



Strengthening Extension Advisory Leaders (SEAL) Conference October 24-26, 2005 Atlanta, GA

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RELEVANCE. The second Strengthening Extension Advisory Leadership Conference was held in Atlanta, Georgia, October 29-31, 2003. At the end of the conference, states made plans on how to introduce the curriculum with appropriate groups at home. The evaluations were consistently high with 97% rating the conference extremely valuable and an excellent use of their time. A follow-up survey was also used to ask if participants were interested in another conference and to identify topics for additional curriculum development. The respondents overwhelmingly indicated that they would like to have another conference and suggested areas of need for curriculum. These responses clustered around advisory leaders role in program development, development of communication tools, leadership development of advisory leaders, and volunteer management.

RESPONSE. The third SEAL Conference was held in Atlanta, GA on October 24-26, 2005. Fifty-five participants representing seven states in the south region participated in the 2005 conference. This conference was targeted toward advisory group members and Extension educators that are heavily involved in developing and sustaining successful county and or statewide advisory groups. The overall conference objectives are noted below:

- ❖ *Reveal effective strategies for advocacy;*
- ❖ *Building advocacy groups that work; and*
- ❖ *Embracing the differences in ourselves and each other.*

RESULTS. A retrospective evaluation strategy was implemented to the participants at the conclusion of the program. Thirty-five of 55 participants responded to the survey. The survey consisted of four components. These components included an intentions to change measurement, a perceptual knowledge change, customer satisfaction, and open-ended response section. The results are noted below.

Intentions to change measurement. The first component reveals the intentions of participants to return home and implement the practices learned during the process. The results are displayed in bullet form below:

- ❖ **27 of 27 (100.0%)** said they intend to return home and implement practices learned on "Marketing the Fundamentals." Two noted they had already adopted.
- ❖ **26 of 26 (100.0%)** said they intend to return home and implement practices learned on "Communicating with Policy Makers." Two noted they had already adopted.
- ❖ **24 of 24 (100.0%)** said they intend to return home and implement practices learned on "Committees: The Advisory Council's Workshop." Four noted they had already adopted.
- ❖ **23 of 23 (100.0%)** said they intend to return home and implement practices learned on "Building Sustainable Extension Advisory Councils." Four noted they had already adopted.
- ❖ **23 of 23 (100.0%)** said they intend to return home and implement practices learned on "Leading Teams." Four noted they had already adopted.
- ❖ **22 of 22 (100.0%)** said they intend to return home and implement practices learned on "Programming Techniques & Skills." Five noted they had already adopted.
- ❖ **12 of 12 (100.0%)** said they intend to return home and implement practices learned on "Personality Traits of Leaders." Two noted they had already adopted.
- ❖ **12 of 12 (100.0%)** said they intend to return home and implement practices learned on "Motivating Others." Two noted they had already adopted.
- ❖ **9 of 9 (100.0%)** said they intend to return home and implement practices learned on "Character and Ethics in Leadership." Three noted they had already adopted.
- ❖ **24 of 26 (92.3%)** said they intend to return home and implement practices learned on "Communicating Impact of CES Programs." Two noted they had already adopted.
- ❖ **11 of 12 (91.7%)** said they intend to return home and implement practices learned on "Communicating with Different Cultures in Communities." Two noted they had already adopted.
- ❖ **23 of 26 (88.5%)** said they intend to return home and implement practices learned on "Role in Annual Budget Process." Three noted they had already adopted.
- ❖ **9 of 11 (81.8%)** said they intend to return home and implement practices learned on "Creating an Organizational Vision." Three noted they had already adopted.
- ❖ **15 of 30 (50.0%)** said they intend to return home and implement practices learned on "Building Sustainable Advisory Systems." One noted they had already adopted.

Knowledge change. The second section asked about the perceived knowledge increase of participants based on the information taught at the 2005 SEAL Conference. The results are below:

Table 1. Mean score differences using a Likert scale¹ to reveal knowledge changes using a retrospective post evaluation strategy.

TOPICS	N	Before the Meeting	After the Meeting	Mean Change
Communicating with Different Cultures in Communities	13	2.77	3.85	1.08
Creating an Organizational Vision	13	2.62	3.69	1.07
Personality Traits of Leaders	11	2.82	3.82	1.00
Role in Annual Budget Process	26	2.73	3.62	0.89
Building Sustainable Extension Advisory Councils	25	2.68	3.56	0.88
GENERAL SESSION – Building Sustainable Advisory Systems	35	2.23	3.09	0.86
Leading Teams	25	2.80	3.64	0.84
Motivating Others	11	3.00	3.82	0.82
Communicating Impact of CES Programs	27	2.89	3.63	0.74
Committees: The Advisory Council's Workshop	25	2.84	3.56	0.72
Marketing the Fundamentals	27	2.85	3.56	0.71
Programming Techniques & Skills	25	2.92	3.60	0.68
Communicating with Policy Makers	27	3.07	3.74	0.67
Character and Ethics in Leadership	11	3.18	3.82	0.64

¹Likert scale = 1 - Poor, 2 - Average, 3 - Good, and 4 - Excellent.

²Change indicates the mean value difference between the before and after measurement. Blue indicates change of 1.00 or greater, teal green is for change ranging from .99 - .75 and white is for change at .74 or lower.

Customer Satisfaction. The third section asked about the overall satisfaction of the conference.

- **30 of 31 (96.8%)** participants said they were mostly or completely satisfied with the conference overall.
- **34 of 35 (97.1%)** participants said they were mostly or completely satisfied with the *knowledge level of presenters on the subject*
- **34 of 35 (97.1%)** participants said they were mostly or completely satisfied with the *instructor responses to student questions*
- **33 of 34 (97.1%)** participants said they were mostly or completely satisfied with the *user friendliness of the information*
- **33 of 34 (97.1%)** participants said they were mostly or completely satisfied with the *accuracy of the information*
- **33 of 35 (94.3%)** participants said they were mostly or completely satisfied with the *quality of course materials*
- **32 of 35 (91.4%)** participants said they were mostly or completely satisfied with the *location of the activity*
- **32 of 35 (91.4%)** participants said they were mostly or completely satisfied with the *timeliness of information (in time to be useful)*
- **31 of 35 (88.6%)** participants said they were mostly or completely satisfied with the *helpfulness of the information in decisions about their own situation*
- **31 of 35 (88.6%)** participants said they were mostly or completely satisfied with the *range of topics covered offered*
- **30 of 35 (85.7%)** participants said they were mostly or completely satisfied with the *completeness of information given on each topic*
- **18 of 35 (51.4%)** participants said they were mostly or completely satisfied with the *newness of the information*

Conclusions. The conference revealed positive results from participants related to intentions to utilize materials, knowledge level, and overall satisfaction. As advisory leadership continues to be a priority for the Extension agencies in the southern region, it is imperative that we build competencies in Extension managers, faculty, and most importantly, our volunteer base. For information on SEAL or curriculum related to Extension advisory leadership, please visit:

<http://extensioneducation.tamu.edu/SEAL/>