

Comments from the University of Wisconsin Extension's International Committee on the Partners of the Americas FTF Project: Review of the Extension Services – Guyana

1) Project Strategy and Design

The key problems facing the current Guyana Extension system have been identified in the briefing papers and presumed to be accurate. This new project effort can provide a more comprehensive extension approach including agriculture, business, community development and family development that can assist the Guyanese in developing their Extension System. A program development model would include a coordinated, systematic approach to;

- A.) Focus on the agricultural enterprises, but also look to include other potential audiences including youth, families, small businesses, and local governments.
- B.) Assess the educational needs of agricultural community as well as new extension audiences. The focus would also be on appropriate Extension program delivery methods.
- C.) Assist the Extension staff in identifying professional development needs, and in developing solutions and strategies to the issues of Extension program delivery, given the financial restraints.
- D.) Identify opportunities to help build linkages and partnerships with the public and private sectors of Guyana society, including NGO's, educational institutions, Guyana Peace Corps, agricultural commodity groups and grassroots organizations.
- E.) Help identify the assets and strengths of existing potential public and private partners.
- F.) Identify methods to build broader political and financial support for the Extension system.

2) Proposed Volunteer Assignments

Initially a team of two University of Wisconsin Extension personnel, a county based agent and an administrative staff, should be sent to do the ground work of: Contacting appropriate agencies, organizations and individuals to explain the purpose, scope and expectations of the project, Identifying potential focus group partners, participants and expectations, Coordinating the logistics of in-country meeting facilities, travel reimbursements, etc., and Establishing a realistic timeline for the project team pre-trip planning, in-country travel and field work, discussion, follow-up and developing the team report.

The second set of FTF volunteer assignments would be the project review team and include Extension staff addressing the six identified subject matter areas, but also could include staff with expertise in natural resources, business and community development, and group processing skills.

In the future, assignments would address teaching extension delivery systems and skills, specific production needs, etc. In addition, short and long-term extension agent exchange programs would be desirable.

3) Thoughts on Diversifying the Review Team

A concern, in utilizing a multi-state team approach, is the cost and time inherent in pre-trip planning and design. Who would facilitate and pay those expenses? In addition, is the best approach to offer a mix of Extension Systems or to concentrate on looking at Guyana's unique situation utilizing the before mentioned local program development approach? Given that concern, UW Extension does have intra-institutional working relationships with Extension systems in diverse land grant Colleges and Universities, including Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal College in Wisconsin, and Prairie View A & M in Texas. A project partnership with these institutions would offer diversity in approaches to extension programming and perspectives where a degree of communication already exists. However, the logistics drawbacks still remain.

If it is the intention and final result of the project sponsors to have a collection of specialists from distinct extension services participate in the project team, then Wisconsin can and is willing to still assist.