



# 2004 Texas Community Futures Forum Facilitator's Guide

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Extension Education Unit <http://futuresforum.tamu.edu> - 979-845-7210

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# WHY DO WE CONDUCT TEXAS COMMUNITY FUTURES FORUM?

Developing educational programs based on community needs is the foundation of Texas Cooperative Extension's success. Texas Community Futures Forum (TCFF) provides an avenue to hear from all types of clientele and people within a county. It is designed to provide an opportunity for everyone in a county to discuss issues their community is facing. Providing solutions to county problems and issues will allow Texas Cooperative Extension to remain viable to constituents. What could be more important to Texas Cooperative Extension than listening to its "customers" - the people of Texas?

Our ability to meet educational needs depends on knowing what local residents see as *their* issues that impact *their* lives. There is no way to know the answers to these questions unless they are asked. Therefore, Texas Cooperative Extension will invite Texans to a "County Forum" to answer questions concerning issues facing their communities.

Texas Community Futures Forum is just one part of the needs assessment process. Other processes to collect information include, but are not limited to:

- State and National Trends
- Commodity/Industry Groups
- State and Federal Mandates
- Emerging Issues

The issues that surface should be discussed with Extension Program Councils, county committees, and subject matter specialists to determine the appropriate action for educational programming. Moreover, they should be shared with other agencies and educational groups to see if a program partnership can be formed to address the issue.

Texas Cooperative Extension is unique because it has faculty in every area of the state who are dedicated to educating Texans in many areas of need. This uniqueness provides an opportunity to bring together the people of Texas, other service agencies, and educational groups to help provide solutions to the problems and issues facing Texans.

Remember the mission of Texas Cooperative Extension: *"to provide quality, relevant outreach and continuing education programs and services to the people of Texas."*

For TCFF information, call the Extension Education Unit at 979-845-7210 or go to the TCFF website at <http://futuresforum.tamu.edu>.

# OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

## **Background**

In 1999 all counties in Texas actively participated in the inaugural *Texas Community Futures Forum* (TCFF). This process allowed individuals from diverse backgrounds to congregate at an *Open Forum* and identify the most pressing issues facing the county using a Nominal Group Technique. The results from this technique established a list of significant issues facing the county. The *Focus Forum* was designed to bring in experts from other government agencies, other community organizations (United Way, church councils, etc.) and individuals from the Open Forum to design structured planning procedures from the issues that surfaced at the Open Forum. Stakeholders from the other agencies were advised to work in collaboration with existing county Extension professionals to develop ways to address these issues.

Since then, County Extension Agents developed, facilitated, and coordinated educational programs for their communities based on these issues. Also, County Extension Agents collaborated with other educational agencies to implement programming efforts for issues outside the subject matter of Texas Cooperative Extension.

In March of 2002, each County Extension Office was asked to provide a *Texas Community Futures Forum Progress Report* on the current status of their individual county. This included a section describing the identified issue, goal, response, and outcome of the implemented program. The objective of the progress report was to help determine the status of the issue based programming identified during the 1999 TCFF process. Also, it provided each county with the ability to reevaluate the 1999 issues and determine the next most effective step with the county's programming efforts. Equally as important, it provided a unique opportunity to acknowledge the work community individuals performed throughout the Open and Focus Forums and update these participants on progress pertaining to the issues.

## **The 2004 Process**

The upcoming 2004 TCFF process has been developed to build on the strengths of the 1999 TCFF process while adjusting for concerns introduced by County Extension Agents and Extension Specialists. Three different evaluations revealed thoughts of Extension faculty related to TCFF. The 2002 administrative center visits yielded several strengths, including: people involvement, facilitation training, exposure to new people, and collaboration/involvement of new people and agencies. Weaknesses were also revealed. Major weaknesses were: too time consuming, issues were identified outside our scope, unclear expectations for collaborative efforts, and lack of specialist involvement. In addition to the center visits, recommendations were also solicited through the 2002 TCFF Validation process. Recommendations from county based faculty included: make the process shorter with only one meeting, provide an overview of the 1999 results to the 2004 participants beforehand, the process needs to focus on

issues that Extension can address instead of a broader spectrum, and development of a flexible process adaptable to individual counties. A third evaluation was specific to facilitation training. Responses from individuals trained in 1999 indicated that they perceived themselves to be competent facilitators. They also suggested that they have used their facilitation skills in other arenas within the county.

### **Faculty Training Overview**

This overview provides an outline for the educational training for the 2004 Texas Community Futures Forum. The training for faculty will include utilizing the newly defined regions as training sites for new and veteran Extension faculty.

The following assumptions have been made for this document: (1) at least one person from each county is required to attend the training. (2) This process will allow County Extension Agents to facilitate the County Forum in their own county. (3) In addition to the training, online educational information will be provided to supplement the training for new and veteran Extension faculty.

Extension faculty will be asked to go to the closest district office within their region. One person from the Extension Education Unit will be at each of the three sites. Using distance technology, the three district sites will participate in the “joint session” simultaneously. After the joint session (general overview), each district site will receive training from the individual trainers at the district site for core and advanced facilitation sessions. The individual trainers who will facilitate the sessions will be comprised of a faculty member from the Extension Education Unit, a regional program director, and the district administrator. After concurrent sessions are complete, the three district sites will reconvene using distance technology for an overall summary and a question and answer session.

