

Multi-Sector Community Collaboration — Assessing the Changing Environment For Extension Work

*Extension's Work With Multi-Sector Community Groups
Serving Children, Youth and Families*

**Changing Environment Team
University of Wisconsin-Extension
Cooperative Extension**

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The Changing Environment Team

Connie Abert
Linda Cates (Chair # 1)
Gay Eastman
Mary Gruenewald
Mary Huser
Sue Pleskac
Boyd Rossing (Chair # 2)
Ellen Taylor-Powell (Evaluation Consultant)

Report Preparation

Connie Abert
Linda Cates
Mary Gruenewald
Mary Huser
Sue Pleskac
Ellen Taylor-Powell (preliminary draft author)
Gay Eastman (thematic analysis)
Boyd Rossing (final draft author)

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MULTI-SECTOR COMMUNITY COLLABORATION – A UW-EXTENSION CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

Community Collaboration for Complex Issues – A Strategy for Changing Times

Multi-sector community groups, typically referred to as coalitions or collaboratives, have become a familiar means of solving community problems, promoting system change and/or enhancing community well being. Axner and Berkowitz (1998) describe multi-sector collaboration as “what happens when non-profit, private, and public organizations and community members form a partnership whose purpose is to solve problems that impact the whole community.”(p. 2)

Multi-sector community efforts emerged as a response to complex community issues where conventional approaches were not working. For example, people working together to prevent substance abuse found that targeted programs might prevent abuse in a school while conditions elsewhere in the community were promoting use and abuse. Thus, community-wide interventions became the chosen vehicle (Wolff, 2001a). The need for broader, multi-sector collaboration was seen and applied across many fields including public health, public safety, violence prevention, family preservation and support, economic development and environmental stewardship. Governments and foundations now frequently require communities to develop coalitions that engage multiple sectors of the community when they apply for funding.

Chavis (2001) summarizes the outcomes that some coalitions, partnerships and other collaborative efforts have brought about. Broadly speaking, they have strengthened community health and resilience by promoting economic development, inter-group relations, and civic participation. They have succeeded in raising funds and implementing new local service systems. They have fostered coordination at the system and the case levels. Coalitions have also enabled spin off activities and initiatives. Finally, studies are beginning to show long term effects on policy change and individual well being. The ability of coalitions to mobilize and focus resources has contributed to these successes.

A study of 44 community groups addressing issues affecting families in 36 Wisconsin counties (Taylor-Powell et al., 2001) showed that members are relatively satisfied with functioning of their groups, yet also wish to make improvements in recruiting, orienting, training and retiring members. The greatest gains for members and coalitions occurred in increased understanding of community needs, issues and resources and strengthened sense of capacity to make a difference by working together, while ability to generate resources needed improvement. Impacts on the community were shown in networks developed and grants written or funded. Further efforts were needed to build on

these foundations and bring about changes in services, policies and conditions affecting families.

The rapid spread of multi-sector collaborations across fields and localities has generated an increased understanding of coalition processes and outcomes. These efforts are complex and dynamic, as changes occur over time in coalition membership, developmental stage and issue focus. These changes affect the capacity of the group to promote effective collaboration by partners and to sustain desired community change (Foster-Fishman et al., 2001).

Wolff (2001b) suggests seven future roles of community coalitions. First, coalitions provide a means for working with the whole community in addressing a host of inter-related issues. Second, while communities are complex and dynamic, a whole community approach can bring significant changes. Future coalitions can and must engage residents at the grass roots level in defining problems, choosing interventions and participating in implementation and evaluation. In addition to enhancing outcomes, these efforts will promote broader civic engagement and innovation and build new community leaders. Third, future coalitions should actively engage diverse participants, crossing racial, ethnic, class, gender and other lines and promoting changes toward greater inclusion and social justice in the community. Fourth, coalitions should also seek to promote emergence and continuation of service systems that function collaboratively, seeking to enhance one another's capacity as well as that of the community. Fifth, the complexity of issues addressed by coalitions will also call for interdisciplinary approaches for technical assistance, support and evaluation. Sixth, coalitions also must identify larger structures that help or hinder community outcomes and advocate for policy change locally and nationally. Lastly, coalitions must be prepared to seek and assume greater decision-making power for local communities, power devolved from local, state and federal governments.

UW-Extension Responds to the Demand for Community Collaboration

As the need for, and interest in, collaborations spread, significant emphasis on supporting multi-sector collaborations in UW-Extension programming for families and youth emerged. UW-Extension educators sought ways to incorporate this demanding arena within their responsibilities. Over the past decade and longer, Family Living Program (FLP) Educators, Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP) Coordinators and 4-H Youth Development (4-HYD) Educators in UW-Extension have expanded their involvement in a broad array of community partnerships, coalitions and other multi-sector groups. The Parent Support and Community Partnerships theme group provided leadership in Family Living Programs. This theme group supported development of resources and training on conducting and evaluating community collaboration. During the 90's, WNEP programming expanded to additional counties and coalition initiatives addressing hunger, food security and nutrition proliferated. Statewide WNEP leaders provided support for this work. A statewide theme group titled

Creating Community Partnerships with Youth provided leadership and support for the work of 4-HYD faculty and staff. A newer emphasis on Community Youth Development now provides further impetus and leadership for this work.

During this period, County UW-Extension Educators gained considerable experience in community collaboration. In many cases they served as initiators and filled key leadership roles in new coalitions. These roles carried new connotations for the mission of UW-Extension to educationally extend the research and resources of the university to residents and communities. Educators were engaged in organizing and facilitating community development efforts. These responsibilities expanded on previous roles focused on teaching and information dissemination. As years passed, more and more community coalitions, networks, councils and other groupings formed. Funders began to mandate collaboration and concerns about the sustainability of coalition efforts emerged. As the programming environment kept changing, new demands and opportunities arose for County UW-Extension Educator roles in community collaboration.

Assessing the Changing Environment

In late 2000, a team of UW-Extension Family Living specialists and County Youth and Family educators, called the Changing Environment Team, was formed to conduct a study assessing the changing landscape of community work and staff needs for professional support to meet the challenges raised by these changes. The study was intended to build on the previous community capacity work of both Family Living and 4-H and Youth Development program areas, including "Extension Role in Community—Evaluation Report," (Taylor-Powell et. al. 2000), Community Group Member Survey: Using the Results" (Community Partnerships Work Team, 1998), and the recent "Mapping our Resources for Community Youth Development: Survey Results on the Collective Capacity of Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development" (Building Capacity for Community Youth Development Work Team, 2002).

The Changing Environment Team focused on UW-Extension's work with multi-sector community groups (MCGs) which were defined as: coalitions, networks, and collaborations that involve various interests and organizations working together to address issues facing children, youth and/or families. Examples include: Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (AODA) or Tobacco Coalitions, Safe and Stable Family Coalitions, Financial Resource Networks, School Readiness Community Projects, Child Care Task Forces, Hunger Prevention Councils and Delinquency Prevention Advisory Groups. The study sought to determine:

1. The extent that the work of County UW-Extension Educators involves multi-sector community groups and how "important" it is to them.
2. If, and how County UW-Extension Educators' assistance in multi-sector groups has changed over the last five years.

3. The type of technical assistance groups and County UW-Extension Educators need to support their work.

METHODOLOGY

In late 2000, several UW-Extension Family Living Program (FLP) Specialists discussed their perceptions of changes in community initiatives that County UW-Extension Educators were engaged in and the possibility of conducting a survey to identify any changes. To begin to collect information, about a dozen Family Living Educators/ Agents participated in an Educational Telephone Network Conference (ETN) to discuss the changes that they had experienced in their community work and their need for support. The discussion was lively and provided evidence that, in fact, the landscape of community work has changed and staff need both professional and personal support to meet the challenge optimally. The Changing Environment Team was formed.

The Changing Environment Team designed a two-stage survey process. First, all County UW-Extension Educators in the Family Living, 4-H Youth Development Program areas and all Coordinators in the Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (197 individuals in total) were asked to respond to an email survey (see Appendix 1). Then, if the County UW-Extension Educator was currently assisting the work of any multi-sector community group, s/he was asked to respond to a web survey (see Appendix 2).

The two questionnaires were pilot tested and revised. Following Dillman's (Salant and Dillman, 1994) total survey design approach, two follow-ups were used to increase the response rate for each survey. An overall response rate of 85% was attained for each stage of the survey process. This was an increase from 51% at the end of the first mailing for the first email survey and from 53% for the second web survey. The survey process was concluded in early December 2001. (See Appendix 3 for response rates for the two surveys and at three points in time). The high response rate helps to assure that the results represent the current opinions and practices of respondents. Also, when comparing non-respondents to respondents there were no discernible differences that would lead to bias or errors in the findings.

The Team considered doing post-survey follow-up with willing respondents. Forty-six individuals provided their contact information indicating willingness to participate in a follow-up teleconference(s) to provide more detail about how multi-sector community groups have changed, how our UW-Extension roles have changed and current needs related to assisting MCGs. The number of individuals who expressed this interest indicates not only the importance of this issue, but also the commitment of UW-Extension Educators to their communities.

Finally, this study shows that a high response rate can be obtained with a commitment of time and resources. The Program Leaders distributed the initial surveys. It is uncertain what difference this made in attaining the final response rate. The use of successive follow-up contacts clearly contributed to the high return rate.

Cautions and Limitations

As indicated, this study focused on the perspectives of UW-Extension personnel. The results should not be generalized to MCG members as a whole. It would be interesting to compare these findings to the perspectives of other non-Extension MCG members; in particular, regarding what technical assistance is considered necessary and who should provide it.

The Changing Environment Team expended considerable effort to develop clear and distinctive definitions to differentiate types of community groups based on actual work and experience as County UW-Extension Educators. Nuances and differences in types and functioning of community groups, however, are complex. As a consequence, some errors in reporting are likely. As always, these responses and results are as “good as possible,” though not perfect.

