About this document

Computers and web connectivity alone do not guarantee that individuals and community-based organizations will be able to take advantage of the benefits and opportunities provided by information technology (IT) tools. To address this problem, The Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development, in partnership with Penn State Cooperative Extension and the University of Vermont Cooperative Extension, sponsored a hands-on, in-depth professional development opportunity on May 13-14, 2003 for those who wanted to learn how to help small business owners, local government officials, non-profit managers, and community leaders use Information Technology tools effectively. A key component of the workshop was the discussion of implementation strategies in participants' home states throughout the Northeast.

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Workshop Background

Computers and web connectivity alone do not guarantee that individuals and community-based organizations will be able to take advantage of the benefits and opportunities provided by information technology (IT) tools. This workshop introduced tested and proven curricula that address digital divide issues, as well as a new curriculum targeted at non-profit organizations.

The primary objective of the workshop was to provide Extension and other professionals at the state, district, area, and county levels with an awareness and overview of programs that help communities move into the information age. Participants learned about content, delivery techniques and benefits of IT programs targeted at all community stakeholder groups. The conference cut across program areas and was designed to encourage and facilitate state planning teams in the IT area. An opportunity was provided for individuals to share their programming activities through posters.

Community stakeholders targeted under this effort include small business owners, local government officials, non-profit managers, and community leaders. The e-business, e-government, e-non-profits and community information network (CN) projects were presented, with the CN providing an umbrella for the other three programs. A key component was the discussion of potential implementation strategies in participants’ home states. The audience targeted for program delivery was Cooperative Extension Faculty and Staff in the Northeast region.

States were encouraged to send a 3-4 member team to the conference. State coordinators were: Carl German (clgerman@udel.edu), DE; Rod Howe (rhl13@cornell.edu), NY; Robert Knight (Bob.Knight@mail.wvu.edu), WVU; James McConnon (jimm@umext.maine.edu), ME; Fred Schmidt (fschmidt@zoo.uvm.edu), VT; Bill Shuffstall (shuffy@psu.edu) or Stephan Goetz (sgoetz@psu.edu), PA. Thirty-seven individuals representing 11 of the 13 Northeast States attended the meeting.

Keynote Speech: The Future of Extension in a Post-Industrial World

In his keynote address, Woody Kerkeslager of Information Futures LLC reviewed new and emerging opportunities for Extension in the digital age. He stressed the fact that information technology is merely a new tool that defines a new age, just like the engine and assembly line represent the industrial age. The implications of this new tool, which allows the digitization of words, images and speech, are profound. In particular, IT presents both threats and opportunities to Extension educators in their capacity of information brokers.
Kerkeslager opened with the question of why Extension budgets are under pressure and declining in most states. One answer may lie in a declining relevance of Extension, as problems facing society have changed and as other agencies have stepped forward to obtain public funding to carry out community development work. The following is a transcript of Kerkeslager’s slideshow. It outlines an important opportunity for Extension in this new world.

Cooperative Extension’s Opportunity: The Digital Divide
by Ellwood Kerkeslager

Overview: The Best and the Worst of Times

Digital technologies impact almost every aspect of daily life in the 21st Century, including education, jobs, business operation, market structure, health care, government, the economy, recreation and entertainment. These technologies are in fact the tools of the information age, and individuals unable to use these tools will be economically marginalized and forced to compete for low-paying jobs. Similarly, communities that are unable to make available these tools will be marginalized economically, with businesses and residents leaving for places that offer better prospects.

Each community must take control of its future and assure the availability of digital tools and public access to them by encouraging suppliers of digital tools to develop and serve the community market. Regulatory, legal and legislative obstacles must be removed, and customers and employees prepared to use the tools. A community-based effort is needed, in which a Community Center allows for free access to, use and training in tools. We have developed a proven structure through the CN program to encourage community involvement and to move individuals, organizations, and the community generally toward a commercially viable market structure that is based on these tools.

The nature of the digital tools supports the efforts to serve communities and small businesses. In particular, location and distance are less relevant than in the Industrial Age, and the cost of even very powerful digital tools is modest. The net effect is that of reversing the pull of the Industrial Age to the cities. Communities and businesses will succeed if market conditions can be met to supply the tools, if the customers and employees are prepared to use the tools, and if this can be done in a cost-effective manner.

