



eXtension – Military Families Monthly Report

Reporting Period: June 16, 2010 – July 15, 2010

1. Significant Activities:

- **Hosted an *Introduction to eXtension Adobe Connect Webinar for Military Partnership Lead Institutions and Sub-Awardees*** (June 21, @ 3:00pm EST). An overview of eXtension was presented including an introduction of staff, history and mission, description of tools and internal and public web resources, professional development opportunities, content management systems, communities of practice (CoPs), web conferencing, eXtension IDs, various applications, and Military Families Community of Practice plans. The recording for the web conference can be found at: <http://connect.extension.iastate.edu/p34061657/>
- **Various meetings articulating web responsibilities for the overall project** (June 17, 2:00-3:00pm EST [WSU]; June 24, 4:00-5:00pm EST [NIFA]). A great deal of discussion and communication within and outside of scheduled meetings was held revolving around responsibilities for developing an overall project intranet and individual project web sites. Clarification and resolution was reached with concurrence from DoD and NIFA. WSU will continue to provide communications and marketing material and associated support on an eXtension hosted intranet site which will include information related to project goals, mission, individual projects, participants and partners, materials, and more. In addition, all individual project web sites, with the exception of already established sites will be hosted by eXtension.

2. Current deliverable(s), activity, goals/objectives

- **Environmental Scan:** eXtension continues to develop an organizational scan to identify all CES programming targeting military families connected to three specific program areas: 1) Community capacity building; 2) Workforce development; and 3) Strengthening families, child care, youth development, and personal finance. A work team was developed with the following

membership: Matt Wiest (DoD), Brent Elrod and Eddy Mentzer (NIFA), Kathleen Lodl (UNL), Michael Lambur, Kevin Gamble, Anne Adrian, and Kyle Kostelecky (eXtension). Tonia Durden (UNL) joined the work team to assist in the development of the child care provider training piece of the scan. Weekly meetings are held with a timeline for the launch of the survey as follows:

- July 6 – Pre-survey announcement letter to CES Directors/Administrators and various listservs (ehsn, fcsldrs, State 4-H Military Liaisons)
- July 16 – Launch of environmental scan survey to same population
- August 4 – Deadline for return of survey
- August/early September – Analyses
- September 14-15 – Report initial findings at Quarterly Lead Institution meeting in Washington, DC

The pre-survey letters have been developed and launched. The survey has been developed and, as of the date of this report, is awaiting Institutional Review Board approval from the University of Nebraska and Virginia Tech University. Development of a child care provider training component continues and will compliment the main environmental scan. A search committee has been formed to hire a full-time evaluator for the project. The pre-survey letters and meeting minutes can be found at: http://collaborate.extension.org/wiki/Military_Families The survey URL has not been finalized at the date of this report.

- **eXtension ID/Join the Military Families CoP step-by-step instructions:** A user-friendly set of step-by-step instructions were developed to assist in the recruitment of new members for the Military Families CoP. It is a three-page text and screen-shot instruction draft document that is being piloted among interested potential members to the CoP. Feedback is being solicited from eXtension staff and new members to evaluate the usefulness of the document. It is targeted at those who are for the most part unfamiliar with eXtension although it is written to be a useful tool for more knowledgeable individuals. The instructions can be found at: http://collaborate.extension.org/wiki/Military_Families
- **Intranet:** A shared network/workspace within the Military Families Partnership project is being developed. It will allow all Lead Institutions and Sub-Awardees to conduct necessary “internal” business. It is anticipated that WSU’s communication and marketing templates can be put on an iFrame or web page within another web site. WSU will maintain the complete management and control over their material and project responsibilities. Kevin Gamble (eXtension) is working with WSU staff on the development of the intranet. The expected launch of the site is approximately August 1.

- **Emerging CoP Web presence:** Continued planning occurs to establish an initial Web presence and hub for the Military Families CoP. Initially, the planned space includes:
 - social networking opportunities such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, among others,
 - links to Military Families Partnership programs,
 - feeds from other resources,
 to promote engagement, relationship building, and interaction among helping professionals and educators. Ultimately the intent is for the CoP to be a springboard to a collaborative process between Cooperative Extension and DoD professionals working with military families that is dynamic and rich in content sharing and development. The Web site will be developed within a content structure that includes three primary categories or focus areas previously mentioned in the Environmental Scan section (1. Community capacity building; 2. Workforce development; and 3. Strengthening families, child care, youth development, and personal finance). A proposal is being developed to hire 4-5 dedicated staff with expertise in these various areas as well as social media skills. They would join appropriate existing CoPs with a primary role of bridging our CoPs with various communities of interest. They would lead the efforts in identifying resources, engaging relationships, and building content specifically directed at supporting the unique needs of helping professionals serving military families. The proposed staff additions, along with current eXtension staff are seen as critical to building the new Military Families CoP as a powerful compliment to existing communities.

- **Continued/increased collaboration with Lead Institutions/Sub-Awardees for project Web support:** We are in the beginning phases of connecting with various projects associated with the Military Families Partnership that require Web support. An overall plan is being developed to determine the best method(s) to evaluate Web support needs and initiate specific support for the individual projects. Further educational opportunities directed at project partners are planned.

3. Action still needed to complete the current deliverable(s)

- **Environmental Scan:** The survey needs to be launched and data collected. Once collected, the data are to be cleaned and analyzed. Initial findings will be organized and presented in written and oral formats for the Military Families Partnership Lead Institution Quarterly meeting in Washington, DC. Additionally, the hiring of a full-time evaluator as soon as possible will help in the success of the project.

- **eXtension ID/Join the Military Families CoP step-by-step instructions:** Review and feedback from eXtension staff and early users is necessary for fine-tuning and final approval of the document.
- **Intranet:** Continued collaboration with WSU, with input from DoD and NIFA, to develop site specifications and a final launch of the intranet for the project.
- **Emerging CoP Web presence:** Completing and submitting the proposal for hiring subject matter social media experts with NIFA/DoD as well as continuing to formulate the design of the initial web presence.
- **Continued/increased collaboration with Lead Institutions/Sub-Awardees for project Web support:** Additional development of educational opportunities to help inform project leaders of eXtension resources. We also need to educate ourselves on potential roadblocks and difficulties as well as solutions when working in a variety of Web environments across various organizations (military installations, government agencies, etc.).

4. Relevant challenges that need attention from DoD

- Continued participation in the environmental scan, encouragement for individual project leaders to assist eXtension identifying Web needs and support, and development of the program Web site to include reallocating funds for hiring subject matter and social media experts.
- Ongoing conversation and input is needed for **developing the Military Families CoP**, especially in the area of making sure the CoP is “generating” the type of traffic, content focus and energy needed to attract military family helping professionals to engage and participate in the CoP.

5. Success stories that would be of interest to USDA and or DoD Leadership

- The environmental scan survey has been completed and will soon be launched to the CES.
- There are currently 68 members and leaders in the Military Families CoP.
- The first eXtension Military Families webinar was conducted.
- A step-by-step instruction document was developed to recruit and assist potential members to create an eXtension ID and join the Military Families CoP.