

Critical Conversations with Public Officials: Methods and Messages

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<http://go.osu.edu/MethodsandMessages>



Setting the Stage

- Relationships with public officials are critical to job security for Extension employees
- With many competing demands for limited resources, we need to ensure our funders know the value we bring to our citizens
- The formally defined responsibility for this varies across Extension systems, but regardless of the state you are from, please know that **all employees and volunteers can and should play a role in this effort.**



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Objectives for this Workshop

- (1) learning about the public officials' we will engage,
- (2) perspective taking/finding common goals,
- (3) identification, definition, and framing of needs and issues,
- (4) message design, structure, and focus,
- (5) structuring messages to show impact,
- (6) problem solving through responding to emerging issues and/or challenges and divergent points of view,
- (7) partnership and relationship building.



Remember!

- Extension is a great investment that truly makes a difference in people's lives
- Our strength is our people and the products we deliver
- The programming we provide ultimately saves tax payer dollars and improves lives!



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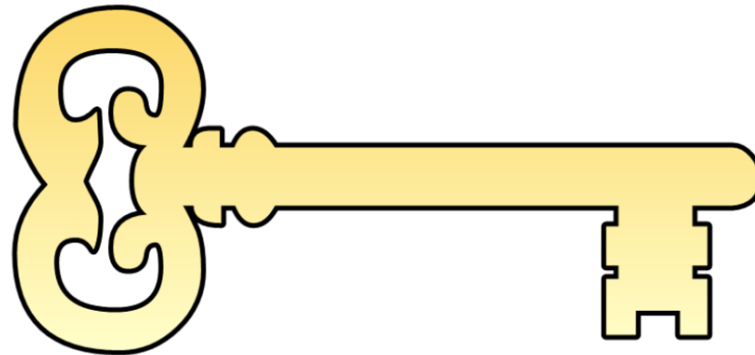
Be Confident!
Believe in Your Message!



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Key Ideas for Effective Conversations with Elected Officials



Effective Conversations Take Planning



We need to have goals for our conversations with elected officials.

Some of our goals may be:

- Building a positive, sustainable relationship

- Positively influencing perceptions of Extension

- Sharing expert information about a public issue

- Gaining support for a budget increase



Be Prepared– Know Your Audience

- To effectively achieve our goals, we need to prepare for our conversations with public officials
- Learning about the public officials' we will engage
- Find out about his or her plans and find common goals (perspective taking and common goals)
- Identify, define, and frame needs and issues for discussion



Ways to Learn about the Public Officials We Will Engage

Read the official's webpage

Search google for recent actions and events

Follow the official on social media

*More tips for learning
about public officials?*



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Find out about Officials' Plans and Identify Common Goals

What interests, philosophies, issues, activities does the public official have in common with Extension, our local or state impact areas, your recent programming, or the programming others in your office have provided?

Remark on the public official's interests, mention recent news reports about their actions, express interest, curiosity, offer sincere compliments about their accomplishments. Then listen.



Message Design, Structure, and Focus Structuring Messages to Show Impact

Now that you understand the public official's point of view, you are ready to shape your message.

We need to be prepared to share the most important, relevant facts, figures and examples.



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Message Design, Structure, and Focus: Teaching and Influencing

Include:

- Your Answer or the Point You Want to Make
- Evidence to support your position
- Examples that illustrate your claims
- A Summary that highlights key idea(s)

Examples:

- Why ANR educators are more needed than ever
- Worksheet as foundation for budget meeting



Example: The Need for Agriculture and Natural Resources Educators



Message Design, Structure, and Focus: Addressing Resistance

Feel, Felt, Found

Never disagree with someone you want to influence.

Example:

Why should county budgets support 4-H educators' continuing education?

