

NCGA Expands Fresh and Regional Support

BY CE PUGH

At its 2013 fall meeting in Seattle, the National Cooperative Grocers Association's (NCGA) designated representatives prioritized several areas in which NCGA could help fuel a strong and successful food co-op sector, including:

- strengthening our talent pool
- enhancing performance
- promoting fresh departments
- allocating more resources to direct co-op support.

NCGA began efforts to address the first of these priorities in 2013 with the establishment of a talent-development department (reported in the previous issue of *Cooperative Grocer*). In 2014, NCGA will begin to make changes and expand services to provide increased fresh and regional programming and support.

New fresh department

NCGA veteran Chris Ryding will lead a new department made up of supplier program managers, category managers, and fresh department coordinators to secure reduced cost of goods, improved supply, and aggressive promotional discounts on meat, produce, and deli items. This team will also develop retail programming and practices to be delivered through new, regionally based fresh department specialists.



In broad strokes, the fresh department will emphasize:

- strategic distribution and product sourcing to reduce product and supply cost
- promotions and programs that support improved operational performance and co-op differentiation and growth, with consideration of regional priorities
- support of NCGA advocacy initiatives.

Expanded regional support

By the end of 2016, NCGA expects to operate new regional offices in each of our corridors to provide for regional support teams, including retail support specialists and other corridor staff. Initial proposed locations for regional

offices are Portland, Ore., and Raleigh, N.C. The central corridor support team will be based out of NCGA's existing office in St. Paul, Minn.

Each regional office will include staff dedicated to supporting the growth and development needs of the co-ops in that corridor or region. These corridor support teams will be directed by a business support manager, and teams will include a business support specialist, business development advisor, and four retail support specialists (center store, produce, deli, and meat).

The new fresh department and the establishment of regional offices is an exciting turning point for NCGA and our co-ops. Our investment in fresh will result in national and regional fresh purchasing contracts and promotions designed to drive sales in meat, deli, and produce departments and to help co-ops maintain their status as leaders in fresh retailing. Our investment in regional offices with additional staff will help us to provide an increased level of direct and targeted support to NCGA co-ops.

These investments are possible due to the success of NCGA co-ops and the resources provided by our successful purchasing and promotional programs. The work we've done as a national group has improved our ability to offer the best of both worlds—a solid national co-op with vibrant regionalism. ■



"The exchange of information among all the participants and illustrations drawn from actual experience are invaluable."

Eric Huot / Partner, Geiger and Huot Architects,
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