### **Proposed Agenda for District Locations**

9:00a.m. – noon      *Introduction and Importance of the TCFF Process*

*Marketing*

noon - 1:00pm      *Lunch*

1:00 - 2:45      *Core\* or Advanced\*\* Facilitation Sessions*

\*Core Facilitation Session -- All county Extension agents hired after the 1999 TCFF process will attend the introductory portion of the training, which will introduce the purpose of TCFF and how to facilitate the TCFF issue identification process.

\*\*Advanced Facilitation Session -- *(For agents that have participated in previous TCFF facilitation training)* The advanced track would offer a refresher on the

TCFF facilitation process, teach advanced facilitation skills, discuss how to manage the issues that surface that may be beyond the scope of Extension, and discuss Extension's dual role as an educational program provider and as a facilitator that builds the commitment of others to implementation.

3:00 - 4:00 p.m.      *Where do we go from here?*  
*Question and Answer session*

4:15 p.m.              *Adjourn*

### **Description of County Forum**

Each county will hold a County Forum. It will be a one-night event that brings together other agency representatives and county residents to identify and prioritize issues within the county. Extension faculty (County Extension Agents/Extension Specialists) will serve as facilitators for these meetings. All residents from the county will be encouraged to attend the forum.

At the beginning of the meeting, participants will be divided into smaller work groups. The facilitator will present an overview of the evening and the purpose of TCFF. Each group will then make introductions and elect a spokesperson to report to the general assembly. Groups will brainstorm contemporary issues facing their community and report these suggestions. After all groups have been heard from, a nominal group technique will be used in the general assembly to prioritize issues. This step mirrors the 1999 process.

After each county prioritizes their issues, the Extension Education Unit will summarize statewide, regional, district, and cluster county results. These results will be shared and interpreted with individual units, departments, regions, districts, and counties through various methods, including data summits to be held in the summer of 2004. This data will be used to develop the most effective response strategy for programming. Groups who use this information include, but are not limited to: county extension agents or Extension specialists, small focus teams of key people (2-3), individual departments/units, districts or regions (without boundaries) and/or statewide teams.

### **Description of Statewide Electronic Forum**

In order to gain a greater level of participation, a state-wide electronic forum will be developed and made available to any interested citizen. This forum will be designed to supplement data collected at the county forums and will focus on a similar set of questions to those posed in the county forums. The site will be active from December 2003 until the close of county forums at the end of March 2004. Demographic questions will be asked on the survey. Data from this source and data from the county forums will be merged for interpretation at the data summits.

A regional data summit will be conducted with County Extension Agents, Extension Specialists, Regional Program Directors, and District Extension Administrators in the

summer of 2004. These summits will allow communication about the issues that surfaced from the County Forums and help plan for future programming efforts.

The TCFF website will have information about county forums and other details for County Extension Agents, specialists, participants, and all interested parties. Go to <http://futuresforum.tamu.edu> for any additional information.

### **Timeline**

Listed below is the timeline for the 2004 Texas Community Futures Forum Process.

<i>November-December 2003</i>	TCFF Process & Facilitation Training
<i>December 2003-March 2004</i>	Statewide Electronic TCFF Issue Survey Available
<i>January 15-March 31, 2004</i>	County Issue Meetings Statewide
<i>April 1-May 15, 2004</i>	Data Analysis and Summary Reports (Extension Education)
<i>Summer 2004</i>	Data Summits (State/Regional/District/County)
<i>Summer 2004</i>	Preparation for 2005 Program Planning
<i>Summer 2004</i>	2005 Program Planning Begins
<i>Spring 2006</i>	TCFF Validation of Issues
<i>Spring 2008</i>	Next Texas Community Futures Forum

# OVERVIEW OF FACILITATOR'S RESPONSIBILITY

Facilitating the County Forum is the most important component to the entire TCFF process. The facilitator will have expectations and responsibilities they will need to communicate and coordinate in order to implement the most successful TCFF process possible.

## Guiding Principles for Facilitators

In order to facilitate effectively, the facilitator should adhere to the following principles:

- Trust the process and have faith in the people invited to give their input
- Recognize that many programs, services or collaborative groups may be represented at the County Forums
- Facilitate the process in a uniform manner, including: involving the entire community, seeking input, and reporting results as consistently as possible across the state

## Facilitator Responsibilities

As stated in the "Overview of the Process" section, one Extension faculty member from each county will be designated as the facilitator for the county. The responsibilities of the facilitator include:

1. Participate in the district facilitation training held in November/December
2. Market the statewide electronic issue survey to clientele
3. Communicate the process to co-workers in the county
4. Provide leadership to the marketing and preparation of the County Forum within the county
5. Facilitate the County Forum
6. Enter County Forum data in to the online system
7. Market the County Forum data results within the county
8. Develop action plans to address issues

Each of these responsibilities will be discussed in more detail on the following pages.