The Third Generation Community Network model by Information Futures, LLC is designed around the current and future power of the digital tools. It is focused on the entire community. Cost is minimized and the project is scaleable as demand
grows and the concept supports development of the market for commercial providers of digital tools. It is community-driven, encouraging volunteerism and learning throughout the community, and it is focused on applications immediately useful in business, education, government, non-profits and family life.

**Key Technology Changes**

Key technology changes underlying the IT revolution are summarized in the adjacent chart. Digital tools have become the engine of the information age and the common language of the global economy. Examples of digital technology components of the digital tools (information appliances, communications networks and information) include: integrated circuits, fiber optic communications, wireless communications, content storage, displays and software.

Digital technology components are now powerful, cheap and used everywhere, and they are bound to become 100 to over 1,000 times more powerful over the next decade. Many of our perceptions related to location, distance, work, workplace, education, government services and community will change as a result of advances in these digital technology components. We are witnessing an “Age” transition period that is as profound as that occurring in the 1830s-1840s. In this age, which is defined by digital tools and not mechanical engines, all information is processed, communicated and stored digitally and it is broadly and readily available. Coincidence of time (synchronization) is not required for communications, human interaction with information appliances is becoming more natural and, finally, voice, text and video converge to multimedia/multimode formats.

The societal impact of this change will be profound. In particular, digital tools will become a part of all jobs, education and entertainment, and markets will continue to expand from local to global. The power of the digital tools benefits small businesses relatively more than large businesses, and rural towns relatively more than cities.

**What Work Will Be Like in Ten Years**

In the future, work will be more dependent on the three digital tools, less dependent on a “strong back,” and also less dependent on place. Work will also be more flexible in time, and in terms of the time period during which a “full-time” job and a part-time job is performed. Individuals will have time to pursue multiple jobs, and work will require lifelong learning. In this new reality, education is too
important for businesses to be entrusted solely to the traditional educational institutions. A more competitive marketplace in education will develop.

Offices will be concentrations of access to communications and information. There will be some one-employer office spaces, some generic office space for short-term lease by employers, and some home offices with communications and information capabilities equal to those of today’s large corporate office. Offices of the future will be flexibly designed to support the space, communications and information needs of teams that can restructure in a matter of days. Employers in information-based businesses will be able to manage (coach, lead and evaluate) a workforce diverse in place and time with the same digital tools used for the business.

In the Information Age, workplace issues such as age, sex and disabilities can be minimized. Employees with skills in the use of digital tools will be qualified to move flexibly between jobs in previously disparate businesses. More employees will become individual contractors or consultants to employers, and home-based businesses using digital tools will develop and thrive. Communities can take many positive steps to support the needs of business, government, educational institutions, families and individuals to prepare for the workplace and economy of the Information Age.

The Third Generation Community Network Model

The guiding principles underlying this model include allowing an entire community to learn to use the tools of the information age and integrating the learning process into the daily life of individuals, families, and organizations. People are put first – technology tools support people, the involvement of community members in planning, implementing and maintaining the project is maximized, and total project costs to the community are minimized.

The mission is to allow people of all ages and incomes to have free access and training in the use of personal computers as a tool to obtain information and to support lifelong learning. As part of the community network project, a World Wide Web site is developed with full community involvement, including families, local businesses, schools, local government, local libraries, local universities and the local media. A common, virtual space is provided for all parts of the community to share activities and information about themselves and their organizations in order to enhance the feeling and functioning of community.

Community network project benefits for families and individuals include more opportunities for personal development, better education and training for jobs, increased involvement within the community, a broader range of entertainment, and new opportunities to volunteer using skills and experience with digital tools. Local government benefits from more effective communications with the public, improved efficiency and service provision, greater feedback from the public, the ability to position community and government as area and national leaders, by
achieving a positive impact on budget, jobs and local economy, and sharing services across departments and buildings and with schools.

The local library or other public building becomes the information center for the public in the Information Age, and a Community Center in town. It develops more vital links in education and lifelong learning, access to the information tools needed for education and jobs, and access to free training in the use of digital information tools. Digital tools allow local schools to provide better education to the community’s children, preparing them for the 21st Century, allows more cost-effective education using new digital tools, enhances the teachers’ job and status, enhances the school administrator’s role and status, and allows sharing of services across school buildings and with government.

