

10-1-2006

## Training Extension Professionals from Developing Countries Through Educational Workshops Conducted in the United States

James C. Hanson

*University of Maryland, [jhanson@arec.umd.edu](mailto:jhanson@arec.umd.edu)*

Dale M. Johnson

*Maryland Cooperative Extension, [dmj@umd.edu](mailto:dmj@umd.edu)*

Raymond J. Miller

*University of Maryland, [millerrj@umd.edu](mailto:millerrj@umd.edu)*

Darlene C. Adams

*University of Maryland, [dadams@umd.edu](mailto:dadams@umd.edu)*



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

---

### Recommended Citation

Hanson, J. C., Johnson, D. M., Miller, R. J., & Adams, D. C. (2006). Training Extension Professionals from Developing Countries Through Educational Workshops Conducted in the United States. *The Journal of Extension*, 44(5), Article 8. <https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/joe/vol44/iss5/8>

This Feature Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences at TigerPrints. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Journal of Extension by an authorized editor of TigerPrints. For more information, please contact [kokeefe@clemson.edu](mailto:kokeefe@clemson.edu).



## Training Extension Professionals from Developing Countries Through Educational Workshops Conducted in the United States

### Abstract

Many opportunities exist for conducting stateside professional improvement workshops to train Extension professionals from developing countries. To conduct a successful workshop it is important to understand the needs of the partner country and identify participants who can use their workshop training to address those needs. An effective workshop will have high-quality field trips, practical classroom instruction, and opportunities for cultural exchange. Pre-workshop planning and close attention to logistical issues are essential to the success of the workshop. Good evaluation of the workshop is important to measure the impacts of the workshop and provide input for improving future workshops.

### James C. Hanson

Extension Economist  
Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics  
University of Maryland  
College Park, Maryland  
[jhanson@arec.umd.edu](mailto:jhanson@arec.umd.edu)

### Dale M. Johnson

Farm Management Specialist  
Western Maryland Research and Education Center  
Maryland Cooperative Extension  
Keedysville, Maryland  
Email [dmj@umd.edu](mailto:dmj@umd.edu)

### Raymond J. Miller

Director  
International Programs in Agriculture and Natural Resources  
University of Maryland  
College Park, Maryland  
[millerrj@umd.edu](mailto:millerrj@umd.edu)

### Darlene C. Adams

Administrative Assistant  
International Programs in Agriculture and Natural Resources  
University of Maryland  
College Park, Maryland  
[dadams@umd.edu](mailto:dadams@umd.edu)

## Introduction

United States agricultural colleges and Extension services are looking for ways to internationalize themselves (Ludwig, 1995; Lundy, Place, Irani, & Telg, 2005). The benefits to these institutions derived from their faculty working overseas have been documented (Place, Andrews, & Crago, 2000). There are also opportunities to conduct educational workshops in the United States for Extension professionals from developing countries. These workshops offer opportunities for U.S. faculty, who have not traveled extensively overseas, to become more familiar with international Extension work. Stakeholders in such endeavors include the funding sources, universities, partner organizations in the participating countries, and faculty and clientele of the universities and organizations. When embarking on an international venture, it is important to identify all

stakeholder expectations in the goal-setting process of the project.

From our experience, we offer successful strategies for conducting stateside educational workshops to create professional improvement for our foreign guests and for our faculty. Our workshops have focused on agriculture but the suggestions and experience can be generalized to other Extension disciplines. The strategies and suggestions we offer can be summarized as follows.

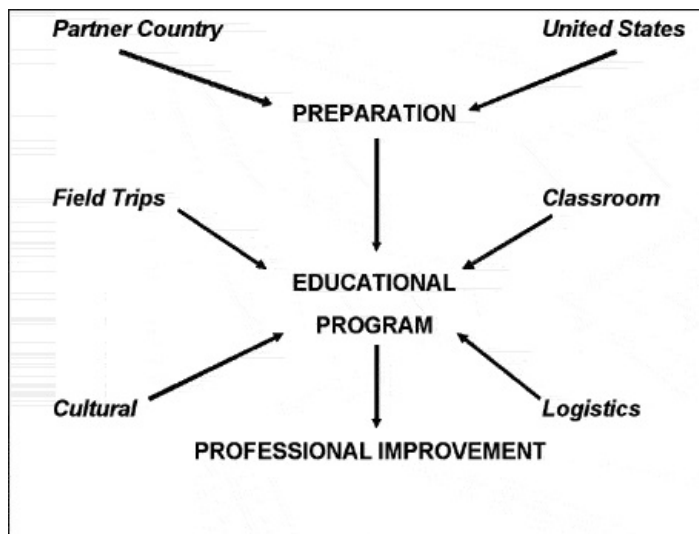
- Careful planning through good communication should take place well in advance in both the partner country and the United States.
- Workshop participants are eager to see practical application of knowledge in farm and business settings.
- Timing and length of workshops are critical factors for success.
- The variety of field trips should be carefully tailored to the interests of the participants.
- Post workshop follow-through helps participants apply their learning to Extension work in their home countries.

