

WASCOE Meeting With STC/SED
June 27, 2019
12:45am

WASCOE officers met with State Executive Director, Sandy Chalmers and the WI State Committee in Madison, WI on June 27, 2019. Officers present were President, Jake Bourget, Vice-President, Shelby Niskanen, and Treasurer, Jon Beam. State Committee members were Committee Chair, Lisa Condon- Dodge County, Thomas Gillis- Pierce County, David Heideman- Waupaca County, Kevin Hoyer- La Crosse County, and Tom McClellan- Walworth County. Warren Hansen, AO was also in attendance.

Questions:

- 1) Several members have asked WASCOE what the implementation of the state's shared management plan will entail and how will it be implemented.
 - a) Will it be implemented before the next round of COTs are placed as this makes sense due to the fact we have so many vacancies now it will affect less managers that are in place?
 - Sandy Chalmers and the STC shared they are finalizing the draft on shared management that will be presented statewide in July so that everyone hears the same information at the same time. After the presentation, there will be a short period of time for PT's, CED's, and COC members to provide feedback. The STC hopes to provide a plan that reduces anxiety and burn out.
 - b) Will the states county committees see the plan and be able to make comments for the state committee's consideration before enactment?
 - Yes, see above.
- 2) The use of Key PTs has come up several times. Wisconsin FSA has not been in favor of utilizing these PTs as program experts. However, we have several programs that are already/or being considered for district/state centralization. These centralized PTs have a significantly higher workload from their centralized duties than typical mentors.

This seems like it would be a good opportunity for PT development and to use Wisconsin's other Key PT slots. Key PT slots used in this capacity would make the most sense if programs are centralized at the State level. A timely reaction to this would be vital as the STO is currently proposing several disaster programs be centralized.

Currently these centralized PTs have very little incentive to be leaders in their programs and are doing so simply for the good of their fellow co-workers and producers. Use of the Key PT position in these areas would be a win/win. Why are we not utilizing the KeyPT position for the duties of centralizing programs?

- The SED explained that the reports she has gotten from the DDs in all the districts is that the CEDs are reporting to them that there is no interest in having KeyPTs in the field. WASCOE President expressed much concern with this statement as he has heard from

many PTs how much they appreciate Marilyn and Lynn as KeyPTs and they value their expertise tremendously. Having a goto in the field especially with computer software questions in the program areas is invaluable and the PTs look to mentors and KeyPTs in the field for some consistency in delivery across the state.

WASCOE will take a poll across the state through their channels soliciting comments from all of FSA to really see how the field views KeyPTs and their value to the field. WASCOE will report their findings back to the SED and AO. The SED also agreed to look into this herself.

- 3) CEDs in the field are looking for STC support in a reaction to DC to show the displeasure with the way FSA has been forced to comply with FPAC in the new hiring system. Someone thinks it's a good idea to have all agencies on the same system. Having FPAC control all hiring for all agencies for the nation and then only one person in the state authorized to proof the certificates for all hires when before the CEDs did it, has slowed the process when we heard many promises they were going to speed up the process. We need to push to speed it up. Help?
 - SEDs and AOs had a regional meeting recently with DAFO and other FSA leadership. The hiring system was a hot topic. The group had many suggestions to improve and speed up the CO hiring process. Unfortunately, the process is mandated to us by FPAC BC, but DAFO hoped to take suggestions from the Midwest Area and use them to improve the process within this system. Examples were to get more than one person with authority to review applications to keep vacancy fill queue moving. It appears STO role where an Admin Specialist reviews all applicants will continue under FPAC BC direction.
- 4) We need to open EVERY CED position as they become vacant to within the state and nationwide and see who applies. If no incumbents apply, wait for COTS. There are two examples of this where this made NO sense and has put the COF in extreme stressful positions for over a year. Dane and Barron COFs - the CED became a DD and the Lead PT became a COT - the two leaders of the COF were now gone. This is too much to expect of these two large workload counties in WI. Both COF's ended up without their leadership for over a year. BOTH these COF's had incumbent CED's that openly expressed interest in applying for these offices. Please open these offices when they become vacant and if county committees wish to not hire after the first pool and wait for more applicants or COTs that decision should be theirs not Madison's?
 - This was discussed in length and the reason office openings are being delayed until COTs are eligible is because COCs were disappointed with only having one applicant apply for their county when open and didn't feel they really had any kind of a choice. This process is the solution to this dilemma. Another concern was balancing the needs of COT's and CED's. PT's would be more interested in entering the COT program if they knew they would have the ability to remain in their home area so as not to uproot their families or spouse's job. WASCOE has fielded concerns that in the long run this has served an injustice to past COTs. Past COTs may have taken a position far away from the county

they wish to be in waiting for it to open and now the STO has hired a present day COT from that county that knows the present COC and has a distinct advantage over a past COT now CED. WASCOE feels a solution could be to open the CED vacancy soon after it becomes vacant as we used to; but inform the COC that after looking at the applicants they can choose to not interview and wait to again open the position when they feel more applicants would be available which is possibly after the COT hiring process takes place. This would still provide for PT upward mobility opportunities across our state.

The AO reminded everyone that the County Committees can request to open a CED vacancy at any time and the STC would review and consider approving it.

