



Extension Leadership Councils: Insights for Unit Coordinators

Facilitated by
Barbara Board and Eric Kaufman


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Objectives for this Session

- To communicate the requirement that all units have an ELC / Advisory board.
- To review the basic elements of building an ELC.
- To share best practices for engaging ELCs as effective partners.


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EXTENSION LEADERSHIP COUNCILS

*Why Have One?
What is Their Role and Purpose?*

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The Beginning:

**Stronger
Community
Advocacy
Needed**

- Early 90's—Approx. 24% Reduction in State Funding
- Looked @ Grassroots—Advisory Systems
 - Tremendous Variance
 - Lots of Solo Acts
- Greater Community Involvement Was Needed
- Needed The Extension Story Told

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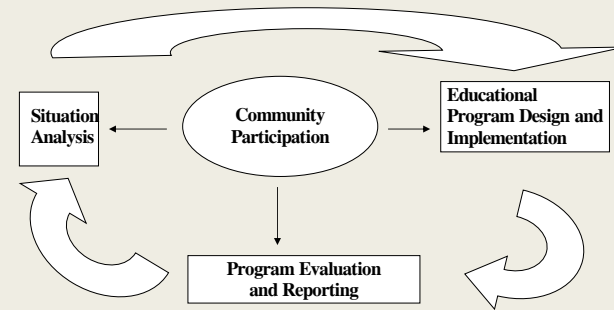
**The Work to Be Done
Mission of Cooperative Extension
Vision For Extension Leadership Council**

To *enable people*
to improve their lives and communities
through an educational process,
which uses scientific knowledge
focused on issues and needs



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**Virginia Cooperative Extension
Educational Program Process**



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Extension Leadership Councils

- Representatives of the community
- Primary partner for community involvement
- Key to Extension Being a Community Resource that Meets the Needs of VA's Communities



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Premises for ELC

ELC's - VCE Programming Partner

Not an Advisory, Supervisory, or Oversight Group

ELC Membership Should be Users, Non-users, Organization/Agency Representatives, Funders...Represent Community Diversity

4-H, FCS, ANR Program Groups Provide Representation to the ELC


Legislative Partners and Other Funders Expect Community Involvement/Connection

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Basic Roles of Membership

- Understand current Extension programs
- Identify community problems, concerns, and issues
- Based upon changing needs recommend program adjustments
- Identify other possible opportunities for cooperation and collaboration
- Design and implement a plan of action for their involvement based upon Extension program plan
- Report results
- Advocate for Extension and its programs

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VCE Programming Process A Map for Partnering with ELC Members


- A guidepost Extension Educators Facilitates ELC Involvement
- A point of direction for Big P and Little P-- Programming
- Each step gives direction to the next step
- Provides a map for planning for involvement and for joint...
 - *Decision-making*
 - *Tasks Identification*
 - *Talent, Expertise, Interest Connection*
 - *Role Assignments*

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Extension Leadership Councils

Assume major, equal, or secondary responsibilities in determining community issues which extension education can address, implementing the solutions, & evaluating & reporting results.....
Partners in the VCE Educational Process....

A Collaborative Effort



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VCE Program Process...The Steps...Points of Involvement


<p style="color: red; margin: 0;">Situation Analysis</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organize for Action 2. Develop a Unit Profile 3. Assess Needs- Community & Resident Perspective 4. Interpret Data & Decide on Program Direction 	<p style="color: red; margin: 0;">Design & Implementation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ID Program Goals & Objectives 2. Understand Learners 3. Develop- Educational Program 4. Develop-Marketing Plan 5. Develop- Action Plan 6. Implement- Program Plan 	<p style="color: red; margin: 0;">Evaluation & Reporting</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus the Evaluation 2. Collect Evaluation Data 3. Analyze Data 4. Report Results
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What does a functioning ELC look like?


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How is it working, really?



"I'm not sure you understand what we mean by next generation leadership..."