## Background

We received two grants from the United States Department of State's Newly Independent States' College and University Partnerships Program (NISCUPP) to create pilot agricultural Extension programs connected to agrarian universities in Uzbekistan (Johnson, Hanson, & Miller, 2004) and Kazakhstan (Johnson, Hanson, & Miller, 2005). Faculty from the University of Maryland traveled to those countries, and faculty from those countries traveled to the United States to participate in multi-week workshops. Four faculty workshops were conducted in Maryland from 2001 to 2004 in which 28 Extension professionals from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan participated.

Figure 1 illustrates the key elements in preparing and conducting a successful multi-week workshops for Extension professionals from developing countries.

**Figure 1.**  
Key Elements in the Preparation of a Multi-Week Educational Workshop



## Preparation

### Partner Country

When conducting workshops for professionals from other countries, it is important that those professionals who are coming to the United State have the proper motivation and skills. They should be Extension workers or Extension administrators who have the desire and capability of improving Extension in their countries. Sometimes U.S. institutions offer Extension educational workshops with mixed results for participants who have already been chosen to visit the United States for ancillary reasons unrelated to Extension work.

When possible, it is best to participate in the selection of participants to assure the attendance of qualified individuals. The process begins months in advance of the workshop to allow for personal interviews of participants by our faculty who visit the partner country during the planning stages. Generally, the partner country identifies the larger set of people from which we select participants. Our requirements for selection include the following:

- A connection to the existing project and/or participating institution.
- Commitment to participate in all aspects of the workshop. It becomes logistically difficult for

participants to expect to go their own way in the U.S. We seek input from participants in the development of the workshop, make sure that they are accurately informed of the agenda, but then expect them to participate fully in the planned activities.

- People with similar professional disciplines and interests. However, depending on the English skills of the group, we allow for a person who serves solely as the interpreter. Interpreters should have experience in the subject discipline of the participants.
- Commitment to work on Extension project related activities upon return to their home country.

The participant selection process is enhanced through sending our faculty members to the partner country to oversee the selection. We are able to identify qualified participants who will use the experience to improve their Extension programs when they return home. We are able to discourage the selection of participants who come to the United States for personal reasons. Sending our faculty to the partner country is also useful in understanding needs of their stakeholders and their Extension potential for addressing those needs. With this understanding we are able to tailor the workshops to fit their needs. Once participants have been selected, we actively seek their input regarding goals for workshop and types of activities they would like.

- In planning the number of people who will attend the workshop, it is important to consider the following issues:
- Balancing the quantity of participants versus the length of workshop and quality of programming under the given budget constraints.
- Allowing for the inclusion of interpreters without diluting the disciplinary focus of the group.
- Providing for sufficient number of people for good discussions without the group being too large.
- Scaling the number of participants to make efficient use of lodging facilities and transportation in the United States.

## United States

In recent years, obtaining visas for foreign visitors has become more difficult. We allow at least 3 months to complete the process. We suggest the following steps.

- The University's Office of International Education Services (IES) is contacted to begin the J-1 (Visiting Professor and Research Scholars) Visa application process.
- DS-2019 forms (Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor J-1 Status) are completed for each participant. Emails to participants are used to collect the information for the DS-2019 forms. All information on the DS-2019 forms should match passports exactly.
- Once DS-2019 forms are complete, they are delivered to IES for approval. The participants make appointments with the American Consulate in their country to apply for their J-1 Visas. It may take 4-6 weeks to get an appointment. The Web site [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors\\_wait.php](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors_wait.php) can be used to estimate the wait time.
- After IES completes and certifies the DS-2019 forms, the original forms are sent by special courier (DHL for example) to participants so that they can take them to the American Consulate for signature and to obtain the J-1 Visa. At this point in time, travel to the United States can take place.
- IES enters the DS-2019 information into the United States SEVIS system so that embassies and other authorized US agencies can access information.
- The DS-2019 forms are signed by a U.S. Immigration official at the U.S. airport upon arrival and copies of the DS-2019 forms are given to IES with U.S. Consulate and U.S. Immigration signatures in place.

