



Media Evaluation

Use of Media In Food, Food Safety and Nutrition Education

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Evaluation Team:

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"People are not coming to meetings, but they are driving in their cars and playing on the internet. How can we capitalize on this avenue for education, evaluate it and report it? "

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I BACKGROUND

“To what extent do family living faculty and staff use the media?”

“Is the media an effective educational tool?”

These are questions family living’s nutrition, health and safety theme group asked in the summer of 1997. An analysis of county work-plans showed that faculty, even those not programming heavily in the theme area, often distribute nutrition, food safety, health and health-care information, through the media.

Faculty and staff view media as a way to provide current research-based information to a large audience in a timely fashion. But, the theme group raised the questions:

- ✓ *“Is this an effective delivery mode for teaching food, food safety and nutrition information?”*
- ✓ *“Is it worth our time and effort?”*
- ✓ *“What are the results of using the media in nutrition and food safety education?”*

This report answers some of those questions and sets the stage for follow-up work that would explore other media issues.

II METHODS

The evaluation design involved three components:

1. An **e-mail survey** of all Extension family living faculty and staff (on the program area FLP-ALL-LIST) to document the extent to which they use the media in food, food safety and nutrition education.
2. A series of telephone **listening sessions** with faculty and staff (those who use the media at least once a month) to determine what media is used, how and why and to gather input for a follow-up outcome evaluation.
3. An **outcome evaluation** to assess the effectiveness of using the media in food, food safety and nutrition education from the customer’s perspective, i.e., readers, listeners and media representatives.

We used the e-mail survey to invite family living faculty to participate in the subsequent listening sessions. This report summarizes the results of the initial e-mail survey and listening sessions and makes recommendations for the follow-up outcome evaluation.

III ELECTRONIC SURVEY

Of the 134 family living faculty and staff contacted through e-mail in October 1997, 86 responded, giving a response rate of 64 percent (Table 1). If we take just county-based faculty and staff, the response rate was 71 percent.

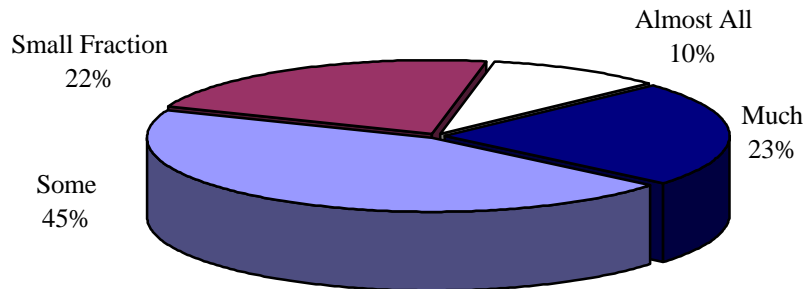
Table 1. Response To E-Mail Survey

Location	# on e-mail list	# Respondents	Response rate (%)
DISTRICTS			
North	20	15	75
West	15	12	80
South	19	13	68
Southeast	12	8	67
Central	15	9	60
Northeast	20	15	75
<i>County Total</i>	101	72	71
STATE	33	14	42
TOTAL	134	86	64

