

## PURPOSE

To develop and implement a comprehensive marketing/communications strategy for OSU Extension’s Family & Consumer Sciences (FCS) Program, which is committed to helping Ohioans keep healthy through good nutrition and food safety, use their money wisely and balance the demands of life and work.

## LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

- To raise FCS’s **visibility** as a first step in building public awareness, understanding and support for its services.
- To position FCS as **a fully integrated, core component** of OSU Extension’s programs and services.
- To give FCS a **clear identity** that distinguishes it from other social service programs, including those administered by county Job and Family Service agencies (e.g., evidence-based services; sustainability; education, not just relief; empowerment).



## FCS's MARKETING ASSETS

What does FCS have to market? What is it about FCS's programs and services that make them potentially attractive to prospective consumers and the community?

High-quality, evidence-based programs and services	Sustainability – a proven track record
Catalytic capacity – FCS makes things happen in the community	FCS's local roots; flexible, responsive to local needs
FCS teaches self-reliance, improves the quality of decision-making	Collaboration with community partners
Improved economic security for those served by FCS	FCS educates, provides more than relief
Workplaces that promote healthy relationships and lifestyles	Passion of FCS staff
Nutrition services and consumer education	Educators' standards of excellence

## EXTENSION'S DEFICITS

Lack of community awareness, understanding; stakeholders aren't familiar with FCS's menu of services	Gaps in services – FCS is not available in all 88 counties
Not sufficiently consumer-centered	Perceived redundancy of services; inadequate clarify of purpose
Inadequate funding	Limited marketing activity



## AUDIENCES

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- ★ Public sector decision makers (e.g., county commissioners, state legislators and local civic leaders)
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- ★ Community opinion leaders, including business leaders and the media
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- ★ Community-based organizations, including the education and faith-based communities
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- ★ Social service agencies/community partners (both current and prospective)
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- ★ Ohio families
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- ★ Business community, including smaller local enterprises
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- ★ Community and corporate foundations, donors and other funders
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- ★ All OSU Extension staff and volunteers
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## CORE MESSAGE

The development of FCS's core message – its brand – should be guided by two underlying assumptions:

1. ***The core message has to be about “benefits,”*** not the features of programs and services. It needs to focus on how people and/or communities are impacted by FCS.
2. ***The core message needs to be short, simple and straightforward.*** While phrases like “empowerment through education” can be useful at a policy or statewide level, they can easily “go over the heads” of people in the field. Ideally, the core message should be built around “action” words.

Suggested core message ... a brand for Family & Consumer Sciences:



**Better lives. Stronger communities**

But we need something more: ***Evidence of the program's effectiveness. Success!***

***Success stories*** can be effective here. And because they focus on individuals, groups and communities, they can be powerful. But success stories need to be handled carefully. They tend to be ***anecdotes***, not data. There's a big difference. And some group, particularly funders, want data that tells how many people are being served/affected, what people think about the services they're receiving and how those services are changing their lives.

Ideally, success stories should be supported by numbers – some basic metrics. For example:

- How many families have received SNAP-Ed or other nutrition education?
- How many families/students have benefited from FCS-related signature programs?
  - Real Money. Real World.
  - Dining With Diabetes
  - Local Foods
  - Energize Ohio
  - Business Retention and Expansion

While these data are important, their collection should **not** be burden, either for educators or the organization. FSC could use its existing reporting system, possibly with a few changes. A simple template could be developed and educators could be asked to fill it out quarterly. That template could ask for information about the indicators identified above. It would be a self-reporting system and numbers could be tabulated and reported in Columbus.

Another possibility would be occasional questionnaires completed by individuals/families served by FCS. These questionnaires would be used to measure satisfaction levels and to identify how these people have been impacted by FCS.

Understand that your metrics won't be used to "prove" anything. Instead, they provide reasonable documentation of the programs' depth and breadth. So self-reporting with all of its limitations should not be a problem.

