

Communicating Impact of CES Programs

Objectives:

- ✓ Increase the understanding of Advisory Council members regarding the influence they have on the perception of the public, and ultimately decision-makers, about CES programs.
- ✓ Develop skills in communicating the impact of CES programs.
- ✓ Become knowledgeable of writing hints which can improve written communication.
- ✓ Develop a brief statement to share with decision-makers regarding the impact of an Extension program

Advance Preparation:

- ✓ Review lesson plan.
- ✓ Duplicate handouts and worksheet of role play topics.
- ✓ Review handouts, Power Point slides and slide notes for presentation.

Materials Needed:

- ✓ Handouts duplicated for each participant:
- ✓ PowerPoint:

Time Needed:

- ✓ Preparation: 1½ - 2 hours
- ✓ Presentation: 1½ - 2 hours

BACKGROUND

Advisory council members are often asked to contact their decision-makers about the value of the Extension program in their county or state. Sometimes the contact is a written letter and more frequently it is the personal visit or telephone call. However, those aren't the only times when volunteer leaders influence the attitudes and knowledge the public has about Extension. Casual conversations across the fence at home or in the grocery store check-out line can have an impact on the perception others have about Cooperative Extension, positively or negatively. As leaders on Extension councils or with specific programs or activities, everything they say or write about Extension will leave an impression. This lesson includes some basic guidelines for writing clearly and communicating the impact Extension is having in a community.

For additional background information review the handouts, slide notes, lesson plan and instructor's comments integrated into the lesson.

INTEREST APPROACH (PowerPoint Slides: 1-4)

- Prepare two flip chart sheets: label one "People" and the other "Places"
- Brainstorm a list of all the people or persons, i.e., neighbors, aunts, spouse, child, teacher, etc., and the places, i.e., grocery store check out line, school, telephone, across the fence, etc. where you mentioned or discussed Extension in the last month. Record on flip chart.

NOTE: "Mentioned or discussed Extension" includes positive and negative comments – *Great council meeting tonight* or *Extension meetings go on forever. I learned a lot from the forages meeting tonight. Or, the pesticide certification*

training is such a waste of time. Also think about non-evaluative comments such as, *I am going to an Extension meeting at the University next week.*

- Explore who these people know (People list) and who might have overheard (Places list). Are any of them related to legislators? Do any of them have friends who know or are related to county decision-makers? Could someone have overheard who is an influential member of the community?
- Share: *Spreading the Word* – (PowerPoint Slides: 5-7)
- Point: Everything we say can have a major impact on how Cooperative Extension is perceived and ultimately the support it receives from the public and decision-makers.

LESSON

I. COMMUNICATING IMPACT

- Use the PowerPoint Communicating Impact of CES Programs, (PowerPoint slides: 1-13)
- Distribute handout: The “3 R’s” of Accountability
 - Review handout and explain the 3 R’s. Give examples – (PowerPoint Slides: 8-11)
- Distribute group activity sheet: *Examples of Impact Statements*
 - Activity: Assign small groups of 3-4 persons one of the examples and ask them to critique the statement. Identify sentences which describe one of the 3 R’s – relevance, response, or results. Wearing your taxpayer hat, does the statement communicate a program of value? What additional information would strengthen the statement? (PowerPoint Slide: 12)

Key Points for Communicating Program Impact: (PowerPoint Slide: 13)

1. **Focus on Education** – Education is our purpose. We conduct many ACTIVITIES but the focus of our activities should be EDUCATION. *What is the educational purpose and what are the educational outcomes of the program?*
2. **Wear your Taxpayer Hat** – Do you ever read an article or hear a news report on a government program and find yourself saying, “How much did we pay for that?” When you are communicating with decision-makers and the general public about Extension programs, keep that question in mind. It will help you emphasize the educational value of the program
3. **Focus on results that indicate increased knowledge, changed behaviors or added value (economic, social, or environmental).** Ask the “so what” question until the program outcomes can be described in these terms. (We call these higher level outcomes “Initial,” “intermediate,” or “long-term” outcomes.)
4. **Write – then rewrite.** When writing, first put words on paper – or the computer screen – then begin editing. Be clear, concise and specific.

Focus on the results of the program. Make the first sentence the most important. Put the outcomes at the beginning.

5. **Make conversations systematic and intentional.** Be prepared to share your Extension story. Can you complete the following statement? *Cooperative Extension is valuable because. . .* You never know when you will find yourself in an elevator with the Mayor. Look for opportunities to communicate the value of Extension. Seek information. When someone says, I went to an interesting program sponsored by Extension, ask for specific information.

