Assessing County Extension Programs’ Readiness to Adopt Technology*

An OSU Extension Case Study of Two Counties

Commissioned by: Deborah J. Maddy, Associate Provost and Associate Director, OSU Extension
Dave King, Associate Provost, Extended Campus and Education Outreach

Purpose – To help prepare counties for a future that demands increased use of technology for improving work efficiencies and expanding audience outreach. The case study and its findings will:

1. Test the study’s assumptions against current reality of county-based Extension faculty and staff,
2. Give recommendations for implementing change, including strategies, actions and needed support,
3. Provide direction for the study participants on how to work together to adopt and implement the recommendations, and
4. Provide a basis for considering changes in Extension program delivery statewide.

Participants – The faculty and staff of Lane and Douglas counties. These two counties differ in the complexity of their operations, community context, funding relationships and program offerings but both are known for quality Extension programs and customer service. At the current time, the two counties share some faculty FTE.

Assessment Team –
Keith Diem, OSU Extension Regional Director, team leader
Kevin Gamble, eXtension
Terry Meisenbach, eXtension
Dana Martin, OSU Extension Staff Chair for Deschutes County
Jeff Hino, OSU Extension and Experiment Station Communications

Schedule –
August 12, 5:30 – 8:30 p.m., Eugene: Dinner and charge to the assessment team
August 13, 9 a.m. – noon, Douglas County: County visit
2 – 5 p.m., Lane County: County visit
August 14, Noon – 2 p.m., Eugene: Lunch and report, tentatively @ Olive Garden Resturant

*For the purpose of this assessment, technology includes eXtension tools, web-based tools and social networking tools used for either programmatic or administrative application.
Assumptions – In today’s market place:

• There is an increased need for education by expanded and diverse audiences not yet familiar with OSU Extension.
• Political viability requires expanding Extension’s audience base through quality access to varied education options.
• A growing number of audiences expect that education will be delivered via technology.
• Available resources, including dollars, people and time, will continue to decrease relative to demand.
• Extension’s competitive advantage in the expanding technology world is relationship based.

Charge to the Assessment Team –

• Identify barriers and constraints, both real and perceived, that are keeping faculty and staff from adopting technology as useful tools.
• Explore the following questions with the faculty and staff:
  o What do you know about your audiences and how do you know it? What are the issues they face?
  o How do you set priorities for focusing on quality service to stakeholders in ways relevant for today’s work environment?
  o What programs or educational activities are suitable and adaptable for technology?
  o What do you need to be successful in adopting technology to advance your work?
  o How might you deliver programs with greater efficiencies and expanded outreach? (Not necessarily targeting new audiences, but taking advantage of work already in play to expand audience reach.)
• Make recommendations for implementing change, including strategies, actions and needed support.

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