ROSE FAQ

June 15, 2005

What is this project all about?

ROSE is a process for examining the true costs (in dollars and time) as well as the benefits of all of NCRA's programs, projects, and services.

What does ROSE stand for?

Resources, Opportunities, and Services Evaluation. Dave "Alphabits" Wenhold came up with the acronym. Senior staff had been referring to it as "the inventory thingy," and we thought it needed a better name.

Isn't "ROSE" a little cutesy?

Sure, but it's useful to have a good shorthand label to use when referring to the process. The rose image may help establish the program in people's minds. You can view it as representing the care -- as provided by NCRA programs and services -- that our members need and deserve in order to flourish.

Or you can call it "the inventory thingy." ☺

Where did the logo come from?

Joan and Nancy did it.

What is the driving force behind this?

For the past few years now, as senior staff has met to consider the next fiscal year's budget, we have started with a draft budget that includes ongoing programs and projects plus new ones requested by the Board of Directors or that grew out of that year's presidential planning meeting. Our revenues have been flat for a while, so the combination of what we are already doing and what we have been asked to add to it invariably puts the first draft budget many hundreds of thousands of dollars in the hole. The Board expects from us a budget that is essentially balanced, so each year we engage in the painful process of delaying or reducing projects to hold down the expenditure side of the budget.

Inevitably, this exercise produces a conversation about how we cannot continue adding new programs and projects without making some hard decisions about which activities we must do and which we can do without. In order to approach the Board on this matter, we saw that staff would need to thoroughly research all of the available options and provide solid information on which decisions can be made. That's what ROSE is about.

When you get down to it, aren't you really talking about cutting costs?

The goal is not to save X amount of dollars or Y percentage of the budget. The goal is to spend money efficiently and effectively, in a way that provides maximum benefit to the membership. An inevitable outcome of the project, if it is done correctly, will be to identify programs that do not have a high value return for the money or time spent on them. In those cases, the project or program will either be modified to improve its performance, or it may be ended. In other cases, this analysis could lead to expansion of certain programs or services.

In any event, having an in-depth understanding of all NCRA programs, projects, and services will allow staff to provide accurate information to the Board so that they may make better informed decisions.

By the way, the same thorough analysis that we will be doing for existing programs will also be done on proposed new programs and projects. All programs, projects, and services – old and new – will be held to the same high standards of relevance and performance. So it is not just a matter finding things to do away with so we can afford new things. The new things will need to demonstrate that they are likely to produce real value before they will be funded.

How is all this going to be done?

The staff directors have compiled a list of all of the association's services, publications, books and tapes, learning programs, and tests and certifications. We are developing forms that staff will complete for every item on those lists. We expect that this will take quite a few weeks to complete. But when we are done, we will have for the first time a thorough, quantified analysis of virtually everything the association does. We will be able to readily see what a program costs in money and time, how many people it benefits, what results it produces, and other measures of its effectiveness.

This is a big job, far more than any one person in a department can be expected to handle. So it is likely that most staff members will be involved in collecting or commenting on data as the project unfolds. We are developing tools to help with the process.

All this makes sense, but how will the results of the project affect my job?

That's an understandable concern, and one that is impossible to answer definitively.

As mentioned earlier, our goal is to spend money efficiently and effectively, in a way that provides maximum benefit to the membership. We don't know what the research will show, and there is a possibility that this could result in some programs being modified or even ended. That in turn could mean some changes to individual staff members' responsibilities. That's not a prediction – just trying to be honest.

As has always been the case, the sum of our work output will be determined by revenue factors such as dues income, advertising revenue, test registrations, meeting registrations, CEU participation, income from investments, and so on. ROSE may well affect what we do, but revenue will continue to determine how much we do.

What is the time frame for getting this done?

We recognize that everyone has plenty to do already, what with the convention, Board meeting, AMS/CMS, vacations, and so on. And we don't know for sure how labor-intensive the inventory process will be. We'll learn that as we go through our first test cases. But, for a ballpark estimate, we think it's realistic to aim for completing the research phase of the project in three months.

Who do I see if I have other questions?

Your department director will be able to help. The entire process is being managed by a steering group consisting of Pat, Joan B., Laura B., and Marshall.