
**North Central
Cooperative Extension Association**

432 N. Lake Street, Madison, WI 53706
Telephone: 608-890-2711 Fax: 608-262-9166 EM: nccea@uwex.edu WEB: www.nccea.org

MEMBERS: University of Illinois; Iowa State University; Kansas State University; Lincoln University, Missouri; Michigan State University; University of Minnesota; University of Missouri; University of Nebraska; North Dakota State University; Ohio State University; Purdue University; South Dakota State University; University of Wisconsin-Extension



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TO: State Program Leaders – North Central Region, Cooperative Extension
FR: North Central Region (NCR) – Cooperative Extension Deans and Directors
SUBJ: Update on Regional Indicators and Banner Outcomes

Evaluation and reporting has been an important topic of many of our fall NCCEA meetings dating back to 2005. More recently (since 2010) the North Central Region has focused on Banner Outcome concepts that are used to describe our priorities for multistate reporting. This approach has been important to our region because it has focused additional attention on how to improve the sharing of program impacts among our states. A purpose for engaging in a dialog around Banner Outcomes has been to enhance our state reporting systems in ways that will improve the usefulness of the information collected by a state, and also expand our ability to offer statements about multistate impacts of high profile efforts that our NCR states have in common.

Banner Outcomes by themselves are not impact indicators. Rather, Banner Outcomes are thematic clusters of impacts that help us tell broadly-based messages about the quality and value of Extension work.

During the past three years ad hoc groups have been formed around themes/clusters, which we refer to as our NCR Banner Outcomes. Those ad hoc groups, composed of program leaders and evaluators, have sought additional feedback from the program areas as they refined and prioritized indicators represented by a Banner.

The following Banner Outcomes have emerged:

1. Economic Value **[Attached]**
2. Engagement in Public Issues **[Attached]**
3. Environmental Quality: (a) soil and (b) water **[Attached]**
4. Health and Physical Wellbeing **[NEW - Attached]**
5. Leveraging (and access to) the Expertise of the Land Grant University **[in process by State CES Directors]**
6. Emergency Preparedness and the Issues Requiring Rapid Responsiveness **[Scheduled for Fall 2012]**

The prioritization of indicators, under a Banner Outcome category, is being accomplished in a way that identifies indicators that apply to multiple programs and across program areas and among the majority of our NCR states. By identifying indicators within Banner Outcome categories we hope to expand each state's capacity to communicate the value of Cooperative Extension by:

- enhancing state data collection and reporting with a common language about the indicators,
- improving our ability to share similar impacts within a state and among other states,
- increasing cross-program area assessment of impacts, and
- improving our ability to combine information from our state reporting system(s) to show impact at a multistate level.

Engaging in the discussions around Banner Outcomes has helped our states set evaluation priorities. For example, in Missouri the Banner Outcomes are being used as “a guide” to help realign some (but not all) of impact reporting and specific indicators faculty and staff use. Other states in our region are using the Banner

Outcomes to help them identify which federal Indicators (from a lengthy list) should be incorporated into their state reporting systems so that overall there is greater compatibility with states in our region. Furthermore, Banner Outcomes such as Health and Physical Wellbeing encourage us to think about cross-program area data collection, which identifies contributions beyond what our Family Consumer Science colleagues have already been collecting for some time.

Again, Banner Outcomes are not a mandated list of indicators that you're asked to adopt. Rather, a concept that can be used to enhance our ability to align state reporting systems with both state and multistate program priorities (e.g., the issue-topics represented by the Banner Outcome names). Our intent with Banner Outcomes is to support and improve state reporting systems by offering ideas that will increase opportunities for sharing information about Cooperative Extension's impact.

That can be achieved, in part, by the common language we are using about Banner Outcomes; and by aspiring to collect the type of information that is reflected in the broadly-based indicators described within a Banner. Regional-scale impact assessment and reporting is an added benefit, yet not the only reason we have pursued Banner Outcomes. Over the past six years we have learned about how regional impact aggregation is a laudable goal; however, in the process of thinking about our priorities for a given Banner (theme) we also improve what we do at a state-level with our reporting system(s).

You should recall that last year during the Fall NCCEA Conference we agreed as a region to utilize the Banner Outcomes by first looking within our respective states and comparing current reporting priorities with the clusters of impacts described by a Banner Outcome. States are NOT asked to abandon current reporting processes. Rather, you may want to ask, "How can our state reporting system(s) contribute to the type of impacts described by a NCR Banner Outcome?"

We hope the discussion about banners will assist you as you weigh the various federal, multistate, state and stakeholder requests for evaluation and reporting information.

As we move ahead with utilizing the Banner Outcomes and the contributions from the ad hoc working groups that developed them, each state may want to consider the following:

- Utilize as additional information in making decisions about your state reporting priorities;
- Consider how your state reporting system(s), often composed of many and more specific indicators, can eventually tell the story of the impacts offered by the Banner Outcomes. *(States use many other impact indicators, and Banner Outcomes should NOT be viewed as "only" what a state should collect. States may find them helpful as they prioritize what data is collected locally, but they are not offered as trade-off or replacement for all state indicators.)*
- Look for ways to utilize Banner Outcomes to engage in cross-program area discussions about (both) program priorities and impact reporting.
- Outline how to incorporate the indicators, and/or how to collect state-level data that allows you (and other states) to collectively contribute to impacts described by the Banner Outcomes.
- Identify evaluation processes/mechanisms/approaches that can be shared among states that will generate the type of indicators described within the Banner Outcomes.
- Use in multistate team discussions related to developing grant proposals and seeking external funding -- especially efforts to identify collaboration goals and joint work projects.

During the Fall NCCEA Conference each Program Area is asked to report back to the State Directors group on how the Banner Outcomes are being used at a state and multistate level, program area and/or cross-program area scale.