Community Network projects provide community leaders with tools and support to make the improvements they want, a sense of pride in their accomplishments, improved community quality of life and feeling of community. The project is a platform to provide local businesses with local, area, national and global market access and exposure; improved local economy; and a basis for current and new businesses to address markets of the future. The media benefit through access to a new, powerful and inexpensive medium. They can become a key player in the life of the “virtual community,” and they have the ability to expand their role from local to regional/state. Last, they can have a daily presence rather than a weekly presence.

Digital tools provide Not-for-Profits more effective ways to communicate with the community and beyond; a better ability to advertise mission and goals to the groups served; better ability to fulfill their service mission; and enhanced ability to serve the community by being community volunteer teachers. Universities have expanded opportunities for involvement in the community as well as for community service based on expertise in digital tools and education.

**Project Stages**

The project works through four stages, in addition to the preparation phase, which consists of obtaining community stakeholder commitment, community inventories, resources, priorities and partners.
Stage A:

People: Build support among stakeholder groups, identify individuals to serve on and organize the Leadership Team.

Equipment: Identify and procure equipment necessary for the Community Center. Community Center and other building preparation: Install or make necessary upgrades (server, local area network, etc.) to buildings identified as Community Center(s) or training facilities.

Stage B:

Secure a high speed Internet connection for the Community Center and training facilities.

Stage C:

Agree on a Community Web site architecture; identify an individual to create the site structure and templates and to serve as Web master; purchase a domain name, etc. or work with organizations that have an existing community Web site to determine if a partnership can be established to expand the existing Web site to serve the entire community. Determine the educational programs and the volunteer teachers. Advertise the Community Center services of free access/free training.

Stage D:

Implement additional services that should be provided by the project. (e.g., e-mail accounts, advanced training, new or improved services for government library or schools).

Community Networking in Your Community

We have adopted the following process for implementing the CN projects.

1. Establish or identify community individuals or a group ready for the start-up commitment
2. Link to community networking experts
3. Identify leadership team – key stakeholder identification and buy-in
4. Conduct community inventories of stakeholders, community-wide internet infrastructure assessment (Internet Service Providers, types of connection available); organizational infrastructure (how publicly funded organizations are using IT)
5. Develop mission, goals, and principles; launch the implementation/technology committee, and the initial plan, including Community Center, Web site, and education plan.
6. Community buy-in; continue to identify volunteers, partners, supporters, donors; initial stages implementation; observe and measure community results, accomplishments; subsequent stages and continuing community learning, improvements.
Stages are determined by the specific community’s situation and circumstances. Components may vary based on the status of any existing Community Centers, the specific partners, the status of government and school buildings, the existence of an initial community Web site, etc. The implementation/technology committee should take these factors into account when developing the components, the initial plan and the four stages described above.

**Finally: The Opportunity**

Each of our communities is being affected by the inexorable spread of digital tools. Each community – government, business, school/university, non-profit, family and individual – is affected and must make a decision. In this case, inaction is also a decision. Cooperative Extension is perfectly positioned to help lead the communities to their optimal futures. Or, it may choose not to do so.

**Program Highlights**

Overviews of the Access eBusiness, Access eGovernment, Access eNon-profit and Community Network programs were provided. The overviews included educational objectives, target audience and program resources of each program.

Prepared by **Rae Montgomery, Tim Kelsey, Walt Whitmer and Bill Shuffstall**

**Access eCommerce** is hands-on electronic commerce education for owners of small businesses. The project’s overall goals are threefold: to introduce small rural business to e-commerce; to encourage business growth or start-up; and to help rural businesses participate in the global economy. Target audiences are those curious about e-commerce, those wanting to make better use of existing websites, very small businesses, home-based businesses, startups as well as small towns and cities. Types of businesses involved include chambers of commerce, supermarkets, newspapers, lawn care services, manufacturers, auto dealerships, farms, resorts, computer services and art galleries.

The course content consists of Electronic Commerce Basics; Planning Your Website; Promoting Your Website; Developing Your Internet; and Business Plan. The course format is 12 hours of instruction in 4 sessions, taught in a computer lab with 20 participants per workshop, an instructor and several “helpers,” or a pool of
instructors and helpers. A number of instructor resources are available, and the possibility exists of branding the program in a particular state. At this time, 12 states are using the program, which received the Community Development Society Innovative Program Award in 2001.

**Access eGovernment** is hands-on education to help local government officials use the Internet to better serve the public. Target audiences include local officials interested in seeing what other governments are doing on the Internet, officials who “want to have” a Web site and officials who want to improve existing Web sites. Participants include state, county and municipal governments, and elected officials, appointed officials, department heads, program staff and clerical staff. A team approach is essential to the program.