The study team considered both quantitative and qualitative results in developing conclusions for this study. In some cases the qualitative responses of a small number of respondents were given some weight in the conclusions. This occurred after considerable discussion by the study team in which such comments were validated by the team's programming experience as well.

FINDINGS

Assistance to the Four Types of Community Groups

The 168 County UW-Extension Educators who responded to the email questionnaire reported that for the groups they work with, they most frequently assist the work of multi-sector community groups (Table 1). A similarly large number reported that they assist other types of community groups, particularly the traditionally supported Extension groups such as 4-H Clubs and the Home and Community Education Clubs and associations (HCE).

Table 1. Number of respondents assisting different types of community groups (n=168)

Type of community group	Respondents	
	Number	Percent
Multi-sector group	136	81
Single nonprofit agency or organization	120	73
Civic association or volunteer organization such as Jaycees or Kiwanis	71	44
Extension supported group such as 4-H Community Club and Home and Community Education Club	133	80

The majority of these respondents indicated that they assist in multiple types of groups. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of the respondents were involved with at least three of the four types of community groups (Table 2).

Table 2. Involvement in different types of community groups (n = 157)

Involved in	Respondents	
	Number	Percent
One type of group	15	10%
Two types of groups	41	26%
Three types of groups	52	33%
All 4 types of groups	49	31%

Family Living Programs (FLP) Educators/ Agents and Nutrition (WNEP) Coordinators more frequently reported assisting multi-sector community groups than did their 4-H Youth Development (4-HYD) colleagues or individuals with dual responsibilities (Table 3). Persons in all three areas of programming responsibility reported about the same frequency of assistance (between 70 and 80% of respondents) to the single, non-profit types of groups. Again, the numbers assisting in civic associations were parallel across the three primary areas of responsibility, although respondents reported assisting these groups less frequently (only 44 to 48% of respondents reported assisting civic groups). 4-HYD respondents more frequently reported assisting traditionally UW-Extension supported groups. Ninety-three percent of the 4-HYD respondents reported assisting these groups compared to 81% of their FLP colleagues and 53% of the WNEP coordinators. This finding may reflect the role 4-H Clubs play in the responsibilities of 4-HYD Educators.

Table 3. Relationship between area of responsibility and assistance in different types of community groups

Area of responsibility	Multi-sector community groups	Single, non-profit groups	Civic association	Extension supported groups
Family Living	94%	79%	44%	81%
WNEP	87%	73%	48%	53%
4-HYD	73%	71%	44%	93%
Other*	20%	20%	20%	60%

*Other = individuals with dual responsibilities

County UW-Extension Educator Assistance to Multi-Sector Community Groups (MCG)

If the respondent reported on the email survey that s/he currently was assisting a multi-sector community group(s), s/he was asked to complete the web survey (phase 2 of the process). One hundred thirty-six reported that they were currently assisting multi-sector groups. One hundred sixteen completed the web survey, yielding a response rate of 85%.

The 116 County UW-Extension Educators reported on a total of 438 multi-sector community groups in which they were members (four groups average per individual) and on another 135 MCGs that they were supporting but not as a group member. The number of groups assisted by these respondents as a member or support person, ranged from 0-22 (Table 4). It is notable that support was usually provided to MCGs as a member. In fact, for over half of the respondents (58%) there were no groups to which they provided support as a non-member. It appears likely that County Educators get involved in MCGs as a member because MCGs address issues of importance to their programming. Then, as a member, they exercise various forms of leadership and provide various forms of support.

Table 4. Number of MCGs that County UW-Extension Educators assist as a group member or in a support capacity (n=116)

Number of groups	As a member		Supporting group but not a member	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0	3	3%	67	58%
1-3	67	58%	43	37%
4-6	31	27%	2	2%
7-9	9	8%	0	0%
10-12	3	3%	3	3%
13 and over	3	3%	1	.8%

The groups supported by County Educators vary in the geographic scope of their activities. When tallied across individuals the predominant category was county wide, comprising 54%. Notable effort also occurred at the local (31%) and multi-county (13%) levels. Results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Geographic Scope of Groups (n = 569 groups)

	Number	Percent
Local	176	31%
County	309	54%
Multi-County	74	13%
Other*	10	2%

* Regional or statewide (1 reported “national and international via email”)

Importance of Multi-Sector Community Groups

The Changing Environment Team was particularly interested in opinions about the importance of multi-sector community group work. Table 6 shows the responses for the Educators who responded to this survey (i.e., County UW-Extension Educators who were currently involved in MCGs or 81% of all respondents, equaling over two-thirds of all FLP, 4-HYD Educators and WNEP Coordinators). Even five years ago, 45% of these respondents considered this work “very important”. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents currently reported this work as “very important”. The level of importance of working with multi-sector community groups to conduct family, children and youth programming was reported to have increased by 22% over the years and is expected to continue to move in the future from “fairly important” toward “very important”.

Table 6. Level of importance of multi-sector community group work at three points in time as determined by County UW-Extension Educators

Points in time	Not important	Somewhat important	Fairly important	Very important	Average level of importance on a 4 point scale
Five years ago (n=82)*	6 (7%)	16 (20%)	23 (28%)	37 (45%)	3.1
Currently (n=116)	1 (1%)	16 (14%)	21 (18%)	78 (67%)	3.5
In the future (n=116)	1 (1%)	7 (6%)	25 (22%)	83 (72%)	3.6

* 34 individuals did not respond since they were not working with UW-Extension five years ago.

The data in Table 6 supports a widespread perception that the importance of multi-sector community group work in County UW-Extension Educator human development programming has shown notable increases.

Assistance Needed by Multi-Sector Community Groups

The other main evaluation question in the study concerned assistance needed, if any, by MCGs and County UW-Extension Educators working with MCGs. Respondents were asked to consider a list of 13 types of technical assistance that the Changing Environment Team compiled based on experience with community groups. The respondents most frequently indicated that MCGs need assistance with evaluation, followed by assistance with facilitation and group processes, strategic planning, fund development, demographic data collection and analysis, and research-based content (Table 7).

Five or six of every ten County UW-Extension Educators also noted the need for attention in the areas of recruitment of diverse members; marketing and public relations; organizational development; and leadership. Approximately four of every ten respondents indicated the need for assistance in the areas of recognition of accomplishments, as well as public policy and legislative issues.

Of all of the types of assistance presented in the survey, conflict management and resolution was the least frequently noted as an area where MCGs need assistance. Further insight into dispositions of Family Living and 4-H Youth Development personnel regarding County UW-Extension Educator roles in conflict management can be found in "Conflict Management Design Team Results and Recommendations", October 2001.

To further examine assistance needs of MCGs, responses were analyzed by the three programming areas: Family Living Programs, Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program and 4-H Youth Development. The results are provided in Table 8. Each programming area serves a different (though overlapping) set of MCGs. Needs vary according to the nature of each group, however some MCG needs are spread widely, e.g., 63-96% for evaluation, and for strategic planning across all three programming areas.

Table 7. Assistance needed by multi-sector community groups (n=114)

Assistance Type	Assistance Needed	
	Number	Percent
Evaluation	93	82%
Facilitation/group processes	80	70%
Strategic planning	80	70%
Fund development	79	69%
Demographic data collection and analysis	79	69%
Research-based content on children/family/youth issues	78	68%
Recruitment of diverse membership	65	57%
Marketing/public relations	62	54%
Organizational development	57	50%
Leadership	53	46%
Recognition for member and group accomplishments	44	39%
Public policy/legislative issues	38	33%
Conflict management/resolution	32	28%
Other	9	8%

Note: respondents could check multiple assistance needs

Within programming areas other top needs varied (see Table 8). For FLP Educators, top needs (73-96%) were: evaluation, demographic data collection and analysis, research-based content on children/youth/family issues, fund development, facilitation/group process, and strategic planning. A second tier (52-63%) was noted by at least half of the respondents: marketing/public relations, leadership, and recruitment of diverse members. The number of top needs was smaller in the other two program areas. For WNEP, top items (50-75%) were: strategic planning, evaluation, fund development, marketing/public relations, and recruitment of diverse members. For 4-HYD, top needs (60-72%) were: facilitation/group process, evaluation, recruitment of diverse members, research-based content, fund development, strategic planning, and organization development. Less prevalent needs (5-46% in different programming areas), yet still important to some educators, exist in areas of: recognition for member and group accomplishments, public policy/legislative issues, and conflict management/resolution

Table 8. Assistance MCGs need, by programming area

Assistance Type	FLP		WNEP		4-HYD	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Evaluation	50	96	13	65	30	70
Facilitation/group processes	40	77	9	45	31	72
Strategic planning	38	73	15	75	27	63
Fund development	41	79	11	55	27	63
Demographic data collection and analysis	45	87	10	50	24	56
Research-based content on children/family/youth issues	42	81	8	40	28	65
Recruitment of diverse membership	27	52	10	50	28	65
Marketing/public relations	33	63	10	50	19	44
Organizational development	25	48	6	30	26	60
Leadership	28	54	6	30	19	44
Recognition for member and group accomplishments	23	44	6	30	15	35
Public policy/legislative issues	24	46	4	20	10	23
Conflict management/resolution	19	37	1	5	12	28

Change in Assistance Needed by Multi-Sector Community Groups

An open-ended question asked respondents to indicate how the assistance needed by multi-sector community groups has changed over the past five years. Forty-two County UW-Extension Educators provided written comments. Main points and ideas that were voiced by more than one person are summarized as follows:

- Multi-sector community groups are more sophisticated today and are at a higher level of functioning.
 - “Five years ago, the focus was more on the need to collaborate and bring people to the table. Now I think they need help to determine what work is more important for community groups to tackle and where will community groups be most effective.”
 - “Many community groups have existed for five to ten years now and are at a higher level of functioning as a group. These groups need more sophisticated education on how to take their group action to the next level.”
 - “Groups now work together as part of business as usual—but need to get more efficient at doing so.”
- There are increased reporting and accountability requirements.
- People, including public sector partners, are more selective about involvement when they do not see solid impact for time invested.

