APPENDIX D  
SAES-422  
Format for Multistate Research Activity  
Accomplishments Report

Project/Activity Number: NCERA-210

Project/Activity Title: Improving the Management and Effectiveness of Cooperatively Owned Business Organizations

Period Covered: November 2015 – November 2016

Date of This Report: January 9, 2017

Annual Meeting Date(s): November 2, 2016

Participants: Annual meeting minutes are available at:  
https://sites.google.com/site/nceracooperatives/meeting

Brief summary of minutes of annual meeting: Annual meeting minutes are available at:  
https://sites.google.com/site/nceracooperatives/meeting

Accomplishments: Provided below are the committee’s stated objectives as well as a summary of the participants’ engagement in pursuing objectives 1 and 2, grouped by broader thrust. The NCERA-210 objectives 3, 4 and 5 are not undertaken by any one individual, but pursued by virtue of maintaining a cohesive and active group of participants who pursue joint activities that meet the project’s stated objectives 1 and 2.

Objective 1: The overall objective of NCERA-210 is to promote and coordinate timely research on cooperatively owned business organizations for agricultural marketing, agricultural input supply, vertical coordination through value added processing, and rural services.

Objective 2: Provide annual opportunities for interaction between and among academics, cooperative management, cooperative boards of directors, and government researchers by conducting an annual research forum, conducting periodic webinars, and involvement with the Cooperatives Community of Practice on eXtension. These efforts will communicate ongoing research on cooperatives, identifying research issues, organizing research teams and extend completed research to the broader cooperative community.

Objective 3: Encourage and support research on the cooperative business model including interdisciplinary by agricultural economists, rural sociologists and business college faculty. Interaction will be encouraged through publication and support of the Journal of Cooperatives, invitations to annual forums, communication of the NCERA-210 web page and listserv, interaction with the Cooperatives Community of Practice on eXtension, participation in cooperative research projects and other methods.
**Objective 4:** Foster communication and coordination among participants through the NCERA-210 web page and electronic listserv, periodic webinars, joint efforts with the Cooperative Community of Practice in eXtension and other methods.

**Objective 5:** Coordinate with other national research projects, industry conferences and complementary groups such as WERA-72, NE-165, Farmer Cooperatives Conference, Cooperatives Community of Practice on eXtension, and the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives.

*General Training and Workshop for Cooperative Managers and Directors*

Michael Boland, together with CoBank and California Center for Cooperatives, conducted educational training to 41 cooperative directors using case studies to highlight cooperatively owned business nuances impacting governance, finance, and strategy decision-making.

Michael Boland, together with Phil Kenkel and the Southern Association of Cooperatives, conducted educational training to 35 cooperative directors. Topics were governance, finance, and strategy.

Michael Boland, together with Phil Kenkel, conducted educational training to 95 cooperative directors. Topics were governance, finance, and strategy.

Brian Briggeman, together with CoBank and Michael Boland, held a CEO Roundtable for Cooperative Managers in Kansas City, Missouri. In 2016, 24 attendees came from 8 states to discuss current issues facing cooperatives and to network with their peers.

Brian Briggeman conducted the K-State Symposium on Cooperative Issues held in Manhattan, Kansas. A total of 89 attendees from Kansas came together to discuss current issues in agriculture.

Michael Cook conducted the GICL Summer Institute to 72 senior management from cooperatives such as Organic Valley, Land O’Lakes, Ocean Spray, Blue Diamond, DFA, MFA Oil, and others. Cooperative leaders are engaged in the process of identifying factors which influence the emergence of friction and factions with agricultural cooperatives.

Keri Jacobs, in partnership with the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives, conducted director training and board officer workshops (6 days) to over 75 directors and a mid-manager workshop to 30
mid-level management personnel at cooperatives. These workshops build human capital for those leading cooperatives, and topics include finance, governance, and strategic planning.

Keri Jacobs presented to the National Telecommunications Cooperative Association 2016 Board Officers Seminar, “Cooperative Leadership for Tomorrow: Success Starts in the Boardroom.”

Phil Kenkel organized for the second year the Bill Fitzwater Symposium on October 20, 2016 in Stillwater, OK. Cooperative boards and managers learned about the status of cooperatives from other states, and included presentations by NCERA 210 members Phil Kenkel, Keri Jacobs, Greg McKee, and John Park.

