



## **Millennial Roundtable at the Learning Conference**

It's estimated that more than one in three people in the workforce today is a "Millennial," passing by Generation X in 2015 and expected to continue to grow in the coming years. The Millennial generation is loosely defined as those born between 1977 and 1995, and are between ages 22 and 40 today. As with all generations, members of the Millennial generation tend to share certain traits that impact their experiences in the workplace: for example, they prefer to work in teams rather than independently, they're technologically savvy and they value feedback.

At this year's FCC Services Learning Conference, a Millennial Roundtable brought together nearly 20 of these professionals to discuss the challenges and opportunities they've experienced in their careers with Farm Credit.

"Millennials are a big focus and a strong presence in the workplace and in Farm Credit, and we wanted to take the opportunity at the Learning Conference to connect with this audience and to connect them with each other," says Jean Cantey Segal, Senior Vice President of Organizational Effectiveness Consulting for FCC Services.

During a lively discussion facilitated by Jean and Chris Keller, Senior Vice President of Talent and Leadership Development with FCC Services, participants shared career highlights, their thoughts on professional growth, and the challenges they face, all while building a network of peers moving forward.

"There was a lot of professional interaction among the group, with participants contributing collaboratively to the conversation," says Chris. "It was particularly helpful for us to hear what their needs are in terms of training and development."

Given the similar ages of the group and the associated professional tenure, it's perhaps not surprising that many participants share very similar experiences.

"It was a really interesting experience to hear from other Millennials across multiple Farm Credit organizations that they had the same feelings and thoughts about leadership development and



training,” says Tyler Keatts, Financial Services Officer with FCS Financial. “Many of us are, or hope to be, moving into new managerial roles, and most in the room agreed that more management training covering the day-to-day responsibilities, separate from leadership training, would be very useful.”

A related challenge identified by the group, including Tyler, was being promoted to a position managing a team of former peers, and the nuances of these changing relationships.

“It’s a unique challenge to manage individuals who used to be our peers, and there’s not always a handbook for what we’re asked to do,” says Cathy Blair, Corporate Secretary and VP of Administrative Services with Mid-Atlantic Farm Credit. “Talking to someone who is in the same situation and knowing that they’re available as a resource, and hearing about how they’re handling a similar situation differently, will be extremely beneficial.”

Another topic of conversation during the roundtable was the communication and organizational styles of the participants, and how they’re received in their organizations.

“Many of us in the room expressed the opinion that a vertical organizational chart isn’t necessarily needed, and that Millennials are eager to earn additional responsibility and gain experience across multiple segments of Farm Credit,” says Andrew Harp, a Loan Officer with Alabama Ag Credit.

While Millennials are eager for more responsibility, they’re equally eager for training and more comprehensive onboarding.

“More and more younger people are being brought on board, and they don’t necessarily have the same background as the older generation. They’re needing to learn agriculture, banking and Farm Credit at the same time, which is a lot to take on,” says Trey Brooks, a Loan Officer with Capital Farm Credit and a member of the Learning Conference steering committee. “We’d all like a stronger training curriculum to get us on board and starting to contribute to the organization faster and more effectively.”

Overall, the Millennial Roundtable was an energizing experience for everyone who participated, and an opportunity to develop new connections that will be a valuable asset in developing future FCC Services programs and for Farm Credit Millennials seeking outside perspectives from their new network of peers.