



Customer Spotlight: In Cooperation with National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) is a national service organization that supports more than 900 electric cooperatives, public power districts, and public utility districts across the country, undertaking advocacy and research on their behalf, and providing them with insurance, educational programs and other professional services to help them better serve their member-owners.

With turbulent commodities markets and challenging economic times facing large portions of the rural landscape these cooperatives serve, effective board leadership is growing more important than ever. Last year, NRECA recognized an opportunity to collaborate with FCC Services to provide the Gettysburg Leadership Experience (GLE) to its directors and senior leaders.



“Gettysburg was recommended to us by some of our members who participated through their involvement with Farm Credit organizations,” says Tracey Steiner, NRECA’s Senior Vice President of Education and Training. “They raved about it and encouraged us to consider finding a way to offer it to more NRECA members.”

Tracey and Bill Wilson, FCC Services Director of Agribusiness at FCC Services, began exploring how the two organizations, which have much in common in serving their cooperative members, could collaborate to bring even greater value to their membership. As an initial step, Bill arranged for Tracey and a few other NRECA leaders to participate in one of the GLE modules, after which they were even more convinced that the leadership development program could benefit its members.

“What impressed us the most is that you don’t have to be a history buff to get a lot out of the experience, because the challenges those leaders faced are completely timely, relevant and applicable

2016: GENERATIONS OF GROWTH



to what our leaders are facing today,” says Tracey. “Concepts like claiming the high ground, the importance of communication, and defining yourself as an organization are critical to all of our members’ long-term success.”

The collaboration between NRECA and FCC Services moved forward in 2016, with two groups of 30 leaders each attending a GLE session. After the success of this year’s programs, two sessions are already being promoted for next year.

So far, the feedback has been extremely positive. “This program allowed me to focus my thoughts with professional points of view to develop a re-organization plan at my Cooperative that has produced great results in only six months,” said one attendee. “The Gettysburg Leadership Experience was the most well-presented and coordinated leadership training that I have ever attended,” said another.

Being away from their daily operations affords attendees the time to think strategically about not just where their organizations are going, but where they’re going personally as a leader. The program includes time for reflection, when attendees can apply lessons to their own experiences. Most leave with an action plan to apply their learnings once they return home.

Tracey believes that FCC Services’ close ties with the cooperative arena, serving both Farm Credit and agricultural cooperatives, enhances the benefits. “This is a program that’s run by people who are familiar with the cooperative business model, and cooperative values are imbued in the content and the leadership style being taught. Things like concern for others, the value of self-help, and fairness and equality are relevant to all cooperatives today, and also underpin why we were having the battle of Gettysburg to begin with.”

Bill says, “This is a prime example of taking one of our strengths in the Gettysburg Leadership Experience, and helping another group of cooperatives benefit from it. This is one piece of an ongoing collaboration between our two organizations.”