"Here's where you give me non-comprehending nods of approval."


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VA Secretary of Education Report (2011)

Observation of ELC:


"While the group appears to be representative of many interests within VCE, this group could be better utilized to communicate with local volunteers and lead advocacy efforts in addition to helping to surface issues from the field or local constituencies."

Among primary recommendations:

"Strengthen the role of the local ELC and their work on the local level with various constituencies and stakeholders."



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR


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State of ELCs in VCE

What percent of ELCs do you believe fall into each of the following categories (currently)?

- “functioning fairly well”
- “staff-dependent”
- “exist on paper only”
- “non-existent”

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State of ELCs in 2011

According to Unit Coordinators & ELC Chairs:
(81 UCs, 32 chairs, & 16 “other”)

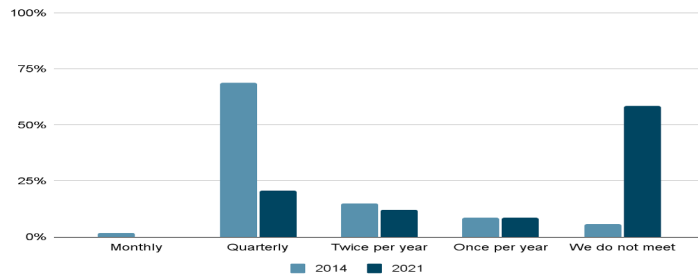
There is a predominant lack of clarity regarding purpose, role, expectations, & tasks of unit ELCs

- 55% are “functioning fairly well”
- 31% are “staff-dependent”
- 9% “exist on paper only”
- 5% are “non-existent”

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Frequency of ELC Meetings –

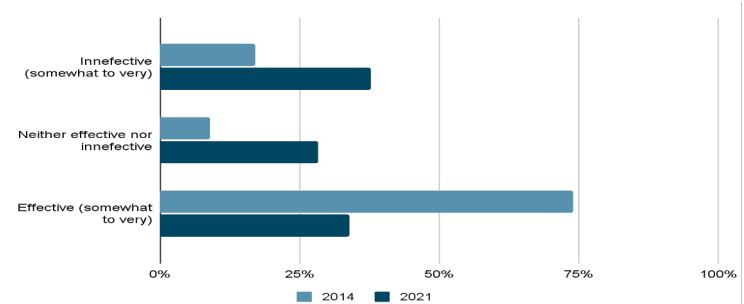
Unit Coordinators (n=74 in 2014; n=58 in 2021)



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State of ELCs –

Unit Coordinators (n=75 in 2014; n=53 in 2021)



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Pandemic Impact, in the Words of UCs...

"Our ELC stopped meeting after we received direction that the ELCs were being discontinued. We had a state ELC member at our meeting who confirmed this. Soon afterward we received info that ELC should still be active. Then COVID hit and our activities were paused. Our ELC would have continued to meet and work if we had not been told to stop."

"We had a very strong and active ELC before the pandemic, but have not met since then. I have been in contact with ELC members individually, but not as a group."

"COVID has decrease our ability to meet and be active. We need to revamp the group."

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Value of the ELC, in the Words of UCs...

"Our ELC has been tremendously successful with advocacy and making visits with local stakeholders, especially in times of budget constraints."

"They are a high functioning group. We need to work hard to make sure the nominations are done... that is the hardest part. We are short on support staff. It is real hard to keep up paperwork (ELC Minutes, notes, membership) without good support staff."

"The traditional role of ELC is awkward when you have agents and localities guiding what you are doing."

"The ELC that I inherited in my county is defunct."

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Ideas for Improvement...

"There is still confusion over the actual purpose of the ELC. State training, standardizing the expectations could be beneficial."

"Our ELC has worked well when there is a project for them, like working on the situation analysis. It would be great for the ELC To bring projects to us."

"The image of the ELC as a 'call to action' group needs to change to be more of an office/program direction advisory group."

