



AGRICULTURE AND
NATURAL RESOURCES

*PROGRAMMING
GUIDELINES*

“Putting Knowledge and Research
to Work with Wisconsin’s Agriculture
and Natural Resources”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
PLANNING	6
IMPLEMENTATION	8
TEACHING	9
EVALUATION	10
DOCUMENTATION	11
County or Unit Reports	11
Team Reporting	13
Web Based Reporting	12
Statistical Reports	13
Non-Tenured Faculty Reporting	13

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 May 20, 1993 Revised: December 27, 1999

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INTRODUCTION

Every Extension professional asks, "How can I have the greatest impact?" Extension's mission is to help people use knowledge to improve their lives. This requires identifying problems, prioritizing needs and implementing relevant Extension programs.

An Extension program involves a sequence of educational experiences over time with a focus on a main purpose of helping people make improvements in their lives. The program is aimed at helping people achieve important outcomes or impacts.

Effective Extension professionals are "agents of change." Highly visible, credible and accountable educational programs result when action-oriented plans, teachings, and evaluations take place.

Extension professionals can have the greatest impact through significant educational programs. A program is an effective way to concentrate resources on serious problems or needs affecting people.

Extension programs help people by:

- Finding, testing, and applying new solutions to serious problems.
- Reinforcing through varied activities to really apply information, create change, or take action.
- Getting personal satisfaction from involvement with important concerns and major results.
- Achieving major impacts on economic, social, cultural, or environmental concerns important to their community.

Extension programs help Extension professionals by:

- Developing clear outcomes and planned activities to meet them.
- Coordinating activities, roles, and resources.
- Using varied and sequenced actions to reach the most people.
- Acquiring resources (help, time, materials, money) and using them more efficiently.
- Communicating with clients, colleagues, the organization, and stakeholders.
- Getting job satisfaction from clear, major results on important problems.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

The management of an individual's Extension program goes beyond time management. But time management is an important part of it. A dynamic Extension program can place pressures on an individual's time. It has the potential of taking away from one's personal and family time.

Key Concepts:

- Manage your time.

Read books and information on time management. These can be helpful in developing a system. However, it takes discipline to follow any system. But once started and maintained, time management can be very rewarding.

- Keep a calendar.

Structure your professional time by blocking specific tasks in your calendar. For example: Identify a particular time to write your monthly report on the last Monday of the month. Note personal time in your calendar for your self or family. Use a code as people who want part of your time may be looking over your shoulder as you schedule a meeting or appointment.

- Bring a balance to your programming efforts.

An Extension program uses all of the tools available. These include media, individual and group instruction. Relying on one or two may cast a particular habit that will be difficult to overcome.

Other ideas:

- Develop quick answers (factsheets) to common questions.
- Develop a personal information file (vertical file) with newsletters, articles, media releases, etc. for quick referrals.
- Home horticulture diagnostics can take up a great deal of time. Use a "pest of the week" approach with displays of disease or insects that are appearing with information on control or direction to a publication.

- Plan well in advance of an educational event

Don't wait until the last minute for developing teaching materials, etc. Have materials in the hands of supportive staff early. Early planning and preparation will make it easier to solve those unexpected last minute problems.

- Work as an office team.

An office or department should work as an effective team. This involves the professional staff as well as the support staff. Support staff are very important to the success of any office effort. Consider support staff as part of the team. Involve support staff in efforts, place trust in their judgment, seek their counsel and recognize their contribution. Collaboration among professionals will lead to a strong team effort. Keep others informed of your programming efforts and keep informed of theirs. Pitch in when necessary to assist others and don't hesitate to ask for their help and advice.

- Work with volunteers.

Volunteers are very important to the success of a program. Master Gardeners, Dairy Promotion Groups and others multiply your efforts. It will take time in the beginning to establish these groups but as they work on their own they will be effective and great supporters of your efforts. Existing groups may have unduly types of service required of you. Take the time to develop them into an effective self-sufficient group. It will take patience and a great deal of recognition of their individual and group efforts to bring this about.

- Odds and ends.

- Keep a brag file
- Keep a problem file
- Initially save everything but eventually file many things in the round file
- Develop a log of contacts, phone numbers, messages, etc.
- Respond to messages (email) immediately, don't put off till
- Follow-up, send thank you notes, answer questions and address individual concerns

PLANNING

The Extension professional has the dilemma of having too many problems to work on, too much content to teach, and too many clientele groups to reach with limited time and other resources. The effectiveness of Extension programming, whether at the county, area or state level, is dependent upon sound planning by faculty and staff. Based largely on clientele input as well as the knowledge and research base of the University, such planning targets the issues and high priority needs of Wisconsin's many diverse clientele groups. Highly visible, credible and accountable programs are the result.

