



Departmental Strategic Planning Summary

During 2011, the staff of the *Center for Profitable Agriculture* participated in a strategic planning process to take stock of program needs, resources and plans. The process included a review of the Center's foundation and history, evaluation of assessed needs, identification of planned and on-going programs and a review of resources. The process was initiated in May, input was summarized in June, a self-assessment comparison with UT Extension strategic plan goal strategies was conducted in August and final input was summarized in October. This document represents an overall summary of the input and results of the departmental strategic planning process.

Rob Holland
Director, *Center for Profitable Agriculture*

Background

Since 1998, the work activities by specialists in the Center have evolved. Initially, "one-on-one analysis of value-added enterprises" accounted for a heavy majority of the work in the Center. The initial concentration on "one-on-one" activities expanded into a very broad arena of work on projects, teams and programs under a very liberal definition of value-added – and some work was conducted outside the value-added scope. While the core mission of the Center has remained focused on value-added enterprises, the fringe areas of this focus have become broader, thus possibly diluting the concentrated focus on value-added enterprises at times.

The number of staff members, their program expertise and their program interests have evolved over time. The Center was created in 1998 with three full-time Extension positions (two specialists and one support staff). From the inception, staff members of the Center have continued to maintain close collaborations with Extension specialists from other UT departments. The Center has also operated in close association with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Market Development division through a formal Memorandum of Agreement. In 2002, the Center became the product of a formal partnership of UT Extension and the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation – a partnership that continues today. By 2010, the Center had three specialist positions, one director/specialist, one support staff, one area specialist and two grant-funded Extension assistant positions, for a total of 7.5 FTEs. At the end of 2012, the Center is slated to have two specialists, one director/specialist and one support staff position for a total of 4 FTEs.

Funding for the Center, as for all of Extension, is a continual process. Increased funding from state sources (UT Extension) for the Center is desired. The preference and need for filling a vacant specialist position in the Center has been well communicated by the department to Extension administration and other supporters. Since 2002, funding support from the Tennessee Farm Bureau has been very strong. We envision this partnership continuing. In addition, other external funds to support future Extension assistant positions in the Center are anticipated.

Given the current staffing situation facing the Center and UT Extension as a whole, a re-evaluation and re-assessment of mission, objectives and program parameters was deemed essential at this time.

VALUE



ADDED

Previous Program Success

The success and impact of the Center's programs since 1998 is strong. Remarkable strides have been made by the Center in a variety of areas, including the following:

- Publishing record
- One-on-one assistance
- Teaching accomplishments through workshops, seminars, tours and conferences
- Value-added enterprises success stories
- Improvements in Tennessee farm income from value-added, direct marketing and agritourism enterprises
- Changes in rules, regulations and terminology in the value-added community
- External funding support for the Center
- Collaborations and team approaches to issues

Extensive evidence exists in support of significant program accomplishments in these areas.

Program Framework

Program successes in the Center have resulted over the years under a rather intuitive and loosely defined departmental/program structure that has been occasionally and informally tweaked and adjusted. In general, the structure has resembled a "Mission-Objectives-Tactics" model.

However, subject matter, program delivery activities and special program thrusts/initiatives have helped frame the Center's success as well. In hindsight, it seems that the first three segments of Center's operational framework are easily identified and described as:

- (1) Mission
- (2) Subject Matter
- (3) Delivery Methods/Activities.

To complete the framework of the Center's overall program operational model, two final segments were identified and fine-tuned:

- (4) Focus Areas and Primary Point of Contact
- (5) Special Program Initiatives (2011).

The conclusions of the Center's 2011 Strategic Planning are presented in the following section.

Center for Profitable Agriculture – Organizational and Operational Framework

Mission

Assisting Tennessee farmers in the analysis, evaluation, development and sustainability of value-added agricultural enterprises.

Subject Matter

Value-added enterprises are those that allow producers/growers to earn a greater portion of consumer expenditures by processing, packaging and/or marketing crops, livestock or other farm resources, including agritourism enterprises and direct marketing ventures.

