

Family and Consumer Sciences

Effective Strategies for Engaging Adult Audiences in Cooperative Extension Work: Young Adults, Working Adults, and Parents with Young Children

August 2025

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Recruiting adult audiences to cooperative Extension programs can be a challenge for Extension professionals. Adult audiences' time is often monopolized by daily responsibilities with work, family, extracurricular activities and life challenges. These strategies can help engage adults in Extension programming by aiming to facilitate active participation and overcome common obstacles. Utilizing these approaches can significantly enhance recruitment efforts, ensuring a broader reach for extension programs.

Common Obstacles to Reaching Adults

- Competing for time: Balancing work, family and other commitments.
- Transportation: Lack of reliable transportation options.
- Cost: Financial constraints that limit participation.
- Childcare: Need for care during program hours.
- Family Obligations: Prioritizing family responsibilities.
- Competition with Social Media Platforms: Misinformation from social media outlets.
- Extended Hours: Flexibility for occasional after-hours and weekend programs.

Strategies and Approaches When Recruiting Adults

- Meet with community partners/advisory groups to understand the needs of the county.
- Make programs relevant and unique. (What makes the program engaging? Would you come to your program?)
 - Use creative, interactive and hands-on activities that apply to daily experiences.
 - Consider the learning styles of the audience.
 - Emphasize the benefits and value of your program.
 - Use creative design software to enhance your marketing materials.
 - Utilize social media as a recruitment and marketing tool.
 - Be intentional about understanding the audience's reason for attending.

Effective Strategies for Engaging Adult Audiences in Cooperative Extension Work

- Consider the time of day, location, duration and delivery format.
- Offer on-site or virtual programs.
- Consider providing childcare, transportation and meals.
- Provide incentives or giveaways that are useful.
- Partner with community organizations, businesses, volunteers and other extension personnel.

Engaging broader adult audiences in cooperative Extension work requires understanding their unique challenges and implementing targeted strategies. By addressing common obstacles and providing relevant, flexible and valuable programs, Extension professionals can significantly enhance their recruitment efforts and create comprehensive and impactful programs.



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