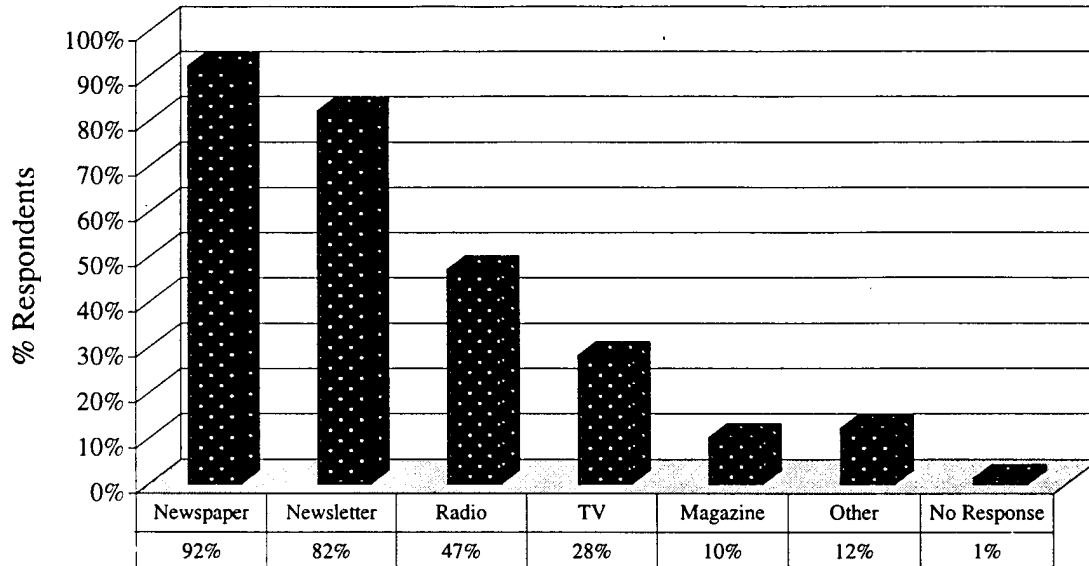
Sixty of the 86 respondents (70%) reported using the media in food, food safety and nutrition education. Following is a summary of the e-mail survey results based on responses from these 60 respondents. These results are illustrative, not generalizable. Results were also distributed to all participants through the Listserv in late October 1997.

- **Extent of media use varies.** As seen in Chart 1, these 60 respondents rely on the media to varying degrees for their food, food safety and nutrition education. Few use the media as their only educational mechanism. About one-third rely on the media considerably for their food-related educational programming.

Chart 1. Amount Of Education Done Through The Media



- **Respondents use many types of media.** The vast majority of the respondents use several media in their programming. Only eight of 60 respondents use just one type. Newspapers are the most commonly used media (Chart 2), followed by newsletter

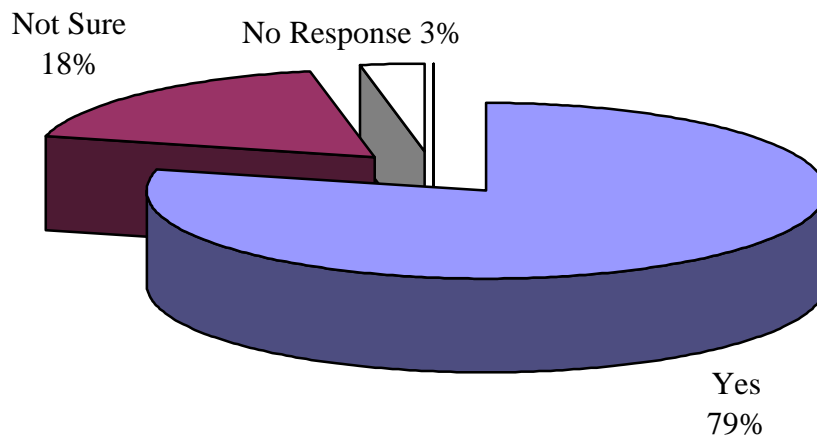


- **Frequency of use varies greatly.** How often faculty and staff use the media ranges from regular weekly delivery to on-demand requests that may occur only once a year. For instance, individuals using the radio may host a regular call-in show, produce a weekly tape, or submit periodic press releases.
- **The content of the media release differs greatly.** The content of the media work may be educational and pertain to food, food safety, and/or nutrition. Or, the content may be an announcement of an upcoming event or a brief interview citation, for example.
- **Time spent on media work varies.** About 50 percent spend two hours a month on media work and 24 percent spend five or more hours. One respondent reported spending 20 hours a month on media work.
- **A slight majority of respondents target specific audiences.** The 51 percent who target specific audiences are most likely to target low-income audiences, families with children and the elderly. This may reflect programming areas. Other targeted audiences include farm families, the Hmong, Home and Community Education

committee members, teachers, health care professionals, young families and day-care providers. Respondents target information in two ways:

