

VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
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An Introduction to the Overall Advisory Committee



Virginia Tech and Virginia State
Virginia's Land-grant Universities

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**Community Resource
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An Introduction to the Overall Advisory Committee

Welcome to the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service People Involvement program. As a volunteer advisor you will assist your local agents to plan, implement, evaluate, and report on Extension programs designed to help your fellow citizens improve their quality of life economically or socially. The purpose of this brochure is to help you understand more completely the responsibilities associated with this important leadership role.

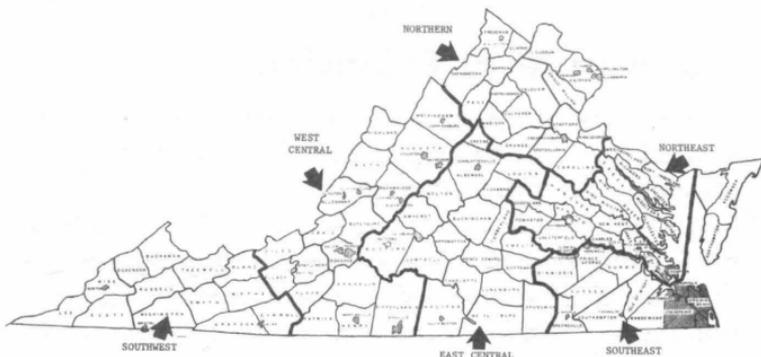
The Nature of Extension

The Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, funded by federal, state, and local governments, provides educational programs which focus on important problems and concerns of the citizens of the Commonwealth. Specifically, these programs are developed in the areas of agriculture, home economics, 4-H, and community resource development to help Virginians:

- Produce food and fiber products efficiently.
- Conserve natural resources and use them effectively.
- Manage home resources wisely to achieve family goals.
- Develop youth as individuals and as members of the family and the community.
- Improve a community's capacity to cope more effectively with community problems and opportunities.



Your local extension office is part of a statewide network with offices in 95 counties and 12 cities. These offices, while part of your local government, are also linked administratively to six district offices located in Abingdon, Roanoke, Appomattox, Warrenton, Richmond, and Windsor. In turn, this network is tied to supporting faculty and administrative staffs at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg and Virginia State in Petersburg. The federal link in this cooperative effort is the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



Ext. Form 16d

The Need for People Involvement

The Virginia Cooperative Extension Service is committed to developing non-credit educational programs for the people of the Commonwealth. In fulfilling this mission, the Extension Service is guided by the principle of "helping people help themselves." Now, as in the past, Extension's strength is derived from the involvement of people in the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating educational programs that meet their individual and community needs. This process of actively seeking input from the citizens of the community in developing Extension programs is what is meant by the term People Involvement.



Your Role in the Program

Each Extension unit is striving to develop or strengthen subject matter program area or commodity committees in each of the four program areas. In turn, the program area committees assist unit agents in the identification, implementation, and evaluation of specific subject matter programs on an annual basis. (See publication 301-002 for further information).

In addition to the program area committees, each Extension unit is committed to organizing an overall advisory committee. Unlike the program area committees which focus on program development in a particular subject matter area, the overall advisory committee assists with unit-wide program planning, the identification of resources to get the Extension job done, as well as in promoting and explaining Extension programs in the community. Your local extension agents will assist you in carrying out these important activities.



How Your Committee Works

Remember how it was when you learned to drive a car? First, you had to know how a car worked. Then you learned the various steps involved in driving. Finally, after some practice, you became a licensed driver. You also discovered certain procedures to follow to be a good driver. In a way, committee work is like learning how to drive a car. You must know how the committee works and what it must do to accomplish its mission.

Your overall advisory committee responsibilities are divided in the following ways: *program planning*, *resource identification*, and *community relations*. Each of these activities will now be discussed in greater detail.



Program Planning

Planning is a characteristic element of most successful activities. When you think about planning, it might be helpful to compare it to a roadmap. A roadmap contains useful information on how to go from one place to another, the mileage involved, and what routes you can take to get there. Just as a roadmap will help you make the right turn and reach your destination, program planning will enable your committee to pinpoint opportunities and problems in your community that Extension educational efforts can address in each of the four program areas.

Your overall advisory committee will be involved in long-range planning and, to a limited extent, annual planning. The long-range planning will focus on insuring that your Extension educational program is up to date. In order to determine if the program is current, your overall advisory committee must review and analyze existing programs in relation to present, as well as anticipated, problems and concerns. When gaps are found and the committee has determined that Extension can respond, appropriate educational goals and objectives should be identified. In order to do an effective job in this critical area, the overall advisory committee should work closely with the program area or commodity committees present in the unit. As noted, the program area committees have been organized for the purpose of planning, implementing, and evaluating educational efforts in each of the four

program areas of Extension. Accordingly, these committees possess special knowledge and expertise that will be helpful in projecting a unit's long-term educational needs.