## Educational Program

In our stateside educational workshops, we incorporate three types of experiences. Field trips offer the participants first-hand experience with U.S. production methods. Classroom instruction is presented using a variety of teaching methods. Cultural events promote friendship. Sound logistical planning facilitates an effective learning experience.

### Field Trips

High-quality field trips are essential to successful stateside educational workshops. Participants from developing countries see things that they have only perused in books, magazines, television, and the Internet. Seeing in person and having the opportunity to ask questions increases their

understanding and ability to take home ideas or develop new ideas that will be valuable in the developing country.

Field trips should include a variety of farm enterprises with different sizes of operations, markets, and agribusinesses. To accomplish this, education programs are best conducted in areas where agriculture is diverse in a small geographic area. Driving long distances to see different types of agriculture wastes the limited time the participants have in the United States.

In our education programs, we conduct two to three field trips per week. There are three or four farms and/or markets on each field trip. When possible, field trips are organized by the local county agent. A typical day starts at the Extension office with the county agent presenting an overview of local agriculture as well as explaining important extension education projects conducted in the county. The agent describes the farms and markets that they will visit with a clearly defined purpose of the visit. This discussion is summarized on a one-page translated handout. After the introduction at the Extension office, one or two visits are made in the morning and two in the afternoon. Lunch is sometimes provided at a farm or Extension office.

USDA regulations require foreign visitors from some countries to wait 5 days to visit livestock farms. So, during the first week, field trips to crop farms and markets are scheduled. We provide honorariums to the farmers and Extension Agents. These honorariums are included in the grant budget.

## **Classroom Instruction**

Classroom instruction is planned in advance, focusing on the needs of the participants. Subject matter in our education programs included farm management, business planning, marketing, crop and livestock production, Extension programming, and grant writing. Classroom instruction focuses on problem solving and is "final report driven."

Participants present reports on the final day based on their classroom seminars and field trips. For example, when we provided business plan training, the participants prepared business plans for agricultural enterprises that could be pursued in their home country and then presented these plans on the final day. Sometimes the final reports deal with specifically how the participants will use the information gained from the workshop in their research, teaching, and Extension work. Most project reports are conducted by groups of two to four individuals. In our experience, their use of PowerPoint and Excel has been valuable for preparing excellent presentations.

In classroom education, lectures are minimized, and discussion is maximized. Self-study and problem sets have been useful teaching methods. Most teaching materials have been translated in advance, but it has also been useful to have participants fluent in both languages help in the translation. This translation process has added to the educational experiences of all participants because discussion on correct translation of concepts improves the understanding of the participants.

It is important to have computers with the participants' native alphabet and language available for classroom activities and the final report. It is useful to connect the classroom work to the field trips. For example, if the classroom work focuses on crop and livestock methods, then it is important for the participants to see farms using those methods. Our classroom education programs include opportunities for the participants to meet with faculty members of their same discipline.

## **Cultural Events**

Participants gain an important cultural education in the United States. The value of these cultural exchanges cannot be overestimated as professional relationships are formed, friendships are developed, myths dispelled, and appreciation for positive aspects of U.S. culture expanded. Cultural education includes:

- Social activities with university, industry, and government officials.
- Dinner at the homes of faculty members.
- Organized weekend activities including sightseeing.
- Welcome Luncheon on the first day with university administrators and Graduation Luncheon on the final day that includes administrators, faculty, and individuals who have had significant interaction with the participants. The crowning event of this celebration is the distribution of graduation certificates and gifts to the participants. Graduation certificates are important to many participants as documentation of continuing education.

One advantage of our university being close to Washington, D.C. is that we provide visits to their countries' embassies.

## **Logistical Issues**

There are key logistical issues that facilitate a good educational program. On the first day,

important priorities are to:

- Provide translated workbook for educational program.
- Review translated workshop schedule with participants.
- Issue university IDs that allows access to libraries.
- Provide per diem payments to each participant for food and incidental expenses.

Throughout the Workshop, we provide the participants:

- Lodging with in-room cooking facilities.
- Access to email and Internet.
- Transportation to purchase phone cards and groceries.

The US workshop leaders greet the participants at airport when they arrive and travel with them to the airport for their farewell.