- There is a switch from “real volunteers” to members who fulfill the roles, but as employees.
- Increasingly, the impetus for collaboration is grant money rather than originating in a community need.
- Funding is increasingly competitive as more vie for the same pool of resources.
- Community groups have become politicized.
- More time is spent in group process.
- While the number of groups has increased, the volunteer pool has remained the same or decreased.
- Groups change and thus, assistance needs change; there is an increasing need to be flexible.

The comments show that while County UW-Extension Educators have been increasing their involvement with multi-sector community groups, the internal and external context shaping the work of these groups has also changed. The comments indicate that in general multi-sector community groups are becoming more professional, selective, sophisticated and politicized. Accordingly, their developmental assistance needs have changed as well.

Type of Assistance Provided by County UW-Extension Educators

Another survey question asked which types of technical assistance should be provided by UW-Extension. This question assumed that some types of technical assistance may or may not be most appropriately provided by County UW-Extension Educators. Survey respondents most frequently indicated that UW-Extension should provide assistance with evaluation, followed by assistance with research-based content, strategic planning, demographic data collection and analysis and group process (Table 9). Four of these areas give at least some emphasis to data provision or analysis. One area focuses on group process and several of the other areas can be accomplished as group process. These may be areas in which respondents felt that UW-Extension had a particular niche and/or expertise or they may represent areas where other technical assistance providers are unknown. It is also notable that these five areas were among the top six areas identified in the previous question. It may be helpful to consider further reasons why beliefs of County UW-Extension Educators regarding MCG needs closely coincide with their beliefs regarding UW-Extension's responsibilities to MCGs. This likely reflects responsiveness of educators to MCG needs, but may also reflect seeing MCG needs through the lens of UW-Extension educator's priorities and capabilities.

Above in Tables 7 and 8, fund development was indicated as a top need of MCGs. Here, however, it was not frequently reported as assistance that UW-Extension should provide. It is unclear whether this response is due to lack of expertise, interest, the availability of other providers to supply this assistance, concern that fund development means fund raising, or some other reason.

Table 9. Assistance that UW-Extension should provide: (n = 114)

Type of assistance to provide	Responses	
	Number	Percent
Evaluation	94	82%
Research-based content on children/ family/ youth issues	83	73%
Strategic planning	73	64%
Demographic data collection and analysis	70	61%
Facilitation/ group processes	67	59%
Organizational development	46	40%
Leadership	43	38%
Public policy/ legislative issues	32	28%
Recruitment of diverse membership	31	27%
Fund development	30	26%
Marketing/ public relations	22	19%
Conflict management/ resolution	19	17%
Recognition for member and group accomplishments	18	16%
Other	6	5%

A further analysis was conducted to consider responses by County UW-Extension Educators in Family Living Programs, Wisconsin Nutrition Education, and 4-H Youth Development programming areas. The results are provided in Table 10. Most educators (60-96% across three programming areas) see a role in assisting MCGs in: evaluation and in strategic planning. Top areas for UW-Extension assistance by FLP Educators (67-96%) were: evaluation, research-based content, demographic data, facilitation/ group process, and strategic planning. For WNEP, top areas (60%) were: evaluation and strategic planning. In 4-HYD the four top areas (60-74%) were: evaluation, research-based content, facilitation/ group process and strategic planning. A smaller number (0-49% in different programming areas) see a UW-Extension assistance role in the eight remaining areas.

Technical Assistance/Professional Development Needs of County UW-Extension Educators

The final item in this series of questions asked respondents to indicate which area they, individually, would like to strengthen in order to work more effectively with multi-sector community groups. Secondly, they were asked to rank order each choice. Table 11 presents the number of County UW-Extension

Table 10. Assistance UW-Extension should provide, by programming area

Type of assistance to provide	FLP		WNEP		4-HYD	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Evaluation	50	96	12	60	32	74
Facilitation/group processes	35	67	5	25	27	63
Strategic planning	35	67	12	60	26	60
Fund development	18	35	3	15	9	21
Demographic data collection and analysis	43	83	8	40	19	44
Research-based content on children/family/youth issues	44	85	8	40	31	72
Recruitment of diverse membership	14	27	4	20	13	30
Marketing/public relations	10	19	4	20	8	19
Organizational development	23	44	2	10	21	49
Leadership	24	46	2	10	17	40
Recognition for member and group accomplishments	8	15	2	10	8	19
Public policy/legislative issues	23	44	2	10	7	16
Conflict management and resolution	12	23	0	0	7	16

Educators who identified each technical assistance area as an area for improvement and the top five rankings for each. The order of preference parallels the items identified in Table 9 as assistance areas that UW-Extension should provide. Evaluation and research-based content were identified as the top areas for UW-Extension technical assistance and were the areas that respondents most frequently identified for knowledge and skill enhancement followed by strategic planning, group process, and demographic data collection and analysis.

Once again an additional analysis was conducted to ascertain responses by each of the three programming areas (see Table 12). Most educators (55-75%) across the three programming areas expressed a need for technical assistance for their own development in the area of evaluation. The top areas of need (50-75%) for FLP Educators were: evaluation, research-based content, demographic data, and facilitation/group process. Top areas (55-60%) for WNEP were: evaluation and strategic planning. In 4-HYD, top areas (56-65%) were: evaluation, research-based content and facilitation/group process. A smaller number (0-49% in different programming areas) called for professional development assistance in the remaining eight topic areas.

Table 11. Ranking of technical assistance areas that County UW-Extension Educators wish to strengthen (n= 113)

Type of assistance needed by County Educators	Number of responses	Ranking (number of responses)				
		# 1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Evaluation	78	20	21	18	12	2
Research-based content on children/ family/ youth issues	65	31	10	9	8	4
Strategic planning	58	11	11	15	6	7
Facilitation/ group processes	55	12	13	8	9	5
Demographic data collection and analysis	53	9	16	11	14	1
Organizational development	30	4	8	3	3	5
Fund development	29	6	8	5	3	3
Leadership	28	7	3	3	3	5
Recruitment of diverse membership	26	3	4	11	2	1
Public policy/ legislative issues	25	4	2	4	6	3
Conflict management and resolution	22	2	4	3	3	4
Marketing/ public relations	18	2	5	3	2	2
Recognition for member and group accomplishments	12	1	2	1	1	2
Other	7	3	1	2	0	1

Table 12. Areas Educators wish to strengthen, by programming area

Type of assistance needed by County Educators	FLP		WNEP		4-HYD	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Evaluation	39	75	11	55	28	65
Facilitation/group processes	26	50	5	25	24	56
Strategic planning	25	48	12	60	21	49
Fund development	17	33	5	25	7	16
Demographic data collection and analysis	32	62	8	40	13	30
Research-based content on children/family/youth issues	33	63	7	35	25	58
Recruitment of diverse membership	9	17	4	20	33	30
Marketing/public relations	6	12	4	20	8	19
Organizational development	11	21	2	10	17	40
Leadership	12	23	2	10	14	33
Recognition for member and group accomplishments	4	8	3	15	5	12
Public policy/legislative issues	18	35	2	10	5	12
Conflict management and resolution	13	25	0	0	9	21

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked to provide additional comments. Forty-seven County UW-Extension Educators did so. Their remarks are summarized as follows:

- Several commented on the benefit of working in MCGs: e.g., opened avenues for working with hard-to-reach youth; provided access to funding; stretched dollars available; increased visibility for UW-Extension; made networking with other agencies possible; served to bring to the forefront youth issues that needed to be addressed.
- Several commented on the demands of the community club program in 4-H that prevents one from being more engaged in MCG work. "...it will take a long time to 'break' long established county expectations. Additional assistance from state UW-Extension to reinforce this transformation of the county would be helpful. Are there state plans to help this transformation happen? Are there written or unwritten expectations that agents participate in MCGs?"
- Because turnover in community groups is common, assistance is needed to work with constantly changing groups.
- Do not overlook existing expertise or assistance and training provided by other professional groups.
- Assistance needs of MCGs vary.

- Assistance that UW-Extension might provide varies county to county depending upon what is available and what other agencies are providing. For example, in some counties, United Way has done extensive work on outcome-based evaluation.
- Multi-sector community group work is time consuming.
- Addressing self-interests of individual members and ways to share credit continue to plague many multi-sector community groups.
- Changeover in community group membership is essential in order to avoid stagnation and the “same old-same old” but difficult to implement.

These comments further highlight the benefits and the constraints of working with multi-sector community groups, as well as the considerable variation across groups in accessible resources and associated assistance needs.

Integrative Qualitative Analysis

Respondents to the web survey took time to enter many thoughtful comments. To fully consider this component of the survey an analysis was conducted to identify themes across responses to all of the open-ended questions. Fourteen clusters of responses emerged. Four categories with many comments were: General Changes in MCG Work and Conditions, Changes in MCG Work: Specific Types of Assistance Community Groups Need, Challenges of Doing MCG Work, and Challenges Faced by MCGs. The thematic analysis results are provided in Appendix 5.

Forming Conclusions and Recommendations

State Program Leaders asked for a comprehensive report with consideration of future directions as well as findings and conclusions. The Changing Environment Team examined the quantitative and qualitative data for several months, drawing also on their experience in working with MCGs and the research literature. The following conclusions and recommendations reflect these multiple sources of information.

CONCLUSIONS

Multi-Sector Community Groups - A Dynamic Context

1. Multi-Sector Community Group (MCG) work has emerged over the last ten years as a key approach that communities employ to meet needs of children, youth and families.
2. MCG work, when successful, brings issues to the forefront, enhances inter-group cooperation, increases access to funds, facilitates pooling and stretching of

resources, reaches new audiences, and most importantly addresses complex community issues that no one organization or institution can tackle alone.