The resulting "scorecard" could be as simple as a one-page factsheet, updated quarterly. And it could be supplemented by other information about SNAP-Ed or other initiatives.

Who would this scorecard be shared with? And would they care about the numbers?

- Clearly, the numbers would **not** be meant for stakeholders at the "grassroots" level. They would **not** be useful with families and others who are served by these programs.
- Instead, the data would help FSC with prospective funders, business and community leaders, and public officials. Most foundations ask specifically for this kind of information. Not having it can be detrimental when requesting funding support.
- Metrics can be most powerful when integrated with or supported by success stories. So your success stories would continue to be valuable.

*The next six pages illustrate how this core message – along with key elements of FCS's Message Map can be used with particular audiences. Note that the messages are often the same, with editing to fit a particular audience. Also, the order of the messages often changes to reflect different priorities.*



KEY MESSAGES FOR  
PUBLIC SECTOR DECISION-MAKERS  
& COMMUNITY OPINION LEADERS  
INCLUDING BUSINESS & THE MEDIA

- ❖ FCS is a catalyst that makes things happen! With only a limited public investment, we build partnerships with other groups and organizations whose missions complement ours. We provide leadership, promote action and find ways to overcome the obstacles between vision and reality. We make lives better ... and communities stronger.
- ❖ FCS gives people the knowledge, skills and tools needed to make healthy, informed choices, which means healthier lives, better finances and more positive relationships at home, at work and in the community. It means better lives for individuals and families – greater independence and self-reliance.
- ❖ FCS turns evidence-based, impartial, current research into useful information that can improve the quality of people’s lives – and it works to make that information accessible to all Ohioans.
- ❖ FCS works to make children and adults healthier by promoting safe food practices and better nutrition, positive money management habits and strong relationships – and we help people acquire the knowledge and skills to make smart decisions in these areas.
- ❖ FCS provides reliable, evidence-based information for businesses’ wellness education efforts with programs that encourage – and empower – people to adopt practices and behaviors that help them improve their finances, build more positive relationships with friends and family, and embrace healthier lifestyles. This leads to lower absenteeism rates, more productive businesses and stronger communities.



KEY MESSAGES FOR  
COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS  
INCLUDING EDUCATION, FAITH-BASED AND  
SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES

- ❖ FCS works as a catalyst that help make things happen! With only a limited public investment, we build partnerships with other community-based groups and organizations whose missions complement ours. We provide leadership, promote action and work with our partners to overcome the obstacles between vision and reality. We understand that we cannot achieve our objectives by working alone. But together, we make lives better ... and communities stronger.
- ❖ FCS delivers evidence-based information directly to the people who need it most.
- ❖ FCS works to equip youth and adults with positive money management practices, savings strategies and home ownership preparedness.
- ❖ FCS educators offer a variety of nutrition programs that save money, promote healthier food choices and combat preventative health risks. Money management and homeownership classes increase economic security; parenting and stress management programs improve stability. Workplace wellness programs lower absenteeism rates and create more productive businesses and stronger communities.
- ❖ FCS gives people the knowledge, skills and tools needed to make healthy, informed choices, which means healthier lives, better finances and more positive relationships at home, at work and in the community. It means better lives for individuals and families – greater independence and self-reliance.
- ❖ FCS turns university-based, impartial, current research into useful information that can improve the quality of people’s lives – and it makes that information accessible to all Ohioans.
- ❖ FCS works to make children and adults healthier by promoting safe food practices and better nutrition, positive money management habits, and strong relationships – and we help people acquire the knowledge and skills to make smart decisions in these areas.
- ❖ FCS provides reliable, evidence-based information for local organization’s wellness education efforts with programs that encourage – and empower – people to adopt practices and behaviors that help them improve their finances, build more positive relationships with friends and family, and embrace healthier lifestyles.