II. WRITING TIPS

- Use the PowerPoint *Communicating Impact of CES Programs* (PowerPoint Slides:14-34)
- Distribute handout: *Writing for Impact: Tips for Improving Writing Skills*. Review points, discuss. (PowerPoint Slides: 14-26)
- Distribute worksheets. Complete and discuss.
 - Correct Grammar Is Important (PowerPoint Slide: 27)
 - Polish Your Style (PowerPoint Slide: 28)
 - Simple Words and Phrases Are Best (PowerPoint Slide: 29)
 - You're the Editor: Shorten and Simplify (PowerPoint Slide: 30 - 34)

III. SUMMARY

- Key Points To Remember – PowerPoint, *Communicating Impact of CES Programs* (PowerPoint Slides: 35-41)

APPLICATION

1. Identify a program conducted in your county. In pairs, write statements including 3 R's. Have each group write their statement on flip chart paper and display so others can see. Critique the statements using the writing tips.
2. Divide into groups of two or three persons. Each group writes a 2-3 sentence statement communicating the value of Extension to your county. (Ex: Complete the statement: Cooperative Extension is valuable to this county because. . .)

Put statements on the top half of a sheet of flip chart paper. Collect the sheets of paper and redistribute to another group. The new group edits the statements using the writing tips discussed and rewrites the edited version on the bottom of the sheet of paper.

Display and discuss each.

REFERENCES

Boleman, Chris and Cummings, Scott. *The "3 R's" of Accountability*. College Station, TX. Texas Cooperative Extension.

Calvert, Patricia, ed., *The Communicators Handbook: Tips and Techniques*. Agricultural Communicators in Education (ACE), Gainesville, FL: Maupin House, 1990.

Grazian, Frank, ed., *Communication Briefings: Ideas that Work*. Pitman, NJ: Encoders, Inc., Volume 6, Number 5 and Volume IX, Number V.

Impact Statements. University of Kentucky, Cooperative Extension Service. Retrieved from <http://www.ca.uky.edu/agpsd/impact.htm>. October 20, 2004.

Krakauer, Kay and Dail, Howard. *Take Me To Your Reader: Shortcuts for Writers in a Hurry*. Davis, CA: College of Agriculture, University of California, 1964.

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ATTACHMENT #1
The “3 R’s” of Accountability*¹
For Advisory Council Leaders

Volunteer leaders are often asked to communicate the value of Cooperative Extension programs to decision-makers and the public in general. Being able to effectively tell the Extension story in a manner that communicates the impact of Extension’s educational efforts is a challenge. The responsibility for communicating impact of programs to the volunteer rests squarely on the shoulders of Extension’s agents and administrators. However, the volunteer must also be able to identify and communicate from their own perspective the impact of programs, specifically the relevance, response and results that ultimately have meaning and value to the public.

Relevance *Describes the educational need that led to the development of the program or educational experience.* It answers the question, “Why is this program being conducted.” Often relevance will include statistical data that indicated this was a problem. Groups and individuals that shared this need through needs assessments or as a part of planning groups are described

Example: This county has the third highest rate of colon cancer in the state and is the ninth highest in the nation. Health professionals throughout the county listed colon cancer prevention and education as one of the major health initiatives needed in the next two years.

Response *Shows how the Extension educator “responded” to the identified need or issue.* It answers the question, “What did Extension do to address this issue?” In describing the response include the participants, educational methods used and the collaborators.

Example: Extension worked with the county medical association and the health department to conduct a series of health fairs, a media campaign, and nutrition and exercise workshops. The educational workshops had 168 (78% female and 22% male) participants and the medical association indicated screenings for colon cancer increased by 50% during the six months following the program.

Results *The most important section of the statement, this section communicates the outcomes of the educational program.* Data answers the questions: “What are the economic, social or

¹ Edited from original publication by Chris Boleman and Scott Cummings, Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas A & M University, College Station, TX, 2004.

environmental changes that result from these educational efforts?
“What difference did this program make to the people who participated? “Did they change practices or behaviors?” “Did they increase their capacity through a gain in knowledge, development of skills or changed opinions or aspirations?”

Example: A follow-up survey of participants indicated six out of ten changed their eating habits and half are exercising more. One workshop participant said, “I may not be able to change the family genetics, but I can change the food they eat.” The health department reported 40% of the participants in the health fair had read the newspaper articles on colon cancer and four persons were diagnosed with early stages of colon cancer as a result of the health screening.

