

Farm Credit Group of 30

It can be lonely at the top, where every decision impacts so many, and the weight of each decision is yours alone. Farm Credit CEOs created a solution to that professional loneliness, establishing a peer network and collaboration group decades ago.

The Group of 30, a peer network and collaboration cohort, brings together Farm Credit CEOs from associations of all sizes and from all regions of the country for twice-yearly meetings facilitated by FCC Services. There they discuss a diversity of industry trends and challenges, from blockchain technology to incentive programs to governance issues to the implications of FCA regulations.

“We cover current topics in the market and how they’re influencing our customers,” says Darrell Curtis, CEO of AgChoice Farm Credit and vice-chair of the Group of 30. “We also share what we’re each doing in our own associations to address the issues and to be more relevant or more efficient in the market.”

The topic of each meeting is determined at the end of the previous gathering, when FCC Services CEO Scott Binder sits with the group’s steering committee to talk through top trends and issues. After subsequent conference call discussions, FCC Services often develops and administers a survey around the selected topic to group members.

“In each survey, we learn that Farm Credit organizations employ vastly different approaches to things from fleet management to electronic banking,” says Scott. “We don’t try to identify a right or wrong approach, but by CEOs discussing why they’ve made the decisions they have, others in the room gain insights into what approach could work best for their organizations.”

When the Group of 30 convenes, FCC Services delivers the results of the survey and facilitates small roundtable discussions among the CEOs, where, Scott says, there is almost an intentionality among members to sit with CEOs from different districts and of different sizes.

“The real value of the Group of 30 is the networking and sharing of our different approaches and lessons learned,” says Mark Miller, CEO of Texas Farm Credit and chair of the Group of 30. “Everyone is very open to discussing what they’re doing. It’s amazing to me that as a \$1.3 billion association, I can take a deep dive into an issue and have a CEO of a \$20+ billion association openly share and have a dialog about a particular issue.”

Depending on the topic, FCC Services invites outside speakers to share their insights, or asks group members who are recognized as having a successful solution present their approach to a specific issue or challenge. Members then take what they’ve learned back to their operations and implement the solutions that make sense for them. Scott says, and Mark and Darrell agree, that valuable information comes from, and the benefits are realized by, all organizations.

“In one instance, a CEO of a small organization shared with us their new approach to announcing their scholarship program, and a significant number of our members have implemented the same program,” says Mark.

Scott also points out that the Group of 30 discussions help members identify opportunities to create alliances or partnerships, especially in areas where scale matters and customer differentiation isn’t as important, such as technology and benefits.

“Farm Credit entities can gain greatly from collaboration,” says Darrell. “We all have very talented and dedicated employees, and through collaboration and sharing our best ideas we can all benefit and improve.”

“The real value of having Scott in the room – and during meeting planning – is that he and FCC Services are so in tune with what’s going on across district lines and in our broader regulatory and legal environment. They bring tremendous value by identifying topics for us to consider and how to dialog about those ideas. The Group of 30 would not be nearly as positive an experience without FCC Services’ involvement.”

— MARK MILLER
CEO, TEXAS FARM CREDIT