

Everyday Entrepreneurial Leadership in Extension

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Overview

Awareness of entrepreneurial application in everyday Extension occurrences can improve Extension's impact in a rapidly changing environment. While the term entrepreneur is often associated with business ventures, interest in entrepreneurial influences in Extension appear through decades of literature.

With underlying tenets of mission-focused proactivity, agility, and accountability, all Extension professionals express varying degrees of entrepreneurial tendencies, including administrators, specialists, agents, educators, office associates, and others who contribute to and support the Extension mission. Regardless of the position, Extension professionals can learn from research and practice related to entrepreneurial leadership.

Entrepreneurial Leader

Models mission-focused entrepreneurial behavior and cultivates a collaborative environment that prioritizes proactive stakeholder engagement, opportunity pursuit, value creation through innovation, resource mobilization, and accountability.

Fox, 2024

Engage Stakeholders

A commitment to others serves as motivation to engage with, influence, and empower stakeholders in their social, political, and cultural contexts. When navigating multiple stakeholder agendas in complex environments, leaders lean into situational awareness, social and emotional intelligence, and adaptation. Continual awareness of diverse external and internal stakeholder perspectives guides priorities and entrepreneurial actions.

Pursue Opportunities

With a passion to bring new ways to serve stakeholders, entrepreneurs engage in systematic formal and informal scanning that leads to the discovery, evaluation, and persistent pursuit of opportunities aligned with the mission. Timely decision making throughout the dynamic entrepreneurial process naturally involves degrees of ambiguity and uncertainty.

Create Value Through Innovation

A focus on creating social, economic, environmental, and other value moves opportunity evaluation forward through a process of collaborative idea generation, idea structuring, and idea promotion. Creating value through innovation in programs, products, services, processes, and partnerships involves tolerance of ambiguity, continuous learning, and adapting constructively to setbacks.

Mobilize and Manage Resources

Pursuing opportunities and creating value requires entrepreneurs to bring together unique combinations of public and private resources. This often includes influencing the mobilization of existing resources with flexibility, a willingness to take reasonable risk on behalf of the people the organization serves, and an understanding that all resource allocations are stewardship investments. Resource mobilization and management includes financial, social, political, and other capitals.

Examples of *Everyday Entrepreneurial Leadership in Extension*

Amidst changes in society, technology, funding, and university contexts, Extension professionals learn from entrepreneurial leadership actions that result in improved stakeholder well-being and organizational performance. A series of entrepreneurial actions led to the following innovations and impacts.



Impact: Flipped a challenge into an opportunity for **partner innovation** and **community well-being**

Entrepreneurial Action: Extension fostered a culture of sustainability in Florida's Tampa Bay Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), working across county borders, engaging with familiar and new partners, leveraging interdisciplinary expertise, and creating educational solutions for valued community certifications. *Contributor: Ramona Madhosingh-Hector, University of Florida*

Impact: **Process innovation** for accessible education and food access programs led to **physical well-being**

Entrepreneurial Action: The University of Idaho Extension Diabetes Prevention Program team created multiple ways for rural and urban adults to learn through a variety of onsite and online spaces. The Ohio State University Extension team in Cuyahoga County (Cleveland), led community-wide efforts to support local farmers and increase access to healthy foods at the neighborhood level through Produce Perks, a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) incentive program. With many diverse partners, this initiative required numerous fiscal and partner processes. *Contributors: Bridget Morrisroe-Aman, University of Idaho; Nicole Debose, The Ohio State University*



Impact: Mobilized a variety of university and community resources to engage new audiences through **service innovation** for **career well-being**

Entrepreneurial Action: A Rutgers team proactively created pathways for underrepresented youth in central cities of seven urbanized counties to learn about STEM careers and explore college opportunities. Rutgers professors, post docs, graduate students, and undergraduates contribute their time and expertise to guide youth through the 4-H STEM Ambassador Program. *Contributors: Rutgers team – Chad Ripberger, Janice McDonnell, Marycarmen Kunicki, Marissa Staffen, and James Nichnadowicz*

Impact: Guided by stakeholder input, **program innovation** led to **financial well-being**

Entrepreneurial Action: When a community assessment indicated that no other organization offered a free community job search program, a University of Kentucky Extension agent led the creation of a *Job Club* to provide resources to help job seekers improve employability skills and maneuver a difficult point in their lives. In partnership with the local business community, the university alumni association, and media, the program team continued innovating through COVID-19 and beyond, with accessible opportunities and impacts for individuals and communities. *Contributors: Dr. Jeff Young, Director for Urban Extension and Diana Doggett*



More details on these examples are included in a case study series (go.osu.edu/NatUrbanExtCaseStudy) featured in *Extension and the Social Sciences*, chapter on Extension programming to enhance urban well-being, Cambridge University Press (2024).

