REPORTING BACK TO COMMUNITY LEADERS & PARTICIPANTS MODULE

Strategies for Community-Centric Planning

PURPOSE

This module equips community leaders, Extension professionals, and partners to **effectively report back to community members and participants, build accountability,** and ensure transparency and continued engagement.

Core Principle: Trust is built and sustained when communities see how their input is used and what progress is being made.

Outcome: Participants will develop clear, accessible, and consistent reporting strategies that keep communities informed and engaged over time.

WHY REPORTING BACK MATTERS

Too often, engagement processes fail because: - Community input disappears into a “black box” - Participants never hear what happened next - Trust erodes due to lack of transparency

Effective reporting back: - Builds trust and credibility - Reinforces participation - Encourages continued engagement - Demonstrates accountability

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SECTION 1: WHAT TO REPORT BACK

KEY ELEMENTS

- What was heard (community input)
- What was learned (key themes)
- What decisions were made
- What actions are being taken
- What happens next

WORKSHEET 1: REPORTING CONTENT PLAN

Element	Key Information	Audience	Format
Community Input			
Decisions			
Actions			
Next Steps			

SECTION 2: MAKING INFORMATION ACCESSIBLE

STRATEGIES

- Use plain, non-technical language
- Provide summaries (not just full reports)
- Translate materials into relevant languages
- Use visuals (charts, infographics)

WORKSHEET 2: COMMUNICATION FORMATS

Format	Audience	Strengths	Limitations
Community Meetings			
Email Updates			
Social Media			
Printed Materials			

SECTION 3: TIMING & FREQUENCY

BEST PRACTICES

- Report back soon after engagement activities
- Provide regular updates (monthly or quarterly)
- Share progress even if incomplete

WORKSHEET 3: REPORTING SCHEDULE

Activity	Frequency	Responsible Party	Method

SECTION 4: CLOSING THE LOOP

KEY PRACTICE

Always answer: “Here’s what you told us, and here’s what we’re doing about it.”

WORKSHEET 4: FEEDBACK LOOP

Community Input	Action Taken	Status	Follow-Up Needed

SECTION 5: FACILITATED ACTIVITY – BUILD A REPORT BACK PLAN

Activity (30–45 minutes)

Facilitator Instructions: - Identify key community leaders and participants - Determine how and when to communicate updates

Prompt Questions:

- Who needs to hear from us?
- What information do they need?
- What is the best way to reach them?

SECTION 6: FACILITATOR GUIDANCE – WHAT ACTUALLY WORKS

Do This:

- Be transparent, even when progress is slow
- Acknowledge community contributions
- Use multiple communication channels
- Keep messaging consistent and clear

Avoid This:

- Overly technical or lengthy reports
- Delayed communication
- Ignoring community input in reporting
- One-time updates instead of ongoing communication

SECTION 7: REFLECTION

Reflection Questions

- Are we clearly communicating outcomes?
- Do stakeholders understand progress and decisions?
- Are we reinforcing trust through transparency?

ACTION COMMITMENT

Within the next 30 days, we will:

SECTION 8: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Community Engagement & Communication

- National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD) https://ncdd.org *Tools for maintaining engagement and communication*

- Community Toolbox (University of Kansas) https://ctb.ku.edu *Guidance on communication and stakeholder engagement*

Transparency & Public Participation

- International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) https://iap2.org *Frameworks for public participation and reporting back*
- Open Government Partnership https://www.opengovpartnership.org *Best practices for transparency and accountability*

FINAL NOTE

Engagement does not end with a meeting, it continues through communication.

When communities see how their voices shape outcomes, trust grows and participation deepens.

Your role is to **close the loop and keep the conversation going.**

(End of Module)