Cooperative Training Programs

We specialize in

- Training and professional development
- Public relations and communication
- Non-profit and cooperative advisory services
- Management and operations consulting
- Electric power consulting and technical assistance
- Seminars, speeches, and workshop facilitation

The InDev team has over 75 years of collective expertise in strategic innovation, operational support, and business leadership; including more than 31 years experience in the electric cooperative sector.

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Media Training for Cooperative Executives & Staff
Training designed to improve the media presentation skills of key co-op personnel

The program is an intensive one-day training session on dealing effectively with print and broadcast media. This program equips senior management and staff with the skills and confidence needed to effectively communicate the co-ops intended message during media events. The program is designed to increase the confidence and capabilities of the participants to speak effectively in planned interviews and press conferences, or when required to make impromptu responses to the media in-the-field.

The program is presented as a mixture of presentations and participant activities that include:

a) Advice on making professional media presentations
b) Participant exercises using videotaping of interviews
c) Individual “playback” coaching
d) Guidelines for effectively communicating with the media

InDev provides this training session on-site for up to 12 participants. The program includes an interactive workshop that covers the basics of preparing and delivering media presentations and interviews. The session progresses from an overview of media interactions to interview techniques. Topics include managing the media judiciously, communicating effectively while safeguarding the co-op’s image, managing hostile interviews, and dealing with crisis situations.

The videotaped exercises provide opportunities for participants to critique their own presentation styles in front of a camera with one-on-one coaching that enhances their confidence and effectiveness.

Topics

1. Exhibiting a professional presence during the interview
   - Dressing professionally without losing your individuality
   - Poise and composure and non-verbal communication
   - Remaining professional under pressure
   - Speaking with grace and finesse
   - Staying on topic

2. The basics of communication
   - Speaking with clarity and confidence
   - Tact, discretion, and compassion
   - Using tone and inflection to enhance communication
   - Avoiding slang, company-speak, lingo, and jargon
   - Unspoken messages in gestures and body language

3. Interview tools & techniques
   - Managing the message
   - Keeping cool in high stress situations, and understanding the danger of “No Comment”
   - Learning to respectfully disagree
   - Dealing with hostile media
   - Recovering from blunders

4. Questions and Answers

1 Provides up to 0.65 CEUs of Continuing Education Credits
2 The program length is determined by the number of participants in the workshop
Communication Training for Cooperative Employees

*Training designed to improve the communication skills of frontline personnel*

The communication skills of your frontline employees (those who interact with the public on a daily basis) influence your cooperative’s image. Your employees must know *what to say* and *how to say it*, and they must be able to communicate with diplomacy, poise, and finesse. In today’s world of instant global communication a misspoken word, phrase, or gesture can have damaging consequences.

First impressions are formed in seconds, but can be the most lasting. Co-op employees need to be cognizant of how they make first impressions, which are often based entirely on nonverbal signals. This program develops the communication skills needed to make favorable impressions, avoid communication blunders, and build stronger community relationships.

The program introduces the principles needed to communicate successfully with co-op members, the community, and the media. Whether interacting with one person or a large group, grasping these principles will help employees communicate more effectively.

The session offers your frontline employees techniques for effective communication during high stress situations. It provides tips on handling communications during the critical first minutes *on-the-scene* of a crisis situation when members of the media arrive before a cooperative spokesperson.

**Topics**

1. **Projecting a professional image**
   - The impact of deportment and demeanor
   - Poise and composure speak volumes
   - Non-verbal communication
   - The role of manners and respect for others
   - The fine art of finesse

2. **The basics of communication**
   - Learning to think before you speak
   - Bridging cultural divides
   - Tact and discretion
   - Using tone and inflection to strengthen communication
   - Avoiding slang
   - Gesturing and body language

3. **Frontline field communication**
   - Keeping cool in high stress and crisis situations
   - Diplomacy and negotiation under duress
   - Learning to respectfully disagree
   - Dealing with the media in the field
   - Avoiding disastrous comments
   - Recovering from communication blunders

4. **Questions and Answers**
Electric Cooperative Orientation

A unique orientation program for new cooperative employees

This program focuses on the unique working environment found at an electric cooperative and helps new employees assimilate into the co-op work place. It provides insights into the concepts of a “not-for-profit” organization and how working for the cooperative differs from working with a “for-profit” commercial enterprise. This program can be used to supplement your existing orientation program or as a standalone program designed to meet your co-op’s orientation needs.

