



# Mission and Vision: The Yearly Mission Checkup is a Dose of Prevention

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Volunteer-led groups, such as Master Gardeners, Watershed Stewards, 4-H Councils, and local farming groups, are a tremendous asset to the University Extension system. Groups such as these greatly expand the reach and depth of Extension programs, and make it possible to offer a wide variety of educational opportunities throughout the state. It is imperative, however, that these groups truly understand, embrace, and incorporate the Mission and Vision of Extension. Once they understand and embrace the Mission and Vision, decisions can be made to support the Extension system.

## Situation

Most Extension volunteers receive their orientation and training at the beginning of their volunteer career. During this time, there is usually some conversation about the Mission and Vision of Extension. This early introduction is very important for volunteers and stakeholders; it allows them to work together and ensure their contributions are aligned with the Mission (Cropper 1998). Sadly, this is usually where the conversation ends. Extension volunteers need to be engaged in programmatic decision-making that benefits the Mission and Vision of Extension.

Complications that detract from fulfilling Extension's Mission may arise when volunteers make programmatic decisions that aren't deliberately aligned with Extension's Mission. Over time the effectiveness of volunteers may decrease, and behaviors surface that are counterproductive to the Mission of Extension (Culp & Doyle 2011). One study conducted in the Indiana 4-H Youth Development program uncovered problems associated with the lack of connection to Mission and Vision and recommended that all staff and volunteers revisit the Mission and Vision (McKee, Talbert, and Barkman 2002).

## Opportunity

It is important to discuss Mission and Vision because of the positive benefits it will have on volunteers, stakeholders, and staff. Many Extension programs have elections at the beginning of the new program year; or seasonal groups may have volunteers and stakeholders transition into new roles on an annual basis. Incorporating periodic reviews of the Mission is encouraged (Cropper 1998. McKee, Talbert,

and Barkman 2002). One approach is to have discussions on how Extension's Mission connects or aligns with the values of people in the community (Blaine & Patton 2000). Here are some tools and techniques extension professionals may use to support the yearly refreshers:

- Provide a Mission and Vision fact sheet that volunteers sign annually.
- One-on-one coaching with specific volunteers and stakeholders who staff identify as not being on task with the Mission.
- Facilitated or group discussions revisiting the Mission and Vision of Extension.

## Results

Yearly education will have many positive benefits for the volunteers, stakeholders, and staff. More decision will be made which align with the Vision and Mission of Extension. When volunteer tasks are aligned with the Mission, conflict is reduced (Culp and Doyle 2011). Volunteers have a deeper satisfaction with the program, volunteer more, and recruit others into the organization (Brinckerhoff 2000). All of these benefits result in volunteers, stakeholders, and staff working together to better serve their communities.

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Culp, K.C. and J. Doyle. 2011. Disengaging a volunteer: What to do when supervision fails. *Journal of Extension*, Vol. 49 No. 5. [http://www.joe.org/joe/2011october/pdf/JOE\\_v49\\_5tt3.pdf](http://www.joe.org/joe/2011october/pdf/JOE_v49_5tt3.pdf).

McKee, R. K., B.A. Talbert and S.J. Barkman. 2002. The challenges associated with change in 4-H/youth development. *Journal of Extension*, Vol. 40 No. 2, <http://www.joe.org/joe/2002april/a5.html>



By **Brian Brandt**, WSU Extension Faculty, and **Dan Teuteberg**, WSU Extension Faculty.

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