Worksheet**Explore and Develop *Everyday* Entrepreneurial Leadership Opportunities in Extension**

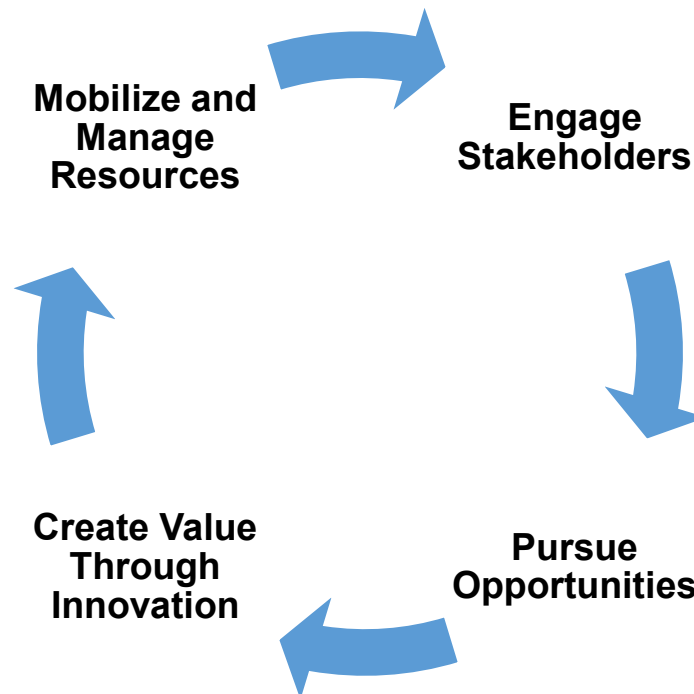
With a motivation to serve others, Extension professionals are naturally entrepreneurial. More awareness, intention, and collaborative approaches to entrepreneurial application benefits Extension during *everyday* moments as well as “big day” opportunities that result in significant impact from a series of entrepreneurial actions.

This worksheet (on the next two pages) guides individuals and teams in exploring situations that are better, due to an entrepreneurial approach. This ongoing process begins with the stakeholder perspective which can continue to inform every other stage of development – these interrelated steps use an entrepreneurial focus.

