

Guide to Conducting an MU Extension Program Showcase

County and Regional

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Introduction – What is a program showcase? Why conduct one?

A program showcase is an opportunity to educate stakeholders and others on the impact MU Extension programs have on our citizens and communities. A showcase may focus on programs in one county or across a region. Our educational programs include Agriculture, Human Environmental Sciences, 4-H Youth Development, Community Development, Business Development and Continuing Education.

It is critical that the showcase highlight the “relevant, responsive and reliable research-based” programming.

A proactive, positive priority or issue may be the catalyst for the showcase. Recognizing Century Farm Families or State Fair Farm Families are examples of catalysts.

When developing a showcase, consider how the showcase will help address the needs of the target audience. For more information, read the section in this document titled “What elected officials need.”

Target audience must be clearly defined. The target audiences could include:

1. Elected officials, their staff and their trusted advisers —commissioners, legislators, council members.
2. Extension supporters and partners, including citizens with deep roots in the county
3. Potential supporters and partners.
4. Emerging leaders.
5. Local/ regional media.
6. A mixed group of some or all of the above. Examples of mixed-group showcase events include:
 - FCS (family consumer sciences teachers) “Back to School Seminar” in West Central Region. The purpose of this event is to introduce new curricula into the schools. Contact Marsha Alexander, Housing and Environmental Design Specialist, Jackson County, West Central Region, to learn more about this event.
 - “Farm City Night” in Clark County. Contact Debby Whiston, Family Financial Education Specialist, Northeast Region, for information about this event.

- “Century Farms and Farm Family Celebration” in Saline County. Cynthia Crawford, Family Financial Education Specialist, Central Region, can provide more information about this event.

7. University of Missouri officials and other University of Missouri partners.

Planning

A planning committee should be convened to develop the concept for the showcase. The planning committee is most effective when deeply engaged in the showcase with specific duties during the planning process and at the event. An engaged planning committee develops ownership and commitment to the event.

The committee could include county council members, county commissioners, county partners, regional faculty and staff, faculty from continuing education, a faculty member from a county or region that has had a showcase, and a campus-based faculty or staff member.

The committee could recommend:

- Format:
 - *Program presentations by a few faculty and/or program participants* to a group of guests in auditorium/theater-style meeting.
 - *Program presentations by many faculty and/or program participants* in a round-table format with guests rotating to the program table presentations of interest to them.
 - *Program tours* within a county or region (paid by registration fee, etc); could involve rural to urban/urban to rural exchange tour to a county or region. Could focus on programming with diverse populations, diverse neighborhoods.
 - *Public issue forums* on countywide or regional concerns, such as water quality, immigration or economic development, and invite decision makers to participate.
 - *Experiential events and simulations such as the Family Budget Exercises, CERT (Community Emergency Response Team), Food & Nutrition Challenge (\$11 Nutrition Challenge in a grocery store).*
 - *Positive and uplifting celebrations* (may include showcase elements) focusing on recognition and building on community values and culture.

The Showcase Program - Program elements should include:

- Welcome and statement about purpose for the event.
- Introductions.

- Main activity such as program presentations and recognition of honorees or awardees.
- Comments or feedback from selected participants.
- Closing.

Additional Planning Considerations

- Make the program exciting!
 - Have a theme for the event.
 - Show how it fits into Americana – “Baseball, hotdogs, apple pie and extension!”
 - Music, patriotism, leadership recognitions, gathering, food, speeches, decorations, photo opportunities, etc.
 - Fill the event with people with deep roots in the county.
 - Invite a local high school or college choir or band!
 - MAKE IT FUN!
- Target audience and other guests such as those from MU Extension and university campus.
- Event date: Select a day when the target audiences can attend. See the section titled “How to Get Elected Officials to Attend.”
- Event times (starting and ending).
- Location (accessibility for all).
- Notify/invite the following after the event date has been confirmed: MU Government Relations; Vice Provost and Director, University of Missouri Extension; MU Extension Director of Off-campus Operations; and MU Extension Director of Constituent Relations. Involve other MU officials as appropriate.
- Food: Provide meals or refreshments depending on the time of day and budget. Consider special dietary needs of participants and presenters.
- Announce the event as early as possible.
- Send invitations and request RSVP; ask council members to assist in extending invitations to commissioners, state legislators and others; include directions to the event site.
- Send reminders about the event by e-mail or telephone, especially to county, state and federal elected officials.
- Attend to event logistics—room setup, assignment of faculty to locations within the [room? venue?], general extension displays, room breakdown, etc.
- Designate a timekeeper or master of ceremonies to keep things moving and on schedule.

- Assign a host to each special guest.
- Day of the event: Provide a welcome team, decorated registration table, printed name badges, event packet with essential handouts.

Marketing and Media Engagement

- Assure the event is posted to the statewide calendar.
- Implement other Web-based options (YouTube, Facebook, etc.).
- Involve/consult the Cooperative Media Group and the MU Extension Marketing Director for assistance.
- Invitations to radio/TV/print media from an individual who has personal relationship the media outlet.
- Prepare and disseminate a news release with information about the event. Follow up with a telephone call.
- Continue and increase use of YouTube and other Internet-based marketing strategies.

