

WOMEN TAKING THE LEAD FOR KENTUCKY AGRICULTURE

Kentucky's women farmers, many of whom represent small and limited resource farmers, are learning more about how important public decisions and policies that affect their future are made.

With the financial assistance of a Southern SARE Sustainable Community Innovation Program grant, a public policy institute was designed and conducted in the fall of 2004. The goal was to equip women in agriculture from Kentucky with the information and tools they need to interact effectively with decision makers. They gained information on:

- How policy and legislative priorities are established;
- Where to find and use reliable data to support their positions;
- What makes an effective public statement; and
- Strategies to work with the media to get the message out to the consumer as well as policy makers.

Institute participants used these new tools and information to teach others how to make their voices heard. This project's overall aim was to strengthen the state's sustainable agriculture through policy and legislative avenues by preparing women in agriculture for new leadership roles.

Based on the experiences and recommendations of Institute participants these tip sheets were developed for Kentucky Women In Agriculture, Inc.'s members and its web site. This toolkit consists of four sections:

- Personal Networks
- Finding Data to Support Your Message
- Working with Public Officials
- Working with the Media

We hope that you find these resources helpful in your efforts to support sustainable agriculture.

Gae Broadwater
Project Coordinator



This project is funded by the Southern Regional Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program through the Sustainable Community Innovation Grants Program.



Personal Networks



Talking to friends, neighbors, family members, co-workers, and acquaintances about your issue can have a significant impact. Members of these personal or social networks can have tremendous influence over each other's views and preferences. As one researcher has pointed out:

"It is both obvious and well known that the immediate social circumstances of people's lives influence what they believe and do about politics."

Alan S. Zuckerman, *The Social Logic of Politics*

In addition, each member of a network can be expected to have broader connections within their communities – providing other avenues for sharing information and influencing opinions.

Opportunities to make the most of your network include:

- Personal conversations
- Sharing information at school, church or social group functions
- Speaking to civic clubs or other organizations
- Internet or e-mail networks

Specific networks for women who are engaged or interested in farming include:

- Kentucky Women in Agriculture
- Kentucky Farm Bureau
- Community Farm Alliance
- Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service
- Land Grant Universities—Kentucky State & University of Kentucky
- Local and state Extension and 4-H councils
- County Councils, Boards, and Commissions

Being able to communicate effectively is a critical element of getting your message out – whether through your personal network or in other ways. This isn't always easy for everyone, but paying attention to certain details can help.

Effective Communication

First, communication is more than just talking. Of course, what we say is at the center, but body language and facial expressions are also important. Like it or not, we're always communicating. Research has shown that we deliver our messages in three ways:

- Verbal – what we say – is responsible for 7 percent of that delivery
- Vocal – how we say it – delivers 38 percent of our message
- Visual – what people see as we're talking – delivers 55 percent

Listening also is key. As author Stephen Covey says: "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." Take the time to truly listen to what someone is saying by:



- Allowing the other person to talk freely
- Hearing what they say instead of interpreting what you think they mean
- Paying attention to such things as tone of voice and body language

According to research:

- We have learned 85 percent of what we know by listening.
- We are distracted, preoccupied or forgetful 75 percent of the time.
- We remember 20 percent of what we hear.
- We listen at 125-250 words per minute. But we think at 1,000-3,000 words per minute.

Everyone needs and appreciates validation. We know what a positive feeling it is to have someone provide feedback that lets us know they have heard and understood our point. Doing the same for others will help build your effective communication skills.

It also is important to remember that men and women communicate differently. Here are some interesting points to remember:

- Men talk in statements, while women tend to talk in questions. Women often use questions in conversation such as, "That's a good idea, isn't it?" because it seems less pushy. But the downside is that men may think that women either don't understand the conversation or are not prepared.
- Women are more inclined to explain a position in a storyline form, relating the who, what, when, where and why of the topic first and finishing with the outcome. Conversely, men start with the results and then back up their position with facts.
- Non-verbal communication such as a simple nod can have different meanings between the sexes. When a man nods, it generally means he's in agreement. When a woman nods, she's showing that she's understanding and paying attention to you. When a man nods, you know it's time to close the deal; that's not necessarily the case with a woman.
- Eye contact has different meanings between men and women. While most males do not fix their eyes on the person talking, women tend to look directly at the person. Women often mistake a man's lack of eye contact for being disinterested.
- And, contrary to common belief, in mixed-gender gatherings, men spend more time talking than women.

