

MINUTES

NW OHIO GREENHOUSE CLUSTER MEETING

Monday, January 31, 2005

7:00 PM – 8:30 PM

TOLEDO BOTANICAL GARDENS

STABLES ROOM

- Attendance:
 - See attached

- Reports:
 - Joe stated that Mike Carroll, Neil Reid, Joe Perlaky and Norm Mull met with accountant Mike Fioritto on January 28, 2005 at the Office of Research to discuss IRS guidelines regarding “independent consulting status.” Both parties agreed this was a much preferred strategy than an employee relationship. It was clarified that UT needed to provide a “Proposal” outlining goals & objectives which accurately reflected the grant requirements while an “Engagement Letter/Contract” should be prepared by Norm in response to that proposal.
 - Joe read the list of Advisory Group members that volunteered at our last meeting and asked for further participants. Both Steve Carver, Manager Technical Education for the Ohio Floriculture Association (OFA) and Claudio Pasion, Associate Professor at Ohio State University agreed to participate. This brings the Advisory Group total to 16.
 - Joe clarified that the Specialized Agriculture Cluster could have more than one Champion. Neil concurred that there is no “single right way” to design a cluster hierarchy. Clusters are very unique, for example, IT is different from Transportation which is different from Specialized Agriculture etc. In the Ag cluster, it would depend on how many other focus groups surfaced in areas such as the food process industry and wine production. However, our initial focus is with the greenhouse industry with Norm being the designated Champion.
 - Joe mentioned that eventually there would be a monthly report given discussing how all the clusters are interacting and sharing information.
 - Joe asked how we could better communicate with the Growers since not all had e-mail addresses. Mary Donnell offered up her bi-annual newsletter and Mike Carroll their regional development newsletter as additional information publications.

- Other Items:
 - Walt Kruger brought up the idea of investigating whether the organization should consider a non-profit status. A discussion of pros and cons ensued. The Ontario grower’s organization is listed as an Association. Further investigation was recommended perhaps inviting a speaker to present on the topic.
 - Walt also showed an example of Ontario’s publication listing their product line and greenhouse locator. Lindsay suggests we contact Melinda to see if such a brochure exists in NW Ohio to avoid duplication of effort. Mary Donnell will also check. If not, perhaps we should consider collaborating on the production of such a marketing booklet?

- There was discussion about creating awareness about the value of flowers and possibly branding our community in some way. Showing a house with and without flowers was a suggestion to help make that point. Perhaps contacting area festival hosts and partner with them. The City of Oregon kicks off these summer activities on May 15 with their “Spring Fest.”
- Other ideas to increase public awareness would be to partner with activities promoted by the Erie Street Market, maybe donate flowers for our area TV stations to use “on-air.”
- Regular meeting dates were set for the 2nd. Thursday of each month, 4:00 pm at TBG beginning March. There would be no meeting scheduled in the month of May due to seasonal obligations. Michael Szuberla, Director of Toledo Grows checked on availability. All dates are reserved with the exception of March 10th, potentially July 14th and August 11th. Alternative sites are yet to be determined.