



Identifying the strengths and needs of Texas Communities

Guidelines

2021

WHY DO WE FOCUS ON ISSUE IDENTIFICATION?

Developing educational programs based on community needs is the foundation of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's success. The issue identification process provides an avenue to hear from all types of clientele and people within a county and the state. Providing solutions to local problems and issues will allow AgriLife Extension to remain viable to constituents. What could be more important to AgriLife 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. TexasSpeaks is our way of asking these questions. This assessment will focus both on assets and needs in Texas communities. The process will be conducted virtually using online data collection technology to conduct the process.

TexasSpeaks is just one part of the process to identify issues. Other processes to collect information include, but are not limited to:

- Reviewing State and National Trends
- Listening to Commodity/Industry Groups
- Implementing State and Federal Mandates
- Reacting to Emerging Issues

The issues that surface from TexasSpeaks should be discussed with county committees, task forces, 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 A&M AgriLife Extension is unique because of our presence in every area of the state and dedication to serving 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.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

The process of identifying relevant issues is fundamental to the program change model for Extension. Extension offers the involvement of local clientele in charting the course of the educational programs that Extension will offer.

TexasSpeaks Process

TexasSpeaks will be conducted state-wide between February 1, 2021 and March 31, 2021 (end date subject to change). The process will be conducted virtually using online data collection technology. Citizens will be asked to identify both strengths and needs within their community.

Issues will be identified that Extension is not equipped to respond to, and those will be shared with other agencies and organizations who can respond appropriately. The following process should involve a diverse and representative group of individuals. We want to hear from as many people as possible.

Targeted efforts should be made to share the TexasSpeaks survey. These groups include, but are not limited to:

- Local school districts
- Major industry(s) in the county/commodity groups/ag producers/business leaders
- Chambers of Commerce
- Local and county government
- Social services groups
- Medical professionals
- Grassroots organizations
- Local civic groups
- Media including radio, television and newspapers
- Social media outlets
- Religious organizations
- Other key leaders/stakeholders in the community
- Youth

You are being asked to share this far and wide. The more people that participate the more representative the results will be. Our goal is for this process to go **VIRAL!!!**

After TexasSpeaks

By late spring you should receive two (2) reports for your county. The first report will focus on all issues identified in TexasSpeaks who identified themselves as a resident of your county. The second report will focus on items identified in the process that relate to the mission and work of AgriLife Extension.

During a county staff conference, we will ask that you discuss both reports to determine if any changes to these reports need to be made. We will also ask that you discuss if changes to committee structure needs to be made to address Extension-related items contained in the report. If there are issues that do not have an appropriate planning group to address the issues, determine plans to form either a short-term or long-term group to assist in program development for that issue.

For issues that do fit with a current planning group, be sure to meet with the chair of the appropriate group. Program plans for the upcoming program years should begin to address the items identified through the process.

We are also asking that you examine the reports for any items that do not fit within the realm

of Extension expertise. If there are partners in the county that may have expertise in that area, please share the issue with that group. Non-Extension Issues will be aggregated on the state level and shared with appropriate agencies for their planning and staffing purposes.

The end result of this comprehensive process will be a set of critical items to guide the development of highly effective and relevant educational programs. Reviewing and taking action on this process is a total effort at the local, regional, and state levels. Teamwork among these levels is critical to the overall Extension program and helps in building an engaged clientele. The steps used to take action based on this process should be documented and communicated to all involved in the Extension program development process.

KEY MESSAGING POINTS

Definition of TexasSpeaks

- > An online survey conducted by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service with the purpose of listening to Texas citizens as they identify the strengths and needs of their communities.

Goal of the Survey

- > Engage as many Texas citizens as possible to create the most accurate and helpful data to support Texas communities at both the state and local levels.

Key Aspects of the Survey

- > Online
- > Anonymous
- > This survey is part of several efforts to identify and understand the issues facing Texas communities
- > Identifying relevant issues is fundamental to the program change model of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
- > Takes approximately 10 minutes to complete
- > Includes an open feedback section for areas not listed within the survey
- > Includes an opportunity to elect to receive contact by the agency

What is Done with the Data?

- > Data from the survey will be aggregated at local levels and provided to local stakeholders. Additionally, statewide data will be aggregated and made available to state agencies and decision makers.

What this Survey does not do

- > Promise action on the part of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

- > Promise action on the part of any Texas governmental office of department
- > Provide personal information to any outside group or government agency

Historical Context of the Survey

- > Previously conducted in person and within each county. This online survey allows for greater engagement of Texas citizens that may have not been reached through previous methods. This new process still requires the support of Extension agents to engage with key stakeholders of their counties and encourage distribution of the survey through these relationships within their community. These outreach efforts are both historically relevant but also immediately necessary for the success and continued relationship building.

TexasSpeaks URL

tx.ag/Dy5dvyl

TexasSpeaks QR Code



SAMPLE MATERIALS

SAMPLE LETTER TO SHARE TexasSpeaks URL

John Smith

123 County Road 456 Boondocks, Texas 123456

Dear Mr. Smith:

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has a rich history of providing educational programs that address the most critical issues in (county name) County. In order to make sure that the programs being planned for the future are on target we invite your participation in TexasSpeaks.

TexasSpeaks is a community assessment survey for citizens to identify the strengths and needs of their communities and is the first step to understanding timely resources that improve the lives of Texans.

Your opinion is highly valued in our community, so we hope you can provide your input share the TexasSpeaks community assessment widely. Our expectation is that the assessment will about 10 minutes to complete. We thank you for your time.

You can provide your input by going to the following URL or by scanning the QR code below.

TexasSpeaks URL

tx.ag/Dy5dvyl

TexasSpeaks QR Code



If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Extension office at _____.
Thank you very much for your involvement in this process.

Sincerely,

Sally Jones
County Extension Agent-FCS
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

Janie Brown
Chairperson
Green County Leadership Advisory Board

SAMPLE NEWS COLUMN/NEWSLETTER STATEMENT

TexasSpeaks is being conducted in (county name) county and across the State of Texas to allow the citizens of Texas to provide their input on the assets and issues in their communities. Your local county office of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service has a rich history of providing educational programs that address the most critical issues in the county and invites your participation in the TexasSpeaks process.

The AgriLife Extension highly values the opinions shared through the TexasSpeaks community assessment. The expectation is that the assessment will take about 10 minutes to complete.

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is a statewide network of professional educators, trained volunteers, and county offices. It reaches into every Texas county to address local priority needs and to extend the latest research to the people of Texas. Some of the major efforts are in mitigating drought impacts; conserving water use in homes, landscapes, and production agriculture; improving emergency management; enhancing food security; and protecting human health through education about diet, exercise, and disease prevention and management.

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