(Excerpted from **LIVING HEALTH, WORKING WELL**, found at: www.dpa.ca.gov/benefits/other/eap/news/september00.htm)

Here are some basic tips for effective communication.

- Step 1: Identify your audience. Who do you want to influence or inform? The same information might be appropriate for the media, legislators and the general public, but you might need to change your message somewhat for different groups.
- Step 2: Decide what you want to communicate and why you want people to know it. Do you want them to do something, stop something, learn something, take a particular action?
 - Step 3: Develop your initial message. Write it down. Share it with friends or trusted colleagues to get their constructive feedback. Keep your message simple and to the point.
 - Step 4: Choose some facts or a story to make your point. Again, keep it simple.



- Step 5: “Design” your communication. Will it be a conversation? A news release? A letter to the editor or to a state or local official?
- Step 6: Decide how to get your message out and determine what time would work best. The timing will guide this decision.
- Step 7: Evaluate. Did your communication reach your target audience? Was there evidence that it had an impact?

(These tips from **THE HEALTH ADVOCACY TOOLBOX** and other additional information on communications can be found at: www.cthealthpolicy.org/toolbox/tools/effec_comm.htm)

Public Speaking

Many people – if not most of us – have a great fear of speaking in public. But there are some ways to deal with the fear – and most of them focus on being well prepared. Practice can make all the difference in taking the edge off the jitters. Here are some other tips that can help:

- If you’re invited to speak to a group, find out as many details as you can, including the time, date, place, contact person, type and size of audience and whether equipment such as a microphone or projector will be available.
- Write it down. Decide what your message will be and write it out. Have a beginning, a middle and a conclusion – but begin with the conclusion. In other words, let your audience know early what your primary message is.
- Don’t worry about flowery language. Write your speech as you would talk. You’ll be more comfortable if your words sound like you.
- Include a call for action or a recommendation, and list your reasons for taking the position. Factual information is important – but try not to overdo it on statistics or you’ll lose your audience.
- Avoid the use of jargon or words that will not be readily understood by people who don’t have detailed knowledge of your topic.
- Anecdotes and personal stories are helpful. But if you can’t tell a joke well, don’t try it in a public speech.
- Repeat your conclusion when you close.

“Know your stuff. Know whom you’re stuffing. Know when you’ve stuffed them enough.”

Charles Osgood

Being able to relax as much as possible will make a public appearance more enjoyable. Here are some ideas:

- Practice, practice, practice – standing in front of a mirror and delivering your speech a few times can help.
- Try to check out the setting for your speech ahead of time – to find out what the room looks like, how the chairs are arranged, where you’ll be standing and other information.
 - If possible, check yourself out in the restroom mirror before you begin.
 - Remember to breathe, and to speak at a moderate pace.
 - Refer to your notes if you need them.
 - And remember to smile – it helps everybody, most of all you!



Finding Data to Support Your Message



The Internet – whether you have access from your home computer or a local library – offers limitless resources that you can use to develop and support your message. A great source for Kentucky information, and advice on how to find it, is **BY THE NUMBERS: FINDING DATA ON THE INTERNET**, by Julie N. Zimmerman of the Department of Community and Leadership Development at the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.

Kentucky: By The Numbers

Data Series



The “Kentucky: By the Numbers” data series is a series of county profiles produced on an occasional basis which are developed to support local decision making.

This resource is available at:
<http://www.ca.uky.edu/snarl/>

Be sure to check it occasionally for updates.

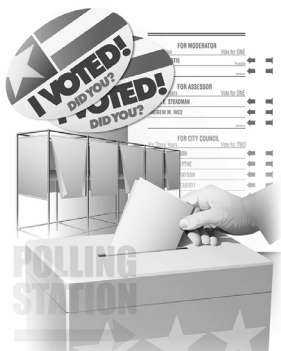
Another key resource is the **CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE IN KENTUCKY**:
http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Kentucky/index.asp



This provides state and county-level data on many agricultural topics, ranging from production and prices to land and machinery values. At this site you can access state and county profiles, or tabulate by zip code or Congressional District.



