



COUNCIL LEADERSHIP

21st Century Programs , Governance & Membership

Your Role in Building Stakeholder Relationships *Council Handout*

Training Module Objectives

Council members will understand their role in:

1. Establishing and maintaining positive relationships with Extension's stakeholders, including county commissioners and other county officeholders; state and federal legislators; city government officials; local funding partners; and community leaders. A stakeholder is someone who is involved with an organization and therefore has responsibilities towards it and an interest in its success. *Extension stakeholders are decision makers who have ownership for supporting extension programs and who – along with their constituents – benefit from those programs. They have the capacity to generate goodwill and obtain resources to support the University of Missouri Extension mission.*
2. Communicating the value of Extension programs for local residents.

State Statutes

The intent of state statutes 262.550-262.620 is for county commissioners to be involved in decisions about Extension programs, to assume fiscal responsibility for local support of those programs and to receive ongoing reports of results accomplished. County extension councils are responsible for communicating with commissioners about Extension programs, governance and membership. Council members also have an important role in communicating with other key stakeholders. Communication requires county extension council members to build and maintain ongoing relationships with those who have interest in and responsibility for programs.

Several sections of the Revised Statutes of Missouri address county extension council responsibilities for communication:

262.597 Financial budget for Extension programs – appropriations from counties.

The council, in cooperation with the county commission and the university, shall prepare an annual financial budget covering the county's share of the cost carrying on the Extension services contemplated by sections 262.550 to 262.620 which shall be filed with the county commission on or before January first each year and the county commission shall include the budget so filed in...the budget of county expenditures...

262.600 Monthly requisitions on county commission, how issued, amount of - ...

Immediately following the close of each month the council shall requisition the county commission for the estimated amount of the month's expenditures and within ten days after filing the requisition, shall submit to the county commission a certified, itemized statement of all expenditures covered by the requisition. The requisition shall constitute the basis for immediate issuance by the county commission and it shall, if there be funds available therefore, promptly issue a warrant covering the requisition in full and drawn in favor of the treasurer of the council.

262.603 Names of council members and officers given university and county commission, when.

Before the allocation of funds is made by the county commission, the council shall present to the university and the county commission a list of members of the council and of its officers with statements signed by the chairman of the council certifying that the named officers have been duly elected and qualified as specified in sections 262.583 and 262.607.

262.617 Annual report to county commission.

At the close of each calendar year the council, through the secretary, shall make an annual detailed report to the county commission, covering all receipts and expenditures, together with a summary of work undertaken and results accomplished. The report shall be filed with the county commission not later than February first, following the close of the year or portion of year covered by the report.

During a focus group discussion with representative county commissioners in November 2004, commissioners said they desire ongoing communication, instigated by Extension councils and Extension faculty and staff – particularly about programs that can assist them in their decision-making role and programs that can assist county residents in improving their lives.

How to Build Relationships with Commissioners and Other Stakeholders

- 1. Listen, listen, listen.** Seek first to understand.
 - a. In informal conversation or through a formal interview, ask elected officials and stakeholders to discuss concerns of constituents and
 - b. Extension's role in the community. Ask how Extension can help them and the people they serve.

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- c. Keep notes about your conversation, capturing the most important points about the person's interests and concerns about the community.
- d. Summarize your notes, and share them with your County Program Director and the whole council.
- e. Approach the officeholder with respect for the office and the tremendous responsibilities of the position.
- f. Practice good listening skills. Good listeners listen with their faces, establish eye contact, and concentrate on what is being said rather than planning what to say next. Good listeners listen without interrupting the other person's train of thought.

(See "Communication is a Three-way Process" handout.)

- 2. See commissioners and other stakeholders as Extension clients, not just as funding sources. Stakeholders are interested in WIIFM – What's In It For ME?**
 - a. Ask stakeholders what their biggest problems are; suggest ways Extension may be able to help.
 - b. Refer them to Extension faculty, Web sites, publications and other materials.
- 3. Invite stakeholders to programs; offer to host them at local events.**
 - a. Co-sponsor open houses, information coffees, breakfasts or receptions with the MU Alumni Association or other partners to showcase University and Extension programs.
 - b. In cooperation with local staff, provide a tour of Extension programs.
- 4. Invite stakeholders to serve on council committees; match their talents and skills with program needs.**
- 5. Recognize stakeholders for their achievements. For example, if they appear in the local paper, clip the article and send to them with a congratulatory note. Keep a scrapbook of Extension articles, and display the scrapbook at public events.**
- 6. Recognize members of the community in the stakeholder's subgroups (business, agriculture, government) as "Extension's Heroes." Give these Extension supporters public recognition through the media.**
- 7. Communicate throughout the year...not just at budget time.**
 - a. Ask each council member to "adopt" at least one vital stakeholder; have the council member learn about the stakeholder's interests and background. Devise a plan to keep in touch with that person on a regular basis.

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(See “Profile on Missouri Stakeholders” sheet and “Stakeholder Communication Plan” worksheet. Also see “Take the Pulse of Your Access and Influence” relationship goal sheet.)

- b. Learn about the stakeholder’s concerns. County commission minutes are public documents; request copies and scan them for issues/needs that Extension can help fill. Read local papers and listen to newscasts to learn about county commission, city council or legislator issues. Determine if there is an Extension connection.
- c. Ask the county commissioner representative on the council to make periodic reports about what is happening in the county and suggest ways Extension might help.
- d. Drop by and visit, or make appointments. Share program impacts in the person’s area of interest through personal stories, e-mails, letters, postcard announcements and phone calls.
- e. Provide copies of newsletters, brochures, program fliers and other materials as appropriate. (See Pass-along card.)
- f. Provide testimonial letters from Extension learners to show program impact.
- g. Send thank-you notes or letters when legislators, commissioners or other stakeholders provide fiscal and other support for programs.

8. Participate in local fairs, displays and events. Keep the University of Missouri Extension name in the forefront. When appropriate, speak to service clubs, organizations and local groups about Extension and your personal Extension-related success experiences.

9. Participate in the annual UM Alumni Alliance Legislative Day in Jefferson City. Come prepared with individual impact stories about how Extension has affected your life; bring testimonial letters from Extension clients and learners.

10. Share stakeholder relations ideas within the regional council and with other county councils.

11. Be enthusiastic! When a stakeholder or anyone asks how you are, mention your involvement in the Extension council and the difference Extension is making for you, your community and the state.

Additional Resources:

Role of County Extension Councils in Marketing:

<http://extension.missouri.edu/extcouncil>

County Commissioner Focus Group Report:

Extension Share Drive

S://MU Campus/Commissioner Focus Group

County Plan of Work

Communicating With Your State Legislators

Extension Message Map:

<http://extension.missouri.edu/staff/marketing/messagemap.html>

Adapted by:

Wendy Brumbaugh, *Northeast Consumer Family and Economics Specialist*

Tony DeLong, *County Council Coordinator*

Roxanne Miller, *East Central Civic Communications Specialist*

Sandy Stegall, *Constituent Relations Coordinator*