



MINNESOTA ASSOCIATION OF CREDIT SPECIALISTS

FARM SERVICE AGENCY
USDA

MACS EVALUATION SURVEY

A survey of the MACS membership was completed in September/October 2005 to get the memberships input on the past, present, joint meeting with MNASCOE, and other concerns. The questions asked the membership were as follows:

1. Please list major concerns for you and your office that MACS should be working on.
2. What does MACS do best now?
3. What areas does MACS need to improve on?
4. A joint meeting with MNASCOE has been proposed which may move the MACS annual meeting to July. Would this increase, decrease, or make no difference on the chances of your attending the annual meeting?
5. Please include any other comments you wish to make.

The survey was completed by twenty members. The survey results are provided as follows:

1. **Please list major concerns for you and your office that MACS should be working on.**

- Representation on FSA Tomorrow planning in Minnesota.
- #1-Justify our jobs – can't think of anything as important right now.
- Maintaining an excellence in FLP customer service and program delivery. Continuing to have sufficient staff to properly implement the programs. Minimal disruption in services and personnel during transition and change. Everyone still has a job.
- Continued support of outreach efforts for FSA programs. FLP structure plan for the future.
- Major concerns: 1) All rights afforded GS employees need to be applied by the SED and FLP Chief. Availability of overtime when worked, closing FLP offices, honoring seniority when offices are combined, employing bumping rights when it fits. 2) Procedure being interpreted to fit SED and FLP Chief wanted ends. Not accepting all planning tools, having unachievable goals and an inaccurate tracking.
- Staffing, budget/funding, Working for America Act, Streamlining of regulations.
- Office consolidation.
- 1) Equitable criteria for consolidation/closure of FLP offices. 2) Backfill FLP Technician openings in supervisory FLP offices.
- FSA farm loan delivery structure and locations.
- Stay abreast of the FSA Tomorrow activities.
- 1) FSA Tomorrow and possible FLP office closing. 2) Lack of direction on where MN FLP is going with FLP office structure.
- I still wonder what the impact of the Supervisory/Non-Supervisory office categories will have on all of this.
- No jobs to be lost, but some of us are unable to drive the additional miles to the next office plus the miles that are already driven. If I lose my job, my family will not have health insurance. I have been through a reduction before and I was one of the lucky ones to keep my job and not move. In my

- mind, I feel that all the decisions have been made, and we are just being dragged along to make it look good for our state that we have been involved in the closing process. Some of our customers are on a very limited budget and any extra driving would be a hardship for them.
- 1) The fair/equal treatment of FLP offices and GS county employees. This includes the possible closure of FLP offices by the STO and NO. 2) The STO makes decisions concerning CO GS employees without getting input from the counties or the DD's in those areas. 3) Requiring the STO to put changes in procedure or interpretation of procedure in a notice to later be updated in handbooks as MN instruction.
 - When FLP offices have already merged together and have a headquarters office with FLP staff in satellite office, it works well to maintain that structure. Could MACS work on the FSA Tomorrow plan for FLP offices to keep as many open as possible to keep customer service more local than regional. FLP customers will need to stop by offices to meet with FLP staff and traveling excessive miles would probably cause hardships for farmers. The merging of 6 offices is a lot as we already are pretty wide spread.
 - Foremost is the process of reorganization of the FLP offices. Unfortunately I believe we are being presented information that implies that there will be structural changes occurring in both FLP and FP. Based on past results I would expect the FLP reorganization to be fully implemented and the FP reorganization to be stalled or eliminated by political action. FLP unfortunately will continue to absorb the changes while FP stays relatively unchanged. As an organization MACS should strongly support a more equal treatment of GS field employees as compared to the CO employees.
 - FSA Tomorrow issues and outcomes, including office locations.
 - Personnel – Why are we hiring FLO's if we are doing office consolidating? Is this the best time? Won't there be less staff needed for the two combined?
 - FSA Tomorrow, seems most pressing, but least productive for employees. Staffing and rehires. FSA (FLP) will eventually have egg on face if not prepared for the future with trained employees.
 - The FSA Tomorrow issue is the biggest concern on the table at this point. I think it is essential that MACS works with the STO to maintain open lines of communication to work through this issue. As this process unfolds, I would like to see the FLO's more actively involved in the process. Too many times, the information is passed from STO to the FLM and the information stream stops there and many FLO's are left in the dark as to what is taking place. The easiest way to mitigate this would be to include FLO's on the conference calls with the STO. The STO's stance has always been that FLO's are FLM's in training. What better way is there to gain valuable experience than by receiving first hand experience.