Key Points for Volunteers

- Become knowledgeable about the programs you are sharing. If you were not a participant, ask county educators or state administrators to tell you about the program. Be able to answer questions. If they don't provide the data – **ASK**.
- Your support is more valuable than a report from an Extension administrator or county educator. Decision-makers want to know what their constituents support and believe is important.
- Always be able to describe:
 - Relevance: Why was this program conducted?
 - Response: What was done?
 - Results: What happened?

ATTACHMENT #2
EXAMPLES OF IMPACT STATEMENTS
CAN YOU FIND THE 3 R'S?

Read the following paragraphs. Which statements describe the 1) relevance, 2) response, and 3) results? What additional information would you like to have?

Dining with Diabetes

During Diabetes Awareness month, The Cooperative Extension Service in collaboration with the County Health Department offered an introductory program about Diabetes to Adams County residents. Forty-three individuals attended the program and voted to continue educational programs in the form of a cooking school during January, February, and March. Of the 43 in attendance, 36 individuals had never been to the Extension Service or the Health Department for services.

Farm to Table

Through the cooperative efforts of the East and West Area Extension Agents and the Department of Agriculture, the Farm to Table Connection was held November 6, 2004. The conference goal was to connect producers with consumers in the promotion of production and the consumption of grown/produced agriculture products. The approximate 400 attendees were able to learn production, marketing and usage of non-traditional agricultural crops, livestock and other commodities. Actual producers were featured presenters on the various ways to diversify farming operations. A highlight of the program was the presentation by an Undersecretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He forecast an outlook for agriculture within the next decade. Response forms collected from the attendees indicated the conference provided information and contacts which will enhance their present situation. Adam County was well represented with four producers featured during the conference.

Plastic Farm Jug Recycling Program

A total of about 2600 pounds of plastic pesticide jugs (about 3500 jugs) were collected for recycling this summer by Adams County's Rinse and Return program. This program is a joint effort of the Adams County Extension Service, the State Department of Agriculture, Adams County Fiscal Court, farmers, and local farm supply dealers. Jug returns were up by about 400 pounds compared to the response in the summer of 2000. Adam County farmers buy over 30,000 plastic jugs containing pesticides each year. Farmers who don't recycle them must send the rinsed containers to a landfill for disposal. By recycling these jugs, we saved several cubic yards of landfill space because the jugs are bulky and don't compact well. An indirect benefit is that a significant amount of oil (a non-renewable source) will be saved because it won't be needed to manufacture this ton of plastic recovered from the chemical jugs. Although the recycle rate appears to be rather low, State Department of Agriculture (KDA) officials say that it is typical of counties involved in the Rinse & Return program. It is also much greater than the recovery rate for plastic in the community as a whole. The Extension Agriculture Agent's role has been to promote jug recycling to farmers and farm suppliers, and to coordinate the labor needed to receive the jugs and get them chipped. All together there have been about 35 people involved in the project including about 15 farmers, employees of three farm supply stores, and KDA personnel, etc.

Regional BMP Workshop Saves Horticulture Industry Money

Cooperative Extension Service Specialists and two Extension Agents for Horticulture provided training to 41 regional businesses. Topics included water quality basics, proper planting practices, quarantine issues, large scale and pot in pot production techniques, and weed identification and control strategies. The goal was adoption of Best Management Practices. In the East, West, and Central Areas there are over 100 nurseries, retail garden centers, and lawn and landscape installation and maintenance companies. Because entering the horticulture industry requires little capital, newcomers are always entering the field. With the loss of tobacco more individuals may enter the horticulture industry. This large industry has a tremendous impact on water usage, water quality, runoff, and nutrient leaching and promises to be a factor in the future. Therefore, it is important that every business operates in a manner that will not be wasteful or create environmental hazards. In an effort to educate business owners and employees about water quality, proper nutrient application, and irrigation a second Best Management Practices workshop was held in the West Area. After having March through November to implement the strategies presented, the participants completed a survey. Many practice changes were noted including improved planting techniques, irrigation and fertilization practices, and water management. The 6 respondents noted they saved a total of \$6,750 in the 9 months since the workshop as a result of practice changes they implemented due to attending the workshop. This is an average savings of \$1125 per person. If what these 6 saved is representative of all 41 participants, the total financial impact of the workshop may exceed \$40,000. The changes that were made that resulted in a financial saving also meant less water was used and less fertilizer was wasted. Thus, there was a positive environmental impact of from this program.

