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THE PROGRAM AREA COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

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This publication was prepared for the chairperson of a program area committee, a part of the county's Program Building organization. County Extension agents have other publications related to program area committee work, including B-1364 *Program Area Committees*, D-1082 *Committee Guide*, Program Area Committee worksheets and others.

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THE PROGRAM AREA COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON

You Hold an Important Position!



Whenever people gather to achieve a purpose, certain individuals guide the group's actions. Whatever the purpose or the group's size, leadership is needed to help all members become involved appropriately in activities.

As chairperson of a program area committee, you hold a position of high leadership and great responsibility. You were selected chairperson because of your interest in the committee's program area and your capability for guiding the group. Your committee can be highly effective with your leadership skills and understanding of how committees should work.

Extension agents are your advisors. They look to you, the chairperson, when it is time for your committee to act. This means *you* are a "special individual" on your committee.

This publication will help you to understand what a program area committee is about, your responsibilities as chairperson and how to organize the tasks so that committee work will be satisfying and rewarding. Extension agents can help you, so keep in touch with them. They will work with you to plan committee meetings by outlining what to do before, during and after meetings.

The Chairperson's Responsibility



Your primary function is to organize and guide the committee's work in a way that members actively and enthusiastically participate in carrying out the committee's role. You'll organize the committee so that all members can participate effectively in committee work.

YOUR COMMITTEE'S ROLE

The program building committee's executive committee periodically reviews county situations to determine areas in which educational programs are needed on a continuing basis. Then the executive committee establishes appropriate program area committees that work closely with Extension agents to develop an educational program in defined areas of responsibility.

You will organize or "manage" committee work toward active member involvement in:

- Planning the educational program
- Helping to carry out the plans
- Evaluating results
- Reporting accomplishments

Since your program area committee has a specific area of responsibility (whether in agriculture, 4-H youth, home economics or community development), the chairperson should have a good understanding of the committee's subject matter area. This knowledge helps you and your committee to develop a sound educational program that treats real problems of your committee's clientele. Some suggestions to help you expand your present knowledge of the program area include these:

- Study the portion of the *Long-Range Extension Program* that deals with information about your committee's program area. This document may

contain descriptive data about related situations and major problems affecting people.

- Talk with Extension specialists and other resource people who have information about your committee's area of interest. Extension agents can arrange for specialists to talk with you individually or as an entire committee. They can help in identifying problems and in arranging opportunities for educational activities the committee can conduct.
- Review publications, research information and written guidelines about your program area. Extension agents and specialists can provide these kinds of resources at your request.
- Understand the four parts of your committee's role—planning, conducting, evaluating and reporting committee program accomplishments. The committee's role is described more fully in B-1364 "Program Area Committees."
- Become familiar with program development processes and resources about committee work, such as studying problems/needs, planning an annual program, publicizing and promoting educational programs, using resource people, recruiting and recognizing members, how to have effective committee meetings and the importance of involving others in decisionmaking.

Extension agents have various aids available, such as worksheets and slide-tape sets, that would be especially appropriate to use at meetings and to review when new members join your committee.

As you gain a good understanding of committee functions, you will recognize when committee meetings are needed, what should be accomplished and what everyone can do to have an effective educational program for the people concerned.

PRODUCTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Productive meetings are essential for effective committee work. It may not be easy, but you can make things happen!

A productive meeting is one in which:

- The reason to meet—purpose—is clear to all.
- Members feel their time is well spent.
- Interest and enthusiasm are high.
- Attendance is good.
- All members participate in decisionmaking.
- Everyone carries out some part of the work.
- The purpose of the meeting is accomplished.

You may have attended a meeting sometime when little was achieved and members just sat around listening. When this occurs, members usually leave thinking they might skip the next meeting. As chairperson, you are responsible for taking the right steps to involve people in the success of meetings.

It's like forgetting the can-opener on the camping trip and suffering a very frustrating situation. If you don't have the tools for a productive meeting, it won't turn out right. A good meeting has its beginning long before the committee actually meets and carries its influence long afterwards. You can learn what to do *before*, *during* and *after* meetings.

Get Ready for the Meeting



Adequate preparation is the most important factor for an effective meeting. This preparation should not be a last-minute task. Planning should be done at least 2 weeks before the meeting. Get together with your Extension agent to discuss each of the following items and take appropriate action:

- Understand the purpose of the meeting. Decide what should be accomplished by this meeting. Determine the outcome you want.
- Set a date and time when all or most members can attend. Try to avoid a schedule that conflicts with other events. Plan to meet when most members can arrange to be present.
- Arrange for a meeting place. Sometimes you can't choose, but when you can, select a convenient place where members will be comfortable.
- Decide how members will be notified about the meeting. Remember that the chairperson is responsible for calling the meeting. A personal contact (such as a phone call to each member) a day or two before the meeting assures good attendance. Usually the Extension agent sends a reminder letter to members, but some type of direct contact improves attendance.
- Prepare an agenda. This useful tool helps the chairperson to conduct the meeting. It includes a detailed list of items to do and discuss during the meeting.