Working with Public Officials



Elected officials are responsive to their constituents. It really does make a difference when they hear from the folks who put them in office. That's why it is important that citizens stay in touch with elected officials at the local, state and national levels. As an observer pointed out years ago: *All politics is local.*

As is the case with the media, or with friends and neighbors, establishing relationships is important. And it is helpful if these connections are made in an ongoing way, to give public officials a chance to get to know you and understand your issues. This is particularly true with members of the Kentucky General Assembly. Once lawmakers go to Frankfort in January,

their schedules get more crowded with each passing day. Having established a relationship before the session begins will be to your advantage.

The following information focuses on ways to make contact with public officials at all levels of government—local, state, and federal.

Local Officials

This is the easiest level for citizens to access, since officials are literally located in your home county. Information on meetings is as close as the government section of your local phone book.

- The county judge-executive's office can provide meeting and location information on county magistrate or commission meetings.
- The mayor's office similarly can provide information on city council or commission meetings.
- Many communities are developing web sites with contact information for government agencies and information about the responsibilities of those agencies. It is often enough just to do a search for the name of a town, city or county (be sure to include Kentucky in your search) to locate the web site.
- Communities with cable television often broadcast government meetings on the local cable access channel. This can help you become familiar with the officials and their points of view on various issues.

State Legislators

There are several ways to communicate your views to legislators: by telephone, e-mail, letter, or personal contact.

The KENTUCKY LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COMMISSION (LRC) operates toll-free telephone numbers that allow citizens to leave messages for legislators or check meeting schedules.

Legislative Message Line: 1-800-372-7181

Calendar (Meetings) Line: 1-800-633-9650

TTY Message Line: 1-800-896-0305

The main phone number for the LRC is 1-502-564-8100.



The main LRC web site, <http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/home.htm>, provides links to legislation, meeting schedules and other information.

The following LRC web site provides a link to contact information for members of the Senate and House of Representatives (and will help users identify their legislators, if needed). This information includes a regular mailing address, telephone number(s) and e-mail address for each member.

<http://www.lrc.ky.gov/whoswho/whoswho.htm>

The following LRC web site includes the calendar for a legislative session, noting which days the General Assembly will meet and which days are legislative holidays.

http://www.lrc.ky.gov/sch_vist/06RS_calendar.pdf

U.S. Senators and Representatives

There are several ways to find out who represents you in the United States Congress:

- The government section of your local phone book
- The Capitol Switchboard, 202-224-3121
- Web sites that, using your zip code, will help you find out the name and contact information for your U.S. Senator (www.senate.gov) and Representative (www.house.gov)

The web sites, www.senate.gov and www.house.gov, also will link you to a personal web page for your federal legislator. These pages contain information about the lawmaker's committee membership and the issues addressed by those committees.

Letters and E-mail

Here are some points to remember when writing a letter or e-mail message to a legislator, either in the Kentucky Legislature or in the U.S. Congress:

- A specific message is more effective than one that expresses a general theme.
- Use a bill number whenever possible. This communicates your area of interest quickly and leaves no room for misunderstanding about your subject.
- Make a personal connection if possible, noting your interest as a constituent or member of a group that is working on an issue.
- Brevity is important in written communications to legislators, especially during a session when their time is very limited.

You can view more tips for writing a letter to your legislator prepared by the CENTER FOR LOBBYING IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST (CLPI) at: <http://blue.isoph.com/shared/assetDownload.aspx?id=1128>

The Center also has developed a series of helpful "How-To" materials that individuals and nonprofit organizations can use in planning their work with legislators. These include:

- Ten Reasons to Lobby for your Cause
<http://www.clpi.org/shared/assetDownload.aspx?id=1241>
- Make a Difference for Your Cause in 3 Hours Per Week
<http://blue.isoph.com/shared/assetDownload.aspx?id=1119>



- Personal Visits
<http://blue.isoph.com/shared/assetDownload.aspx?id=1127>
- Presenting Testimony
<http://blue.isoph.com/shared/assetDownload.aspx?id=1126>
- Nonprofit Lobbying—Yes, You Can Do It!
<http://blue.isoph.com/shared/assetDownload.aspx?id=1118>

The **FEDERAL POLICY ADVOCACY HANDBOOK**, developed by the Community Food Security Coalition, www.foodsecurity.org, is another good resource and includes detailed information on dealing with federal legislators and agencies. (Community Food Security Coalition, P.O. Box 209, Venice, CA 90294 310-822-5410)

Additional sources of information:

- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: www.cbpp.org
- The Advocacy Institute: www.advocacy.org
- Federal register: www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/
- Congressional information: <http://thomas.loc.gov/>



Working with the Media



The news media is one of the best ways to distribute your message to a wide audience. Local newspapers and radio stations can be particularly helpful in rural communities.