Access eGov comes in three “flavors”: Intro to eGovernment (1-hour); eGovernment Tour (4-hour hands-on); and process facilitation. In the latter, a specific local government is provided assistance with developing an eGovernment site. Instructor tools include PowerPoints, Speaker notes, Brochure, eGovernment manual (on-line and paper copy), and an on-line evaluation form. In Pennsylvania, over 50 county staff have been trained to deliver the program; CED’s provide a one hour introduction while CD agents deliver a four hour session.

**Access eNonProfit** is a one-half day hands-on workshop designed to help non-profit organizations make the most of their web presence. Non-profits save money and provide better information and services; engage in commerce, and promote mission-based communities; and they become more customer-focused. Objectives include helping non-profit’ staff to understand the potential of their web presence, and web resources for meeting organizational goals; use the web to learn what other non-profits are doing; to develop a strategy for developing (or redeveloping) their website for their visitors; and to find affordable resources and tools.
The following are primary target audiences: Non-profit organizations looking to improve their web presence, those interested in starting a non-profit organization, and those interested in learning more about the services provided by non-profit organizations. Types of non-profits include churches, United Ways, community and civic organizations, social service organizations, philanthropic organizations, issue-specific organizations (e.g., environmental, political, social, etc.), recreational and sports organizations, and educational organizations. The course content consists of eNonprofit basics, Learn to use the internet, Plan your website, Implement and test, Maintain and promote, and Follow your business plan. Course materials include presentation and teacher notes, a brochure, program planning guide, and assessment and evaluation tools.

**Community Network Projects** are community-driven efforts that move an entire community into the Information Age. The rationale behind the project was discussed in some detail earlier in Kerkeslager’s keynote address, as were the implementation processes. The project is currently being implemented in five Pennsylvania counties and in Portalis, NM, with three other sites having expressed an interest in introducing a project. Program resources include fact sheets on CN Introduction, Community Web site, Community Center, Education and Broadband Demand Aggregation, in addition to Inventory Tools (stakeholder identification; organizational IT assessment; Internet infrastructure assessment). State/multi-state training options are available.

**eProgramming Models**

This section presents implementation models being used to integrate digital divide programming in Minnesota, Nebraska, and Pennsylvania.

**University of Minnesota** by Rae Montgomery

At the University of Minnesota, Access eCommerce (Business) is located within the community vitality initiative, under the Community Economics section. Access eGov and eNonProfit are part of the Leadership and Civic Engagement section in the same initiative, which also includes the section on diversity and inclusion. The programs are delivered on a regional basis within Minnesota, through six community economics regional extension educators.

To expand outreach, University of Minnesota relies on training of members at other institutions to deliver programming to their respective audiences. These include Pine Technical College, the Minnesota Women’s Business Center and the University of Minnesota Duluth Center for Economic Development. Another strategy is that of developing curriculum for client needs, including the Association of Minnesota
Counties (eGov), telephone companies (Access eBroadband) and Pine Technical College (Access Internet). To ensure sustainability, University of Minnesota offers curriculum development as well as licensing and branding of the programs.

**University of Nebraska by Connie Hancock**

At the University of Nebraska, the e-team consists of eight Extension educators. One-half of each educator’s appointment focuses on technology programming. The mission is to educate and empower rural communities to implement and benefit from technology opportunities. Responsibilities of staff include the development, marketing, facilitation and teaching of technology programs, operation, maintenance and expansion of programs, staying abreast of new concepts and technologies, and technology planning in rural communities. eProgramming includes Master Navigator (a four week course that teaches Windows concepts, navigating the WWW and email); Nebraska Electronic Main Street (a four week course that teaches community leaders and business owners e-business concepts); and Nebraska e-Government (basic skills plus four hands-on workshops working with local elected officials). ePublications have been prepared on NebFacts (Internet terms) and Lessons for community groups (SafeSurfing.com; and Telemedicine: The Future is Here).

