

Adapted from:

Empowering & Motivating

Extension Advisory Boards, Committees and Councils A Hands On Practical Approach

Michael F. McKinney
c/o Leadership Dynamics
1850 Ravenridge Street
Wesley Chapel, FL 33543

THE SELECTION PROCESS:

Selection . . . is one of the most critical components of establishing or maintaining a viable working Advisory Group. The people you select will ultimately determine the direction your organization will follow in serving the needs of your community.

Who Should I Select To Serve On My Advisory Group?

1. Select individuals with a genuine interest in your organization or program and look for people who communicate well with others. (*Note check list of attendees to the GAP session and the County Conversations for potential interested people.*)
2. Look for individuals with a proven record for volunteering, but don't overlook those citizens without prior volunteer service or past association with Extension.
3. Avoid personal friends and individuals with a personal agenda. Example: The angry father whose daughter was disqualified from the county horseshow might not be the most objective person to serve on your Advisory Group.
4. Try to balance your committee with individuals who bring a wide range of interests and backgrounds to your group. Example: A typical overall Advisory Council might look like this:

Homemaker, School Administrator, Chamber of Commerce Rep., Retired Senior Citizen, Public Relations Consultant, Banker or Real Estate Broker, Teacher, Nonprofit Agency Director, Farmer, Elected Decision Maker, Collaborative Agency, Community Activist, Environmentalist, Former Policy Maker, Newspaper Editor, Faith Community.

When selecting your Advisory Group, it is extremely important to have a diverse committee. Geographical boundaries, gender, ethnicity, program representation, and community profile are key factors in the selection process. It is important to have a good mix of those with a strong tradition and affiliation with Extension and those with no prior association with Extension. From time to time it might be necessary to unseat a member from your group. Usually this is facilitated by poor attendance.

ORIENTATION OF ADVISORY MEMBERS:

Orientation. . . is a way of leveling the playing field for your new members and a perfect time to establish ground rules and to review the group's mission and vision.

Why Is Orientation Important?

1. Orientation allows an individual to join a committee or council in progress as an informed equal with the existing advisory members.
2. When orientation is not provided, volunteers report being less motivated to serve the organization.
3. The orientation session provides the perfect forum for the educator to explain the expectations, goals and objectives for serving on the Extension Advisory Group.

What Should Orientation Training Include?

1. Include a brief history of the Advisory Group and review any documents like the By-laws or past Minutes.
2. Define their role as an Advisor and their limitations.
3. Define your role as the Extension Educator and your limitations.
4. Provide other pertinent information such as: What is Cooperative Extension and what are the relationships with the federal, state and county partners.
5. Introduce your new members to your office faculty and staff.
6. Give your new members a tour of your Extension facility.

Suggestions When Conducting New Member Orientation:

1. Don't overwhelm your new members with a lot of statistical data.
2. Keep the orientation session short (60 minutes or less is ideal).
3. Make the session relaxed and comfortable (provide refreshments).
4. Share a little of yourself with the group (let them get to know you as a person as well as an educator....and do the same with them).
5. Give your new members an orientation packet to take home.
6. It may be necessary to provide this orientation training one-on-one if a member cannot attend the scheduled group session.