This program introduces the employee to the nuances of the electric cooperative, and covers topics such as member-ownership, typical organizational structures, reporting responsibilities, and co-op operations. It provides a brief overview of the history of rural electrification, and introduces the co-op philosophy and its effect on customer relations. It explains the myriad of relationships within the rural electric cooperative community.

Topics

1. Optional - New Employee Orientation Checklist (presented in conjunction with an HR representative)
   - This session is tailored to meet your HR requirements
   - Provides the details of your cooperative from a HR perspective and related employment details

2. Introduction to the cooperative
   - An overview of the electric cooperative and the philosophy behind its success
   - A look into the structure of the co-op, including member-ownership, the role of the board of directors, and the co-op’s not-for-profit status

3. Why the electric cooperative is unique
   - A look at the differences and similarities between cooperatives, public utilities/municipal systems, and investor-owned power companies
   - Discusses not-for-profit – vs – for-profit motives and views of electricity distribution

4. A Brief Review of the History of Rural Electrification
   - Electricity in America from the 1800’s to the 1930s
   - The birth of rural electrification
   - Rural electrification from the 1930’s to today

5. The Rural Electrification Administration(REA)/Rural Utility Services(RUS)
   - An introduction to the REA and its role in rural electrification
   - A review of the organization from its inception - through its transition to today’s RUS

6. Cooperative Associations
   - This section of the program covers the role of allied cooperative organizations
   - A review of statewide, regional, and national associations

7. Questions and Answers
America’s Rural Electrification Story
A look at the inspirational legacy of the rural electrification program and the role of electric cooperatives

This program presents the rich history of rural electrification in America, and serves as a source of inspiration and motivation for new and veteran employees alike. It follows the struggle of rural America to acquire and retain access to electricity. It looks at the philosophical differences in the approach that cooperatives have in providing electricity as compared to other power suppliers. The program covers key events and actions that had an impact on the rural electric program, drawing from historical records and personal experiences of the presenter, a second-generation co-op lineman.

Topics

1. Electricity in America, the early days
   - The growth of electricity in the US from the 1880s – to the 1930s
   - Main Street becomes the Great White Way
   - Rural America remains in the dark (less than 10% of rural farms have electricity in 1935)
   - Early attempts at rural electrification

2. The Rural Electrification Program Begins
   - Franklin D Roosevelt at Warm Springs, Georgia
   - Early moves – Morris Cooke (the 12 Minute Memo)
   - The Rural Electrification Act of 1936
   - Cooperatives, a different approach to rural electrification

3. The War Years
   - Scarcity of resources; nothing to work with and no one to do it
   - The co-ops band together nationally (NRECA)

4. The Wires Go Up
   - Standardization and production line techniques
   - By 1960 more than 95% of rural farms have electricity

5. The Role of the Rural Electrification Administration (REA)
   - The need for the REA
   - Standards and production line processes
   - Safeguarding the members
   - The REA grows and changes with the times (the transition to the RUS)

6. Allied Cooperative Organizations
   - The need for statewide/regional associations
   - National organizations including NRECA and CFC

7. Today's cooperative is not your father’s co-op
   - The changing role of the electric cooperative
   - The transitioning relationship between members and their co-op
   - How the co-ops lead in innovation and resource conservation

8. Questions and Answers
Professional Presence for Cooperative Executives

Mastering six critical areas of professional excellence

This training session helps cooperative staff members perfect their business bearing and demeanor. This four-hour session builds self-assurance and confidence in areas of speech, appearance, presentation skills, and speaking styles. The program helps new and veteran professionals understand the nuances of professional presence and provides the skills needed to project a positive co-op image. This presentation can also be tailored to meet the needs of members of the board of directors in their roles as cooperative representatives.