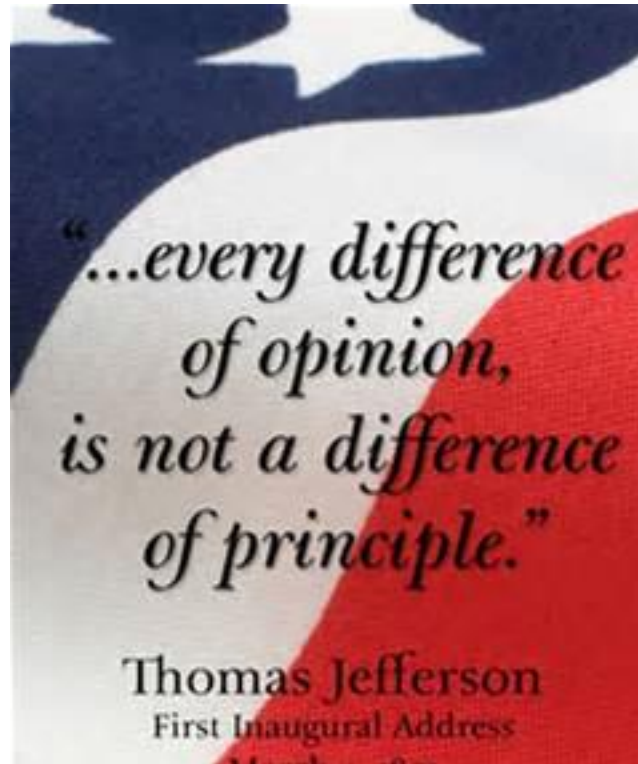


Responsive Problem Solving: Responding to emerging issues and/or challenges

Impact Area	Key Issues	When Not Addressed	Investment Opportunity
Health and Wellness	Food Insecurity Infant Mortality Heart Health Obesity Prevention Access to Health Care Drug and Alcohol Addiction	Loss of Life Medical Costs Loss of Workers Crime	Prevention of Disease Addiction Prevention Reduced Mortality Reduction in Crime



Responsive Problem Solving: Responding to Divergent Points of View



Share Impacts that Resonate:

How can we ensure our messages are meaningful and memorable to our elected officials?

- Share how we impacted lives in their districts
- Share how what we do helps them achieve their goals
- Use examples that resonate
- What is their return on investment (ROI) OR return on expectation (ROE)



Structuring Messages to Show Impact

During the Coshocton and Muskingum counties' Agronomy School, 35 farmers and agricultural crop professionals learned about insect and disease management, fertilizer rates, and improving corn yield while managing input costs. **These participants estimated they would save an average of \$300 per acre in the upcoming season based on knowledge gained at the school.**

Nearly half (46 percent) of the participants intended to adjust or change plans based on knowledge that they learned from the program. These changes related to fertilizer rates and seed selection. The vast majority (92 percent) of the participants planned to tell someone else about something they learned from attending this Agronomy School.



Structuring Messages to Show Impact

A total of 1,165 family members were impacted by EFNEP. The 158 adult graduates significantly increased knowledge and improved behaviors in diet quality (88 percent), food resource management (75 percent), and food safety (65 percent), resulting in Mahoning County residents making healthier choices.



Structuring Messages to Show Impact

What makes your garden grow? Master Gardener Volunteers, trained by OSU Extension, shared research-based information with gardeners through workshops, community gardens, and one-on-one consultations.

A total of 210 Master Gardener Volunteers in Franklin County performed more than 10,870 hours of volunteer service at 43 different sites and programs throughout Franklin County. This volunteer service was valued at \$236,857 at the current rate of \$21.79 per hour of volunteer labor.



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Structuring Messages to Show Impact

The Development of Living Skills (DLS) program offers in-home instruction to individuals and families referred by Children Services. Instruction is given in the areas of nutrition, parenting, child development, money management and home economics.

DLS provided 1,224.75 hours of teaching time to 101 clients.

As a result, 21 children were reunited with their parents from foster care, and 31 at-risk children were able to remain in their parent's home, avoiding foster care or kinship care.



Tips for Success-- Remember to:

- Be interesting! Be creative! Win your audience's attention!
- Frame your message in terms of our contributions. (Avoid explaining what we want our public officials to do for us).
- Share that Extension is an investment that pays dividends for the communities we serve by supporting the goals we have in common.



Partnership and Relationship Building



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Thank You!

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