

Guidelines for Conducting the County Listening Session With Community Leaders and Stakeholders as Participants

- A. Conduct the county listening session between January – March, 2003
- B. Purposes of county listening session

Every four years, the **(Name)** County Extension Service develops a long-range plan. The purpose of this plan is to help Extension faculty and volunteers prepare educational programs that address the challenges and changes facing the people of this county over the next four years.

One step of the process is to ask stakeholders and other community leaders, traditional and potential audiences, and county Extension advisory committees to come together in one or more listening sessions and help determine Extension educational priorities. The information generated during the listening sessions will be used by the county Extension faculty and the county Extension advisory committee in developing long-range objectives and action plans to guide Extension educational programs for calendar years 2004 to 2007.

The long-range objectives from all counties provide the foundation for UF Extension to determine how well-prepared Extension is to help people cope with this changing world. UF Extension, in turn, will develop a long-range action plan of support for educational program priorities established by the long-range planning process.

- C. Materials needed for the county listening session
 1. Name tags
 2. Colored dots for group assignments (or type group number on each name tag)
 3. One flip chart, markers and tape for each group
 4. Refreshments (drinks and meal or heavy hors d'oeuvres is suggested)
 5. Facility with large room and breakout rooms
 6. Check to see if you need a speaker system for the large room
- D. Steps to be taken
 1. Involve broad base of knowledgeable community citizens – some of whom may not be familiar with Extension -- to address 4 questions
 - a. What do we value about our county?
 - b. What trends and issues are impacting what is valued?

- c. If current directions persist, is this where we want to go? If not, are there local resources who can best address each issue or trend?
 - d. Of those issues and/or concerns that can best be addressed through the expertise of Extension educators, what priority should be placed on each issue or concern?
2. The number to be invited to the listening session will depend on the county population. A minimum of 15-20 participants is suggested for rural counties with populations of less than 15,000, 30-40 participants should be the goal of mid-size counties and 60-80 for very large counties. The upper limit is left to the discretion of the CED and Chair of the Overall Advisory Committee.
 3. County faculty meet to discuss long-range planning process and nominate people for county listening session and person to co-sign letter of invitation (CED will be other co-signer. Also consider the Advisory Committee chair as a 3rd person to sign)
 - a. Who should be invited?
 01. Respected in the community
 02. Familiar with what different groups value about the county
 03. Knowledgeable of changes impacting county
 04. Individuals who play important roles in the county
 - b. How to identify such people? Ask those who work with
 01. Other governmental organizations
 02. Youth organizations
 03. Civic organizations
 04. Department directors of county government
 05. Chamber of Commerce
 06. Commodity groups
 4. CED (and faculty team) meets with Overall County Advisory Committee chairs to review listening session process and nominations for listening session. Consider inviting a limited number of advisory committee members to the listening session.
 5. CED and Chair of Overall Advisory Committee meet with person identified to co-sign letter of invitation and request his/her involvement in and support for the community listening session. **See Guide for Inviting Key Person to Host Listening Session.**

6. Arrange for facility where listening session(s) will be held. Facility should have a large meeting room and several breakout rooms.
7. Send out letters of invitation with RSVP to CED. **See Letter of Invitation to County Listening Session Participants.**
8. Select and train a Group Facilitator and Recorder for each group. **See instructions for facilitator and template for recording group comments.**
9. Pre-assignment of those who commit to the listening session into specific groups is left to the discretion of the CED and Person co-signing the letter of invitation
10. Suggested Agenda for the Listening Session (with recommended times).
 - a. Welcome and purpose – Person who co-signed letter of invitation (5-10 minutes)
 - b. How the Listening Session will work – CED (10 minutes)
 - c. Introduction of group leaders and recorders (5 minutes)
 - d. Breakout for Session 1 (30 minutes)
 - e. Refreshments and group feedback from Session 1 (40 minutes)
 - f. Overall group merge group answers to questions 1 & 2 into one set (15 minutes)
 - g. Breakout for Session 2 (30 minutes)
 - h. Group feedback from Session 2 (15 minutes)
 - i. Overall group merge group answers to questions 3 & 4 into one set (20 minutes)
 - j. Where to from here & adjourn -- Person who co-signed letter of invitation (5-10 minutes)

9. Working Agenda

- a. Welcome and Purpose (**Name of Person who co-signed letter of invitation**)

Thank you for coming to this listening session sponsored by the (**Name**) County Extension Service. This session is part of Extension's long-range planning process.