***Everyday* Entrepreneurial Actions**

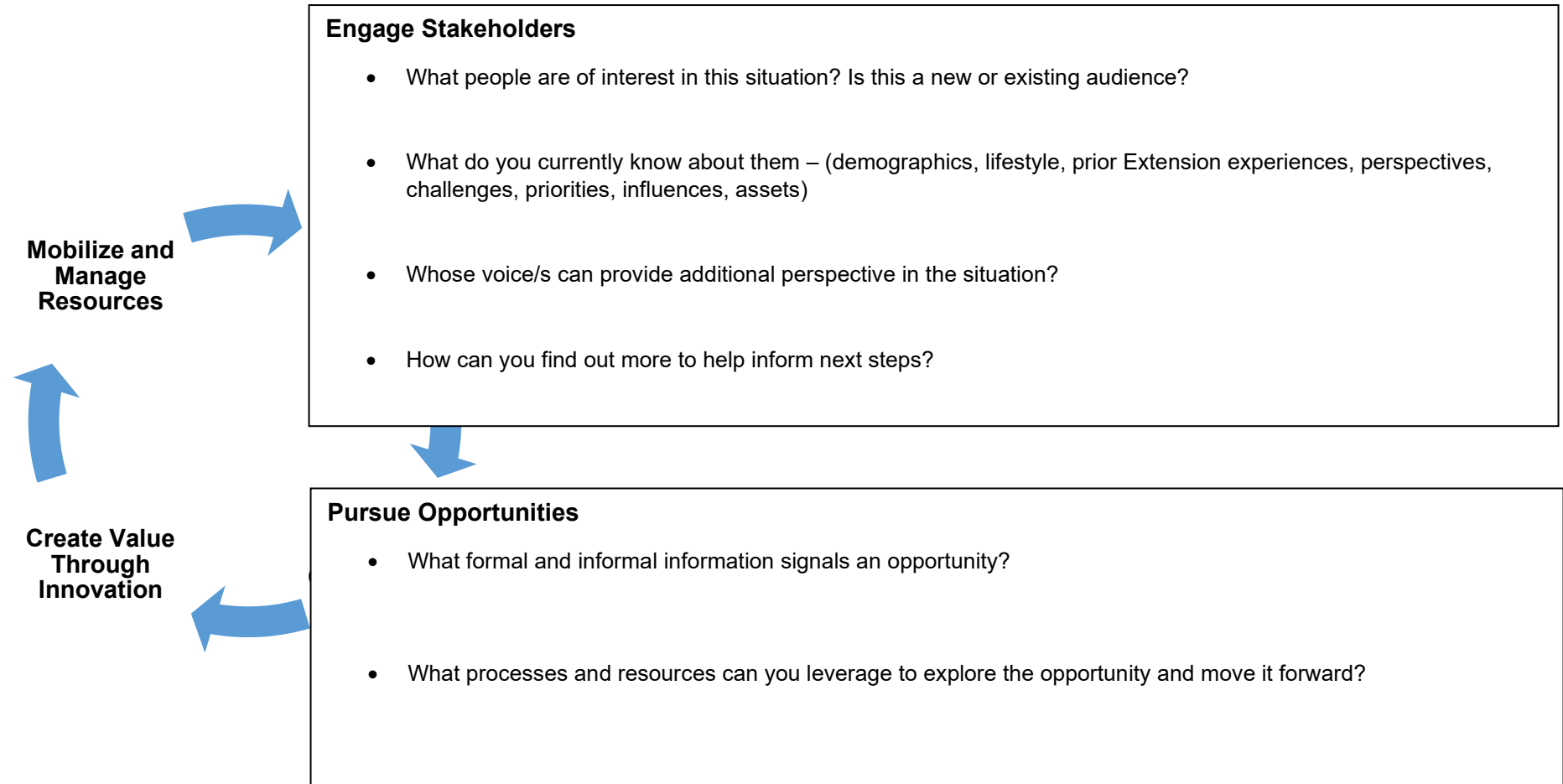
- Mission-focused
- Value driven from multiple stakeholder perspectives
- Proactive and agile
- Collaborative
- Tenacious amidst uncertainty and setbacks
- Accountable
- Other _____

An interactive version of this worksheet is available at go.osu.edu/EELE



Entrepreneurial Leadership Worksheet

What's the Situation/Focus? _____



Mobilize and Manage Resources (Stewardship Investments)

- To make the most of the situation, what public and private resources can you leverage (financial, facilities, equipment, supplies, expertise, and other human capital, as well as social, political, and cultural capitals)?
- What resources do you need help leveraging?

**Engage Stakeholders****Pursue Opportunities****Create Value Through Innovation**

- What are you creating (program, product, service, process, partnership)?
- How do your stakeholders benefit?
- What allies, advocates, and sponsors do you need? What value do they add?

Resources and References

The screenshot shows the Ohio State University Extension website. The main heading is "Urban Extension" with the subtext "Ohio State University Extension". The navigation menu includes "About", "Positioning", "Programs", "Personnel", "Partnerships", "Library", "News & Events", and "OSU Extension". The page title is "Everyday Entrepreneurial Leadership in Extension". A breadcrumb trail reads: "PERSONNEL // PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT // EVERYDAY ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP IN EXTENSION". The main text states: "Awareness of entrepreneurial application in everyday Extension occurrences can improve Extension's impact in a rapidly changing environment. While the term entrepreneur is often associated with business ventures, interest in entrepreneurial influences in". A QR code is located on the right side of the page.

go.osu.edu/eele

Contacts and Acknowledgements

- Julie M. Fox, Ph.D., The Ohio State University, CFAES, Associate Professor and Extension Director of Strategic Initiatives and Urban Engagement, fox.264@osu.edu
- Ramona Madhosingh-Hector, M.S., M.S.P., University of Florida/IFAS Extension, Regional Specialized Agent, Urban Sustainability. ramona.m.hector@ufl.edu. For more information about Ramona's WCMER Fellowship work in this area, visit <https://metroextension.wsu.edu/2020/05/04/ramona-c-madhosingh-hector/>
- Michelle Gaston, The Ohio State University, managed project details in support of this Bulletin and related resources. gaston.6@osu.edu

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