

Best Practice: Building Local Support & Credibility

Summary

The Elkhorn Restoration Committee created the *Inform, Involve, and Educate Outreach Program* to tell the group's story as part of outreach to local organizations.

Keys to Success

- Develop the strategy with collaborative members to build internal support
- Create materials that all members can use during outreach events to ensure the message is clear and consistent.

“Establishing our Inform, Involve and Educate Strategy required us to prioritize our efforts, establish criteria for what we do, set timelines, agree as to why we are here doing what we are doing and be able to succinctly share that with anyone. This strategy allows anyone from the ERC to have the same format and points to share regardless of their background.”

- Al Christophersen, ERC Co-Chair

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Developing a strategy and supporting documents can help tell a collaborative group's story and build public support

In 2014 the Elkhorn Restoration Committee, which focuses on the Elkhorn Mountain wildlife management area of the Helena and Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forests in Montana, developed a communication strategy members call the *Inform, Involve, and Educate (I&E) Outreach Program*. The strategy was developed to build public support and credibility for the group, and also to help recruit new members. The Restoration Committee hopes to share its story, accomplishments, and program of work with members of local government, sportsmen's organizations, community groups, schools, businesses, and private landowners.

Tom Williams, Elkhorn Restoration Committee Chairman, explained, “Through the I&E outreach program we have presented our goals and accomplishments to organizations and committees with a vast array of interests.”

Though the I&E outreach program was developed for the public, the process to create and update it also benefits the Restoration Committee. As Al Christopherson noted, “the committee process of getting a diverse group to agree to who we present to, what we say, and how we say it is an extremely powerful relationship building process for the committee.”

The strategy, which is attached, outlines clear goals and objectives for public outreach events, process steps for contacting local organizations, potential outreach opportunities, and key topics to cover during presentations. A two-page handout the group created to accompany members during outreach events is also attached. Content includes a brief description of the group, membership list, goals, and geographic area. A PowerPoint presentation was designed as another piece of the “package” that Elkhorn Restoration Committee members could use to tell the group's story in an organized and consistent way.

Links

- Elkhorn Restoration Committee
<http://www.montanarestoration.org/elkhorns-committee>