
Background of Your Two Cents Program

"An organization is only as good as its people, and you make ARS great. I couldn't be more proud of the people that make up this wonderful organization." *Edward B. Knipling, Administrator of ARS*

ARS' employees are indeed our most valuable asset. Each day they direct their considerable talents and energies toward meeting the ARS mission with the utmost quality and responsiveness. An organization's effectiveness can always be increased, and employees will be a most valuable source of ideas.

Your Two Cents is a new way for employees to share their ideas with leadership and colleagues across ARS. Your Two Cents is a program designed by leaders in the USDA Research, Education, and Economics (REE) mission area and ARS to solicit ideas, input, and innovations about work and organization from those who work within ARS each day. Central to the program is a new website tool where employees speak directly to Agency leaders with the intent of sharing constructive analysis of current business processes (agreements, or travel, for example), communications within ARS and with ARS customers, and other ideas they may have. By submitting comment(s) to Your Two Cents, an employee is contributing to the discussion on how to increase efficiency and effectiveness of internal processes in ARS.

The Your Two Cents Program embodies these values:

- Accessible - to all ARS employees from animal caretakers to area directors
- Anonymous – employees feel confident they can use the system without retribution
- Constructive - not a complaint system
- Shared – input is shared with appropriate audiences; discussion is valued
- Transparent – obvious as to response process
- Sustainable - through changing Administrations

Response Team comprised of Caird Rexroad, Judy St. John and Larry Chandler will read each piece of input and determine appropriate response.

Moderators (a support team) comprised of Sharon Drumm, Tracy Havermann, Ellen Buckley, and Michele Esch will monitor site, delete inappropriate input, approve postings, and track responses by response team.

Roles

Focus Group comprised of Donna Gibson (SY Ithaca), Linda Fulton (Secretary Mississippi State), Mari Gomez (AO Weslaco), Dave Goodrich (SY Tucson), Perry Rainosek (AO Houston), Joe Rinehart (SY Fargo), Candace Wilson (AO Ft. Detrick), and Lori Wilson-Voss (Program Analyst, MWA) will have access to all ideas and responses and periodically check in with Response Team with aim of keeping responses meaningful and relevant out in the locations of ARS.

Other personnel may be called on to assist with responses, as needed.

Group members will set aside time weekly to look at ideas and responses submitted on the Your Two Cents site. Once every two weeks the group will meet with the Response Team, virtually, to provide feedback to that group on:

- How the responses posted read and if any response "missed the mark";
- Larger observations on the tone of the site, input, and responses; and
- Any ideas for how to speak in a more field-friendly tone and how to speak to employees in an increasingly meaningful way.

Focus Group Charge

More frequently (as necessary) focus group members will feel free to call Response Team members to provide input or observations as they may arise.

The group will work as a loosely formed team, with individuals acting independently to review and then coming together to discuss with the Response Team.

Focus Group members will have full access to the Response Team Admin site to peruse ideas and responses. As such Focus Group members agree to maintain the anonymity of those who submitted ideas who wish to remain anonymous and generally respect the privacy of personnel involved.