2. What does MACS do best now?

- Provide possible answers to problems. Keep doors open to political leadership.
- Current leadership will keep us on the right track.
- They seem to be a forerunner in the implementation of the proposed plans, have set a good example as a leader in the transition process and has the interests of the employees at hand.
- Supporting employees efforts to do the best job possible to serve our customers.
- Nothing in my opinion. I guess I'm in the wrong seat. But this could change by start asking questions of SED and Program Chief to explain their decisions.
- Open, honest communication with management. Identify issues and solutions for improved program delivery, partner with management for policy and strategic goals direction, represents general employee issues and concerns.
- Represent FLP concerns with the STO and help implement changes.
- MACS is good at requesting input from employees and excellent in keeping us updated on current happenings.
- Speaking as a united voice to the STO.
- Allow fellow members to come together annually. We do not see our co-workers very often any more.
- Represents all FLP well with the state office.
- We still have the infrastructure available to address major issues when they come up.
- I just joined this October.
- File exchange is great.
- They represent the FLP employees fairly in decisions that need to be made.
- Communication of the member's needs does not appear to have been the highest priority over the past several years. In past years there was more independent thinking. MACS cannot really be performing its function if it merely parrots the policies and views of the current management. In order to provide productive input to management there will be times when it is necessary to disagree with management, particularly if proposed actions do not appear to be logical. In terms of reorganization whatever happened to the cost/benefit analysis that has occasionally been used to logically support impending changes within an organization?
- Informs its members of what is going on in Washington and how it may affect us.
- Listed to the staff and react in best interest to the staff and customers.
- Information highway is very good. Communicates well with STO.
- I think MACS is doing a great job of keeping communication flowing with the STO and keeping the general membership informed of things that are going on that have a direct impact on employees.

3. What areas does MACS need to improve on?

- Membership/recruitment of new employees needs to be emphasized. We are a smaller group of employees than we used to be.
- We need to keep informed and I don't think there will be a problem with communication this year.
- I would like to see a more equal representation of PT concerns addressed. Even though the PT's can be an associate member, they do not really fit comfortably into the scheme of things.
- Continue to support our members for the best interest of the customers.
- Not being afraid to challenge the decision makers. They are not perfect, no one is, so there decision needs to be challenged to determine what decisions are wrong.
- Assure that all member/employee perspectives are well represented. Engage more member participation in MACS/NACS business. Communicate issues and successes and needs to membership. Diplomatically take contrary positions when appropriate to best represent membership.

- Not sure.
- In the past, I don't feel that MACS has been concerned about FLP Technicians as it has been about FLMs/FLOs. My hope is that in the future, MACS will provide an equally strong voice for Technicians.
- Greater involvement of the members.
- Supporting the FSA in general.
- Need to link better with MNASCOE.
- I don't know whether or not MACS had much input in the Lincoln/Lyon consolidation. I think we need to be assertive that we want to be at the table.
- No comment.
- Better representation for CO GS employees and their concerns not just the STO concerns.
- The primary area is being addressed now and I appreciate that. That area is to develop the full participation of all members in providing input to be organized and presented to management. Consultative meetings should not be a platform for the individual agendas of the board members. These meetings and other contacts should always be utilized to fully represent the consensus of the membership.
- Be more proactive than they have been in the past couple of years.
- Need to somehow build morale up with our members. We need to better encourage our FLO's and FLOI's. Not sure quite how to do this but should be explored with a survey or something to them.
- District representatives need to be more involved. I can see the district representatives playing an active role in membership promotion, information dissemination, etc.

4. A joint meeting with MNASCOE has been proposed which may move the MACS annual meeting to July. Would this increase, decrease, or make no difference on the chances of your attending the annual meeting?

- No difference.
- Make no difference – I will attend.
- Increase
- No difference
- Make no difference
- No difference
- No difference
- No difference
- No difference
- No difference
- No difference
- Decrease, September is a better time to have this joint meeting.
- It would make no difference to me on attendance, although I would favor not having a joint meeting.
- Makes no difference
- Increase
- No difference
- No difference – would still attend.
- None
- No difference
- No difference
- Makes no difference

Increase: (2)

Decrease: (1)

Make No Difference: (17)

5. Please include any other comments you wish to make.

- Hold on...the roller coaster ride is about to begin and we are in the process of change AGAIN. Even though we have been down this road numerous times, I feel we (PT's) find we are afraid of losing our jobs and yet are committed to make the changes as smooth as possible. We are really TEAM players. We are a group of women that do not really belong to MNASCOE or MACS and feel somewhat like we fit in between things someplace. Change is always going to happen, it is a part of life. Leave the FEAR behind you. Look at it as a NEW BEGINNING, ANOTHER CHAPTER IN OUR LIVES, FULL OF NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND EXPERIENCES.
- MACS can exist whether management agrees or disagrees with the Association's positions on issues. Likewise, management can choose actions and decisions however it chooses whether MACS agrees or disagrees. The bigger issue is to maximize the influence MACS can have on management decisions. It's my opinion that adversarial relationships with management will result in diminished influence on management decisions. Properly presented contrary opinions by MACS can enhance the quality of managerial decision making favorable to Association members. If it's obvious that MACS/NACS will be used to further a political or policy agenda not favorable to the Association members, the Executive Committee would be well advised to abstain from comment to not compromise benefits of maintaining the positive working relationship with management and seek resolution via alternative methods (e.g.: FMA, partnership with MNASCOE, etc.) You probably know who I am based on my comments anyway.
- This is a good way to get input.
- Nice survey format.
- Thanks for all the hard work that the President and all the officers and district representatives do for the MACS membership!
- It might be a good idea for MACS to provide some guidance on how to fill out the pending FSA Tomorrow surveys FLMS are required to submit. (This was written Monday morning 10-3-05)
- Please make sure our MACS voices.
- I am glad that MACS is here to represent the FLP staff with the State Director and Washington. You do make a difference.
- The board members of MACS should be applauded for taking immediate action to prepare a position paper representing MACS. Suggest that FMA be involved in the process if it is deemed appropriate.
- Staffing seems the biggest issue. Some offices may need to consolidate, but is six an absolute.
- Keep up the good work!

Survey results compiled and reported by:

/s/ James D. Kruize

JAMES D. KRUIZE
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