3. The environment of MCG work has changed. There are more collaborations underway and new needs have arisen. Funding is a driving force. Some groups are becoming more professionalized with less volunteer or citizen involvement. Serving on coalitions is sometimes perceived as an added burden for staff of agencies with reduced budgets and over-worked personnel. Many groups have moved beyond the challenge of bringing people to the table to the challenge of identifying the most important issues and capitalizing on MCG group capabilities. Long-standing groups are at a more mature, sophisticated level. As groups gain greater influence they are recognizing the need for being outcome based, and for documenting impact.

4. MCGs are experiencing a host of challenges. The complex issues addressed by MCGs require building new relationships and then sustaining long-term, collaborative action. Groups in a community sometimes rely on a core group of over-committed active community members and find it difficult to recruit and sustain new and diverse participants, especially family and business representatives. For other groups, high turnover of group leaders is a challenge. Some groups are stagnating, reluctant to evaluate and change their purpose or scope. Competition for funding or credit sometimes erodes the collaborative spirit of a group. When initial funding of groups relying on outside sources ends they may flounder as they strive to either seek new outside resources or to become more locally self-sufficient with very limited local resources. Solid impacts must be achieved and documented to justify time, energy and resources invested in MCGs. In some cases these are difficult to achieve or document in a timely fashion.

5. MCG work has emerged as a central strategy for addressing community issues with coordinated application of community resources. However, these processes can be difficult and time consuming and results do not come quickly. For greater success with these crucial processes, residents and organizations must adopt a longer horizon for accountability while strengthening shorter term attention to group development, and to strategy development and implementation.

Assistance Needed By MCGs

1. To be effective, MCGs must, in an ongoing way, competently apply processes that enable them to develop and function effectively. They must negotiate stages of group formation and group building, direction setting, resource acquisition, and program implementation and evaluation. They must also continually review their directions, composition and activities and make needed changes as their understanding of issues increases, as issues change and as other factors come into play over a long term multi-year process.

2. Multi-sector community groups have a wide range of technical assistance needs and the needs change over time. Study findings indicate some types of assistance are needed by most MCGs and other needs are less prevalent. These latter needs may arise at certain stages of MCG development. Qualitative findings also indicate that some standing groups are becoming more sophisticated and looking for more advanced forms of assistance. Attention should be given to when different types of assistance are appropriate and useful with community groups, e.g., professional development to develop critical thinking, technical assistance, training in a particular model or program, serving as resource or liaison, etc.

UW-Extension's Work With MCGs Addressing Issues Affecting Children, Youth And Families

1. Work with MCGs has become more important and central to Family Living programming over the last decade. 4-H Youth Development Educators are becoming more involved in these efforts as well. Along with increased importance has come increased commitment of time and energy, as well as refocusing of priorities and of ways to accomplish priorities. Respondents in both program areas expect the importance of this work to further increase in the future.

2. UW-Extension has developed significant experience-based expertise, especially at the county level, on how to work with and support MCGs providing timely assistance regarding human and family issues and regarding development and operation of MCGs.

3. UW-Extension's educational roles in MCG work recall and recover an earlier educational organizing tradition that has been considered in recent scholarship (Peters, 2002). In Extension's early decades a central role was to build cooperative, educational and democratic partnerships of government, university and ordinary people to develop civic capacity as well as to solve specific problems. In later years the role receded as the process of transferring knowledge and technology from universities to communities came to the forefront and now the earlier role has re-emerged. Yet today, though educational organizing is a long-standing part of UW-Extension's mission, instruction by information dissemination and direct instruction is more readily recognized as educational activity by many educators and stakeholders. UW-Extension should undertake concerted efforts to clarify, legitimize and communicate the educational roles of UW-Extension in supporting MCGs.

4. UW-Extension's work with MCGs is best done in a context of recognition, validation and support by County and State Extension administrations. To continue and expand this type of work such support is critical. Some County Educators, particularly in 4-HYD call for clearer and stronger support for this type of work, especially at the state level.

5. UW-Extension educators experience challenges in working with MCGs. Educators must adapt to groups with different strengths and at different stages of development. Work with MCGs often takes considerable time and urgent demands are difficult to manage in one's larger program of work. Significant knowledge and skill is needed to be effective in this work and educators must often learn as they go while engaged with and assisting multiple groups.
6. UW-Extension's increasing involvement in MSG work calls for expanded educational roles. UW-Extension educators must choose and communicate the roles they play in their work with MCGs. Such roles with MCGs include: sharing research, resource and other information with members, providing instruction for members, facilitating educative deliberations and problem solving, and designing or implementing educational programs as outcomes of the MCG. In some cases educators are shifting away from direct teaching of specific clientele as they devote more time to the educative potential of MCGs. Through MCG work they are reaching key community leaders and the larger citizenry with education addressing important, recognized issues.
7. Despite the values of UW-Extension work with MCGs, educators should continue to consider and weigh the relative merits of direct teaching of specific clientele and of other methods for fulfilling UW-Extension's mission to the more systemic impacts of work with MCGs. In this way UW-Extension's work with MCGs can be further clarified as a key strategic component in achieving UW-Extension's educational mission.
8. The study provided solid evidence that UW-Extension Educators fill a variety of roles with MCGs. Therefore, it is essential that UW-Extension Educators be able to clearly articulate their specific roles with the group, and with other stakeholders, and to measure progress and success regarding their contributions.
9. The number of MCGs that a County Educator supports varies from a few to seven or more. Most of the groups are county-wide in scope. It is the responsibility of each educator to consider the array of groups they support in light of their mission, priorities, capabilities and other factors. Some roles call for a greater investment of time and resources than others. Thus, consideration should also be given to what types of support will be given to various groups. As the number of MCGs in a county increases, educators might also consider new structures that might provide coordination or other support across related groups and serve to economize on the educators time.

UW-Extension's Assistance To MCGs

1. County UW-Extension Educators are well positioned to provide some of the assistance MCGs need as well as to inform members of other sources of assistance outside UW-Extension. Findings indicate that generally the types of assistance UW-Extension Educators believe they should provide corresponds to the types they believe MCGs need. While being responsive to local needs is

highly prized in UW-Extension, an argument can also be made for defining a niche of special expertise and capability and focusing energies on providing excellent assistance in that area. UW-Extension educators must periodically assess the proper balance for UW-Extension in supporting MCGs.

2. The findings indicate that providing research-based content is a high priority of Family Living and 4-HYD educators, an educational role as applicable to MCGs as to other audiences. UW-Extension should be known for providing research-based information about children, youth and families to coalition members. Increasingly UW-Extension can also become known for providing research-based information regarding MCG functions, development and outcomes.
3. In addition, findings indicate educators need to provide assistance in areas of evaluation, facilitation and group process, and strategic planning to enhance the effective development and functioning of these groups.
4. UW-Extension should consider whether to specialize in certain forms of MCG assistance, with training and resources to support county educators providing this assistance to groups. Specialized roles, if pursued should be undergirded by solid and broad foundational knowledge on the core functions and developmental requisites of MCGs.
5. Fund development was seen as important to MCGs, but wasn't seen as something UW-Extension should provide or as something educators wished to become more skilled at. Further discussion is needed of UW-Extension's role in fund development. Technical assistance in the areas of evaluation, research-based content, strategic planning and demographic data are all essential to effective fund development. These functions were also identified as needed by community groups and as UW-Extension responsibilities. Perhaps what is needed is to make connections for educators under a broader concept of coalition sustainability. Then educators could support coalition sustainability in various ways while not conveying an expectation that UW-Extension will take responsibility for writing grants, administering funds, etc.
6. County UW-Extension Educators should be aware of assistance UW-Extension can provide and of assistance available from other sources across the broad spectrum of MCG functions and development. They should offer assistance according to their programming priorities and capabilities and should refer to other reliable sources for other identified needs.

Professional Development and Support For UW-Extension Personnel

1. The study confirms that County UW-Extension Educators serving children, youth and families need technical assistance and professional development support to build, expand, and sustain competence in working with and assisting MCGs. Educators call for information and education regarding research on

human and family issues and they call for education and support to strengthen their understanding and skill regarding the processes of MCG work. Some assistance and support needs are important to many educators; others are expressed by a smaller number. Further study might indicate whether this may be because some needs are associated more strongly with early stages of one's UW-Extension career and one's involvement with MCGs (e.g., diverse membership, recognizing others), while readiness to address other needs (e.g., conflict management) emerges later in one's career. If this is the case, such needs should be included as important areas for professional development and technical assistance even though the number of responses was lower in the survey results.

2. The collaborative work of County Educators is currently supported by: access to print and web-based resources providing research-based content on human and family issues, and offering guidelines for community collaboration, by intermittent face-to-face conferences or training sessions, by informal networking with colleagues and others, and, or consultation with state specialists. Specialist resources in Family Living to this area have decreased as key specialist positions in coalition work, in community and group development and facilitation and in demographic information have not been replaced. This array of support is not sufficient in amount and, or perhaps in utilization to meet needs for professional development in the increasingly important area of supporting multi-sector community groups.

3. UW-Extension educators who possess knowledge of diverse participation, strategic planning, evaluation and other key MCG process components will experience greater satisfaction and help MCGs experience greater success.

FURTHER STUDY

1. Through more in-depth study of multi-sector community group work at the local level, consider implications for state/federal policies of devolution. Examine issues of local capacity, and capacity building as they relate to sustainability of coalitions and the innovations in organizations and services they introduce to communities.

2. Conduct special studies aimed at long-term evaluation of the evolution and impact of MCGs. Include attention to time and costs of coalition work, to effectiveness of process, to value for children, youth and families (more efficient, effective services, additional resources, etc.), to projected economic value, and to enhanced family and community health. Use the findings of such evaluation to inform training and resource materials provided to increase UW-Extension capabilities.