ATTACHMENT #3
WRITING FOR IMPACT: TIPS FOR IMPROVING WRITING SKILLS

Good writing is clear thinking made visible. ~Bierce

Audience

- If your goal is to get a message to the reader, then your knowledge of the reader is a key to your success. Clearly identify your audience: age, gender, what they know about the subject, what they don't know about the subject, etc.
- Is the reader familiar with Cooperative Extension?
- Is the reader interested in the topic?
- What does the reader want to know?
- Audience Similarities:
 - Are interested in results
 - Want brief, understandable information
 - Competition for their attention
 - Are not specialists or scientists
 - Have some control over programs
- Keep your audience in mind as you write.

Words

- Less is more: use the right word, not the most; simple familiar words are best; avoid jargon and unfamiliar words.
- Words are your tools – use the appropriate tool for the task.
- Words don't think for you. They only convey your thoughts.
- If the idea is not clear in your mind, the words won't clear it up.
- When you have trouble putting something into words, stop trying to write and start trying to think.
- **Use** the short word: is – **not** exists
- **Use** the simple word: ate – **not** consumed
- **Use** the personal word: you – **not** one
- **Use** the specific word: 110°F – **not** quite hot
- **Use** the colorful word: big as a basketball – **not** very large
- **Use** the active word: It bit me – **not** I was bitten by it
- **Use** the familiar word: beekeeping – **not** apiculture

Numbers

- Make statistics easy to understand. Say "one out of eight" instead of 12 ½ percent. Use analogies such as, "During the five minutes it takes for you to read this story, 10 people will be diagnosed with cancer." Too many statistics can overwhelm the reader.
- In text, spell out numbers below 10 and use figures i.e., 18, to express numbers of 10 or more.
- In groups of two or more numbers, treat the sentence as a unit:
 - He had two suits.
 - He had 100 ties.
 - He had 100 ties, 12 shirts, and 2 suits.
 - One or two more won't matter.

- Spell out numbers at the beginning of a sentence: Fifty-three people attended. Exceptions are symbols such as, 4-H.

Simplify

- Use the short word
- Use short sentences, the more words the harder it is to follow.
- Be as brief as possible
- Eliminate excess evidence and unnecessary examples. Usually one fact or example will support your point.
- Edit, then edit, then edit again. Be ruthless with your copy.
- Start well. The first one or two sentences capture the reader's attention.
- Be conversational. Convey your message with common everyday words. Use contractions. We use them when speaking.
- Use personal words. "I", "you" and "we" involve the readers.

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ATTACHMENT #4
CORRECT GRAMMAR IS IMPORTANT

Whether writing a letter to your congressman or an article for the newspaper, check your copy closely for grammatical errors before you send the message. If possible, have someone else check it, too. The list below includes common grammatical mistakes. The less flowery the language and the more straightforward, the more likely you'll communicate effectively.

Can you improve these statements? In the space provided, rewrite the statements.

Common Grammatical Mistakes

Too Many Prepositional Phrases - Don't avoid these phrases completely; just remember too many make reading difficult.

Poor: The sales meeting was conducted by the sales manager of the company in the conference room.

Better:

Mixed Tenses-

Wrong: He walked the dog and works with horses.

Right:

Wrong: The women cleared their tables, grabbed their coats, and were going home.

Right:

Dangling Modifiers-

Wrong: Walking through the rows, the potato bushes nearly filled the rows.

Right:

Wrong: To benefit fully from a long concert, the seats must be comfortable.

Right:

Redundancy-

Wrong: Mary was wearing the same identical hat as Sue.

Right:

Wrong: The two agencies cooperated together for a period of two weeks.

Right:

Non-Agreement - This can be tricky. To check, think: "Which one has correct noun-verb agreement?"

Wrong: A bowl of apples, peaches, and bananas make a nice centerpiece.
Right:

Wrong: Which one of the following sentences have the correct noun-verb agreement?

Right:

Careless Repetition-

Wrong: You want to emphasize a point, so you repeat it, using different words for emphasis.

Right:

ATTACHMENT #5 POLISH YOUR STYLE

There's always a better way to write it. Any time you rewrite something, you will probably improve it. Try your hand at simplifying the words and phrases listed below.

Write a better sentence

When you rewrite, try to shorten sentences and give them more action. In doing so, consider the context of your article. You may have a different "answer" than we do for the following because you thought of the sentence in a different context than we did. That doesn't mean you're wrong. But your sentence should be easier to read than the original. It should contain an active verb if possible. Active verbs show action. You can find good examples on sports pages (hit, smashed, ran, booted) and in recipes (mix, stir, baste, whip).