Planning is an ongoing process that will bring about successful programs targeted toward clientele concerns. Prioritizing is difficult but needed to determine the most important concerns. Prioritizing can be done by:

- Reviewing the previous programming
- Talking with clientele and potential clientele.
- Gathering data from agriculture statistics, DHI, testing labs, Census of Agriculture, Natural Resource Conservation Service, University WISPOP or locally generated information.
- Web sites can provide a great deal of information. Wisconsin Demographic Services Center www.doa.state.wi.us/deir/boi.htm provides demographic data including Wisconsin geography, population projections and estimates and other census information. National Agriculture Statistics Service <http://www.nass.usda.gov/wi/> has information on Wisconsin agriculture.
- Surveying clientele randomly selected or at educational programs.
- Listening to advisory committees, Extension organizations, commodity groups, etc.
- Trends occurring in county or area as compared to state or national trends.
- Observing and thinking about the situation. Be sure to note your thoughts.

Selecting and developing a program requires the extension professional to decide what alternatives are most appropriate for a program. Some questions that should be answered are:

- Is the problem or need clearly identified by up-to-date information?
- Does the program need fall within the mission of Extension?
- Will the results be important to a sizable number of people?
- Do people think it's important?
- Can you carry out some of the program through your routine commitments and responsibilities?
- What are the consequences if you don't do it?
- Will a major project in some other area produce more important results?
- Can you get enough support and resources to succeed?
- Will it contribute substantially to Extension's long-range goals in your program area?
- Does your department, Extension Education Committee or other major advisory council support a major effort in this area?
- Will there be a direct benefit to people who take part?

IMPLEMENTATION

Awareness

- Build visibility with clientele and the general public.
- Use a variety of teaching methods including group and individual instruction, demonstrations, media work and innovative approaches.
- Target clientele: producers, agriculture professionals, users and non-users of Extension.
- Reach out to new clientele.

Materials Developed/Adapted

- Instructional materials are developed or existing materials are adapted to the county or learner level.

Use of Community Resources

- Network with veterinarians, NRCS, FSA, farm suppliers, production testing organizations, marketing and commodity groups, and other professionals.
- Recruit and train volunteers to carry out educational activities.
- Producers who have been successful should be used for training others.

Use of University Resources

- Incorporate materials, specialists and other faculty/staff in developing a collaborative county program.
- Base educational programs on university research and not intuitive or individual testimony.

TEACHING

Build credibility through active quality teachings.

- Take a major role as an educator.
- Develop a variety of teaching methods - maintain a balance.
Examples: large group, small group, individual instruction, mass media, result demonstrations, newsletters, and displays.
- Use individual instruction in a proactive manner, not just reactive.
- Develop your own instructional materials with level of the learner in mind.
- Always have quality instructional materials and visuals.
- Focus on University research.
- Tell them, show them, and always leave them a reference.
- Build an expertise and expand upon it for the benefit of learners.

Develop lesson plans to help guide a teaching effort.

Example: Sprayer Clinic

Objectives

- 1. Growers will learn the importance of sprayer calibration and maintenance.*
- 2. Growers will be able to identify the best spray pattern.*

Materials: sprayer, calibration jar, equipment manual, hand-out

Outline: Importance of calibration

Economic

Poor results

Hazardous to environment

Test sprayer tips for output

Demonstrate spray patterns on hard surface

Demonstrate calibration with and without calibration jar

Evaluation: Log comments, follow-up individual instruction.

EVALUATION

The Extension professional is responsible for quality improvement of their program. The purpose of evaluation is to improve the effectiveness of the effort for the future. A well-planned evaluation will determine the impact of the effort and lead to the improvement. It is very important to plan evaluation ahead of time and never as an afterthought.

- Integrate collection of information into the program and make it meaningful.
- Keep logs of contacts, observations, quotes, discussions, etc.
- Use multiple methods, both quantitative and qualitative, to evaluate programs and teachings.
- Use individual instruction as a means of determining decisions made by clientele as a result of your educational efforts. A selected sample of participants can be used to reduce the amount of time.
- Use pre and post tests, knowledge scale or instruments able to determine previous knowledge with teachings that will be used in multiple settings or are a major component of a major program.
- Interviews of clientele are effective. Structured interviews are credible. Trained support staff can do the interviews.
- Mail questionnaires are less costly in terms of time. They can be very effective when designed properly. It is most important that efforts are made to ensure high response. It would be better to get an 80% return from a random sample than a 20% return from everyone.
- When possible, have others do your evaluation. Self-reporting of results is questioned at times. If there is data or information from other sources, use it.
- Develop a system to collect case studies.

DOCUMENTATION

It is the responsibility of the faculty and staff to show effective use of public funds. The person who does a good job in reporting to local and state stakeholders will be the primary beneficiary.

County or Unit Reports

County faculty and staff hold the responsibility to provide the county partner with the information needed to appraise the value and return they are receiving. These reports should be both written and oral presentations.

The written report should be brief and to the point. Keep in mind the reader of these reports. As a busy county official, they need to have a good background on plans, why a particular program is being conducted and the impact the effort is having. They may desire to be part of an educational event when possible, either to introduce speakers or at least to be recognized as a participant.

