages landscape contractors to bring their minority technicians with them, particularly the large Hispanics population of landscape workers.
* The office distributed Spanish worker Protection materials to commercial Horticulture clienteles to reach Hispanic population and to improve program reach. EFNEP program partnered with other organizations to expand the reach of EPNEP activities to attract and serve racially and ethnically diverse clients.
* FSNE Educator worked with HIV support groups that are predominantly male in order to increase male participation in nutrition education programs.
* 4-H educator is developing two new program areas that will greatly increase male participation in 4-H youth development program.
* The military program at Andrews Air Force Base and the Drug Court Program are designed to target underserved minority populations to increase minority participation in the county’s Extension activities.

**St. Mary’s County**

* The FCS, FSNE educator and Associate Agent have an established partnership with Southern Maryland Tri-County Head Start Programs as part of the FSNE and FCS programming. This Head Start program has a large Latino population and bi-lingual staff members who worked with the educators as interpreter to clarify program needs specific to the Latino population.
* To further improve the reach and inclusiveness of Extension initiatives, the part time FSNE Associate Agent developed literatures for low literacy audiences. Both FCS and FSNE programs utilized the help of an intern as an interpreter and developed Spanish language flyers and other educational materials as needed.
* School Family and Fitness Night activities are offered to those with special needs or physical /mental disabilities at the Green Holly Elementary School.
* Special Salad tables were built at the Chesapeake Public Charter School at accommodating levels to cater to the needs of young disabled children in wheelchairs.
* The office partnered with public schools to proved free transportation and child care for participants as needed. Arrangements for transportation of participants were provided and documented for the “Child Obesity” training at the true Holiness Church; An African American Church located in Park Hall, Maryland.
* All reasonable efforts were made to integrate volunteer leaders’ membership into EAC and volunteer leadership recruitment and training program were set up at the Patuxent River Naval Station. All meetings were attended by diverse groups such as African American, Hispanic and Asian. While the review team was in the 4-H office, one of the minority volunteer, an African American male, called with questions about the program signifying its existence.