"When we start a new ELC it would be helpful to have a designated reference directory of information to share with new ELC members: purpose, meeting facilitation guidelines, roles of ELC members, state coordinators to host annual or semi-annual training/meetings, etc."

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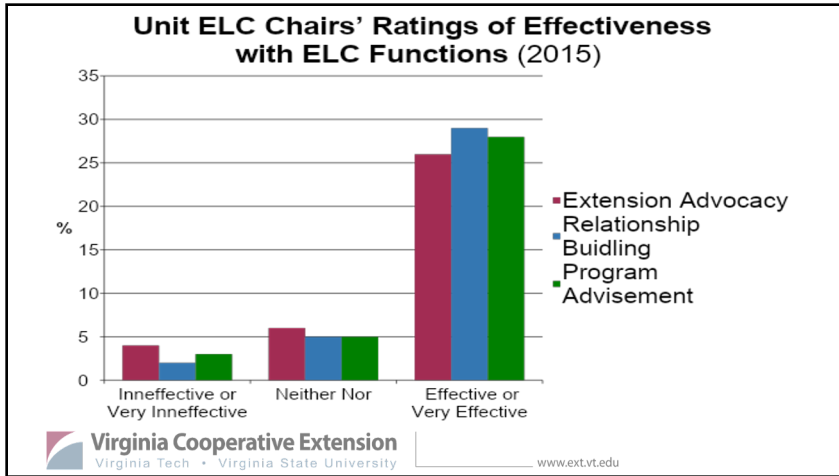
Extension Leadership Councils: Planning for Success (Pub 490-394)



Areas of Work

- Relationship Building
- Extension Advocacy
- Program Support & Advisement

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Extension Advisory Leaders Reasons for Volunteering (Spearman, 2011)

1. Desire to serve others and improve the community.
2. Give back to society through Extension volunteerism.
3. Positive attitudes and interests about Extension.
4. Desire for value and meaningful service.
5. Prior positive experience with Extension.

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Extension Advisory Committee Members' Priorities (Williams, 1991)

<p>Reasons for Joining:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Like to work with people. 2. Could use my talents and skills while serving on the committee. 3. Like the Extension agent. 4. Wanted to keep aware of what was going on in Extension. 5. Felt the committee accomplished things and I wanted to be a part of that. 	<p>Reasons for Quitting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Did not feel needed. 2. Did not feel the committee was accomplishing anything. 3. Inadequate opportunities to influence what goes on in Extension. 4. Did not feel the committee provided a means for improving the county. 5. Inadequate opportunities to be involved in making decisions about Extension programs.
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Who Are Your Stakeholders?



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Candidate Worksheet

Appendix A: Extension Leadership Council Candidate Worksheet

This worksheet will help the nominating committee evaluate potential ELC members.

Name of candidate: _____

Geographic region represented: _____

Primary community interest represented: _____

Questions	Yes	No	Unsure
Does the candidate believe in the mission and vision of Extension?	—	—	—
Does the candidate see the community in a broad perspective?	—	—	—
Is the candidate a long-time community resident (at least five years)?	—	—	—
Is the candidate interested in multiple areas of Extension education?	—	—	—
Is the candidate considered a leader in the community?	—	—	—
Is the candidate a good fit for the Extension Leadership Council?	—	—	—

What strengths do you think the candidate can bring to the Extension Leadership Council?

Other comments about the candidate:

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How do you prepare members?




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Orientation Checklist

- Overview of VCE
- Introduce Local Programs
- Define ELC
- Describe Local ELC
- Obtain Commitment
- Continue Education



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Purpose-Driven Agenda

Provide a predictable structure.

Focus on desired outcomes.

Lead with guiding questions that encourage more discussion than reporting.

Appendix D: Template for a Purpose-Driven Agenda

Use this worksheet to prepare agendas that will ensure meeting objectives are met.

