

***Foundations of Political Effectiveness
in Cooperative Extension—2009***

Political Effectiveness Assessment Tool

Introduction and Instructions

The purpose of an assessment tool is to help individuals and groups analyze their strengths and weaknesses relative to achieving some desired outcomes within their particular situation or environment. This political effectiveness assessment tool is intended to help individuals, offices, and teams identify opportunities to take actions based on the *Principles for Political Effectiveness in Cooperative Extension* released in 2009. Users should read and understand the concepts set forth in that document before using this tool.

The Assessment Tool is designed to be used in a variety of ways depending on the time available and the need for considering political effectiveness. The tool can be used in:

- Individual assessment.
- Group assessment pre-work completed ahead of time by all participants and tabulated. Results used to identify strengths and weaknesses prior to group discussion to reaffirm or modify results.
- Group assessment during meetings to ascertain strengths and weaknesses by consensus.
- Group assessment during a meeting or retreat to discover strengths and weaknesses by consensus and to drive in-depth dialog about political effectiveness.

The Political Effectiveness Tool is not meant to be prescriptive. It is intended to help assess the strengths and weaknesses found in a variety of strategies and tactics that have been found to be effective in fulfilling each “principle.” You may find that some of the strategies and tactics are not relevant to your situation. A rating scale is provided for you to indicate the degree of relevance.

Where a strategy or tactic is relevant, you can indicate whether improvement is needed in this area. “None” means that you are strong in this area and that no improvement is needed. “Some” indicates you are doing something with this strategy / tactic, but it could be done better. “Much” notes that little or nothing is being done in this area and that it needs significant attention.

A column is provided for you to make comments about each strategy and tactic, and to list specific things that you think need to be done to make improvements in an area.

Links are provided for many of the strategies / tactics to help you find more specific information, resources, and ideas that you can use to make improvements. These resources and additional links can be found at the Cooperative Extension Political Effectiveness website.

As indicated, the assessment can be undertaken by individuals, but is best performed in a group setting. As a group, participants will be less likely to minimize weaknesses or overstate strengths. The differing perspectives within a group are also beneficial for identifying a wider range of creative alternatives for maximizing political effectiveness. And of course, working as a team is one of the core principles of political effectiveness.

There are a variety of ways that you can use your results to develop an action plan. Usually, you will want to go back and list the areas where you felt you needed to make improvements and then prioritize them. Likely the items that you identified as having high relevance and needing much improvement should be given highest priority. (See table at the end of this document) You could use a simple matrix for this ranking.

Working with each high priority area, you will want to identify alternative actions you can take to create the desired improvements. Select ideas that will work best for your situation. Your action plan should be specific and should include details about what, how, who, when, and any other relevant details. (See example at the end of this document or Logic Model: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/evaluation/evallogicmodel.html>). There are many other processes available for developing action plans, ranging from simple (above) to complex (strategic planning). What is important is that you use a process that is appropriate for your situation, engages the right people, and produces meaningful outcomes.

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Principle / Strategy / Tactic	Relevance			Needs Improvement			Comments / Strategies or Actions
	None	Some	High	None	Some	Much	
1. Responsive Educational Programs: Our effectiveness is based on quality educational programming and individual obligations to professionalism.							
a) Center programming on current and future needs identified and valued by clients, partners and decision-makers. https://www.uwex.edu/ces/apps/programplanning/ http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/planning/index.html							
∞ Appropriate and timely situation analysis, needs assessment, visioning and/or other methodologies are used to target programming and judge program's potential value in relation to the other alternatives https://www.uwex.edu/ces/apps/programplanning/model/modelsituational.html http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/planning/index.html							
∞ Key stakeholders including decision-makers, resource allocators, active and potential partners, and representatives of all potential audiences are involved in assessment processes https://www.uwex.edu/ces/apps/programplanning/model/modelsituational.html http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/planning/index.html							
b) Incorporate multiple resources of the University of Wisconsin System and the community into effective programming. https://www.uwex.edu/ces/apps/programplanning/							
∞ <i>County</i> - Appropriate Cooperative Extension specialist resources are utilized http://www.uwex.edu/ces/eduprog.cfm Or, <i>Specialist</i> -							

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Appropriate coordination with county faculty and staff is utilized http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/							
∞ Partnerships and collaboration with appropriate public (federal, state, county, and municipal agencies, officials and staff) and nongovernmental organizations are utilized http://lgc.uwex.edu/							
∞ Volunteers are recruited, supported, and recognized							
∞ Potential political impacts are considered in program planning							
c) Accountability, Responsibility-based Culture and delivering Transformational Education are fundamental to our profession. http://www.uwex.edu/ces/admin/responsibility/ http://www.uwex.edu/ces/admin/transform/							
∞ Where/when appropriate, plans of work are reviewed with decision-makers (county Extension liaison committee, supervisors, administrators, departments, funders, etc.) https://www.uwex.edu/ces/apps/programplanning/							
∞ Timely program announcements and reports (success stories, program findings, newsletters, annual reports, etc.) are shared with appropriate decision-makers, key stakeholders, partners, and clientele https://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/apps/flrc/pow/index.cfm http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/washington/UWXOfficePrintedmaterial.html http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/winnebago/ http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/fonddulac/briefings.html#annualreports							

