

## **Outreach Task Force 2007**

Report to the AAEA Executive Board  
June 20, 2007

This Task Force was appointed by President Steve Buccola and President-Elect Otto Doering on April 23, 2007. Our assignment was to develop a concrete proposal for future AAEA outreach activities. We were to use the work of two previous committees that explored AAEA outreach efforts as the foundation for our work.

The Task Force met by conference call on May 3, 2007. Otto Doering joined this call to clarify our assignment and provide background on outreach discussions of the past nine months. Otto asked us to finalize our report before the end of June 2007. Further discussions and deliberations were conducted by phone and e-mail. A final conference call was held June 19.

This report is a strategy and framework for successful AAEA outreach to key audiences over the next three years. It is a reaffirmation of our profession's commitment to outreach. If adopted and implemented by the Board, we believe these recommendations can produce an exceptional professional outreach program for AAEA.

By agreement of the task force, June 20, 2007

Steve A. Halbrook, chair  
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## **Part A - An Outreach Vision and Strategy for AAEA**

### **Recommendation #1            Adopt a Vision for Outreach**

*We recommend that the Board amend the current AAEA Vision/Mission and Goals by adding this “Vision for Outreach” to replace current goal #5.*

*Broadly communicate the results of quality economic analysis applied to issues and challenges faced by public and private sector decision makers in ways that enhance public understanding of and appreciation for the work of agricultural economists.*

Although the current AAEA mission and goals statements clearly include outreach, it is our observation that in recent years there has been no shared understanding of what form outreach should take, including, for example, what *Choices* should accomplish. The Task Force believes that outreach is a core mission of AAEA.

### **Recommendation #2            Implement a Proactive, Multi-Product Outreach Strategy**

*We recommend the adoption of a proactive, multi-product strategy for outreach to a variety of key target audiences. These audiences include students, teachers, industry leaders, public policy makers and staff, interest group leaders of all types, the media and society at large. We should be reaching any person or group who uses or could use quality economic analysis. While “the world is our beat” is an exaggeration, we need to target those people and groups who could have an immediate need for the products of our profession.*

We must target our products to specific audiences to meet their immediate needs. Currently, we have only one product, *Choices* magazine, to appeal to a variety of audiences with no assurance that the product we are offering meets any need of any specific audience. The current editors of *Choices* have taken the first steps in this direction, but we need to do more.

*We recommend that the Board retain the Choices brand for AAEA outreach.*

We make this recommendation because:

1. It is clear that the Web audience for *Choices* is thriving and growing rapidly;
2. *Choices* has brand recognition beyond the profession. These audiences traditionally have been modest in numbers, but they represent the leadership of key stakeholder groups;
3. AAEA has invested more than \$1,000,000 in *Choices* over the years;
4. Starting a new brand or label would require investing considerable resources to establish that brand or label with key stakeholder audiences; and
5. The *Choices* brand can be used to market a variety of products, not just the types of articles currently published under the brand.

We believe that maintaining and extending the *Choices* brand is critical to the success of this outreach strategy. It will allow us to implement this plan faster and with fewer human and financial resources than would be necessary otherwise.

Products of a more inclusive outreach portfolio could include the following:

- A. ***Choices Reads*** (on-line and paper by subscription or for special purposes)
  - 1. Current journal articles addressing timely topics translated to an outreach format
  - 2. Basic analysis of policy issues – a variation on traditional *Choices* articles
  - 3. Quick read/rapid response (1,000 – 2,000 word) policy analysis/briefs
  - 4. Point-Counterpoint and opinion/editorial
  - 5. Policy/funding news from state, national and international sources
  - 6. Targeted press releases on contemporary issues as they arise
  - 7. Digests of current research on hot topics
  
- B. ***Choices Speaks***
  - 1. Blogs
  - 2. Pod Casts
  - 3. Web Casts
  
- C. ***Choices Academy***
  - 1. Outreach and media training for professionals
  - 2. Professional exchanges
  - 3. Mentoring programs
  - 4. Develop professional visibility in other venues such as hearing and review panels
  - 5. Virtual resource centers

Initial emphasis will be placed on *Choices Reads*, while exploring possibilities for audio and video development, distribution and audience potential. Details of target audiences and products will need to be finalized by the Outreach Management Team. Some products and activities should be coordinated with C-FARE and other partner organizations as AAFA should not duplicate or reinvent. Rather, the outreach goal should be to add value to work already being done by showcasing it to a broader audience.

Additional products can be added as human and financial resources are available.

## **Part B – An Implementation Plan for AAEA Outreach**

These recommendations provide an outline of the institutional framework, including human and financial resources, necessary to implement the Outreach Vision and Strategy set forth in Recommendations #1 and 2. These recommendations may need to be adapted as we move forward.