## KEY MESSAGES FOR OHIO FAMILIES

- ❖ We give people the knowledge, skills and tools needed to make healthy, informed choices – to make their lives healthier, to improve their finances, and to strengthen their relationships at home, at work and in the community. Our programs and services make people’s lives better. They help people gain or maintain their independence and to become more self-reliant.
- ❖ Our educators offer a variety of nutrition programs that save money, promote healthier food choices and combat preventative health risks. Money management and homeownership classes increase economic security; parenting and stress management programs improve stability. Workplace wellness programs lower absenteeism rates and create more productive businesses and stronger communities.
- ❖ FCS turns university-based, impartial, current research into useful information that can improve the quality of people’s lives. And we work to make that information accessible to all Ohioans.
- ❖ FCS prefers not to work alone. We form partnerships with other community-based groups and organizations whose missions complement ours. We promote action and work to make things happen! With our partners, we make lives better ... and communities stronger.
- ❖ We deliver research-based information directly to the people who need it most. They can trust this information. And they can use it to make smart decisions that improve the quality of their lives. We make lives better ... and communities stronger.



## KEY MESSAGES FOR COMMUNITY/CORPORATE FOUNDATIONS

- ❖ FCS is a catalyst that makes things happen! With only a **limited public investment**, we build partnerships with other groups and organizations whose missions complement ours. We provide leadership, promote action and find ways to overcome the obstacles between vision and reality. We make lives better ... and communities stronger.
- ❖ FCS gives people the knowledge, skills and tools needed to make healthy, informed choices, which means healthier lives, better finances and more positive relationships at home, at work and in the community. It means better lives for individuals and families – **greater independence and self-reliance**.
- ❖ FCS turns university-based, impartial, current research into useful information that can **improve the quality of people's lives** – and it works to make that information accessible to all Ohioans.
- ❖ FCS works to make children and adults healthier by promoting safe food practices and better nutrition – and we help people acquire the knowledge and skills to make smart decisions in these areas.
- ❖ FCS provides reliable, evidence-based information to encourage – and empower – people to adopt practices and behaviors to improve their finances, build more positive relationships with friends and family, and embrace healthier lifestyles.
- ❖ FCS delivers evidence-based information directly to the people who need it most.



KEY MESSAGES FOR  
OSU EXTENSION  
STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

*Staff messages ...*

- ❖ FCS is a vital part of OSU Extension's menu of services and programs for Ohioans and their families. As part of that menu, we make lives better ... and communities stronger.
- ❖ FCS's educators offer a variety of food safety programs that prevent foodborne illnesses by helping people know how to safely handle and prepare food. They teach people how to protect food from contamination. These professionals also offer a variety of nutrition-related programs to show people how to use herbs and spices to lower sodium consumption, prepare heart-healthy meals, cook for one or two, and stretch the food dollar. One of our most popular programs is Dining with Diabetes.
- ❖ FCS gives people the knowledge, skills and tools needed to make healthy, informed choices – to make their lives healthier, to improve their finances, and to strengthen their relationships at home, at work and in the community. Our programs and services help people gain or maintain their independence and to become more self-reliant.
- ❖ FCS provides reliable, evidence-based information for businesses' wellness education efforts with programs that encourage – and empower – people to adopt practices and behaviors that help them improve their finances, build more positive relationships with friends and family, and embrace healthier lifestyles. This leads to lower absenteeism rates, more productive businesses and stronger communities.
- ❖ FCS is a catalyst that makes things happen! With only a **limited public investment**, we build partnerships with other groups and organizations whose missions complement ours. We provide leadership, promote action and find ways to overcome the obstacles between vision and reality.
- ❖ FCS makes OSU Extension stronger by working collaboratively with other Extension initiatives (e.g., 4-H, agriculture and natural resources, and community development). And it has the ability to generate new resources through grants and other funding.
- ❖ One of FCS's highest priorities is to secure the staff and funding needed to offer community nutrition services in all 88 Ohio counties.