Even though only one person in the county is the designated facilitator, everyone in the county office will have responsibilities and be involved in TCFF. Some responsibilities could include:

- Marketing TCFF
- Crowd Control
- Facilitation Support
- Small Group Facilitation

# **RESPONSIBILITY #1**

## **PARTICIPATE IN THE DISTRICT FACILITATION TRAINING HELD IN NOVEMBER/DECEMBER**

This training will be a one-day event held simultaneously at three district sites within one region. Extension faculty attending the training will be asked to go to the closest district office within their region. One person from the Extension Education Unit will be at each of the three sites. They will be joined by District Extension Administrators, Regional Program Directors, and the training team at the district site. Using distance technology, the three district sites will participate in the “joint session” simultaneously. After the joint session (general overview), each district site will receive training from the individual instructors at the district site for core and advanced facilitation sessions. The individual instructors for the sessions will be comprised of a faculty member from the Extension Education Unit, a regional program director, and the district administrator. After concurrent sessions are complete, the three district sites will reconvene using distance technology for an overall summary and a question and answer session.

The two breakout sessions will teach core and advanced facilitation techniques. The core facilitation session has been developed for county Extension agents hired after the 1999 TCFE process and others that feel they are at the “core” competency level. This session’s objective is to introduce the purpose of TCFE and how to facilitate the TCFE issue identification process at the “Issue Meeting.” The advanced facilitation session has been developed specifically for county Extension agents who participated in the 1999 TCFE facilitation training and would like to learn advanced facilitation techniques. The advanced track offers a refresher on the TCFE facilitation process, teaches advanced facilitation skills, discusses how to manage issues that may be beyond the scope of Extension, and discusses Extension's dual role as an educational program provider and as a facilitator that builds the commitment to implementation in others.

The two performance objectives for this training are that participants will:

1. Learn how to organize the entire TCFE process for county implementation
2. Learn how to facilitate groups effectively

## **RESPONSIBILITY #2 MARKET THE STATEWIDE ELECTRONIC FORUM TO CLIENTELE**

The growth in the number of people using computer technology to communicate is well documented. Therefore, a website will be developed for anyone in Texas to logon to and list issues they believe need to be addressed. The online user will be anonymous. Their issues will be placed into an online data entry system. The Extension Education Unit will analyze the data and provide this information to all facilitators before the County Forum.

The facilitator's responsibility will be to help market the website to people in their county and to let them know that they can go to the website and enter their ideas.

Again, the purpose is to provide Texans another opportunity to suggest issues they believe are pertinent to their counties.

## **RESPONSIBILITY #3 COMMUNICATE THE PROCESS TO CO-WORKERS IN THE COUNTY**

Even though one person in the county is the point person, the 2004 Texas Community Future Forum is still very much a team approach. Remember, it was the famous Vince Lombardi who said, "The achievements of an organization are the results of the combined effort of each individual." That certainly holds true for Texas Cooperative Extension and Texas Community Futures Forum.

The first item that needs to be discussed with co-workers and the county staff is the date of the County Forum. It is imperative that everyone has the date, time, and location marked on their calendars.

The assigned county facilitator should discuss with co-workers during the office conference about key individuals in the county that should receive a personal invitation to participate. These key individuals could be community leaders, school educators, or current county committee volunteers. If possible, the county faculty should attempt to personally contact them to discuss the importance of the County Forum.

Most of the support from co-workers will probably take place in the days leading up to and during the County Forum. Ideas for support leading up to and during the County Forum are listed below:

- Help setup the meeting room immediately before the County Forum
- Assist with gathering pre-meeting materials (markers, name tags, voting stickers, sticky wall sheets)
- Assist the facilitator with the entire County Forum process
- Recruit their committees and contacts to the County Forum
- Help market the County Forum to everyone in the community
- Have a presence at the County Forum to help explain the process, Texas Cooperative Extension in general, and define their roles in the county

# **RESPONSIBILITY#4 PROVIDE LEADERSHIP FOR MARKETING AND PREPARATION OF THE COUNTY FORUM WITHIN THE COUNTY**

## **Marketing the County Forum**

The #1 priority is to set a date for the County Forum and make everyone in the community aware of the upcoming event. The County Forum should be marketed to the people in the county however possible. This includes newspapers, newsletters, and postings within the community. Make sure that all county committees know of the upcoming County Forum.

During the conference with co-workers, the facilitator should discuss which key individuals in the county should receive a personal invitation to participate. These key individuals could be community leaders, school educators, or current county committee volunteers. If possible, try to personally contact them to discuss the importance of the County Forum.

When marketing the County Forum, it is important to communicate the importance of this meeting to the county. Reasons on why people should participate in the County Forum are listed below:

- Celebrate the successes of the 1999 TCFF process
- Represent the people of your community to help solve issues facing the county
- Initiate discussions regarding issues facing your county
- Identify a plan to provide educational solutions to these issues
- Develop strategies to allocate resources through collaborations with other educational partners to provide solutions to county issues

These are obviously not all the positive reasons to attend. There are certainly many, many more to list. The facilitator should be creative and think of other insightful reasons why individuals would want to participate in the County Forum.

## **Getting People There**

Your best tool for getting people to attend your county forum is through word of mouth. Let your county committees know about the forum, and ask them to spread the word. Make the forum prominent in the Extension newsletter, and possibly put a notice in the local newspaper. More stakeholders than just loyal Extension supporters should attend the County Forum. The goal is to have participants from a broad spectrum of stakeholders. Send a personal letter of invitation to specific organizations or leaders. A phone call works well, too.