Additional efforts target librarian, teacher and postal service training, organizing local technology committees, conducting local technology fairs and expositions, statewide meetings with Congressman Osborne, and technology conferences and workshops. The Master Navigator has been taught in over 108 communities to 1,416 people; the Nebraska Electronic Main Street has been offered in 35 classes benefiting 392 businesses, and 100 additional instructors have been trained (1/3 have taught classes). Other notable accomplishments include a grant acquisition (Nebraska Information Technology Commission award to AIM Institute and conNEcting Nebraska for $110,000; the group is currently part of the National e-Commerce Extension pilot effort; and it submitted a proposal to the Nebraska Secretary of State, and the Nebraska Information Technology Committee Community Planning Grants); community planning (formal community and business IT assessments) and the group has collaborated with the AIM Institute and the Center for Applied Rural Innovation to facilitate statewide business and provide an IT survey. On the horizon are projects involving e-Ag, e-4-H, advanced NE Electronic Main Street and e-Other.
At The Pennsylvania State University the Access eCommerce and eGov programs are being offered as a suite that also includes the Community Network Initiative (CN). These are all viewed as programs that fill an important gap, and they are built on internal and external partnerships, with administrative support. Each has a lead staff person who works with agents willing and able to implement the programs.

The Community Network Initiative was launched in 1998, when it was piloted in Potter County, PA. Out of this pilot a model for statewide delivery was developed and additional digital divide programming opportunities were identified. A county agent was funded at 50% for this position out of administrative funds. In addition, a consultant was funded by Penn State’s Vice President for Outreach and Cooperative Extension.

The CN project currently consists of eight projects at various stages of development, and it is supported by state agencies and includes collaboration of faculty from other colleges in the University. Partners include the private sector (broadband providers), Appalachian Regional Commission Local Development Districts and the PA Rural Development Council. The CN team recently visited New Mexico to discuss adaptation of the program in that state.

Opportunities and challenges include the fact that this is a new audience and programming area; the real and perceived internal and external competition; marketing and implementation regionally and through individual agents (with a limited statewide effort); and the cost. Key lessons for implementing successful e-programming efforts include finding or creating program material, building administrative support (central and regional), establishing an implementation taskforce, marketing the program to statewide organizations to gain credibility; and partnering with appropriate organizations.

Reports of Roundtable Discussions

Small group discussions were held around possible strategies for implementing digital divide programming in the Northeast Region. These are summarized in the following sections.
Access eBusiness
By Jennifer Glover, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oswego County and Rae Montgomery, University of Minnesota

In the Wednesday morning session, Extension Educators explored the University of Minnesota Extension Service’s Access eBusiness curriculum. In four hours, Rae Montgomery (University of Minnesota Extension Service) and Jennifer Glover (Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oswego County) provided an overview to participants of the award winning 12-hour Introduction to eCommerce that has been used throughout the United States in educating small business owners. The afternoon followed with a brief roundtable to discuss the future of eCommerce programming throughout the Northeast Region. The discussion was held around the question, “what will it take to bring eCommerce programming to the Northeast?”

Introducing eCommerce will require a number of training activities, including train-the-trainers and short overviews and in-service education to introduce and identify interested staff members. County and regional Extension staff need to explore potential partnerships with outside organizations (e.g., Small Business Development Centers, Chambers of Commerce) to assist in referrals and other business expertise, since many states do not have a strong presence in providing business education through Extension.

Training is also necessary to assist Extension educators who are not technology-savvy, so that they may better utilize computers and the Internet. As our future clients (teenagers and tweens, who are already comfortable navigating the Internet) grow up and develop eCommerce web sites, educators delivering eCommerce programming need to have a more adequate skill set to be credible sources of Internet knowledge.

In addition, eCommerce education cannot be Extension’s only avenue to technology training. It is crucial for Extension to integrate electronic technologies throughout a variety of subject areas, such as the curricula discussed throughout the Bridging the Digital Divide Conference (i.e., eGovernment, eNot-for-Profit, and Community Networks).
Extension can also play a pivotal role in providing research in this area. Currently, it is difficult to obtain relevant, timely and unbiased research to support the benefits and best practices of eCommerce. Relevant information and research to emphasize best practices in developing an effective web site are also needed.

In addition, a centralized information-sharing system should be developed for Extension Agents and Specialists to collaborate across state lines.

To ensure success in eCommerce programming, it is necessary to educate staff and administrators about the need for these educational opportunities. Then, working regionally, staff can begin to implement pilots to test the success of the program in each state. We recommend that these programs be led by an eCommerce statewide specialist and a county or regional agent to maximize the impact upon local business owners.

Access eGovernment
by Timothy W. Kelsey

Participants in this group started the discussion by pointing to the need for an overview position paper for communities, to be commissioned by the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development. This would include an impact statement for communities with alternate case examples showing the impact of IT. The sequencing here is that of community education about the need for e-Gov, which produces the drive for officials to act on that need. In this context, it is important for communities to think regionally.

