



Working Regionally: GETTING STARTED

(Part 1 of 3)

Authors and reviewers:
 Julie Garden-Robinson, Professor and Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist, North Dakota State University (NDSU) Extension;
 Rebecca West, Program Assistant, NDSU Extension; Londa Nwadike, Extension Associate Professor of Food Safety, Kansas State University and the University of Missouri, and Shannon Coleman, Associate Professor and State Extension Specialist, Iowa State University.

We thank our many NCFSEN colleagues for their participation in this effort.

This publication was made possible in part with funding from the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences Foundation. We thank them for their support.

Reference. Garden-Robinson, J., West, R., Coleman, S., Ingham, B., McGarry, J., & Nwadike, L. (2021). Organizing Extension family and consumer sciences groups around a common topic: Lessons learned and best practices. *Journal of the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences*, 16, 93-98.

NDSU EXTENSION

IOWA STATE
UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

 **K-STATE**
Research and Extension

 **Extension**
University of Missouri

County commissions, North Dakota State University and U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. NDSU does not discriminate in its programs and activities on the basis of age, color, gender expression/identity, genetic information, marital status, national origin, participation in lawful off-campus activity, physical or mental disability, pregnancy, public assistance status, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, spousal relationship to current employee, or veteran status, as applicable. Direct inquiries to Vice Provost for Title IX/ADA Coordinator, Old Main 201, NDSU Main Campus, 701-231-7708, ndsu.eoaa@ndsu.edu. This publication will be made available in alternative formats for people with disabilities upon request, 701-231-7881.

Why form a regional Extension group?

We formed for the same reasons we form connections of all kinds:

- Share strengths – What do each of us bring to the table?
- Connection – Being a part of a group makes us stronger together.
- Mutual support and mentorship – Bolster as well as advise each other.
- Flexibility – Form and maintain informal networks with the ability to respond quickly to needs.
- Relationship – Build bonds between each other that strengthen the entire group.
- Collaboration – Work together in programming, publishing and presenting; more hands (and heads!) make lighter work.

Begin forming your regional group.

Who:

- Identify initial core members – Consider two to four across state lines.
- Grow membership – Have at least one member from each state in your region, eventually.
- Establish leadership – Dual leadership works best to share responsibility.

EXAMPLES FROM OUR NETWORK:

- Our founding group began in 2016 during a regional Extension meeting in Chicago.
- Seven of 12 states in our region were initially in the group.
- We now have a membership continuum established in all states in our region, rotating members in and out as they are hired and retired.
- We began with one leader, but after she retired, decided dual leadership would work best – each leader is from a different state, and responsibility is shared for running meetings and maintaining documents.

What:

- Central topic – What will your group rally around, where do your members have the most expertise, and what is the demand out there among consumers?

EXAMPLES FROM OUR NETWORK:

- At our group's inception in 2016, we chose the topic of food safety.
- The other North Central Region groups formed at that time had topics focused on aging and diabetes, plus a few others.
- Choose a topic that has urgent and immediate implications and applications to consumers in their everyday life; for example, food safety involves frequent handwashing, which is a daily practice that does much to prevent disease and has become supremely important in pandemic times.
- Understand that your topic will have many layers; for example, food safety involves cottage foods, farmers market safety, and home food preservation safe practices, which again have become particularly popular in pandemic times.

Search for NCFSEN ...



or scan here!

