

COMMUNITY BUILDING

EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION

Best Practices

Developing effective communication in your community takes time and the involvement, commitment and support of key individuals and organizations. However, the results will be worth it for all members. The following are important points to consider:

- ❖ Make sure there is a clear understanding of the importance of two-way community communication – providing information and asking for feedback.
- ❖ If community communication is free, open and honest, the quality and quantity of it tends to increase.
- ❖ Open, honest and respectful community communication helps build trust among community members, groups, organizations and institutions.
- ❖ Communication should always be clear, accurate and in context with the situation.
- ❖ Within a community, there are many different units and levels between which communication should occur to be effective.
- ❖ Make information appropriate and of interest to the audience.
- ❖ Ensure information is distributed in a timely fashion so people may use it more effectively.
- ❖ Develop multiple access points for people to obtain information – newsletters, newspapers, bulletin boards, websites, library and schools. Videotape meetings for those unable to attend.
- ❖ Develop multiple ways for people to provide feedback – public comment periods before, during or after public meetings, conducting community surveys, hosting facilitated public dialogues or community forums, brown bag lunches with officials, suggestion boxes situated around town and e-mail links to town officials.

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



- ❖ Inventory all existing means of communication – community newspaper/newsletter, school newspaper/newsletter, church newsletters, bulletin boards, television, radio, and any other methods of distributing information. Determine where there are gaps and how to address them.
- ❖ Publicize all established and new information outlets widely so people know what is available and where they can get information.
- ❖ Develop a community-wide communication strategy that everyone knows and understands so information is shared uniformly.
- ❖ Find out from all the different groups in the community – disabled, minorities, unemployed, parents, youth, elderly, businesses, civic organizations, government officials, law enforcement, commuters, seasonal residents, year-round residents, landowners, renters and farmers – what information they need and want, and how best they can access it.

Resources:

Building Communities from the Grassroots – Community Development Academy, University of Missouri.