

Item 4.0: ESCOP Communications and Marketing Committee

Presenter: Jerry Arkin/Arlen Leholm

Background:

ESCOP Communications and Marketing Committee Report

The “Marketing the SAES” white paper is a result of work by the ESCOP Communications and Marketing Committee. In February of 2007, this committee was asked by ESCOP and some members of the AHS group to develop compelling reasons why our nation’s State Agricultural Experiment Stations need a marketing strategy. Included in this brief, is a list of frequently asked questions and answers concerning the proposed marketing strategy.

Marketing the SAES

Despite the vital work and exciting discoveries at the State Agricultural Experiment Stations (SAES), we believe there is insufficient visibility for sustenance of our programs, let alone the growth which the nation needs. We seem to suffer not just from a shortage of fiscal resources but also from a lack of a recognized identity. Too few in Washington D.C. and elsewhere know of us, our mission, and the substance of our research efforts. To remedy this situation, the ESCOP, Communication and Marketing, Committee recommends a marketing (educational) campaign aimed at key federal officials who make the funding decisions upon which our collective destinies depend.

How do we build upon existing efforts to get better recognition of SAES and turn that into strategic support for our programs? The ESCOP, Communication and Marketing, Committee believes that earlier and repeated use of the media to educate and attract major sponsors for our programs is the best way to go forward. We have to build support in home districts and states of our congressional champions and convert that locally-based support into explanations of and publicity for the national SAES system.

Challenge

Over the past fifteen years (F.Y. 1992 to F.Y. 2006), Hatch program funds have been steadily eroded by inflation. As measured in constant 2000 (inflation adjusted) dollars, Hatch funding was \$192 million in F.Y. 1992 and \$153 million in F.Y. 2006. During this same time period (and again measured in constant 2000 dollars), appropriations for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) increased from \$8.6 billion in F.Y. 1992 to \$24.0 billion in F.Y. 2006 and funding for the National Science Foundation (NSF) increased from \$2.2 billion in F.Y. 1992 to \$3.6 billion in F.Y. 2006.

Why have NIH and NSF thrived while funding for the SAES system has withered?

- NIH and NSF have a strong cadre of congressional supporters who understand the agencies’ missions, support their goals, and champion their causes.

CSREES and the SAES institutions do not have legislative champions who are ready, willing, and/or able to provide the sustained leadership necessary for significant SAES funding growth.

Recommended Solution

The land-grant system (including the Experiment Station Section) has a strong and effective lobbying effort in place. We believe that this existing effort needs to be complemented by a narrowly-focused

education campaign aimed at no more than 20-30 members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. We need these members to understand:

- What we do in their state or district.
- What we do for the nation and the greater global community.
- How federal SAES funds leverage state, local, and private funds.
- Why increased SAES funding – both through the formulas and competitive methods – is so important.

The ESCOP Communication and Marketing Committee recommends that the Experiment Station Section retain a nationally recognized marketing firm to help us establish a brand identity and educate federal decision-makers.

Who, What, Why, Where and When of a State Agricultural Experiment Station Marketing Strategy

Why do State Agricultural Experiment Stations (SAES) need a marketing strategy?

- The SAESs lack identity, are difficult to describe, and have not achieved the financial and political support levels necessary to take full advantage of their problem-solving and economic development capacity. The SAESs, a \$2 billion per year enterprise, do virtually no marketing at present.
- The land-grant system's current lobbying approach has worked well, but is not designed to educate key federal decision-makers at a level more than needed to support the lobby effort.

What will the SAESs achieve with a marketing effort?

- It will link state and local-based research impacts to dynamic, integrated and competitive food, agriculture, human systems, forestry, and environment research institutions.
- Also, a successful marketing effort will allow for a more educated base to support increased, sustainable funding (which must include both competitive and formula/capacity-building resources).

Who is the key audience for the SAES marketing strategy and where should the SAESs first focus resources to obtain the most impact?

- In the next few years, ESCOP should focus the primary marketing message on key members of the House and Senate and House Agriculture and Appropriations Committees and their relevant subcommittees. The SAESs might also focus on leaders in OMB, OSTP, and USDA.
- By initially focusing on key Members of Congress (in their local districts) we would limit the targets and link a national marketing campaign by utilizing experiment station communication expertise already in place to provide access to the local media and other outlets. This would be the most strategic and cost effective approach to marketing the SAESs.

Should a SAES marketing strategy include teaching and extension functions?

- A skilled marketing firm will help the SAESs determine how best to craft marketing messages for maximum impact. Clearly, teaching and extension functions need marketing assistance too; an integrated approach would better represent the system's breath and depth.
- The advantage for marketing the SAESs includes its ability to develop multistate research teams and rapid responses to national issues.

- No matter the mission involved, a successful marketing effort must remain focused, simple, economical, and directed at those individuals who affect system budgets.

Doesn't our advocacy firm already perform the marketing function as part of its lobbying contract with the SAESs through NASULGC?

- No the existing advocacy firm, hired to lobby Congress on behalf of the Colleges of Agriculture, Extension, the SAESs, etc. does not have the marketing function in its contract. However, the marketing strategy must coordinate closely with the lobbying effort – a strong marketing effort would complement and strengthen the system's effectiveness.

What attributes and experiences must a marketing firm possess if selected to develop and implement a SAES marketing strategy? Where would the firm deliver the messages?

- The firm must have demonstrated congressional marketing success and it must understand how to influence our key target audience.
- The firm must be able to deliver marketing messages to the key members in their home districts and to the most important media markets that influence those members but be able to tie local outcomes to a national SAES system.

How do you hold a marketing firm accountable for performance?

- ESCOP would identify and carefully monitor outcome measures and objectives stated in the marketing firm's contract for progress toward the strategy's objectives and goals.
- ESCOP will develop a marketing outcome report and present it to the system annually. Additionally, ESCOP will conduct a comprehensive review after three years.

Who will hold the marketing firm to its milestones and outcomes as stated in the contract?

- ESCOP charged the Communication and Marketing Committee with developing a strategic marketing plan and thus accepts this responsibility.

How will SAES marketing efforts complement other attempts to gain new resources?

- It will enhance our chances for success with efforts such as CREATE-21 and NIFA.
- It will enhance and be coordinated with the existing lobbying effort.
- It will cooperate with other parts of the NASULGC system where appropriate.

How will ESCOP fund this marketing effort?

- ESCOP initially provided the Communication and Marketing Committee \$10,000 to develop a marketing firm proposal.
- ESCOP must fund and implement successful marketing efforts over the long run.
- ESCOP needs some off-the-top funding to sustain at least the initial phases of this marketing effort.
- ESCOP and its member institutions could strategically redirect funds currently spent on fragmented efforts whose impacts are, at best, unknown to fund and sustain much of the proposed marketing effort.
- At some point, ESCOP could ask SAES stakeholders to contribute to the effort's funding.

- A coordinated marketing effort from ECOP and ACOP may also benefit the strategy.

When should the marketing effort begin?

Ideally, in order to influence the next annual budget/appropriations cycle, the effort should begin no later than October 1, 2007. A marketing firm should be selected as soon as possible.

Action Requested: None. This has been sent to the AHS and Policy Board for information.

Action Taken: Approved that ESCOP move ahead with enabling the Communications and Marketing Subcommittee to send the RFA for development of a strategic marketing plan out for bid.