- 1) An audience is selected depending upon the topic of the media release.
 - 2) An audience is targeted using a specific type of media, such as sending a newsletter to particular audience.
- **Media work is worth the time.** None of the 60 respondents said that media work was not worth their time though 18 percent were not sure (Chart 3). For most (78 percent), media work is worth it. They know this through the informal feedback they receive. Other indicators of value reported by respondents include the number of requests they receive for additional information, continued presence in the media, and location their release is given such as the placement in the print media or air time (length and time-spot) on radio and TV. Simply getting print space or airtime is considered an indicator of value and credibility.

Chart 3. Media Worth The Time



- **Improved public relations and visibility are the main benefits of media work.** Most respondents (83 percent) see the benefit of their media work as enhancing public relations and increasing visibility for UWEX and its programs. Respondents see the media as a cost-efficient way to disseminate information to large numbers of people. Other benefits were cited: an additional avenue for delivering research-based information; a timely way to deliver information; a source of convenient information since print materials may be read at leisure.

IV LISTENING SESSIONS

We conducted four listening sessions via teleconference October 27-29, 1997. Each session lasted an hour with four to six participants per session. A total of 18 family living faculty and staff participated. Table 1 shows the representation of the participants.

Table 1. Participants In Listening Sessions

Total number of participants	18
County-based faculty	17
State specialists	1
Family living program area	10
Nutrition education program area	7
FL/NEP split position	1

Participants received the list of questions that focused the discussion prior to the listening sessions (see Appendix). Participants received summaries of each session for confirmation of content and feedback. The following summary of the four listening sessions is organized by the questions that were discussed.

A. What factors influence your media work?

The e-mail survey revealed considerable variation in the way faculty and staff use the media. Consequently, the listening session interviews were designed to better understand the reasons for these variations and their effect on the outcomes of media work. The following summarizes the major factors that appear to determine why the media is used as it is.

- 1. Purpose.** The media is used for multiple purposes, not just for education. Participants talked about using the media to announce or publicize events and Extension, create visibility for agents and Extension, build relationships, create depositories of topical information, as well as educate the public about food, food safety and nutrition. Often a media spot is used for more than one purpose, such as advertising an upcoming Extension event at the end of an article on food safety.
- 2. Control.** Some respondents said they are “in control” of their media work. They have an established relationship with a media outlet or a regular program. They determine the content of their work to meet their own objectives. Other respondents indicate that they act “on-demand” and have to wait for requests. Their work is not

self-determined – to meet their own educational objectives – but depends on media requests and needs.

- 3. Type of information.** Participants talked about the appropriateness of different media for delivering different types of information and gave numerous examples. For example, respondents commented on the limitations of radio and TV for disseminating technical information. But, radio and TV are preferred for fast-breaking, current information. Also, radio and TV provide a more human touch. A voice can be warm and appealing which helps people retain information according to our respondents. Listeners relate to a person they see on TV or a familiar agent's voice on the radio. Television allows for demonstrations that people can see and hear. Printed handouts, however, should accompany television demonstrations and appearances since television's time constraints make in-depth coverage unlikely.

Several said they value photos as a powerful visual tool for communicating.

Respondents said print media has greater educational potential and is more useful for disseminating lengthier technical information. It is not as good for "hot" topics because it "takes longer to get things into print".

Respondents said newsletters have the longest life. They can be read any time and shared with others. They allow for greater detail and can be targeted and distributed to specific audiences. In some cases, agents produce their own newsletters and have complete control over the content. In other cases, they contribute to another agency's newsletter.

Only one of the listening session participants currently uses the Internet and an electronic list server to disseminate information though interest was expressed by many. Many said they use the Internet to find information to add to their own releases. Several noted that posting information on the Internet would allow reporters to conveniently access Extension information when the Extension office is closed. Few of the participants use public access TV. Either it is not available or the results are not worth the time. One participant told about the considerable time and effort she spent producing a show, which only reached a small audience and was of poor quality due to limited filming and editing resources.