Getting to know the reporters and editors who will be covering your issue is an important part of building effective media relations. The first step is making a telephone call to the media outlet and getting the name and contact information, such as the e-mail address, of the right people. Don't hesitate to get in touch with the reporter and/or editor, and make an appointment to talk and share information. It is helpful to do this before you want to try to place a news item or generate interest in a news story. Establishing yourself as a credible source of information on your topic can pay off in the long run.

It is important to remember the following options for getting your message to the public:

- **Newspapers:** Daily papers provide the most detailed coverage of news today – and that means longer interviews and great information requirements. Kentucky's weekly newspapers offer well-read avenues of distribution, and sometimes they'll accept and print your release with little editing. Consider writing an op-ed article or becoming a resource.
- **Television:** Getting on the evening news is the goal of most would-be newsmakers, but remember the other opportunities offered by this medium. Morning and noon news programs and expanded late-afternoon broadcasts mean that producers need more stories to fill the time. And don't forget cable television. Local access channels can be used for community meetings and to distribute information about public events.
- **Web pages:** The internet provides information on virtually any topic. The possibilities are limited only by time and imagination!
- **Radio:** Brevity is the key for regular radio newscasts. But talk programs provide time to review a topic in depth. Controversy is a prerequisite for some talk radio productions, but others provide a venue for more thoughtful discussion. And remember to check with public radio stations in your area about opportunities to share information.
- **Public affairs programs:** Sunday morning or late night, TV stations in particular are in need of worthwhile topics to discuss on their news and public affairs broadcasts.

More specific tips on working with the news media follow.

Working with the Media

Here are a few fundamentals to aid your efforts to establish a good working relationship with the news media:

- Become familiar with the reporter(s) covering you and your issue. Try to keep up to date, since reporters' job assignments can change frequently.
- Be friendly, but avoid trying to establish "friendships" with reporters who cover you and your issue; similarly, avoid trying to make them your advocates.
 - Be open. You are the expert and you have the best information to share.
 - Become familiar with, and try to respect, reporters' deadlines.



News Releases

A news release is one of the easiest ways to get out information. It also is one of the easiest things to toss in a trash can. To avoid that:

- Typed, double-spaced releases are best.
- Don't worry about flowery prose or catchy leads. Get to the news immediately. Make sure you include the basics: who, what, when, where and why. You'd be surprised how many people forget to include an address or time of an event.
- Start with what, not who. It's more interesting that something noteworthy has happened than it is to know who is announcing it.
- Be brief. You shouldn't leave out important details just to fit your release on one page. But don't expect someone to read a six-page release, either. As a general rule, two pages is the limit.
- List a contact person and phone numbers. If the news release is from an organization, make sure the contact person is someone who is readily accessible. It's best to include home numbers and e-mail addresses since reporters often need information after regular office hours.
- Accuracy is imperative. If you misspell a name or give wrong information, there's a good chance you'll see the mistake repeated. Double check dates, times, names and other information.
- If your release is announcing an event, include accurate, detailed directions. A map is a great idea.
- Know who should get your release. Use a media guide or call the media outlet to make sure your contact list is up to date.
- It's often a good idea to follow up news releases with a phone call to make sure your information got to the right person.

News Conferences

- News conferences are most helpful to broadcast reporters who need audio or videotaped comments to tell stories.
- Provide handouts that summarize information being presented. Charts or graphs are also helpful and may get your story better play.
- Provide time for follow-up questions after your presentation.
- Broadcast stations have special needs:
 - Avoid making your presentation in front of windows or bright lights. A dark backdrop, particularly blue, is best.
 - Indoor news conferences are usually best, since you can better control distracting noises.
 - Provide enough space for microphones on a rostrum and make sure speakers know to stand in front of the microphones.
 - Don't hold news conferences in small rooms. Cameras and lighting equipment take up a lot of space.