Delivery Methods/Activities

- Teach (workshops, seminars, meetings, conferences, tours....)
- Publish educational information (publications, fact sheets, reports...)
- Conduct one-on-one analyses
- Provide training to Extension agents and agriculture leaders

Focus Areas (Base Programs) and Primary Point of Contact

- ❖ Agritourism Megan Bruch
- ❖ Value-Added Marketing Megan Bruch
(Product Marketing, Enterprise Marketing, Farmers Markets, Roadside Stands, On-farm Marketing, Pick-Your-Own, Community Supported Agriculture, Marketing Channels...)
- ❖ Applicable Production, Processing and Marketing Regulations Megan Bruch and Hal Pepper
- ❖ Value-Added Business and Financial Analysis/Evaluation Hal Pepper
(Business Planning, Management, Business Structures, Risk Management, Sales Tax, Funding)

Special Program Initiatives for 2011

- ❖ Direct Marketing
 - Direct Marketing Sense ----- Megan Bruch
 - Direct Farm Marketing for Success -----Megan Bruch
- ❖ Farm-to-Market (subset of Organic Initiative)
 - MarketReady ----- Shasta Hubbs and Megan Bruch
 - Farm-to-School ----- Shasta Hubbs
- ❖ Value-Added Beef Program ----- Megan Bruch, Hal Pepper and Rob Holland
- ❖ GROW-10 ----- Amy Ladd and Rob Holland
- ❖ Value-Added Dairy ----- Hal Pepper
 - Ag Econ Graduate Student -----Rob Holland and Hal Pepper
 - Analysis Team ----- Hal Pepper
- ❖ Sales Tax Exemptions for Farm Enterprises ----- Hal Pepper

Comparison with UT Extension Strategic Plan

As a result of the departmental strategic planning process and the identification and development of new organizational and operational programs and parameters, we feel that the management, operation, plans and initiatives of our Center fit extremely well within the overall strategic plan for UT Extension.

VISION: We understand, respect, support and enhance the vision of our “premier educational organization.” Our teaching efforts are aimed at “increasing economic prosperity” of our clients, which ultimately “enhances the well-being of rural and urban communities.”

MISSION: We are focused on providing educational information that will help “Tennesseans to improve their quality of life and solve problems.”

CORE VALUES: We are committed to “high-quality educational programs that improve Tennessee’s quality of life and economy” and we “value communication and responsiveness” in our planning, delivery and reporting.

PRINCIPLES: We recognize and respect our work as a part of the University of Tennessee. We deliver our programs and extend information in every county. We utilize the team approach in every aspect of our operation and delivery. We are committed to continually striving for efficiency with time and resources. We value input, listening and mutual respect. We support diversity and inclusivity. We utilize proven methods and embrace new technologies. Excellence is our goal.

Finally, we have addressed each of the priority goals and strategies for UT Extension and considered how well we, as a department, support and measure-up to each of them ⁽¹⁾. Using a “very weak” to “very strong” classification scale ⁽²⁾, our self-assessment (as a department) of our status and progress for each of the goal strategies is provided below:

Partnerships:	Strong to Very Strong
Funding:	Fairly Strong and Improving
Renew facilities and equipment:	Strong
Prioritize programming:	Strong
Equip staff to use technology:	Fairly Strong and Improving
Evaluate outcomes:	Fairly Strong and Improving
Team:	Fairly Strong and Improving
Encourage employees to enhance commitment and engagement:	Strong and Improving
Compensation:	Strong and Improving
Volunteers:	Improving
Simplify procedures:	Fairly Strong and Improving
Simplify reporting:	Fairly Strong and Improving
Streamline policies:	Fairly Strong and Improving
Marketing plan:	Fairly Strong and Improving
Share successes:	Fairly Strong to Strong
Increase visibility:	Strong

Conclusions and Implications

The strategic planning process for the *Center for Profitable Agriculture* served as a much-needed opportunity to reflect on our successes, evaluate our resources, focus on program needs, streamline our programs and narrow the parameters and definition of the work that defines us. The results of the process and the documentation in this report is helpful as we continue our work, as we communicate with others about what we do and as we continually improve the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of the educational programs we provide. The process and this document also provide a framework that allows us to focus on our core mission, subject matter and base programs while regularly developing special initiatives.

⁽¹⁾ Each full-time member of the CPA staff was asked to provide a self-assessment rating for our department (Center) for each goal strategy in the UT Extension strategic plan. They were asked to provide a rating based on their understanding of the goal strategy with respect to their understanding and experience of/in our department and in comparison with their understanding of other departments and standards.

⁽²⁾ Classification Scale: Very Weak --- Weak --- Fairly Weak --- Improving --- Fairly Strong --- Strong --- Very Strong.