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To: Board Members
From: Gary Fish, Manager of Pesticide Programs
Subject: Planning Session Topic: Streamlining of the Licensing Process

As we discussed this issue at the planning session it became apparent that the major Board member concerns revolve around the time it takes to issue a license after exams are passed and developing a more convenient system for paying license fees. Additional concerns include the distance applicants must travel to take exams and the need for a live or virtual training to help supplement the self-study manuals.

Some ideas that the Board discussed include:

- develop a combination exam/license application that can be used to apply for both the exams and license with one check, but the application would specifically state that all fees are NOT refundable, even if the examinee flunks the exams
- develop a receipt that doubles as a temporary license for companies that send someone with the application and fee directly to our office
- develop computer based testing that gives immediate feedback on correct and incorrect answers
- partner with the Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles or a private company like H & R Block to provide multiple exam centers
- develop an on-line application and payment system so companies do not have to travel back and forth to accelerate the licensing process
- record an initial training session and make it available on-line or as a DVD and/or start doing more initial training sessions

The staff has discussed these ideas and submits the following analysis:

There are some things that we could begin to implement with a little extra time and no additional funding and there are others that will require additional resources i.e., new software, a better functioning database and possibly more personnel.

1. The combination exam/license application would not be especially hard to design and implement and it probably would be a relative wash in terms of adding some work in one area and reducing it in another, but you must consider how many companies will be willing to pay extra money up front and then lose it when their exam candidate fails an exam. From a workload perspective, it is important to make the additional, up-front fee for the license non-refundable, because refunds involve considerable staff time and cost the state significant resources to process.
2. Issuing a temporary license and license number is another item that is feasible. It will require creating a new document and training a few staff members so they can do the 4 or 5 steps in the licensing system to generate a new license number. It will increase the work load for our office staff and it could become burdensome, depending on how many people/companies take advantage of the service.

3. Computer based testing (CBT) is not an item that can be done very quickly or easily and it will require purchasing new software or contracting with an outside vendor to convert all the exams to a computer based system. CBT does give immediate feedback and automatically corrects the exams, but it will be quite expensive. Most of the states that have implemented CBT license 30,000–50,000 applicators and bring in much more revenue than we ever will. Even if the Ag Basic license brings in an additional 2,000–3,000 licensees, we will only be up to around 6,000 applicators.
4. Adding testing centers by partnering with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles or a private company like H & R Block is also very attractive. We might be able to contract it out for a percentage of the exam fees, but I am fairly certain the fees would have to be raised significantly in order to generate enough revenue to make it attractive to those entities. Indiana has partnered with H & R Block and their exam fee schedule is shown below.

Office of the Indiana State Chemist Exam Candidate	
Scheduling fee	\$29 (per session)
Examination fee(s) First exam	\$44
Additional 1 hour exam	\$22
Additional 90 minute exam	\$32
Additional 2 hour exam	\$44

Virginia Department of Agriculture (VDA) offers their exams at DMV sites; their exam fee is \$70.00 and the VDA also pays \$5.00 per exam to the DMV. Florida offers both commercial and private applicator exams at all their Cooperative Extension offices; exams are free but their private applicator license is \$100.00 and their commercial applicator license is \$250. We already offer private applicator exams at Cooperative Extension offices for free; our commercial applicator exam fees are \$10.00 per core or category exam and \$50.00 for the master level exams.

5. We have been seeking an on-line licensing application and payment system for over 10 years. Other state licensing entities like the Forestry board have implemented that type of system, but we have not been able to develop or purchase an application to date. I have approached InforME (the state sole source vendor for on-line payment systems) a number of times and asked them to develop something for us, but they have been reluctant to do so since the only way they can get paid is through transaction fees and we do not have enough applicators taking exams to make it cost effective for InforME to commit the needed resources into our project. We are currently working with the state Office of Information Technology to pursue a new course with a new sole source vendor for database development, including on-line transaction systems. We are hopeful that this new avenue may be more fruitful, but the bottom line is this direction is also quite expensive and we will have to have a number of Divisions or even Bureaus involved to help make it affordable.
6. I have had several conversations with Jim Dill about recording an initial training session and making it available on-line or through DVD's. The biggest decision to be made for this effort is whether to make it more than just a talking heads recording of a live session. The talking head form of training video is not very effective (very boring). Moving in the direction of doing a professional video training program could be quite expensive, most estimates come in around \$1,000–2,000 per minute of finished video. Our typical initial core training is 3 hours long. If we could find a graduate student in videography we might be able to get it done much cheaper, but it is a lot of work. We did a few production videos in the 90's and I remember it was very expensive even through the University production facility.

I have attempted to lay out the options discussed at the planning session and to provide information to help you make some decisions. I hope this will help facilitate discussion at the Board meeting. It is all up to you folks now.