

# Reporting Impacts to County Leaders

**When Michigan State University (MSU) Extension signs an agreement with a county board of commissioners or county executive, we become contractually obligated to provide them with an annual report. In addition, keeping boards informed of the good work we do is essential to the overall success of the organization.**

Much of the annual report information shared with county commissioners and county executives is pulled from our reporting system. District directors need everyone's help to ensure they give an accurate, complete report of important work done in that county. Program staff *must* provide details of their work in their regular program reports, including the participants' counties of residence. This is the only way that county leaders can understand the local need for programming, our response to that need and the number of county residents who participated in the education.

In addition, talk to your district director about providing an update of your program accomplishments during a local county board of commissioners meeting or to your county executive's staff members at least once a year. If you provide programming in other counties, consider providing updates to those boards as well.

Each district director will have the schedule for all regularly posted county board of commissioners meetings throughout the year. These are also often posted on each county's website. MSU Extension staff members should coordinate with their district director to identify appropriate times for MSU Extension to be featured on a board of commissioners meeting agenda. This will ensure that MSU Extension presents at important meetings throughout the year in a strategic and coordinated fashion, not all at the same time. Speaking with the appropriate district director about your desire to present a report to your county will contribute to the success of the process. Some guidelines to help you through the process follow.

## **DO:**

- **For counties governed solely by a board of commissioners:**
  - Speak during the public comment period at board meetings if your update is less than three minutes.
  - Ask to be added to the agenda of the board meeting if you would like several minutes of the board's time. Each county has its own calendar and process for getting on an agenda. Your district director will be familiar with the process. Be sure to ask your district director for help at least four to six weeks before the meeting.
- **If you have a county executive:**
  - Provide programmatic impact reports for a specific department head within the executive office structure and not directly to the



commissioners. Speak with your district director to determine to whom you should speak, and find out the procedures for meeting with and providing information to them.

- MSU Extension cannot make a presentation to the board of commissioners without being invited by the county executive's office. However, use other communication channels besides commission meetings to provide information to county commissioners. These channels vary by county. Talk to your district director to determine the option that best fits your situation.

- **In all counties:**

- Determine how the board of commissioners or county executive's office likes to receive information. All counties are different, so be sure to verify the appropriate format to use to deliver the information you want to share.
- Introduce yourself and your role with MSU Extension.
- Address the commissioners or county executive's office staff formally. Use appropriate titles such as "Commissioner Smith." Avoid using colloquial or informal language such as "You guys." Also avoid using first names unless instructed by the individual you are speaking with to do so.
- Keep it short. The board members and county staff want brief reports, not an educational session. Save the details for the question and answer period.
- Make your report relevant to the residents and businesses in the county. Tell them how many people you have affected, what changes you have made (or have the potential to make) based on your programming and what types of activities you engaged in. Tie your comments to statewide or regional initiatives when appropriate.
- Speak slowly, clearly and succinctly.
- Thank them for their continued support for MSU Extension.
- Smile!
- Report back to your district director with highlights if they can't attend the meeting.
- Seek input and feedback. Share that feedback with your office colleagues, district directors and institute director.
- Remind county commissioners and county executives that more information can be found on the county MSU Extension website.

## **DO NOT:**

- Do not talk about what you are doing in other counties unless it is relevant or related to the work you are doing in their county.
- Do not use acronyms or abbreviations.
- Never make up or embellish participation or evaluation data. If you only have estimates, say so, and offer to get more exact numbers if commissioners ask for specifics.
- Do not try to answer questions that are out of your area. Let them know you'll try to find the answer if they want to know.
- Do not be afraid or nervous! County commissioners and county executive office staff members are regular people, just like you!



Published in September 2015 and updated January 2020 by the MSU Extension Strategic Connections Team

