



Strategic Plan: 2008-2013

Drafted by Board of Directors on Sept. 14, 2007

Mission Statement

The MREC is a partnership between its members and Land Grant Universities in the Midwest whose mission is to support education and research on rural energy issues for the benefit of: Farms and other rural energy consumers, rural energy suppliers, Farm organizations and agricultural trade associations, Electrical equipment and allied industries, and Government regulatory agencies

Purposes

- Provide a forum for members to exchange information and ideas.
- Initiate and support activities that will encourage efficient and safe energy use for agriculture, industrial and commercial businesses, residential housing and other development in rural areas.
- Identify, encourage and support research that will provide new technology for energy generation and improved use of energy.
- Promote safe and proper wiring, installation and use of electrical and other energy delivery equipment.
- Serve as a primary source of information on proper, efficient and safe and sustainable generation, distribution and use of energy.
- Work with educational institutions, state agencies, allied groups and other organizations to develop and conduct educational programs on rural energy issues.

Audience

- Energy supplier personnel
- Electrical equipment industry:
 - Engineering/Development Marketing/Sales/Distribution Dealers/Installers
- Agricultural/Rural energy consumers
- Electricians
- Educators
 - University, College and Extension
 - High School Agriculture Programs

- Agricultural Vocational Technical Training
- Research Institutions
- Youth Organizations
- Farm Organizations
- Agricultural and other news media
- State agencies and commissions

Services

- Provide educational programs for members and other audiences.
- Provide an open forum for members to discuss rural energy issues.
- Provide information and expertise on rural energy issues to the public.
- Provide member support of education programs at local state agricultural events.
- Coordinate utility efforts in communication with energy equipment industry, product information and testing and research and education programs.
- Respond to critical rural energy issues and challenges.
- Serve in an advisory capacity on rural energy issues where appropriate.

PLANNING GUIDELINES

Rural Energy Issues

- Reliability of energy supplies.
- Electric power quality.
- Rural electric distribution system capacity, 3 phase availability and cost.
- Farm wiring and safety, cost and availability of farm wiring materials.
- Lack of integration of electrical system into farm planning and construction.
- Future of rural economy - Characteristics of consumers in the future.
- Electric load management, Demand Side Management, Direct load Control, Time of day rates.
- Load shifting, Consumer incentives.
- Poor image of rural distribution system maintenance, and upgrade.
- Difficulty of locating electric generation, transmission and electric and gas distribution facilities, due to growing public concerns.
- Perceived side-effects of electricity use (EMF, stray voltage, 'electrical trespass', 'objectionable currents')
- Increasing shortage of agricultural staff and expertise in Utilities.
- Increasing shortage of agricultural staff and expertise in Universities.
- Increasing energy demands of customers.
- Reduced emphasis on agricultural issues within Utilities with declining number of agricultural customers.

- New agricultural energy technology.
- Need for centralized, credible source of rural energy information and data.
- Challenges of emerging bio and renewable energy sources

Strengths

- Knowledgeable, interested members.
- Well established and functioning structure.
 - Members, Partners, Executive Committee and Board of Directors
 - Leading Rural Energy Issues Web Page
- Recognized record of performance.
- All major rural power suppliers are represented and involved.
- Diverse representation of membership, from field staff to management.
- Promotes unity and uniformity between energy suppliers.
- Strong support and financially sound.
- Useful and well-attended educational programs, Small group interaction encourages working together and focusing on major issues.
- Provides central contact to key resources; e.g., National Food and Energy Council, Electric Councils in other states, American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers, IEEE, EPRI, Universities and USDA/Extension networks.

Weaknesses

- Continued need to increase public visibility of MREC.
- Limited official ties with trade allies/organizations.
- Need for improved communications with council members and public.
- Need for better continuity and focus of education programs.
- Need for broader representation on council, i.e., Municipal utilities, Trade allies.
- Need to get other universities more involved.

Key Results Areas

- Recognized Industry leadership
- Improved Member service and education
- Innovative Research and development
- Expanded Communication with members and public
- Cooperation among members
- Improved quality of service

GOALS & STRATEGIES

Long Range Planning

Goal: Develop a long-range plan for the Midwest Rural Energy Council for 2008-213.

Action Plan:

1. Establish long-range goals.
2. Establish annual action plans.
3. Develop process for annual review of Strategic Plan and update as necessary.

Educational Activities

Goal: Provide conferences and educational opportunities on significant and emerging issues and concerns identified by MREC.

Action Plan:

1. Expand marketing and awareness of annual conference.
2. Identify and prioritize educational needs, plan educational strategy schedule, and develop and conduct special educational programs.
3. Identify and develop targeted curricula and materials for our audiences.
4. Support information and educational efforts at agricultural events
5. Coordinate activities with similar educational interests.
6. Oversee coordination of activities using the Web site.
7. Coordinate review and recommendations of sale and service tools, computer hardware and software, energy audit software, stray voltage test equipment, and other applicable equipment.

Structure and Organization

Goal: Improve effectiveness of MREC structure and efficiency of activities

1. Support existing members.
2. Investigate the possibility of expanding membership.
3. Provide staff and budget to meet short- and long-term plans and objectives of MREC.

Action Plan:

1. Strengthen ties with the University of Minnesota, Michigan State University, UW Platteville, the University of Illinois, Iowa State University, South Dakota State University, North Dakota State University, and energy organizations in the Midwest.
2. Identify staff required to meet MREC objectives.
3. Periodically update job description for staff position.
4. Develop funding plan for staff position; e.g., fee-for-service, membership dues, fees from conference and seminars, and increased membership.

Research

Goal: *Serve in an advisory capacity in support of rural energy research.*

Action Plans:

1. Review existing research and provide information to members.
2. Identify and prioritize common research needs.
3. Establish formal relationships with research organizations.

Communications

Goal: *Establish MREC as a primary source of information on agricultural and rural energy issues.*

Action Plan:

1. Maintain, expand and improve WEB page: WWW.MREC.ORG.
 - a. Search Internet and post information of interest to members.
 - b. Develop WEB link to promote MREC as a source of speakers to other organizations on agricultural and rural energy issues.
2. Improve email database and notification to members with a professional email service.
 - a. Continue to update and expand the member database.
3. Broaden and increase interaction with allied organizations
 - a. Develop a contact list for Audience organizations.
4. Develop plan and mechanism for coordinated news releases on rural energy issues.
 - a. Identify key agricultural media personnel, develop relationships with agricultural media, and send periodic news releases on current topics.