The long-range planning function is represented by a written document that describes the existing community situation, identifies programming opportunities in each of the four program areas, and establishes goals and objectives that the advisory committee structure (both the overall committee and the program area committees) and your Extension agents will attempt to implement. The Virginia Cooperative Extension Service has determined that the long-range planning cycle will cover a period of four years.

The extent to which the overall advisory committee will become involved in annual program planning will vary unit to unit. However, several ways can be noted. First, the overall advisory committee will want to insure that the programs being offered during a given year are appropriate, timely, and based on recognizable need. Second, your committee will want to insure that the programs being offered during a given year are balanced and address issues and needs in each of the four program areas of Extension. Next, the overall advisory committee will want to monitor a given year's programs in relation to projected (long-term) programs. If deemed appropriate, your committee may decide to alter the four-year plan. Last, the overall advisory committee will want to monitor programs being implemented in order to be able to report on them and evaluate them.



Resource Identification

The identification of resources to get the Extension job done is the second responsibility of the overall advisory committee. This role is analogous to a foundation for a building. Unless the foundation is secure, the building may be in jeopardy of collapse. In many respects, quality Extension programs will not be possible without a “resources” foundation. People, money, office space, office materials, and volunteers are the foundation resources Extension must have to do its job; and your committee can help.

Reviewing the annual operating budget, helping decide what level of local funds are needed to do the Extension job, and justifying such requests before local governing bodies are outstanding examples of how your overall advisory committee can become involved in resource identification. Other examples could include recruiting volunteers to help implement the Extension program; securing needed equipment and supplies that may not be available through traditional government sources; and, the monitoring of staffing needs and the articulation of those needs when turnover or staff expansion occurs.



Community Relations

The essential focus of community relations is the building of a positive image for Extension in the community. This important work can be done by explaining and promoting Extension programs to potential clientele, government officials, and the general public. Your overall advisory committee can become involved in community relations in a number of ways. For example, summary reports on Extension educational programs and their impacts can be prepared and shared with the community.

News releases and formal reports to the local governing body could be strategies for accomplishing this task. Sponsoring tours and open houses, developing media releases, and making public appearances on behalf of your local Extension Service are additional ways the overall advisory committee can assist their local Extension office in community relations. In light of the prevailing cutback climate at all levels of government, the need for effective community relations must be a top Extension priority across the Commonwealth.



Relationship With Other Committees

As noted, the overall advisory committee is one part of the advisory committee structure in your community. The other half is represented by the program area committees for each of the four program areas. Several relationships result from this dual system. First, some members serving on the program area committees will also serve on the overall advisory committee. This is encouraged because those persons possess special knowledge regarding the individual programs being planned in each of the four program areas. This knowledge will be invaluable when the overall advisory committee finalizes both the long-range and annual Extension educational plans.

Another relationship the overall advisory committee will have with the program area committees involves intraorganizational communications. That is to say, the overall advisory committee will be able to keep the total advisory committee structure abreast of what the various committees are doing and when. Coordination of committee activities and possible sharing of responsibilities could be a byproduct of such communication. Finally, coordination of community relation efforts, program evaluation efforts, as well as program reporting efforts will be enhanced as a result of a good communications link between the overall advisory committee and the various program area committees.



Your Job as a Committee Member

Think of your committee as a group of people in a rowboat. The combined effort of each person using an oar helps to make the boat move at a desired speed to reach an objective. No committee can perform its role and be productive without the active participation of each member. Accordingly, it is important that committee members know how to be effective members. The following will assist you in this effort.

Making Committee Meetings Work

In athletic team competition, the objective is to win. All members of the team prepare for the athletic event, participate in the event, and follow-through on their assignments so that the combined efforts of team members achieve the objective. The productive committee member, like an athlete on a team, must prepare for the meeting, participate in the meeting, and follow-through on assignments and other responsibilities if the committee is to be successful.

Prepare for the Meeting

Have you ever attended a meeting when you did not really know what would take place? When you were asked for your opinion, were you prepared to give a good answer? When a committee meeting is called, make sure you understand the purpose of the meeting so that you can be prepared to participate in the discussion and decision making. You should:

- Review the agenda in advance.

- Review the past meeting's minutes.

- Determine when and in what manner you will actively participate in the meeting.

- Identify any item not on the agenda which needs to be discussed.

Participate in the Meeting

Advance planning enables committee members to participate in the business of the committee. Key points to be considered include:

- Arriving on time for all meetings.
- Allowing yourself to be enthusiastic about your appointed task.
- Participating in committee discussions, decisions, and actions.
- Respecting the rights of fellow members to express their ideas and suggestions.
- Working to achieve committee goals and objectives.



Follow-Through After the Meeting

Committee work is incomplete without follow-through. To follow-through you should:

- Support the plans made or actions taken by the committee.
- Carry out any post-meeting duties assigned to you or accepted by you.
- Inform interested clientele about plans and actions of your committee.
- Inform other interested groups or organizations about the committee plans and the parent organization.
- Help conduct major activities planned by the committee.

