



Working Regionally: GETTING TOGETHER [Part 3 of 3]

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Foster a culture of communication in your regional Extension group.

These are signs of successful collaboration:

- Supportive.
- Easy-going and informal.
- Give and take atmosphere.
- Mutual respect.
- Share problems and solutions.
- Membership is intentional and therefore strongly bonding.

Use meetings to practice communication.

- Allow for healthy, open discussion during meetings.
- Explore ideas and voice opinions.
- Be diplomatic and carefully consider others' input.
- Listen with interest, and pause to consider before responding.
- Arrive at decisions by consensus – rarely vote on issues.

Speak up!

- Don't rush, but do start on time to respect those who are present at the beginning of the meeting.
- Get all members to speak with an active roll call.
- Use a topic-appropriate icebreaker – for example, "What is your favorite garden vegetable?" or "What is your favorite holiday dish?"
- Take time to comment on each other's icebreaker, that way meeting late-comers can participate in the roll call when they arrive.
- Go around the membership taking turns or use the chat as an alternative if you are short of time because of a guest presentation.
- Once a year, get an update from at least one member from each state, so that the whole group can hear from members they might not hear from otherwise.
- Remember that some members are less vocal than others, so be sure to employ these and other strategies to hear everyone's voice.

Activate your members.

- Every member should have an active role.
- Let members brainstorm and come up with how they would like to contribute.
- Organize into smaller subcommittees or working groups to involve everyone.

EXAMPLES FROM OUR NETWORK:

- Start a regional newsletter, ask members to contribute items, or invite outside guest columnists.
- Identify members with graphic design proclivities.
- Solicit and collect images from members for use in a variety of publications.
- Create social media content.
- Select members to co-author an article.
- Identify members for mutual peer review of scholarly efforts.
- Engage members to present at a conference.
- Create an Extension webinar series and ask members to volunteer to present, along with other area experts on a variety of topical subjects.

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