## Preparation for the County Forum

The following is a list of items that are suggested for the "Issue Meeting." Appendix A is also attached as a checklist for these items.

1. Paper - 8.5x11" paper.
2. Water-based markers - These will be used by groups to post information on to the sticky wall sheets. Each group needs several of the same color marker.
3. Permanent marker - to transfer issues onto the flip chart paper.
4. Flip chart paper - Big Post-it flip chart paper to rewrite issues for the large group, write the questions, and to use for the entity discussion.
3. Tape - Use tape (masking) to stick paper on the wall.
4. Colored dots - The dots are used for voting and prioritizing issues. Each participant needs 2 sets of 10 dots. Choose 2 different colors, like green and blue, one color for each time participants vote.
5. Name tags- These are typically sheets of cardstock paper folded in half so that they can easily stand on a table. The participants should use a marker to write their name on it so they can be identified by the facilitator and group spokesperson.
6. Copies of the TCFE Progress Report - In 2002, each county provided an update on the response to the TCFE issues that were identified in 1999. These can be found at the website below:  
<http://extensioneducation.tamu.edu/tcfe/>  
Once you are at this site, type in your county name and password (the password is the county id). Then, simply click *Final Report*. You will be asked if you want the file in a PDF format or HTML. Click one of these options and print the report. After printing, make sufficient copies for the group.
7. Random numbers for group assignments - Make copies of the sheet with group numbers on them and cut these numbers out for random group assignments (Appendix B).

## **RESPONSIBILITY #5 FACILITATE THE COUNTY FORUM**

Each county will hold a County Forum. This will be a one-night event that will bring together other agency representatives and county residents to identify and prioritize issues within the county. Extension faculty (County Extension Agents/Extension Specialists) will serve as facilitators for these meetings. An Extension faculty member will facilitate the meeting. Appendix C provides a checklist outlining these steps as well.

### *Before the County Forum:*

- Purchase necessary supplies
  - 8.5 x 11" paper
  - Multi-colored markers
  - Tape
  - Notepad
  - Large Post-it (flip chart) paper
  - Dots (2 colors, 10 dots of each color for each participant)
  - Name tags
  - Copies of the TCFE Progress Report
  - Random numbers for group assignments
- Arrange meeting room for large and small group discussions.
- Arrange refreshments.
- Copy and cut out placement numbers from Appendix B.
- Make a supplies packet for each table.

### Overview of the County Forum:

- Welcome & Video
- Small Group Discussion
- Break
- Large Group Discussion
- Entity Identification
- What's Next?

### ***Welcome & Video (15-20 minutes)***

- Have all participants come and sit down all together. According to the facilities available, you may have a meeting area for the large group together with separate breakout rooms, or you may have a room large enough for all groups to meet in the same room.
- Greet the group and introduce yourself and other extension faculty present.
- Have everyone write and wear a name tag.
- Explain that the county forum meeting is designed to gain input from the community about the issues they are facing. Explain that Texas Cooperative Extension and other agencies and community organizations

- will use the issues identified to guide future programming efforts.
- Show the video from Dr. Fehlis if equipment is available.
- Give an overview of the evening:
  - Participants will break into smaller groups to brainstorm ideas about issues facing their community.
  - Each group will vote on their top issues and bring them to the large group.
  - The large group will discuss and vote on the top issues.
  - Groups will decide which organizations could address the top issues.

*Resources:* TCFF introductory video, TV/VCR

**TIP:** If you have a small staff, invite one or more agents from other counties or some of your volunteers (who may have experience in facilitation) to help.

### *Small Group Discussion (35-50 minutes)*

- Give each person a number that you have copied and cut from the page in Appendix B. Ask them to find the table or room with their number on it and go there.
- Inform participants that their first assignment will be to elect one group member to be the representative from that group.
- Tell participants that their group will brainstorm ideas about issues facing their community.
  - They need to answer the question: **What are the critical issues facing people in our community over the next 5 years?**
  - They will brainstorm and write each issue on a separate piece of paper to post on the wall.
  - Then they will discuss the issues and combine similar issues and eliminate duplicates.
  - Each group member will receive 10 green (or whichever color you decide) to vote on the issues they believe are the most important. They can weigh their votes however they wish – all 10 dots on one issue, one dot on 10 different issues, or any combination.
  - The representative will order the issues according to the number of votes that they get. The representative will bring all the issues to the facilitator at the break.
- Give each group representative a bag of supplies: paper, several of the same color marker (so that you can later identify issues with groups—i.e. the blue group, the green group, etc.) , tape, and colored dots.
- Other faculty present can float between the groups to make sure groups are on track and following directions. Make sure to facilitate, but do not offer personal input.

*Resources:* paper numbers, 8.5 x 11" paper, different colored markers, tape, colored dots.

**TIP:** If a group writes an issue that is vague, ask the group to clarify. Remember that you are the one who will have to interpret this potential issue in the future!