So, WASCOE is looking for ways to fairly accomplish what was discussed that can be suggested to the STC and management. Maybe this is an educational thing and the COCs need to be reminded of this each time there is a CED vacancy in their county. WASCOE agrees it's a good suggestion but again, how do we accomplish this. Does WASCOE need to remind and explain this to the COCs each time there is a CED vacancy? Can this be made part of a CED vacancy "checklist" given to the committees when there is a vacancy? Can the DDs be required to report back to the STC that they've had this conversation with the COCs and what their choice is? WASCOE will solicit suggestions from the field through their channels and present them to the SED and AO and try to come up with a feasible plan.

- 5) COT hiring - COT hiring panel should not be comprised of a DD in the district that the PT comes from, or especially a former CED of the PT being interviewed for the COT position. This is an extreme conflict of interest and gave the appearance as preferential treatment. WASCOE has received this concern from several individuals in some areas of the state. Can the STC be aware and enforce this as our management team will not?
 - The STC assured WASCOE that no DD had any influence on the final round of interviews and hires. There was the presence of a DD to answer any program or field process questions if the STC had any questions, but the DD had no input on any decisions the STC made during the hiring process and was not present during any decisions.
- 6) COT Training - Look at using MN training modules. They are excellent. Calls for COT, CED, and DD involvement and review of each module during the training program. WI could develop a task force to look at them and tailor them to WI. All new PTs to a program have to complete that program module in the same manner with review from CED and DD. This creates consistency and uniformity on program implementation. Also, management is the number 1 priority and like the last group of COTs that is a major part of the test, but no matter of the size office not everyone does it all and the programs part of the test should not be eliminated. Programs are what we do and they should prove they know about them all.
 - The SED does like the consistency and structure of the MN training process and she informed us that so does the national level. At the national level they are working to develop a COT training process based off the MN training modules and will hopefully

turn out a program that will be consistent for all states that we can use. WI is waiting for word on this.

- 7) Why do all temps need to get LinkPass cards? It's required but often it's more of a nuisance and drain on the office. It's not only the cost of the cards, it's the cost of time and travel dollars for them to do the 2 visits needed to get the cards. We've had our last 3 temps here leave within a year (one to full time positions with the government but most to full time jobs outside the agency). Is there a problem asking for 30 day exemptions when they are in the office? Is there a way to streamline the process for getting the 30 day exemptions?
 - Warren, AO agreed that this process should be much simpler and agreed that this would be a good suggestion. He will look into this but did bring up the fact that the national level is mandating for security purposes that eventually all offices will need key pad readers that will only read the employees lincpass to unlock and enter the office buildings. This may be just one more reason that ALL employees and contractors must get a lincpass. But for now, Warren will look into the exemption possibility.
- 8) We are getting a lot of e-mails requesting that we put something on a sharepoint site by a specific deadline or a report is due by a specific deadline. These items don't show up on the sharepoint reports and deadlines calendar – they are just sent by e-mail or posted to sharepoint. If I can't respond right away, I lose track of them and then I have to hunt for what is due when. So why have the calendar? I'm concerned that I'll miss deadlines. I do realize that there are duplications and redundancies in the information that we have to submit and that adds a level of frustration to the whole process.
 - Everyone present agreed that the common goto place needs to be the reports calendar and the STO Specialists will be reminded that any requested reports need to be on that calendar.
- 9) With the continued disasters becoming routine I see a lack of assistance for livestock producers, because of being pigeon holed into whether their situation, or record keeping practices align with FSA policy. The number one change within Wisconsin control is changing normal mortality rate for adult dairy cows from 4.3% for Wisconsin to 1.5% nationally. STC needs to reevaluate that increased NMR. In my experience it is too high and uncommon for dairy producers to have that high of normal mortality rate for their adult cows. The cull rate is high, but that is a different process and evaluation system than normal mortality rates in dairy herds.
 - The STC needs to set the mortality rate based on research and facts. At this point in time all Wisconsin research points to a normal mortality rate for adult dairy cows of over 5%. The STC feels they are very fair based on research at the 4.3% rate here in WI. They would be more than willing to change that if a county can present them with factual research from a creditable source that the NMR is less than 4.3% here in WI. If a county can produce this information please contact John Palmer so he can bring it to the STC.

10) As CEDs become stretched in more shared management situations, they are putting more work onto PTs they once did, and now we typically have lower staffing numbers creating potential for burn out. More CED responsibilities are getting put onto PTs without increased compensation. CEDs are included in our staff numbers as a fulltime employee creating widgets in our workload but they are no longer a staff member working on those widgets, they are management. What is the STO plan for keeping employees and handling burn out since CEDs are included in our staffing numbers when in reality they should NOT be included in our staffing numbers?

- The SED, STC, and AO all agreed that in the past there was a shared management factor used when counting workload in counties. They now understand with more and more shared situations and especially in situations of even more than two offices involved, the CED is much more of a manager of people and situations than they are a workload processor or “widget maker” so to speak. In the future realistic factors need to be developed based on the shared situation to accurately reflect the actual “staff” contributing to the workload processes in the offices.

The SED commented that a place to start would be if WASCOE had a suggestion or recommendation on how to account for management/supervision in the state's workload and staffing plans, she and the STC would be willing to listen. So, I know there are not many of us ol'timers left, but if anyone out there has had experience with creating the shared management factors in the past workload/staffing charts, that would be a great place to start with the way it was figured. Please contact the WASCOE officers if you know a bit about that. Thank you!