



Extension

University of Missouri

Guidelines for Counting Extension Contacts from Virtual Programming and Social Media

Virtual programming and social media have become a prevalent means of reaching clients in our Cooperative Extension work. It is important to have guidelines on how to count these connections through our Extension Contacts reporting procedures. These guidelines include some of the most common applications used currently, but we recognize this list is not exhaustive and will need to be updated as new applications are adopted.

Extension faculty and staff are reminded that contacts are only counted when there is an exchange of educational information. Posting a congratulations note to recent county contest winners, or reminding followers of the time and place of a field day or program does not qualify as an Extension contact. Also remember that indirect contacts require accounting for the age group (under 18 and 18 and over) of the contacts. Age information is generally not possible for individual social media posts and recorded webinars therefore, you would report these contacts as “unknown age”.

Facebook – Delivering educational information using Facebook should be counted as indirect contacts. For every post with educational information, use the **reach** count as shown on each post. For every video and reel with education information, use the number of **views**. These give you the potential number of pages and profiles who may have seen your post, video, or reel.

X (formerly Twitter) – Delivering educational information using X (formerly Twitter) should be counted as indirect contacts. For every post with educational information, count the number of Followers.

Instagram – Delivering educational information using Instagram should be counted as indirect contacts. For every post with educational information, use the **reach** count as shown on each post. For every story, video or reel with education information, use the number of **views**. These give you the potential number of profiles who may have seen your post.

YouTube (or other educational video platforms) – Views may be counted as indirect contacts.

Blogs – Delivering educational information using various blog platforms should be counted as indirect contacts. Some blog formats provide analytics that can be useful in collecting participant data. It is likely you will not be able to identify most of the blog followers. Where possible, count the number of page views.

Podcasts – For a podcast, count the number of plays/listens (not downloads) as indirect contacts.

Webinars – Depending on the webinar delivery method, educational information delivered using various on-line platforms may be counted as either direct or indirect contacts.

- Webinars where educational information is delivered live and having face-to-face connections with participants through web cameras can be counted as direct contacts. You will need to report race, ethnicity, and gender, if possible. Collecting this data may **not** be done through visual observation of the participants. Demographic data may be collected through preregistration/self-reporting or post participation self-reporting.
- Asynchronous Canvas courses in which a learning assessment is implemented can be reported as direct contacts.
- Webinars where educational information is delivered without having face-to-face connections with participants through web cameras should be counted as indirect contacts. Record the number of participants at your webinar.
- If a recording of the webinar is posted after the live event and analytics are available for the page with the recording, you may be able to use the analytics to help collect indirect data.

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Adapted from Virginia Cooperative Extension. Authored by Joe Hunnings and S. Gill 2015. Updated by Lonnie Johnson and Ben Grove 2023