Provide oral reports that are educational. Don't just cover the listing of activities. If the written report is brief, an oral report can go into depth on a particular activity. Explain why a particular activity is needed, teach an abbreviated lesson and cover the impact the activity has had or is anticipated to have.

State faculty and staff will need to keep their department or center informed of their plans and progress. Each unit will have different requirements and procedures. The faculty or staff person should speak to their unit head or department chair for information.

Consider the following when reporting:

- Speak in terms of clientele; not activities

Example: Five clients gained knowledge determining the economic threshold for treating leafhoppers. This came about when a Clearfield farmer contacted this agent.

OR: *125 growers have a better understanding of the Feed Grain Program as a result of two joint FSA and Extension meetings. This agent taught a session on calculating returns.*

NO: This agent conducted a Twilight meeting at the small grain plot where five growers attended. This agent spoke about each plot.

- Make the report a learning experience.

Example: Twenty-six pesticide handlers indicated that they are now using personal safety equipment when handling pesticides. This resulted from a follow-up visit. It is apparent many who handle pesticides do not concern themselves with their own safety. Two handlers last year were hospitalized as a result of inadequate personal safety.

- Show the value of the investment that the county makes.

Example: Three families made decisions on expanding their dairy herds through the use of a financial package made available to counties. One family determined that they could expand to 300 cows, and the computer printout saved them an estimated \$5,000 in interest charges since they could expand in three steps.

OR: *Eleven producers began raising dairy beef adding an estimated \$60,000 to their operation. Information shared with these producers was obtained from a district in-service training held last year.*

- Show the return on the investment that the county makes.

Example: A recent survey indicated forty growers harvested their first crop hay an estimated three days earlier as a result of the scissors cutting project. This resulted in better quality alfalfa. The value of this alfalfa increased by \$4.00 per day or a total of \$70,000 improvement.

- Add a human-interest story where appropriate.

Example: One hog producer was able to make adjustments in her feeding after determining that toxins in the corn she was feeding had caused three

sows to abort. She had contacted this agent after reading an article in the local paper about the mold conditions in storage. After sampling and determining that the corn did have toxins, a change in source of corn prevented any further abortions in twenty-seven farrowings.

- Speak to human development or leadership development.

Example: Seven Holstein Association board members learned about proper meeting planning and parliamentary procedure at a recent board meet. This agent was asked by the president to train the board members. This agent noted that the next meeting adjourned a half-hour earlier than normal. Plans are being set to have a mini-session at each board meeting to learn more about running a meeting.

Team Reporting

The primary way for faculty and staff to report their efforts will be through a system of team reports. There are two levels of reports. First, as a member of a team and second, as a contributor to team efforts. As a member of a specific team, the individual will be involved in implementing team efforts and will need to provide documentation as described by that team.

Even though a person is not a member of a specific team and may not be programming heavily in a team's area, there is an expectation of providing information about efforts that have occurred as a result of a particular team programming. An example would be an effort in nutrient management that is being programmed by an agent in a different county, but in the agent's county he or she is responsible for tracking the change that clientele have made. In our example, it might be the number of producers and number of acres that are managing their nutrients. This information will be reported on the team's web site.

Web Based Reporting

A new reporting system, established in 2000, is designed to support work teams. Work teams will have team plans of work and team evaluation plans. Faculty and staff will be able to report their activities that contribute to the team effort. These activities would include statistics, impact indicators, impact statements and success stories. Faculty and staff do not need to be on a team to report these activities to a team.

Statistical Reports

Title VI, Civil Rights Act of 1964 specifies that no person in the U.S. shall, on the grounds of race, color, religion, sex or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. Proactive measures to assure equal opportunity are mandated in Title VI. This requires faculty and staff to make affirmative action efforts until program participation by underrepresented minorities reflects proportionate representation in the population of potential recipients.

This requires that the faculty and staff identify the potential audience based on demographic or other local information. Documentation needs to show reasonable efforts in reaching underrepresented minorities within potential audience. This will include minorities on advisory committees; use of mass media, mailings, organizations, etc.; and programming designed to reach these minorities. Examples of documentation can be found in the civil rights file located in county office or the program area office. For more information on civil rights compliance and documentation go to: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/admin/crights/crightsindex.htm>

Reporting of civil rights data will be through the web based reporting system. Individual reports would include racial/ethnic information in the following categories: white, not of Hispanic origin, black, not Hispanic origin; American Indian or Alaskan Native; Hispanic; Asian or Pacific Islander.

Reporting for Non-tenured County Faculty

Non-tenured county faculty are responsible for reporting to their academic department. These reports will be reviewed by the faculty's district mentoring team. This district mentoring team will review these reports on an annual basis and provide recommendations for the faculty.

Reports will include narratives for a multi-year plan, annual plan and an annual accomplishment report. These reports become part of the faculty member's tenure portfolio. The following is a guide in writing these plans and reports.