

Positioning the Communications and Marketing Committee

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The Charge:

The Policy Board of Directors (PBD) of the Board on Agriculture Assembly (BAA) commissioned a small working group to assess strategies to increase the effectiveness of the Communications and Marketing Committee. In that charge, the PBD asked the working group to consider alternative lines of reporting and models of organization of the CMC. The working group considered six organizational models. Herein, we make a recommendation on the preferred models.

Recommendation:

The working group recommends that the CMC be appointed immediately as an ad hoc committee of the BAA with a goal of establishing the CMC as a standing committee of the BAA within one year of its appointment as an ad hoc committee.

Further, we recommend that the BAA develop a funding mechanism to provide a budget for the CMC. Currently, the CMC has an annual budget of \$400,000 funded by an equal assessment (\$133,333) to the Administrative Heads (AHS), ECOP and ESCOP.

Background:

The communications and marketing project started as an ESCOP initiative dedicated to marketing and advocacy. This grew from a white paper, *Marketing the SAES – A Background Paper on Marketing the SAES* written by Dave MacKenzie, Executive Director – NERA, early in the 2000s. The marketing and advocacy initiative culminated in the establishment of an ESCOP standing committee (Communications and Marketing) and development of a communications and marketing strategy (2008.) In 2012, ECOP joined with ESCOP on the CMC with a goal to oversee and guide a coordinated and targeted educational effort to increase awareness of the Agricultural Experiment Stations and Cooperative Extension Services. In 2013 and 2014, the cost of the project was \$400,000 annually and was split equally between ECOP and ESCOP. Leadership of the committee was shared between the Experiment Station Section and the Cooperative Extension Section; the long-term outcome of the communications and marketing project was to seek increases in federal funding to competitive and capacity lines. In 2014, the administrative heads (AHS, collectively represented by Ian Maw) joined the effort. Again, the membership of the committee changed to reflect the supporting divisions and the annual operating budget was split evenly between AHS, ECOP, and ESCOP.

In 2015, the first Plan of Work (CMC, 2016 Plan of Work) was adopted. The plan included a statement that defined the CMC as the *policy-making body that oversees the development, implementation and effectiveness of the targeted educational efforts, including coordination with the APLU Board on Agriculture Assembly, kglobal and Cornerstone Government Affairs*. One of the goals

of the plan was the development of *ways to coordinate activities with the BAA and its committees including the Budget and Advocacy Committee (BAC) and the Committee on Legislation and Policy (CLP)*. A year later, the 2017 CMC Plan of Work, evolved to state explicitly that the communications and marketing plan (CMP) would focus on BAA initiatives. That included the “One Ask”, Water, Healthy Food Systems and Infrastructure.

While the CMC represents the interests of the sections (AHS, CES and ESS) and, therefore looks like a standing committee of BAA; in actuality, the CMC is a standing committee of ESCOP. The CMC has outgrown its current model of organization and now seeks a means to clearly and closely integrate activities with the oversight organization of AHS, ECOP and ESCOP: the BAA. Equally important, the CMC seeks greater activation of its constituent organizations and partners during calls to action. If effective coordination of the CMC with the BAA, BAC, CLP and institutional partners is to be successfully accomplished, then the reporting lines of the committee must be clearly established.

Once the reporting line is established, then the membership of the committee should be evaluated as a means to optimize the CMC’s operating efficiency.

Models of organization:

Recommended Models

The CMC is appointed as a standing committee of the BAA

Advantages

- Opportunity for close coordination with the BAA.
- Elevates level of responsibility.
- Clear line of organizational oversight.
- Means to assist in unified messaging.

Disadvantages

- Requires 2/3 vote by the membership.

The CMC is appointed as an ad hoc committee (or task force) of the BAA

Advantages

- Quick fix.
- Opportunity for close coordination with the BAA.
- Elevates level of responsibility.
- Clear line of organizational oversight.
- Means to assist in unified messaging.

Disadvantages

- Requires appointing the committee on an annual basis, chance of high turnover rate of committee members.