*Volunteer messages ...*

- ❖ FCS turns university-based, impartial, current research into useful information that can improve the quality of people's lives. We work to make that information accessible to all Ohioans.
- ❖ FCS delivers research-based information directly to the people who need it most. They can trust this information. And they can use it to make smart decisions that improve the quality of their lives – and of their families' lives.
- ❖ FCS is a catalyst that makes things happen! With only a **limited public investment**, we build partnerships with other groups and organizations whose missions complement ours. We provide leadership, promote action and find ways to overcome the obstacles between vision and reality.

## MARKETING STRATEGY

How can we best reach and mobilize our target audiences ... and how can we best communicate these messages?

Responding to these questions with a whole bunch of random actions – albeit well-motivated actions – is **not** the right answer! What’s needed is a clear and compelling strategy, or a set of strategies designed to raise FCS’s visibility as a first step in building public awareness, understanding

and support for its services; position FCS as a fully integrated, core component of OSU Extension’s programs and services; and give FCS a clear identity that distinguishes it from other social service programs, including those administered by county Job and Family Service agencies.

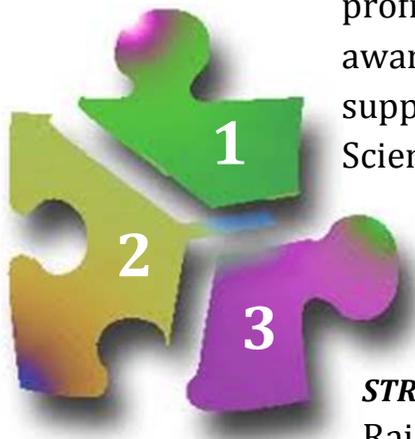
And remember: FCS is faced with **a two-fold task**:

- (1) To build the program’s STATEWIDE presence; and
- (2) To support FCS programs at the COUNTY level.

Below is one way to structure such a **strategy** with some **possible tactics** or actions for each strategic initiative.

### **STRATEGY #2**

Develop marketing tools and strategies for county-level Family & Consumer Sciences and OSU Extension staff, and provide professional training to build county staff’s capacity to use these tools



### **STRATEGY #1**

Deepen public-, private-and non-profit sector opinion leaders’ awareness, understanding and support for Family & Consumer Sciences as a core component of OSU Extension’s programs and services

### **STRATEGY #3**

Raise public awareness and visibility of Family & Consumer Sciences programs and services – and of their benefits for families throughout Ohio.



***NOTE: The actions/tactics below are presented as possibilities. They are NOT meant to suggest that the FCS Program should do all of them, or that there aren't other options. The program needs to set priorities – starting with a few actions and building on them over time.***

**Strategy #1:** Deepen public-, private-and non-profit sector opinion leaders' awareness, understanding and support for Family & Consumer Sciences as a core component of OSU Extension's programs and services

### ***Priority Tactics***

- Encourage county-level programs to develop ***a contact list of local leaders*** (government, business, education, faith-based community, social services, etc.) and to periodically communicate with them (e.g., a personal "leadership" letter or email) updating them on FCS program activities and accomplishments, and asking for their feedback; provide county-level programs with guidance and support for this purpose
- Urge county-level programs to ***meet with local business leaders and other private-sector opinion leaders*** to build personal relationships and to tell them about FCS programs and the needs they are meeting
- Urge county-level programs to invite public officials to ***visit their programs*** and to participate in public events, giving them visibility and opportunities to talk with the FCS community

### ***Other Tactics***

- ***Communicate periodically with county commissioners and state legislators*** to familiarize them with FCS programs and services – and share with them the program's accomplishments and needs
- Collaborate with county-level programs to identify key ***community and corporate foundations*** that may have an interest in FCS services – and the populations that benefit from those services; develop a strategy for communicating regularly with these foundations and for pursuing opportunities for programmatic support



**Strategy #2:** Develop marketing tools and strategies for county-level Family & Consumer Sciences and OSU Extension staff, and provide professional training to build county staff's capacity to use these tools and to tell the program's success story.

