

Public Awareness Teams (PAT)

UNH Cooperative Extension Mission

UNH Cooperative Extension provides New Hampshire citizens with research-based education and information, enhancing their ability to make informed decisions that strengthen youth, families and communities sustain natural resources, and improve the economy.

Public Awareness Teams' Goal

Through ongoing communications regarding Cooperative Extension's capabilities, programs and impacts, volunteers and staff will build positive relationships with legislators and key decision-makers resulting in increased public and legislative support and public awareness for the University of New Hampshire and UNH Cooperative Extension.

Target audiences or publics

- Legislators
- County government officials
- Key decision makers
- Target public audiences (i.e. 4-H volunteers, Farm Bureau, etc.)
- Media

Structure

Form in each county a Public Awareness Team (PAT) made of approximately two to three staff and three volunteers from the Advisory Council. This group could serve as a coordinating committee and bring in any number of other volunteers for special assignments and other volunteers as needed.

Role of the State Advisory Council

Encourage and support County Advisory Councils in managing the system, working in conjunction with local Extension staff and Extension Administration.

Monitor and evaluate the statewide system, propose new or different approaches as appropriate and act as a statewide PAT.

Role of Extension Administration

Oversee the development, implementation and evaluation of the state PAT plans.

Involve the State Advisory Council in developing and implementing the PAT plan to the fullest extent possible.

Oversee and support the roles of County Office Administrators, other county staff and state specialists in implementing and conducting PAT efforts.

Develop and oversee a system for recruiting, training, managing and recognizing PAT volunteers.

Provide ongoing updates and communications about PAT to staff, county and state advisory councils and others as appropriate.

Coordinate UNH Cooperative Extension PAT efforts with the overall USNH/UNH advocacy efforts.

Work with the PAT to solicit its ideas and advice and to communicate its recommendations.

Maintain a statewide data base of legislative contacts.

Role of Volunteers

Participate in orientation and training.

Become informed of legislator's (s') interests, committee assignments and district they represent.

Contact specific legislator(s) throughout the year.

Educate legislators about the value of what we do and keep him/her informed of program impacts, consistently communicating to legislators UNH Cooperative Extension's contributions at the county and state levels.

Encourage legislators to get involved in UNH Cooperative Extension, including attendance and/or participation in programs and activities. Accompany them, when possible, to the program or activity.

Ask the legislator how UNH Cooperative Extension can better serve his/her constituency.

Encourage the legislator to use UNH Cooperative Extension expertise in responding to requests from his/her constituency and ask what are the needs of their constituents.

Provide UNH Cooperative Extension with brief reports of contacts with legislators, including their comments and recommendations on ways Extension can better meet the needs of New Hampshire residents.

Role of Counties

County Advisory Council Members

- Consider serving as a PAT volunteer.

- Work with Extension staff to identify and recruit county residents who have a relationship with a local legislator or public official and who would be willing to serve as a PAT volunteer or simply speak on our behalf.
- Work with staff to develop and implement a system of providing ongoing support for PAT volunteers, keeping them informed of program impacts, opportunities for legislator involvement, and programs/events to which legislators should be invited.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the PAT system on a regular basis, initiate improvements when necessary, and replace volunteers no longer able to fulfill the role.

County Office Administrators

- As a PAT member, ensure implementation of the PAT System in the county through the combined efforts of all county staff and the County Advisory Council.

County Extension Staff

- Support the efforts of the PAT system within the county.
- Provide prospective members for the County Advisory Council with a list of Council responsibilities, including their role in PAT efforts.
- Identify and recruit residents with existing relationships with local legislators or public officials, in partnership with the County Advisory Council.
- Plan and conduct orientation and training for PAT volunteers, in partnership with the County Advisory Council and UNHCE Administration.
- Maintain ongoing contact with volunteers, provide needed support, and keep them fully updated with program impact information, details of upcoming programs and events, and specific opportunities for potential involvement of legislators.
- Respond promptly to legislators' requests with specific information.
- Evaluate the PAT system, in partnership with the County Advisory Council, to introduce needed changes, and replace PAT volunteers no longer able to fulfill this role.

State Specialist's Role

- Inform Extension Administration of individuals with whom they work who are considered potential volunteers for matching with a county legislator. Help recruit this individual if requested by the county.

- Produce program impact reports to keep staff and volunteers fully informed and to equip them with relevant and up-to-date information to share with legislators.
- Respond promptly to legislators' requests with specific information.
- Participate in volunteer orientation and training and provide program updates when requested.

Program Team Leader Role

- Inform all staff of their PAT responsibilities and ensure they are reflected in individual plans of work.
- Evaluate staff on their PAT efforts.

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*UNH Cooperative Extension is an equal opportunity educator and employer.
University of New Hampshire, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and N.H. counties cooperating.*