



COUNCIL LEADERSHIP

21st Century Programs, Governance & Membership

Be an Effective County Extension Council Member

Council Member Handout

An effective county Extension council member is informed, involved and committed to the mission of University of Missouri Extension and to the goals of the county council. This module will help council members:

- Identify characteristics of an effective Extension council member;
- Understand their responsibilities and opportunities as council member;
- Identify information needs and available resources.

University of Missouri Extension Mission

The mission of University of Missouri Extension is to:

Improve Missourians' lives by addressing their highest priorities through the application of research-based knowledge and resources.

As an integral part of the land-grant mission, University of Missouri Extension is a joint venture of the University of Missouri campuses; Lincoln University Cooperative Extension; the people of Missouri through county Extension councils; the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; and other stakeholders and partners.

Characteristics of an Effective Extension Council Member

Each county council member brings a collection of skills, resources and knowledge that is valuable in carrying out elected or appointed responsibilities. Common among all effective county council members are:

- **Vision** for the future and understanding of the long-term effects of decisions that further community goals.
- **Knowledge of the county**, including awareness of its assets, its people and their educational needs.
- **Open-mindedness** to carefully weigh the pros and cons of an issue before reaching a decision.
- **Self-assurance** in decision-making, not influenced by strong or vocal factions.
- **Enthusiasm** for the goals of the organization and the ability to communicate that interest and passion to others.

Council Member Responsibilities/Opportunities

Council members are responsible for:

- **Educational Program Development and Implementation** — Council members assist in planning and carrying out Extension programs in their county by identifying concerns in their community; making recommendations to the University; and ensuring access to residents, groups and organizations in the county.
- **Governance** — Council members administer local extension budgets and operations, including council-employed personnel and office operations; they are responsible for council elections, meetings and operations.
- **Membership** — Council members represent the diversity of the county's changing population.

Seven Steps to Becoming an Effective Council Member

The following suggestions can help you become an effective council member with the vision, knowledge, open-mindedness, self-assurance and enthusiasm to ensure that the educational goals of your community are met.

1. **Know your responsibilities and how the Extension council operates.** Be knowledgeable about state statutes governing county Extension councils (*see the Extension Council Manual M-61 and your council's bylaws*).
2. **Talk to people in your county** to learn what others consider the important educational needs and issues in the county. When program priorities are being set, be prepared to introduce their ideas with suggestions for an appropriate course of action.
3. **Be a source of information about University of Missouri Extension.** Let others know about educational programs at every opportunity. Share with stakeholders the ways that Extension programs improve people's lives.
4. **Get to know faculty and staff.** Regional Extension specialists assigned to your county are responsible for carrying out day-to-day responsibilities for educational programs. Ask them about those programs. Faculty welcomes the opportunity to discuss current and future programs with you. They work with a statewide Extension network to deliver programs. Obtain a list of Extension employees who deliver programs in your county, and review their areas of expertise.
5. **Understand the issues.** Be informed on the issues and prepared to make decisions at council meetings. Your unique perspective is always welcome.



6. **Participate in council and committee meetings.** As an elected or appointed representative of people in your community, your participation in decision making is essential to ensure that their educational needs are met.
7. **Explore resources to help you do your best.** Following is a brief description of some council resources and where to find them.

Be an Effective Council

An effective council is one in which members are engaged and involved. As a whole, effective councils engage in practices to ensure that the educational programs address community needs and that the council itself and the local operations it governs are efficient. Following are some characteristics of effective councils as they relate to the three council functions:

Educational Program Development and Implementation

An effective council:

- Understands its role: provides advice and counsel to the county program director concerning the Extension program in accordance with state statutes;
- Is open to new ideas and opportunities;
- Has a sense of priorities and timing.

Governance

An effective council:

- Understands state statutes governing county Extension councils;
- Has a clear, written statement of its purposes in alignment with state statutes and understands those purposes as a result of discussion;
- Establishes and follows council bylaws;
- Conducts meetings according to parliamentary procedure;
- Believes in, respects and practices democratic values;
- Has a responsible leader who guides the council in its deliberations;
- Keeps a written agenda, minutes of meetings and other necessary records;
- Evaluates its work regularly and prepares an annual report.

Membership

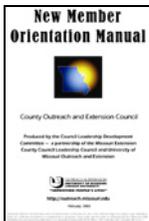
An effective council:

- Follows state statutes regarding membership and elections;
- Has elected and appointed members who are qualified and genuinely interested in serving;
- Works as a team rather than as individuals;



- Has members who participate actively in deliberations and discussions;
- Provides an enjoyable and productive experience for its members;
- Reflects the diversity of the citizens of the county;
- Participates in regional and statewide council development activities;
- Celebrates accomplishments;
- Creates a positive environment for Extension in the county.