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d) Build and foster a supportive team environment. Effective teamwork is based on mutual respect for all team members' abilities and contributions.							
∞ Office/ Team has gone through RBC assessments and distributed learning exercises and materials http://www.uwex.edu/ces/admin/responsibility/							
∞ Office/ Team has identified the strengths/resources that each team member brings and strives to use them in a strategic manner to foster political effectiveness							
∞ Office/ Team works together in planning, programming, and collaborating with agencies and organizations							
∞ Office environment creates a positive first impression and courteous, knowledgeable responses are given to all clients							
2. Strong Relationships with key decision-makers: Building and maintaining relationships with decision-makers is an ongoing process. Through these relationships, we are better able to determine situational analyses, priorities and potential inputs.							
a) Look for opportunities to spend time with decision-makers. Listen and learn about their concerns, issues, and ideas. Understand their motivation and perspective. Trust and respect them. Be relevant and connected to their political agenda.							
∞ Opportunities to develop and maintain professional networks and relationships with key decision-makers (federal, state, and local) are utilized by all faculty and staff							

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∞ All team members understand the relevant background and history connected to the current political environment. Office/ Team has identified political structures and/or power structures/maps applicable to their programming environment http://www.extension.purdue.edu/ecd/Community%20Power%20Structure%203-2-06.ppt#1 http://web1.msue.msu.edu/msue/imp/modii/ii719205.html							
∞ A database of influential people, decision-makers, and key supporters has been developed							
∞ Office/ team members attend key governmental meetings and other meetings of key elected officials and decision-makers							
b) Establish strong connections with all key funding and programming partners. Nurture these relationships.							
∞ Office/ Team has clearly distinguished and communicates its function from other agencies/ departments/ organizations with a seemingly similar function							
∞ Office/ Team has identified and established collaborative relationships with people in agencies and organizations whose expertise and resources complement Cooperative Extension programs							
∞ People from other related agencies and organizations are included on your advisory and planning committees							
∞ Office/ Team has representation at key informational and advisory meetings of other agencies and organizations							
3. Effective Communications: Honest and open communication is critical in political effectiveness and our work. Decision-makers							

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<p>need to know about the mutual benefit of partnering and having a relationship with Cooperative Extension. When decision-makers know about our programming, know the breadth of our clientele and the depth of our educational outcomes, they can appreciate our value and understand the need to fund us in the future.</p>							
<p>a) Engage in open and ongoing dialog with decision-makers. Involve them in designing solutions for problem solving and creating educational programming opportunities.</p>							
<p>∞ Our programs encourage communication between decision-makers and their constituents http://cpag.uwex.edu/</p>							
<p>∞ Key decision-makers are invited to plan, attend, and participate in educational programs and other Extension sponsored events</p>							
<p>b) Communicate with multiple audiences to help them understand the wide range of educational programming available through Cooperative Extension.</p>							
<p>∞ Office/Team has developed a strategic marketing/promotion plan http://www.uwex.edu/ces/leader/modules/documents/Module8.pdf (page 70)</p>							
<p>∞ A database of clients, existing and potential, has been developed</p>							
<p>∞ Positive and collaborative relationships have been developed with different types of media outlets that are used strategically to communicate about programs and their impacts</p>							
<p>∞ All opportunities are used by all office/team members to promote office/team programs as well as the programs of</p>							

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individual office / team members							
∞ Faculty and staff are capable of giving “30-second elevator” message about the work of Cooperative Extension, county office, team, or individual http://www.uwex.edu/ces/admin/documents/pvv.pdf							
c) Use evaluation tools and reports that demonstrate our accountability and that provide evidence of program impacts. http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/index.html							
∞ Evaluation design is part of the program planning process. Programs are systematically evaluated and the results are shared with key stakeholders and decision-makers http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/index.html							
∞ Annual success stories, outcome statements and statistical reports are submitted http://www.uwex.edu/ces/techservices/prs/ https://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/apps/flrc/pow/index.cfm							
4. Fiscal Awareness and Political Sensitivity: We must understand fiscal impacts and budget decision making processes to build responsive and effective programs. We need to be sensitive to the needs of decision-makers and key stakeholders. Our political effectiveness focus should be on education and information, not lobbying, personal opinion or personal agenda.							
b) Discretion is warranted at all times, as decision-makers are political.							

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∞ Faculty and staff understand organizational relationships and structure in university, state, and county settings, including budgeting and management policies for county offices http://www.uwex.edu/ces/employeeresources/depthead/ http://lgc.uwex.edu/Finance/index.html							
∞ Office / team maintains good, ongoing communication with people who are influential in budget development and adoption including administrators, fiscal and budget officers, etc.							
∞ Office / team understands basic principles of negotiation in politically sensitive situations including concepts of conflict resolution and principle- or interest-based negotiation http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/nonprofits/management/sites/conflict.cfm							
c) Understand fiscal conditions, constraints, policies and past practices that affect budgetary processes. http://www.uwex.edu/ces/budget/resources.cfm http://lgc.uwex.edu/Finance/index.html							
∞ Office / Team understand their program's budgeting process and requirements							
d) We are not unique in the public budgeting process. We have an obligation to assess needs and justify programs during the policy-making and budget process. Funders will require evidence of programmatic, political and financial impacts of programs.							
∞ The value gained from the broad range of University resources available through Cooperative Extension is							

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documented and clearly communicated http://www.uwex.edu/ces/techservices/prs/ http://www.uwex.edu/ces/employeeeresources/index.cfm							
∞ Support provided to other departments/ agencies/ organizations is documented and clearly communicated							