

Marketing plan worksheet with directions for development K-State Research and Extension

Welcome to the first step of developing your county or district's marketing plan. Hopefully, you'll find this to be an exciting and helpful process. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Kira Everhart-Valentin, graduate research assistant at kde6464@k-state.edu or 785-532-3063.

Please organize how you intend to go about developing this marketing plan. You may want to designate a small group of individuals as your "marketing team." Or, you may want to make it a full office effort and have periodic meetings. No matter which route you choose to take, everyone should be encouraged to provide his or her opinion on key issues. Also, you'll want to designate a contact person who will be the primary liaison between the office and the marketing unit at K-State.

As you work on this plan, always look behind you. In other words, review what you have in parts I and II before completing part III. Let your previous work guide you throughout each step. That will help you stay focused and moving in the right direction.

One thing to remember: You are already marketing in everything that you do. This is simply a way to help organize your marketing efforts so they are more consistent and effective. Right now this may seem like a large project, but you will find that as you implement your strategies, they will fit into your everyday activities.

I. Situational Analysis

The situational analysis is simply the K-State Research and Extension story. If you were to hand this plan to someone from outside of the organization, what would he or she need to know in order to understand who and what you are?

- **Background Description:**
 - This is the storytelling part. What does K-State Research and Extension do? Who does it serve? What exactly are you trying to market in this plan? What are some of the big issues that are affecting how and what you do as an office? Take everything there is to know about your organization and summarize it down to the most important and relevant information (in ½ to a full page or so).

- **Key Findings:**
 - These are some of the important bits of information that help to describe your organization and the situation it is facing. Often, statistical values are appropriate here, such as demographic data (including ethnic populations, income distribution, percentage of residents working outside the county, etc. – data that may be a bit unique or defining). Some good sources of information are the U.S. Census Bureau, Kansas Action for Children data, the USDA and Kansas Department of Health and the Environment.

II. SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)

The goal behind the SWOT analysis is to help you and your staff identify what areas of your office and operation you should capitalize on, and what areas need improvement. It is imperative that this step be completed before any of the others as what you bring to the table here will drive the rest of the plan. When doing this, try to include as much of the staff as possible and allow for some open discussion – you might be surprised what comes up.

In this step, you simply need to identify and list your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). The steps that follow will be built off of what you identify here, so take your time. An important thing to remember: be careful not to fall into the rut of identifying your SWOT by program area. This marketing plan needs to encompass K-State Research and Extension as a whole. Instead of identifying the strengths, weaknesses, etc. of the horticulture/FCS/agriculture/4-H program area, ask yourself: “What are the strengths of K-State Research and Extension Scenic County as a whole?”

Strengths: What are you doing well? What are the organization’s strong points? Remember, these are internal characteristics.

Weaknesses: Also internal, these are areas in which you are not performing as well as you should or would like. What aspects of your organization are weak and in need of improvement?

Opportunities: An external characteristic, an opportunity can be looked at as a potential strength. If you take advantage of a particular opportunity, could it become one of your strengths in the future? In other words, what areas/situations can you take advantage of to help make your Extension operations better and stronger?

Threats (Challenges): Like opportunities, threats are also external. They are potential weaknesses – situations or challenges that threaten your ability to achieve success. What are these?

III. Target Audience

Keep in mind that these are the audiences that you would like your marketing to have an impact on. Use your SWOT to guide this - are there particular audiences that you said you aren’t doing well reaching? Are there particular audiences that may be directly affected by some of the weaknesses and threats you listed? Your primary audiences are those that you want to see the greatest change in. This would especially include those audiences that you do not feel you are reaching but you believe you should be. Your secondary audiences are more likely to be your current, more loyal users whom you want to keep in your focus as well, but who will require less effort than your primary audiences. This would also include the “vehicles” that you would use to get to your primary audiences (such as schools, media, etc.). Your tertiary audiences are those that help you reach your secondary and primary audiences and who you want to keep in the marketing “circle.” These may include administration, your boards, the Department of

Communications, etc.

You will also need to determine where you feel your county commissioners should be. Keep in mind what kinds of goals you have for them.

Be careful to make sure you are establishing your *marketing* audiences, not your programming audiences. These may potentially be quite different. Here you are targeting who you need to work the hardest to get word out to. Often, those who we are already programming to will not necessarily be in our primary target audiences. Generally, we find they fit better in the secondary audiences. Still, this may not always be the case.

Also, be sure to develop a manageable list. Separate your audiences out enough to target them (what is (are) the defining characteristic(s) needed to be able to target your communications with them? Is it their ethnic background, their age, their location of residents – i.e. rural versus urban?), but be careful not to separate them out so much that you have an extremely long list of audiences that you can't handle for targeting.

Primary:

Secondary:

Tertiary:

IV. Objectives

Your objectives are simply the goals for your marketing efforts. Use your SWOT to guide this step as well. What areas did you identify as needing work? What changes do you want to see? When possible, try to make your objectives measurable. If you can't, at least begin thinking about how you're going to try and measure whether or not you're achieving your objectives.

Take time to set good, strong objectives. This is the skeleton and frame of your marketing plan. How many you set will depend on your county or district's situation. In general, most set between 4-8 objectives.

- A.
- B.
- C.

V. Key Messages

Your key messages are the wording or messages that need to be presented in all communications. Like was mentioned earlier, make sure these are messages that apply to K-State Research and Extension as a whole and are not focused on a specific program area. However, keep in mind that your key messages are *not* slogans. Instead, they are ideas/messages that you want your audiences to understand. The only slogan that you should be using is "Knowledge for Life."