### **Priority Tactics**

- Prepare a comprehensive set of **talking points** (for consistent messaging) and share it with all state and county-level FCS personnel, including volunteers
- **Review (audit) all program flyers and publications** and identify strengths/weakness and gaps in coverage – then develop the following materials for county-level FCS offices:
  - Design and produce **a “family” of publications** that can be used to familiarize stakeholders with FCS programs and services – and their benefits
  - Prepare a series of **one-page fact sheets** on key FCS programs and services – as part of the “family” of publications – that focuses on the need for these services and how FCS is responding to it
  - Produce a pocket folder with allow individual FCS programs to be featured
- Develop and carry out a **communications training program** for county-level personnel – possibly a series of regional “professional development” sessions for FCS and other OSU Extension personnel.
- Plan and execute one or more professional development sessions for educators on **relationship building**, using Extension staff and/or outside consultants to give them the insights and skills needed **to develop the personal relationships** (e.g., with business, nonprofit and civic leaders) that will enhance program success in their counties
- Produce **a brief, high-quality video presentation** highlighting FCS's impact in the communities it serves; feature community opinion leaders, public officials, collaborating organizations, FCS staff and the individuals/families served by the program
  - Or, produce a series of briefer videos (with a common format) highlighting multiple FCS programs and services, which could be used together or separately
- Develop a simple **pocket card** with an “elevator message” on the front and key data about FCS on the back, which can be used widely with the media, frontline agency staff, public- and private-sector decision-makers and others

### **Other Tactics**

- Assist county-level programs in creating **Speakers Bureaus** and provide them with **tools and direction in making attention-grabbing presentations** to civic clubs, faith-based groups, business and other community-based groups
- Prepare **columns** with consumer-oriented info for placement in weekly newspapers
- Draft articles about FCS services and successes, which county-level FCS staff can seek **placement in business' and non-profit organizations' in-house publications and newsletters**



**Strategy #3:** Raise public awareness and visibility of Family & Consumer Sciences programs and services – and of their benefits for families throughout Ohio.

**Priority Tactics**

- Use **periodic news releases and media placements**, including electronic media, to highlight FCS services and their benefits
- Support county-level programs' efforts to take FCS-related signature programs into communities – and find ways to demonstrate FCS's value to communities; encourage FCS programs to make their efforts more attractive by **working collaboratively** with local organizations (e.g., a local bank or financial services organization and/or a statewide education organization in the case of Real Money. Real Word; a local food retailer in the case of a food safety or nutrition program; or a major employer in the case of a business retention and expansion program)
- Develop and implement a **digital media strategy** that allows FCS – at the statewide and county level – to communicate with Ohioans who use 21<sup>st</sup> century communication technologies (web, mobile and social media) to build awareness and create supportive relationships; begin by determining target audiences, developing core content and identifying the platforms that will be used deliver content (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, etc.)

**Other Tactics**

- Encourage FCS programs to work with county-level Extension programs to form **marketing committees** with representatives from local public relations firms and corporate communications departments to assist in the crafting and implementing effective marketing initiatives Chosen priority; make a subset or focus of existing county Advisory Committees
- Develop a “template” for county-level programs that want to establish a **Community Service Award** initiative to honor volunteers, non-profit agencies, businesses or others who have given Ohioans the knowledge, skills and tools to make healthy choices; include a public event with public officials' participation to get media and community attention
- Work with the Ohio Broadcasters Association to produce **Public Service Announcements (PSAs)** that feature Extension services and their benefits – to be placed on local radio stations with the assistance of the OBA.



## A FINAL SUGGESTION

- Don't try to do too much. Don't overextend. Figure out what you can do.  
***Be a bit ambitious. Then do it.***
- ***Start with the Priority Tactics in each the strategic areas.*** Then build upon them, developing a more robust group of marketing/communications activities as you grow capacity over time.
- ***Be innovative. Be collaborative ...*** leveraging connections with other groups and organizations. Be strategic ... and execute effectively.
- Remember that people are most interested in how they or their communities can ***benefit*** from what you do. ***So think like a customer ... always!***