3. Counter-balance this study with an additional study of MCG members regarding changing environment, group assistance needs and sources of

assistance. This would complement the findings of the current study, which focused on perceptions of County UW-Extension Educators only.

4. Inventory sources of MCG training, technical assistance, etc. outside of UW-Extension, e.g., agencies, issue initiatives, United Way, etc.
5. Further explore the demands of MCG work and to consider in more depth the best ways to reconcile stakeholder expectations, UW-Extension posture, educator background/capabilities/interests, and shifting demands of MCG work. Many of these issues have been addressed in Family Living Programs, as MCG work has become a central function. MCG work has more recently emerged as an emphasis in 4-HYD. Accordingly a review in this program area is recommended.
6. UW-Extension Educators identified research-based content on children, youth and families and demographic data for use by MCGs to carry out their mission as areas of needed assistance. Therefore, further analysis is needed to determine what is needed, when and by whom. A follow-up study or focus groups would assist in acquiring the information.
7. Web-based information has greatly expanded access of MCG members and County UW-Extension Educators to information pertinent to MCG work. An inquiry regarding needs for research content should also address the need for developing skills and methods of educators and of MCG members for evaluating the worthiness of such information.
8. UW-Extension Educators identified coalition development content as areas of needed assistance, such as strategic planning, evaluation and facilitation and group process. Further study is needed as to the specific tools and skills needed as they relate to work with MCGs.
9. Conduct a focus group study of the support needed by County UW-Extension Educators who are new to the organization or just beginning to work with MCGs.
10. Prepare additional analyses of the survey data regarding the amount of MCG work within programming areas and MCG work by years of UW-Extension experience.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Policy

1. The evidence documents that work by UW-Extension Educators with MCGs is substantial across programming areas in 4-HYD and FLP and is deemed important for future UW-Extension work. Therefore, UW-Extension should recognize and affirm the legitimate and important work occurring in this area now and promote continued and expanded efforts in the future. UW-Extension should also identify this work as an essential core competency for faculty and staff in Family Living Programs and in 4-H Youth Development programs and should consider the same designation in other program areas.

Programming

1. UW-Extension should develop and strengthen a system for supporting MCGs—a system that addresses areas of broad-based concern, that is responsive to needs of individual MCG groups within program areas with different constituencies and issues, that builds on UW-Extension's mission and special strengths, that complements support available from non-Extension sources, and that capitalizes on capabilities of county educators. MCGs need timely research-based content regarding human and family issues. Given today's wide access to information, MCGs and County Educators also need assistance in evaluating the quality of information. They also need support in developing and operating as an effective change system. The system for supporting MCGs must provide timely information and support recognizing that MCGs address fast moving, complex issues of broad concern.

2. Identify and consider varied models for providing assistance to MCGs. Examples include: assistance by County Educators to MCGs they serve, inter-office and cross county collaboration of County Educators around complementary capabilities serving each other's MCGs, assistance via multi-county or state-wide training and resources, partnering with other organizations to provide assistance (around shared issue concerns or around shared community capacity building concerns), establishing regional MCG consultants/trainers, etc. In some cases training or consultation provided to MCGs could also be designed to include County UW-Extension Educators, thereby contributing to their professional development as well.

3. Strengthen linkages across UW-Extension programming areas that can enable complementary and supportive contributions to UW-Extension's educational work with MCGs that address issues affecting children, youth and families. In particular, Specialists and County UW-Extension Educators in the Community, Natural Resources and Economic Development program area have much to offer regarding the processes of community development as they apply to MCG work in these issue areas.

4. Explore potential partnerships with UW System institutions, other institutions of higher learning and state and other organizations. Partnering is a model for assisting MCGs that has promising potential for accessing resources, meeting mutual needs and building inter-organization relationships.
5. Develop and implement ongoing methods for ascertaining types of assistance MCGs need, for determining areas UW-Extension will address, and for evaluating the effectiveness of UW-Extension assistance.
6. Encourage and support County UW-Extension Educators in determining their commitments to MCGs based on their programming priorities in light of local needs and in selecting appropriate member and support role(s) that balance time invested, UW-Extension's mission and anticipated impact.

Professional Development and Support of UW-Extension Personnel

1. Develop a system of professional development that provides training and support for County Educators enabling them to provide effective support to MCGs. The system should address broad-based concerns and also have the capability to support smaller groups of educators with less prevalent needs. It should provide training and ongoing support to strengthen the capabilities of County UW-Extension Educators so they can make good choices about MCG commitments and so they will be more effective in meeting the many challenges of MCG work. Funds to support UW-Extension Educator participation should be readily available. The system should build on and tap the expertise that has been developed already in the field.
2. The evidence documents that work by UW-Extension Educators with MCGs is substantial and important across Family Living and 4-H Youth Development program areas. Therefore, UW-Extension needs to provide the necessary professional development and technical assistance for faculty and staff in working with MCGs. Some knowledge and skill development needs were identified by most respondents across FLP, WNEP and 4-HYD programming areas. Other top needs varied by programming area. Efforts should be made to provide training and other support soon for the top rated topics in each programming area. Some training could be provided across program areas and other training could focus within a specific program area.
3. The professional development and support system should provide information and education that builds knowledge and critical skills regarding research on human and family issues, as well as education and support to strengthen understanding and skill regarding the processes of MCG work.
4. It is strongly surmised that effective MCG work rests on a foundation of selected core knowledge and skills. Efforts should be made to identify these core topics. Then training and other support should also be provided soon on these

core topics, especially for new County UW-Extension Educators. When training is conducted on a specific topic, e.g., strategic planning, demographic data, etc., efforts should be made to relate the topic to larger coalition processes.

5. UW-Extension Educators bring the unique role of assessing and addressing the developmental needs of MCGs while also utilizing the expertise of coalition members that are at the table. To support educators in this catalytic and educational role, UW-Extension needs to build the understanding of faculty and staff regarding MCGs by accessing, conducting, and/or disseminating research related to coalition development and sustainability.

6. UW-Extension Educators bring the unique strength of teaching the process as they facilitate groups, and thereby building capacity within MCGs. Therefore enabling educators to facilitate process learning as part of coalition development and operations should be a key goal of professional development for UW-Extension Educators. Learners should study and acquire knowledge of coalition processes and of methods for teaching them as part of the coalition's work.

7. UW-Extension Educators identified technical assistance needs in both process and content areas. What is critical is the integration of these skills for the development and sustainability for MCGs and for enhancing their effectiveness. Therefore, professional development that includes an integration of these technical assistance areas must be designed and provided.

8. MCG work is dynamic and challenging for UW-Extension educators. To be responsive and effective educators must act as reflective practitioners, addressing needs with their best judgment at the time, reflecting on consequences, learning and then bringing the new insights to the next challenge. UW-Extension should explore varied models for supporting educators in their reflective practice including mentoring, support teams, action learning circles, etc.

9. Effective work with MCGs calls for UW-Extension Educators with both specialized expertise and ability to integrate diverse content. Efforts should be made to strengthen connections between educators and specialists engaged in and supporting MCG work to enhance awareness of existing resources and support, and to foster specialized and integrative thinking and application. This means bringing specialists in human and family content together with specialists in MCG processes as well as generalists and other educators working directly with MCGs to jointly consider and integrate knowledge of children, youth and family within the context of MCG initiatives. In addition to these efforts to strengthen connections of existing personnel, efforts must be made to increase state specialist support for MCG work by drawing in more existing and/or new human and family specialists in supporting this work, by new hires with a focus on MCG processes, demographics or other areas to be identified, and by greater engagement of relevant specialists in the Community, Natural Resources and Economic Development program area.

FINAL WORDS

This report provides strong documentation that working with multi-sector community groups is a critical part of County UW-Extension Educators' current and future work. The study documents the increasing involvement of County Educators in supporting the work of multi-sector community groups. Educators indicate that this work is very important to the success of their programming for children, youth and families.

This work is complex and dynamic and can be very time consuming. Collaboration poses many challenges for UW-Extension practice and may call for new ways of supporting such practice. Each collaboration is dynamic and the context of multiple collaborations is also dynamic; thus learning for effective practice must be ongoing.

UW-Extension educators are well positioned to provide the essential leadership, vision and support for multi-sector community groups to effectively deal with community issues. However, without quality professional development and ongoing support and technical assistance County UW-Extension Educators will be hard pressed to continue effectively meeting these high priority programming needs with the high quality, cutting edge assistance expected from our organization.

As members of the Changing Environment Team we asked many times how UW-Extension can most effectively meet the needs of multi-sector community groups as they act to address local issues involving children, youth and families. It is our earnest hope that this report will provide a platform to support the more specific assessment, planning and action that will provide answers to this question.

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APPENDIX 1 –

Who Responded – Whose Responses Are These?

Respondents to Email Survey

Primary area of Extension responsibility

Family Living	WNEP	4-H	Other	N/A
63	30	69	5	1

Years worked for UW Extension-Cooperative Extension

0-2	3-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26+	N/A
41	25	33	32	16	12	7	1

District work in

Southeast	South	Central	West	Northeast	North	N/A
26	34	23	25	26	28	1

Respondents to Web Survey

Primary area of Extension responsibility

Family Living	WNEP	4-H	Other	N/A
52	20	43	0	1

Years worked for UW Extension-Cooperative Extension?

0-2	3-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26+	N/A
20	22	18	23	11	13	7	2

District work in

Southeast	South	Central	West	Northeast	North	N/A
18	18	21	14	24	20	1

APPENDIX 2 -

Email Survey Questions

DATE:

From: Laurie Boyce and Greg Hutchins

TO: UWEX Cooperative Extension Family Living Educators, WNEP Coordinators, Youth Development Agents

SUBJECT: Are you involved in community group work?

Are you working with community groups to achieve your programming goals?

Sometimes this work has special challenges and opportunities. The Family Living and Youth Development program areas would like your help in assessing the involvement of county based faculty and staff in community group work. Whether community group work is a major or minor part of your activities, please take a few minutes to respond to the following 4 questions. **This is brief!**

Press 'Reply' and enter your responses directly into the email message. When finished, press 'Send' to mail your reply back to us. Thanks.

