

# IMPACT



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## Sharing Strategies for Success

### *The Situation*

The Pacific Northwest states—Idaho, Oregon, and Washington have a history of working together to provide professional development training for 4-H and FCS faculty and staff. However, due to budget constraints, staff from the three states have not met formally for the past six years. In 2006, following the National 4-H meeting in Seattle, Idaho agreed to host a meeting.

The PNW Conference provides up-to-date information to faculty and staff. Travel is inexpensive as the meeting is close to home and the networking with neighboring counties from across state lines provides opportunities for sharing ideas and for meeting federal guidelines for working outside of our state. Additionally, a peer reviewed experience for poster sessions and presentations is provided.

### *Our Response*

Each Pacific Northwest state gathered interested faculty to serve on the planning committee. The committee met monthly via telephone conferencing beginning in fall of 2005. The success of the conference can be attributed to this group of people planning and carrying out the duties they agreed to do.

Idaho took responsibility for facilities, tours, registration, and speakers. Oregon took the lead on the peer review process of the poster session and workshops, the proceedings booklet, and evaluation survey and tabulation of the results. Washington provided the AV equipment and speaker gifts for the conference.

The theme and seminar topics for the conference were developed in collaboration and based on input from the many conferees. The program consisted of poster sessions, seminars, focus group sessions, and plenary sessions. The conference was held in Boise, Idaho in early May 2006.



### *Program Outcomes*

The conference was well attended with a wide representation of Extension, 4-H, and Family and Consumer Sciences faculty and staff. Of the 103 registrants, 37 were from Idaho representing 23 counties, 49 were from Oregon representing 28 counties, and 17 were from Washington representing 12 counties.

A survey was developed to obtain feedback on the value of the sessions and the conference and to obtain suggestions for improving the conference. The survey instrument included questions prompting responses on a five-point Likert scale and open-ended questions for more detailed input. The response rate was approximately 50%. While responses about the conference ranged from “poor” to “superior” about the conference workshops, general sessions, meals, and tours, overall high marks were given throughout the program. The overall satisfaction mean scores for the conference content sessions were 4 on a 5-point scale.

Comments given by participants included: “The session was really high quality.” “This conference has been great! I have gotten some very useful information that I will definitely incorporate in my program. This is what I expect when I attend conferences. When this level of programming is in the conference I am willing to attend even if I have a limited travel budget.” Twenty five percent of comments made in the “What worked well at this conference?” were about how useful the meeting was to network with colleagues. Numerous comments recommended holding the next conference in 3 to 5 years. In response to the question, “What didn’t work so well at this conference?” comments tended to center on the accommodations (temperature and room size) and a desire for more time (i.e. schedule) to accommodate informal sessions. Overall, the conference was well received and most indicated eagerness to attend again. Participants indicated the information learned will be used within their jobs; there were no comments giving specific information learned.

The value of this conference is more effective multi-state programming in the future. Faculty and staff have networked and shared information and expertise that program participants in the Pacific Northwest are interested in gaining. The conference was well received and participants have encouraged leadership within each state to form another planning committee for the next PNW Professional Development conference.

## ***For More Information***

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