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| ***Recommendations on*** ***Operational Themes*****Extension Support** The following organizational support is critical to a statewide advisory leadership system: * Recruitment of diverse, representative, high level volunteers
* Commitment for long-term administrative support
* Active involvement of extension leadership on all levels
* Two-way communication with active listening
* Training for faculty and advisory leaders
* Operational structure and guidelines for advisory council
* Follow through on input with documented responsiveness
* Availability of facilities and technology
* Commitment to partnership with advisory leaders
* Faculty position assigned to strengthen advisory leadership
* Facilitate convenient meeting dates and locations
* Recognition system for volunteer advisors

*Possible funding options:* * Extension taxing district
* Funding by volunteers
* State extension budget
* Grant or contracts
* Local funds (fee-based diverted to advisory funds)
* County government partner
* Fund-raisers
* University foundations or local foundations

*Staffing roles that extension should support for a strong ALS system:* * Technical assistance
* Coordinators-local, district, state

*Training specialists for:* * Evaluation
* Program development
* Volunteer development
* Organizational development

*Communications* * Public information
* Extension publications
* Advisory system newsletter
* Reports on advisory system impacts and outcomes

**Roles of Advisory Leaders** Advisory leaders should: * Offer a reality check for programming
* Validate, legitimize, and provide authority
* Share load of planning, delivering, and evaluating programs
* Interpret program for stakeholders
* Provide checks and balances on budget for programs
* Help identify resources for extension programming
* Facilitate group, present information, and research issues
* Support group to stakeholders and elected officials

*These roles are most critical to the continued effectiveness of extension:* * Networking and building relationships with people
* Ensuring relevancy of programs
* Assisting with prioritizing of programs
* Justifying "letting go" of programs
* Identifying needs for new program initiatives

*To avoid potential conflicts and misunderstandings regarding the role of leader versus the role of extension worker:* * Have a diverse group with a systematic rotation plan
* Provide clear understanding of roles:
* Written job descriptions
* Training in how to perform roles
* Defined limits of responsibility
* Involve faculty and advisory leaders together in training to build trust

**Training for Extension Faculty** To lead advisory groups effectively, extension faculty need: * Basic skills that offer empowerment to advisory committees
* Facilitation skills
* Group process skills
* Volunteer development skills
* Relationship building
* Involving diverse volunteers
* Matching skills of volunteers with work needs

*Effective training is needed:* * Series of district and multi-district training supported by Web-based resources.
* Consistency
* Same content
* Same curriculum materials
* A state team that involves all job groups and volunteers should provide training.

*We recommend a common curriculum for the Southern Region that allows for each states to adapt structure:* * Would give emphasis to the priorities of the Southern Region
* Would establish core competencies.

*Success of training initiatives is measured by:* * Follow-up measurements by advisory council members that address knowledge gained and practices implemented
* Degree of involvement of advisory leadership groups
* Motivational level of volunteers

**Organizational Guidelines** Formal guidelines should include: * Mission of advisory groups
* Functional roles of advisory leaders
* Structure
* Number of meetings
* Membership criteria
* Rotation system for group renewal
* Representation expectations
* Oversight responsibility

*There should be consistency across the state from county to state because:* * Councils will exist
* They will have a programmatic focus that is needs- and issue-based
* Consistent terminology will help build a feeling of the larger whole
* Consistency can still allow for variability in structure based on county needs

*Suggestions for access to guidelines?* * Written published notebooks with bulleted information and white space
* Oral presentations at meetings
* Videotapes or other visual/ oral presentations pictures and illustrations

*Oversight for implementation of guidelines should lie with:* * Volunteers (lay people)
* Extension staff
* Responsibility to coach volunteers to implement programming tasks
* Responsibility to have an advisory group
* State-Administration
* District and county administrators

**Communication Strategies** Communication issues most critical to the effective operation of the system include: * Individuals serving know goals and objectives
* Building a team where members understand and appreciate differences
* Systems and tools to create public awareness of overall extension program
* Process to ensure consist two-way communication
* Terminology used and understood by both faculty and volunteers
* Understanding persons individual communication style \
* Perception of issues
* Follow-up for face to face meetings
* Continuous information flow between face-to-face meetings

*Issues that require a more personal communication strategy versus a technology strategy: Advisory member development* * Recruitment
* Orientation training
* Benefits of organization
* Operating procedures
* Leadership training
* Identifying member expertise

*Group development* * Team building
* Diversity appreciation
* Strategic planning
* Giving constructive criticism
* Evaluation of processes
* Support of local government
* Discussion of new ideas

*Technological strategies that are most effective in communicating with volunteers:* * Telephone
* Web cam
* Teleconferences with good preparation
* Accessibility of web sites
* E-mail
* Fax
* Regular radio, TV programs, PSAs

There are so many communication systems available today, such as Web pages, digital imaging, videotaping, multimedia, news media, committee meetings, and library systems. We must select accessible and appropriate system and use them with specific, clear directives. *From Strengthening Extension Advisory Leadership in the Southern Region, a Southern Region Extension Advisory Leadership Conference held in Charlotte, N.C., May 3-5, 2001*

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