Winter Workshops Conference Call

August 17, 2012

Present: Sarah Eichberger, Jane Jewett, Stephanie Heim, Annalisa Hultberg, Greg Schweser, Erin Meier, Linda Kingery, Helene Murray

Stephanie and Sarah started the discussion with an update on Farm-to-School workshops. Sarah was just recently given the task of organizing these workshops, and no dates have been set yet. They are thinking about November or February through March, and would like feedback on the best time. They would also appreciate feedback on workshop content areas, topics, and trainers. They are considering bus tours, and thinking about schools as venues for the workshops.

There was discussion about the idea of holding the workshops in schools. Having them during school days would not be possible. Evening or weekend workshops at schools might be possible.

MISA and the RSDPs can help identify local leaders to help with planning these workshops. The grant includes $2000 per location for expenses related to organizing the workshop. Stephanie wants to follow a similar model as the previous round of Farm-to-Cafeteria conferences, in which local groups worked on content and framework as a group. Stephanie also liked the train-the-trainers model of a conference in Washington, which started with big groups and then went to hands-on training in small groups.

There was discussion of the time frame for these workshops. November is really soon; but the time frame for schools and farmers to do their planning for the next season is November through February. Farmers and schools need lots of advance time for planning. January is too busy; March is too late.

The MISA calendar has most of the winter conferences listed already, but the Immigrant & Minority Farmers Conference on Feb. 2 & 3 isn’t there yet. Jane will add it. Dates set thus far for the Wholesale Success workshops that MISA is planning in conjunction with FamilyFarmed.org: Dec. 6 at Gale Woods Farm, Jan. 5 in Northfield, and at the Immigrant & Minority Farmers Conference. A date still needs to be set for the Bemidji location.

Annalisa reported that their Specialty Crop Block Grant was approved for three workshops that are not scheduled yet. They will start in October. They are finding that “Pure Workshops” where she and Michele Schermann do all the content delivery are too cumbersome; and they are going towards “Peer Workshops;” that is, train-the-trainer workshops, in 2013. They want to train farmers in areas around the state who can then deliver information and help to their peers.

Stephanie asked about Renewing the Countryside; whether they received a Specialty Crop Block Grant that they applied for. Originally RTC had talked about applying for funds to do 8 workshops with the intent of having those be part of or co-located with the Farm-to-School workshops. Helene said she would check with Brett. Stephanie said that their next steps would be to put together an outline and a timeline for the Farm-to-School workshops.

Erin asked if we could share the basic documents related to all of these workshops – the grant applications or summaries, who is doing what, timelines, etc. Jane will compile these documents if people send them to her and put them on a web page. We’ll be looking at just now through 2013; not getting into 2014.

Linda asked how soon dates for workshops could be set. She would like to see the workshops advertised regionally, as a series: GAPs, Post-harvest handling, Farm-to-School. We should coordinate on setting the dates for these workshops so that they can be effectively advertised. The Risk Management Agency grants that FamilyFarmed applied for to fund the post-harvest handling workshops will be announced at the end of September. By November, we should be able to have dates set.

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