Additional Resources

1.  **Missouri Extension Council website** — Source for news, information and training materials. (<http://extension.missouri.edu/extcouncil/>)
2.  **The County Extension Manual (Manual 61)** — Reference on history, laws and agreements that govern University of Missouri Extension. *Updated 10/03; available online.* (http://extension.missouri.edu/extcouncil/manual/pdf/council_manual_61.pdf)
3.  **New Member Orientation Manual** — Introduction to council and University of Missouri Extension. *Revised edition coming in early 2004.* (<http://extension.missouri.edu/extcouncil/orientation/index.html>)
4. **UME Staff Directory** — Online directory of regional specialists, campus faculty, educational assistants and others who work for University of Missouri Extension. (<http://extension.missouri.edu/uoedir/>)
5. **Parliamentary Procedure Online** — Introduction to procedures for conducting and organizing meetings according to parliamentary procedure. (<http://www.parlipro.org/>)

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References:

IMPACT Leaflets 12, 12a and 12b authored by Charles St. Clair, *Community Development Specialist*
Extension Council Directed Discussions Statewide Summary Report, May 2002, Council Development Committee





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Trainer Notes and Council Activity

Through this council development activity, council members can explore their responsibilities in educational program development and implementation, governance and membership. After completing the exercise, council members should be able to:

- Identify characteristics of an effective Extension council member;
- Understand their responsibilities and opportunities as council member;
- Identify information needs and available resources.

Tips for Facilitating

The following tips can assist trainers and council members in getting the most out of the "*Be an Effective County Council Member*" training module:

1. Determine who will be the presenter(s) (council member, specialist, county program director).
2. Review "*Be an Effective County Council Member*" handout, PowerPoint presentation with speaker notes and council activity.
3. Review resources identified in the module.
4. Prepare materials needed for council activity.
5. Place "*Be an Effective County Council Member*" module on council agenda, and involve Regional Council Leadership Team in training exercise as needed.

Council Development Activity

Preparation time: 1 hour or less

Presentation time: 30-45 minutes

What is needed? *(Note: Online resources may be used if Internet access is available.)*

- "*Be an Effective Council Member*" module for each participant
- Copies of:
 - The County Extension Manual (M61)
 - New Member Orientation Manual

- Missouri Extension Council webpage
- Staff Resources webpage
- Newsprint, markers, easel, masking tape

At the Meeting

1. Introduce "*Be an Effective County Council Member*" topic. (5 minutes)

Deliver PowerPoint Presentation with speaker notes.

2. Distribute and review module materials. (10 minutes)

Discuss how people can become effective council members. Ask group to identify characteristics. Write answers on newsprint.

3. Lead activity. (15 minutes)

Brainstorm information needs anticipated in the next few months: (If council information needs have been identified, proceed to No. 4.)

- Ask each participant to share ideas.
- Write responses on the newsprint.
- Repeat process until most participants are passing.
- Review the list, combining related topics.
- Ask participants if the meaning/intent is preserved.
- Identify enough topics for groups of 2-3 people to discuss.

4. Have participants select a topic and form discussion groups of 2-3 people. (5-10 minutes)

Review resources available and instructions for small groups. (See *Suggested Topics and References* section for ideas.)

Instructions for small groups: (Provide newsprint and markers or paper for notes.)

- 1) Identify information required to address topic.
- 2) Locate answers/information using resources provided. Other sources also may be used.
- 3) Formulate action steps (i.e., use with committee, identify additional information, develop timeline, etc.).
- 4) Consider the following questions:
 - a. Have you used this resource in the past?
 - b. What did you discover new about this resource?
 - c. Will you revisit this resource?
- 5) Report back to council.

Suggested Topics and References

- 1) **County Personnel** — The Extension Council Manual (M-61), county bylaws and/or policies and procedures



- 2) **University Personnel** — The County Extension Manual (M61) and Performance Evaluation website (<http://extension.missouri.edu/staff/perfeval/>)
- 3) **Audit and Budget** — The County Extension Manual (M61), “Audit Guidelines for Extension Councils” (<http://extension.missouri.edu/staff/adminmgmt/audit.html>) and “Fiscal Procedures for Extension Councils” (http://extension.missouri.edu/staff/adminmgmt/fiscal_policy_council.html)
- 4) **Elections** — The County Extension Manual (M61)
- 5) **Program Direction** — County Plan of Work, demographic information (<http://osed.missouri.edu/tables/>)

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