## Evaluation and Lessons Learned

The lessons we learned are similar to a four-stage process used in workshops designed to resolve conflicts (Kaufman & Sosnowski, 2005). In that process, partners are first encouraged to build trust, appropriate training exercises are then offered, common ground is established, and then opportunities for activities upon reentry to their countries are designed.

For each of the four workshops, a non-participant conducted evaluations to assure an objective evaluation. In the first two workshops, each participant was interviewed individually. In the last two, group interviews were conducted. With additional feedback from University of Maryland educators, the following are the improvements we made in the workshops as a result of this feedback.

**Listening to your participants and following their advice:** Good communication is based on building mutual confidence and familiarity. It is best that the U.S. workshop component of a project be delayed until people get to know each other and trust is established. Once advice is offered by our participants, it is essential that it be followed as much as possible.

**Knowledge versus its application:** We focused on business planning in our first workshop. We discovered that our participants were already trained in business planning theory, but it was its application about which they wished to learn. In future workshops, the program was changed so the participants saw how farmers developed and used their business plans, and lectures were better integrated with farm and business visits.

**Timing and length of workshop:** In the United States, we often plan Extension meetings in the winter for our farmers when they have more free time. Our first workshop for the Uzbeks was planned for February, which turned out to be the wrong time. They wished to see crops growing and farms in operation. We scheduled subsequent workshops for summer and early fall. We also started out with a 4-week workshop that was deemed too long. Later workshops were reduced to 2 weeks.

**Selection of farms for field trips:** Our participants liked visiting the same type of farm enterprise on a given day, that way they could compare and contrast the different ways that farmers raise vegetables, for example. Also, ornamental horticulture is a major industry in Maryland; however, the Uzbeks did not see that industry developing in their country so they were not interested in that type of farming operation. In a similar fashion, while they found capital-intensive technology interesting, it was not useful to them because capital is scarce and labor is abundant in their country.

**Post workshop follow-through:** Consistent post workshop follow-through, that includes communications, planning, and action on the part of both partners, is important. It is relatively easy for participants to be committed to the training program component in the U.S., but it is much more difficult to develop and carry out a program in their country. It is absolutely necessary to have developed ahead of time a follow-up plan for how the participants will function when they return home and to secure a commitment from the university, government, or other needed authority to provide time, finances, or other needed support.

## Conclusion

Conducting stateside educational workshops for Extension professionals from developing countries is a rewarding experience. Professionals from foreign countries can learn about our Extension system and agricultural technologies that might have application in their country. In addition, U.S. faculty participants are exposed to different cultures and agricultural systems, which broadens their perspective. Professional relationships are established, countries are brought closer, and lifelong friendships are formed.

## References

Johnson, D. M., Hanson, J. C., & Miller, R. J. (2004). Extending the educational outreach to farmers in Uzbekistan. Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of Maryland Information Series 200402, March, College Park, Maryland.

Johnson, D. M., Hanson, J. C., & Miller, R. J. (2005). Extending the educational outreach to farmers in Kazakhstan. Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of Maryland Information Series 200501, July, College Park, Maryland.

Kaufman E., & Sosnowski, S. (2005). The Peru-Ecuador peace process: The contribution of track-two diplomacy. In R.J. Fischer (Ed.), *In paving the way: Contributions of interactive conflict resolution to peacemaking*, Lexington Books, pp.175-201.

Ludwig, B. G. (1995). What characterizes an internationalized U.S. Extension system? *Journal of Agricultural and Extension Education*. Fall.

Lundy, L., Place, N. T., Irani, T., & Telg, R. (2005). "What in the world are they thinking?" Perceptions of Extension personnel regarding internationalizing agricultural extension. *Association of International Agricultural and Extension Education 2005. Proceedings of the 21st Conference*, San Antonio, Texas, May 25 - 31.

Place, N. T., Andrews, M. P., & Crago, N. E. (2000) The impact of overseas assignments on individual, organizational and community attitudes, behaviors and support for international Extension involvement. *Proceedings of the 27th Annual National Agricultural Education Research Conference*, San Diego, California, December 6<sup>th</sup> 2000.

[Copyright](#) © by Extension Journal, Inc. ISSN 1077-5315. Articles appearing in the Journal become the property of the Journal. Single copies of articles may be reproduced in electronic or print form for use in educational or training activities. Inclusion of articles in other publications, electronic sources, or systematic large-scale distribution may be done only with prior electronic or written permission of the [Journal Editorial Office, joe-ed@joe.org](#).

If you have difficulties viewing or printing this page, please contact [JOE Technical Support](#)