

Multi-State Publications Save Dollars and Staff Time

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Abstract

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Regional or multi-state publications have long been considered a "good idea," but actual benefits to participating states have been defined only in general terms. An evaluation of North Central Region publications has shed some light on the concept.

When states cooperate in the development and printing of a manuscript, benefits come in at least two forms: 1) lower per-copy costs, and 2) less demand for editorial and specialist time.

Per-Copy Cost Reduction

Press runs and per-copy cost figures were analyzed for nine of 15 North Central Region publications printed during 1978. Information on the other six was not available at the time of analysis.

Figures show that the per-copy costs for regional publications dropped from 10 to 56 percent as a result of cooperative centralized printing. For example, NCR 56 was an existing Iowa State publication which had been popular throughout the region for two or three years. In 1977 the publication was revised and submitted for regional identification. Iowa's order was for 25,000 copies. On a press run that size, the per-copy cost would have been 25 cents. In the past, this would have been the purchase price for other states. Through the regional procedure, however, states were given an opportunity to place a pre-printing order. Orders from the other 11 North Central states increased the press run by 14,450 copies.

With a total press run of 39,450 copies the per-copy cost dropped to 17 cents (including shipping). Assuming that the other states would have purchased the same number of copies of this publication from Iowa at the original price of 25 cents, the shared savings for participating states through pre-printing orders was more than \$3,000.

On other publications—again, assuming that participating states would have purchased the same number of copies without centralized printing and cost sharing—the dollar savings ranged from \$250 to more than \$9,000. The average savings for these nine publications was \$2,798. (See Table.)

Regional Publication	Publishing State		Region		Regional savings	
	Order	Cost per copy	Order	Cost per copy	Per-copy cost reduction	Compared with states' purchase without regional printing
NCR 11- The Farm Corporation	7,000	\$.32	28,000	\$.14	56%	\$5,040
NCR 50- Farm Business Arrangements	2,250	.31	5,000	.23	25%	400
NCR 52- Utilization of Waste Water	10,000	.455	15,000	.378	16%	1,155
NCR 56- Soybean Diseases	25,000	.25	39,450	.17	32%	3,155
NCR 58- Books for Young Children	15,000	.10	25,000	.09	10%	250
NCR 59- Identifying the Community Power Actors	4,350	.51	8,500	.32	37%	1,615
NCR 61- Living Within Your Income	12,000	.17	37,075	.10	38%	2,595
NCR 62- 4-H and You	20,000	.115	39,200	.082	28%	1,293
NCR 63- Tree Fruit Insects	6,000	3.25	10,000	2.29	29%	9,600

Staff Time Savings

Saving in staff time through multi-state publications is difficult to estimate. Defining an average manuscript or even documenting the time spent by authors, editors, and artists in preparing a publication is necessarily tentative. By defining several assumptions and using obviously conservative estimates, however, we can arrive at some useful comparisons.

We assume that purchased multi-state publications are needed and would be developed if they could not be purchased. If we also assume that 80 hours of staff time are spent developing the "average publication and that staff time costs \$8 an hour, each new publication developed represents a \$640 investment in staff time. If a state purchases 10 publications which otherwise would have been developed, the "saving" is \$6,400 in staff time. Obviously, this does not represent actual dollar savings, but rather the availability of staff time for other production or activities.

The Costs

There are some added costs involved in regional publications. Meetings to plan, discuss, and develop manuscripts may erode some or all of the savings resulting from shared printing. The North Central Region is making an effort to have high quality multi-state publications with little staff time spent in planning and development meetings. Individual authors are encouraged to draft manuscripts for regional consideration. Specialists in all 12 North Central states are given an opportunity to evaluate the draft and make suggestions. If there is enough interest (at least seven North Central states) the author is encouraged to revise the manuscript and submit it for final approval or rejection. At this time states are also given an opportunity to participate in the cost sharing by placing pre-print orders.

Summary

If 10 states participate, the estimated dollar "saving" in staff time amounts to \$6,400 for each publication. The per-copy cost reduction amounts to \$2,789 per publication. For the North Central Region in 1978, that meant a "savings" of more than \$137,800 for the 15 publications produced jointly by the 12 states.

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