Regional training is needed for Extension in this area. This includes regional sharing via an electronic forum (that is scheduled with regularity) of programs, resources and ideas in this subject area. An overview program should be planned and implemented for the Northeast Extension Directors to help them better understand the program. The question was also raised, what else do local officials need in terms of computer software, skills and standardization of protocols and software. To be effective, we would need to partner with government associations, and recognize the need for standardization of hardware and software (we should serve as a voice for this but not advocate for a particular brand or type of software), and also plan for training in computer and internet development.
This group discussed the importance of extending our capacity in this area. We will develop an overview for Extension Directors of this program, including a “Woody-like” piece providing the context of the digital divide and a great sense of urgency for this area. States will develop IT Action Plans that are state-specific. As part of this, we need to identify the IT components that already exist in all other Extension programs, as well as barriers to understanding issues related to new clientele and getting steeped in topically in-depth information. Once this is established the second half of our responsibility is to ensure that all Extension professionals across the system have access to this information.

In terms of extending our capacity we need to apply e-programming as programming and not as technology as such. We need to match technology knowledge capacity with softer skills development on the part of users. Perhaps we can pursue grant opportunities to combine technology with education. We need to identify promotional and advertising approaches to get to the difficult-to-reach. Each state should identify an IT ‘person’ – appointing someone to coordinate as we move forward.

We need to integrate IT literacy education into all of our educational programs: E-Everything! To do this we need focus teams as well as specialists who identify IT issues within topics. In terms of evaluation and accountability we need to assess for the purpose of improvement, accountability and marketing. We need to identify collateral benefits through benchmarks, including testimonials, examples of impact – change, qualitative vs. quantitative, and process and outcomes. This includes borrowing from other states, and sharing resources and tools. This conference is a good start for initiating these activities.
Members of this discussion group agreed that Community Network (CN) programming is an excellent opportunity for the Cooperative Extension system in their states. The model can easily be adopted by Cooperative Extension systems across the region. Benefits discussed included those that are internal and external to Extension:

**External to Cooperative Extension**
- Addressing a contemporary issue facing communities in their states
- Providing a framework to help communities transition into the Information Age

**Internal to Cooperative Extension**
- Building partnerships with a broader group of stakeholders
- Building support for Cooperative Extension among new stakeholder groups

Some communities across the region are likely ready to adopt and implement CN Projects. These communities would exhibit several of the following characteristics:

- An individual or organization willing to champion a community network project.
- A history of organizations working cooperatively to address community issues.
- Existing community Web site, community center(s) and/or demand aggregation effort.

An inventory of communities could be created as part of the background work for establishing a CN, and to generate interest in such an effort.

Another issue discussed was how this kind of activity should be promoted within the Cooperative Extension system in the current funding environment. One strategy would be to identify champions in each of the states. These champions should develop and implement a plan to
pilot CN projects in as many states across the region as possible. States interested would identify one community that is ready to implement a project. CN experts would work with Cooperative Extension Staff and other interested organizations to pilot a CN project in that community. Staff from Cooperative Extension and other key organizations in the state would participate in and observe the CN process in the pilot project, enabling them to gain the knowledge and skills needed to guide projects in other communities.

The group also identified the following list of marketing materials or tools that need to be developed:

- Identify or develop and share inventory tools and studies and case studies or examples
- Document anecdotal examples of benefits to individuals, businesses, communities and testimonials
- Develop a CD or Video mock-up of a CN Project that can be used to help leaders grasp the concept and process
- Devise a mechanism to share local studies on computer use
- Create tools to promote the concept both internally and externally (such as through a State Fair to model a CN). Create a Web site structure that provides Web space for every organization and event at the fair. Provide the organizations training opportunities so they have the skills and opportunity to improve their Web presence. Install a Community Center that provides free access to computers, high-speed Internet and productivity and training space for volunteers to lead education on the productivity tools.

Finally, the group developed the following schematic to describe how the Community Networks can be envisioned as an umbrella for the other eProgramming efforts.

![Community Network (CN) Diagram]

**Wrap-up – Where to From Here?**

At the wrap-up session, agreement was universal over the importance of continuing to move ahead with e-Programming efforts in the Northeast US. The Northeast Center is the logical vehicle for overcoming state borders and helping educators
work together, and also for raising the visibility of this issue among the Northeast Extension Directors.