Topics

1. Establishing a unique professional style
   - Understanding how to present a professional image while maintaining your individuality
   - The topic covers professional attire and attitudes and how they have an impact on your audience

2. Speaking professionally
   - Tips on speaking with poise and confidence in any setting
   - This topic helps professionals develop positive communication techniques that match and complement their professional style

3. Mastering Close Communication Techniques
   - Learn to communicate effectively in one-on-one and small group situations
   - This session provides tips for effective meeting management, negotiation, and conflict resolution

4. Developing a Solid Podium Presence
   - Learn to make fearless presentations
   - This topic will benefit anyone that needs to speak before an audience, whether it is at a local civic club, before the board of directors, or a national meeting

5. Managing the 21st Century Media
   - Effectively dealing with the modern media environment
   - Learning to deal with incessant and aggressive media tactics
   - Working effectively with the management and PR team in the field

6. Dealing with Disaster
   - Effective communication in high-stress situations and crisis situations
   - Learning to respectfully disagree
   - Understanding the pitfalls of “No Comment”
   - Avoiding damaging comments
   - Recovering from blunders

7. Questions and Answers
Employee Public Relations

A guide to engaging co-op employees in public relations

An effective public relations (PR) program must be a company-wide effort. It is essential that every co-op employee understands that they are part of the PR process and have a working knowledge of its basic principles. This training session covers such basics as dealing with public perceptions, the need for message clarity and consistency, and how employees can support the PR team. This training session is designed to strengthen your PR efforts and can be tailored to fit your co-op’s specific needs.

Topics

1. Public relations: an overview
   - Covers the basics of public relations
   - Highlights the fragility of public perceptions
   - Introduces the importance of solid and consistent PR to the cooperative

2. Every employee is a public relations representative
   - Reinforces the need for all employees to be cognizant of their role and impact on the co-op’s PR image

3. Why cooperative branding, symbols, and slogans are essential
   - Covers the importance of your local co-op brand and messages, and how local brands tie into regional and national brands and messages

4. A practical guide to media communication
   - Helps participants understand the needs of the modern media. It identifies manipulative media tactics, and offers methods for dealing with aggressive and confrontational media representatives

5. Projecting the right cooperative presence among the membership
   - Identifies how employees can inadvertently create a negative impression among members of the community
   - Introduces strategies to increase member loyalty and achieve greater positive public perceptions

6. Employee public relations in crisis situations in the field
   - Provides first-responder employees with tips and strategies to maintain control of messages in high-stress public situations until an official cooperative spokesperson arrives
Electric Cooperative Public Relations

Building and strengthening your public relations program

This training covers the basics of a successful public relations (PR) program. It introduces principles and concepts for effective PR including the need for clear consistent messages, the importance of local branding, and necessity for co-op wide support. It identifies media manipulation techniques and offers tips to effectively respond to negative media perceptions. This program is tailored to support your PR program or can be a platform for launching a new public relations initiative.

Topics

1. Public relations: an overview
   - This topic identifies elements of a good PR program and presents strategies that can be quickly and effectively employed

2. Building an effective press kit
   - A practical guide to assembling a press kit including press releases, fact sheets, and photographs

3. The power of symbols and slogans
   - Covers establishing and strengthening your corporate identity, building a strong local brand, developing a consistent message, and creating synergy with regional and national brands

4. Newsletters and promotional materials
   - Provides tips on writing and producing newsletters and promotional materials that members will read, creating gripping visuals, and developing text that captures and holds the reader’s attention

5. A practical guide to media communication
   - Helps participants understand the needs of the modern media. It identifies manipulative media tactics, and offers methods for dealing with aggressive and confrontational media representatives

