

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

Specialist-Educator/Agent Political Effectiveness

Principle

State specialists and county educators working together increase Cooperative Extension's credibility with decision-makers. Openly telling our stakeholders and funding partners about these collaborations helps demonstrate the value of our research/resource-based mission.

Key Ideas

- Political effectiveness depends on strong educational programming that is centered on current and future needs of clients, stakeholders, and decision-makers at local, state and national levels.
- Political effectiveness is a dimension of Cooperative Extension work that should be considered when planning and delivering specialist-educator educational programs.
- Our success as specialists-educators requires respectful, timely and relevant communications with each other; our county, state and federal partners; and other stakeholders.
- Collaborations between specialists-educators bring stronger educational programming that transforms people and communities in long-lasting ways. Research-outreach is a two-way street; the needs of our clientele should help form the research agenda and research should be the foundation of educational programs.

Strategies

1. Strong educational programming is valued by stakeholders and decision-makers when they understand the importance of the connection between county educators and the vast assets provided by specialists across the state. Specialists-educators should seek opportunities to collaborate on relevant research/resource needs of clientele.
2. When planning and delivering Cooperative Extension educational programs, specialists-educators should look for opportunities to spend time with stakeholders and decision-makers. Establish strong, ongoing connections with them. Listen to their concerns, issues and ideas. Involve them in designing educational programs that address needs.

As individuals, specialists-educators must be able to speak the “language” of different audiences. To every group they work with, they need to convey the two-way message that educators are the local resource for specialists and specialists support educators’ needs. As a team, specialists-educators should communicate back to stakeholders and decision-makers the success, impacts, outcomes and/or value of collaborative educational programs in the terms used when listening to them. Decision-makers who hear from specialists-educators working together will better understand the breadth of our clientele and the depth of educational resources that Cooperative Extension brings to its constituents.

3. Collaborating specialists-educators should involve stakeholders and decision-makers as participants or presenters in local, regional and state educational activities and events that demonstrate the collaboration’s accountability and provide evidence of program impacts. Doing so will nurture stronger relationships to maintain or increase support for Cooperative Extension.