Cornell University is offering to host a similar workshop next year, with support from The Center. The workshop planners will consider the fact that Extension is well ahead of research in this area, and may seek to address this as part of the workshop program. Other considerations include the appropriate balance between theory and practice (having more hands-on sessions and introductions to computers would be beneficial), and avoiding concurrent sessions so that participants could be exposed to all program areas.

At the same time more thought needs to go into how to get people into the computer labs and willing to commit four hours of their time to these programs. In others words, what is the pay-off? Class participants could be tracked for evaluation purposes and a database of observations built (for example, are trainees able to apply the knowledge imparted?). It is now possible to study and evaluate websites in real time, but we should not ignore as a beneficial impact those instances where individuals chose not to set up a website after learning (correctly) that doing so was not a good option for them.

The question was raised, how can we share the importance of the information presented at the workshop with our colleagues in the states who did not attend? Evaluations of programs need to be carried out along with impacts of the technology within the community at large.

One possibility explored at the end of the workshop is that of developing an Access eExtension curriculum for Extension Directors and their staffs. This curriculum would not only simulate for the Directors the training that occurs in each of the ePrograms discussed at these workshops, but it could also help in improving the websites used by each state. Essentially, Directors would be invited to review, discuss and evaluate other Extension sites (outside the Northeast), and in the process also learn how to optimally use their own state’s websites as a key portal to their programs. As such, this effort would parallel the eExtension effort currently underway nationally.

Finally, we will seek to establish regional taskforces for each of these programming areas in the Northeast to continue the momentum created at the workshop. This includes asking the Directors to endorse these taskforces within their states. We will be setting up specialized listservs by subject area and possibly by state to encourage ongoing communication. We will also explore potential funding sources to help support an expansion of these initiatives in the future.
Poster Presentations

Name: Lisa Dennis
Organization: Univ. of MD Cooperative Extension
Email: ld78@umail.umd.edu
Title: Bridging the Digital Divide in Maryland

Program Areas:

4H
Youth
Community Development

Purpose/Objective: PowerUp is organized and operated for the purpose of assisting under-served youth to obtain the skills, experiences and resources required to succeed in the digital age. It’s activities are aimed at fulfilling the five promises identified by America’s Promise – The Alliance for Youth as being key to building character and competence of our young people; caring adults; safe places; marketable skills; and opportunities to serve.

URL: N/A

Description: The project in Somerset County, MD has the following goals:
• to utilize existing Extension programs
• to provide better access to community members through the internet, building e-commerce sites for individuals to market local products, teaching the elderly computer skills
• to build and maintain web sites and domains and working with the agriculture and waterman communities to bridge the digital divide. This grant will allow the Crisfield Community to have the opportunity to enrich their population through technology by utilizing youth and adult partnerships to enhance educational and business opportunities.

Audience: The facility where this project will be housed is Woodrow Wilson Community Center; this organization serves African American, White and Hispanic youth population from primarily single parent families – these families have limited resources.

Description of Program:

posters, charts, etc.
Name: Carl L. German  
Organization: University of Delaware  
Email: clgerman@udel.edu  
Title: Mid-Atlantic Regional Food Systems Web Site  
Program Areas:  
   Other: Agricultural Marketing  
Purpose/Objective: To promote the availability of the site.  
URL: http://agri-culturehealth.net  
Description: Site contains information pertaining to farm retail marketing, an electronic farm market directory, food and health, food safety, and environmental issues.  
Audience: Primary audience is farm retail market operators and consumers.  
Description of Program:  
   interactive site  
   posters, charts, etc.

Name: Paul Treadwell  
Organization: Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Email: pt36@cornell.edu  
Title: Linking Campus to Community  
Program Areas:  
   4H  
   AgNR  
   Community Development  
Purpose/Objective: To illustrate the diverse ways in which Cornell Cooperative Extension is using ICT to deliver programing and access to information to the citizens of New York.  
URL: N/A  
Description: To illustrate the diverse ways in which Cornell Cooperative Extension is using ICT to deliver programing and access to information to the citizens of New York.  
Audience: N/A  
Description of Program:  
   handout  
   posters, charts, etc.  
   video
Workshop Evaluation Results

1. What level of opportunities do you see for this type of programming in your state? [please circle]

5 4 3 2 1
lots of opportunities some opportunities no opportunities

- Six respondents see lots of opportunities (5)
- Nine respondents rated the level of opportunities a (4)
- Two respondents see some opportunities (3), primarily because of a lack of resources.