Rewrite the following sentences, simplifying them and using action verbs where possible.

Example

Poor: Your consumption of milk should be a quart daily.

Better: Drink a quart of milk daily.

Poor: Strict adherence must be given to safety precautions when using these insecticides.

Better:

Poor: Elimination of these pests calls for a strict insect control program.

Better:

Poor: The right fertilizer must be used for high corn yields.

Better:

Poor: Each pint carton should be labeled, and this label must be recorded on the information sheet for the laboratory.

Better:

Poor: Evaporation of liquid takes place.

Better:

Poor: When an application of wax is made to this surface a brilliance is imparted to it.

Better:

Poor: When application of pressure is employed by the operator, the machine is activated.

Better:

ATTACHMENT #6
SIMPLE WORDS AND PHRASES ARE BEST

Sometimes two simple words are better than one complex word. Put one or more easy words in each blank.

Deficiency _____

Equivalent to _____

Construct _____

Insufficient _____

Remainder _____

Approximately _____

Illustrate _____

Beneficial _____

So as to allow _____

Make plans for _____

In order to _____

Keep in mind _____

Adjacent to _____

In addition _____

At the present time _____

Disposed of on the market _____

List a description of _____

Are suspected of having _____

It is advisable to begin _____

More uniformly shaped _____

With the exception of _____

It is my opinion that _____

ATTACHMENT #7
YOU'RE THE EDITOR: SHORTEN AND SIMPLIFY

Eliminate unnecessary words and phrases in the following statements

- In the year 1963, near the city of Windblow, a man by the name of John Jones was engaged in building a small sized shed for the purpose of storing all his different machinery.
- The reason that he was building this particular shed was because he had previously attended a meeting held in town in the month of September.
- First of all they had talked about he important essentials of machinery care. Then a man had reported to the effect that for some time to come, throughout the whole area, there would be stronger winds than any in the whole of past history.
- From that time on, John doubled up his efforts in order to completely finish his shed before the storms finally began. Among John's neighbors, it was the consensus of opinion that he did not know the basic fundamentals of building, because of the fact that the room was of a round shape.
- Every now and then, during the course of the day, farm workers who were employed by a neighbor shouted comments over the top of the fence.
- "From what is visible to the eye it looks as if he had bisected an organ in two pieces and supported it by means of toothpicks made out of red colored wood," said one.
- "There are many people who say that it cost the sum of \$20,000," said another one. "Nobody else but a new beginner would build such a kind of shed as that."
- When they first began, John still continued working. He appeared to be unaware of them, but as an actual fact he was angry. The workers stayed around for the period of an hour or so until someone or other called them back to work again.
- As a general rule, John's wife brought his lunch at the hour of noon. Today, she arrived late, followed closely behind by their pair of twins.
- The twins seldom cooperated together, and in a short space of time they were both shouting at each other.

COMMUNICATING IMPACT OF CES PROGRAMS

Your help is needed in providing vital feedback on the **SEAL Curriculum** you have just completed. Please take a moment to complete this survey.

For each of the topics listed below, in the LEFT column, circle the ONE number that best reflects your LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING before the **SEAL Curriculum**. Then, in the RIGHT column, circle the ONE number that best reflects your LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING after the **SEAL Curriculum**.

LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING

	Poor 1	Average 2	Good 3	Excellent 4				
Level of Understanding	<u>BEFORE</u> the Program				<u>AFTER</u> the Program			
Understanding the influence Advisory Council members have on the perception of the public related to CES programs.	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Understand the importance of "writing hints" and how they can improve written communication	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4

Intentions. For the following behaviors, check the box that describes what you plan to do as a result of the **SEAL Curriculum**.

Behavior Change	Yes	No
Will you develop a brief statement to share with decision-makers regarding the impact of Extension programs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Satisfaction. Check the box for the statement that best describes your thoughts concerning the program.

Satisfaction	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The subject matter was timely for me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The speakers were effective.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The information was practical to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can go and use the information I learned today in my organization.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overall, this was a very educational program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What is the most significant thing you will apply (feel free to list more than one)?

Do you feel like what you learned provides you the ability to lead more effectively? (Circle the best answer)

YES

NO

- Please explain your answer or provide an example.

Please provide any additional information on the back.

Thank you very much for your time!!!