- 4. Audience.** Who the audience is influences the content of the media release. For example, if an audience is the general population, the release could include information about the eating habits of children in general. If the media outlet targets a specific audience, such as low-income mothers, content could be tailored to that specific audience.
- 5. Location.** Participants talked about how geographic location and sophistication of the media market influence their media work. Particular differences were pointed out

between rural and urban areas. For example, two respondents in rural counties reported that they do not use TV because there are no local stations. In contrast, an agent in an urban county has a weekly TV show.

The reverse seems true for print media. Urban centers with competitive, global newspaper markets may not need or want Extension information. Rural newspapers are more likely to run Extension releases. “Large papers never print anything we give them,” noted one participant. She attributed this to the county’s relative insignificance in the paper’s circulation area.

6. **Gatekeepers.** Participants stressed the influence that media contacts (editors, station managers and reporters) have in determining access to the media outlet and the content of the release.
7. **Individual preference.** Personal preference and interests also influence media use. For example, the respondent using the internet in educational programming is an avid internet user. Another, who regularly uses television, credited this to her prior work experience, familiarity and comfort with the television industry.
8. **Timing.** Participants talked about the influence that the broadcast’s time slot has on format and content for different audiences. For example, an early morning radio show when farmers and the elderly are the primary listeners demands a different format and content than an afternoon talk show directed to commuters.

B. What makes a media success?

To find out how faculty and staff measure media success, we asked listening group participants to reflect on past successes. One participant talked about a successful effort as sending releases to all media outlets. Another described success as the amount of coverage a release received. Another said involving the media up-front to achieve widespread outreach for a public health initiative resulted in a successful effort. One participant cited the flurry of requests that a press release generated. One said success was having a story that led to other stories. Another described success as educating the media on the significance of an event or topic.

Of prime importance is that media work brings recognition and visibility to Extension. Participants advised their colleagues to include the county office, contact name and telephone number in all press releases.

Participants identified the following factors as contributing to success:

1. **Reputation as technical expert or consumer advocate.** All stressed the importance of being recognized as knowledgeable in the subject matter or having research-based information to share. One respondent referred to herself as a “consumer watchdog”. Even in sophisticated, competitive markets, Extension agents have established

themselves as the expert or spokesperson on nutrition-related topics. One agent spoke about how a newspaper reporter contacts her to check the validity of food-related information or add to articles on nutrition. Another participant, crediting her established reputation, told about how a newspaper organized a series of focus groups to determine the need for a particular program. The focus groups resulted in Extension getting full registration for the program.

2. **Understanding consumer interest.** Participants stressed the importance of being able to understand consumer interests and demands. One participant said she frequently creates shows based on viewer questions. Others talked about successful media work that was linked to timely interests. Examples included an article on pickling of fish at the peak of the tourist-fishing season; a story on recipes for salsa making during the time of a bumper tomato crop; and an article on cloning at the same time a local company announced they had cloned a calf.
3. **Good relations with media contacts.** Respondents linked media success to the working relationships they have with reporters and editors. Such relationships depend on local context and personalities. One participant talked about not being able to get her stories into two newspapers, while a third newspaper contacted her regularly to verify information and often cited her as an information source. All reinforced the importance of building and nurturing personal relationships with media contacts—a long-term process that takes time and energy. Respondents stressed the need for direct and ongoing contact with media gatekeepers and advised agents to quickly respond to the needs of media contacts. “If we do so, they will become more responsive to what we need and want. We need to know what makes their job easier so that they will come back to us and use our materials.” Others recommended calling media contacts before and after a program or photo opportunity to confirm and thank them for their press coverage.
4. **Using multiple media outlets.** Various participants felt that using several media outlets is necessary for success, particularly when the purpose of the media release is educational. One agent told of writing a weekly newspaper column that accommodates lengthier, more technical information, followed by a radio show that addresses topics more informally. Respondents mentioned combining media coverage with public workshops on the same topic. When using several media outlets, however, participants mentioned that the content needed to be packaged to fit the particular media outlet.
5. **Collaboration.** Collaborating with media contacts, agencies, influential people and community members leads to success. Participants spoke about a variety of collaborative efforts that resulted in, for example, having doors to the media opened, press releases initiated and Extension’s outreach promoted.