**TIP:** Emphasize that each issue should be written on a separate sheet of paper.

**TIP:** Yellow markers do not show up on the paper!

**TIP:** Write the question on a flip chart for participant referral.

### *Break (15-20 minutes)*

- Encourage all groups to wrap up discussion and take a break.
- Have the representative from each group bring their group's issues to the large group meeting area.
- Meet with the group representatives to help them combine issues and eliminate any duplicate issues.
- Write each issue (combined or otherwise) on a large post-it (flip chart paper), and put it on the wall with the smaller pieces of paper next to them.

**TIP:** Provide refreshments (ex: punch and cookies).

**TIP:** Be careful not to lose the meaning of an issue when it is combined.

### *Large Group Discussion (30-45 minutes)*

- Bring the large group back together. Tell participants that a summary of each issue is on the large paper with the issues from the small group beside them.
- Allow each group representative to give a 2 minute summary of their group's issues. Ask for agreement and if the summaries are acceptable.
- Once there is consensus, take down the small sheets.
- Ask if there are any other issues that need to be combined or eliminated. Remind them that combinations might help their issue to receive more votes, but it is perfectly okay to leave their issue standing alone.
- Begin clarification and discussion. This is where a timer comes in handy. Allow each participant to speak for only 30 seconds.
- Give each participant a set of 10 blue dots (or some other color than the small groups used earlier). They can vote for their top issues on the post-its. Again, they can distribute their votes however they wish.
- Rearrange the issues in order of the most to least votes. Have some participants tally results if you need help.
- There should be a clear break between those issues that received a lot of votes and those that received few. For example, one issue might have 20 votes, and the next one down might have only 8. Try to make the break at about the 80% mark, or find the natural break (The top issues are all of those that combined received 80% of the vote or are above the natural break.)

*Resources:* 10 colored dots for each participant, post-it (flip chart) paper, tape, marker, timer

**TIP:** Set time limits up front so that discussion doesn't go too long. Set ground rules of only 30 second presentations by each person to make sure that the more outspoken participants don't drown out quieter ones.

### *Entity Question (15 minutes)*

- The forum will now focus on the top issues. (However, if participants would like to identify entities to address other issues as well, they may do so.)
- Ask the question: **Which entities (agencies, organizations, community groups, etc.) are positioned to best address these issues?**
- Ask participants to brainstorm the answer to this question for the top issues.
- Rewrite the top issues in rank order on a flip chart with enough room to write entity suggestions next to them. Write entities down as participants make suggestions.

*Resources:* flip chart, marker

**TIP:** Write this question on a flip chart as well.

### *What's Next? (5 minutes)*

- Explain to the group that results of the forum will be entered into a database for statewide aggregation. The county agents will also meet with county committees to determine the strategy for addressing these issues specific to Extension.
- Extension will also forward on the other issues to the identified organizations.
- Hand out the progress reports from the 1999 TCFE process so that they can see the issues identified last time.
- Thank the participants for their time and help.
- Encourage them to contact the county office with questions or go to the website at <http://futuresforum.tamu.edu>.

*Resources:* 1999 TCFE Progress Reports (found on the TCFE website).

**TIP:** You may have to explain that you did not hand out the progress reports in the beginning of the forum so that their ideas would be fresh and not influenced by the last TCFE process.

\*\* For helpful suggestions on facilitating your County Forum, refer to Appendix E.

## **RESPONSIBILITY #6 ENTER DATA INTO THE ONLINE SYSTEM**

The data from the County Forum will be entered into an online system. The facilitator will be asked to enter these data or coordinate this effort with someone within the county. These reports will be used to mandate results for statewide, regional, and local program planning.

A regional data summit will be conducted with County Extension Agents, Extension Specialists, Regional Program Directors, and District Extension Administrators in the summer of 2004. These summits will allow communication about the issues that surfaced from the County Forums and help plan for future programming efforts.

## **RESPONSIBILITY #7 MARKET THE COUNTY FORUM DATA RESULTS WITHIN THE COUNTY**

The work is certainly not over after the County Forum. The facilitator will be responsible for disseminating the identified issues in the county. This is just to inform the county of what issues did surface and describe the actions that will take place to support education concerning these issues. One way to do this will be for the facilitator or the Chair of the County Extension Executive Board to address the County Commissioner's Court to provide a summary of the County Forum.

The educational strategy to address these issues will probably not be known right away. It will take time to determine how to address identified issues effectively.

More information will be available on the development of programs to answer county issues based on the regional data summits.

## **RESPONSIBILITY #8 DEVELOP ACTION PLANS TO ADDRESS ISSUES**

The final responsibility is for all County Extension Agents is to develop action plans to address the identified issues. Steps in developing action plans should include forming task forces and/or discussing issues with the county program committees to develop sequential learning experiences that make up the educational program to address the issue.

This action plan could be a multi-year educational plan that introduces an issue to the target audience and takes three to five years to address through a behavior change adoption.

More information on this responsibility will be forthcoming.

