



THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Colleges of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences & Family and Consumer Sciences

The Extension Leadership System

Communicating with Your Program Development Team

Whether your Program Development Team is in the beginning stages or firmly established, keeping members in the communication loop is vital to the team's success. But often, committee members protest they are inundated with large quantities of useless information; that they don't get the information they need; or that they receive information too late to devote serious attention to it. Effective communication between members builds a culture where everyone works together more efficiently and collaborates to achieve common goals.

Ensuring your team members are up-to-date requires maintaining a free flow of information among all members through a well designed, deliberate communication system. This system should concentrate on the exchange of information related to decision making, member involvement and shared leadership. In developing the communication plan, seek team member input regarding the information the team needs to do its job; the formats in which the information should be delivered; and how often information needs to be shared.

What information does the team need?

An effective communication system provides members information needed to make decisions, monitor progress toward goals and other information related to the functioning of the team. Keep communications clear and concise and avoid sending messages that are not necessarily relevant to the work of the team. Well informed team members are equipped to help you make decisions that advance the team's goals. Reports related to overall goals and specific programs help members monitor progress, identify barriers, and evaluate the implementation process. Other information such as announcements, meeting minutes, upcoming dates and program reminders require no formal team action, but enhances Extension's visibility

How does the team want to receive information?

Just as people learn in different ways, we process information in different ways. Our ability to understand and remember the information is partly determined by the communication method. Ask your members how they prefer to receive information and make the information available using a variety of communication forms. Letters, emails, phone calls, in person, text messages, podcasts, webinars and video conference are only a few of the methods in which you can communicate with your team members.



Make information available using a variety of communication forms.



Some communication will be scheduled and routine.

Each program development team will have unique needs which influence how often information is shared between members.



Focus on team goals.

When does the team need to receive information?

Each program development team will have unique needs which influence how often information is shared between members. Some communication will be scheduled and routine.

- At least two weeks before each meeting members should receive the agenda, information about issues for discussion and committee reports.
- Within one week after each meeting, send the minutes and date of the next meeting to all members. Contact members who did not attend to let them know they were missed, encourage their participation in the next meeting, and remind them of upcoming dates and programs.

Communication between meetings is also essential.

- Periodic updated reports, newsletters, notice of new information posted on your web page, thank you notes, significant publicity or news articles, opportunities for member training and member recognition are just some of the news you can share to keep your team members in the loop.

To be successful, the communication system with your Program Development Team must be purposely planned, focused on team goals, and should keep members current through constant contact. Good team communication has the following characteristics:

Concise – Keep communication simple and brief.

Meaningful – Present what is relevant to the goals and the work of the team.

Timely – Report information that is relevant to the current agenda.

Relevant to Responsibilities – Share information which helps the team do their job.

Best Available – Provide the best available indicators and data for the situation.

Context – Be clear as to the importance.

Graphic Representation – Convert text to graphs to illustrate the message.

Effective communication with your Program Development Team is crucial to forming and maintaining a motivated group focused on achieving the team's goals and actively engaged in the program development process.

Rate Your Communication with Your Program Development Team <i>For each question, give yourself a score from 1 to 10 (with 10 being perfect)</i>	
_____	Do you review mission and vision statements periodically with your team to keep everyone operating on the same page?
_____	Do you have Operating Guidelines which clearly explains the role your expect team members to play?
_____	Do you recruit team members with a job description spelling out expectations?
_____	Do you make a special effort to forge a good relationship with your chair or facilitator?
_____	Do you maintain support throughout the team by keeping all team members well-informed of what's going on?
_____	Do you work with the team chair or facilitator to develop simplified PDT meeting agendas and materials? Is the meeting format simple, keeping information to what is essential?
_____	Do you prepare a special financial report of events for the team which tells them what they need to know in a clear, concise manner?
_____	Do you hold regular team activities, such as informal gatherings, at which team members can socialize and get to know one another and the county Extension staff?
_____	Does your communication program include a variety of initiatives to keep team members informed, motivated and committed?
_____	Do you send team members a newsletter or memo periodically, updating them on Extension's activities?
_____	Do you make sure the team is active in fundraising and marketing?
_____	Do you recognize all team members often? Do you give tokens of appreciation at least once a year in addition to other recognition for special achievements?
_____	Score: 120-90 = A, 89-65 = B, 64-45 = C, 44-39 = D, 38-0 = F



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