6. The co-op website, your direct link to the Internet generation
   - Discusses The Web (often the most underutilized PR tool) as a medium for bi-directional communication, and offers suggestions for building a stronger website from a PR perspective

7. Projecting your presence among the membership
   - Introduces strategies to increase member loyalty and positive member involvement
   - Describes methods for tapping the strength of grassroots support

8. Public relations in crisis situations
   - Helps co-ops prepare to effectively respond to high-stress situations and develop action plans for proactive and positive response in crisis situations
Community and Economic Development

A guide to community growth and prosperity

This training program focuses on the impact of community and economic development (C&ED) from a cooperative perspective. Drawing from examples of community and economic development projects funded under the USDA REDL&G program, it demonstrates how cooperatives have incorporated key principles of community and economic development into their implementation of C&ED projects. The training outlines an effective working model by identifying community stakeholders, and exploring critical growth areas such as jobs, education, recreation, the arts, and access to the global community.

Topics

1. **An introduction to community and economic development**
   Provides definitions of Community and Economic Development and explains their differences, commonalities, and links. The session highlights how C&ED benefits the cooperative.

2. **The foundations of a community and economic development program**
   This session uses existing rural community examples to develop core concepts and identify issues critical to building a successful program.

3. **The C&ED tool box**
   Identifies tools and techniques used in successful programs such as - needs assessments, resource surveys, visioning, strategic planning, critical relationship building, benchmarks and metrics, workforce development, and marketing networks.

4. **Business development**
   A focus on business retention and expansion, entrepreneurial and micro enterprise development, business incubators, and new business attraction factors.

5. **Financing**
   Examines financing options (bonds, grants, and government programs), combining and leveraging financial resources, and maximizing stakeholder participation. This session provides details of the USDA Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants (REDL&G).

6. **Creating a unique advantage**
   Covers topics of branding, business clustering, regional marketing networks, media relations and advertising, and capitalizing on tourism and recreation.

7. **Elements of community prosperity**
   Explores the impact of community services such as healthcare, education, parks and recreation, housing, cultural events, and the arts.

8. **Building a C&ED team**
   A discussion of the elements and steps needed to build a successful team such as establishing the mission, goals, and objectives; action-plans, tasks, and activities; and management responsibilities.
Electric Cooperative Finance & Accounting
An introduction to the requirements of cooperative capital management

This program provides as introduction to cooperative finance and accounting. It offers a macro-view of financial issues and management, audit procedures, and internal control. This is an excellent program for clerical staff, non-finance professionals, and new management personnel.

Financial Management and Accounting: This session examines the techniques and methodologies of financial management and accounting for electric co-ops. It explores internal and external control requirements, the financial roles of management, board, and the funding entities such as Rural Utilities Services (RUS) and National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (NRU-CFC).

Audit Procedures and Internal Control: The program reviews the practices and procedures used in conducting financial audits of electric cooperatives, as well as the use of audits as a management tool. It reviews RUS’s use of audits for oversight and monitoring and for the protection of the member-owners. The goal is to improve the participants’ knowledge and understanding of the need for and use of audits, and the importance of correct and accurate internal control procedures.

Financial Forecasts, Work Plans and Budgeting: This session provides an introduction to the functions and processes of financial forecasts, work plans, budgeting, and resource planning. Its goal is to develop a better understanding among staff of the importance of the planning process on the long-term health of the cooperative and the necessity of forecasting future requirements.

Topics
1. Financial Management and Accounting
   - Introduction to electric cooperative financial management and accounting
   - Use of uniform system of utility accounting
   - RUS requirements for cooperatives

2. Audit Procedures and Internal Control
   - Use of an audit as management tool
   - How RUS uses audits
   - Steps in the audit process
   - Conducting a financial audit
   - Preparing the audit report

3. Financial Forecasting, Rate Design, Work Plans, and Budgeting
   - Introduction to financial forecasting
   - Rate design
   - Integrated resource planning
   - Work plan format and preparation
   - From budget preparation to work plan insertion

4. Review, Questions, and Answers