Date of meeting: _____

Start and end time of meeting: _____

Location of meeting: _____

What to bring: _____

Focus topic: _____

Guiding questions:

• _____

• _____

What we need to accomplish:

Agenda

1. Call to order
2. Introduction of members and guests
3. Approval of minutes from previous meeting
4. Announcements
5. Reports and/or professional development activity
6. Unfinished business (if any)
 - a. _____
7. Discussion and response to guiding questions (above)
8. New business
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
9. Adjournment


Note: The agenda can be further enhanced by assigning a time and person responsible for each agenda item.

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Community Needs Assessment

- How has our community changed in the past year or two?
- Which community needs relate most to Extension’s mission and program areas?




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Program Review & Planning



- Which Extension programs relate most to current community needs?
- How can Extension programs be improved or restructured to better meet community needs?


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Program Promotion

- Which stakeholders and policy makers need to know more about Extension’s programs and efforts?
- How can we better advertise and promote Extension’s programs?



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Recognition



- Which programs, staff members, and volunteers deserve extra recognition?
- How can we better recognize and support these individuals and programs?

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Best Ways to Retain Volunteers

(Spearman, 2011)

1. Provide meaningful engagement opportunities.
2. Provide training opportunities.
3. Appreciate and recognize service.
4. Respect volunteer time and inputs.
5. Provide challenging opportunities for leadership improvement.

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Responsibility Report

Regular 360-degree evaluation is key.

Appendix C: Extension Leadership Council Responsibility Report

The Extension Leadership Council should complete this self-assessment annually to ensure that it is meeting its responsibilities.

Report date: _____

Total number of ELC members: _____

Total number of ELC meetings held during the past 12 months: _____

Average number of ELC members attending each meeting: _____

Responsibility	Level of Performance (1 = low; 5 = high)	Explanation of Rating
Relationship building: Connect Extension agents and programs with stakeholders and organizations throughout the local community.	1 2 3 4 5	
Extension advocacy: Market Extension and advocate for the necessary resources to sustain and improve Extension programs.	1 2 3 4 5	
Program support and advisement: Participate in the VCE programming process, including situation analysis, program design and implementation, and program evaluation and reporting.	1 2 3 4 5	
Other:	1 2 3 4 5	
Other:	1 2 3 4 5	

Note: The ELC chair or unit coordinator may summarize yearly accomplishments on a separate sheet.

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The Science of Success (Halvorson, 2012)

“Well over 100 studies, on everything from diet and exercise to negotiation and time management, have shown that deciding *in advance* **when** and **where** you will take steps to reach your goal can double or triple your chances for success.”


If-Then Plan Types

- **Replacement:** replace a bad habit with a good one.
- **Ignore:** Block out unwanted feelings
- **Negation:** Specify actions you won't be taking in the future


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*Partnering and Leading Others
Involvement in Extension Education*

**Facilitative/Collaborative
Role of Extension
Educator**



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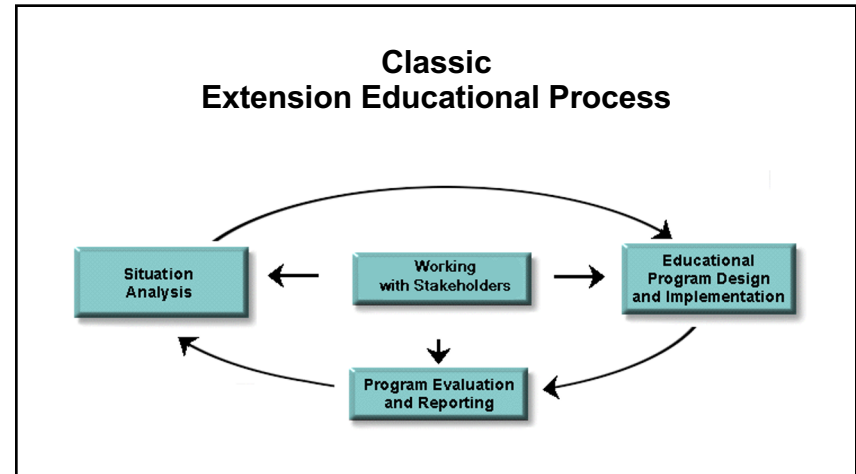
*How Would
You
Describe Being an
Extension Educator?*

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As Extension Educators our Job is to...