The Interview



Any media interview can cause anxiety. Here are some steps that can help alleviate the stress generated by these events.

- Prepare in advance by knowing your information. Don't wing it.



- Anticipate the questions and prepare responses, but avoid memorizing.
- Practice, practice, practice. Work with a trusted friend or colleague who will give you candid feedback.
- Train your face to remain attentive but not to show surprise, dismay or negative emotions.
- Be positive and upbeat.
- Be honest.
- Learn how to avoid a “no comment” response by saying such things as: “I’m not prepared to address that at this time” or “I’ll get back to you on that when I have more information.”
- Answer questions thoroughly but briefly. Avoid the use of jargon.
- Speak naturally and clearly.
- Try not to get angry. If you do, don’t show it.
- If possible, know how much time you have and use it effectively.

Media Phone Calls

Avoiding reporters’ calls won’t make them go away. Here are a few basic suggestions to keep in mind.

- Return calls promptly. Don’t put them off until the end of the day; reporters have to meet their deadlines.
- If you don’t have anything to say, call back and say so. It keeps reporters from bugging you.
- Try to be sure everyone in your organization knows where to direct media calls.

Scheduling

- Generally, events scheduled early in the week get better coverage than those later or on weekends. At daily newspapers and broadcast stations, Thursdays and Friday are usually the most hectic. At weekly papers, the day before publication is usually busiest.
- Small crews work on weekends at many daily papers and broadcast stations. However, weekend reporters are often looking for a good feature, and they’re always looking for breaking news.
- If you plan an event for a weekend, get notices out well in advance and follow up with calls.

Mistakes

- If a story contains a significant error, journalists want to correct it. It is especially important to make prompt corrections in newspaper articles since they often are used as background for future stories.
- Call immediately after you spot a mistake. Ask for the reporter who did the story or his or her editor.
- Yelling doesn’t help. Remember that the person on the phone might not be the one who made the mistake.
- Know the difference between incorrect information and a difference of opinion.

(Portions of Working with the Media were taken from: Kentucky Media Guide, Society of Professional Journalists, Bluegrass Chapter and Clark Publishing, Inc., Lexington, Kentucky, and were used with permission.)



Op-Eds & Letters to the Editor

Many daily newspapers publish op-eds, or opinion articles, as part of their editorial coverage of public policy issues. Op-eds (the name comes from the fact that these articles are usually published on the page **opposite** the **editorial** page) provide an opportunity to share information and your point of view about an issue that has been in the news.

Most newspapers also publish their policies about letters to the editor. Short letters are an effective way to convey a quick message to your community.

Here are some points to remember about providing an op-ed or letter to the editor for your local newspaper:

- **Check before you write.** Call the newspaper and ask for the editorial page editor or, depending on the size of the paper, the editor to find out if they will accept an op-ed or to determine their letters policy if necessary.
- **Timeliness is helpful.** If possible, try to relate your opinion piece or letter to an issue that has been in the news within the past few weeks.
- **The usual length of an op-ed is between 600 and 800 words**, but this could vary according to publication. **Short letters are better** and more widely read; three paragraphs should be sufficient.
- Evidence to support your point is helpful, but try to avoid the use of too many statistics or report citations.
- **Think “people” instead of “programs.”** What impact will the action you are advocating have on the people in your community?
- If writing for a local newspaper (as opposed to those with state-level circulation), **try to keep your message as local as possible.**
- If your goal is encourage a particular development in local government, the General Assembly or Congress, **include a call to action** in the op-ed to make sure people know your “bottom line.”

The following suggestions are offered to help you write an opinion article.

Opening paragraph(s): This is where you make your point, such as “Kentucky needs to develop more markets for products to help farmers who are diversifying their production.”

The next paragraphs (2-4) should focus on the situation, problem or challenge that needs to be addressed. For example, you could use information from a report or study pointing out how many Kentucky farmers are growing different crops as tobacco production decreases.

The next paragraphs (2-4) should focus on what local, state and/or federal changes are needed to address the problem. This might include passing legislation, authorizing a certain action, making an appropriation for a project, or similar activities.

The concluding paragraph(s) should repeat your original point and issue your call to action.

