MSU Extension 4-H Field Staff
Perceptions of Area of Expertise Teams

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Area of Expertise Team Defined

- Program delivery mode for MSU Extension where campus staff, field staff and clientele work together as a team to meet clientele needs
- Seamless interface between clientele and research
- Key to meeting information based society future needs
Historical Perspective

- 1992 - MSUE Empowerment Committee recommends change in organization
- 1994 - First AOE Teams were field crops, dairy and livestock
- 1995 - AOE Teams expand to include children, youth and families and community and economic development
- 1996 - Dollars from middle management shifted to AOE Team support
Literature

- The Wisdom of Teams, Katzenbach and Smith, 1993
- Farmer’s Perceptions of AOE Teams, Suvedi, 2000
- Perception of Area of Expertise Teams, Booth, 2001
Types of Teams

- Working groups
- Pseudo-team
- Potential team
- Real team
- High-performance team
Characteristics of Real Teams

- Small number
- Complimentary skills
- A common meaningful purpose
- Specific performance objectives
- A common working approach
- Sense of mutual accountability
Objectives of the Study

- Determine 4-H field staff’s awareness of and attitude toward AOE Teams
- Determine 4-H field staff’s perceptions of the AOE Team impact on 4-H programs
- Determine factors affecting 4-H field staffs decisions to join and participate in AOE Teams
Method

- Population is Michigan 4-H field staff (N=108)
- Mailed survey
Instrument Design

- AOE Team participation
- Joining AOE Teams
- Impact of AOE Teams
- Demographics
- Opportunity to add additional comments
Instrument Validity and Reliability

- Examined for validity by a panel of experts
- Piloted to test for reliability and found it to be .78 on Cronbach’s Alpha Scale
Survey Method

- Dillman’s total design method
Survey

- November 18, 2002
Survey

- Return rate 91%
- Early and late respondents were compared for non response error
- Results tabulated for frequency, mean and standard deviation
Participation on AOE Teams

- 69% of 4-H Agent Staff
- 10% of 4-H Program Assistant staff
- 75% of CEDs with 4-H Responsibilities
- 43% of all respondents belong to an AOE Team
Participation on AOE Teams

- Beef
- Christmas Trees (1)
- Community Development
- Consumer Horticulture
- Dairy
- Economic Development
- Equine (2)
- Family Resource Mgmt
- Farm Mgmt
- Field Crops
- Fisheries and Wildlife (1)
- Floriculture
- Food, Nut & Health
- Food Safety (1)
- Forage/Pasture/Grazing (1)
- Forestry
- Fruit
- Human Development (3)
- Land Use
- Leadership (2)
- Manure
- Ornamentals
- Poultry
- Sheep
- State & Local Gov. (1)
- Swine
- Tourism
- Vegetables (1)
- Volunteerism (17)
- Water Quality
- Woody Ornamentals
- Youth Development (13)
### Joining AOE Teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I wanted to join an AOE</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I have adequate support to belong to an AOE</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I am expected to belong to an AOE</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>I felt pressured to join an AOE in the past</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the process of joining an AOE</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I can join any AOE that interests me</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joining an AOE is easy</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have adequate time to participate in an AOE</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>1.07</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Joining AOE Teams

- 49% were neutral or did not want to join an AOE
- 51% agreed or strongly agreed that they wanted to join an AOE
Joining AOE Teams

“I do not have an understanding of how joining an AOE will help me – this is why I have not become involved. I might consider it if someone took the time to ‘recruit’ me”

“State and county staff make it very clear that these opportunities are intended for agent staff”
Joining AOE Teams

“I believe there is still a perception that if you aren’t board appointed then there is a credibility issue of whether of not that person could be knowledgeable in a particular area.”
Joining AOE Teams

- 52% agree or strongly agree that they have adequate support to belong to an AOE
- 4-H agent staff were more apt to report such support than program assistant staff
Joining AOE Teams

- 56% disagree or strongly disagree that they have adequate time to participate in AOE
- 19% agree they have adequate time to participate in an AOE
My county 4-H program has changed as a result of AOE Teams

AOE Teams have affected my professional development. I regularly receive information from AOE Teams. The AOE Team model has created a better working relationship between 4-H field staff and campus staff. AOE Teams are well respected by 4-H Clientele. There is adequate communication from AOE Teams to county 4-H field staff. AOT teams have had a positive impact on 4-H programs. I am aware of what most AOE Teams are doing.