## APPENDIX A

### CHECKLIST OF ITEMS FOR COUNTY FORUM

- \_\_\_\_\_ Paper - 8.5x11" paper.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Water-based markers - to post information onto the sticky wall sheets. Each group needs several of the same color marker.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Permanent marker - to transfer issues onto the flip chart paper.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flip chart paper - Big Post-it flip chart paper to rewrite issues for the large group, write the questions, and for the entity discussion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Tape - Use tape (masking) to stick paper on the wall.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Colored dots - The dots are used for voting and prioritizing issues. Each participant needs 2 sets of 10 dots. Choose 2 different colors, like green and blue, one color for each time participants vote.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Name tags- These are typically sheets of cardstock paper folded in half so that they can easily stand on a table. The participants should use a marker to write their name on it so they can be identified by the facilitator and group spokesperson.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Copies of the TCFE Progress Report - In 2002, each county provided an update on the response to the TCFE issues that were identified in 1999. These can be found at : <http://extensioneducation.tamu.edu/tcfe/>
- \_\_\_\_\_ Random numbers for group assignments - Make copies of the sheet with group numbers on them and cut these numbers out for random group assignments (Appendix B).

## APPENDIX B

### SHEET TO USE FOR RANDOM GROUP ASSIGNMENTS

Copy this page as many times as necessary. Cut out numbers by using the lines. Randomly hand these out to participants as they enter for the "Issue Meeting." The number they draw should correspond to the number placed on a table for groups.

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9

## **APPENDIX C**

### **CHECKLIST FOR FACILITATING THE COUNTY FORUM**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ As participants enter the room, ask them to have a seat at a table.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Welcome participants, introduce yourself and others helping.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Explain the importance of TCFF and how the process works, as well as how the evening will go.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Give out name tags and show the TCFF introductory video.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Give random numbers and break into small groups.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Groups each elect a representative.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Small groups brainstorm and vote on top issues.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Break and group representatives bring together issues, combine and eliminate duplicate issues.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Large groups meets and discusses issues.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Large group votes on top issues.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Tally votes and rank issues in order from top to bottom.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Large group discusses and gives suggestions for the appropriate entities to address each of the top issues.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ Give out copies of the 1999 TCFF Progress Reports for participants to review.
14. \_\_\_\_\_ Thank participants for their help and time. Explain that Extension will use the results to plan for future programming.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **REGIONAL DATA SUMMITS**

#### **Purpose and Objectives of Regional Data Summits**

The biggest change to the 2004 Texas Community Futures Forum is the addition of “*Regional Data Summits*.” The purpose of the regional data summit is to develop an educational program plan by open communication between County Extension Agents, Extension Specialists, Regional Program Directors, and District Extension Administrators. Specific objectives of the regional data summits are:

- Bring issues to the table. This includes TCFE issues and issues that emerge using other issue identification processes.
- Determine if there are similar issues that emerge from the issue identification processes.
- Develop work groups to begin planning to address issues.
- Develop resources that can help address and support programming concerning issues.
- Draft an action plan for priority issues.

#### **Why is the Regional Data Summit important?**

The 1999 process yielded all types of issues facing Texans. However, there was a great deal of confusion on what to do with the issue. Regional Data Summits have been added to help connect all types of issues to County Extension Agents, Extension Specialists, and Regional Program Directors. This day should allow these groups to develop issue responses, identify resources to address issues, and simply communicate with each other how to most effectively address issues. Each region will host a day long summit.

Figure 1 is attached to reveal all the different areas where issues surface. These different areas include TCFE, county committees, base programs, specialists, state and national trends, commodity/industry/groups, state and federal mandates, and (unexpected) emerging issues. It is important to understand this because these are all valid, reliable sources for issues. The key is to study the issues that surface from these different areas, allowing the educational programmer to determine the significance of the issue, resources that are available to address the issue, and determine the issues that need significant educational programming in order to answer. Again, this is why these Regional Data Summits are important. The answers to these questions can be answered during the summits.

#### **What should be brought to the table?**

For the Regional Data Summit to work most effectively, everyone should bring issues to the meeting to address. Here are some items that each group should try to bring and discuss.

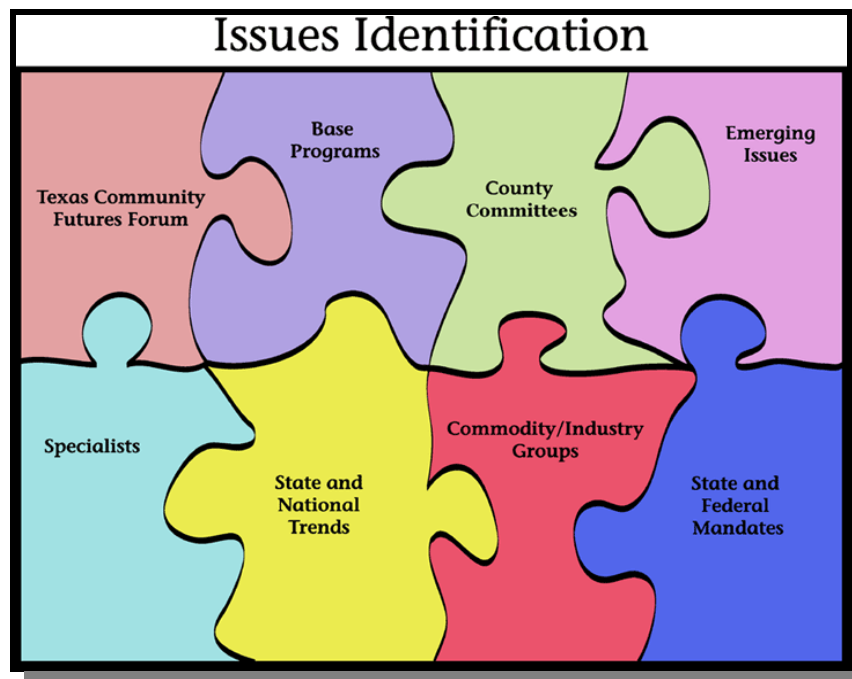
**Extension Education Unit** - The unit will bring statewide, regional, district, and county data to the summit. They will also facilitate the day.