John Park developed materials, provided support for, and conducted six training sessions (12 training days) for over 800 cooperative managers and directors. The training improves the competitiveness of the cooperative businesses by enhancing director and manager knowledge of current legal issues and regulation compliance, finance, strategy, management best practices, and industry trends. Program evaluations indicate attendee satisfaction of the training is 4.5 out of 5 (excellent).

**Co-op Business Model Training for Employees and Students**

Brian Briggeman, together with CoBank, held a workshop, “Emerging Leaders: Building Trusted Relationships,” a 3-day program for cooperative employees. Participants were 16 attendees from 6 states.

Brian Briggeman developed and taught an online course on cooperatives at Kansas State University titled, Cooperative Management. A total of 26 students took the course. Multiple videos were created that engaged cooperative industry leaders. This course will be taught for multiple years to come.

Michael Cook taught at the University of Missouri a graduate-level course, Economics and Sociological Approaches to Collective Action, and an undergraduate capstone course, Agri-Food Business and Cooperative Management.

Keri Jacobs worked with the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives to develop and host the first-annual Iowa Institute for Cooperatives’ Co-op Intern Day, a one-day educational event geared towards Iowa’s cooperatives’ summer interns. Industry leaders, CoBank, and Keri Jacobs provided an in—depth view of the cooperative business model and provided interns with insights on transitioning from students to employees, working for cooperatives, and the role of cooperatives
in the agricultural economy.

Keri Jacobs presented to Ag Partners, L.L.C., “How a Co-op is Different and Why It Matters,” as part of their employee training program.

Keri Jacobs developed material to supplement community college business courses and presented with Raccoon Valley Electric Cooperative, “The Cooperative Way: A Business Model.”

Keri Jacobs taught an economics course on cooperatives to 50 undergraduate students at ISU. The course requirements include a semester-long project in which students work with a cooperative board member or manager to learn more about the governance, finance, history, and operations of a local cooperatives. Jacobs also delivered two guest lectures to undergraduate courses in agricultural business to over 100 students.

Keri Jacobs provides experiential learning of about cooperatives for graduate and undergraduate students by supporting student travel and research experiences. Students attended the National Farmers Union’s College Conference on Cooperatives, the University of Saskatchewan and Centre for Study of Co-operatives’ student case study competition, cooperative annual meetings, NCERA-210’s Annual Conference, Farmer Cooperative Conference, and others. Three undergraduate students and two graduate students were supported with gifts made by cooperatives.

Greg McKee presented, “Cooperatives, Hands On!” at the National Farmers Union’s College Conference on Cooperatives in Bloomington, MN (February 12, 2016). The conference attracts college students nationally to learn about cooperatives and interact with cooperative leaders across all industries.

Greg McKee coordinated a student tour of cooperatives in Fargo, ND and also Washington, D.C. during 2016.

Greg McKee taught two sections of a semester-long course on cooperative business management to 60 students at NDSU and 20 at UNL.

John Park matched six college interns from Texas universities with Texas cooperatives for work experiences. The internship program builds leadership and management capacity within the cooperative industry. Over the 7 year timeframe, 57 students have participated from 5 Texas universities. So far, 12 of these have started careers with a Texas cooperative. A focus group conducted with this year's participants revealed that the program is regarded as a premiere work opportunity, and successfully introduces the cooperative industry to the students as a potential
career opportunity. The 6 interns from this year’s program unanimously agreed that they were completely satisfied with their experience and would recommend it to a friend.

Todd Schmit assisted with instruction and material development for an undergraduate course, Cooperative Business Management (AEM 2230) at Cornell University.

Performance, Profitability, and Finance and Equity Considerations for Cooperatives

Brian Briggeman together with CoBank held a workshop, Emerging Leaders: Building a Cooperative Finance Foundation, a 2-day program for cooperative employees held in Manhattan, Kansas had a total of 34 attendees from 7 states.

Keri Jacobs presented cooperative financial performance and consolidation study findings at two cooperatives’ board planning sessions and also to a cooperative managers’ workshop.


Greg McKee presented at the Nebraska Summer Research Symposium in Lincoln, NE, “Relationship between CEO Change and Cooperative Business Performance” (August 10, 2016).

Jeffrey Royer conducted a study analyzing the ability of rural electric cooperatives to retire member equity under three strategies: (1) replacing equity with term debt to provide for an immediate one-time retirement of capital credits, (2) reducing the rate at which equity is accumulated and relying more on term debt to finance asset growth so margins can be used to accelerate the retirement of capital credits, and (3) adjusting the electric rate to generate additional margins for retiring capital credits. Analyses suggest that the average distribution cooperative could employ these strategies to expand capital credits retirement substantially without weakening its financial condition.