Your Extension agent can provide a worksheet for preparing an agenda. Write "what is to be done" in one column and "who will do it" in another. Develop a timetable so you know how much time to spend on each item. This keeps the discussion moving and insures that all items are handled before adjournment.

- Delegate responsibility to others; give assignments to members. Help them to get actively involved, to understand that they are needed and to spread the work among all members. Members will realize that they're expected to do more than just attend meetings. Members will stay interested in committee work if they have a constructive part in it. Assigning members tasks to do before or during meetings is an *efficient way for you to help the group function*. As chairperson, you delegate to others.
- Identify and arrange for any printed material and resource people needed at the meeting. Before you go to the meeting, be sure you have

everything you need. You'll set a good example for members to follow when you're prepared.

Conduct Committee Meetings



Here are specific points to consider in conducting a meeting:

- As chairperson, you preside. But don't do all the talking!
- Call the meeting to order on time.
- Set a relaxed atmosphere by being informal but business-like. Members tend to act or react according to the tone set by the chairperson. Be enthusiastic!
- Be sure someone on the committee keeps a record of the meeting.
- *Use* the agenda you prepared. An outline copy for each member helps them stay on track, too.

Follow Through After the Meeting



A good meeting feels great!! All the members did their part—interest was high and you achieved what you intended to get done. Now that you have the momentum going, follow through on the tasks to be done after your meeting. Usually you will:

- Evaluate the meeting. Did the meeting achieve its purpose? Did most or all members attend? Could anything be done differently next time to improve attendance or the meeting itself?
- Keep in touch with members who accepted assignments. Offer assistance when needed. County Extension agents will help the committee members as needed. Do not expect one person to do all the assignments—it's a team effort. If all individuals do their part, the whole committee will achieve its purpose more easily.

- Contact members who did not attend the meeting and share the committee's decisions and plans. You can help them see they were missed.
- Send a written summary of the meeting to all members. The agent advisor can help in this effective way of communicating with everyone. The summary also serves as a reminder to those who volunteered to carry out some task after the meeting.
- Keep other groups and organizations informed about your committee's activities, especially those who need to understand and support your committee's goals. Be sure to keep the public informed through mass media. What your committee does is important and others should hear about it.

Maintain an Active Membership



Keeping the committee active and interested is an important task. Everyone needs to feel important. Motivated members are active members! You can motivate members by expressing appreciation for what they do on the committee. An active committee makes your job more enjoyable.

New members are needed when individual terms expire. Specific procedures for naming new members are included in the program building committee's standing rules. As chairperson, help to identify and select new members when they're needed. Contacting them directly and asking them to serve assures that new members are involved early in strengthening the committee's work.

When you know members on a personal basis, this knowledge of their interests and capabilities helps you in involving each member in responsibilities each would accept.

Members stay interested in committee work if they have a constructive part in it. Assigning members tasks to do before or during meetings is a good way to help the group function. Match the assignment to the person! Ask members to do something they are able and willing to do. Someone may not feel comfortable introducing a guest speaker to a large group but could keep an attendance list or distribute materials. Others might be interested in providing transportation to an educational event or setting up equipment before people arrive.

YOUR FUNCTION AS A MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Your leadership is important not only to your program area committee but also to the executive committee of the program building organization. This group provides leadership and coordination to the total Extension program—the combined concerns and activities of all parts of the organization.

As chairperson of your program area committee, you are also a member of the executive committee, representing your areas of concern in relation to the total Extension educational program. When the executive committee meets, you are expected to participate in carrying out its vital leadership and coordination role within the program building organization.

In representing your program area committee, you report on its plans, activities and accomplishments. You hear about what other program area committees are doing. Major decisions vital to maintaining the best possible total Extension educational program and the best organization for conducting it are made at the executive committee level. Your participation helps the group to evaluate the overall Extension program according to goals established by the group.

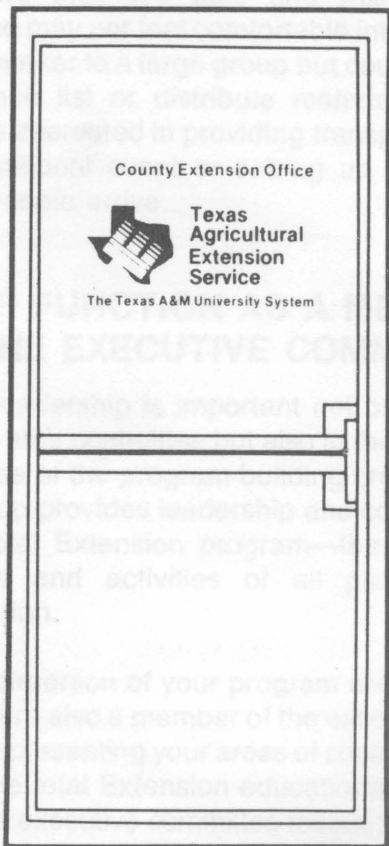
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