



2012

# NACO INSTITUTE OF EXCELLENCE

## 2012 Institute of Excellence Graduate Uses Experiential Learning to Manage Conflict

A clash between one division of county government, state government and an affiliate group had been intensifying for several years; the groups involved were not communicating with each other.

Ignoring negative and exasperating comments, a 2012 NACO Institute of Excellence graduate took a risk and invited all of the groups to a meeting to discuss the situation. Each group explained the state statutes governing their divisions and the procedures they follow.

They discovered the conflict stemmed from the statutes being out of alignment. The groups realized they need to work together to get the statutes changed, so that the work between the divisions results in the intended outcomes. Future meetings are being planned to determine an appropriate course of action.

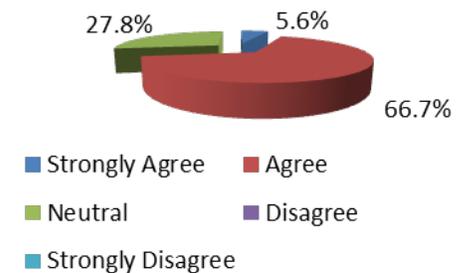
The graduate borrowed an activity from the Institute to facilitate the meeting. Attendees were grouped together to form "mini-courthouses." The "officials" worked through the conflict based on the perception and need of their respective offices. By using the experiential learning the young leader was able to get the three different groups to listen to each other and agree to work on eliminating the conflict.

**The NACO Institute of Excellence is a year-long leadership development program for county officials. In 2012, 28 officials completed the program and were recognized by their peers at the NACO Annual Conference in December. The program, funded by user fees began in 2008. Since then 190 officials have completed the Institute.**

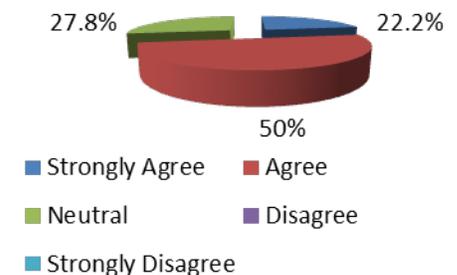
**The leadership program is collaboration between the Nebraska Association of County Officials, UNL Extension, UNL Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication and the UNO School of Public Administration.**

### Year-End Evaluation (n=20)

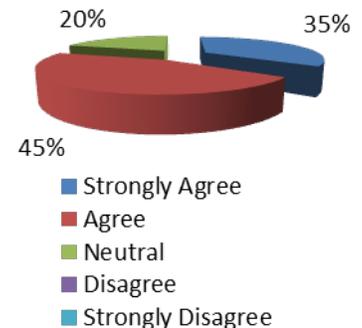
*As a result of the NACO Institute of Excellence, I am more proactive in leading change.*



*As a result of the Institute, I plan to or have made a change in my office or board.*



*As a result of the Institute, I will use innovation to find better solutions to problems and issues.*



## Testimonials

### County Official Garners Local Support

“The county board sent out a memo announcing the intent to combine county offices. They made the decision without contacting any of the elected or appointed officials resulting in great concern within the courthouse.

I researched the facts and figures and personally contacted community leaders to let them know what was going on. I invited community residents to a public hearing on the matter. With facts in hand and 50 community leaders attending the hearing to testify against the proposal, the vote was 7-0 NOT to combine county offices.

I would never had been able to do this without the experience of the NACO Institute of Excellence program. I just wanted to tell you how much I appreciate attending the program and the help it has given me. Thank you so very much for what you do.”

### Institute of Excellence Instructor Inspires County Board Member

“As a result of this morning’s class, I will be able to give a speech focused on positive attitudes and looking to the future.

In our county there is a county-owned nursing home that has been financially independent for many years. Without contacting the county board, they decided to add a wing to the building and it turns out they did not have enough money to fund the project. This financial fiasco along with other administrative issues caused a great deal of turmoil in the county. Staff morale was low and the county had to pay for the improvements.

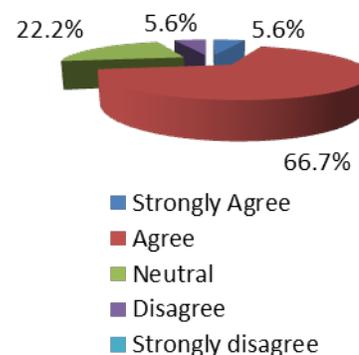
I’ve been asked as a county board member to give a speech at today’s ribbon cutting. I have been worrying about what I would say in my speech. In this morning’s class with Dr. Hall, I was writing notes like crazy. The things she was saying fit our situation perfectly. I can now return to my county and speak with those attending the ribbon cutting ceremony this afternoon about the importance of keeping a positive attitude and looking toward the future.

I just wanted to tell you that this program has been such a great help to me. Thank you.”

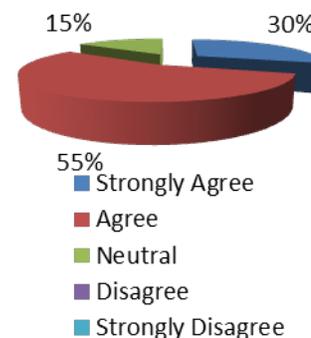
*For more information about the NACO Institute of Excellence contact your local UNL Extension Office or Extension Educators, Phyllis Schoenholz (pschoenholz1@unl.edu) or Carroll Welte (cwelte1@unl.edu).*

### Year-End Evaluation Con’t.

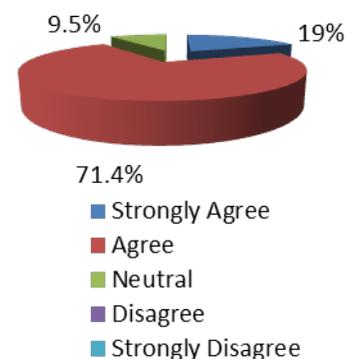
*As a result of the Institute of Excellence, I am using skills and concepts learned to lead change in the county.*



*As a result of the Institute of Excellence, I am a better leader in venues outside of the courthouse and county government.*



*As a result of the Institute, I better understand the perspective of other elected officials.*



SESSION EVALUATIONS FROM ALL FOUR YEARS INDICATED SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN KNOWLEDGE FOR ALMOST ALL OF THE LEADERSHIP CONCEPTS AND SKILLS MEASURED.