### **Recommendation #3            Establish an AAEA Outreach Management Team**

*We recommend the establishment of an AAEA Outreach Management Team as follows:*

<i>Outreach Director</i>	<i>Established member of the profession 1/4 time - Appointed by the Board for a five year term</i>
<i>AAEA Communications Manager</i>	<i>Paid staff member 1/4 time devoted to the Outreach Management Team</i>
<i>Section Outreach Coordinators</i>	<i>One per section appointed by the sections, one person representing the AAEA Foundation (Foundation Committee or current structure) and one person from C- FARE</i>
<i>At-large outreach coordinators</i>	<i>Six – two appointed each year by the president-elect for three-year terms. These appointments should be people with expertise in areas not otherwise represented on the Team.</i>

The Outreach Management Team will have primary responsibility within AAEA for:

1. Implementing the Outreach Vision and Strategy,
2. Identifying critical target audiences,
3. Developing and marketing outreach products,
4. Documenting adoption, use and impact of outreach efforts,
5. Developing a plan for sustainable funding of outreach, and
6. Raising awareness of outreach within the profession

The Outreach Director will act as the chair of the Outreach Management Team. The initial team, to be appointed and assembled by September 2007, will establish the operating procedures for the Team. The Outreach Director will be the liaison between the Team and the AAEA Board.

The AAEA Communications Manager is a full-time employee of AAEA, with responsibilities for managing communications within the association. This person has professional expertise in communications and may or may not have training in economics. We recommend that 1/4 of this person's time be devoted to implementing the work of the AAEA Outreach Management Team.

Outreach coordinators will be responsible to:

1. Identify topics/issues needing immediate/rapid response;
2. Recruit authors and/or write various types of outreach material in their area of expertise;
3. Review outreach material in their area of expertise;
4. Cultivate relationships with leader of key audience groups; and
5. Document adoption, use and impact of outreach materials in their area of expertise.

The Task Force is aware of individuals who may be willing to serve as the Outreach Director and we have consulted with some section leaders about identifying outreach coordinators. We believe this structure can be operational before the end of 2007.

#### **Recommendation #4            Commit Financial Resources**

The Task Force believes that outreach is a core mission of AAEA and that outreach should be paid for by member dues and/or funds generated from other AAEA activities. However, we recognize that there are differing views about current association budget expenditures.

*We recommend the following annual budget for the first three-years of the Outreach Management Team (subject to reasonable annual adjustments):*

<i>AAEA Communications Manager</i>	<i>\$15,000</i>
<i>Outreach Director (honorarium or staff assistance)</i>	<i>\$ 7,500</i>
<i>Other Expenses</i>	<i>\$ 7,500</i>
<i>Web costs</i>	
<i>Printing</i>	
<i>Postage</i>	
<i>Misc.</i>	
<b><i>TOTAL</i></b>	<b><i>\$30,000</i></b>

*We recommend that for the next three years, AAEA commit to 2/3 of this outreach budget from general funds and empower the Outreach Management Team to raise the remainder. One of these sources will be the addition of a “voluntary outreach fee” of \$10.00 to the AAEA member dues invoice, giving members the opportunity to make a contribution to support outreach. AAEA will maintain records accounting for all outreach funds. Should funds raised exceed the proposed budget, outreach efforts may be expanded.*

We believe that the above budget is the bare minimum needed to begin to build a viable outreach program. Full implementation of the recommendations in this report may require significant additional resources. However, we can start with nominal funding expecting to build support for outreach over time.

**Recommendation #5                      Implementation Plan – The Next Three Years**

*The timeline for implementing the Outreach Vision is as follows:*

<i>July 2007</i>	<i>Adoption of the Outreach Vision by the AAEA Board Draft any by-law and other governance changes necessary to implement the plan</i>
<i>August 2007</i>	<i>Inform the membership</i>
<i>September 2007</i>	<i>Appoint the initial Outreach Management Team</i>
<i>October 2007</i>	<i>Turn over all Choices materials to the Outreach Management Team Outreach Director appointed</i>
<i>January 2008</i>	<i>New outreach materials hit the street</i>
<i>June 2008</i>	<i>1<sup>st</sup> annual outreach report sent to AAEA Board and Membership</i>
<i>August 2008</i>	<i>Appointment of new members to Outreach Management Team</i>
<i>June 2009</i>	<i>2<sup>nd</sup> annual outreach report to AAEA Board and Membership</i>
<i>August 2009</i>	<i>Appointment of new members to Outreach Management Team</i>
<i>January 2010</i>	<i>Initiate review of Outreach Vision and Initial Implementation</i>
<i>June 2010</i>	<i>3<sup>rd</sup> annual outreach report to AAEA Board and Membership</i>
<i>July 2010</i>	<i>Decision about continuation of Outreach Vision and Plan</i>