

# **NORTH CENTRAL REGION VOLUNTEER FORUM REPORT TO 2009 NCRVF DELEGATES**

**Saturday, October 3, 2009  
Lincoln, Nebraska**



## **Background**

- At the request of the North Central 4-H Program Leaders, an NCRVF Task Force was established in 2005 including 1-2 representatives from each state in the region, youth and adult volunteers, volunteer specialists, and program leaders.
- The Task Force was charged with considering various options available to operate an effective and fiscally-responsible training opportunity for 4-H Volunteers in the North Central Region.
- Objectives were prepared and benchmarks for these objectives were measured at the 2006, 2007, and 2008 Forums.
- Benchmarks included:
  - Alignment of Forum educational opportunities with Volunteer Research & Knowledge Competencies (VRKC), Life Skill outcomes, and 4-H-approved materials.
  - Increase in youth participation at the NCRVF up to 1/3 of total participation.
  - Recruitment of youth and adult participants to serve in co-leadership roles for Forum planning and as co-presenters for workshop sessions.
  - Identification and utilization of Volunteer Impact Coordinators in each state.
  - Increase in number of workshops sessions utilizing the Train-the-Trainer concept.
  - Enhanced expectations of Forum participants to share information obtained at the Forum with additional volunteer audiences.
  - Use of technology to share Forum sessions with audiences beyond those in attendance at the Forum.
  - Posting of workshop session materials on-line for use by volunteers.
- Based on data obtained, the progress toward the benchmarks was assessed, revised recommendations for the North Central Region Volunteer Forum were prepared, and a progress report was delivered by the Volunteer Specialists to 4-H Program Leaders in March, 2009.
- A formal report of these results was prepared for presentation at the 2009 NCRVF in Lincoln, Nebraska.

## **Purposes of the North Central Region Volunteer Forum**

- Enable volunteers to train other volunteers working directly with youth.
- Increase the capacity of volunteer and salaried staff to contribute to the achievement of the mission of 4-H Youth Development Education and the Cooperative Extension System as a whole.
- Build the spirit, passion, and commitment of the 4-H community.

## **Progress toward Benchmarks**

Benchmarks were established to measure progress toward Forum goals. Overall, significant progress has been made on some of the benchmarks identified by the task force in 2006 (e.g., the use of Volunteer Impact Coordinators; increased sharing of Forum materials). Consistent progress

toward other benchmarks has been limited (e.g., enhanced use of technology to broaden Forum audience; incorporation of youth in leadership roles).

**Other Considerations regarding the Future of the Forum:**

- Each Forum needs to be as economical as possible to attend, including expenses for registration, travel, and housing.
- The current economic situation of the region has the potential to affect the Forum for several years to come (including a state's ability to host, staffing, and attendance).
- Volunteer Specialist positions may be in jeopardy in some states within the region; additional job responsibilities that are assigned to all Volunteer Specialists limit the time available for Forum planning.
- Each state has taken a different approach to implementation of the Forum (e.g., utilization of staff and volunteers; youth/adult planning committees). Varied outcomes have been achieved as a result.
- Thousands of 4-H volunteers do not attend the Forum for a variety of reasons. Delivery of educational materials and information in a variety of methods must be explored and provided to support 4-H youth and adult volunteers.
- 4-H Volunteers have a wide variety of needs, interests, and abilities. Educational experiences offered in multiple delivery methods must be made available to reach all volunteers, including those with short and long-term tenure.
- Methods to measure the use of technology and how effectively technology is able to meet the needs of volunteers will be identified and implemented.
- Technology should be in use in an ongoing, increasing basis at the Forum or for other volunteer training opportunities.
- Volunteer Specialists and planning committees need training on the use of technology.

**Forum Options Recommended:**

Based on this information and considerations, the North Central Region Volunteer Specialists presented the following four options for the future of the Forum to the North Central 4-H Program Leaders in March 2009:

1. Offer face-to-face Forum and technology-based Forum in alternate years.
2. Continue the face-to-face Forum on an annual basis and continue to work on benchmarks outlined in 2006.
3. Eliminate the Forum.
4. Consider other options not yet outlined.

**Forum Option Accepted:**

A motion to consider the 3<sup>rd</sup> option, elimination of the Forum, was considered and defeated by the North Central 4-H Program Leaders.

A motion to approve the 1<sup>st</sup> option, offer face-to-face Forums in alternate years with technology-based Forums, was then discussed. This motion was approved unanimously.

Therefore, beginning in 2010, a face-to-face Forum will be held in even-numbered years. A Forum will be held in 2010 in East Lansing, Michigan and then in Kansas in 2012, following the same geographic rotation among the North Central States.

Beginning in 2011, on the odd-numbered years, an alternative to the Forum using enhanced technology will be offered to reach additional volunteers. More details about this alternative volunteer training opportunity will be shared as they become available.