June Executive Leadership Conference

The Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) June Executive Leadership Conference took place June 13th and 14th at the Statler Hotel in Ithaca NY. Dr. Chris Watkins, CCE Director, met with Board Presidents to discuss issues facing Associations and Executive Directors had a number of professional development workshops over the two days. Thank you to all the Board Presidents who took the time to participate in the conference. Materials from the Conference can be found [here](#).

Virtual Meetings of CCE Boards and Committees

A follow-up to the conversations with Association Board Presidents and Chris Watkins, Director of CCE. The question came up whether Open Meetings Law allows virtual meetings of boards and committees. A board member can video-conference into a board meeting though it has to be in a public place, have audio and video, and the public has to be able to come and watch from that remote location. Additionally, the remote location has to be made public prior to the meeting. If all that criteria is met, then that person may participate in voting and can count toward quorum. We reviewed these criteria with Executive Directors and identified other questions along meeting remotely that need answers. We are researching these questions and will publish a fact sheet to be made available on the Board Toolbox.
2019 State 224 Funding Request

Director Chris Watkins mentioned at the June ELC we are continuing our effort to secure a $4 million increase in state funding of our CCE system through 224 funding. This funding goes directly to local associations to support programs. We had great success this past March in Albany making our request and maintaining the current level of support. We are currently modifying our strategies for this coming year’s request based on feedback from this past year. We will be asking Executive Directors to make another trip to Albany in January 2019 to again seek an increase in 224 funding. Summer and fall are very busy times with lots of CCE programs and events, such as camps, fairs, and many others. This is also the time of year when our state elected partners are back in their districts. We are asking Executive Directors to reach out to your state Senate and Assembly members to get them to attend a CCE event in your county to experience first-hand the impact of our programs. Our request is more likely to be funded when members experience the power of CCE programs. There is no need to bring up the 224 funding request at this time, we will focus on that next winter. For now, we need our state partners to see the value in CCE programs.

Strategic Thinking

The Innovation RFP kicked off in April after the Systems Conference. Chris Watkins committed a total of $150,000 to be put toward small awards (of up to $5000 each) to support innovative thinking, testing, and iterating across Associations, and often in partnership with Extension Administration. In the spirit of trying new things and adjusting approaches, the Innovation RFP subcommittee crafted a process which was open and transparent from the start, with a compilation of FAQ received from staff, available on the strategic plan site (strategicplan.cce.cornell.edu) and with a series of Zoom webinars to answer questions and receive feedback.

As of the second and final June 15 deadline, there were over 70 submissions, which was encouraging and exciting for our state. The review process began on a rolling basis, with review using a rubric by 4 randomly selected nominated staff members from across the state, and then by subcommittee members, all compiled by Eskedar Getahun (State Extension Specialist), then passed along to Chris Watkins and Sarah
Dayton for a final decision. So far, 5 counties have been awarded as follows:

- Orleans County: supporting the creation of a programmatic phone app for real time information sharing
- Clinton County: supporting programmatic video creation
- Chautauqua County: supporting programmatic video creation
- Rockland County: supporting podcast creation and infrastructure to support remote participation in programs
- Steuben County: explore staff recognition and incentive activities that will promote cross-generational communication, understanding, and team building

The subcommittee took a break from reviewing the submissions for a period to do a “take stock” of the overall pool, combing through applications, and making note of some of the big-picture cross cutting themes that were coming up in many of the submissions. Specifically, these themes include: needs to experiment around how we communicate our work (e.g. video creation), strengthening our diversity, equity, and inclusion approaches, and strengthening some operational processes. There are also very unique and specific proposal suggestions. The review process will continue again, with hopes to provide feedback to all of the submissions from the first deadline of May 25th within three weeks and the remainder of the submissions by the end of July.

In addition to the Innovation RFP effort, teams of Extension Administration staff and Executive Directors have been working on key areas to move the strategic thinking process forward. The dissemination team is working on creative ways to share the exciting innovations across the system more readily through a revamp of the strategic plan website, to include dynamic content; the team is also producing posters of the strategic priorities and values statements, with suggestions for engaging exercises to be sent to all Associations. The measurable outcomes team has had conversations with Association staff to get input on what specific measurable outcomes we can set for the state as a way to concretely reflect on the strides we will make over the 5-year period of this strategic plan (through 2022). The resource document group is creating templates and resources to guide Associations in doing their county strategic plan, while staying connected to the state plan.

This dynamic and iterative process has not always been comfortable or easy, as it requires comfort with ambiguity, but we are hearing a lot of positive feedback about the conversations that have opened up and the space that has been created for us to work on strengthening CCE. We look forward to hearing any feedback on this process!
Office of Engaged Cornell (OEI)

In the first three years of a strategic partnership between CCE and the Office of Engagement Initiatives, 18 county-level extension offices have been included in the partnership with OEI across five different funding mechanisms.

While the vast majority of these 33 grants are associated with faculty and students from contract colleges, increasing involvement from students and faculty from the Cornell Law School, the College of Architecture, Art, and Planning, and the College of Arts & Sciences represents a broadening of extension relationships.

As part of this strategy to create new opportunities for community-university partnerships involving all disciplines and colleges, in May the Office of Engagement Initiatives and the Atkinson Center of a Sustainable Future hosted a lunch and roundtable discussion as a launching point to further community-engaged research and learning collaborations with Erie County. The event was co-organized with CCE Erie County and Cornell in Buffalo.

Blackbaud Extension Accounting Resources (BEAR) Project

The status of this project is on schedule and on budget. Data mapping and importing is complete. Data validation is in progress and business process discussions occurred in mid-July. Training and user acceptance testing is ongoing and deployment planning will be completed in a phased rollout. For any questions related to this project, please contact your Executive Director for further details.