Jeffrey Royer constructed a model of an agricultural cooperative financed by a combination of noncash patronage refund allocations and unallocated retained earnings that can be used to identify financing strategies that may increase the present value of the after-tax cash flow received by members given the values of variables such as the rate of return on equity, equity growth rate, member discount rate, and member and cooperative marginal income tax rates.

Rich Sexton is advancing research to understand how revenue pooling policies of cooperatives induces business with high-quality and low-quality producers.
Other Extension and Outreach Presentations to Cooperatives and Associations

Brian Briggeman conducted research titled, “The Economic Value of Trust,” and presented this research to CoBank.


Cook, M.L. and F. Chaddad, “Cooperatives as Leaders in Supply Chain Management”, three week workshop for Professor Julien Cadot, February 21 – March 11, 2016

Cook, M.L., “Economics of Member Engagement: Importance and an Obligation”, Organic Valley Board of Directors, La Farge, Wisconsin, February 26, 2016

Cook, M.L., “GICL Board Chair/CEO Conference Workshop”, Rancho Valencia, California, April 7-10, 2016


Others Activities and Engagements, including Cooperative Centers and State Associations

Michael Cook collaborated with International Food Policy Research Institute, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Bank, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), and the International Cooperative Association (ICA) to the review and acceptance of a diagnostic framework developed at the University of Missouri. This framework is entitled the “Cooperative Life Cycle Framework” with theoretical underpinnings derived from new institutional economics, property rights theory, behavioral economics, economic sociology and evidence based management. This framework assists international development agencies, donors, cooperative leadership, and applied researchers to identify the unique consequences of differences in transactional and demographic preferences in the governance, leadership and management of producer/user owned and controlled entities.

Matthew Elliott is pursuing research on recent emergence of multi-stakeholder sustainability alliances in which farmer cooperatives have recently become members. Alternative alliance governance rules are explored to quantify the effects to bargaining power distributions within the multi-stakeholder alliances. The findings inform cooperatives and their farmer members of the strategic and ordinary risk from the new dimension of market power that occurs in emerging sustainability alliances.

Ani Katchova is a Director of a newly established Center for Cooperatives at The Ohio State University. The Center’s current activities are to develop educational modules on cooperative finance topics, facilitate student internships and projects on cooperatives, establish ties with the cooperative industry, and conduct applied research on cooperative finance issues.

Greg McKee presented to the NE Cooperative Managers Association, “Education, Research, and Extension Program at University of Nebraska on Cooperatives.” He provided an overview of his role and interactions with and for the benefit of cooperatives.

John Park engaged with Spade Co-op Gin and Consumers Supply Cooperative to provide their economic contribution statements. This information strengthen their competitive position through improved communication of cooperative value to their individual members and local
policy makers. In addition, at the request of local cooperatives, a more widespread effort to educate the public and cooperative members on the need for cooperatives in the agricultural system, a series of posters are being developed and distributed to project a more unified message of cooperation. Greater understanding of the cooperative mission helps to strengthen loyalty among cooperative members and improve support from local, state, and national leaders and legislators.

The University of Wisconsin’s Center for Cooperatives (UWCC) hosted the 19th Annual Farmer Cooperatives Conference. The conference featured 18 speakers who presented on current issues affecting agricultural cooperatives to 140 academics, researchers, cooperative business leaders, and policy makers. NCERA-210 member Brent Hueth is Faculty Director of the UWCC.

UWCC has engaged in a multi-year research effort to measure and describe the economic impact of cooperative businesses using official federal statistics produced and reported by the U.S. Census Bureau. A new Economic Census is scheduled for 2017. In collaboration with NCBA and NCFC, UWCC has been working with the Census Bureau to include a new question asking firms if they are a cooperative business. At present, there is no identification question that would indicate this.

UWCC has a multi-year AFRI applied research project to better understand and enhance opportunities for cooperative entrepreneurship by identifying and researching clusters of cooperative activity. The project also aims to engage stakeholders in a participatory process to create the tools to analyze and better understand community-level data. The development and refinement of these tools will support the more systematic development of cooperatives.

**Impacts**

*Grants and Contracts*

Matthew Elliott was Co-PI on a USDA Grant, "Advancing Co-ops in South Dakota.” Project December 1, 2015 - December 1, 2017), $10,000.

Greg McKee received a CHS Foundation grant for research, student support, and equipment.

