

UF/IFAS Extension Communication Planning Guide

As you map out your individualized communications strategy, use this template to help you:

- analyze and validate the situation,
- define your target audience,
- define your goals,
- determine the appropriate communication activities,
- outline the use of messages and other communication tools,
- determine the appropriate communication vehicles for each target audience and/or program, project or initiative you are trying to impact, including strategic partners and referral sources, and
- determine implementation timing and the budget for each audience and/or situation.

Communication plans can be developed for a target audience for whom multiple programs or initiatives may be appropriate, or for a specific program, project or initiative.

Communications plan for (insert name of target audience or program, project or initiative)

1. Situation Analysis

What is the current vs. the desired situation?

What is the **current situation** with the target audience and/or program, project or initiative?

What research, information, metrics and/or observations can you use to validate your analysis of the current situation?

What are the goals (**desired situation**) for the program, project or initiative? Make goals as specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-based as possible.

What are the obstacles or challenges in closing the gap between current and desired situation and how can you deal with them?

2. Target Audience Profiling Questionnaire

Define the target audience(s) for the program, project or initiative:

Who is the target audience?

What commonalities do the members of this target audience share?

What do they want or need that an IFAS Extension program, project or initiative can provide?

How large is the target audience?

What do you need to know about them that you don't already know?

What other IFAS Extension services might be appropriate for them?

What, if any, are their other options and/or alternatives?

What is the best way(s) to communicate with them? How do you know?

What do you want them to know?

What do you want them to do as a result of your communications with them?

3. The following diagram depicts the relationships between communication and achieving awareness/credibility, interest, preference, selection and loyalty with the target audience.

Questions Communication Should Answer							
Awareness		Credibility		Interest	Preference	Selection	Loyalty
Questions	What is IFAS Extension? What value could it provide for me and my situation? Is IFAS Extension a proven and/or credible resource?			Is an IFAS Extension program, project or initiative a possible option for me? How/where do I get more information?	Is IFAS Extension the best choice for me and my situation? How/why is it better than the other alternatives?	How do I access IFAS Extension and its services?	Will I continue to use IFAS Extension and/or recommend IFAS Extension to others?

Users' Decision-Making/Selection Process						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recognize the issue or need.	Understand or define the issue or need.	Determine desired outcome.	Explore alternatives.	Evaluate alternatives.	Selection	Repeat usage and/or referrals.

Your Role in the Process							
Actions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Be "top-of-mind" when a potential user has an issue or need that IFAS Extension could address.	Identify and explore the opportunity to provide an IFAS Extension service or solution.	Determine/plan the solution based on user's desired outcome.	Communicate the proposed solution.	Explain the value or benefits of the proposed solution.	Provide the solution.	Assess results, manage the relationship and solicit referrals.

Part of communication planning is determining what, how and when you should communicate at each step in the users' decision-making/selection process.

Notes:

Communication and Messaging

As you move through the communication process, your messages should map to the information requirements of your target audience. They should provide more detail and substantiation about the value IFAS Extension provides to the target audience. Understanding the messages that are required to support the later stages of the users’ decision-making processes makes it possible for you to create better messages in the earlier stages of the process. The following table summarizes how you can evolve the essence, or the net “takeaway,” from your messages.

Communication process—net takeaway from IFAS EXTENSION messages						
Awareness		Credibility	Interest	Preference	Selection	Loyalty
What IFAS Extension is and what it does.						
IFAS Extension and its programs are proven resources.						
			IFAS Extension has a vision for and commitment to meeting the needs of the target audience.			
			IFAS Extension has specific offerings and capabilities that meet the unique needs of the target audience.			
			IFAS Extension has strong capabilities (including the knowledge and dedication of the people you will be working with) that make it the best alternative.			
					You made the right choice in selecting IFAS Extension	
						IFAS Extension delivered on its promises and should be recommended to others.

1. Communication vehicle options

The types of communication vehicles that you use are dictated by the corresponding communication objectives. In the row beginning with “Awareness,” the following table shows examples of key communication vehicles that could support each communication objective. Not all communication vehicles are required for you to relay your message to the market effectively. Use the Target Audience Profiling Questionnaire to understand fully how your audience finds information and to select the most appropriate communication vehicles based on your audience’s preferred sources for information.

Communication process—sample communication vehicles					
Awareness	Credibility	Interest	Preference	Selection	Loyalty
Press briefing or tour, or both	Press mentions	Research and/or white papers	Data sheets and other detailed program collateral information	Proposal templates, face-to-face meetings, and other company documents	“Thank you” and “just checking in” communications by e-mail, regular mail, phone, or other modes
Press releases and associated materials	Quotes, references, and mentions	Press articles	Feature and functionality presentations, videos, and other types of demonstrations	Customer references	Internet marketing
Analyst briefing or tour, or both	User and partner quotes and references	Research papers and presentations	Printed customer success stories	E-commerce Web site	
IFAS EXTENSION informational Web site	Program overview collateral materials	Conference speaker presentations	Capabilities brochure		
Industry event trade show floor participation	IFAS EXTENSION overview slide presentation	Positioning advertising such as billboards	Return on investment (ROI) tools		
Awareness advertising	IFAS EXTENSION overview demonstration on Web	Direct marketing	Research-based studies or technical white papers		
Public relations	Press and analyst article reprints	Internet marketing	Direct-response advertising		
Internet marketing			Direct marketing		

2. Communication vehicles selection

Use the Target Audience Profiling Questionnaire to get a detailed breakdown of your audience's demographics and psychographics. This will help you understand how your audience finds information, and it will help you select the most appropriate communication vehicles based on your audience's preferred sources for information.

In the following table, for each communication objective listed in the row starting with "Awareness," list the communication vehicles that are most appropriate for your audience. By assigning vehicles to communication objectives, you get a sense of the timing and order in which you should implement your communication vehicles.

Communication process—communication vehicles for					
Awareness	Credibility	Interest	Preference	Selection	Loyalty