6. **Placement.** Participants linked success to where an article is placed in the print media or when a show is aired. Observable measures of success are prominent placement in a newspaper or prime-time spot on radio or TV.
7. **Localized information.** Participants spoke of the value of Madison-prepared press releases, but stressed the importance of localizing and personalizing these releases. Participants cautioned about using local terms and wording, noting that “prepackaged” press releases are seldom used.
8. **Regular press releases from the state office.** Having materials that come regularly from the state office contributes to success. They make it possible for agents to provide a regular weekly release and often lead to feature stories. How agents handle these materials, however, varies. Some agents blanket all media outlets with the state releases. Others send them to targeted outlets or to specific media contacts. Some agents send the state releases as soon as they are received. Others modify, localize and personalize the releases.
9. **Media strategy.** Many participants discussed the importance of having an overall media strategy or a plan. This would include a process for contacting and keeping up with media contacts; using multiple outlets for each message or educational objective; and capitalizing on opportunities to promote Extension and advertise upcoming events.

C. What are the challenges of media work?

Listening group interviews revealed the following challenges and obstacles that Extension faculty and staff face in media work.

1. **Difficulty of judging consumer interest.** Participants said successful media work depends on knowing consumer interests—but this is a major challenge. Several spoke of the difference between Extension’s and the public’s perception of what constitutes a “hot” issue.
2. **High turnover among media contacts.** Participants consider good media relations important, but high turnover among contacts poses a problem. Station managers, editors and reporters frequently change jobs. The time and effort spent getting to know one person may not pay off. Agents often have to start over and take the time to get to learn a new reporter’s interests and ways of doing business. Sometimes, just learning who to contact can be a chore. One agent talked about periodically polling media outlets to keep her mailing list up to date.
3. **The needs and perceptions of the media differ from those of Extension.** Participants talked about how the media and Extension work under different objectives and deadlines. An Extension release, which advertises an event or a registration

deadline, may not be printed in a timely fashion. What is more, some media outlets look for sensational stories rather than articles with educational content.

4. **Inaccurate citations.** Respondents cited examples of being misquoted and having information published inaccurately.
5. **Unintended outcomes.** Media success does not always lead to the desired outcome. One respondent noted her success in getting a front-page cover story about food preservation. The agent and her office were not prepared for the rapid response. By 8 a.m. the next morning, the office was flooded with requests for checks of pressure canner equipment. “The media may drum up more business, but is this what we want?” On the other hand, several respondents mentioned positive, unintended outcomes such as callers responding to an agent’s radio talk show with answers to questions that added to Extension’s information base.
6. **Uncertainty.** Participants talked about the uncertainty of media work. A press release may not be picked up by a newspaper when an agent in a nearby county submits a similar release. An editor might select one agent’s release over another because newspapers use stories from outlying areas as a marketing strategy. Or a local paper might not print the release if a larger regional paper covers the same story. To get around this problem, some county offices coordinate their media work, with one agent serving as the technical expert or media point-person for the region.
7. **Limited resources.** Effective media work is time-intensive. Many faculty and staff lack the time and resources to do effective media work.
8. **Difficulty of evaluating effectiveness.** Several respondents said the benefit of a news release might not appear immediately. People may read or hear an Extension release one day, but use the information much later. Media providers may prohibit surveys to protect their customers. Also, it was noted that evaluations are hard to do since the public is not used to analyzing what they read, hear and see. “They do not just call up and say I really learned something from that show.” High turnover in the media business also makes it hard to build relationships to call upon for feedback.