2. How important is Bridging the Digital Divide-type programming to the future of Cooperative Extension in your state?

5 4 3 2 1
very important of medium importance not important

- Ten respondents rated the BDD programming as very important (5)
- Six respondents rated the importance of BDD programming a (4)
- One respondent rated the importance as medium (3)

3. Please indicate which of the four concurrent sessions you attended and also indicate how useful you felt the session was using this scale: [Note: no responses received for the eGov session]

5 4 3 2 1
very useful of medium usefulness not useful

- Five respondents attended the Access eBusiness session with three rating it as very useful (5), one indicating medium usefulness (3) and one providing no response as to usefulness.
- Seven respondents attended the eNon-profit session with six rating it as being very useful (5) and one rating of (4).
- Five respondents attended the Community Network Initiative with four rating it as very useful (5) and one respondent rating the session between (4 and 5).

4. Would you like to make these programs available in your state?

Circle: YES NO

- All 17 respondents would like to make these programs available in their state.

5. What barriers and opportunities do you see for joint BDD efforts across state lines in the Northeast US, if any? [Note: no responses received for the eGov session]
Access eBusiness

**Barriers:**
- Differing program foci
- Commitment of resources and identifying the need and available resources
- Limited staff resources
- Budget for traveling across state lines

**Opportunities:**
- Shared resources; less duplication
- Ability to show impact
- Develop regional workshops for clientele groups
- Expanding collaborations for quality programming and to utilize expertise

eNonProfit

**Barriers:**
- Some challenges in eGov arena due to differences in government structure across states
- Varying politics across states and differences in business competitiveness
- In Maryland the information needs to get to those with expertise in this area
- Budget
- Dollars

**Opportunities:**
- We can learn from each other and support in eBusiness, Community Network Initiative and eNon-profit – these activities are the same wherever you go!
- Greater outreach with non-profits
- Pressing issues – timeliness
- Shared programming
- Collaborations

Community Network Initiative

**Barriers:**
- Educating community leaders
- Resources/funding
- Community leaders buying into the concept
- Lack of focus on this area (Digital Divide) in extension
- Making time to do it

**Opportunities:**
- Everywhere
- Strengthen and shape extension for the 21st Century
- All of the universities will be interested in partnering and helping tackle the Digital Divide
- Now may be the best time to bring these issues forth, since extension is in the middle of funding challenges and needs to change
- Resource sharing – utilize technology to support one another’s programming (talk to one another and share ideas used good and not so good! Can do this on-line)
6. What additional resources, training, etc. would you need to deliver these programs?

- Train-the-trainers; case studies; evaluations
- Additional training and availability of co-trainers. The curriculum available as a “pilot” reduced cost basis
- Additional resources – marketing tools – display booth materials (photos/labels, etc.) to use in reaching audiences. We need a web-based forum to share experiences in teaching or FAQs that go beyond the curriculum so everyone knows the answers!
- Step by step examples that one can follow and demo with
- Resources on information technology
- Contact information: Who to contact-How to access the need of the community or business
- Training in Community Network facilitation for extension staff and training in each of the program areas that are part of a Community Network (eGov, eBus, eNFP, etc.)
- Action plan
- More in-depth training and more hands-on and IT training
- Train-the-trainer and video-conference for extension agents
- In-service

7. Do you have any general comments about this workshop?

- A great step in getting Extension geared in the right direction! ETechnologies will be crucial for our communities for years to come – inability to join will leave us behind!
- Nice use of training methods with a variety of hands-on and shared learning techniques. Very good networking opportunity. Facilities are excellent!! Very good dinner. Need to go to the next stage – take the next step. “This is a great opportunity for educators to expand their capability of e-programming and furthering the capacity of Extension, communities and individuals.”
- Good job!
- A good chance to learn from each other and strategize together.
- I would love to attend more than one workshop. Very informative!
- Very informative, should happen twice a year.
- I think the speakers and program coordinators were excellent.
- Parking – distance to sessions was a little difficult. Excellent speakers!
- The workshop was excellent. I wish I could have participated in all four sessions.
- Need participant list? (Good for future collaborations – can be done after session with mailout). Some redundancy on first day. Second day excellent.
- Great information shared. It opened my mind to a new vision for future programming.