**Regional Program Directors** - They will be the point persons for the summits. They will bring issues through needs assessment processes they are currently implementing with commodity/industry groups, base programs, and state/federal mandates. In addition, they will also have the regional TCFE issues that represent their programming area.

**County Extension Agents** - County Extension Agents will bring issues identified in their county TCFF process, issues from their base program areas, and their county committees/task forces.

**Extension Specialists** - Extension specialists will be asked to bring issues that have surfaced through their association meetings and communication with colleagues. Also, they will bring emerging issues in their area, issues from commodity/industry groups, and TCFF issues that are specific to their subject matter.

**Figure 1. Different sources from which issues may surface.**



# APPENDIX E

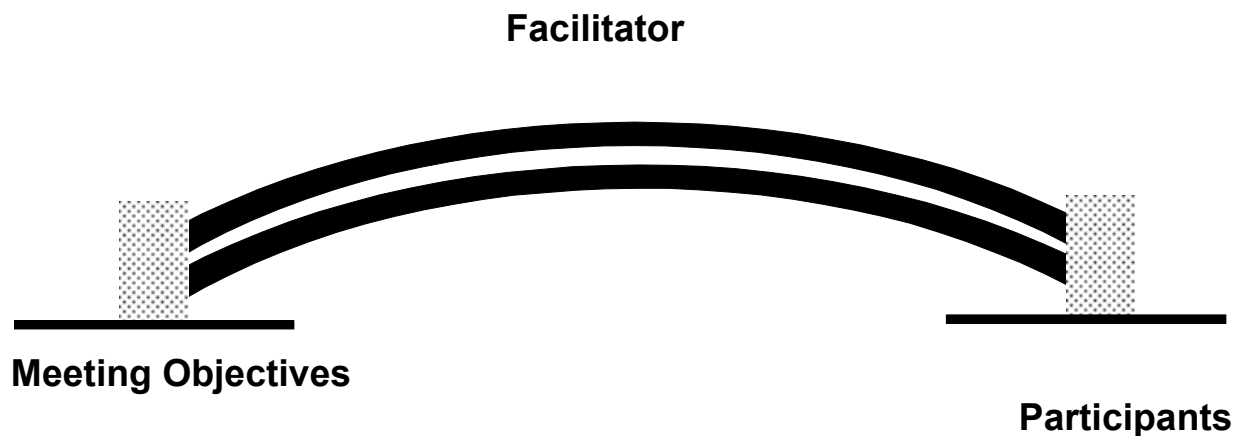
## FACILITATION SKILLS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

### What is the Role and Responsibility of the Facilitator?

- ✓ The role of the facilitator is to help the participants in the group understand clearly what it is they are trying to achieve.
- ✓ The role for the facilitator is to help keep the group on task and make progress toward what they are trying to achieve.
- ✓ Any input from the facilitator is focused on what the group is trying to achieve, NOT on what the facilitator wants to achieve.
- ✓ In order to help the group communicate well the facilitator must model quality communication.
- ✓ Your role is to facilitate, NOT participate.

### What skills are necessary to fulfill these roles and responsibilities?

- Attending
- Observing
- Listening
- Questioning



## Attending Skills

“Attending” means presenting yourself in a physical manner that communicates interest and attention. This helps build rapport with your audience by communicating that you are interested in them and value them as individuals.

Attending helps you gather information. Your physical location or position allows you to observe behavior and body language. It also encourages participants to interact with you.

### Four Attending Behaviors for Facilitators:

1. Face the Audience
2. Maintain Appropriate Eye Contact
3. Move Toward Participant(s)
4. Avoid Distracting Behaviors

<b>Do</b>	<b>Don't</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Position your body to face everyone</li><li>■ Continually scan the group with your eyes, but not in a distracting manner</li><li>■ Make eye contact with individuals</li><li>■ Walk toward participants</li><li>■ Smile at individuals</li><li>■ Nod at individuals</li><li>■ Circle the room during small group work to check on progress</li><li>■ Use natural expression both verbal and facial when talking</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Turn your back to part of the group</li><li>■ Scan the group too frequently or rapidly with your eyes</li><li>■ Avoid eye contact</li><li>■ Put too much distance between yourself and participants</li><li>■ Stare at individuals</li><li>■ Shuffle papers or look at your watch while participants are talking</li><li>■ Talk to visual aids</li></ul>
<b>Additional Thoughts and Ideas Here</b>	

## Observing Skills

Observing skills help you assess how information is being received. Based on your observations, you can make decisions to continue as is or adjust in response to the participants' needs.

### Observation Process for Facilitators

1. Look at individual body language--facial expressions, body position, body movement, etc.
2. Try to determine feelings based on observations.
3. Take action based on the inferences you make.