The purpose of this session is to ask you to reflect on some of the challenges and changes you see for this county during the next four years. We will be asking you to address four questions:

- What do we value about our community?

- What trends and issues are impacting what we value?
- If current directions persist, is this where we want to go? If not, are there local resources who can best address each issue or trend?
- Of those issues and/or concerns that can best be addressed through the expertise of Extension educators, what priority should be placed on each issue or concern to be addressed by Extension?

The county Extension faculty, in turn, will work with the Extension Advisory Committee to develop an action plan and long-range objectives that address the issues we have discussed today.

The long-range objectives from all counties will provide the foundation from which UF Extension can better determine how well-prepared they are to help the people of this state cope with challenge and change facing us over the next four years (2004-2007).

Now I would like to turn the program over to **(Name)**, the County Extension Director for **(Name)** County

b. How the listening session will work -- CED

- We will be dividing into small groups with two breakout sessions
- Introduce **Group Leader and Recorder** for each group
 - ◆ Each individual has been assigned to a group and you will see a (number or colored dot) or your name tag that indicates the group to which you have been assigned
 - ◆ When we go to breakout sessions, groups will meet as follows: (give group room assignments).
- **Breakout Session 1**
 - ◆ Each group will answer questions 1 & 2 (minutes)
 - ◆ We will come back for refreshments (heavy hors d'oeuvres is suggested)
 - ◆ Group leaders will provide feedback from each group on answers to the two questions
 - ◆ As one group, we will ask you to help us merge answers to each question into one set that reflects all groups for each question
- **Breakout Session 2**
 - ◆ Each group will answer questions 3 & 4
 - ◆ Group leaders will provide feedback from each group on the answers to questions 3 & 4.

- ♦ As one group, we will ask you to help us merge answers into one set that reflects all groups for each question
- c. Break into groups for Session 1
 - Answer Questions 1 & 2
 - See **Facilitator** guide
 - See **Template** for recording answers
 - d. Break and feedback session (highlights from each group presented on flip charts)
 - e. Merge group answers into one set for each question
 - f. Break into groups for Session 2 and answer questions 3 & 4
 - g. Feedback session (highlights from each group presented on flip charts)
 - h. Merge group answers into one set and establish priority for Extension education in addressing issues relevant to Extension's mission and program areas
 - **Mission:** To provide research-based knowledge and educational programs that enable people to make practical decisions to improve their quality of life.
 - **Program areas** within the Extension mission include: agriculture; family and consumer sciences; community; aquatic, coastal and aquaculture; natural resources; 4-H youth development; and energy
 - i. Where to from here/adjournment
 - County Extension faculty will work with their county Extension advisory committee to develop an action plan and long-range objectives that addresses the issues we have discussed today.
 - The county long-range objectives from all counties will provide the foundation from which UF Extension can better determine how well-prepared they are to help the people of this state cope with challenge and change facing us over the next four years.
 - A brochure reflecting Extension's long-range plan will be made available to each participant next Fall (2003).

- E. Submit results of county listening session to the Extension Program Development and Evaluation Center (PDEC) at <http://pdec.ifas.ufl.edu/longrange/county/template.html>
- F. County Extension faculty meet with Overall Advisory Committee to develop action plan and long-range objectives
- F. County Extension faculty present long-range objectives to Extension Administration at a regional listening session (**see Guidelines for presenting Results of Listening Session**).
- G. UF Extension use county long-range objectives as foundation in formulating statewide long-range objectives.
- H. Statewide design teams develop educational materials for each statewide long-range objective
 - 1. Design teams work with appropriate county faculty to develop educational materials that support long-range objectives
 - 2. Program Development and Evaluation Center work with design teams to develop evaluation and accountability indicators to measure progress in addressing long-range objectives.
- I. County-based, center-based and campus-based faculty implement programs in support of long-range objectives (January, 2004)