- Understand the situation....what is going on...
what is needed
- Understand the targeted learner
- Develop purposeful plans to address needs
- Establish the goals & outcomes needed for targeted learner(s)....
- Develop educational products & use effective strategies to work with targeted learners
Facilitate positive change, transformation others need,
not merely dispense information/technical expertise

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Extension Educational Process

...“planned, coordinated, facilitated, collaborative deliberate decisions & actions of Extension Educators in partnership with advisory leadership, program volunteers, targeted learners, internal partners, & community partners”

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Extension Educators

EXTENSION EDUCATORS

Provide Expertise to Solutions

Methodical in Identifying Issues, Problems Needs

Serve as **Convener and Facilitators** in Developing Educational Solutions

Engage Community in Decision Making

Cultivate Involvement and Ownership

Provide **Collaborative Leadership**



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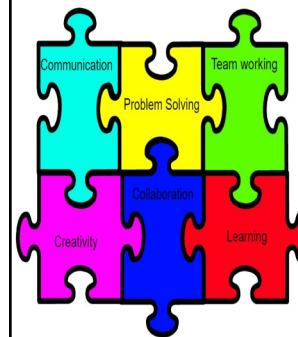
Think Back to...

• An experience that facilitated and **engaged others well in the work of the group....**

• **What do you recall.... made that happen?**



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Team Efforts Require.....**Hard Skills**and.....**Soft Skills**

- Soft Skills.....A Few.....
- Interpersonal Skills Needed to Succeed in Workplace.... People Skills
- Communication, Leadership, Critical Thinking
- Emphasis on Teamwork
- Good Organization, Strategic Planning,
- Requires Stepping Outside Your Comfort Zone
- Open to Feedback, Learning, Change, Growing
- Takes Effort, Practice

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Effective Group Leadership

- Provide Clear Directions and Information
- Provide Orientation to Chair & Members
- Invests Time in Building Structure
- Involves People in Setting Goals
- Works with Chairs to Develop Agendas and Annual Plans
- Administrative Support ..Planning and Execution of Meetings and Plans

- Ensures Information is Provided
- Provide Reports, Products, Services that Furthers Work
- Answer Questions, Raise Questions, Make Suggestions
- Fosters Trust, Commitment, Involvement
- Works on Tasks and Relationships



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- Clearly Defined Purpose/ExpectationsWritten Committee/Job Description
- An Effective Chair...Well Informed...Proven Leadership & People Skills
- Carefully Selected Members...Greater Than 5 — Less Than 15



What Makes it Happen

- On-Boarding Plan Orientation for Leaders and Members
- Well-Run Meetings (Recommend Minimum -Quarterly)
 - Agenda Purposeful, Ideally Shared Before Meetings
 - Starts on Time..... Ends on Time
 - Decision Process Clarified...Vote, Work Assignment
 - Involves All Members
 - End With Summary and Action Plans Going Forward
- Annual Calendar/Work Plan Members Involved in Establishing Includes Meeting Dates, Members Know Expectations
- Reflects, Evaluates Progress.....Helps Make Changes, Gauge, Establish Success
- Recognition for Contributions and Accomplishments—Frequently and Annually




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Questions?

Comments?

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Going Forward



What Should Done?

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Going Forward ...



- Paired Discussion
- 10 minutes
- Come Back and Share
 - Helps us All

*What Needs to Be Done
to Bring Leadership Councils into
The Work of VCE?*



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Contact Us With Questions

Eric Kaufman, EKK@VT.Edu
 Barbara Board, Board@VT.Edu



"I'm feeling a sense of conclusion here, so let's draw things to a close."

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