Below, you will find that two messages are already listed (including the "Knowledge for Life" slogan). This is because these are two messages that need to be communicated from K-State Research and Extension as a whole. This consistency needs to present throughout the state.

You may find that you do not need any more key messages outside of those listed below. It will depend on your current situation. As you decide, simply think about what you believe every resident should know and understand about K-State Research and Extension as a whole in your county or district.

- A. "Knowledge for Life"
- B. Unbiased, research-based information
- C.
- D.

VI. Strategies/Tactics (Action Plans)

The meat on the bones of your marketing plan, this step includes the strategies and tactics you intend to use to achieve your objectives. Strategies are concepts and are what you need to ACCOMPLISH in order to achieve your objectives. Tactics, on the other hand, are tangible and are what you need to PRODUCE in order to achieve your objectives. Be careful not to go objective by objective in identifying your strategies and tactics as some strategies and tactics may help to achieve multiple objectives at one time.

For example, a county or district may identify one of its objectives as wanting "to increase awareness of K-State Research and Extension among the county's Hispanic population." By breaking this down into components, they may then identify that one way of doing this would be to have a strong presence in Spanish-language media. Therefore, one strategy may be "to increase K-State Research and Extension's presence in Spanish-language media." This would then be broken down into tactics, such as developing relationships with local Spanish-language reporters, producing targeted news releases in the Spanish language, participating in local Cinco de Mayo events, etc. Another county or district may have the same objective of increasing awareness and usage among key audiences as well as improve relationships with key decision makers and key leaders. They may also want to make information more accessible to county residents. A strategy that would help to achieve all three of these objectives might be to develop stronger communications with local media. By doing this, a county or district is likely to see more publications of Extension-related pieces. With this, one can expect to see an increase in awareness among some key audiences. In addition, if key decision makers see more news involving K-State Research and Extension, they are likely to better understand its importance in the community. Accessibility also increases as K-State Research and Extension information *comes* to the county resident instead of the resident always having to come into to office to get it.

Also, one must stress the importance of keeping your county boards in the loop on what you are doing with the plan. So, you may even want to find a way to write that in as a tactic (for example, under a strategy dealing with communications with community opinion leaders and decision makers). By keeping them in the same boat, you will help to keep their support in your efforts.

In addition, it is also important that you address the need to communicate your impact to your county and district residents. Their support and buy-in is imperative to your success, so it is necessary to *show* them what you are doing to help them. How are your services and efforts benefiting them as residents of the unit in which you work?

A. Strategy

1. Tactic
2. Tactic
3. Tactic

B. Strategy

1. Tactic
2. Tactic
3. Tactic

C. Strategy

1. Tactic
2. Tactic
3. Tactic

VII. Budget

This step is quite simple. In your budget, you will need to list out exactly how much your marketing plan will cost you. You will need to go tactic by tactic, determining if there is a cost involved, and if there is, what that cost is. Be careful not to miss any “hidden” costs. For example, if you have chosen to host an event of some sort, what all is involved? Do you need to rent space? Buy food? Purchase materials? Take the time to analyze each and every tactic to come up with a solid final number. This will keep any costs involved from surprising you. It is also vital for your ability to plan ahead and make this plan successful. However, do keep in mind that many (if not most) of your marketing efforts will likely be for little or no cost. Many marketing efforts are simply a change in the way we do things.

VIII. Assessments:

Back under objectives, it was noted that you would need to start thinking about how to measure them. Now it’s time to list those measurements. Your assessments are how you intend to assess your progress towards achieving your objectives. As noted on the plan model itself, it can include surveys, hits on your web page, media coverage, presentations, phone calls, etc. The goal here is simply making sure you are working to know whether or not your marketing efforts are effective. You’ll also want to list the time period associated with these assessments (how often do you plan on doing them?).

IX. Timeline

You will need to wrap up your plan by setting a timeline for all of your marketing efforts. Like in your budget, you will need to go tactic by tactic and determine a reasonable amount of time for its completion. Some may be able to be completed immediately; others may take three

months, six months, or more. It all depends on the nature of the tactics and how your office works. However, your timeline should not exceed two years for any of the tactics.

Hopefully, you and your fellow staff members are ready to get started on your own county or district plan. While it may seem a bit overwhelming at this point, don't be discouraged. The key is breaking it down. Don't try to sit down all in one setting and do the whole plan. It simply won't work. Instead, limit your meetings to no more than two or three hours. It will keep your staff fresher as well as make it easier to work in more frequent meetings.

What you will also find as you begin to implement this plan is that it will not be as time consuming as you may be afraid of. In general, many of the marketing efforts are simply small changes to your everyday way of doing things. You may have some special, larger marketing tactics, but most will find their way into your daily activities.

There is one other thing that is important to keep in mind. Once you have completed this plan and begin its implementation, you will need to revisit it regularly. As a staff, you should sit down and review your plan as well as your progress on a monthly basis. It is vital to keep it on the front of everyone's mind. In addition, you need to revise your plan on a yearly basis. How have your audiences shifted? If they haven't, how have your objectives changed? What other issues have come to the forefront as well? What strategies or tactics need to be added on to or which ones simply are not working and need to be scrapped? Your marketing plan has to be an ongoing project with periodic maintenance to adjust to your changing needs. Otherwise, you will not see long term success.

With that, best of luck with your plan!