- 1) What is your primary area of Extension responsibility?
 - a) Family living
 - b) WI Nutrition Education Program
 - c) 4-H youth development
 - d) Other:

- 2) How many years have you worked for UW Extension-Cooperative Extension?
 - a) 0-2
 - b) 3-5
 - c) 6-10
 - d) 11-15
 - e) 16-20
 - f) 21-25
 - g) 26+

- 3) Within which district do you work?
 - a) Southeast
 - b) South
 - c) Central
 - d) West
 - e) Northeast
 - f) North

- 4) Are you currently (as of September 2001) assisting the work of any of the following types of community **groups**?
 - a) Multi-sector groups, e.g. coalitions, networks, collaboratives, that involve various interests/organizations working together to address issues facing children, youth and/or families. Examples include: AODA or Tobacco Coalitions, Safe and Stable Family Coalitions, Financial Resource Network, School Readiness Partnership,

Child Care Task Force, Hunger Prevention Council, Delinquency Prevention Advisory Group

YES

NO

Not now, but have within the last five years

b) A **single** nonprofit agency or organization that serves children, youth and/or families such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters, YMCA, or a school district

YES

NO

c) A civic association or volunteer organization such as Jaycees, Kiwanis, Garden Clubs with projects that serve children, youth and/or families

YES

NO

d) Traditionally supported Extension groups such as 4-H Community Clubs/Leaders Associations or Home and Community Education (HCE) Clubs/Association

YES

NO

IF you currently or have in the past worked with **multi-sector community groups** (item a above), WE NEED YOUR HELP. We have another survey WE HOPE YOU WILL COMPLETE. Your input will provide important information about these groups and the assistance you need to work effectively with them. For ease of completion, that survey is attached as a MS Word file. Or it is available:

1) on the web at:

2) Or, if you prefer a hard copy, please indicate below and we will mail it to you:

Send me a hard copy that I can complete and return by postal mail.

As you can see, we are very anxious to hear from YOU. Our ability to provide assistance for working with multi-sector community groups depends upon HEARING FROM EVERYONE.

This work is being done by a family living and youth development committee consisting of Connie Abert, Linda Cates, Gay Eastman, Mary Gruenewald, Mary Huser, Sue Pleskac and Boyd Rossing with evaluation assistance from Ellen Taylor-Powell.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

We will share all results within two months.

Press 'SEND' .

APPENDIX 3 -

Web survey

CHANGING ENVIRONMENT ASSESSMENT SURVEY: Multi-Sector Community Groups

Thanks for taking the time to complete the following survey about **multi-sector community groups** with which you work. This information will help:

- 1) determine whether and how Extension involvement with these types of community groups has changed, and
- 2) determine what technical assistance and support are needed.

This survey builds on the community capacity work of both family living and youth development program areas including the "Extension Role in Community Groups", "Community Group Member Survey" and the most recent "Building Capacity for Community Youth Development Survey". In addition, the timing is right due to the statewide support Extension received from county partners for the "Best Practices in Children, Youth and Families" budget initiative.

Please complete by October 19, 2001. Thank you very much.

Contact any one of us if you have questions or concerns: Connie Abert, Linda Cates, Gay Eastman, Mary Gruenewald, Mary Huser, Sue Pleskac, Boyd Rossing, or Ellen Taylor-Powell.

When answering the following questions, please consider ONLY **multi-sector community groups**, e.g. coalitions, networks, collaboratives, that involve various interests/organizations working together to address issues facing children, youth and/or families. Examples include: AODA or Tobacco Coalitions, Safe and Stable Family Coalitions, Financial Resource Network, School Readiness Partnership, Child Care Task Force, Hunger Prevention Council, Delinquency Prevention Advisory Group

- 1) As of September 2001, how many multi-sector community groups are you working with? Make a note of these since they are the foundation for subsequent questions.
 - a) As a member: ____ (number of groups)
 - b) Supporting group but not a group member: ____ (number of groups)
 - c) Other: ____ (number of groups; please describe your relationship to these other groups):
- 2) What is the geographic scope of these groups? (include all groups identified in Q1)
 - a) Local community (e.g., neighborhood, city, school district): ____ (number of groups)
 - b) County: ____ (number of groups)
 - c) Multi-county: ____ (number of groups)
 - d) Other: ____ (number of groups) Please describe geographic scope:

- 3) **Currently**, how important is working in/with multi-sector community groups to your family, children, youth programming goals?
- a) Not important
 - b) Somewhat important
 - c) Fairly important
 - d) Very important
- 4) **Five years ago**, how important a priority was multi-sector community group work to accomplishing your family, children, youth programming goals?
- a) Not important
 - b) Somewhat important
 - c) Fairly important
 - d) Very important
 - e) N/A – recently joined Extension
- 5) **In the future**, how important a priority do you think multi-sector community groups will be to accomplishing your family, children, youth programming goals?
- a) Not important
 - b) Somewhat important
 - c) Fairly important
 - d) Very important

THE FOLLOWING QUESTION WILL TAKE A BIT OF TIME BUT IT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION. SO, PLEASE TAKE A FEW MINUTES WITH IT.

- 6) The following items pertain to areas of technical assistance and support. First, place a checkmark in column A for any technical assistance that you think multi-sector community groups you work with need. Second, place a checkmark in column B for any technical assistance you feel Extension (as an organization) should provide to these groups. Third, place a checkmark in Column C for those areas of technical assistance that YOU would like to strengthen in order to work more effectively with these groups. Fourth, **next to each item you checked in Column C**, place a number to rank order the knowledge/skills **you** want to strengthen. Give your top priority a 1, your next priority a 2 and so on until all items you checked in column C are ranked.

Type of Assistance	A Assistance groups need	B Assistance we should provide	C I want to strengthen my knowledge/skills RANKING	
a) conflict management/resolution				
b) demographic data collection and analysis				
c) evaluation				
d) facilitation/group processes				
e) fund development				
f) leadership				
g) marketing/public relations				
h) organizational development				
i) public policy/legislative issues				
j) recognition for member and group accomplishments				
k) recruitment/diverse membership				
l) research-based content on children/family issues				
m) strategic planning				
n) other: please list				

ONLY FIVE QUESTIONS TO GO!

- 7) Over the past 5 years, do you think the type of assistance that multi-sector community groups have needed has changed?
- a) YES
 - b) NO
 - c) N/A – recently joined Extension

If Yes, please briefly describe how the assistance needs have changed:

8) Please share any other comments you may have regarding your work with multi-sector community groups.

9) What is your primary area of Extension responsibility?

- a) Family living
- b) WI Nutrition Education Program
- c) 4-H youth development
- d) Other:

10) How many years have you worked for UW Extension-Cooperative Extension?

- a) 0-2
- b) 3-5
- c) 6-10
- d) 11-15
- e) 16-20
- f) 21-25
- g) 26+

11) Within which district do you work?

- a) Southeast
- b) South
- c) Central
- d) West
- e) Northeast
- f) North

THANK YOU!

If you would be interested in participating in a teleconference discussion to provide more detail about how multi-sector community groups have changed, how our Extension roles have changed, and current needs, please provide your name and email address below. Within the next few months, we will hold several telephone conference calls to gain more detailed information to help us with this work. This would involve about 1 hour of your time.

Name: _____

Email _____ Telephone #

APPENDIX 4 -

Response information

Email survey response

Area of responsibility	Number on mailing list	Respondents		Response rate
		#	%	
Family Living	70	63	20	90%
WI Nutrition Education Program	31	30	34	98%
4-H Youth Development	95	69	42	73%
Other*		5		
No designation		1		
TOTAL	197	168		85%

* Individuals with dual areas of responsibilities

Web survey response

Area of responsibility	Number from email survey who reported work with MSCG	Number who responded		Response rate
		#	%	
Family Living		52		
WI Nutrition Education Program		20		
4-H Youth Development		43		
Other*				
No designation		1		
TOTAL	136	116		85%

* Individuals with dual areas of responsibilities

Response rate for two surveys at three points in time

Survey	1st Request		2nd Request		3rd Request	
	#	Response rate	#	Response rate	#	Response rate
Email (n=197)	100	51%	146	74%	168	85%
Web (n=136)	72	53%	101	74%	116	85%

APPENDIX 5 -

Thematic Analysis of Narrative Responses

Changing Environment Assessment Survey
Thematic Grouping of “Other” Responses
and Responses to Open-Ended Questions

Topical Outline:

- I. General Importance of Multi-Sector Collaborative Work
- II. Importance of Multi-Sector Collaborative Work: Specific Benefits to Communities
- III. Importance of Multi-Sector Collaborative Work: Personal Benefits
- IV. Importance of Multi-Sector Collaborative Work: Benefits to Extension
- V. Drawbacks of Multi-Sector Collaborative Work
- VI. General Changes in Multi-Sector Collaborative Work and in Conditions Affecting Such Work
- VII. Changes in Multi-Sector Collaborative Work: Specific Types of Assistance that Community Groups Need
- VIII. Extension’s Role – Change / Appropriateness
- IX. Challenges of *Doing* Multi-Sector Collaborative Work
- X. Challenges Faced *by* Multi-Sector Groups
- XI. Existing Technical Assistance Expertise
- XII. Past Technical Assistance
- XIII. General Comments
- XIV. Comments on the Survey

I. GENERAL IMPORTANCE OF MULTI-SECTOR COLLABORATIVE WORK

- It's a key piece to what I do.
- I don't think their needs have changed but I do think we are seeing more and more of these collaborations so perhaps there is more of a need for our involvement.
- These groups have become much more important because of funding that is coming to the county. Collaboration is very essential. It is up to the groups to handle many of the needs for families and children and caregivers.
- What was in its infancy 10 years ago seems to be full fledged and very key now. I believed in it then and see the power of it now.
- Multi-sector groups are just a way of doing business and achieving goals and results in our county. It's important in all of our program areas.
- Group work seems to be the way that we can work together to accomplish support for families and youth.
- It takes a lot of time, and there will be failures, which we need to accept and move on, but when it works it is great.