Todd Schmit supported his activities within the Cooperative Enterprise Program (Cornell) with funding from the Northeast Cooperative Council (through 06/2018), USDA’s Federal State Marketing Improvement Program (through 03/2016), CHS Foundation (through 12/2016), New York Apple Association (through 03/2017), USDA Smith-Lever Funds (through 09/2017), and USDA Hatch/Smith-Lever (10/2017 – 09/2020).
Sanja Zivkovic received a Foreign Agricultural Services grant from the USDA: Cochran Program for Serbia Developing of the Food Processing Industry Associations and Cooperatives - Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Project duration: July 9-23, 2016. Award amount: $12,279.30.

**Summary of Programs with Long-Term Impacts**

1. Education of cooperative boards of directors improved through jointly organized education programs conducted by NCERA members in multiple states, including California, Colorado, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Montana, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, and Wyoming. The programs focus on strategic thinking, finance, governance, and mergers and helps boards make more informed decisions in a complex environment.

2. Members' teaching, research and extension activities contributed to understanding challenges facing cooperatively owned agricultural business organizations and finding feasible solutions to such challenges. Articles, monographs, and presentations at professional meetings, webinars, and workshops by NCERA 210 members are extremely useful to educators, professionals who provide technical assistance or advice to cooperatives.

3. NCERA 210 members continue to pursue and share research at national and regional meetings, and collectively develop new materials and platforms for dissemination of research.

4. Committee members are contributing to the peer-reviewed journal, Journal of Cooperatives, under the editorship of the NCERA-210 member Dr. Phil Kenkel.

**Publications**

*Journal and Refereed Articles*


Other Publications, Posters, Abstracts, Proceedings, and Academic Presentations


Jacobs, Keri L. “Co-ops Managing Through Low Margins,” Feedstuffs, August 8, 2016, 44.


Kenkel, P. Opportunities for Rural Electric Cooperatives to Adopt New Cooperative Business Models Selected paper, NCERA-210 2016 Annual Meeting, Radisson Plaza Hotel, Minneapolis, November 2, 2016


Kenkel, P. Leading the Charge or Waiting for the Troops Case Study, AE16024, Department of Agricultural Economics Staff Papers, Oklahoma State University, December 2016.

Kenkel, P. Updating the Governance Structure Case Study, AE16023, Department of Agricultural Economics Staff Papers, Oklahoma State University, December 2016.

Kenkel, P. Positioning for the Future Case Study, AE16022, Department of Agricultural Economics Staff Papers, Oklahoma State University, December 2016.

Kenkel, P. Pondering When to Hold Them and When to Fold Them Case Study, AE16021, Department of Agricultural Economics Staff Papers, Oklahoma State University, December 2016.

Kenkel, P. A Dashboard for the Board Case Study, AE16020, Department of Agricultural Economics Staff Papers, Oklahoma State University, December 2016.

Kenkel, P. Financial Decisions for the Board Case Study, AE16019, Department of Agricultural Economics Staff Papers, Oklahoma State University, December 2016.

Kenkel P. Reinvest, Revolve or Refund Case Study, AE16018, Department of Agricultural Economics Staff Papers, Oklahoma State University, December 2016.

Kenkel, P. Addressing the Equity Retirement Budget Case Study, AE16017, Department of Agricultural Economics Staff Papers, Oklahoma State University, December 2016.

Kenkel. P. Leading the Charge or Waiting for the Troops Case Study, AE16024, Department of Agricultural Economics Staff Papers, Oklahoma State University, December 2016.

Kenkel, P. Profit Distribution Alternatives for a Grain and Farm Supply Cooperative Case Study, AE16016, Department of Agricultural Economics Staff Papers, Oklahoma State University, December 2016.
Kenkel, P. Transforming the Cooperative for the Next Generation Case Study, AE16015, Department of Agricultural Economics Staff Papers, Oklahoma State University, December 2016.

Kenkel P. South Central Cooperative-Case Study, AE16014, Department of Agricultural Economics Staff Papers, Oklahoma State University, December 2016.

Kenkel, P. The Run Away Board Case Study, AE16013, Department of Agricultural Economics Staff Papers, Oklahoma State University, December 2016.

Kenkel P. The Outside Offer Case Study, AE16012, Department of Agricultural Economics Staff Papers, Oklahoma State University, December 2016.

Kenkel, P. Succession Planning Case Study, AE16011, Department of Agricultural Economics Staff Papers, Oklahoma State University, December 2016.


Royer, Jeffrey S. 2016. Accelerating equity retirement in rural electric cooperatives. Cornhusker