Behavior	Possible Feelings
Smiling Nodding Affirmatively Leaning Forward Eye Contact	Engaged/Understanding
Yawning Vacant Stare Shuffling Feet Leaning Back in Chair Looking at Clock/Watch	Not Engaged/Bored
Frowning Scratching Head Pursing Lips Vacant Stare Avoiding Eye Contact	Uncertain/Confused

Feeling Inferred	If....	Then...
Engaged/Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Several participants</li> <li>■ One participant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Continue</li> <li>■ Continue, but note to check again later or followup with that participant somehow</li> </ul>
Not Engaged/Bored	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Several participants</li> <li>■ One participant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Try taking a break, going faster, pushing onward</li> <li>■ Continue, but reassess again shortly (maybe an early notice for rest of group).</li> </ul>
Uncertain/Confused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Several participants</li> <li>■ One participant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ask participants for areas of confusion. Try to clarify through re-phrasing information, asking others to explain, or providing examples.</li> <li>■ If time permits, ask about areas of confusion and provide clarification. If time is limited, talk with the individual at next break.</li> </ul>

## **Listening Skills**

Listening skills for facilitators means obtaining verbal information and verifying that you understand the information. Listening skills enable you to demonstrate your understanding of the participant's perspective. Listening skills also provide you with feedback on how information is being received. You can use this feedback in determining how you proceed in facilitating.

### **Listening Process for Facilitators**

1. Concentrate on what the participant is saying. Listen to the words being expressed.
2. Interact with the participant to make sure accurate understanding of the information expressed. Paraphrase what was said to demonstrate understanding.

#### **Listen to the words being expressed.**

As you listen to the words being expressed, try to grasp the content AND meaning from the PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVE. There are often many distractions that compete with our listening skills.

Personal distractions such as your own thoughts that develop as someone else is speaking. Try to minimize these and stay focused on what the participant is trying to express.

Environmental distractions such as sights and sounds that are going on as someone is speaking. Try to stop these or at the very least put them out of your mind until the participant has finished speaking.

#### **Paraphrase what was said to demonstrate understanding.**

Paraphrasing demonstrates your interest, but it also allows you an opportunity to verify with the participant what they are trying to express and get more information that will aid in further understanding.

Start paraphrase with "You're saying . . . .As I understand it . . . ." This allows the participant to confirm that your understanding or if you have missed important details then the participant can add the information as needed and appropriate.

## Questioning Skills

Questions play a major role in facilitation. They can help you determine what the participants already know or perceive. Questions can provide you with feedback about how information is being received and understood. This will then in turn help you understand how you need to facilitate to continue to move the group toward what they are trying to achieve. Questions also invite participation and involvement.

### Questioning Skills for Facilitators

1. Asking Questions
2. Handling Answers
3. Responding to Questions

### Asking Questions

Most of recognize two BASIC types of questions: open or closed questions. As a facilitator, you need to use more expanded version of these two basic types noted in the following table.

Type	Definition
Open Ended	A question that cannot be answered with a “yes” or “no” or specific response.
Closed Question	A question that can be answered with “yes,” “no,” or a specific response from the participant.
Overhead Question	A question that is directed to the entire group rather than one specific participant.
Directed Question	A question directed to a specific participant.
Reversed Question	A question turned back to the participant which allows the facilitator to clarify what the participant asked or stated.
Redirected Question	A question that asks others what they think.

Choosing how to Direct Questions	
If...	Then....
Stimulate all of your participants Allow participants to respond voluntarily Avoid putting someone on the spot	Overhead Question
Stimulate one participant Tap the known expert in the group	Directed Question

Once you have decided what type of question you will use, be thoughtful about how you will phrase it. The following table gives some guidelines for phrasing questions.

Do	Don't
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ask clear, concise questions</li> <li>■ Focus on one issue</li> <li>■ Ask reasonable questions based on what participants probably know</li> <li>■ Ask challenging question that stimulate thought</li> <li>■ Ask honest, relevant questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ask rambling, ambiguous questions</li> <li>■ Ask questions covering several issues</li> <li>■ Ask questions that are too easy or require no thought</li> <li>■ Ask trick questions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Additional Thoughts and Ideas Here</b></p>	

## Handling Answers

Another skill associated with questioning involves the way in which you handle responses to questions. Your response will impact both the individual and the rest of the group especially in regard to future participation.

To maintain participation for the future, when you respond, remember to:

- use positive reinforcement, be careful in being too complimentary;
- acknowledge the effort of the respondent even if their response is not appropriate; and
- do your best to minimize potential embarrassment.

## Responding to Questions

Responding to questions from the group provides an opportunity to enhance the entire group's understanding, as well as that of the individual asking the question. Remember to:

- repeat the question so everyone can hear;
- direct your response to the entire group; and
- ask if there is need for further clarification.

Also, the way that you respond to questions will affect whether participants will feel comfortable asking questions later in the meeting. So remember to:

- acknowledge the value of the questions – in short, don't ignore the question; and
- never belittle the question - do not make fun of the question as silly, either verbally or with body language.

There are basically three ways to respond to questions:

1. Provide the answer yourself;
2. Redirect the question to the group or a particular participant; and
3. Defer the question or park the question until a later time, but remember to answer!!).