II. IMPORTANCE OF MULTI-SECTOR COLLABORATIVE WORK: SPECIFIC BENEFITS TO COMMUNITIES

- In a sense, it allows us, as professionals, to become co-workers...and we all are **able to respond to community needs more effectively** and with cooperation and respect because we know and trust each other.

- Two of the community groups I work with have really been grass roots, and **addressed the needs early on before they became problems**
- My collaborations with other community agencies have enabled 4-H to **become a part of the lives of children we would have difficulty reaching on our own.**
- It has **brought to the forefront youth issues** that need to be addressed in this county, which I may not have known
- It also **alleviates funding problems** to some degree and allows a win-win situation for all of us.
- Through these groups I have **found funding** by being in the right place and the right time **to fill a need** identified by a collaborative group
- I have found **multi-sector work helps stretch the dollars available and energy of team members**
- We need to partner and work hard **to avoid duplication - pool resources as they get tighter**
- With **limited resources in the North**, community groups are the best way to use and share resources with agencies, schools, and other organizations
- It is necessary **in a small community.**
- **In rural counties** with minimal resources, it is very important to work collaboratively to **maximize the services and educational programming. Economically it makes a lot of sense** for our county to work with the neighboring county on almost all initiatives.
- I see it as extremely important. First of all, **in a rural county, our resources are limited.** So we need to make the most of what we have; collaboration accomplishes this goal. Multi-sector community groups also **helps diminish any "territorial" feelings**
- **By serving on multiple groups**, we can often **keep them apprised** of what the other is doing, **provide a communication link**, help them **recognize each other's accomplishments** and **support their goals.** Often this makes all groups function in a more cooperative and creative way. It **reduces unintended redundancy and improves effectiveness** directly and politically.

III. IMPORTANCE OF MULTI-SECTOR COLLABORATIVE WORK: PERSONAL BENEFITS

- Thus far it has been very interesting and challenging
- It's very rewarding and has given me personal and professional contacts that allow me to work more effectively for families
- I have found them very beneficial for myself professionally. It has given me a chance to network with other agencies that I would not have had . . .

IV. IMPORTANCE OF MULTI-SECTOR COLLABORATIVE WORK: BENEFITS TO EXTENSION

- Team members are beginning to better understand Extension and why there may be differences in how Extension is involved from county to county.
- . . . it strengthens the visibility of UW-Extension within the counties.

V. DRAWBACKS OF MULTI-SECTOR COLLABORATIVE WORK

- It has reduced job autonomy and often hampered effectiveness because the impetus is most often grant money first rather than just a community need and the guidelines for procurement often hamper progress and are seen as \$ wasters. Too much bureaucracy.
- Two of the four collaborative groups I work with are on a county-required obligation (HCE & the Fair Board). If I don't work with these groups, the county

- will not retain my contract. Neither of these two groups have anything to do with my programming.
- Working with community group is one of my two multi-year Plans of Work. I am finding it incredibly difficult to get the plan written however, because the groups I'm working with are at many different stages in their actions. There are also some non multi-sector groups involved.
 - I find it harder and harder to find a collaborative effort that is sincere and genuine about its goals. By and large, the grassroots or community involvement is not bought by groups – people are used to acquire grant money to purchase additional support programs that serve larger agencies like human services and eventually the grassroots folks disappear. I used to do better when I had a few innovative grant dollars that I could do a solid program with and not have to live with the frustration of others who are only looking to build their agencies.

VI. GENERAL CHANGES IN MULTI-SECTOR COLLABORATIVE GROUP WORK AND IN CONDITIONS AFFECTING SUCH WORK

- It is only in recent history that agencies and organizations have **recognized the need and benefit of working together on behalf of families. . . .**
- **. . . and more prevalent in general**
- **More people are becoming involved** in these types of groups, so **our roles have changed in how we work with them.**
- I don't think their needs have changed but I do think we are **seeing more and more of these collaborations** so perhaps there is more of a need for our involvement.
- It **continues to grow** and is often overwhelming.
- There seems to be **more collaboration going on, but people/agencies do not always define collaboration in the same way...** Some are true sharers...others are in competition for funding and may not collaborate on all...or take the credit for something that was done collaboratively
- **Five years ago the focus was more on the need to collaborate and bring people to the table. Now I think they need help to determine what work is most important** for community groups to tackle and where will community groups **be most effective. . . .**
- **Some of these needs were nonexistent 5 years ago,** except for the Native American
- **More groups** have formed to address issues, so **needs have arisen that five years ago would not have existed.**
- **More key players are involved** and **groups have become more important and 'influential'.** Realization that **documentation and changes made.....need to be shown to public and to purse string holders...**seems to be more prominent
- I think it's the future of Extension work. Our value as an organization is to be able to bring the research-based information and education to the community so the community can address issues of importance to its citizens. **Local citizens are increasingly more competent at technology transfer and are finding their own sources of that type of information**
- Community groups are **working on much more complex issues because individual agency resources are getting cut to a minimum.** We must rely more on other agencies and work together in order to be effective with little resources.
- **Coalitions are beyond the beginning stages of work** and need to observe trends and evaluate programs already in place
- Many community groups have existed for 5-10 years now and are **at a higher level of functioning as a group.**

- It is an **increasingly sophisticated environment** and **the pool of volunteers is smaller**. Reporting expectations and **impact/outcomes expectations are higher** in all sectors (public, private, etc.) placing higher demands on staff and volunteers as well.
- The biggest change I have noticed is a **switch from "real volunteers" who serve on boards to "volunteers" who fulfill the roles, but do it as an employee**
- I think **groups are getting more sophisticated** in their desire to make a difference. They are hearing new terms like "outcome based evaluations" and are looking for help in developing their plans and checking for results
- Groups **now work together as a part of business as usual . . .**
- They are **dealing with more funding issues**
- Observation: **The availability of funding has been a driving force for several groups.**
- **Working together, is more important than ever**, and a group that works together is more likely **to get funding**. Also **funding is harder to get**.
- **Resources are more scarce**, more **collaboration is necessary to avoid competing for limited resources**. Therefore it is necessary for groups to help each other rather than compete with each other.
- In one case, the group did not exist. Now, I think they are so **dependent on funding, which includes grants**. Also I think it is more important to work cooperatively because of **limited resources**.
- They are having to become **more outcome based in their planning and evaluation**. This is an area in which they do not have much experience in. **Grant monies are also becoming harder to obtain** as more individuals are in the same grant pool.
- **More accountability is expected and involvement in groups has declined**
- **Much more turnover in groups . . .**
- I observe **a lot of working weary members of coalitions**, not able to take on more responsibility
- Less work can be done in-kind by community groups, **everyone is over-worked** and their staffs are limited in the kind of work they can take on for multi-sector community groups.

VII. CHANGES IN MULTI-SECTOR COLLABORATIVE WORK: SPECIFIC TYPES OF ASSISTANCE THAT COMMUNITY GROUPS NEED

- We have seen the growth of **new groups that need almost every area of expertise** and the **other groups need better evaluation and research skills**
- **As the group changes, the type of assistance given changes.**
- I think groups are getting more sophisticated in their desire to make a difference. They are hearing new terms like "outcome based evaluations" and are looking for **help in developing their plans and checking for results**. The partners we have in our collaborative efforts look to Extension faculty for this support.
- Members of community groups have grown in their ability to work cooperatively. Therefore, any **technical assistance needs to be at an advanced level** in order to be helpful.
- Many community groups have existed for 5-10 years now and are at a higher level of functioning as a group. These groups need **more sophisticated education on how to take**
- **their group action to the next level**. They also need **neutral, unbiased research on family/youth/children issues**.
- **Higher level of training** in regards to **how to collaborate effectively**, what does that mean and **what does the final product look like**.
- **multi-cultural awareness**

- **Hispanic, Hmong, Somalian**
- The groups are important, yet they need to **constantly evaluate their purpose and scope**. Too often groups continue to "function" when the needs that created them have changed
- Learning to **work cooperatively**
- Much more turnover in groups and **need for strong leadership and goals that can be accomplished.**
- **membership retention**
- **keeping the membership engaged** - I observe a lot of working weary members of coalitions, not able to take on more responsibility
- **Groups are finding that engaging volunteers is critical.** They need information and assistance in this area**recruitment, job descriptions and expectations, recognition**, etc. The groups I select to work with must have youth in their mission. For that **reason information on youth development, youth leadership, youth engagement** is critical.
- --but **need to get more efficient** at doing do—i.e. delegate, assign tasks to an agency--not feel like all decisions must be made at a meeting.
- Five years ago the focus was more on the need to collaborate and bring people to the table. Now I think they need help to determine what work is most important for community groups to tackle and where will community groups be most effective. I think Extension can help them learn about **what prevention efforts are most effective in the long run; how to do evaluation to measure impact; and how to make decisions** about what to work on based on local demographics, need, evaluations of other projects, etc.
- I see a lack of **vision and leadership** with poor **organizational skills** as the downfall of most community groups.
- , , , ,I think they need some **strategic planning help**.
- They need to **evaluate** the **impact** of their efforts. They need to **seek funds** to continue/expand their efforts. They need to **have research-based information**.
- 1)they need assistance in **evaluating** collaborative efforts 2)they need to know **how to seek funding for sustainability** 3) they need to know **how to develop a strategic plan, implement it and evaluate it** 4) they need to know **how to handle conflict** 5) they need to know the most **current research on children and family issues and also on coalition development** 6) they need to know **how to recruit members from the public, nonprofit and also the private sector**.
- I added **program planning**, different from strategic planning and organizational development, in order to address the "how do we do it" question after a mission, goals, and objectives are outlined. I'm finding that the groups can articulate what they want to accomplish in a broad sense, but lack the preparation or experience to put together actual programs that will get them to meet their goals and objectives.
- It is an increasingly sophisticated environment and the pool of volunteers is smaller. Reporting expectations and impact/outcomes expectations are higher in all sectors (public, private, etc.) placing higher demands on staff and volunteers as well. I think community groups need **assistance to keep current with the language and rhetoric of current thinking, especially where funding is concerned**. We can make evaluation easier when everybody speaks the same language.
- They are having to become **more outcome based in their planning and evaluation**. This is an area in which they do not have much experience in. **Grant monies are also becoming harder to obtain** as more individuals are in the same grant pool.
- **Planning and fund raising needs have increased**