Talking Points and Elements for Program Presentations and Descriptions

1. Situation statement: Brief description of the situation being addressed that explains why this program is important.
2. Brief description of the extension education program including, how it works (content, delivery methods, etc.) and why it is effective.
3. Results:
 - a. Changes participants made.
 - b. Outcomes from changes participants made and the benefits to them.
 - c. Benefits to others (Public Value)-helps to answer why public appropriations should fund the program.
 - Narrow the information gap - usually by providing objective, research-based information that leads to improved decision making.
 - Address crucial concerns about fairness - equal access to information and resources for all populations, including disadvantaged people.
 - Provide benefits to people who do not participate directly. There are many examples: improved water quality, tax base, infrastructure, affordable/safe food supply, new community service[s?], trained

volunteers contributing to other community projects and organizations, etc.

- Reduce costs for others - reducing health care costs, such as with Stay Strong, Stay Healthy; energy conservation, etc.
- d. Improve the social, environmental and economic outcomes in the community. This would be new businesses, new jobs, increased sales, improved tax base, increased availability of affordable housing and other economic improvements in the community. Social outcomes may include reduced teen pregnancy and improved parenting skills. Other examples could include improved air quality, improved health of citizens, etc.
4. Closing comments, if appropriate for your event.
 5. Testimonials – include quotes from participants giving testimony about program benefits. Better yet, invite some program participants to the event to demonstrate skills they have learned or discuss how a program benefited their lives. It is best to have the program participants present a testimony in their own words.
 6. Props and demonstrations – provide items that will draw attention to the program being presented. Consider such items as fire apparatus, safety/AgrAbility demonstrations, household poison displays, indoor air quality monitors and green rebuilding and conversion models.

After the Event

Send photographs, etc., to Sandy Stegall for inclusion in MU Extension Update and Eileen Yager for inclusion in MU Extension Insider. Submit photos and story to news media. Consider creating a newsletter or communication piece with photos and a story about the event. Send it to each county extension council.

Evaluate/Assess Effectiveness

Assess the effectiveness of the event in producing the desired short- and longer-term outcomes. This could involve gathering immediate participant feedback at the end of the event and additional feedback several months after the event. (See sample instrument.)

Resources and Tools for Planning and Implementing the Event

- Invitation letters (see templates):
 - State and federal legislators.
 - Commissioners (to be used by county councils).
 - County and regional council members.

- Reminder postcard (sample provided).
- Reminder e-mail message.
- News releases (sample provided).
- Program Description Template – give to those making program presentations.
- Organizational Stakeholder resources, including Pride Points: <http://extension.missouri.edu/staff/stakeholders/>.
- MU Extension exhibits.
- Program panel brochures (with the same images as the MU Extension exhibits).
- MU Extension pocket portfolio.
- MU Extension bags (plastic).

How to Get Elected Officials to Attend

Consider the best time of the year for the target audiences. Here are suggestions.

County commissioners:

- Any time of the year, weekdays, morning, noon, night.

State elected officials:

- Legislative session (January to mid-May): Thursday evenings, Friday mornings or Friday afternoons. Invite at least a month in advance of event.
- Odd-numbered years, off-session (May 15-Nov. 30): Schedule the showcase for any day of the week except Wednesday night. Have the showcase during the morning (breakfast) noon or evening.
- Even-numbered years (election years) – Off-session (May 15-Nov. 30) is a perfect time for the showcase, but send the announcement/invitation earlier to give officials more notice. Give them time on the agenda but be aware of local circumstances, such as whether the person is running for office.
- Ask a key influential person to extend a personal invitation (face-to-face visit or phone call) to the elected official.

What Elected Officials Need

Elected officials have many responsibilities and may have many events to attend. Consider their needs when working with them and inviting them to a programs. Which of their needs will the program address?

- Recognition that they are supporting good things:
 - Extension is a good thing.
 - Publicly recognized for supporting extension.

- Key knowledge and educational resources to help people and communities with problem prevention and problem solving. Too many people and agencies only contact elected officials with problems.
- Quality, concise knowledge about the impact extension has in their communities:
 - Cutting-edge programming.
 - Relevant, responsible and reliable programs.
 - Sound bites, not 30 pages.
- To know the public value of programs to justify public investment (tax dollars):
 - Narrow an information gap to improve decision making.
 - Access to information and resources for all populations, including disadvantaged people.
 - Provide benefits and/or reduce costs to people who do not participate directly.
- Quality, research-based information to help them do their jobs.
- Proactive, positive events and celebrations that distinguish extension from problem-based reactive needs.
- To be seen as active, positive leaders.
- To be heard and feel ownership in our programming.
- Good news and how they contributed to it – in front of the media.
- Key advisers to be at least neutral or better yet knowledgeable and supportive of extension.
- To know how we are delivering programs for other agencies:
 - Building Strong Families – Department of Corrections.
 - Children, Youth and Families at Risk-LIFE (Living Interactive Family Education) Program for incarcerated parents.
- To know the showcase date as soon as it is set.

Templates

Attach templates that are mentioned in various sections of this document.

1. invitation letters (see templates):
 - State and federal legislators.
 - Commissioners (to be used by county councils).
 - County and regional council members.
2. News releases (sample provided).