

Employee Engagement and Involvement: Training staff to localize and extend communications

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Abstract

For several years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service has focused efforts on building internal communications capacity through training and sharing consistent messaging documents among all staff. Building on previous efforts based in the agency communications plan, the communications office is now providing templates, a photo and video library, a specialized intranet, targeted communications training, ongoing consultancies, and more to staff in 46 remote offices as well as in the Washington, DC headquarters. With these tools and services, staff are increasingly able to confidently create their own high-quality materials, pitch and place stories, expand their outreach and partnerships, and speak as ambassadors convincingly about the value of NASS, responding to surveys, and using agricultural statistics. Since beginning these newer efforts, we have seen staff engagement and confidence rise as evidenced by the number of people attending trainings, requesting consultations, using the intranet repositories, getting local stories placed/media coverage, and creating new locally-generated materials shared and used by peers. This presentation will share the challenges with engagement and consistent messaging and how these were overcome, how we operationalized field office generated ideas, examples of the tools and materials developed, and more.