

Communications and Marketing Committee Minutes June 17, 2021, 3:00 PM ET

In attendance: Karla Trautman (Chair), JF Meullenet, Steve Loring, Elizabeth Gregory North, Ken White, Wendy Fink, Mark Latimore, Faith Peppers, Nancy Cox, Caroline (Crocoll) Henney, Doug Steele, Ryan McConaghy (Forbes-Tate Partners), Ryan Taylor (FTP), Chanse Jones (FTP), Rick Rhodes, David Leibovitz

1. Introductions and opening remarks
 - Karla welcomed the group and announced that Wendie Cohick (Rutgers) has been named the new ESS representative on the CMC.
2. Approval of the agenda
 - **The agenda was approved by unanimous acclamation.**
3. Approval of minutes, 4/15/2021
 - **The minutes were approved by unanimous acclamation.**
4. Search update on the APLU/FANR position “Assistant Vice President, Communications, Outreach and External Partnerships” (Doug Steele, Karla Trautman)
 - A formal offer was extended to Andrea Putman (SoAR), she has accepted informally.
 - Guidance from the CMC will be important during the beginning of her time as AVP.
 - Anticipated start date of July 15 (date of next CMC meeting and before Joint COPs).
 - Formal announcements will be released on Monday, June 21 to the CMC and in the APLU FANR newsletter.
 - **Once the announcement is released, section representatives on the CMC are encouraged to share the update with their sections.**
5. Forbes/Tate Partners update (Ryan McConaghy, Ryan Taylor, Chanse Jones)
 - FTP has released two monthly communications toolkits since the last CMC meeting. Those were forwarded to all representatives on the updated list of BAA communicators.
 - In May, an infrastructure-related social media campaign was posted on AgIsAmerica; 13 LGUs participated and reached an audience of 51,000.
 - July’s toolkit will use Independence Day as a hook to tie activities to American agriculture.
 - Strategic roadmap development identified that “one ask per month” is the best method of delivery to the BAA communicators.
 - FTP encourages communicators to talk with Directors and ensure priorities are aligned.
 - Through the AgIsAmerica Twitter feed, FTP sees that participation is increasing month to month across the system.
 - Participation from the Western region has been low. Steve Loring mentioned that this topic will be discussed at the upcoming WAAESD summer meeting.
 - Regional association executive directors (ESS and CES) have been added to the BAA Communicators list and receive all materials pushed to the communicators.
 - Elizabeth mentioned she is forwarding all BAA communications materials to ACE and the Southern region communicators group.

- Southern communicators may not be hearing from Directors that these BAA activities are a priority. Some communicators do not feel that legislative material is their kind of messaging to share; it does not appeal to their social media follower base.
- There is a lack of education among communications staff surrounding where funding comes from and why this messaging is important to share.
- USDA averages a media audience of 570M people per month, but that is not representative of NIFA. To amplify this messaging, it's important to do what we are doing: engaging Directors at LGUs.
- We need to be prepared going into the Joint COPs meeting with a message or note to be shared by Executive Directors, reminding Directors about the importance of these efforts prior to section meetings kicking off. There should be a direct callout of the local communicators, to ensure Directors keep them informed of what needs to happen.
- Directors must be connected to the reason why they are making this investment in communications and marketing.
- Make Directors and communicators feel like a part of the process and offer training on the whole effort and why they have an important role to play.
- It's also important for the communicators to emphasize that this really isn't an additional responsibility—just by adding a few hashtags you can repurpose messaging you're already working on. Mississippi State used a news release already in process, rushed it up, and tagged it to support the campaign.
 - The Southern Region has been using #ExtensionHasAnswers
- It may help to offer some "introductory type sessions" for new communicators, similar to the way we introduce New Deans and Directors to the overall BAA and its work. As Faith mentioned, it should not be assumed that every communicator understands where the funding for colleges of ag come from or what the partnership between NIFA and the LGUs is.

6. Future CMC membership, roles and responsibilities

- A new blank committee roster was shared with the CMC.
- Major suggested changes: Section Chairs and representatives (6) are removed, five regional communicators are added. The AVP would also be added to the new CMC roster.
- The roster as shared with the CMC did not include a NIFA Liaison, and that position should be included in the new roster.
- This suggested roster removes redundancy between Executive Committee representatives, section reps, and section chairs (a section could be represented three times by Directors.)
- In the future, having the face-to-face CMC meeting at CARET AHS or APLU will be another opportunity to help get greater understanding and engagement from communicators.
- **This suggested CMC roster should be presented to each section (ESS, CES, and AHS) in July during the Joint COPs meeting. Ultimately the recommendation needs to be presented to the BAA Policy Board of Directors for approval. Having the initial discussion in July is critical to create buy in from the sections who fund the CMC.**

The meeting adjourned at 4:02 pm ET.