D. How can we improve our media work?

As regular media users, we asked participants, “*How could you improve your media work?*”

1. **Training.** Respondents called for more and better media training, such as the workshop offered during the 1996 State Staff Conference, either through Extension or elsewhere. Several individuals spoke of the need to learn to write and speak in sound bites. They also requested help in learning how to gauge consumer interest. Because many find it difficult to travel to Madison, faculty and staff would like to see more

self-study or flexible learning opportunities. They recommended that successful agents serve as trainers, perhaps hosting others on-site. One participant commented on the benefit her office experienced (working with UW-Oshkosh) when it offered media training to other county agencies.

2. **Institutional policies within Extension.** Participants noted Cooperative Extension's minimal relationship with public broadcasting. They raised various questions: "What are Extension's institutional policies and relationships across the division?" "Why can't or don't we use public TV and radio?"
3. **Evaluation: Impact and outreach.** "Most people want to receive information at home rather than attend a workshop. But, how do we know how many we reach and what impact it has?" What is more, faculty, who spend considerable time working with the media, would like a way to include this work in their performance reviews. Media contacts are not currently counted in annual statistical reports. "How can this work be credited?" There is a consensus that the media is an important avenue for educating the public. "People are not coming to meetings, but they are driving in their cars and playing on the Internet. How can we capitalize on this avenue for education, evaluate it and report it?"
4. **Strategies for working with media contacts.** Participants understand the importance and time-consuming nature of building and nurturing professional relationships with media contacts. "We need help with how-to strategies." "What works and what doesn't work?" "Should we do periodic polling to identify media contacts?" "Are their proven ways to nurture media relationships?"
5. **Administrative commitment.** To continue to use the media effectively, Extension faculty and staff want to see an administrative commitment to media work. One way to demonstrate this support is through continued support for media-related positions and professional development opportunities.
6. **Changing technology.** Respondents advised each other to keep track of changing media technology and take advantage of it. They also advised each other to keep connected with the various resources that the media uses.

E. Input into design of survey of media users

One purpose of the listening sessions was to solicit input from faculty and staff who regularly use the media about what they would like to learn from a user evaluation. Their input would go into creating a meaningful outcomes evaluation. The final question in the one-hour listening session was "*What would you like to learn from a survey of media users?*"

Participants agreed that media work involves three groups of people.

- **End-users or the general public:** readers, listeners and viewers
- **Media contacts:** reporters, editors, publishers, station managers, program managers, call-in hosts and columnists
- **Conduits for Extension-related information:** Individuals who pass information along to their clients such as principals, teachers, school groups, legislators, senior center staff, church groups and doctors

Participants raised a number of questions they would like answered in an outcome evaluation including the following:

1. *How can Extension do more effective media work?*
 How can we make our information more useful?
 How can we use different media types more effectively? Is it more effective to place an ad in a weekly shopper or to air it as a taped radio message—or use both?
2. *Who are we reaching?*
 How many people read our articles, watch our TV shows, and listen to our broadcasts?
 What factors make a person decide to get an Extension bulletin, for instance?
3. *What impact does media work have?*
 Respondents believe that media work has the potential to alter behavior, but they are uncertain about the impact of their own work.
 How effective is one type of media over another, for example, a newspaper article versus a bulletin in changing behavior?
 How credible is Extension information?
4. *How can Extension boost visibility using different types of media?*
 How can our information be packaged to better publicize Extension's benefits?
 Do certain media outlets give Extension more visibility and credibility than others?
5. *How can Extension develop a media performance indicator?*
 Respondents said they would like to see the value of their media work recognized by Extension directors and local officials and included in their performance appraisal documents.
6. *How does Extension gain a better understanding of media behavior?*
 How can we determine when a newspaper will run a particular release?
 What times during the day or which days of the week is information more likely to be heard or read; by whom?
7. *How much time should Extension specialists and faculty spend on media work?*

What educational, public relations or visibility results can we expect from a given level of input?

V CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As might be expected, media work done by family living faculty and staff in food, food safety and nutrition is extremely varied. Differences exist in which media outlets are used, frequency of use, and content of the message. This is a result of various interacting factors, many of which are beyond one's control – availability of outlet, interests of media contact, allocated space, etc. as well as personal reputation and discretion. A standardized statewide assessment of media impact appears inappropriate since local variation is so great.

It is also clear that media work is undertaken for various and often multiple purposes. The primary purpose may not be education. Few use a media campaign approach. In fact, increasing Extension's visibility and promoting good public relations are the main reasons for doing media work and are seen as the primary benefits. An evaluation of a visibility efforts that focuses on educational goals is likely to produce no or spurious results.

Newspapers and newsletters are the most commonly used media. They also have the greatest educational potential. Our Extension faculty and staff feel that greater detail can be covered in print materials. They have a greater shelf life and can be shared with others, extending the educational potential. Extension has considerable experience in evaluating newsletters. This experience could be made available to other faculty and staff.

Influencing behavioral change is one, but not the only benefit of Extension's media work. Using the media provides a variety of benefits or outcomes, such as:

Benefits for end-customer

- Increased awareness of topic and/or other Extension information of potential use (bulletins, classes, etc)
- Increased knowledge of topic, Extension, and related opportunities

Benefits for media contacts

- Increased understanding of current issue, event and topic which they then transfer to others
- Availability of regular news release
- Opportunity to include research-based information and expertise

Benefits for Extension

- Increased visibility, contributing to marketing goal
- Reach learners in timely manner where they live, work, and drive

- Efficiencies in reaching large numbers and a more diverse audience
- Ability to archive information

Next Steps

1. Encourage specialization of media work where appropriate: coordination among counties and districts to take advantage of individual's expertise. Several examples exist to learn from.
2. Capitalize on expertise that exists across the state—encourage on-site visits and successful agents to mentor others. Do not be confined by program area identities.
3. Set up a web site for faculty and staff to access information on using the media – how to make contacts, how to keep them current, how to do effective media work, how to plan a media campaign, etc. This might be a big or small site depending upon interest and resources. It might have a chatline and an expert mail function, where faculty could ask the 'experts' about media issues.
4. Select a few counties where media work is routine and active. Work with those counties to design and establish a meaningful outcome evaluation of their work. Make experience and materials available to others.
5. Establish a method for valuing and crediting media work in performance appraisal.

MEDIA EVALUATION

LISTENING SESSIONS

PROTOCOL

I. Welcome: Second part of media evaluation process.

II. Roll call

III. Background review of media evaluation.

1. Initiation
2. Purpose
3. Strategy

IV. Purpose of Teleconference was 'Listening Sessions'

1. Four groups over three days and 20 volunteers
2. Process
3. Notes and summary

QUESTIONS

I. First set of questions has to do with your media work. Second set of questions asks for your input into the outcome evaluation.

1. [Round Robin] Which sources of media do you use and how often? You provided this information on the e-mail survey, but let us take a few moments now to share so that others on line will know something about your media work.
2. When do you use different media? For instance, when do you use newsletters versus the newspaper? What do you consider when making these decisions.
3. What are the benefits of different types of media? For example, broadcast media (radio and TV) versus print media versus your own newsletter.
4. Think about a recent media success? What made it work? Why? Think about a recent media failure? What made it not work? Why?
5. How might you be able to improve your media work? What are the problems? What are the barriers? What are the opportunities?

II. The following questions seek your input into the design of an evaluation of media users.

1. We have defined media users as
 1. Readers, listeners, viewers and
 2. Media contacts.
 3. Who else do you consider to be users of your media work?

2. [Round robin] What questions would you like answered from an evaluation of media users? What information would help you? What questions are clientele and or stakeholders asking you about your media work that you would like to be able to answer?

3. To whom would you give or share information from this evaluation?

CLOSING

Notes from today's discussion will be sent to you to make sure we heard everything right. Then we will compile a summary of all four sessions.

Your input will be incorporated in the outcome evaluation. As that evaluation is designed, we may ask you for further input.

Thank you