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<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>AOT teams have had a positive impact on 4-H programs</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am aware of what most AOE Teams are doing</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>.90</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is adequate communication from AOE Teams to county 4-H field staff</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
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<td>AOE Teams are well respected by 4-H Clientele</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>The AOE Team model has created a better working relationship between 4-H field staff and campus staff</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>.78</td>
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<tr>
<td>I regularly receive information from AOE Teams</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AOE Teams have affected my professional development</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My county 4-H program has changed as a result of AOE Teams</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>1.07</td>
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Impact of AOE Teams

- 60% are either neutral, disagree or strongly disagree that AOE Teams have had a positive impact on 4-H
- 40% agree they have had a positive impact
Impact of AOE Teams

“I haven’t noticed any measurable impact on 4-H programming as a result of AOEs. I’m under the impression that more significant work takes place on the State 4-H Programming Committees (which are particularly valuable because of volunteer involvement).”
Impact of AOE Teams

“I feel AOE’s have been helpful in the area of professional development and indirectly this impacts the local program, but I don’t see a direct affect on local programming.”

“My mind races with ideas when I attend meetings and there is not enough time to implement everything!”
Impact of AOE Teams

- 87% are neutral, disagree or strongly disagree that they are aware of what most AOE Teams are doing
Impact of AOE Teams

“..unless I’m missing something – I never hear that much about or from these teams. Staff should be updated regularly as to whom they can consult, who is on these teams and especially – what these teams have been working on.”
Impact of AOE Teams

- 89% are neutral, disagree or strongly disagree that there is adequate communication from AOE Teams to 4-H field staff
- 10% agree and 1% strongly agree that there is adequate communication.
Impact of AOE Teams

“Not much is coming back to the counties.”

“There are a lot of AOEs we never hear from”
Impact of AOE Teams

- 27% of 4-H field staff agree that the AOE Team model has created a better working relationship between field staff and campus staff.
- 21% disagree or strongly disagree it has created a better working relationship.
Impact of AOE Teams

“Sometimes is its very hard to understand what the role of AOEs and campus specialists can or could play in our county programs (4-H).”
Impact of AOE Teams

- 73% disagree or strongly disagree that they regularly receive information from AOE Teams
- 9% agree that they regularly receive information from AOE Teams
Impact of AOE Teams

- 13% of 4-H field staff believe that AOE Teams are well respected by 4-H clientele
Impact of AOE Teams

“A majority of 4-H Volunteers don’t have a clue about AOE Teams, nor do they care. They are looking for practical stuff.”
Conclusions

- The majority of 4-H field staff do not belong to an AOE Team
- 4-H Agent staff are more apt to belong to an AOE Team than 4-H Program Assistant staff
- Most 4-H Program Assistant staff do not feel they have support to join an AOE Team
- 4-H Field staff do not believe they have enough time to belong to an AOE Team
Conclusions

- Most 4-H Field staff who belong to an AOE Team are on Volunteer Management or Youth Development
- 4-H Field staff do not receive adequate communication from AOE Teams
- 4-H Field staff do not know what most AOE Teams are doing
- Although a majority of 4-H Field staff see a positive impact on 4-H, they do not believe AOE Teams have impacted their county program
Recommendations

- Communicate more often and on a regular basis to field staff
- Clarify role of 4-H Program Assistants on AOE Teams
- Consider ways to make belonging to an AOE Team less time consuming
- Ask 4-H Field staff how AOE Teams could benefit local 4-H programs
Opportunities for Further Study

- Needs of 4-H field staff
- Perceptions and needs of 4-H volunteers (clientele)
- Perceptions of field staff other than 4-H in MSUE
- Program Assistant relationship to MSUE