**National Initiative for Consumer Horticulture (NICH)**

**Executive Committee**

**Bi-Weekly Conference Call**

**Tuesday March 19, 2019**

**10am ET / 9am CT / 8am MT / 7am PT**

**Minutes**

**Attendees:** Sylvia, Missy, Ellen, Gail, Heather, Mary Kay, Debbie, Pam, Shannon, Casey

1. Welcome Heather Kirk-Ballard to the meeting! Heather is the representative for the Academic/LGU Council. Heather is the Consumer Horticulturalist at LSU.
2. Strategic Tactics (Casey)  
   1. Update on the draft communication to Atlanta meeting participants (Sylvia)  
      Letter complete, has been reviewed by Marketing Committee. Ellen will send the email to the Atlanta listserve this afternoon.
   2. Post to website (Ellen)  
      Action is already in the queue.
3. Committee Updates (new, Emergent Info to Share)
   1. Marketing/Communications (Mary Kay)   
      *Tabled until next meeting.*
   2. Community (Pam)   
      Sending out the recruitment letter to MG state coordinators to kick off internal engagement work this week.
   3. Environmental (Gail)
      1. Infographics: Continuing to push the infographic ‘Plants do that for the Environment’ so they are ready for distribution and sharing. In review of infographics realized that we focus more on landscape benefits than individual plant benefits. Asking MarCom group to consider a #Gardensdothat or #Landscapesdothat hashtag to be more inclusive as opposed to singularly focused on ‘plants’. Committee discussed general interest in being accurate; however, feel that we need to move toward the Marketing Committee and Commercial Council for feedback. What is the most appropriate hashtag for the end user? What resonates with the end consumer and what is our own jargon?
      2. Grant proposal/NIFA relevancy reviewers: Gail sent a proposal for an SCRI grant – did not go through to be considered for funding. Gail will share feedback on the proposal so committee can discuss possible need for more targeted effort to ID SCRI reviewers.
      3. Other: Carl Evanson at U of HI on the committee asked if there could be a layered NICH meeting on top of a day on the hill event? Will discuss this as a separate item on this call.
4. Council Updates (new, Emergent Info to Share)
   1. Commercial (Mason) – How was the 3.5 dialog received by the Council?   
      *Tabled until next meeting.*
   2. Non-Profit (Shannon)   
      Has reached out to Jenny to ask her to be a co-chair of the Council.
5. New Business
   1. List serve/communication topics
      1. Update on draft editorial calendar (Ellen)  
         Gail, Pam and Ellen have shared topics. Missy will compile a list of additional topics related to week/day gardening events and send to Ellen by early next week. Ellen will send final draft to Mason late next week for Commercial Council consideration.
      2. Update on e-newsletter template (Sylvia)  
         Lauren has created 2 draft template designs that the MarCom Committee is considering. Will present to the Executive Committee shortly.
      3. Update on draft communication to the tent list (Mason)  
         *Tabled until next meeting.* Tent list has been broken down and will be shared with the ExCom by Sylvia. List will be divided up for more personal outreach/communication. MarCom Committee is involved.
      4. Hashtags – What is ours? How does it tie to NICH? (Missy)  
         Discussion will evolve in MarCom Committee as they consider #gardensdothat, etc. Looking forward to their future recommendations around hashtags.
   2. Development Committee discussion (Ellen)  
      NICH originators discussed need for this committee but did not activate it. Seems to be logical next step for the organization. Shannon happy to be a part of the group that looks at fundraising (part of a team – not the leader). One of our major selling points is that we are not asking for money. How would a development committee seek money?
      1. Potential needs (current and future):
         1. Promotional pieces for tradeshows/other events beyond NICH business cards
         2. Funding for national meetings
         3. Part-time CEO
      2. Pros:
         1. Staff
         2. Closer connection to NICH supporters through in-person meetings
         3. Better visibility through promotional materials
      3. Cons:
         1. Industry feedback has always
         2. Would need to incorporate as a 501c3 or 501c6 to raise funds, cover expenses, and hire staff. This would require us to comply with rules about advocacy that may stymie our progress. Possible work around would be to ask an organization to be our fiscal agent so we can see if this is something we want to pursue in the future. This would let us avoid having to incorporate at the outset. Casey shared both failure and success of this type of model. Successful example (Seed Your Future) had a business plan, significant industry support, professional marketing and more. We are not ready for this – NICH has always lived off the kindness of strangers – not a sustainable business development plan. We still need to find our future and iterate our future. What do we need money for? This discussion needs to begin at the ExCom level. Is this a discussion we want to further at a future meeting? If yes, is there anything we can do in preparation to guide that conversation? YES, we will continue the conversation. In advance of that conversation, we will consider what we would use funding for.

**ACTION ITEMS:**

* Relevancy reviewers – Always potentially needed please continue to have potential relevancy reviewers contact Tom Bewick @ NIFA ([TBEWICK@nifa.usda.gov](mailto:TBEWICK@nifa.usda.gov)).
* Ellen will send the Atlanta meeting participant email/letter this afternoon.
* Marketing Committee – please consider #Gardensdothat or #Landscapesdothat hashtag to be more inclusive as opposed to singularly focused on ‘plants’.
* Commercial Council – have your members done the consumer research work to help us understand if we should be using #plantsdothat or #landscapesdothat or #gardensdothat? Any thoughts on marketing and terms that resonate with the end consumer?
* Committee will consider a NICH meeting in conjunction with a ‘day on the hill’ event at a future meeting.
* Sylvia will share updated tent list.
* All of ExCom will consider how we would use funding to further NICH efforts if we had funding.
* Committee will continue discussion of Development Committee at a future meeting.