- More emphasis on **strategic planning, outcome management, and evaluation.**
- **Research Information Grant Writing**
- Several groups exist so there's a **need to increase communication among these groups**
- **volunteer development, youth involvement and engagement**
- **youth/adult partnerships**
- **low cost or free facility use for youth-centered meetings/events**
- continued training on **evaluation of youth audiences** would be helpful

VIII. EXTENSION'S ROLE

Changes

- I have seen the role of Extension go from the people at the table that take minutes and make coffee and some technical assistance to being full partners with recognized roles at the table that fully contribute to the mission of the group
- I think it's the future of Extension work. Our value as an organization is to be able to bring the research-based information and education to the community so the community can address issues of importance to its citizens. Local citizens are increasingly more competent at technology transfer and are finding their own sources of that type of information.

Inappropriate roles for Extension

- Personally, I don't think I as a FLE/WNEP person should be expected to assist my groups with strategic planning
- Explanation on Fund development – I would like help in writing grants, but I don't want to be fund-raiser
- It would be hard to be the "provider" of the mentioned skills for the groups that I am a member of. For example, conflict management.

IX. CHALLENGES OF *DOING* MULTI-SECTOR COMMUNITY WORK

Groups at different levels of need and strength

- Each group is at a different level in terms of their development in processes and the stage at which they are at. Some groups have truly moved into the collaboration model, while others are still more coalition based.
- Working with community group is one of my two multi-year Plans of Work. I am finding it incredibly difficult to get the plan written however, because the groups I'm working with are at many different stages in their actions. There are also some non multi-sector groups involved.
- Every group is different with different strengths, depending on the resources of members and their respective agencies.

Takes time and energy

- Conflict resolution and developing policies can be very time consuming and energy draining.
- It is rewarding, when it works but it is also very time consuming.
- It takes a lot of time, and there will be failures, which we need to accept and move on, but when it works it is great.
- Certain coalitions make me tired.
- It can be very time consuming
- Much more time is spent with group process and the public sector is getting harder to recruit when they do not see solid impact for the time and energy spent. Much more political than before with county government wanting to micro manage everything – big time waster of late.

Competing demands on time:

- The work that I do in this area would be easier to commit to if the Community Club Program didn't take so much time. . . .

Time management difficult when you work "on demand"

- Working with multi sector groups can be draining and intensive. Their needs do not reflect your time management. Many things that we can help with are needed on the spot and then require a great deal of time. We cannot plan their time only ours, yet we have the skills they often need. This can kill our own time and planning. It is often difficult to turn away because your previous time commitment and reputation are often the victim neglecting the
- unplannable and evolving need. An example would be conflict management needs that develop on a committee

Unclear expectations/Lack of support

- The work that I do in this area would be easier to commit to if the Community Club Program didn't take so much time. I am working to help the traditional program become less dependent upon the agent, but it will take a long time to "break" long established county expectations. Additional assistance from State UW-Extension to reinforce this transformation of the county would be helpful. Are there State plans to help this transformation happen? Are there written or unwritten expectations that agents participate in multi-sector community groups? I (and others I know) have been struggling with this since I started.
- As a member of the 4H Youth Program area, I feel that we have not been perceived as a full partner in these types of community development, family development - YOUTH DEVELOPMENT efforts. Increased support for professional development, and increased visible support on the part of UWEX administration, needs to be given. Only through such efforts will county staff have the support to continue and to expand this type of community work. All too often we do not "take the chance" to expand beyond our "comfort level". Visible support may be the catalyst for "taking such chances".
- The biggest issue is addressing self interest of individual members vs. the role of the coalition or initiative. I only work with partners. No other staff inside UWEX shares my area of interest. There is no clear sense of what back up support the UWEX can provide. There are always issues of policy, credit and funding allocations to address and no clear answers from our team regarding limits/ options for our work

Lack of personal experience, information, or skill

- At first it was overwhelming since **my previous background did not include collaborations on a county-wide or larger basis**. The more I work with the groups, the easier it is to
- The Family Living Agent was the President of the Action Alliance group here. She has recently left her position. I have only been in my position for 6 months. I was involved with the group before she left but only on a limited basis. I am now helping to run it until her replacement arrives. **I feel I do not have enough information on the background of the group yet** to adequately answer the above questions.

X. CHALLENGES FACED BY MULTI-SECTOR GROUPS

Community Member Recruitment

- Other than hospitals, **businesses have been noticeably missing** from our groups. Parents and other **family representatives have not always been available** for involvement, even though they have been asked
- It is **hard to recruit new members** to a coalition to keep it sustained and get new ideas

Community Member Retention/Burn-out

- Keeping people involved (member retention) seems a challenge for all organizations – **as more opportunities arise, group members leave.**
- In a small rural community / county – I observe the leadership and membership of many coalitions are comprised of dedicated individuals who have been at this for 20 or more years. They and **the members around the table are getting weary** ...new joiners do not seem to be asking to be included.
- I observe **a lot of working weary members of coalitions**, not able to take on more responsibility
- **Less work can be done in-kind by community groups, everyone is over worked** and their staffs are limited in the kind of work they can take on for multi-sector community groups.
- . . . **the public sector is getting harder to recruit** when they do not see solid impact for the time and energy spent . . .
- It is **hard to get people to commit their time as everyone has so many obligations**
- Balance time for collaborative work in low population area – **same players tapped all the time** or people being used to access grants
- The frustrating part of working with these groups of **overcommitted people** is the **[lack of] follow through**

Too much change within groups

- In many groups, **staff turnover** is a challenge. So any ideas to work with a constantly changing group would be helpful.
- **The director of the program has changed 3 times in three years.** The program is stagnating because the steering committee can't or won't move forward. I think they need some strategic planning help.
- **Membership in the group has changed**, a different set of skills, talents and interests are brought to the table.

Not enough change within groups

- It is **hard to recruit new members** to a coalition to keep it sustained and get new ideas
- A very important item is **changeover in the makeup of groups to insure that new ideas are presented** and that the group doesn't fall into the "same old-same old" stagnant situation that comes from having the same people involved year after year. New people are often reluctant to join an **effort that is controlled by firmly entrenched dominant leaders** that don't want anything changed from the way "it's always been done".
- The director of the program has changed 3 times in three years. The program is stagnating because **the steering committee can't or won't move forward. I think they need some strategic planning help.**

- There's a sense that these two groups are spinning their wheels somewhat and I sense that **some members do not want input or the new ideas** that may help the groups move forward.
- The groups are important, yet they need to **constantly evaluate their purpose and scope**. Too often groups continue to "function" when the needs that created them have changed.

Sharing of credit

- The biggest issue is addressing **self interest of individual members vs. the role of the coalition or initiative**. . .
- It has always been a **challenge to separate successes of the group with individual successes** when working in partnership.
- I am concerned about **Extension visibility sometimes getting lost in group work**. I find sometimes that **others are unwilling to share credit** even though it is "infinitely divisible". I also think that there is sometimes the perception of duplication among certain stakeholders - that we (those in a coalition) are all doing the same thing. Communicating one's specific role up front and in an ongoing way is very important.
- There seems to be more collaboration going on, but **people/agencies do not always define collaboration** in the same way... Some are true sharers...others are in competition for funding and may not collaborate on all...or take the credit for something that was done collaboratively

Sustainability

- It is **hard to recruit new members to a coalition to keep it sustained** and get new ideas
- One issue is sustainability. **How do you keep the enthusiasm going** after a year or so?

XI. EXISTING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE EXPERTISE

- The most effective and sustainable groups in this county come together because of a shared commitment to a purpose, i.e. grassroots initiatives. Within these groups, expertise in the above technical assistance categories is often present because of professional development and /or resources available to group members. That is, like Extension, **other professional groups provide assistance and training for their members in these areas**. I see less need for Extension as a source for much of this assistance in my county.
- Extension has a role, but it does vary depending on how strong the **United Way** is in their community. In our setting, United Way has done extensive work on outcome based evaluations, so we do not do that work. That may not be the case in other counties. We need to continue to assess the needs of our specific counties and move forward given the resources available.
- **Family Preservation and Support** had more technical assistance than other community groups have been offered. Examples: training sessions, print materials, staff time, web pages.

XII. PAST TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Seminars we could chose to attend have been offered on a sporadic basis.
- Family Preservation and Support had more technical assistance than other community groups have been offered. Examples: training sessions, print materials, staff time, web pages.

XIII. GENERAL COMMENTS

- Enjoy it.
- It is exciting work with both challenges and benefits. When the group is working together on a common goal, much can be accomplished. If there are turf issues, it can be challenging.
- Working more as a community to do projects-working together concepts. 'It takes a whole village to raise a child'.

XIV. COMMENTS ON THE SURVEY

- In realizing their potential to "make a difference" they recognize the needs for assistance in areas marked on previous page.
- **just a short notation--This survey question is not grammatically correct (i.e. "groups have needed"
- For question 8, there are more areas that I personally would like to strengthen, but I could only check those that I had picked for question 7, that I feel Extension has a role in. . . This may affect results for others, too.
- . . . This survey is educational and motivational for me to consider [working with other coalition groups]