



Roadside Reflection - Keeping Stakeholders Engaged When Everything Feels Uncertain

1. Lead with Transparency, Not Certainty

Why it matters: Honest, timely communication builds trust—even when you don’t have all the answers.

Action Steps:

- Share regular updates with stakeholders—even if the update is “We don’t know yet, but we’re watching closely.”
- Use a simple communication structure: “Here’s what we know. Here’s what we’re working on. Here’s what’s next.”
- Avoid speculation; instead, be a consistent and calm presence.

People don’t expect perfection—they expect people who show up with honesty.

2. Small Touches, Big Impact

Why it matters: Stakeholders don’t always need a big gesture—they need to feel remembered.

Action Steps:

- Make one unexpected connection each week (call, text, or handwritten note).
- Create a simple rotation list of key stakeholders to check in with monthly.
- Keep messages brief and personal: ask how they’re doing, not just share updates.

A small note or short conversation can go a long way in uncertain times.

3. Show Them Their Voice Matters

Why it matters: People are more invested when they feel heard and their input shapes the path forward.

Action Steps:

- Use quick surveys, informal interviews, or listening sessions to gather feedback.
- Respond to what you hear—acknowledge concerns or ideas, and explain how they influence decisions.
- Highlight examples of how stakeholder feedback has been implemented.

When people feel heard, they stay connected—even through change.

4. Anchor in the Mission

Why it matters: Mission clarity provides stability and purpose when everything else feels unclear.

Action Steps:

- Share real-life stories that reflect Extension's long-term impact.
- Include a mission reminder in monthly newsletters or updates.
- Revisit your “why” with your team and align messaging accordingly.

The mission doesn't change—even when everything else does.

5. Visible and Valuable: Be Present

Why it matters: Stakeholders notice your presence—even in small moments. Visibility builds credibility.

Action Steps:

- Attend community events, even if you're not the speaker—just being there matters.
- Celebrate small wins publicly: a youth program success, a farmer's milestone, a partner collaboration.
- Send a photo or update that spotlights a local story.

Being visible—even briefly—reminds people that you're invested.

6. Clarify What's Still in Motion

Why it matters: In uncertainty, people need to know what they can count on.

Action Steps:

- Regularly share what programs, services, or staff are still active and reliable.
- Create a simple visual (calendar, chart, email section) showing “What’s Continuing This Month.”
- Be clear about what’s paused or changing—but frame it with what remains.

Focus attention on what’s still moving forward.

7. Empower, Don't Just Inform

Why it matters: Involving stakeholders in solutions builds loyalty, ownership, and momentum.

Action Steps:

- Invite stakeholders into brainstorming or co-creating ideas.
- Ask them to champion an initiative: present at a meeting, share a story, or recruit others.
- Shift from “Here’s what’s happening” to “How can we shape what’s next—together?”

Engagement grows when people feel like co-creators—not just recipients.